

O M A N
عمان
D A I L Y

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SUNRISE 06:23 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:05 AM
DHUHR 11:57 PM
ASR 03:04 PM
MAGHRIB 05:26 PM
ISHA 06:39 PM

20 OMANI YOUTH
BRING THE
COSMOS
TO LIFE

INBRIEF

HM'S GREETINGS TO MOROCCO, LATVIA

HM ORDERS CONFERRED

IN APPRECIATION OF OFFICIALS' EFFORTS IN PERFORMING DUTIES

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco, on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to King Mohammed VI and the people of Morocco, wishing Morocco further stability and progress. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of greetings to President Edgars Rinkēvičs of the Republic of Latvia, on the occasion of the Proclamation Day Anniversary of the Republic. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Rinkēvičs and his country's people.

BIDIYAH CARNIVAL FROM NOV 19-29



The Organising Committee for the Bidiyah Carnival 2025 in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate announced the programme of events and accompanying activities for the tourism winter season in the wilayat. The carnival will be held from November 19-29. Faisal bin Humaid al Hajri, Chairman of Bidiyah Automobile Club, stated that the Bidiyah Carnival 2025 is organised by the Club and the Oman Automobile Association, supervised by the Office of the Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, and in partnership with a number of public and private sector institutions. It includes more than 14 diverse events.



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has conferred the Royal Commendation Order (Second Class) on some officials. Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, presenting the Royal Commendation Order (Second Class) to Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of the Supreme Court.



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has conferred Oman Military Order (Third & Fourth Class) on some officers from the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presented the orders to the officers.

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK has conferred the Royal Commendation Order (Second Class) on some judges, their excellencies and senior officials. This recognition from His Majesty is in appreciation of their efforts in performing their professional duties, and coincides with the nation's celebrations of the glorious National Day. The orders were presented by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, at his office on Monday.

Meanwhile, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has conferred Oman Military Order (Third and Fourth Class) on some officers from the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presented the orders to the officers at Muaskar Al Murtafaa. This Royal recognition was bestowed in appreciation of their dedication and devotion in serving their nation and

performing their national duty. HH Sayyid Shihab congratulated the officers who received the Royal honour and recognition. He commended the efforts and dedication they have shown in serving Oman and its Leader, and urged them to continue their dedication and loyal service under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has also conferred Oman Military Order (Third

and Fourth Class) on some senior officers of the military and security services on the occasion of the glorious National Day. At the behest of His Majesty the Sultan, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office and Head of the Supreme Commander's Office, presented the orders. This Royal honour from His Majesty, the Supreme Commander, comes in recognition of their loyalty and dedication in performing their national duties. — ONA
SEE ALSO P2&5



The agreement aligns with the mission to regulate and develop the energy and minerals sectors.

ADDENDUM TO CONCESSION DEAL FOR BLOCK 5 SIGNED

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed an additional addendum to the Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) for Oil Concession Block 5, located in the Al Dhahirah Governorate and operated by Daleel Petroleum. Signing the agreement on behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman was Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. Also participating in the signing were Mohammed bin Ali al Barwani, Chairman of Mazoon Petrogas SAOC, and Wang Guihai, Vice-President of Mazoon Petrogas Limited. This signing comes within the framework of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals' efforts to maintain annual oil and gas production levels and increase the volume of future

reserves. This aligns with its mission to regulate and develop the energy and minerals sectors, ensuring the optimal utilisation of national wealth according to the highest standards of occupational health, safety and environmental protection. The new addendum introduces a financial mechanism that contributes to raising production rates through the development of producing fields and continuing exploration work using the latest technologies in the sector. It also includes a commitment to intensify drilling activities and enhanced oil recovery programmes, which is consistent with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals' vision for developing and utilising energy resources with high efficiency and innovation to support the national economy. — ONA

Greater Muscat Structural Plan wins Smart Cities Award in US

MIAMI: The Greater Muscat Structural Plan was crowned with the Smart Cities Award, which was granted during the World Architecture Festival (WAF) 2025 Awards held in Miami, the United States of America (USA). The festival is one of the most prominent international gatherings in the fields of urban planning and design. This is an acknowledgment of the vision presented by the plan in shaping the future of Muscat as a smart and sustainable city, capable of responding to the challenges of urban growth, embracing the knowledge economy, and developing advanced and integrated transport systems. The festival also announced the selection of the Greater Muscat Structural Plan among the top 10 future projects globally in the Masterplanning category, following a competition that included 19 global projects representing an elite group of the most prominent international companies and offices specialising in urban planning and design. This reflects the advanced standing of the project on the global stage.



Greater Muscat Structural Plan was ranked among the top 10 future projects globally in the Masterplanning category.

Nasser bin Abdul Latif al Saigh, Technical Director of the Greater Muscat Structural Plan, stated that participation in this festival constitutes an opportunity to showcase current and future urban projects on an international platform that brings together an elite group of specialists in architecture and urban planning. He noted that this participation provided an opportunity to learn about experiences from

different countries around the world, connect with work teams, and present the Greater Muscat Structural Plan to a group of international judges. He stressed that the crowning of the Greater Muscat Structural Plan with this award represents international certification of the quality of this plan, which resulted from extensive collaborative work with partners in both the public and private sectors. — ONA

OMAN

HM confers Military Order on officers

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has conferred the Oman Military Order (Third and Fourth Class) on some officers from the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF).

HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presented the orders to the officers at Muaskar Al Murtafaa. This Royal recognition was bestowed in appreciation of their dedication and devotion in serving their nation and performing their national duty.

The occasion was attended by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, the SAF Chief of Staff, the SAF commanders, the Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies and the CEO of the Military and Security Services Pension Fund.

HH Sayyid Shihab congratulated the officers who received the Royal honour and recognition.

He commended the efforts and dedication they have shown in serving Oman and its Leader, and urged them to continue their dedication and loyal service under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander. — ONA



Order on security services officers



**Congratulations to
HIS MAJESTY
SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK
and the generous people of Oman
on the occasion of
the National Day of the
Sultanate of Oman**

**امتاك
imtac**

**Industrial Management
Technology & Contracting LLC**



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has conferred the Oman Military Order (Third and Fourth Class) on some senior officers of the military and security services on the occasion of the glorious National Day.

At the behest of His Majesty the Sultan, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al

Numani, Minister of the Royal Office and Head of the Supreme Commander's Office, presented the orders on Monday.

This Royal honour from His Majesty, the Supreme Commander, comes in recognition of their loyalty and dedication in performing their national duties.

The occasion was attended by Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs, Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service, and some senior commanders in the military and security services. — ONA

Tender Notice for the sale of used materials

Tender No. AW/T/PH1/01/2025

Al Watanyiah United Engineering and Contracting Co. LLC hereby announce a Tender for the sale of used materials, as described in the table below, on an "as is, where is" basis. Those wishing to submit a Bid must obtain the Tender documents from the Company's Head Office (HO) in Ghala Industrial Area after paying the specified Tender Fee in the Company's Bank Dhofar account 01040605344006 (IBAN NO: OM080250001040605344006).

S. No.	Description	Location	Tender Fee (RO)	Earnest Money Deposit (RO)	Period for purchase of Tender	Last date for submission of offer
1	Used Porta Cabins and GRP Ablution, used safety items/Scrap materials, Used Furniture, UPVC, PVC, HDPE, GI Pipes and Project returned items.	Sohar, Haima, Barka and Ghala	25/-	10% of the submitted offer	19/11/2025 To 03/12/2025	10/12/2025 5.00 PM
2	Aluminum Profiles (Random Lengths)	Ghala				

- The last date for submission of offers is on Wednesday, 5 PM, detailed date on the above table, accompanied by an Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) issued by any local bank in Oman (equivalent to 10%) of the total offered value.
- The EMD must be valid for 60 days from the last date of submission of offer and the original EMD along with the offer must be submitted in the tender box at the reception of our HO Ghala, Muscat, Oman on or before the last date & time indicated above.
- Contact details: 2450 2581 / 82 - Extn. 149 / 150, GSM: 9294 7637 / 7722 8166

Honouring Oman's Journey Empowering Its Future

Khimji Ramdas extends its sincere congratulations to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik** and the people of Oman on the occasion of the glorious **National Day**.

As the nation continues to thrive under Oman Vision 2040, we remain committed to supporting progress and uplifting communities, every step of the way.

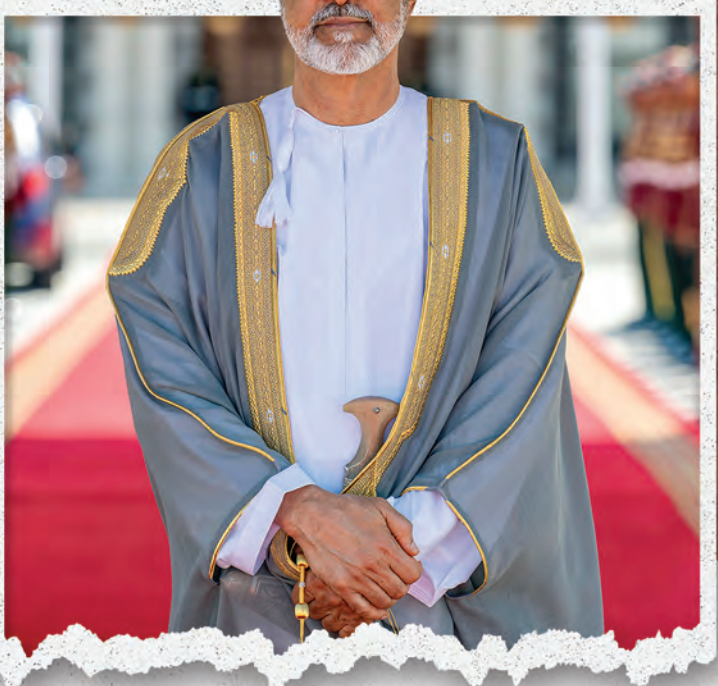


Felicitations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik
& the people of Oman on the occasion of the
National Day of Oman

مشاريح علوي ش.م.م
Alawi Enterprises L.L.C.

(The Heirs of Late Qais Al Zawawi)

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Congratulations to

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK

and the generous people of Oman
on the occasion of the National Day
of the Sultanate of Oman



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Mitsubishi Corporation and its employees
extend their warmest congratulations
and heartfelt greetings to

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and to the people of Oman
on the occasion of the **National Day**.

May Almighty Allah bless His Majesty and the nation
with continued success, prosperity and peace
in the years to come.









بأسمى آيات التهاني والتبريكات، وبكل مشاعر الإجلال والولاء،
نرفع أسمى التحايا
لِحَضْرَةِ صَاحِبِ الْجَلَالَةِ السُّلْطَانِ هَيْثَمِ بْنِ تَارِقٍ الْمُعَظَّمِ
- حفظه الله ورعاه -
ولأرض عُمان وشعبها الوفي احتفاءً باليوم الوطني العُماني
المجيد سائلين المولى دوام العز والرخاء لهذا الوطن الأبي

With sincere congratulations and good wishes — and with
deep respect and loyalty — we extend our salutations to

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
— may Allah protect and guide him —
and to the noble nation of Oman on the glorious National Day.
May Almighty Allah grant this proud nation lasting peace,
prosperity and honor.









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HM CONFERS ORDERS ON OFFICIALS



HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has conferred the Royal Commendation Order (Second Class) on some judges, their excellencies and senior officials. This recognition from His Majesty is in appreciation of their efforts in performing their professional duties, and coincides with the nation's celebrations of the glorious National Day.

THE ORDERS WERE CONFERRED ON THE FOLLOWING:

Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy
Chairman of the Supreme Court

Nasr bin Khamis al Sawai
Public Prosecutor

Shaikh Al Mokhtar al Harthy
Head of the Administrative Unit at the Supreme Court

Dr Saleh bin Salim al Rahbi
Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court

Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy
Under Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani
Chairman of Dhofar Municipality

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

Jamal bin Hassan al Mousawi
Secretary General of the National Museum

Eng Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Busaidy
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Fisheries

Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage

Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy

Under Secretary of the Ministry of Finance

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education

Majid bin Said al Bahri
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs

Ahmed bin Salim al Rujibi
Deputy Chairman of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority for Audit on Government Units

Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai
Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation

Sulayem bin Ali al Hakmani
Chairman of Consumer Protection Authority

Eng Omar bin Hamdan al Ismaili
CEO of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology

Mohammed bin Said al Balushi
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Information

Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Economy

Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development

Dr Saleh bin Said Masan
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry

Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing

Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Muttawa
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Urban Planning

Khalid bin Ahmed al Saadi
Secretary General of the State Council

Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi
Governor of Al Batinah North

Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah
Chairperson of the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED)

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri
Chairman of the Environment Authority

Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy
Governor of Al Buraيمي

Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport

Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth

Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri
Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority

Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah
Chief Executive Officer of Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation

and Quality Assurance of Education

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism

Badr bin Salim al Maamari
Chairman of the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority

Ahmed al Humaidi
Chairman of Muscat Municipality

Shaikh Abdulaziz al Hinai
Ambassador at Large at the Foreign Ministry

Eng Hilal bin Mohammed al Waili
Head of Royal Cavalry, Camels, Farms and Gardens Affairs at the Royal Court Affairs

Pankaj Kanaksi Khimji
Adviser for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas
Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI

Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs

Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Sayyid Dr Munthir al Busaidy
Deputy Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow up Unit

Eng Odai bin Hilal al Maawali
Chairman of the Medical City for Military and Security Services

Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Faroojiyah
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion

Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi
Under Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs

Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi
Governor of Al Batinah South

Mahmoud bin Yahya al Thuhli
Governor of Al Sharqiyah North

Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri
Governor of Al Wusta

Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation

Sulaiman bin Nasser al Hiji
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative and Financial Affairs

Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs

Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Owaini
Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance

Khalid bin Salim al Ghammari
Under Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour

Zahra al Lawatiyah
Deputy Chairperson of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority for Audit on Authorities, Investments and Companies

The orders were presented by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, in his office.

Sayyid Khalid congratulated the judges, their excellencies and the senior officials on being honoured by His Majesty the Sultan, wishing them continued success in serving the nation. — **ONA**



OMAN

SHORT TAKES

OMAN GUEST OF HONOUR AT KUWAIT INT’L BOOK FAIR



A group of Omani private libraries and publishing houses are also participating. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will be the Guest of Honour at the 48th edition of the Kuwait International Book Fair, held under the slogan ‘Capital of Culture...Homeland of Books’. The fair takes place at the International Fair Grounds in Mishref from November 19-29.

Oman’s pavilion in the book fair comprises the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the National Records and Archives Authority, the Cultural Club, Bait Al Zubair Foundation, the Omani Society for Writers and Literati, and the Oman Memory Centre.

