

Times  
OF OMAN

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LEGACY

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THREE-DAY EVENT

# Sayyid Bilarab presides over military music show at ROHM

**MUSCAT:** His Highness Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said presided over the military music show “Oman and the World” organised by the Royal Opera House Muscat as part of the National Day celebrations on Thursday.

The three-day event, featuring Omani military bands and a number of international bands, is a continuation of the annual military music performances presented by the ROHM in the glorious month of November, with the participation of Omani military bands alongside a number of international bands, in celebration of this happy occasion.

Participating from the Omani side with musical bands are: the Royal Guard of Oman, the Royal



Army of Oman, the Royal Air Force of Oman, the Royal Navy of Oman, the Royal Oman Police, in addition to the Royal Cavalry, the Royal Camel Corps, the Scout Band, and

the Infantry Team of the Royal Army of Oman.

These groups provide an ideal opportunity to witness the high precision of military parade dis-



plays, and to hear bagpipe music, drums, wind instruments, and other selected performances.

In a demonstration of the close relations and openness that binds

the Sultanate of Oman to the countries of the world, this year's ceremony witnessed the participation of an elite group of musicians and artists from the friendly Kingdom

of Belgium, to confirm the depth of civilisational and cultural communication with the Sultanate of Oman, and to enrich this ceremony with wonderful military displays and captivating heritage segments, presented in their traditional costumes that reflect the authenticity of their countries.

The audience in the main square of the Royal Opera House Muscat watched displays of artistic skills in exquisite formations to the tunes of military music, in addition to watching performances by percussion groups in a concert that included various heritage segments.

The show also included the participation of a group of the most skilled Omani musicians. -OMA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

## OMAN Oman bags three awards at WTM



**1** Oman, as part of its participation in the World Travel Market in London, won 3 awards within the ‘Wanderlust 2025’ global awards, in the fields of adventure tourism, heritage and cultural tourism and sustainable tourism, confirming its position as one of the most notable tourist destinations. >A2

## WORLD ‘No US officials to attend G20 meet’

**2** President Donald Trump said that no US officials would attend the Group of 20 summit in South Africa, citing the country's treatment of white farmers. “It is a total disgrace that the G20 will be held in South Africa,” Trump said. >A7

## SPORTS India clinch T20I series in Australia

**3** The fifth T20I between India and Australia has been called off due to rain at The Gabba in Brisbane on Saturday. India clinched the five-match series 2-1. >A8

# PLAN TO RAISE DIGITAL ECONOMY'S CONTRIBUTION TO 10% OF THE GDP

Oman accelerates efforts to build a thriving digital economy

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Oman plans to increase the digital economy's contribution to 10% of the GDP by 2040 and by the end of this year, the contribution is expected to reach approximately 3%, said Dr. Ali bin Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and IT.

He emphasised that the programme serves as a long-term roadmap aligned with Oman Vision 2040, structured into four phases: Integrated digital government, digitisation of key economic sectors, export of digital economy services, and ultimately, a flourishing digital economy.

The National Digital Economy Programme in Oman is advancing its mission to build a prosperous digital economy through three core pillars: Digital government,



business digitisation, and digital society. The initiative aims to serve as a key contributor to the national economy.

He added that the government is nearing the completion of the first phase, which focuses on digital government transformation. The programme is implemented through a series of executive initiatives overseen by various government entities.

The first phase includes eight initiatives, among them the Artificial Intelligence Programme.

After four years of implementation, Oman has made notable



progress across global indicators, including ranking 45th in the Government AI Readiness Index, 41st in the e-Government Development Index, achieving top-tier

status in the Cybersecurity Readiness Index, and ranking 50th in the Network Readiness Index.

Oman Vision 2040 aspires for the Sultanate to be among the top 20 countries in all these indicators.

In line with Royal directives, the National Programme for Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Digital Technologies were launched in 2023.

It focuses on three main areas: promoting AI adoption in economic and developmental sectors, localising AI technologies, and establishing AI governance. >A2

Al Dakhiliyah building a diversified economy based on knowledge and sustainability

B8

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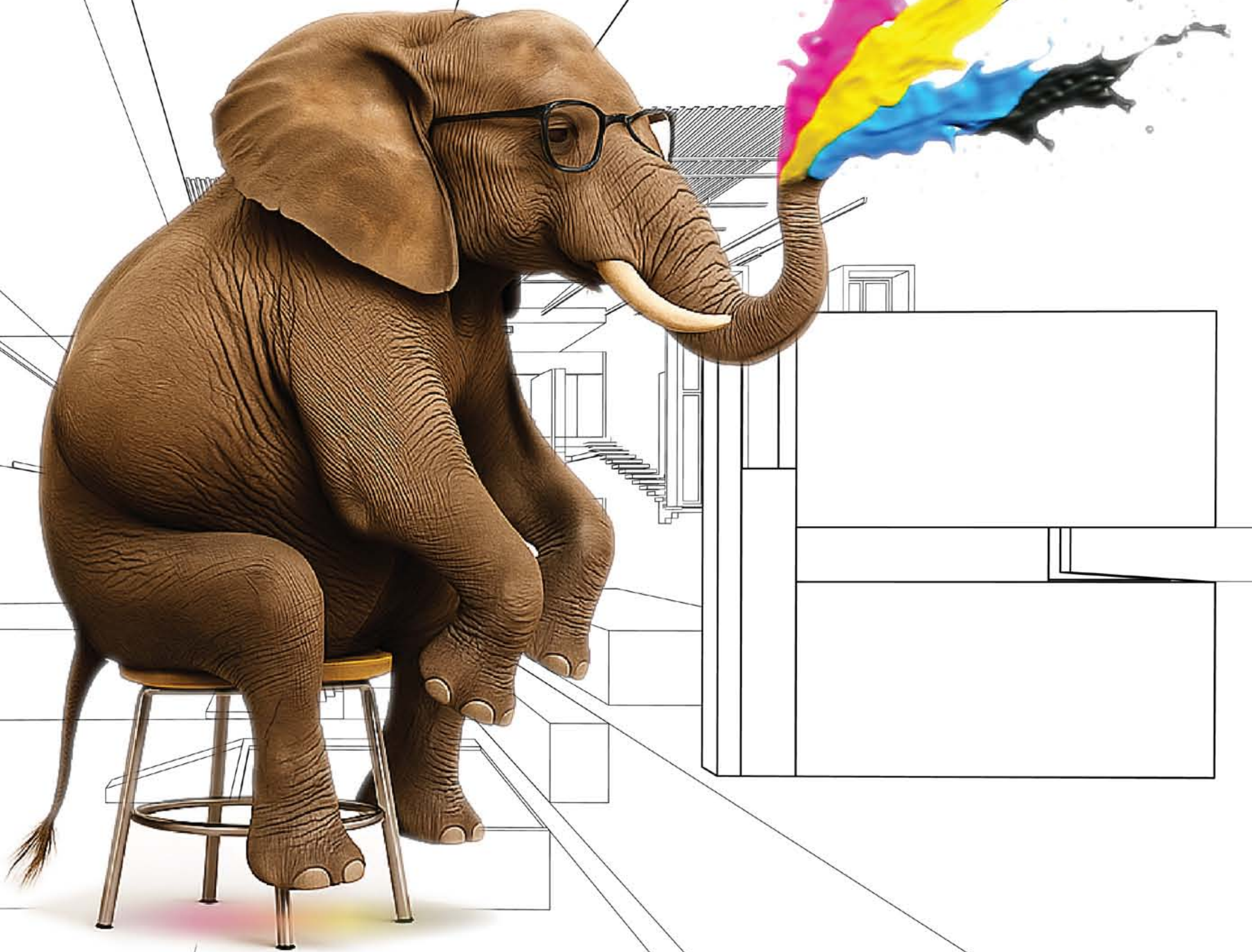
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# Oman bags three awards in the World Travel Market, London

Oman’s participation in this event included the signing by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, represented by its platform ‘Discover Oman’, of a new partnership with the ‘Discover Qatar’ platform

Times News Service

**LONDON:** The Sultanate of Oman, as part of its active participation in the World Travel Market 2025 held in London, won 3 awards within the “Wanderlust 2025” global awards, in the fields of adventure tourism, heritage and cultural tourism and sustainable tourism, confirming its position as one of the most prominent diverse tourist destinations rich in authentic and sustainable experiences.

Oman’s participation in this event also included the signing by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, represented by its promotional platform ‘Discover Oman’, of a new strategic partnership with the



“Discover Qatar” platform, which aims to enhance regional tourism cooperation and promote multi-destination travel between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar.

Under this new strategic partnership, the two platforms will work to develop integrated tourism packages and joint promotional initiatives aimed at encouraging visitors from key international markets, particularly from Asia and Europe, to explore both destinations in one trip.

Italy, Spain and China will serve as pilot markets for the application of the joint cooperation concept, utilising the joint representative office of the two parties in Italy to launch joint promotional events and activities.

The partnership will also include organising joint promotional tours, unified participation in ma-



join international tourism events and exhibitions, as well as collaborating with major tourism and travel companies to develop and market joint packages for the two destinations, which combine the cultural and heritage experiences that characterise both the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar. On the other hand, the Ministry



of Heritage and Tourism, in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, announced during this participation a project to issue a book about the Sultanate of Oman that embodies its cultural and tourist status within the series of international publications that deal with the most prominent luxury destinations around the world in cooperation with the international publishing house “Assouline”, which specialises in issuing luxury books. This is in line with the tourism marketing strategy to target the public interested in luxury tourism.

The Ministry also celebrated the launch of the book “Oman, Jewel of the Arabs” in cooperation with the British-Omani Society and the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in London.

This book documents an exploratory journey undertaken by a

number of young Omanis and interested British people that lasted 30 days along the coasts of the Sultanate of Oman, from Ras al-Hadd in the South Sharqiyah Governorate to the Wilayat of Salalah in the Dhofar Governorate, passing through the North Sharqiyah and Al Wusta Governorates, using traditional means of transport such as camels and walking, and modern means of transport such as four-wheel drive vehicles at the beginning of this year. This journey is a re-enactment of the route of the British explorer Bertram Thomas, one of the most prominent British explorers, who undertook it in 1928.

It is hoped that the Sultanate of Oman will host the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) 2026 conference, which coincides with the association’s 50th anniversary and is one of the

most prominent annual events in the travel and tourism sectors.

This is part of the Ministry’s plan to promote Oman’s tourism assets in the British market next year.

The conference aims to discuss the latest trends in the tourism sector, exchange experiences, and develop future strategies for promoting tourist destinations around the world, with the attendance of about 150 participants from tour operators, travel agents, and tourist destination experts.

It is worth mentioning that the Sultanate of Oman participated with a pavilion at the World Travel Market 2025, which presented a rich experience reflecting the diversity of tourism and heritage, highlighting the tourism experiences it offers, and promoting cooperation and partnerships to support the growth of Oman.

## GEOLOGICAL CHALLENGER COMPETITION

# Student teams conduct analytical studies of actual rock formations

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Oman Geological Society organised the 10th edition of the Geological Challenger Competition in Wadi Al-Muaydin, located in the Wilayat of Nizwa in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The event saw participation from 48 students specialising in Earth Sciences and Petroleum & Gas Engineering, representing various Omani universities and colleges.

The competition is part of the society’s efforts to promote geological awareness and enhance field skills among students in scientific disciplines related to the energy sector.

It aims to prepare national cadres capable of working in exploration, geological analysis, and applying theoretical knowledge in natural environments.

This competition serves as a field-based experience simulating real-world work in oil and gas companies.

Student teams are tasked with conducting analytical studies on actual rock formations, including identifying geological layers and their locations, measuring rock orientations, and evaluating oil and gas bearing strata using modern field tools, maps, and geological software.

The event also aims to refine



students’ skills in field research, teamwork, and scientific decision-making. It empowers them to engage in professional communication and applied thinking within an environment that mirrors major corporate settings. Additionally, it seeks to reinforce the importance of geological sciences in supporting the national economy and developing the energy and mineral sectors.

Abdul Munim bin Abdullah Al-Zakwani, from the Oman Geological Society and logistical organizer of the competition, stated: “The competition included students from various Omani universities, with specialisations divided between Earth Sciences and Petroleum Engineering. Partici-

pants worked in teams of four to six students two from petroleum disciplines and four from geology collaborating to study a rock site, analyze its layers, identify rock types and properties, and then develop a model simulating oil-bearing formations, estimating expected production volumes and sustainability periods.”