A group of libraries and publishing houses are also participating. The fair’s management selected Mohammed bin al Zubair as the Personality of this year’s edition. Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, emphasised that participation in the Kuwait International Book Fair is of special importance, especially as Kuwait celebrates being the Capital of Arab Culture and Media for 2025. — ONA



The operation is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman and the region. — ONA

ROYAL HOSPITAL PERFORMS REMOTE UROLOGY SURGERY

MUSCAT: The Royal Hospital, in collaboration with the Sabah Al Ahmad Center in Kuwait, performed its first remote urology surgery using the advanced Toumai surgical robot.

This medical breakthrough embodies the integration of Omani and Kuwaiti medical expertise and opens wider horizons in the field of digital medicine and smart surgery.

The operation is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman and the region. It will enable the surgical teams in the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait to perform the procedure with high precision and minimal invasiveness while achieving high safety rates and faster patient recovery. — ONA

Labour ministry launches Qudrat digital platform

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 17

Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, on Monday presided over the launch ceremony of the Qudrat digital platform, a national integrated system designed for national capacity building and talent management, aiming to achieve the strategic goal of investing in human potential.

Qadrat is part of the three pillars of the National System for Capacity Building and Talent Management programme. The other pillars are the National Strategy for Capacity Building and Talent Management, and the General Framework for Capacity Building and Talent Management.

Developed by the Ministry of Labour, Qadrat aims to coordinate and unify national programmes related to talent across various government and private sectors.



Developed by the Ministry of Labour, Qadrat aims to coordinate and unify national programmes related to talent.

It provides a comprehensive record of skills and capabilities for future business development and empowers Omani youth with a national platform to showcase their skills.

“We expect the platform to serve a wide range of Omani society, including school and university students, graduates, employees, job-seekers, entrepreneurs, experts, and retirees with more productive activities where their talents can be utilised,” said Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour

for Human Resources Development, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour.

Speaking to the Observer, Dr Zamzam bint Saif al Lamkiyah, Project Director of the National System for Capacity Building and Talent Management, said that the initiative is one of the strategic programmes of the Tenth Five-Year Plan. It falls under the priority of education, learning, scientific research, and national capabilities, driven by the belief that people are the foundation and purpose of development.

“The Qudrat digital platform aims to unify the digital identity of skills and talents across the Sultanate of Oman under one comprehensive system. It serves as a trusted national reference for individual competencies. Each individual will have a personal profile on the platform from an early age.”

Survey reveals confidence in employing nationals

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 17

UNDER the leadership of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the results of the ‘Employer Survey 2025’ conducted by the Ministry’s Department of Statistics and Information were announced on Monday. The survey aimed to study the alignment of higher education outputs with the national labour market requirements and identify the skills and competencies needed in various economic sectors.

The employer survey targeted institutions that have employed graduates from higher education institutions between 2018 and the present. The data collection period lasted approximately two consecutive months, with 4,430 establishments in the study population. Of these, 1,083 companies responded, achieving a response rate of 24.4 per cent, demonstrating good cooperation and responsibility from the private sector.

The survey aimed to enhance employment opportunities for Omani higher education graduates by providing accurate data on labour market needs and assessing the alignment of academic programmes with employer requirements. It sought to gather employers’ opinions on current and future needs, monitor recruitment, training, job satisfaction, skills acquisition, and workplace performance indicators to develop more effective policies.

Dr Rahma emphasised that the survey



The survey aimed to enhance employment opportunities for Omani higher education graduates by providing accurate data on labor market.

is a crucial compass to align educational outputs with labour market needs. It aims to expand opportunities for youth by introducing them to required specialisations and skills, including self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The Minister highlighted that 68 per cent of employers had hired Omani graduates from higher education institutions, showing growing confidence in employing national talent. Additionally, 47 per cent reported hiring graduates without prior work experience, indicating willingness to invest in training and on-the-job experience.

Despite positive indicators, challenges remain as 38 per cent of companies reported difficulties employing Omani graduates due to a lack of practical experience. However,

23 per cent of private sector institutions collaborate with higher education institutions in training, employment, and community services.

Maitha bint Dawood al Lawati, Assistant Director of the Statistics and Information Department, noted that 76 per cent of employers were satisfied with Omani graduates working in private sector institutions. Employers preferred to hire graduates in management, commerce, engineering, and information technology, with a preference for bachelor’s degree holders.

Abdullah bin Ali al Shibli, Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, emphasised the need for soft skills.

Cinema icons gather in Muscat as Gulf film fest kicks off

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, NOV 17

The Gulf Film Festival 2025 commenced on Sunday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat.

The four-day festival brings together a distinguished group of Gulf film-makers from across the GCC member states. 26 Gulf films are competing for nine awards in feature films, short films, and documentaries.

Speaking on the occasion, Ibrahim bin Saif Bani Araba, Assistant Director-General for Arts and Festival Director, said the festival embodies a clear vision aligned with the Cultural Strategy 2021-2040, which aims to strengthen Oman’s cultural leadership and

enhance its regional outreach. He explained that the festival offers a vital platform for Gulf talents to connect and exchange creative and technical expertise, showcasing the shared cultural identity of the region through the language of cinema.

The festival’s accompanying programme features a diverse range of activities and screenings, including an evening titled “From Story to Screen... Gulf Tales Inspiring Cinema,” highlighting the region’s cultural diversity and bridging traditional narratives with modern film-making.

The event gathers notable Gulf figures such as Saudi actor Abdulmohsin al Namir, Emirati writer Mohammed Hassan Ahmed, Kuwaiti Ziad Abdullah al Hussein, Bahraini writer-director Shaikha Suha al Khalifa, and Omani director



26 Gulf films are competing for nine awards in feature films, short films, and documentaries.

Mohammed al Kindi. The festival also presents a special screening of the Kuwaiti film “Buqshat Saad” directed by Mujbil al Faraj, attended by renowned actor Saad al Faraj.

Among the celebrated guests are prominent Gulf and Arab artists including Mohammed al Mansour, Huda al Khateeb, Fatima al Hosani, Bassem Yakhour, Ashraf Zaki, Rogina, Yaqoub Abdullah, Faisal al Amiri, Shaima Sabt, Ahmed Sharif, and Hussein al Haddad.

The festival also welcomes leading Omani actors who have significantly contributed to the local drama scene: Fakhriya Khamis, Saleh Zaal, Amina Abdulrasool, Talib al Balushi, Ibrahim al Zadjali, Buthaina al Raisi, Noor al Balushi, and Juma Heikal.

Syrian actor Bassem Yakhour emphasised the importance of interaction among film-makers in

both cinema and television, noting that such festivals allow creators to observe the latest trends and developments in the regional film scene. Kuwaiti actor Saad al Faraj, one of the festival’s honourees, expressed his appreciation for the warm reception and recognition he received.

Saudi actor Abdulmohsin al Namir, also among the honourees, highlighted the importance of the Gulf Film Festival in promoting healthy artistic competition and unifying creative efforts.

Omani actor Juma Heikal expressed his delight at being honoured during the Gulf Film Festival, emphasising the significant symbolic value of the recognition. He also expressed hope that he and his colleagues would continue to meet the high standards expected of such an accolade.

ANTICIPATED RULING



Security personnel stand guard as demonstrators attempt to demolish the residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in Dhaka. — AFP

BANGLADESH COURT SENTENCES EX-PM TO BE HANGED

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court sentenced ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina to be hanged for crimes against humanity, with cheers breaking out in the packed court as the judge read out the verdict. Hasina, 78, defied court orders that she return from India to attend her trial about whether she ordered a deadly crackdown against a student-led uprising last year that eventually ousted her.

The highly anticipated ruling, which was broadcast live on national television, came less than three months before the first polls in the South Asian country of 170 million people since her overthrow in August 2024. “All the... elements constituting crimes against humanity have been fulfilled,” judge Golam Mortuza Mozumder read to the court in Dhaka.

The former leader was found guilty on three counts: incitement, order to kill, and inaction to prevent the atrocities, the judge said. “We have decided to inflict her with only one sentence — that is, sentence of death.” Crowds waved the national flag and celebrated on the streets of the capital. Former interior minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal was also sentenced to death in absentia after being found guilty on four counts of crimes against humanity. Ex-police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun, who was in court and had pleaded guilty, was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment.

Hasina, who was assigned a state-appointed lawyer for the trial, called the verdict “biased and politically motivated” in a statement issued from hiding in India. “Its guilty verdict against me was a foregone conclusion,” Hasina said. She can appeal against her sentence — if she is arrested or surrenders, her defence lawyer Md Amir Hossain said. Shamsi Ara Zaman, whose photojournalist son Tahir Zaman Priyo was killed during last year’s protests, said she was “satisfied” with the death sentences but “dismayed” that the ex-police chief was given only five years in jail.

Bangladesh has been in political turmoil since the end of Hasina’s autocratic rule, and violence has marred campaigning for elections expected in February 2026. The United Nations says up to 1,400 people were killed in crackdowns as Hasina tried to cling to power, deaths that were central to her trial.

Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman said the trial “pays the dues to the martyrs”, while interim leader Muhammad Yunus called it an “historic verdict”. The trial heard months of testimony detailing how Hasina had ordered mass killings. Hasina was backed by New Delhi, fraying relations between the two neighbours since her overthrow, and Bangladesh reiterated its call for India to extradite her.

India’s foreign ministry said that it had “noted” the verdict, adding it was “committed to the best interests of the people of Bangladesh”. It did not comment immediately on Bangladesh’s extradition request.

Security forces surrounded the court for the verdict, with armoured vehicles guarding checkpoints and thousands of police officers posted across the capital. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA PROPOSES FIRST MILITARY TALKS WITH NORTH IN YEARS

SEOUL: South Korea proposed talks with Pyongyang to avoid border clashes, the first such offer in seven years as Seoul seeks to ease military tensions with the nuclear-armed North. Citing recent incursions by North Korean troops, Kim Hong-cheol, deputy minister for national defence policy, told a news briefing that military-to-military channels can help avert an escalation. “To prevent accidental clashes and ease military tensions, our military officially proposes that the two sides

hold inter-Korean military talks to discuss the establishment of a clear reference line for the MDL,” he said, referring to the military demarcation line on the border. Seoul and Pyongyang technically remain at war as the 1953 Armistice Agreement that halted the conflict between them was never followed by a peace treaty. The MDL lies inside the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), a four-kilometre-wide buffer zone that runs for 250 kilometres across the Korean peninsula. Kim said

there had been repeated crossings of the demarcation line by North Korean soldiers “while installing tactical roads, fences, and laying mines”. South Korean troops fired warning shots and issued broadcasts to encourage the North Koreans to retreat, he said. The proposed military talks follow South Korean President Lee Jae Myung’s offer of broader discussions with the North, a reversal from the stance taken by his conservative predecessor. — AFP

Macron, Zelensky sign accord to buy fighter jets

FRANCE’S President Emmanuel Macron and Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky signed an accord for Kyiv to acquire up to 100 Rafale fighter jets and other hardware, a boost for Ukraine as it fights the Russian attack. The letter of intent inked by the two leaders sets out possible future contracts for Ukraine to acquire 100 Rafale fighter jets “with their associated weapons”, the French presidency said. It also lays out deals for the new generation SAMP-T air defence systems which are under development, radar systems and drones.

The accord signed at France’s Villacoublay air base is not a purchase and sales contract and is projected to be realised “over a timeframe of about 10 years”, the presidency added. Zelensky, who has suffered setbacks over the last week due to a corruption scandal at home and Russian forces closing in on the Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk, wrote on X ahead of meeting Macron that the accord would be a “historic deal”. “A great day,” Macron wrote in a brief post on X in French and Ukrainian over a picture of the deal being signed.

The aim is to “enable it (Kyiv) to acquire the systems it needs to respond to Russian aggression”, added a French presidential official, asking not to be named. The Ukrainian president had already signed a letter of intent last month to acquire 100 to 150 Swedish Gripen fighter jets. France has delivered Mirage fighter jets to Kyiv, but until now there had been no talk



France’s President Emmanuel Macron (R) and Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky shake hands, at the Elysee presidential Palace in Paris. — AFP

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of Ukraine acquiring the Rafale, the crown jewel of French combat aviation.

The visit by Zelensky to France is his ninth since Russia launched its full-scale attack of Ukraine in February 2022. It comes ahead of what analysts predict will be a tough winter for Kyiv as Moscow presses on the battlefield. Overnight, Russian strikes killed three people in a city in Ukraine’s eastern Kharkiv region, its military administration chief said. Seven people were killed after Russia struck apartment blocks across the capital Kyiv.

The Russian army seized three more villages across eastern Ukraine, the defence ministry in

Moscow said on Monday, the latest in its grinding advance.

Efforts by US President Donald Trump to force a peace deal have stalled as Moscow has rejected calls for a ceasefire and refused to drop hardline territorial demands. Zelensky at the weekend announced an overhaul of state-owned energy companies after a corruption scandal, ordering two ministers to resign and sanctioning a former business partner who was named as its mastermind.

France’s Europe Minister Benjamin Haddad said in a television interview on Saturday that governments had to be “extraordinarily vigilant” about corruption as Ukraine presses its case to join the European Union. Zelensky’s visit is part of a brief tour of his western allies that saw him seal an energy deal with Greece on Sunday, and will include a visit to Spain on Tuesday.

Macron and Zelensky also visited the headquarters of a Ukraine multinational force that France and Britain are preparing in the event an international force is deployed in Ukraine after any ceasefire. The headquarters at Mont Valerien, west of Paris, is where countries from the “coalition of the willing” organised by France and Britain have sent officers to prepare the force. France says that 34 countries and Ukraine have already offered to take part.

Meanwhile, Ukraine needs more than 70 billion euro in extra financial assistance to defend itself and keep the government running in 2026 as Russia’s war drags on, the EU said. — AFP

SUSPICIOUS FLIGHTS TO CLEANSE PALESTINIANS

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa said the surprise arrival of 153 Palestinians on a plane last week indicated “a clear agenda to cleanse Palestinians” out of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The group landed in Johannesburg on a chartered flight on Thursday without departure stamps from Israel in their passports. Reports said a shadowy organisation named Al-Majd was involved in their travel from Gaza.