He explained that participants were provided with field data to help them perform calculations and apply theoretical concepts in real-world settings. Wadi Al-Muaydin was chosen for its geological formations that resemble those found in oil fields such as the Fahud Field, where rock types closely match the formations clearly visible in the valley, mak-

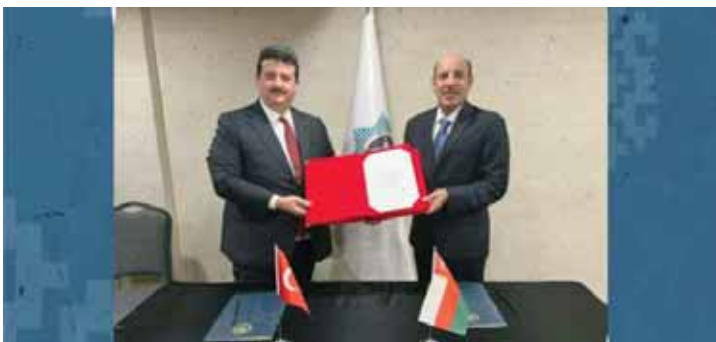
ing it an ideal environment for field training.

He also noted that the targeted rock layers were given Arabic names inspired by the Omani environment, with each layer having distinct properties and functions some acting as barriers to prevent oil leakage, while others serve as natural reservoirs.

He said that the three-day competition has trained over 500 students since its inception, providing them with practical experience that boosts their readiness for the job market and supports them during interviews for employment in oil and gas companies, as it offers a realistic environment that simulates actual work conditions in the sector.

## INTERPA

# Sultan Qaboos Police Sciences Academy gets top accreditation



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Sultan Qaboos Police Sciences Academy has been officially accreted as a member of the International Association of Police Academies (INTERPA) during the organisation’s 14th annual conference held in Turkiye.

The membership was granted following a comprehensive review and evaluation of the academy’s programmes and standards by a specialised committee.

This accreditation marks a significant international endorsement of the academy’s academic and professional excellence, as well as the quality of its training and educational programmes.

It highlights the academy’s pivotal role in developing police personnel in line with global best practices.

Membership in INTERPA opens new avenues for collaboration and knowledge exchange with international police institutions. It also enables the academy to participate in specialised research and scientific events, contributing to the advancement of police sciences worldwide.

This achievement reflects the Royal Oman Police’s commitment to enhancing police education and training, and reinforces the academy’s position as a leading center for knowledge and research in the fields of security studies and police sciences.

## DIGITAL ECONOMY

# Govt institutions allocate funds to implement AI projects

**<FROM A1** The programme includes 32 projects implemented by various government entities and targets four key outcomes: enhancing Oman’s AI readiness, increasing the number of AI startups, boosting scientific and research output in AI, and expanding national capabilities.

Among the programme’s achievements is the launch of the AI Economies Initiative by the Ministry of Economy, which allocated OMR10 million in its first year and OMR15 million in the following year to support AI projects.

Government institutions have actively competed for funding to implement their developmental AI



projects. Notable launches include “Mu’in AI,” a language model tailored for government use, the AI Studio, the “Engineered by AI” initiative, the “AI Makers” initiative, and the National Open Data Portal, which aggregates data from over 40 government entities.

## Fourth Industrial Revolution

He highlighted the inauguration of the Fourth Industrial Revolution Centre in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and the World Economic Forum. The Ministry also published the National Policy for Safe and Ethical AI Use and formed an AI Expert Committee comprising members from public, private, academic, and mili-

tary sectors to advise on AI strategies and projects.

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences launched the ICESCO Research Chair for AI Ethics.

In partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, a strategic research programme in AI was initiated, receiving proposals including one from the National University.

Ambitious projects were also announced, such as the “Oman Digital Triangle,” currently under development.

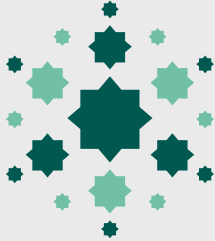
This initiative spans three geographically distinct zones, each equipped to host AI data centers powered by sustainable

green energy.

He announced the launch of the Green AI Alliance in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. The alliance currently includes 34 entities—AI companies, data center operators, energy firms, renewable energy providers, and investors—working together to identify investment opportunities and implement green AI projects in Oman.

Finally, a dedicated AI zone near Muscat International Airport was announced, envisioned as a regional hub for AI technology companies in the Middle East, offering a tailored package of incentives to attract investment and innovation.

-With ONA inputs



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COMMENTARY

## No more paper hassles: How contracts can be made electronically in Oman

The Electronic Transactions Law of Oman has simplified the process of forming contracts electronically, ensuring that they are legally valid and enforceable. Contracts can now be created entirely or partially through digital means, including emails, online platforms, or automated systems.

Speaking exclusively to Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Founding Partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, a leading law office in the Sultanate, stated: “Electronic contracts become legally binding once the parties express their agreement through an ‘offer’ and ‘acceptance’ using electronic methods, such as clicking ‘I agree’ or digitally signing a document. The law recognises electronic signatures as valid, provided they meet reliability criteria.”

Dr. Al Zadjali explained that a simple electronic signature, such as typing one’s name, may suffice if it can be proven trustworthy. Meanwhile, advanced or qualified signatures, linked to verified certificates, offer stronger legal assurance.

He further highlighted that the law allows contracts to be formed automatically by pre-programmed systems (like chatbots or online payment gateways) without direct human involvement.



**DR. MOHAMMED IBRAHIM AL ZADJALI**, Founding partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm

For instance, buying a product online through a website’s automated checkout process creates a valid contract, if the user knows they are interacting with such a system. However, the government may set specific technical and security standards for these automated systems to ensure fairness and transparency.

Electronic contracts are treated on par with traditional paper contracts in terms of legal validity. If a party requires an “original” document, an electronic version can serve this purpose, provided it accurately displays the content and maintains authenticity, such as unaltered PDFs with time-stamps. In case of disputes, courts assess the reliability of the electronic processes used to create or store the contract.



“Oman’s law updates contract rules to include online agreements, making them legally as valid as paper contracts, as long as they meet clear standards for security, transparency, and fairness,” he concluded.

*(Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established 18 years ago and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).*

# Water and sewage projects in Bausher reviewed by Nama

The most prominent of these are 7 projects with a total cost of OMR123mn



**MUSCAT:** Nama Water Services reviewed the water and sewage network projects being implementing in the Wilayat of Bausher in the Governorate of Muscat during a community meeting at the office of the Wali of Bausher.

The most prominent of these are 7 projects with a total cost of OMR123 million, which include main and branch lines for sewage networks with lengths of 311 kilometres, including 34 kilometres for potable water networks, in addition to other components and facilities that complement the project.

It also includes the project to establish sewage networks in the heights of Bausher at a cost of OMR17.5 million, and it is expected that 60,000 people will benefit from it, as it is scheduled to be completed in 2028 with an implementation period of four years.

The project includes sewage networks with a length of 68 kilometres, 1,100 inspection chambers, and 6,850 household connections.

The project also includes the construction of sewage networks in Al-Aziaba South at a cost of OMR5.6 million, and the number of beneficiaries is 13,000 people.

The project is expected to be completed in 2027 with an implementation period of three years, and includes sewage networks with a length of 49 kilometres, 1,714 inspection chambers, and 722 household connections.

The first phase of the sewage network rehabilitation project in the Al-Ghubra North and Al-Azaiba North areas, costing OMR24 million, is also underway.

The project was awarded at the end of June and is scheduled for completion in 2028, with a four-year implementation period. It includes the construction of a 4-kilometre main sewage line, the replacement of 812 inspection chambers, the rehabilitation of a similar length of the existing main line, and the replacement of 80 deep inspection chambers.

Nama Water Services is currently implementing a project to construct pumping stations in Bausher and Al Ansab at a cost of OMR21 million.

The project, expected to be completed in 2028, will take four years to complete. It includes a pumping station with two 17-kilometre discharge lines and a 3.5-kilometre gravity sewer line to connect the Al Ansab and Bausher networks.

Work is also continuing on

the sewage network project in Al Ansab, where the completion rate has reached 8 percent, and the number of household connections is 4,180 homes. The project is expected to be completed in 2028 with an implementation period of four years, and it includes sewage networks with a length of 75.5 kilometres, and 1,160 inspection chambers, and the cost of its implementation amounts to OMR25.7 million.

In the Al Khuwair area, two projects will be implemented: the Al Khuwair 1/17 project, costing OMR14.3 million, which includes 882 household connections and is expected to be completed in 2029 after a five-year implementation period.

This project includes a 30-kilometre sewage network, a 15-kilometre potable water network, and a 1-kilometre treated water network.

The second project, Al Khuwair 2/17, costing OMR15 million, includes 858 household connections.

It is also expected to be completed in 2029 after a five-year implementation period and includes a 30-kilometre sewage network, a 19-kilometre potable water network, and a 2.2-kilometre treated water network.

BRAZILIAN CITY OF BELÉM

## Investments in the clean energy have become engines of growth

**SAO PAULO:** The Sultanate of Oman affirmed its continued pursuit of environmental and climate goals, and the climate transition, which is a major economic and development opportunity, as investments in clean energy, sustainable infrastructure, and climate intelligence have become the engines of growth in the twenty-first century.

This came in a speech delivered by Dr. Abdullah bin Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, at the meeting of world leaders in the Brazilian city of Belém, prior to the launch of the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference COP30, which begins the day after tomorrow with the participation of 200 countries.

He explained in the Sultanate of Oman’s speech that “Oman Vision 2040” has set the requirements of the three environmental agreements as a major national agenda, and has moved forward in implementing the national strategy for carbon neutrality, activating the national carbon register, and developing Article 6 policies of the Paris Agreement, in addition to promoting renewable energy projects.

He pointed to the great concerns about the impact of climate change on the entire ecosystem, explaining



that what the planet Earth is witnessing in terms of human civilization phenomena, rising temperatures, melting ice, loss of biodiversity and forest fires, has left no room for doubt that climate change is a reality that cannot be ignored, which places everyone before national and global responsibilities to accelerate the pace of work, especially after the outputs of the climate report issued at the end of last October, which showed that climate action is still below ambition.

He added: “The planet’s ecosystem is one indivisible system, which underscores the need to review the current global environmental institutional system, which operates with the governance of the past to manage the files of the present and the future, which has led to wasted efforts and slow procedures. Institutional governance

is the basis for the success of work systems, unifying efforts, and confronting challenges.”

He explained that the Sultanate of Oman is working on implementing several climate change adaptation projects, including an early warning system, flood protection systems, and the construction of resilient and sustainable cities, in addition to expanding the adoption of nature-based solutions.

He concluded his speech by affirming that the Sultanate of Oman believes that development and sustainability are complementary paths, that achieving a just and equitable transition is the way to ensure a secure future and a prosperous and sustainable economy, and that preserving the environment is the best investment in the future of coming generations and the true foundation for the well-being of peoples.



### Tender Notice

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) hereby announces the following Tenders:

| Tender No.     | Description of Project                                                                                                                                  | Eligibility                                                                                                                                                     | Tender Fee (RO)                          | Last Date of Distribution of Tender Documents | Bid Submission Date |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| T/2739179/2025 | Consultancy Services for Design and Supervision for Water Distribution Networks in Adam Wilayat                                                         | Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned                    | R.O 100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable   | 20/11/2025                                    | 29/12/2025          |
| T/2739180/2025 | Consultancy Services for Design and Supervision for Water Distribution Networks in Masirah Wilayat                                                      | Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned                    | R.O 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable   | 20/11/2025                                    | 29/12/2025          |
| T/2739181/2025 | Consultancy Services for Design and Supervision for Water Distribution Networks in Al Wusta Governorate                                                 | Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned                    | R.O 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable   | 20/11/2025                                    | 29/12/2025          |
| T/2739189/2025 | Consultancy Service for Design Review & Construction Supervision of Interconnection Water System Between Al Sharqiyah & Al Dakhiliyah Governorates      | Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned                    | R.O 1,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable | 20/11/2025                                    | 29/12/2025          |
| T/2738174/2025 | Construction of Water Distribution Network and House Connections in Saiq & Tawi Huqain in Al Kamil & Al Wafi Wilayat in South Ash Sharqiyah Governorate | Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority specialized in the works mentioned                                                | RO 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable    | 20/11/2025                                    | 29/12/2025          |
| T/2739188/2025 | Construction of Water Distribution Networks in Nizwa and Bahla Wilayats in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate                                                    | Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned | R.O 2,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable | 20/11/2025                                    | 5/1/2026            |

The tender documents can be obtained from the e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from this announcement date. The applicants shall pay the tender fee by logging into their (I-supplier Page).