“We are suspicious, as the South African government, about the circumstances surrounding the arrival of the plane,” Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola told reporters. South African border police kept the group on the plane for 12 hours before President Cyril Ramaphosa allowed them entry on a standard 90-day visa exemption. It emerged later that a first plane carrying 176 Palestinians had arrived on October 28, according to the local Gift of the Givers charity that is assisting the arrivals. “We do not want any further flights to come our way because this is a clear agenda to cleanse out Palestinians out of Gaza and the West Bank and those areas, which South Africa is against,” Lamola said. — AFP

EXPLOSION DAMAGE

Polish PM denounces ‘sabotage’ of railway



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said that an explosion which damaged a railway line to its close ally Ukraine was an “unprecedented act of sabotage”. The damage directly targeted “the security of the Polish state and its civilians,” Tusk said. The explosion was on the rail link running from Warsaw to Lublin and connects to a line serving Ukraine. “This route is also crucially important for delivering aid to Ukraine,” he added. — AFP

BANDITS ACTS

Gunmen kidnap 25 schoolgirls in Nigeria



Gunmen from a criminal gang kidnapped 25 people and killed a staff member in a raid on a northwestern Nigerian girls’ secondary school. Police said the gang armed with “sophisticated weapons, shooting sporadically, stormed the Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School” in Kebbi state. Police were deployed but “unfortunately, the suspected bandits had already abducted twenty-five students from their hostel to unknown destination.” — AFP

ROAD TRAGEDY

Pilgrim bus crash in Saudi Arabia’s kills 45



A fatal accident involving a bus filled with Indian pilgrims killed at least 45 people near Saudi Arabia’s holy city of Medina, one of the deadliest crashes in the Gulf kingdom in years. “The tragic bus accident involving Indian pilgrims in Saudi Arabia is deeply distressing,” V.C. Sajjanar, police commissioner for the city of Hyderabad, where many of the Indian citizens were reported to have come from, told reporters. — AFP

OPINION

National Day – a celebration of vision and progress



AS NATIONAL Day approaches, the excitement is not only for the long weekend holidays that accompany the celebrations but also for the opportunity to reflect on the Sultanate of Oman's achievements over the past decades.

Marked on November 20 each year commemorating the founding of the Al Busaid State in 1744, this date marks a pivotal moment in Omani history, establishing national unity and sovereignty that continues to shape the nation's identity and progress.

The Al Busaid State has an enduring legacy of 281 years. The establishment of the Al Busaid State was crucial for unifying the Omani nation and delineating its national sovereignty and the significance of November 20 as National Day was officially declared by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in January, on the anniversary of his assumption of power. He emphasised that this day honours the ancestors and commemorates a glorious period in Oman's history, recognising continuous service to the nation since 1744.

Under the current leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, Oman has entered a new phase of Renewed Renaissance since 2020. This period focuses on deep administrative and economic reforms, modernising government, and implementing Oman Vision 2040. The vision aims to diversify income sources away from oil, develop vital sectors like tourism, logistics, and manufacturing and empower youth.

Oman's maritime heritage has also played

a significant role in its history and continues to do so. The nation's geographical position, with the sea before it and mountains and desert behind, led Omanis to become skilled seafarers and traders. This legacy is maintained today through initiatives like the vessel 'Shabab Oman II', which sails the world carrying Oman's message of peace and harmony. The enduring bond between the Omani people and the Al Busaid State leadership, characterised by mutual loyalty and cohesion, has been crucial in overcoming national challenges. This relationship is reinforced by the leadership's commitment to direct communication with citizens through public councils and periodic meetings. National days like November 20th play a vital role in rooting national identity and fostering a sense of belonging and unity among the Omani people, reminding generations of their achievements and contributions.

The role of visionary leadership is also evident in Oman's early embrace of responsible development and deployment of AI technologies. Policies have been put in place to ensure the secure and ethical use of AI while encouraging innovation and boosting competitiveness.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO), in its recent Annual Report, highlighted that despite several external challenges, the economy delivered strong growth in 2024, driven by the Government's reform agenda and the continued expansion of the non-hydrocarbon sector.

Inflation remained low, supported by

The enduring bond between the Omani people and the Al Busaid State leadership, characterised by mutual loyalty and cohesion, has been crucial in overcoming national challenges

sound monetary and fiscal policies. Fiscal and external balances posted surpluses in 2024, and public debt continued its declining path. Oman's sovereign credit rating was upgraded to investment grade, and the banking sector remained highly liquid and well capitalised. Oman's economy performed strongly in 2024, expanding by 1.6 per cent compared to 1.4 per cent in 2023, supported by higher non-hydrocarbon activity and effective policy reforms. Non-hydrocarbon GDP grew by 3.5 per cent, reflecting robust gains in manufacturing, services, and logistics. A strong Omani Rial, combined with administrative and fiscal measures, helped contain inflation, which remains among the lowest in the region due to prudent economic management. Financial transactions conducted through digital channels in the Oman now account for 87 per cent of all executed transactions, thanks to the widespread availability of electronic payment options across all commercial activities and several directives aimed at limiting cash usage in certain sectors. Launched in 2023, the Social Protection Fund (SPF) now has over 1.54 million beneficiaries, including children, persons with disabilities, widows, and orphans. These figures reflect progress in service quality, human resource development and contribution management.

And on a lighter note, let us not forget the achievements at the highest levels of the Oman national football team and the cricket team, which continue to bring pride and joy to the nation.

BBC caught in crossfire of polarised political and media landscape

MARIE HEUCLIN

Accused of being biased by some, defended as a champion of impartiality by others, the BBC is once again the subject of a thorny debate about the role of a publicly funded broadcaster in an increasingly polarised landscape.

The BBC is regularly used as political football, with the organisation facing flak for how it chooses to cover issues from climate change to Brexit.

Now it is under greater scrutiny than ever before, following the revelation that a documentary it aired last year misleadingly edited a speech by US President Donald Trump.

Trump has issued an unprecedented threat to sue over the documentary, which was broadcast before the US presidential ballot and examined why US voters were prepared to re-elect a convicted felon. In the former constituency of ex-prime minister Boris Johnson, a vocal critic of the BBC, one pensioner questioned by AFP appeared torn between her attachment to the BBC and its struggles sometimes to fulfil its public service duty when it comes to the news.

"I don't want to get rid of the BBC... but I think they have been biased on a lot of things," said Sandra Madden, a resident of Uxbridge, west London.

It showed that the BBC was "too left-wing", she concluded. The public broadcaster nevertheless remains the most popular UK news source, according to the latest figures published by media watchdog Ofcom.

Around half of Britons have a positive opinion of the BBC, compared to 29 per cent who hold a negative view, according to a YouGov poll published this week. While 31 per cent said it was too left-wing, 19 per cent said it was too right-wing. BBC chairman Samir Shah this week defended the organisation's "sacred job" of upholding impartiality and the truth. On hot-button issues like immigration, Gaza or the rise of the far-right, the BBC finds itself caught in the crossfire of different ideological camps.

The BBC "has been weaponised by people who want to use it as an example (in their view) of the world going too far in one direction", said Lee Edwards, professor at the Department of Media and Communications at London School of Economics (LSE). — AFP

Strides of progress: Oman has much to celebrate

TODAY,

Omanis have much to be proud of, as the country makes significant strides in legislation, national planning, and social recognition. From legal reforms to ambitious development plans, social welfare initiatives, and the celebration of women's contributions, Oman continues to define a future that is inclusive, forward-thinking, and deeply rooted in its cultural identity. One of the most significant milestones for Oman this year is the introduction of the new disability law. This legislation marks a critical step toward ensuring equality and inclusion for all members of society.

For decades, individuals with disabilities in Oman, like in many other countries, have faced barriers to education, employment, and social participation. The new law, however, demonstrates the government's commitment to removing these barriers and creating a society in which every individual can contribute fully. By codifying rights, protections, and access to essential services, the law not only empowers people with disabilities but also sends a message about Oman's dedication to social justice and human dignity. It reflects a modern understanding of citizenship, one that values all voices and abilities as vital to the nation's progress.

Equally notable is the progress of Oman Vision 2040, the country's long-term development blueprint. A recent report highlighted



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Taken together, these events—legal reform for people with disabilities, substantial progress on Oman Vision 2040, implementation of the social welfare programme, and the celebration of women—paint a picture of a nation in motion

that Oman Oman Vision 2040 is now 75 per cent complete, a remarkable achievement that underscores Oman's steady and focused approach to national planning. Oman Vision 2040 is not simply about economic growth; it is a holistic framework aimed at fostering sustainable development, improving quality of life, and positioning Oman as a hub of innovation, education, and cultural pride. The completion of three-quarters of this ambitious plan signals not only administrative efficiency but also the resilience and determination of the Omani people. From infrastructure development to healthcare expansion and environmental conservation, Oman Vision 2040 reflects a forward-looking society that carefully balances modern aspirations with traditional values.

Social welfare in Oman has also seen significant advancement through programmes implemented in recent years. These initiatives, designed to support families, vulnerable groups, and citizens in need, exemplify the government's commitment to social protection and equity. From financial assistance to healthcare support and community services, the welfare programme strengthens the social fabric by ensuring that no Omani is left behind. It complements legislative reforms and development goals by addressing everyday challenges faced by citizens, making social justice and well-being central to national priorities.

In addition to legislative,

developmental, and social welfare achievements, Oman has recently celebrated Omani Women's Day, an occasion that highlights the indispensable role of women in all aspects of national life. Women in Oman have been at the forefront of education, healthcare, business, and public service, and their contributions continue to shape the country's future. Celebrating Omani women is more than a symbolic gesture; it is an acknowledgment of their agency, talent, and commitment.

The celebration also serves to inspire the younger generation, encouraging both girls and boys to recognise the power of equality, opportunity, and shared responsibility in building a strong, dynamic society. Taken together, these events—legal reform for people with disabilities, substantial progress on Oman Vision 2040, implementation of the social welfare programme, and the celebration of women—paint a picture of a nation in motion. Oman today is not content with resting on its historical achievements; it actively seeks to improve the lives of its citizens while honouring its cultural and social heritage.

The synergy between inclusion, development, and recognition of individual contributions reflects a country that is increasingly confident in its ability to embrace change while preserving identity. A country that is not only modern and ambitious but also compassionate and inclusive, making today a moment of pride for every Omani. Indeed, Oman has much to celebrate.

The celebration of history...



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

It is that time of the year we see the buildings adorned with lights of national colours. This week the tallest flagpole became a screen of national spirit.

This year is also the first time the celebration will be on November 20 marking the beginning of Al Busaid State. It was founded by Ahmad bin Said al Busaidi on November 20, 1744. Read through the history, and one can recognise the places of historical importance that are now considered tourist destinations.

In history, the four variables that are critical are individuals, society, place, and time.

Each family has its own history. And you can see the effect of the history on its present and future. The importance of history is distinct because it creates identity. Knowing history develops critical thinking while helping to preserving heritage. It also gives an insight into political, economic, social, and cultural history. That is what makes history so intriguing.

History is not just meant for classrooms and museums, but it is to be part of history, arts, and conversations.

There are different ways history can be preserved. From a journalistic perspective, today's breaking news invariably becomes part of tomorrow's narration of history. November 20, 2025, is a date that will be etched once again in the modern history of Oman as the renaissance continues under

the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, with the focus on long-term financial stability, governance, green energy, diversification of the economy by strategising in renewable energy, technology, tourism, logistics, supporting small and medium enterprises, and moving towards a circular economy while fostering innovation and adaptability.

Today we have photos, audio and video recordings, and digital archives. They all serve as verifiable records of public life.

Documentary films, narrative podcasts, and print features offer, context, analysis, and storytelling that preserve not only facts but also the human meaning behind events, making complex historical moments relatable, understandable, and memorable.

Interviews by journalists can be considered oral history projects. Profiles of ordinary people can become part of community memories and recordings of which can be preserved voices and perspectives. If not recorded, these could be lost forever. If preserved, the collection becomes part of the collective memory of a society.

What is important is to avoid sensationalism, and what is required is a balanced analysis.

Oman's National Records and Archives Authority collects, preserves, and protects national documents while organising the government archives to ensure their validity for future generations. It works to document

Each family has its own history. And you can see the effect of history on its present and future. The importance of history is distinct because it creates identity. Knowing history develops critical thinking while helping in preserving heritage

the history and cultural heritage of the Sultanate of Oman and provide research and documentation services to government entities and individuals.

Today digital writings such as blogs are part of online archives. Before writing, societies preserved history through storytelling. The beauty is that this can be experienced in Oman even today in the digital world. At a recent event in a mall celebrating the national spirit, in came an Omani folklore band, mesmerising everyone.

One can experience history through folktales and myths, songs and chants, proverbs and poems, as well as narratives by elders.

An interesting entity is the Oman Centre for Traditional Music. The centre's work includes collecting and documenting music, preserving historical songs and dances, and organising activities and workshops to promote and discover new talent.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in May 2024 issued a Royal Decree transferring the Oman Centre for Traditional Music from the Diwan of Royal Court to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Poetry is an essential part of Ar Razah, Al Masbaa, Al Taghroud, Al Midan and Al Tashahshah. The centre ensures there is a continuity in the knowledge and performance of the folk art forms, which is another way of preserving history.

So go ahead and enjoy, as history is being made.

UKRAINE FIGHTS FOR MONEY, REFORM TO SURVIVE ‘WAR’

PETER APPS

Ever since mid-2024, residents and Ukrainian officials have been stripping everything of value from the frontline town of Pokrovsk: library books, hospital beds, industrial equipment, everything that once supported a bustling settlement of more than 60,000 people at the heart of Ukraine's eastern, mainly Russian-speaking Donbas region.

This week, with thick fog apparently frustrating Ukraine's efforts to use unmanned drones to slow the advance of Russian forces, pro-Kremlin social media feeds showed what appeared to be several hundred-strong Kremlin forces entering the town, many on motorcycles and in battered trucks.

For President Volodymyr Zelensky's government, the likely fall of the first major Ukrainian city since nearby Bakhmut in 2023 comes at a challenging time, as winter looms and Russian missiles and drones once again target Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

It is not all bad news for Kyiv. This year has seen Ukraine's economy exceed its pre-war size despite its loss of territory and significant contraction in almost every area of the economy and industry outside the defence sector.

For now, though, with Russia advancing - albeit very slowly, and with enormous casualties - few see much prospect of a peace deal before the fourth anniversary of full-scale war comes round in February 2026. If anything, both sides seem to be attempting to prepare their citizens and economies for perhaps years more of "forever war".

Zelensky's government is also facing rising domestic political headwinds, including a still growing corruption crisis, an ongoing backlash over mass conscription, and — perhaps most significant of all — a massive budget shortfall of tens of billions of dollars over the next few years.

"If the war ends in a month, we will spend this money on recovery," Zelensky said two weeks ago as he argued that without further financial support, his nation could not endure.

"If it does not end, then we will spend it on weapons. We simply have no choice," he said.

Against that backdrop, Ukraine is hoping to retool its military to allow some of those who have spent the war so far in combat to re-enter the mainstream economy, while expanding its weapons manufacturing not only to defend itself for the duration of the conflict but to become a major player in the rearmament of Europe when the war finally ends.

Whether European governments would truly welcome that competition is another question.

With Russia's economy, political and media establishment now firmly reoriented behind ongoing war, eastern and central European nations are very worried any ceasefire in Ukraine might simply open the door to further Russian military rebuilding as a precursor to an attack against one or more eastern Nato nations. — AFP

The key to unlocking private climate finance

THE United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30), now underway in Brazil, marks a decade since 195 parties adopted the landmark Paris climate agreement at COP21. But what should be a moment of celebration is instead being overshadowed by rising uncertainty: the climate-finance gap still amounts to trillions of dollars, while support among the developed countries for climate action is fracturing.

The transition to a low-carbon global economy cannot succeed without the active participation of the private sector, yet businesses and investors are reluctant to commit funds amid uncertainty and instability. Above all, markets need predictability: coherent policy frameworks, clearly defined priority sectors, and practical strategies for managing the financial, environmental, and social risks.

The predictability and stability that investors and markets require, however, remain out of reach. The International Energy Agency has warned that policy uncertainty has stalled the development and usage of many promising clean-energy technologies that are ripe for scaling up. Excluding AI, venture-capital funding for energy innovation declined across sectors in 2023 and 2024. Meanwhile, most countries still lack the policy and investment mechanisms needed to mobilise private capital at scale.

While tighter financial conditions and policy uncertainty play a major role, they are only part of the problem. A deeper, often overlooked reason for the slow pace of progress is that the global climate movement has largely failed to focus on the people most affected by the energy transition: workers, consumers, and local communities. From its very inception, the Council for Inclusive Capitalism (which I lead) has argued that major economic transitions provide companies and investors with a unique opportunity to build a more inclusive society. Inspired by the late Pope Francis's call to



The transition to a low-carbon global economy cannot succeed without the active participation of the private sector.



LYNN FORESTER DE ROTHSCILD

The writer is Founder and CEO of the Council for Inclusive Capitalism

"hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor," we established a partnership with energy-intensive companies and investors to develop a framework for a just climate transition.

Created in collaboration with BP, Reliance, the California Public Employees' Retirement System, State Street, and others, this framework places people at the heart of the energy transition. It emphasises universal access to clean energy, decent jobs that provide pathways for retraining and reskilling, support for local communities, and the need to strengthen supply chains. It also recognises that investors' capital-allocation strategies must align with these priorities through meaningful stakeholder engagement and sharing of best practices.

Together with the energy transition, the AI revolution is set to reshape labour markets. To this end, we co-hosted a meeting with World Bank President Ajay Banga at the recent UN Climate Week in New York to discuss how to learn from the mistakes of past transitions and ensure that no one is left behind.

Turning ambition into action requires achievable national

strategies. When implemented effectively, nationally determined contributions can serve as more than just climate pledges – they can guide investment and act as road maps for economic transformation. Brazil provides a useful model: a joint report by the OECD and the UN Development Programme touts the country's National Bank for Economic and Social Development as a leader in creating innovative financial instruments capable of attracting private capital at scale.

Other emerging markets are also making strides. Wind and solar power are expanding rapidly across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, with India on track to become the world's second-largest renewable-energy market after China. For developing countries, inclusive growth is not a slogan but a socioeconomic imperative, particularly when it comes to ensuring access to energy and critical infrastructure. The dozens of world leaders in Brazil for COP30 are meeting at a critical juncture. To build a just and sustainable future, we must bridge the divide between governments, financial institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

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SPORTS

ARAB CUP



The encounter will mark Oman’s second warm-up match in the underway domestic camp, following their convincing 2-0 win over Sudan last Friday at the same venue.

RED WARRIORS SET FOR MAJOR WARM-UP TEST AGAINST IVORY COAST TODAY

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 17

The Oman’s national football team will face one of their toughest challenges in the current preparation phase when they will meet Ivory Coast (Côte d’Ivoire) on Tuesday at the Seeb Stadium. The highly anticipated friendly match will begin at 7 pm and is expected to provide valuable insight into the Red Warriors’ readiness ahead of their decisive Fifa Arab Cup Qatar 2025 qualifier against Somalia on November 26.

The encounter will mark Oman’s second warm-up match in the underway domestic camp, following their convincing 2-0 win over Sudan last Friday at the same venue. That victory offered head coach Carlos Queiroz and his technical staff a positive start, but Tuesday’s clash will present a significantly more demanding test. Côte d’Ivoire, ranked 42nd in the October Fifa World Ranking, recently secured qualification to the Fifa World Cup 2026, highlighting their current strength and form on the international stage.

Coach Queiroz emphasised during recent training sessions the need to sharpen both defensive structure and attacking transitions. The Portuguese tactician focused on refining tactical movement, pressing patterns, and quick offensive buildup, all of which will be thoroughly examined against the speed, power, and discipline of the African champions.

The match is expected to serve as a key evaluation platform for the coaching staff, especially as they seek to finalise the squad composition and tactical approach for the upcoming essential encounter with Somalia. With Oman looking to secure a place in the Arab Cup’s group stage, facing an elite side such as Côte d’Ivoire offers the perfect environment to test the team’s resilience, adaptability, and overall readiness.

According to team insiders, Queiroz is likely to rotate the squad and hand opportunities to players who did not feature in the Sudan match. These include goalkeepers Fayez al Rushaidi and Ibrahim al Mukhaini, along with seasoned full-back Ali al Busaidy and midfielder Abdullah Fawaz, who has been training individually in recent days before rejoining group sessions. Their inclusion is expected to widen the competition within the squad and provide the coaching staff with a broader assessment of available options.

The match will also serve as a platform for Queiroz to implement specific tactical variations tailored for high-level opposition. The latest training sessions have indicated emphasis on compact defensive organisation, rapid counterattacks, and situational high pressing elements that will be crucial when facing physically strong and technically gifted opponents.



The match will also serve as a platform for Queiroz to implement specific tactical variations tailored for high-level opposition.

Snooker World Cup enters knockout stages in Muscat

O m a n p l a y e r s b o w o u t o f s i n g l e s e v e n t

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 17

ALL eyes turn on Tuesday to the Active Oman Centre at the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), where the singles category of the World Cup of Snooker enters its decisive phase with the Round of 32, Round of 16 and quarterfinal matches. The global tournament, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman until November 23, is witnessing intense competition among the world’s top players, while Muscat continues to receive wide praise from participants for its exceptional organisation and outstanding facilities prepared to host an event of this scale.

The second day of the IBSF Oman World Cup of Snooker witnessed another round of intense group-stage action, as players continued their push towards the knockout rounds. Qatar’s Ali al Obaidli defeated Oman’s Abdullah al Raisi 3–1, while Malaysia’s Thor Chuan Leong overcame Afghanistan’s Mohammad Noor Zai. In Group E, Iran’s Siyavosh Mozayani secured a narrow 3–2 win over Afghanistan’s Mohammad Rais Senzahi and Australia’s Hassan Kerdee beat Oman’s Ahmed al Khusaibi 3–0.

Hong Kong’s Chau Hon Man continued his strong performance with a 3–0 victory over Bahrain’s Khalil Busaif, while Poland’s Sebastian Milewski defeated Oman’s Sadiq al Farsi 3–1. China’s Deng Haohui beat Afghanistan’s Mohammad Zarif Afzali and Egypt’s Hesham Shawky won 3–0 against Oman’s Musallam al Masahli.

Additional results saw Poland’s Michal Szubarczyk, Australia’s Chi Kin Yeung, India’s Brijesh Damani, Bahrain’s Habib Sabah and India’s Hussain Khan all claim important wins. In Group L, UAE’s Mohamed Shehab defeated Iraq’s Ali Hussein, while Egypt’s Mina Awadi edged France’s Gauvain Bazin 3–2.

India’s Pankaj Advani and Hong Kong China’s Chang Yu Kiu also secured



Oman player Husain al Lawati voiced his pride in the Oman’s hosting of a global tournament of this scale.

straight-frame victories.

Elsewhere, Iran’s Ali Gharahgozlou, Qatar’s Ahmed Saif, UAE’s Khalid Kamali, Australia’s Adrian Ridley, Pakistan’s Muhammad Asif and India’s Aditya Mehta all continued their winning momentum. Hong Kong’s Nansen Wan, Ukraine’s Mykhailo Larkov, Iran’s Amir Sarkhosh and Türkiye’s Enes Bakirci wrapped up the day with solid performances in their respective groups.

GREAT ADMIRATION

Hong Kong’s Chang Yu Kiu expressed his great admiration for the event’s setup, noting that the championship is held in a modern venue that offers comfortable playing conditions and professional table and lighting standards. He added that the smooth logistics and punctual transportation help players perform at their best, affirming his ambition to compete for the title.

Oman’s Husain al Lawati voiced his

pride in the Sultanate of Oman’s hosting of a global tournament of this scale, emphasising that the hall, facilities, and organisation match the standards of top international events. He highlighted that direct competition with world-class players offers Omani players an invaluable opportunity to develop their skills.

Mohammed Mostafa Shehab, UAE national team player, praised the exceptional and fully integrated organisation of the tournament in Muscat, noting the high-quality tables, facilities and professional hosting standards. Shehab enters the tournament with strong ambitions, backed by an impressive career that includes a world title and three semifinal runs. He confirmed that his goal this year is to win the championship.

Shehab added that this edition is among the strongest, featuring nearly 16 serious title contenders, far more than previous editions, where only two or three players were favourites.

Al Wahibi’s camels lead RCC purchases on second day

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 17

Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahibi secured the highest share of acquisitions, with three of his camels, ‘Minsa’, ‘Adab’ and ‘Shawahen’, being purchased by the Royal Camel Corps (RCC) after winning the top spot in the first three rounds of the Valuation Rounds at Al Felaij Track on Monday. ‘Zafah’, owned by Saif bin Said al Wahibi, was also select for purchase after delivering a strong performance and finished runner-up in the first round. ‘Hamloulah’, owned by Ali bin Abdullah al Balushi, joined the acquired list by the RCC after claiming second position in the second round.

The five days race is being organised by the Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF) in cooperation with Royal Camel Crobs (RCC) as part of the fourth race of the 2025–26 camel racing season.

Strong performances marked the second day with 13 rounds at Al Felaij Track in the Wilayat of Barka, as the Hagayeg category, two years old, ran over a distance of 4 km. The



Al Nashmi owned by Hamad bin Khadim al Zurai.

— Hamood al Ghafili

event was launched on Sunday with 28 rounds for same category over 3 km.

Monday’s programme also featured races with human riders over 2 km, adding further excitement to the morning session.

The competitions will continue on November 18 with 15 rounds for the Lagaya

category, three years old, over a distance of 5 km, during which the RCC will select the top three camels for purchase.

In addition, five rounds will be held for the Elythaa category, four years old, with the top two camels to be purchased by the RCC.

On November 19, the Elythaa category, four years old, will headline the programme with 13 rounds, including six rounds over 6 km and seven rounds over 5 km.

The final day on November 20 will feature six rounds for the Thanaya category, five years old, followed by six rounds for the Al Hawl category, six years and above, all contested over 6 km.

STANDOUT PERFORMER

The race also include qualifying some top camels to the final race, HM’s Cup, which will be held at the end of the race season.

Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahibi, standout performer of the second day after selling three camels to the Royal Camel Corps, expressed his gratitude for the strong results, saying: “We thank God for this

remarkable success. These camels are among our finest and most unique bloodlines, and today they performed at their absolute best. This race brings us great joy, especially with winning three icons. These camels have achieved notable victories in Oman and in the GCC, as and they are home-bred.”

Al Felaij Track Results- Hagayeg category – 4 km (Read as round number, camel, owner)

1. Minsa, Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahibi;
2. Adab, Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahibi;
3. Shawahin, Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahibi;
4. Al Ain, Said bin Amer al Mughairi;
5. Al Dheebah, Saleh bin Hamad al Maharbi;
6. Harbah, Ahmed bin Sultan al Ghafili
7. Al Dheebah, Said bin Salim al Jadili;
8. Makarim, Ali bin Mohammed al Wahibi;
9. Fakhr, Ahmed bin Mohammed al Darai;
10. Shawahin, Jumah bin Ali al Rubie;
11. Al Shaybah, Abdullah bin Al Abdan al Maliki;
12. Al Fayidhah, Hamad bin Ali al Wahibi;
13. Haqqwah, Hamad bin Shteif al Wahibi;
- Human rider races over 2 km:**
14. Al Rawdah, Amer al Zurai;
15. Takreem, Mohammed al Jaradi;
16. Al Nashmi, Hamad al Zurai

MOBILITY WORKSHOP



FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem met with officials of the automobile clubs from across the Mena region during the workshop in Muscat.

FIA CHIEF BEN SULAYEM CHAMPIONS MOBILITY INNOVATION AND SAFETY

MUSCAT: The Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) is stepping up efforts to save lives on roads across the Mena region, and modernise transport services, two key issues highlighted at a regional workshop that concluded in Muscat on Monday.

The FIA, the global governing body for motor sport and the federation for mobility organisations worldwide, hosted the event alongside the FIA Mena Mobility Council and Oman Automobile Association (OAA), bringing together automobile clubs from across the region.

FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem, who holds a close affinity with the Sultanate of Oman due to the prominent part it played in his rally career, attended the workshop, and also met with Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

They discussed opportunities for collaboration to further enhance Oman's leadership in smart and sustainable mobility, including the development of advanced transport infrastructure, digital licensing systems, and initiatives to promote road safety and innovation across the wider region.

The workshop was held to share knowledge and innovation, and advance the modernisation of key international mobility services.

These included the International Driving Permit (IDP) and Carnet de Passages en Douane (CPD) systems. Discussions centred on digitalisation, road safety, and innovation in mobility and tourism, highlighting the region's growing role in shaping the future of safe and sustainable mobility. The event also spotlighted several new FIA mobility services introduced in the region, including the FIA Road Safety Index, the FIA Driver Safety Index, and the Safe Mobility 4 All & 4 Life programme, each designed to enhance capacity, strengthen collaboration, and deliver data-driven improvements in safety and accessibility.

Ben Sulayem said: "This region is home to some of the fastest-growing mobility ecosystems in the world. This workshop is about working together to harness innovation, digitalisation, and shared expertise to deliver safer and more accessible mobility for all. Collaboration between our Member Clubs and government authorities is essential as we modernise services and strengthen our regional capabilities."

Launched at last month's FIA Asia Pacific Congress in Thailand, the FIA Driver Safety Index (DSI) is a subscription-based Software as a Service (SaaS) solution which empowers public and private organisations to measure and compare driver risk in a universal, reliable and actionable way.



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy after winning the final of ATP Finals against Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in Turin, Italy. — Reuters

Sinner sees off Alcaraz to retain ATP Finals crown

JANNIK SINNER ended a turbulent season in the best possible fashion on Sunday after seeing off Carlos Alcaraz in straight sets, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5, to retain his ATP Finals title in front of delighted fans in Turin.