Applicants who are not registered shall register through the following link: <https://nws.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> in order to receive the login credentials of the Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login) <https://nws.nama.om/en-us/Business-with-Us/Supplierlogin>. All participating companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope. Bid Bonds must be obtained from a local Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman addressed to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 2:00 pm on the bid submission date.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 2:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website [www.owwsc.nama.om](http://www.owwsc.nama.om) & in case of general queries you may contact us through the email ID of [tender@nws.nama.om](mailto:tender@nws.nama.om)



# Madhubanti mesmerises Muscat!



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Acclaimed singer Madhubanti Bagchi made her Oman debut at the Sheraton Hotel on Friday night, leaving the audience spellbound. Her two-hour show featured powerful renditions of popular Bollywood hits, soulful ghazals, and classical melodies, showcasing her remarkable versatility. Music lovers cheered for more even after the final note faded. With her captivating voice and effortless charm, Madhubanti's maiden show in Muscat created an unforgettable evening and a lasting mark on the city's vibrant music scene. The evening began with Omani singer Nadeem Al Balushi belting out some memorable songs, adding a local flavour to the cross-cultural celebration. Following the live performances of Madhubanti,

the night continued with DJ Pri (Priyanka) taking over the console for an electrifying after-party. G. V. Srinivas, the Indian Ambassador to Oman, graced the event as the Guest of Honour, joining a large gathering of distinguished guests, dignitaries, and music lovers from across the Sultanate. Organised by Nexus Novel in association with Kings United Dance Academy, the event was supported by Travel Point (Travel Partner), Sheraton Oman Hotel (Hospitality and Ticketing Partner), and Ultimate AV Production (AV Partner). Other sponsors included Om-Pay, Unimoni, Gulf Exchange, Global Pay, Guide Me, Kriti (India), Ripples, GPT, Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, and Times of Oman. Here are snapshots from her unforgettable debut in Oman.

Photos: Shabin Z



# Initiative to help private sector meet goals of Oman Vision 2040

The initiative also aims to enhance the private sector's ability to create job opportunities and attract investment, thereby boosting Oman's economic competitiveness regionally and globally

Times News Service



**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, the Royal Oman Police, and the Tax Authority, continues to implement the "Elite Companies" initiative.

This programme aims to spotlight leading companies distinguished by their institutional, financial, and administrative performance.

The initiative seeks to stimulate the business environment by encouraging the adoption of advanced models of governance, innovation, and productivity.

It aligns with Oman's broader efforts to support the national economy and empower the private sector to play a vital role in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

As part of the Ministry's strategy to honour national institutions that have fostered a culture of excellence, the initiative also aims to enhance the private sector's ability to create job opportunities and attract investment, thereby boosting Oman's economic competitiveness regionally and globally.

Mubarak bin Mohammed Al-Douhani, Director General of Planning at the Ministry and Head of the Supervisory Team for the Elite Companies, emphasised that the initiative reflects the Ministry's vision of building a competitive and

resilient private sector rooted in governance, innovation, and sustainability. He noted that the companies classified under this initiative have demonstrated readiness for expansion and growth, offering business models aligned with global market dynamics.

Beyond recognition, the initiative encourages companies to adopt best practices, improve operational efficiency, and contribute to economic development by creating quality employment opportunities for Omani youth. These companies are expected to lead productive sectors and support a dynamic and competitive investment environment.

Al-Douhani highlighted that Elite Companies form the backbone of the local economy. Out of 352,622 registered companies, 5,109 have been classified as Majid Companies.

Their exports, as recorded in the Bayan customs system by the end of 2024, reached OMR5.926 billion out of a total OMR9.279 billion in private sector exports representing 63.8% of the total.

Additionally, these companies employ 140,881 Omani nationals, accounting for 40% of the total Omani workforce in the private sector.

Tariq bin Nasser Al-Harassi, Director of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in South

Al Batinah Governorate and Project Manager for Elite Companies, explained that the initiative uses a clear classification system based on company age, revenue size, export value, Omanization rates, branch network, and market presence. Companies must also demonstrate active operations and legal compliance with national regulations.

He added that classified companies benefit from several advantages, including participation in shaping commercial policies, streamlined procedures, enhanced investor confidence, and other approved incentives.

Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, Board Member of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of the Finance and Insurance Committee, stated that the Elite Companies initiative reflects a strong national vision to reinforce the private sector's central role in sustainable development, investment attraction, and economic opportunity creation.

He noted that this strategic step supports high-performing national companies known for innovation and effective management, helping raise competitiveness in both local and regional markets.

He added that the initiative will offer a range of incentives and benefits to companies across its classification tiers, enhancing their

operational and expansion capabilities and driving them toward higher levels of performance and productivity.

These benefits will also motivate other companies to adopt best practices and strive to join the classification in the future.

Salman concluded by emphasizing that this initiative represents a vital national project that strengthens Oman's economic framework.

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry is committed to supporting it through active partnerships with government entities and private institutions, with the goal of creating a more flexible and attractive business environment. The initiative is expected to empower Omani companies to grow, expand, and compete regionally and globally, in line with the national objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Executives from leading companies classified under Category (A) of the Elite Companies list have expressed pride in the recognition and reaffirmed their commitment to excellence and national development.

Nasser bin Suleiman Al-Azri, CEO of Vale Oman, stated that the company's classification in Category (A) affirms its dedication to developing an integrated in-

dustrial ecosystem that supports Oman's strategic goals, enhances local value, and empowers national talent. He emphasized that Vale Oman will continue investing in technology and innovation to ensure the sustainability of the national industrial sector.

Sameeh bin Ahmed Al-Abdulatif, Board Member of Gulf Agency Company (Oman), also classified in Category (A), noted that this recognition serves as a strong incentive to continue improving services and elevating operational standards.

Faisal bin Salim Al-Maashani, Director of the CEO's Office at Oman Flour Mills, highlighted that the company's designation as a Elite Company in Category (A) reflects its commitment to excellence, quality, and sustainability

in the food industry. He affirmed the company's ongoing efforts in digital transformation and its contribution to national food security.

Moath bin Ahmed Al-Hinai, CEO of Onsor Technologies, described the company's classification as a Elite Company as a significant milestone that underscores its adherence to quality and excellence standards. He added that the recognition boosts client and partner confidence and opens new opportunities for growth and expansion.