Italian Sinner brought the house down by winning the championship match tennis fans wanted to see, adding the prestigious year-ending tournament to the Australian Open and a landmark triumph at Wimbledon this season.

The 24-year-old also bounced back from a three-month ban which chopped out a large chunk of his season despite the World Anti-Doping Agency accepting that the Italian was accidentally contaminated with banned substance clostebol last year.

"It has been a really long week... it was a brilliant atmosphere here, it was almost like being at a football match," said Sinner on court to loud cheers. "I'm really happy to have given something positive to all of you." Sinner has now won 31



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy after winning the final as Spain's Carlos Alcaraz poses with the runners-up trophy. — Reuters

ALCARAZ FORCED ONLY BREAK POINT IN FIRST SET

SINNER WINS TIE-BREAK AND BREAKS IN FINAL GAME OF SECOND SET

straight matches on indoor hard courts, a run which stretches back to the 2023 championship match at Turin's Inalpi Arena which he lost to Novak Djokovic.

Four more indoor wins would draw him level with Djokovic's tally set between 2012 and 2015 – the second-highest in the Open era but some way behind John McEnroe's record of 47.

He hasn't dropped a set at the Finals since losing that final to the Serb two years ago, and he was imperious over the week in

northern Italy.

Alcaraz, unlike Sinner, now heads into the Davis Cup after a remarkable individual season in which has won eight tournaments in total and taken his Grand Slam tally to six. Spaniard Alcaraz had the edge over Sinner over the course of the season, winning four of their six match-ups, which all decided top-level tournaments, and pipping his rival to the year-end world number one spot. "I'm really really happy with the level that I played today, with the performance," said Alcaraz.

"I mean I just played against someone that hasn't lost a match indoor for two years now, so that means you know how great player you are," Alcaraz told Sinner.

Sinner hadn't dropped a service game in the whole tournament up to that point but he broke back in game six to put the crowd on their feet.

And Sinner collapsed to the ground in joy when Alcaraz sent a backhand wide on the first championship point, before heading into the stands to share his joy with his family amid the roars of the crowd. — AFP

Hockey Oman Carnival concludes with resounding success

MUSCAT: The Hockey Oman Carnival, organised by Hockey Oman in partnership with UTSC, concluded on Friday after attracting more than 15,000 spectators and delivering one of the most successful hockey festivals ever held in the Sultanate of Oman.

The carnival opened in the presence of GV Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, who attended as the chief guest.

Srinivas praised Hockey Oman and UTSC for their efforts in promoting hockey and strengthening sporting and cultural ties between Oman and India.

The closing ceremony was attended by Dr Marwan bin Juma al Juma, Chairman of Oman Hockey



Team Coorg Oman captured the Gulf Hockey Fiesta title.

Association (OHA), Ahmed bin Nasser al Darmaki, Secretary of OHA, senior officials from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) and members of the OHA Board, who commended the participating teams and organisers for their outstanding contributions.

CATEGORY CHAMPIONS The tournament featured several competitive divisions, with thrilling finals across all age groups: **Women's International Tournament:** India Rush Mumbai defeated Hustle Hoc Kochi after a 2-2 draw, securing victory 2-1 on penalties.

Gulf Hockey Fiesta – Men's Category: Team Coorg Oman captured the title with a powerful 6-3 win over UTSC. **Masters Men:** UTSC overcame Oman Veterans with a 4-2 victory. **Under 18 Boys:** Ahli Sidab beat Al Amerat Club 7-2. **Under 18 Girls:** Indian School Al Seeb defeated Muscat Club 7-1. **Under 14 Boys:** Muscat Club defeated Qurayat Club in a high-scoring 6-4 match.

Officials praised the competitive spirit on display, noting that the finals showcased exceptional talent and growth in grassroots hockey across Oman.

The carnival also featured vibrant cultural and community activities, including a 600-woman dance

performance, which captivated the audience. Visitors enjoyed a lively Fan Village offering entertainment, games, and family-friendly attractions throughout the event.

The combination of top-quality hockey and cultural celebration created a festival atmosphere that resonated with fans and participants alike.

Organisers expressed gratitude to participating teams, partners, and spectators for their support. They emphasised the event's role in elevating hockey's profile in Oman and fostering stronger international sporting ties.

The Hockey Oman Carnival concluded as a landmark event, celebrating sport, culture and community on a grand scale.



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SHORTTAKES



The workshop reviews the status of environmental indicators across GCC countries, examines national and regional efforts in monitoring SDG-related data, and presents ongoing statistical projects in the environmental field.

GCC WORKSHOP
REVIEWS PROGRESS
ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS

MUSCAT: A regional workshop focused on monitoring progress towards the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) began on Monday in Muscat. Organised by the Statistical Centre of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the two-day event brings together national and regional bodies responsible for environmental data and sustainable development.

The workshop reviews the status of environmental indicators across GCC countries, examines national and regional efforts in monitoring SDG-related data, and presents ongoing statistical projects in the environmental field.

It also explores opportunities to strengthen coordination mechanisms among entities producing environmental data and highlights international best practices, including those of ESCWA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, emphasised the importance of reinforcing statistical efforts to track environmental and sustainable development progress. He noted the crucial role played by the GCC Statistical Centre in streamlining data exchange, harmonising methodologies, and adopting modern tools for data collection and dissemination.

Al Saqri highlighted that the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda stresses the need for efficient natural resource management and a balance between environmental protection, economic growth, and social well-being. — ONA

RO 204m pact boosts
South Minerals Project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 17

MINERALS Development Oman (MDO) has signed a landmark partnership agreement with India's JSW Group to develop the South Minerals Project, one of the country's most significant industrial minerals ventures, valued at RO 204 million.

The project will establish an integrated value chain for the extraction of gypsum and limestone, supported by a dedicated marine terminal at Shuwaimiyah in the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands.

The terminal will have an annual handling capacity of up to 27 million tonnes, reinforcing the national port network and strengthening supply chains for Omani exports to regional and global markets. The initiative is closely aligned with Oman Vision 2040's objectives for economic diversification and industrial development.

Spanning three concession zones covering 1,500 sq km, the project is backed by proven reserves confirmed through extensive exploration by MDO in recent years. Once fully operational, the quarries are expected to produce 30 million tonnes of gypsum and limestone per year, significantly enhancing Oman's exports of industrial minerals and supporting new logistics and industrial opportunities, particularly in Dhofar Governorate.

With sizeable mineral reserves and well-developed infrastructure, the development is also positioned to attract downstream industries and stimulate local value chains. JSW Group was selected as the strategic partner based on its



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technical strength, financial capability, and global expertise in iron and steel, metals, energy, infrastructure and related sectors.

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, said the South Minerals Project represents Oman's proactive investment approach in building a competitive mining sector across the full value chain.

The partnership, he added, will help attract foreign investment, accelerate sectoral development, and reinforce national diversification goals.

Dr Badar bin Saud al Kharusi, Chairman of MDO, explained that the project comprises two major components: the construction of a port dedicated to exporting gypsum and dolomite, and the mining operation itself – the largest of its kind in Oman.

He added that the project will also host new factories that will create employment opportunities for young Omanis.

Eng Mattar bin Salim al Badi, CEO of MDO, emphasised that

the initiative marks a major milestone in the company's long-term strategy to expand mining industries and strengthen Oman's logistics capabilities. He noted that the project will boost the competitiveness of Omani exports, open access to new markets, and deliver tangible economic value.

The Shuwaimiyah marine terminal, he added, directly supports national plans to improve maritime transport efficiency and support infrastructure.

Rankesh Roy, CEO of JSW Infrastructure, described the partnership as a key step in deepening the company's presence in the Middle East. He highlighted Oman's favourable investment climate, strong regulatory framework, and supportive investor environment as major strengths that will underpin the project's success.

He added that JSW remains committed to developing world-class maritime infrastructure that delivers sustainable value for all stakeholders.

OQGN to connect Misfah and Duqm IPPs to Oman's gas grid

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 17

OQ GAS NETWORKS (OQGN), the exclusive operator of Oman's natural gas transmission network, has announced that it is preparing to connect two major gas-fired Independent Power Projects (IPPs), currently under procurement, to the national gas grid.

Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP), the sole buyer of power and water output in Oman, is overseeing the procurement of the two combined-cycle gas turbine (CCGT) based IPPs planned for development at Al Misfah in Muscat Governorate and at Al Duqm in Al Wusta Governorate.

The larger of the two, Misfah IPP, will have a capacity of 1,600 MW, while Al Duqm IPP will be



Work is also progressing on construction of the Fahud-Suhar Loop Line project, a 193-km gas pipeline initiative designed to boost the country's gas supply network.

sized at 800 MW.

Three consortiums led by international developers are currently in contention for

mandates to build the pair of IPPs, which are targeted for commercial operation by April 1, 2029, with early power planned one year earlier, on April 1, 2028.

Officials at OQGN – a publicly traded subsidiary of OQ Group – revealed that the Final Investment Decision (FID) has been granted for connecting the two power schemes to the national gas grid. Work on the basic engineering phase supporting these gas supply linkages has also commenced, they noted during discussions accompanying the publication of OQGN's Q3 performance report.

Per the FID granted by the regulator, the Misfah IPP will receive 8.5 million standard cubic metres per day (MMSCMD) of natural gas, while Duqm IPP will be supplied with 4.5 MMSCMD.

Additionally, work is

progressing on construction of the Fahud-Suhar Loop Line project, a 193-km gas pipeline initiative designed to boost the country's gas supply network.

Under an award announced in June, Petroleum Projects Company Petrojet and Partners LLC is undertaking the EPC works at a cost of RO 105 million. Pipes for the 42-inch line are being sourced from Jindal Saw Limited of India.

Mansoor bin Ali al Abdali, Chief Executive Officer of OQGN, noted that the company is currently sourcing natural gas from six producers to meet the requirements of more than 130 end-users distributed across Oman.

"We run a long network of high-pressure pipelines with an asset length of almost 4,300 kilometres. They extend all the way from the

far north in Al Buraimi to Salalah in the south. The total capacity of the network exceeds 70 billion cubic metres of gas in total," he stated.

He further added: "All of the IOCs operating in the country are connected to our network, including primarily Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), which supplies more than 60% of the gas.

We also have BP, Oxy and Shell supplying to our network through pipelines coming from PDO, while our parent company OQ – through its upstream arm OQEP – is connected as well. We are proud that we supplied more than 40 billion cubic metres last year, and in just the first three quarters of this year, supply has already reached almost 36 billion cubic metres of natural gas to various industries."

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SHORTTAKES



The new branch enhances service reach in the area.

NATIONAL FINANCE
OPENS NEW BRANCH
IN AL AMERAT

MUSCAT: Underscoring its commitment to delivering unmatched financing solutions to diverse customer segments nationwide, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, proudly announces the opening of its new branch in the Wilayat of Al Amerat, the 24th addition to its robust branch network.

This marks a significant milestone, as it becomes the first finance company to establish a branch in the area, a testament to the company’s forward-looking growth strategy.

This expansion reflects National Finance’s dedication to customer-centricity and advancing financial inclusion, bringing accessible, convenient financing solutions to individuals and businesses across the country.

The new Al Amerat branch enhances service reach in the area, offering tailored financing products closer to where customers live and work, further strengthening the company’s connection with the communities it serves.

Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, stated, “Our expansion into the Wilayat of Al Amerat represents our continued commitment to facilitating our customers’ access to financing that aligns with their individual and institutional goals. Being the first finance company to establish a presence in the Wilayat of Al Amerat is a proud achievement.

It affirms our strategy of thoughtful, community-driven growth, and our belief that financial empowerment should be within reach for everyone. As we continue to grow, we remain focused on delivering meaningful impact by offering innovative, customer-centric solutions where they are needed most.”

Strategically positioned in the rapidly developing locality of the Wilayat of Al Amerat, the new branch enters a high-potential market with the aim of empowering individuals to achieve their goals, and helping businesses accelerate their growth.

Designed with National Finance’s signature modern aesthetic and a warm, community-oriented atmosphere, the branch is equipped with tech-enabled features, including self-service kiosks and sign-language interpretation via video call, delivering seamless, inclusive and efficient customer experiences.

Sohar International wins OER corporate excellence award

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its unwavering commitment to delivering world-class banking experiences, Sohar International was recently honoured with the prestigious OER Corporate Excellence Award 2025 in the Large Cap category.

The award was received on behalf of the bank by Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Government & Private Banking Officer, at a red-carpet ceremony that brought together esteemed dignitaries, industry stalwarts, C-suite executives, and decision-makers from across Oman’s business landscape.

Graced by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and hosted by the auspices of Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Mashani, Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court, the ceremony celebrated corporate distinction



The Corporate Excellence Awards are based on a detailed ranking process evaluating companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Kia unveils new Tasman

ADVENTURE

and excitement filled the environment as Reliable International Automotive, the distributors of Kia in Oman, provided pre-launch test drives of the all-new Kia Tasman at an exhilarating event held at the Oman Automobile Association.

This unique launch put guests directly behind the wheel and in command of Kia’s most bold and capable pick-up yet.

From the moment the Tasman was unveiled, it drew immediate attention for its commanding stance, muscular design and unmistakable presence. Built on a robust body-on-frame structure, the Tasman blends rugged capability with Kia’s signature design sophistication. The pick-up’s imposing grille, signature LED headlamps, sculpted sides and athletic proportions announced its arrival as a true powerhouse ready for Oman’s varied landscapes.

The exciting event encouraged guests to get into the Tasman and experience its capabilities over a specially designed off-road course at the Oman Automobile Association.

Guided by professional marshals, participants experienced the vehicle’s impressive 4WD performance, The course featured challenging terrain designed to demonstrate the Tasman’s high ground clearance (up to 252 mm), powerful 2.5-litre turbocharged engine producing 277 hp and 43 kg.m torque and 3,500 kg towing capacity. Each twist and climb highlighted the Tasman’s confidence-inspiring performance and advanced engineering. Drive Mode Select system and the dedicated X-Trek off-road modes, including Desert



From the moment the Tasman was unveiled, it drew immediate attention for its commanding stance, muscular design and unmistakable presence.

Mode and Rock Mode, that deliver optimal traction and control across Oman’s sand dunes and mountain trails.

Inside, the Tasman redefines what a pick-up can be. Its spacious cabin combines premium practicality with contemporary refinement. The integrated panoramic digital display, combining a 12.3-inch infotainment system and digital cluster, places control and connectivity at the driver’s fingertips.

Premium materials, artificial leather seats and thoughtful features such as wireless smartphone charging, dual-zone automatic climate control and rear AC vents ensure every journey offers a premium feel.

For those who choose the X-Pro trim, luxury meets adventure with features like heated and ventilated driver’s seats with memory function, a Harman Kardon audio

system and mood lighting, enhancing every drive with comfort and style.