Al-Hinai further emphasised the company's focus on developing team capabilities, optimizing operations, and building sustainable partnerships to maintain excellence. He expressed strong support for the national initiative and looked forward to additional incentives that encourage companies to elevate their performance.

The Elite Companies initiative continues to highlight Oman's pioneering role in enhancing the business environment and empowering national enterprises to build a diversified and sustainable economy rooted in innovation and knowledge. It reinforces Oman's position as an attractive destination for investment and entrepreneurship, while strengthening the overall competitiveness of its business ecosystem.





جامعة ظفار  
Dhofar University

### Notice for The Annual Ordinary General Meeting (AGM) of Dhofar University S.A.O.C

The Board of Directors of Dhofar University (S.O.A.C) is pleased to invite the company's shareholders to attend the twenty-first Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the company (AGM), which will take place on Wednesday, 26 November 2025, at 2:00 p.m. The meeting will be held via the AGM's electronic platform, accessible from the Muscat Clearing and Depository (S.A.O.C.) (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum is not secured to convene the AGM, a second meeting will be held on Thursday, 27 November 2025 at 02:00 p.m. The agenda of the valid meeting will be as follows:

AGM Agenda

1)

To consider and approve the board of directors' report on the activities of the company and its financial status during the financial year ended on 31 August 2025.

2)

To consider and approve the board of directors' report on the organization and management of the company, during the financial year ended on 31 August 2025.

3)

To consider and approve the auditor's report on the financial statements of the company for the financial year ended on 31 August 2025.

4)

To inform about the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended on 31 August 2025.

5)

To appoint the External Auditor for the new financial year ending 31st August 2026 and determine his fees.

6)

To elect the members of the Board of Directors of Dhofar University (S.O.A.C).

Any person wishing to be nominated as a member of the Board of Directors must fill out the nomination form prepared for this purpose. The form should be delivered to the company at least five working days before the AGM date, not later than the end of the workday on Tuesday, 18.11.2025. According to the company's articles of association If the candidate is a shareholder, he must own at least five thousand (5000) shares of the company until the date of AGM.

As per the Articles of Association of the company, the MOCI's guidelines of holding AGMs for SAOC companies via electronic means and the other relevant rules, please note the following:

a. A legal person only has the right to appoint a natural person to attend the AGM and vote on decisions taken on his behalf via electronic means. This natural person must have an ID issued by Muscat Clearing and Depository Company SAOC.

b. Shareholders have the right to vote on any of the agenda items starting no earlier than three days from the date of holding the AGM. In case the shares owned by a shareholder changed (increased/ decreased), the vote shall be void and a new vote needs to be made on the day of the AGM.

In case of any queries, please do not hesitate to contact  
the Legal Advisor: Mohammed Abbas, Tel. No.: 23237108, GSM: 94043168

Chairman  
Tariq Salim Mustahil Al Mashani

Legal Advisor  
Mohammed Abbas

External Auditor  
Deloitte & Touche (M.E.) & Co. LLC



THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN  
Tender Advertisement

The Royal Guard of Oman, invites tender for the following:-

| Tender Reference | Subject                                                         | Grade       | Tender Document Fee (Non-refundable) | Submission Date    |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 07/2025          | Construction of Villa Complex ( Plot NO.140) At Madinat Al-Ilam | III & above | SME R.O. 10/-<br>L.O R.O. 25/-       | 16th December 2025 |

Specialized companies registered in the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the above-mentioned Grade and the Procurement and Contracts Directorate of the General Directorate of Finance, Royal Guard of Oman, can collect the tender document from the Tender Committee Secretariat, Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from Monday 10 th Novmber to Sunday 16 th Novmber 2025.

Wax-sealed Tenders addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee should be submitted to RGO before 1200 hours on the submission date along with a Tender Bond the name of the Royal Guard of Oman equivalent to 1% (One Percent) of the value of the Tender from any registered Bank in the Sultanate of Oman,. The tenderer shall not reveal his identity other than the tender title and the address mentioned below.

No Tender will be accepted after the submission date. The Royal Guard of Oman reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender without giving reasons.

For more Information: 24637401 or 24637402.

Tender Committee  
P.O Box 381C.P.O  
Postal Code 111

FROM 16-19 NOVEMBER

## Oman to host Gulf Cinema Festival 2025

**MUSCAT:** Oman will host the Gulf Cinema Festival 2025 events, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, from 16-19 November at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The festival features the participation of 26 Gulf films competing for nine festival awards across various categories, including feature, short, and documentary films.

Sayyid Said Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, stated that the Festival aligns with a clear vision translated by the Cultural Strategy 2021-2040 to enhance the cultural leadership of the Sultanate of Oman and its cultural communication at the regional level. He noted that the Festival is a leading platform for

promoting Gulf cinematic momentum, exchanging artistic and creative experiences, and highlighting the shared cultural identity of the Arabian Gulf countries through cinematic art.

He added that organising the Festival is part of the Ministry's diligent efforts to develop the creative industries sector and empower youth to contribute to a Gulf

cinema industry that expresses the reality and future aspirations of Gulf societies. The Festival grants 9 main awards to honour the most prominent participating works in their fields: Best Feature Film, Best Documentary Film, Best Short Film, Best Original Score, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Screenplay, Best Director, and Best Cinematography. — **ONA**



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# Royal Hospital performs Oman's first robotic surgery successfully

This achievement reflects Oman's forward-looking vision for medical excellence and the adoption of advanced technologies in precision surgery



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Royal Hospital has successfully performed the first robotic surgery in the Sultanate of Oman, marking a major milestone in the country's healthcare journey.

This achievement reflects Oman's forward-looking vision for medical excellence and the adoption of advanced technologies in precision surgery, adding a new chapter to the nation's evolving healthcare landscape.

Dr. Qais bin Mohammed Al-Hooti, Consultant Urologist at the Royal Hospital, told the Oman News Agency that the procedure involved reconstructive surgery on the renal pelvis for a patient suffering from ureteropelvic junction obstruction.

The operation lasted approximately two hours and was successfully completed.

He explained that robotic surgery represents the pinnacle of precision surgical innovation, offering surgeons unprecedented control, three-dimensional visualization, and the ability to perform highly delicate movements beyond the limits of the human hand.



The system also enables access to deep and complex anatomical areas, reduces incision size and blood loss, accelerates patient recovery, and enhances safety while minimizing complications—ushering in a new era of high-quality, efficient surgery.

The hospital aims to expand the use of robotic surgical technology across multiple specialties, including urology, colorectal surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, hepatobiliary and gastrointestinal surgery, and cardiothoracic procedures.

A key focus is on training and empowering national medical talent to position Oman as a regional leader in robotic and digital sur-

gery. This achievement aligns with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 to build a pioneering healthcare system rooted in innovation and modern technologies.

It strengthens the national health infrastructure and supports Oman's aspirations to develop a generation of highly skilled surgeons and technicians proficient in smart surgical techniques, reinforcing the Sultanate's status as a regional hub for advanced medical care.

The surgical team expressed pride in this landmark accomplishment, noting that robotic surgery offers superior precision and control, reduces postopera-

tive complications, and shortens recovery time compared to traditional methods.

Hospital officials emphasised that this milestone marks the beginning of a new era of smart surgery in Oman. Efforts are underway to expand robotic procedures into other specialties such as colorectal, thoracic, and gynecological surgery, further establishing the Royal Hospital as a national reference center for advanced medicine.

They also highlighted that this success would not have been possible without the continuous support of the Ministry of Health and the collaborative efforts of surgical, medical, and technical teams. It reflects a bold national strategy aimed at enhancing the capabilities of Omani healthcare professionals and equipping them with cutting-edge global technologies.

Robotic surgery is one of the most advanced developments in modern medicine. It relies on

intelligent systems operated by surgeons through a sophisticated console that provides magnified, three-dimensional views of the surgical field and enables movements that surpass human dexterity.

This technology significantly reduces blood loss, lowers complication rates, shortens recovery periods, and improves surgical outcomes—especially in complex tumor cases and sensitive anatomical regions.

## PORT SULTAN QABOOS WELCOMES INTERNATIONAL CRUISE SHIP CARRYING 2,386 TOURISTS

Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat welcomed the international cruise ship Mein Schiff 4, operated by German company TUI, carrying 2,386 tourists from various countries around the world. The arrival marks the beginning of the 2025-2026 cruise season, launched by Asyad Ports and Free Zones in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. This launch is part of ongoing efforts between the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Asyad Group, and several public and private sector partners to strengthen Oman's position on the global cruise tourism map and establish Omani ports as key destinations for international cruise lines. The arrival of Mein Schiff 4 signals a promising start to an active tourism season. Port Sultan Qaboos is expected to witness a rise in the number of cruise ships visiting Oman in the coming months, reflecting the country's appeal as a distinguished maritime destination in the region. Cruise tourism is a central pillar of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism's strategy to develop the tourism sector, in cooperation with Asyad Group and other stakeholders. This aligns with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to diversify the national economy and enhance the country's tourism potential. — **Times News Service**



MUSANDAM GOVERNORATE

## Agreement to develop Khasab Square inked

**KHASAB:** An agreement to finance the development of Khasab Square was signed on Thursday with Oman LNG company.

Inked in the Wilayat of Khasab in Musandam Governorate, the agreement aims to make Khasab Square an urban landmark that reflects the tourist identity of Musandam Governorate.

The agreement was signed by Sayyid Ibrahim Said Al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam, and Dr. Amor Nasser al-Matani, Chief Executive Officer of Oman LNG Development Foundation.

**Enhancing the city's attractiveness**

The agreement aims to develop Khasab Square in a manner that contributes to improving the general landscape and enhancing the city's attractiveness to residents and visitors alike.

The signing of the agreement stems from an ongoing partnership between Musandam Governorate and Oman LNG.

**Development projects**

It emanates from Oman LNG's commitment to social responsibility programmes aimed at supporting development projects in various governorates of the Sultanate in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. — **ONA**

CHARGES OF 'GENOCIDE'



Istanbul public prosecutor issues arrest warrants against Netanyahu

**TEL AVIV:** The Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has issued arrest warrants for 37 individuals, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on charges of "genocide" in connection with the war in Gaza.

According to a press statement from the prosecutor's office cited in the newspaper *Türkiye Today*, among those named are Defence Minister Israel Katz, IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir, and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

The prosecutor's office has reportedly claimed that Israel of "systematically targets civilians in the Gaza Strip" amid its war against Hamas, which started after the terrorist group's 7 October 2023 atrocities against Israeli civilians.

The warrant is said to cite specific incidents from the early days of the war, including the 17 October 2023 incident at the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital. Israeli and US intelligence concluded that this was the result of a failed rocket launch by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist group.

Israel denies all claims that it targets civilians. It regularly cites its efforts to evacuate non-combatants ahead of strikes, as well to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid, as evidence.

Türkiye's president is supporter of Hamas.

That is also the case of Israel. In August 2025, however, Prime Minister Netanyahu personally recognised the genocide, though this falls short of any kind of official recognition. — ANI

US officials will not attend G-20 summit in South Africa: Trump

The Trump administration has long accused the South African government of discriminating against its white minority, citing alleged land seizures and violence



**WASHINGTON DC:** President Donald Trump on Friday announced that no US officials would attend the Group of 20 summit in South Africa later this month, citing the country's treatment of white farmers.

"It is a total disgrace that the G20 will be held in South Africa," Trump posted on his Truth Social network.

The Trump administration has long accused the South African government of discriminating against its white minority, citing

alleged land seizures and violence.

The South African government has denied that Afrikaners and other white South Africans are being persecuted.

"No US government official will attend as long as these human rights abuses continue," Trump said in his post.

Trump said at a business event earlier this week in Miami that South Africa should be thrown out of the group of the world's largest economies, saying: "South Africa shouldn't even be in the Gs any

more, because what's happened there is bad."

**JD Vance plans to skip summit**

Trump announced in September he would skip the G20 summit this year, but that Vice President JD Vance would attend in his place.

On Friday, as Trump broke news that US officials plan to skip the summit, Reuters news agency reported an official, without naming the person, as saying that "the vice president is not travelling to

South Africa for the G20, nor does he have any plans for international travel in the near term."

Each year, a different country assumes the G20 presidency and sets the agenda for that year, with the US due to take on the role after this year's summit on November 22-23.

Trump plans to hold next year's summit at his golf resort in Miami — at the same location he proposed to host the 2020 Group of Seven (G7) summit during his first term.