In keeping with Kia’s philosophy of safety innovation, the Tasman comes equipped with advanced driver assistance systems that make every adventure safer and more confident.

Features include Blind-Spot Collision Avoidance Assist (BCA), Lane Keeping Assist (LKA), Lane Following Assist (LFA), Multi-Collision Brake (MCB) and Trailer Stability Assist (TSA), offering peace of mind whether driving through the city or conquering Oman’s rugged terrain.

Add to that the Electronic Parking Brake with Auto Hold, Surround View Monitor, Rear-View Camera and Smart Cruise Control and the Tasman ensures drivers remain in full control, no matter where the journey leads.

OMAN AIR TO BRING 7,000 MORE TOURISTS DIRECTLY TO DHOFAR

MUSCAT: Oman Air has entered into an exciting new partnership with leading tour operator Fun & Sun to operate a series of charter flights connecting Moscow and Salalah.

The programme is expected to bring approximately 7,000 additional visitors to Salalah in its first season, further supporting the development of domestic tourism and contributing to increased economic activity in Dhofar.

It is anticipated that strong demand will pave the way for the charter programme to be extended year-round.



Fun & Sun is an established and high-volume travel operator, and the collaboration builds on growing interest in Oman from the Russian market. Alongside the new charter

operations, Oman Air continues to operate its scheduled service between Muscat and Moscow with up to nine flights per week, providing year-round connectivity for business and leisure travellers.

“We are pleased to partner with Fun & Sun, expanding access to Salalah from one of our fastest-growing international markets. The charter programme complements our scheduled Muscat-Moscow service and highlights the appeal of Dhofar beyond the khareef season,” said Mike Rutter, Chief Commercial Officer of Oman Air.

“By focusing on point-to-point

growth, we have been able to increase the number of passengers flying to and staying in Oman by over 50% since the beginning of our transformation.

Over the next five years, this change is expected to benefit Oman’s economy by up to RO 90 million per year in additional in-country spend.

The expansion of direct flights from Europe to Salalah is another example of Oman Air’s commitment to delivering on Oman’s 2040 Vision agenda for tourism and increased GDP contribution from the aviation sector,” he added.

across multiple sectors.

The Corporate Excellence Awards, organised by Oman Economic Review in partnership with Moore, one of the region’s leading audit and advisory firms, are based on a detailed ranking process evaluating companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The assessment examines key parameters such as overall performance, profitability, shareholder returns, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), innovation, market leadership, brand equity, and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance.

Recognition through this rigorous, independently verified framework highlights Sohar International’s financial strength, robust practices, and continued contribution to Oman’s sustainable economic development.

Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi,

Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated, “Such recognition reflects the collective effort of our teams and the trust placed in us by our customers and shareholders.

At Sohar International, we have built our growth on sound governance, a clear sense of purpose, and a continuous drive to contribute towards Oman’s economic progress in line with Oman Vision 2040.

This award reaffirms the strength of our institution and the principles that guide us — serving as both an acknowledgment of what we have achieved together and a motivation to sustain our momentum and further strengthen the value we deliver to our customers, shareholders, and communities.”

Sohar International’s recognition comes amid a period of sustained growth and prudent financial management.

SHORTTAKES



Oman's total electricity production reaches 41,164.9 gigawatt-hours.

OMAN’S TOTAL ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION RISES BY 8.4 PER CENT

MUSCAT: Oman's total electricity production increased by 8.4% by the end of September 2025, reaching 41,164.9 gigawatt-hours (GWh), compared to 37,959.3 GWh during the same period in 2024.

Preliminary data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information also showed an 8.2% increase in net electricity production in Oman — which includes purchases by the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company and the Rural Areas Electricity Company — reaching 39,973.6 GWh by the end of September 2025, compared to 36,944.8 GWh at the end of September 2024.

On the other hand, total water production in Oman up to the end of September 2025 recorded a slight decrease of 0.6%, reaching approximately 387.702 million cubic metres, compared to 390.197 million cubic metres during the same period last year.

Muscat Governorate witnessed a decrease in water production of 11.2%, reaching 154.377 million cubic metres compared to 173.854 million cubic metres last year.

Meanwhile, water production in Dhofar Governorate increased by 3.8%, reaching 57.516 million cubic metres.

Water production in the remaining governorates also increased by 9.3%, registering 175.808 million cubic metres compared to 160.919 million cubic metres up to the end of September 2024. — ONA

Oman advances labour protection reforms

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 17

OMAN is moving steadily towards a more secure, competitive, and modern labour market as new reforms in social protection and wage regulation begin to take shape.

Recent findings from a labour environment assessment survey highlight significant progress in strengthening the safety net available to workers while aligning employment practices with Oman's economic diversification goals.

The latest measures follow the introduction of the new Labour Law, which broadens the scope of worker protections across unemployment insurance, healthcare coverage, retirement benefits, and compensation during illness or job interruptions.

These changes reflect a long-term national strategy to enhance economic resilience and create an environment where both employers and employees can thrive with confidence.

One of the most notable advancements is the government-backed unemployment insurance scheme.

According to the survey, the system is designed to support workers who lose their jobs for reasons beyond their control, ensuring income stability while they transition to new opportunities.

The insurance model is



The changes reflect a long-term national strategy to enhance economic resilience and create an environment where both employers and employees can thrive with confidence.

financed through a combination of public funds and social security contributions, enabling wide coverage that extends beyond traditional full-time employees.

This inclusive approach is particularly beneficial for workers on temporary contracts, project-based employment, or self-employed individuals — groups that historically faced higher vulnerability during economic fluctuations.

Healthcare protection has also strengthened under the current legal framework. Institutions are now required to contribute to workers' healthcare costs, with the level of contribution varying by sector and contract type.

The system guarantees access to essential medical services,

either through employer support or contributions under the social security structure.

Importantly, this foundation opens the door for broader future enhancements, including extended coverage for dependents and families, contributing to greater overall well-being.

In the area of retirement security, Oman continues to build on its contribution-based pension system, jointly funded by employers and employees. The survey notes that this structure strengthens long-term financial stability for workers and encourages sustained participation in the labour market. While harmonisation across various sectors remains a work in progress, the current framework provides a solid

base for equitable retirement benefits.

These reforms underscore a larger national transformation as Oman moves from a traditional employment landscape dominated by the public sector to a diversified model driven by private-sector growth, entrepreneurship, and flexible work arrangements.

This transition is central to Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises human capital development and sustainable labour practices.

Strengthening social protection ensures that this diversification does not leave workers behind, but instead enhances confidence, productivity, and long-term economic participation.

Wage regulation is another area showing encouraging progress. While the Labour Law establishes a unified minimum wage for Omanis, the survey highlights ongoing efforts to improve clarity around wage standards, overtime calculations, and sector-specific allowances. Although expatriate wages are contract-based, the government continues to promote fair practices and greater transparency across industries.

The Wage Protection System plays an increasingly critical role, ensuring that salaries are paid accurately and on time, reducing disputes and reinforcing trust between employers and employees.

As Oman continues refining its labour governance framework, the overall trajectory remains positive.

AI threats reshape security strategy in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, NOV 17

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the global cyber threat landscape, and cybersecurity experts in Oman are urging organisations to elevate their readiness as AI-powered attacks grow more sophisticated.

This was the focus of a high-level panel discussion at the Cysec Oman Forum, where speakers examined how AI is reshaping both the nature of cyber risks and the strategies needed to counter them.

Panellists warned that AI now enables attackers to automate, accelerate, and mutate malicious activities in ways that traditional defence systems struggle to detect.

Unlike conventional malware, which typically follows predictable patterns, AI-driven threats can constantly change signatures and behaviours to avoid detection.

“AI allows threats to evolve on their own,” Yahya al Azri,



AI now enables attackers to automate, accelerate, and mutate malicious activities in ways that traditional defence systems struggle to detect.

an IT expert at Oman National Computer Emergency Readiness Team (OCERT) at the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology, explained. “It becomes harder to identify,

harder to isolate, and harder to stop unless we adopt AI-powered defence models ourselves.”

The session stressed that Oman must invest in next-generation intrusion detection systems, predictive analytics, and AI-supported defensive tools to stay ahead of emerging risks.

These tools, speakers noted, are not optional additions — they are becoming essential components of modern infrastructure security. “We must use AI to fight AI,” Ahmed al Lawati, an information security specialist at Mala'a, said, reflecting a sentiment widely shared across the discussion.

But the conversation expanded beyond technology. Experts underscored that cybersecurity readiness now requires equal attention to awareness, governance, and talent development.

They pointed out that while coding and technical subjects are increasingly taught in Omani schools and universities, secure

coding and digital awareness are not yet embedded in curricula. “If we want a cyber-resilient society, then cybersecurity must be part of our culture,” Hilal al Busaidy, a data centre expert, argued.

“It cannot be limited to IT departments.”

The panel also highlighted the global shortage of cybersecurity professionals, warning that this challenge is particularly pronounced in the Middle East.

Oman's strategic frameworks are strong, but execution requires a stable, well-trained workforce — something that remains difficult to secure as global demand rises. Yahya stressed that the solution lies in long-term investment.

“It starts in the schools, continues in university, and must be supported by lifelong training,” he said.

“Technology and regulation can be upgraded quickly, but developing people takes time.”

Panellists agreed that AI is forcing organisations to rethink their entire

security posture.

Traditional boundaries between conventional and unconventional threats are fading; phishing, fraud, identity spoofing, and infrastructure attacks are increasingly driven by machine-generated intelligence.

At the same time, defenders require stronger analytics, better reporting mechanisms, and more agile response capabilities.

Despite the risks, experts described Oman as well-positioned to protect its infrastructure and economy. National strategies are in place, cross-border cooperation is expanding, and awareness at the leadership level has improved substantially. What is now required is continuous adaptation and rapid deployment of AI-enabled defences.

As Shaikha al Mashaykhi, information security specialist at OCCI, concluded, “Oman has the right strategy. The next step is preparing for a world where AI shapes every threat we face — and every defence we build.”

OIL HUB

Oil prices down as Russian exports resume



Oil prices slipped on Monday as crude loadings resumed at Russia's Novorossiysk export hub after a two-day halt caused by a Ukrainian attack. Brent fell 45 cents to \$64.36 a barrel, while WTI dropped 46 cents to \$59.93.

Both benchmarks had gained more than 2% on Friday after the suspension at Novorossiysk and the nearby CPC terminal, which briefly disrupted around 2% of global supply. — Reuters

FLIGHT RECOVERY

FAA lifts domestic flight cuts



The US Federal Aviation Administration ended mandated flight cuts at 40 major airports on Monday, removing restrictions imposed during staffing concerns linked to the federal shutdown.

The FAA also lifted limits on space launches and general aviation. Airlines had anticipated the move, with major carriers confirming they had no cancellations planned for Monday's operations. — Reuters

PRICE SLOWDOWN

Italy inflation eases in October



Italy's consumer inflation eased to 1.2% in October, the lowest in a year and consistent with earlier estimates. The slowdown was driven mainly by a 0.5% decline in regulated energy prices, which had surged 13.9% in September.

Price growth in unprocessed foods also fell to 1.9% from 4.8%, while transport-related services inflation moderated to 2.0% from 2.4%, according to official data. — dpa

OPINION

Training or capacity building: Does it really matter?



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker.

OVER the years, I have seen many organisations investing in what they call “training”, but what they really do is bring in an external expert, run a few workshops, maybe provide certificates, and hope their teams come out transformed. To tell the truth, sometimes it truly helps; however, what I see more often is that after a few weeks, people return to their usual routines, and little actually changes. Like nothing even happened. This situation has a clear answer, i.e., training and capacity building are not the same thing. And to understand it better, I suggest we dive a bit deeper into the difference between capacity building and training. What is the key point of training? It focuses on transferring knowledge. On the other hand, capacity building focuses on transferring capability, that is, the ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations, sustain it, and then multiply it across the team. Think of it this way: training gives you skills. Capacity building gives you ownership. When building capacity, you do not just teach someone, but give them a deeper understanding of how to adapt, lead and teach others. In the technology sector, this difference plays a crucial role and becomes even more visible. For example, young engineers complete traditional training programmes that teach programming languages or frameworks.

After that, they start working on real projects, but at that very point, we can see all the issues. These engineers have a mess in their heads, from the codebase and deadlines to constant change. The point that I want to share is that they’ve completed training, not built up capacity. It’s not that they lack intelligence yet lack real problem-solving. On the other hand, with capacity building, engineers are placed directly into a working environment to deal with the project firsthand. Engineers see a real project where technology, teamwork, and business come together. This capacity building gives them the possibility to spend months working on a real project, solving real issues and understanding how the development process works. This “learn, adapt and then multiply” model creates a cycle of growth that no standard training can achieve. It’s how true capacity grows — from inside the product, not outside it. I have seen this approach work especially well in tech initiatives that understand the long game. For example, some academies today follow a hybrid model where engineers start by learning fundamentals and then join actual client projects for a period of immersion. One such approach is what is done at Introduct Academy. There, engineers deal with real products and development in the short term. The main point of this approach is that

Capacity building focuses on transferring capability, that is, the ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations, sustain it, and then multiply it across the team. Think of it this way: training gives you skills.

after learning and working on real projects, these engineers return as mentors for the next group. This helps expand the company’s capacity based on genuine product knowledge. That is called capacity building in action. The main difference with traditional training is that it teaches how the real ecosystem works, not just classroom lectures. Today, we see more about how technology changes and develops. It happens so fast that traditional classroom lectures become outdated. Software tools, frameworks, and platforms – they change and evolve faster than any curriculum. The only sustainable advantage a company can have is people who know how to learn continuously — and who can pass that mindset to others. That is what capacity building is about: constant learning and a never-stopping culture. One more thing that I wanted to share is that capacity building is not just about learning to solve real-time problems but also about communicative skills. When people spend time inside a working environment, they learn how to communicate with the team and how to pick up ownership. From the start, they learn how to think about problem-solving, not task-taking. At this point, the person becomes a contributor, not just an employee. You might think that it will take more time to learn this way than through traditional training. And here you’re right.

CHINA’S TRADE CLOUT CAN QUICKEN THE YUAN’S RISE

KA SING CHAN

A SINGLE word often makes a big difference in Chinese policy. In previous five-year economic development plans, for example, Beijing had always reiterated it wants to “prudently promote” yuan internationalisation. In an outline of the next 2026-2030 blueprint unveiled last month, the word “prudently” has been struck out. That signals bolder designs for the renminbi, though progress will be limited so long as economic planners keep tight control over capital flows. China’s \$20 trillion economy may be the second-largest in the world, but its currency was only the fifth most-traded last year, according to a September report from the Bank of International Settlements. Still, thanks to incremental policies, including currency swap deals with other central banks, the yuan now makes up 8.5% of global currency transactions, up from 7% in 2022. For Beijing, trade settlement will probably be the next area of focus, given China’s 15% share of \$33 trillion of global trade by value. Notably, as part of a broader contract dispute, China’s steel industry has stopped purchasing dollar-denominated iron ore from Australia’s BHP since October, according to Chinese media, citing sources, and has insisted the mining giant settle 30 per cent of transactions in yuan going forward. Separately, Dutch chipmaker Nexperia’s Chinese unit has demanded all transactions be settled in yuan, after The Hague seized control of the company’s Netherlands-based parent in September, sparking a broader standoff. These moves can have an immediate impact. Up to 12.4 trillion yuan (\$1.7 trillion) of trade with China was paid in local currency last year, about 27% of the total, according to the country’s central bank’s yuan internationalisation report published last week. Settling 30% of imports from BHP can add another \$39 billion worth of yuan-denominated transactions annually. And using renminbi will appeal to countries that want to reduce their reliance on the US dollar. That includes Brazil and Russia, which exported \$31 billion of soybeans and \$50 billion of crude oil, respectively, to the People’s Republic last year. — Reuters

Family houses: Nation builders to pace-setters

ACROSS the world, family-owned enterprises are not a footnote — they are the backbone of productive economies. From Europe’s Mittelstand to Asia’s patient industrial champions and the Gulf’s trading dynasties, families invest for the long term, hire and train locally, and stick with sectors through cycles. That staying power is what countries seek when shifting from consumption-led booms to export-led, capability-driven growth. Oman’s experience mirrors this global story. Since the 1970s, our family houses helped build ports and roads, distributed essential goods, stood up workshops and fleets, and partnered with the state to deliver the basic infrastructure of modern life. Now the frontier has moved. Oman Vision 2040 asks the private sector to manufacture more at home, export more abroad and create better jobs at scale. With their brands, bank lines, supplier networks and international partners, family houses are our quickest path from policy to projects. Three shifts are decisive. The first is governance and succession. As founders step back, informal arrangements no longer suffice. A written family charter, a council to resolve family matters outside the boardroom, a professional board with independent directors, and a clear CEO/CFO succession plan are not ceremonial — they are bankability. Good governance lowers the cost of capital, speeds decisions and prevents value-eroding disputes. In practice, this means a board calendar, audit and risk committees that meet, and performance contracts that reward cash conversion, delivery, safety and Omanisation. The second shift is strategic focus: moving from project-by-project trading into cluster-based



Oman Vision 2040 asks the private sector to manufacture more at home, export more abroad and create better jobs at scale.



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI
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The writer is founder and CEO - Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor

manufacturing and services. The near opportunities are clear: downstream metals and fabrication; construction materials with certified quality; food processing and cold chain linked to farms and ports; healthcare delivery platforms; and energy-transition components and O&M. Free zones and industrial estates give us the right platforms. The execution model is simple: pick three positions — (1) JV manufacturer with a global partner, (2) certified component supplier to regional anchors, or (3) specialised services/O&M provider. Secure offtake where possible, invest in certifications, and develop local suppliers in your orbit rather than compete with them. Every anchor project should publish three numbers — local-content ratio, Omani jobs created and retained and export share — so success is visible and repeatable. The third shift is finance for the new cycle. The cash-flow shock of 2020–2021 exposed balance-sheet fragilities. The response is discipline, not retreat: centralised treasury and 13-week cash forecasting; working-capital programmes that tighten receivables, inventory and payables; and ring-fencing mature, cash-generative assets (income properties, utilities O&M, logistics concessions) for refinancing or partial listing. Sukuk, private credit, club deals with regional families and selective MSX listings can recycle capital into productive plants, digital operations and export platforms — without sacrificing control. When governance improves, financing costs follow. Lower cost of capital puts more projects over the line. Policy can and should accelerate these shifts through performance-based support that rewards delivery, not promises. First, an Offtake & Anchor Programme in priority clusters reduces revenue risk for early movers. If a family house commits to a certified plant in a free zone with published ICV and hiring targets, time-bound offtake or aggregator contracts can unlock bank finance and shorten the road from board approval to first production. Second, a Fast-Track Permitting Lane is equivalent to a grant in saved time. In exchange for transparent scorecards and quarterly reporting, projects receive expedited land, utilities and regulatory clearances with named case officers and digital timelines. Third, co-investment should crowd in private capital, not displace it. Minority stakes by development funds, interest buy-downs tied to verified job placements, and receivables-backed working-capital lines for export orders help scale production without fiscal strain. Crucially, these tools must extend into the supply chain so SMEs benefit when anchors grow. Human capital belongs at the centre of every investment decision. Each factory or service platform should sponsor pre-hire apprenticeships and supervisor bootcamps designed with OSHRM and colleges, with placement and one-year retention disclosed annually. The state can credit fee reductions against verified placements — paying for outcomes, not intentions.

Leadership forum opens in Muscat

MUSCAT: The Oman Strategic Leadership Conference opened on Monday in Muscat, highlighting the growing importance of strategic thinking in modern leadership across government and industry. The two-day event is organised by Al Asayel Development Company in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. The conference aims to promote the adoption of strategic planning as a practical methodology for guiding decision-making, strengthening institutional alignment, and



The conference aims to promote the adoption of strategic planning as a practical methodology for guiding decision-making, strengthening institutional alignment, and raising overall performance.

raising overall performance.

In his keynote remarks, Dr Aflah bin Said al Hadhrami, Managing Director of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), underscored the value of the conference as a platform for sharing expertise, anticipating future trends, and developing solutions tailored to both local and regional contexts.

He noted that the event brings together analysts, speakers, and thought leaders from within and outside the Sultanate to examine experiences and forward-looking strategies.

Global leadership expert Dr John Maxwell, also delivering a keynote address, discussed a

range of themes central to effective leadership.

These included the role of shared values in uniting communities, building communication frameworks capable of activating strategy through compelling messaging, and the importance of agility in navigating an increasingly volatile global landscape.

He also outlined pathways for developing future leaders capable of driving transformation and sustaining competitiveness.

The conference continues today with broad participation from experts, specialists, and decision-makers from the public and private sectors. — ONA

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Oman Observer
we shall overcome
BREAKING NEWS
68 new Covid-19 cases in Oman. Resilient stresses 1,000+ mask

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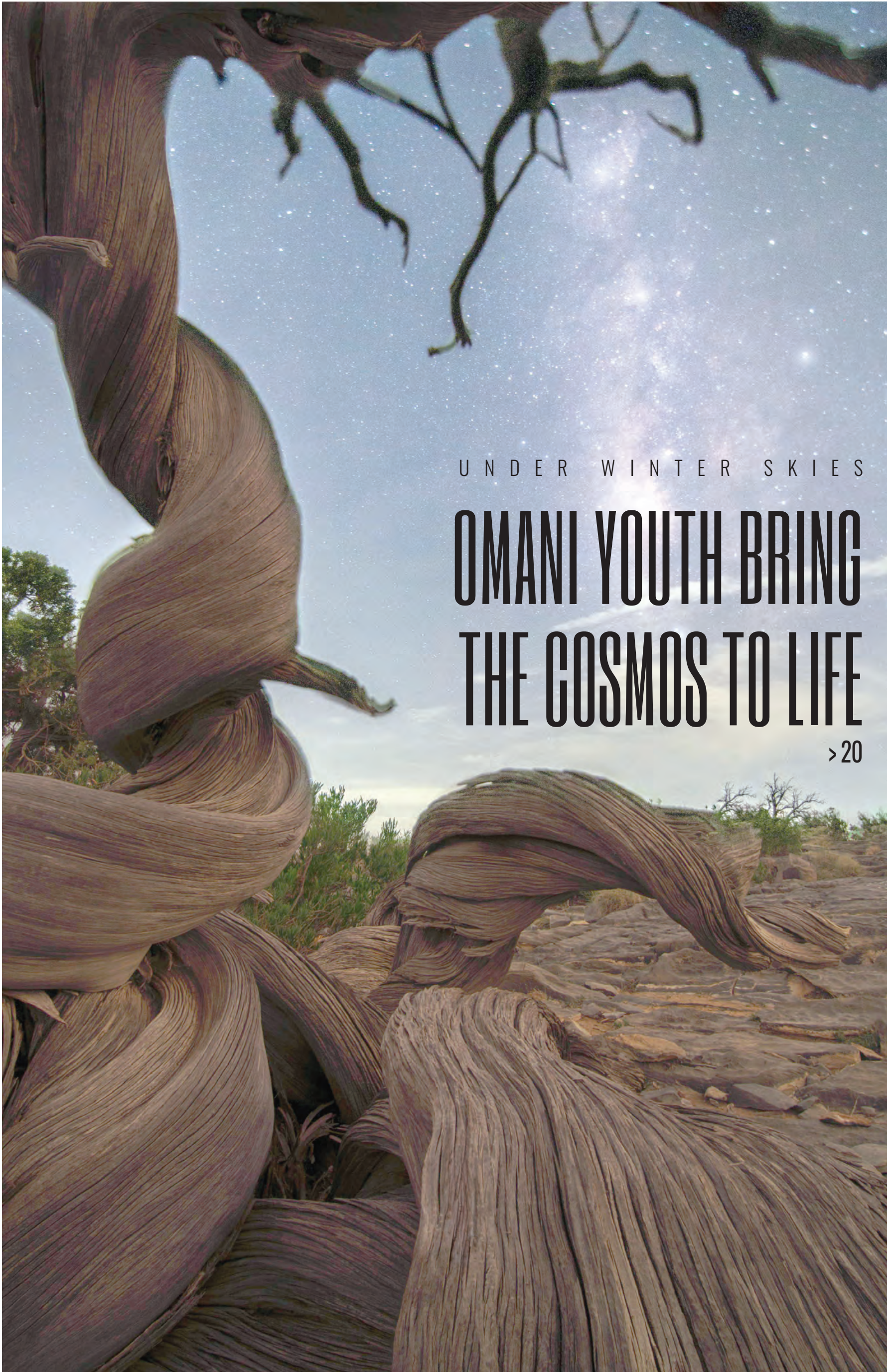


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ART/LIFE



HOLLYWOOD

Tom Cruise accepts honorary Oscar for lifetime achievement



Tom Cruise accepted an honorary Oscar at the Governors Awards, delivering an emotional speech about his lifelong passion for film-making.

The Academy Honorary Award was presented by Alejandro G Inarritu, who is directing Cruise in an unnamed film slated for release next year.

The four-time Oscar-nominated actor described film-making as not just a job, but “who I am.”

“It takes me around the world,” Cruise said. “It helps me to appreciate and respect differences. It shows me also our shared humanity, how alike we are in so, so many ways.

“And no matter where we come from, in that theatre, we laugh together, we feel together, we hope together, and that is the power of this art form. And that is why it matters, that is why it matters to me. So making films is not what I do, it is who I am.”

The “Mission: Impossible” star was honoured alongside choreographer Debbie Allen and “Do The Right Thing” production designer Wynn Thomas.

Historically, many recipients of the prize have not yet won a competitive Academy Award themselves.

Cruise has been nominated twice for best actor in “Born on the Fourth of July” and “Jerry Maguire,” once for supporting actor in “Magnolia” and once for best picture with “Top Gun: Maverick.”

He told the crowd his love for cinema began at a young age.

“My love for cinema began at a very early age, as early as I can remember,” Cruise said.

“I was just a little kid in a darkened theatre, and I remember that beam of light just cut across the room, and I remember looking up, and it seemed to be just exploding on the screen. Suddenly, the world was so much larger than the one that I knew.”

Singer Dolly Parton was also recognised with the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award for her decades-long charitable endeavours.

Parton, who could not attend due to health concerns, sent her thanks via video.

Upon announcement of his nomination in June, Academy President Janet Yang hailed Cruise’s “incredible commitment to our film-making community, to the theatrical experience, and to the stunts community.”

“This year’s Governors Awards will celebrate four legendary individuals whose extraordinary careers and commitment to our film-making community continue to leave a lasting impact,” she said. — **dpa**

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



ANIMAL PLANET

An adult female Masai giraffe rears on its hind legs as it resists efforts by Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) rangers to guide it into a transportation crate during an exercise to translocate large herbivores from Kedong Ranch due to land subdivisions and corralling. — **AFP**



ENTERTAINMENT

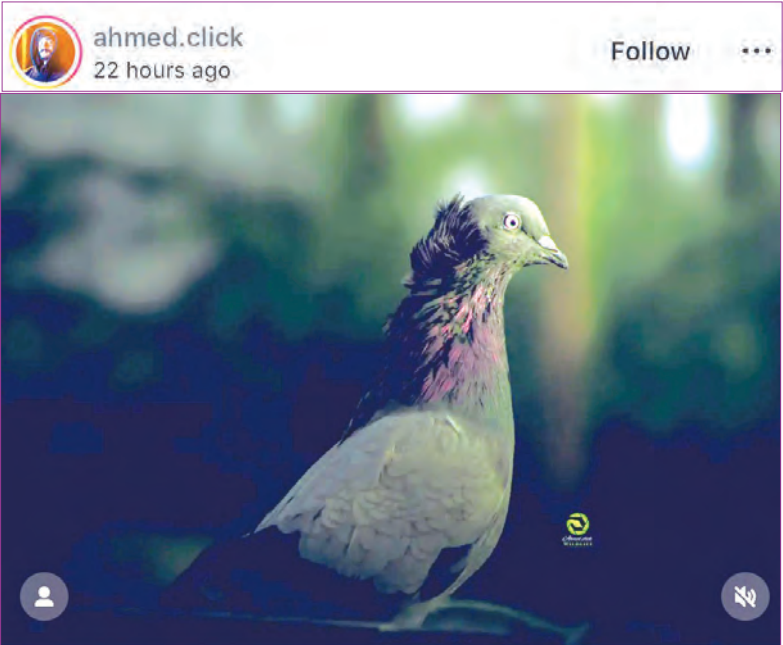
British actress Emily Blunt attends the 16th Governors Awards at the Ray Dolby Ballroom at Ovation Hollywood in Los Angeles. — **AFP**



CULTURE

People with their dogs take part in the 6th edition of the ‘Paris Sausage Walk’ (Marche des Teckels) along the banks of the river Seine in Paris. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



A Stunning Omani Homing Pigeon



An Omani man posing at Nizwa's Camel Market

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SWEDEN'S QUIET FORESTS PROVIDE SANCTUARY

CAMILLE BAS-WOHLERT

In a cottage nestled deep in a Swedish forest, three couples recently spent four days whispering and without phones as part of a campaign about the dangers of noise pollution and promoting quiet Scandinavia.

The project arose from the observation that for many tourists, Sweden's appeal lies in its tranquillity.

"What are their reasons for choosing Sweden as a travel destination? Relaxation, calm, and to unwind, as well as experiences in nature," Josefine Nordgren, one of the organisers of the 'Silent Cabin' project by Visit Skane, which promotes tourism in southern Sweden, said. "Even in Germany, noise pollution is 10 times higher than in Sweden," she said.

Noise is the second-most detrimental environmental factor affecting Europeans' health after air pollution, according to the European Environment Agency (EEA).

This autumn, as the sun began its winter retreat in Sweden, Visit Skane invited three couples to spend four days - on separate occasions - in a little green cabin with white trim at the end of a winding forest lane, free of charge on the condition that their conversation remained below 45 decibels.



The so-called 'silent cabin' in Hoor, Sweden. The Visit Skane tourism office sponsors the project, where two people can stay three nights in the cabin for free as long as they stay quiet.

— AFP

A normal conversation level is around 60 decibels.

To ensure everybody played by the rules, a sound meter was placed on top of a cupboard.

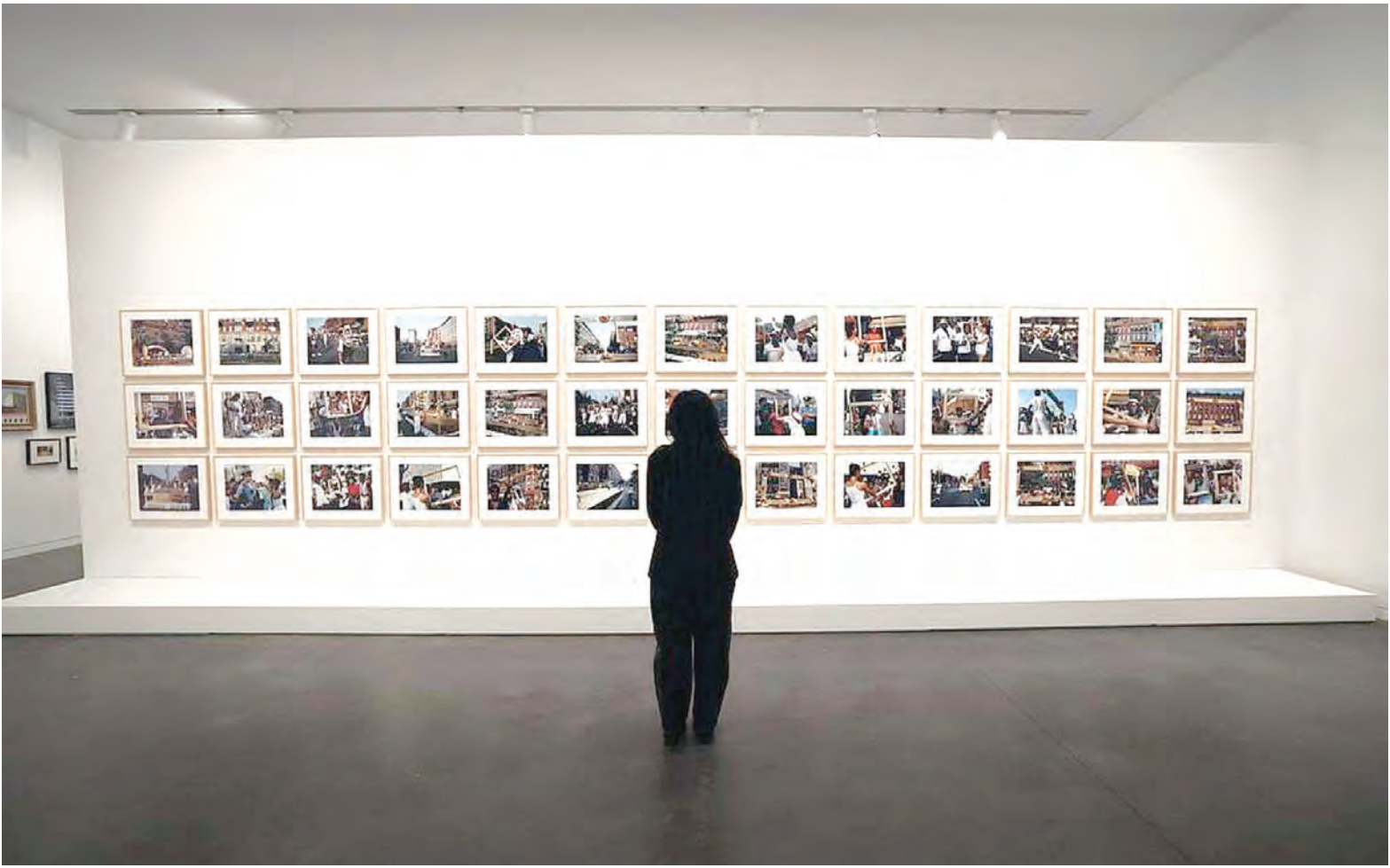
The unit was connected to the organisers' own system, and if the conversation level remained too high for an extended period, the couple faced eviction.

The couples were all city dwellers charmed by the cosy cabin - kitted out with a large bed, small table and stove - tucked in between trees with leaves turning yellow and red near a small brook.

The bathroom and kitchen were located in the owner's main house, a short walk away.

The sound meter ensured the visitors stuck to the challenge.

"It's so important that we had this measurement, I think, to take it seriously," Lise Holm, a 26-year-old from Tubingen in Germany who stayed in the cabin with her older sister Johanna, said. — AFP



Harlem museum

AS The Studio Museum reopens this weekend in its gleaming new building, New York's premier institution for Black art finds itself looking back and looking forward at the same time.

Colourful signs featuring permanent works have sprouted near the museum's home in Harlem, a centre point in Black life and imagination in America for more than a century.

The museum, closed for the more than seven-year project, has commissioned new works to commemorate the reboot, which features expanded studios for the institution's artists-in-residence programme.

But the 57-year-old museum is also hearkening back to its roots with a retrospective of the late Tom Lloyd, whose electronically programmed wall sculptures anticipated today's digital age.

Some of the same pieces were hung in the museum's inaugural 1968 show back when works by artists of African descent were mostly absent from New York's leading museums.

Today's art scene is very different.

Rashid Johnson, Amy Serald and others are regularly showcased in shows at the Guggenheim, Whitney and other nameplate New York museums, which have also hosted retrospectives belatedly recognising Black movements.

"In the time of the museum's life, we have seen this incredible trajectory and some of that is a result of the work that the museum did in its establishment and its early years," said Studio Museum director Thelma Golden, who oversaw a more than \$300 million drive to finance a teardown and newbuild project that cements the museum's ties to Harlem.

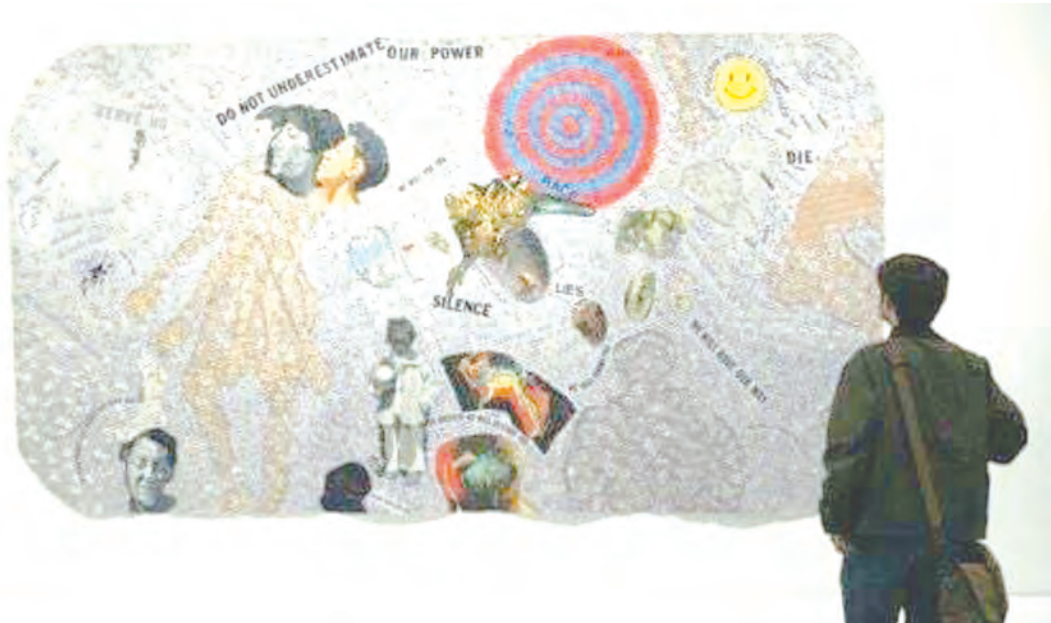
"The aperture opens, but even with that, we still believe deeply in the work that continues to need to be done."

'TRULY CURRENT WORK'

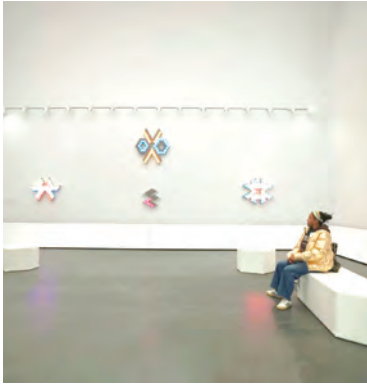
The museum's history is laid out in photos of the 1968 groundbreaking, and there are posters of jazz nights, "Uptown Friday" gatherings, high school programmes and of shows such as a retrospective of James Van Der Zee, a famed photographer during the Harlem Renaissance.

The founders' ambitions

REBOOTED HARLEM MUSEUM CELEBRATES RISE OF BLACK ART



Colourful signs featuring permanent works have sprouted near the museum's home in Harlem, a centre point in Black life and imagination in America for more than a century



included creating a place distinct from New York establishments like the Museum of Modern Art. The Studio Museum will present "truly current work," founders wrote in 1966. The work "could turn out to be a flash in the pan or could conceivably begin an entire new school or new direction in art."

Backers also sought to redefine Harlem, "which is all too often equated with slums, violence and other evils," and to deepen the commitment of supporters - some white - to "make New York City a united city rather than one which is currently divided by an invisible Berlin wall."

Key turning points included 1981, when the Studio Museum broke

ground at its current address at 144 West 125th Street.

Another shift came after Golden joined in 2000, when the mission statement was expanded beyond US-born creators to artists of African descent "locally, nationally and internationally."

SIGNATURE WORKS

That broadened scope is boldly expressed on the building's exterior with a red, black and green flag by David Hammons inspired by the Pan-African flag of the 1920s associated with activist Marcus Garvey.

Another signature work is Houston Conwill's "The Joyful Mysteries," containing statements by seven prominent Black Americans written for future generations. The time capsules will be opened in September 2034, 50 years after their creation.

The new edifice itself nods to Harlem's architectural vernacular, with a mass of geometries in gray concrete and glass.

— AFP

OMANI
YOUTH
BRING
THE
COSMOS
TO
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IDRIS AL BALUSHI

In the dead of winter, the skies of Oman breathe fresh life. In the heart of the starry nights in the Omani desert, when the dunes fall silent and the sky turns into a velvet canvas of glittering bodies, a small group of young Omanis gather around their telescopes. Their breath fogs the air, their boots crunch over powdery sand, and their eyes are fixed upward, not in search of direction, but in search of wonder. This is Stargazers, a homegrown sky-exploring project created by four Omani youth who turned their private passion into one of the most unique and soulful experiences in Oman.

The team, which was founded by Ali bin Nasser al Shueili, Qasim bin Hamad al Busaidy, Ali bin Rabi’a al Kindi and Yahya bin Hilal al Kindi, didn’t begin with grand plans; they began with a simple shared obsession: to chase the stars.

“We used to go out alone just to photograph the sky, the galaxies, the Milky Way, the meteor showers,” they recall.

“Over time, we realised these moments were too beautiful to keep to ourselves, they deserved to be shared.” And so, in 2022, Stargazers came to life.

While much of Oman turns inward during the cooler months, Stargazers turns outward, to the sprawling night sky that becomes its clearest and most radiant during winter.

The team leads groups into remote deserts untouched by light pollution, where the temperature drops, the air sharpens and the heavens open up with dazzling clarity.

These winter nights have become the project’s signature, perfect for meteor watching, stargazing, and experiencing the kind of cosmic



silence that makes the universe feel close enough to touch.

“Winter is ideal for our expeditions; the desert becomes the perfect observatory,” they say.

In summer, they shift towards cooler winds and higher ground, to places like Al Hajar Al Gharbi Reserve, where elevated cliffs offer breathtaking panoramic views of the vast skies.

What began with a handful of friends has grown into a movement attracting people from every corner of Oman, and beyond. A typical trip now includes 10 to 15 participants, many of them young Omanis discovering astronomy for the first time, along with travellers seeking to see Oman through a cosmic lens.

Each journey starts with curiosity and ends with awe. Participants gather around telescopes, some professional for deep-sky astrophotography and others



small and accessible, while the team explains the stories of the stars, celestial navigation and the personalities of planets.

They guide everyone into hands-on observation and even help them capture their own moments beneath the luminous sky.

“We want people to leave feeling a sense of connection, with the universe, with Oman’s skies and with the beauty of creation,” the founders explain.

Despite their youth, the Stargazers team has already documented rare and extraordinary celestial events, among them the Perseids and Quadrantids meteor showers, crystal-clear captures of the Milky Way across Oman’s wilderness, comets including the recent Comet Lemmon, and most astonishingly, the first documented aurora ever seen from Oman’s skies.

Their eyes now look towards

future events, lunar eclipses, planetary conjunctions and intense periods of solar activity.

Their growth has been fuelled by the community that found them online.

Social media, especially Instagram, became their main engine for connection and visibility.

“Through it, we reached people from inside and outside Oman who love astronomy,” they say, describing how their images of nebulae, constellations and silhouettes of Omanis beneath glowing skies drew thousands into their orbit.

Challenges are part of the journey; unpredictable weather, long travel distances, and delicate equipment all require constant attention, yet none of it dims their determination.

Looking forward, the founders hope to expand Stargazers into



educational programmes for schools and universities, and to offer specialised trips for visitors seeking cosmic adventure in Oman.

Their vision is simple yet ambitious, to place Oman on the regional map as a destination for astronomical tourism.

In a world of screens and noise, Stargazers brings people back to silence, wonder and connection.

It is a reminder that Oman’s beauty doesn’t end at its mountains, wadis, or coastlines; it continues upward into the endless dome of stars.

For anyone searching for a magical winter night activity, something meaningful, calming and unforgettable, these young Omanis have already created the perfect invitation: Come sit under the Omani sky, listen to the whispers of the universe and let the stars tell their stories.