— DW

MD-11 CARGO PLANES

US logistics companies UPS, FedEx ground planes after Louisville crash

**LOUISVILLE:** US logistics companies UPS and FedEx have grounded their combined fleet of more than 50 McDonnell Douglas MD-11 cargo planes.

The decision, announced on Friday evening, followed a crash involving one of the planes at Louisville International Airport in Kentucky earlier that week, which killed at least 14 people.

"Out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of safety, we have made the decision to temporarily ground our MD-11 fleet," UPS said in a statement.

"The grounding is effective immediately. We made this decision proactively at the recommendation of the aircraft manufacturer."

Meanwhile, Boeing — which acquired the MD-11 program through its 1997 merger with McDonnell Douglas — also announced that it recommended UPS and FedEx suspend MD-11 freighter flight operations.

"This recommendation was made in an abundance of caution and we will continue coordinating with the FAA on this matter," a



Boeing spokesperson said.

**What do we know about MD-11 crash?**

The US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is leading the investigation into the crash. Investigators determined that the accident occurred when one of the engines caught fire and detached from the plane during takeoff.

The plane reached an altitude

of approximately 100 feet (30.5 metres) before plunging off the runway in flames, destroying two nearby businesses in the process.

On Friday, US safety investigators said the three UPS pilots attempted to regain control of the aircraft just before it crashed after a warning bell sounded in the cockpit.

The NTSB reported that the plane was built in 1991 and modi-

fied into a cargo aircraft. A preliminary report on the investigation is expected in about 30 days.

**How many MD-11s are operated by UPS and FedEx?**

The MD-11 was developed and initially produced by McDonnell Douglas Corporation, which merged with Boeing in 1997. Production of the MD-11 ceased in 2000, and its use for passenger service officially ended in 2014.

UPS and FedEx are the world's largest cargo carriers. Prior to the crash, UPS had 27 MD-11s in its fleet, according to a UPS fact sheet. The company stated that its MD-11s comprise only about 9% of its fleet. FedEx which has a fleet of 700 aircraft operates 28 MD-11s. The company said it is "immediately implementing contingency plans" to avoid disruptions.

Disruptions could have far-reaching consequences because FedEx and UPS transport goods for major retailers such as Amazon, Walmart, and Target, as well as manufacturers and businesses around the world. — DW

AIRFIELD LIGHTING SYSTEM PROBLEM

Flight operation in Nepal's Tribhuvan airport halted

**KATHMANDU:** Flight operations at Nepal's Tribhuvan International Airport have been halted following a problem in the airfield lighting system, an airport official confirmed.

As per the spokesperson of the Himalayan nation's only operating international airport, a short circuit was reported on Saturday evening, halting flight movements.

"Problem has been reported in the airfield lighting system of the runway. At least five flights are on hold as of now. All arrival and departure flights, including domestic and international, have been delayed. The problem was detected from 5:30 PM (Local Time)," Renji Sherpa, spokesperson for TIA, confirmed to ANI over the phone.

Seeping of rainwater into the wire lanes of the runway lights might have resulted in the short circuit, leading to the halt in airport operations, the officials have suspected.

With the problem reported, flights from Dubai (Fly Dubai),

Qatar (Qatar Airways) and Korea (Korean Airways) were kept on hold at Simara. With a shortage of fuel on board, the Korean Airways aircraft was diverted to New Delhi, India.

A domestic flight from Janakpur, operated by domestic Buddha Air, which was kept on hold over the holding zone of Simara, was returned back to Janakpur.

With the problem in the lighting system, the runway of Tribhuvan International Airport is reported to have gone dark. TIA has a tabletop runway with a length of 3,350 metres.

"Repair works are underway," Sherpa confirmed.

Runway lighting refers to a system of lights installed on and around an airport runway to guide aircraft during low visibility, especially at night. These lights mark the runway's edges, centreline, and threshold, providing visual cues for pilots during takeoff, landing, and taxiing.

— ANI

EXTREME WEATHER

New major storm looms after Typhoon Kalmaegi wreaks havoc in Philippines

**MANILA:** The Philippines is in for more extreme weather as a major storm moves toward the country's eastern coast.

The island nation is still reeling from Typhoon Kalmaegi, which devastated large swathes of the country this week.

The new storm, Typhoon Fung-wong, is expected to turn into a super typhoon before it makes landfall on Sunday night or early Monday morning, with the Philippines' weather bureau warning of storm surges of up to five metres (16 feet).

The official death toll from Typhoon Kalmaegi in the Philippines has meanwhile risen to at least 204, officials say.

Kalmaegi went on to kill at least five more people in central Vietnam after the storm pounded the country with torrential rain and high winds on Friday.

The storm had weakened to a tropical depression by Friday morning and moved into neighboring Laos and Cambodia.



**Evacuation orders as Typhoon Fung-wong nears**

Fung-wong, currently carrying maximum sustained winds of 140 kph (87 mph) and gusts of up to 170 kph, has already brought heavy rains and winds to parts of the eastern Philippines.

The typhoon spans 1,500 kilometres (932 miles), meaning that it could also affect the densely populated area in and around the

capital, Manila.

Residents in low-lying and coastal areas have been ordered to evacuate to higher ground and to halt all activities at sea.

**Ongoing cleanup in the Philippines**

Meanwhile, cleanup and rescue operations are continuing in the center of the Philippines, where Kalmaegi made landfall

on Tuesday.

In addition to the more than 200 fatalities, nearly 450,000 people were evacuated to shelters, and nearly 400,000 remained in evacuation centers or homes of relatives as of Saturday.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday visited the worst-affected areas in the central Cebu province, where 141 people died, mostly in flooding.

The Philippines is hit by around 20 tropical cyclones each year. More than 6,300 people died when Super Typhoon Haiyan hit the country in November 2013.

**What is the extent of the damage in Vietnam?**

In Vietnam, the storm uprooted trees and downed power lines, leaving some 500,000 people without power as of Saturday. It also caused dozens of homes to collapse and severely damaged or blew the roofs off more than 2,600 others.

— DW



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**TENDER NOTICE**  
Ref: ISB/Tender/2025-26 dated 10/11/2025  
**Bids are invited from interested parties for the following tenders:**

| Tender Documents available from | Tender Submission Date | Tender Fee. (R.O.) |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 10/11/2025                      | 20/11/2025             | 10.000 for each    |

| Sl.No. | Name of Tender                                                          | Tender No.   |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 01     | PA System – Zone Allocation                                             | A005/2025-26 |
| 02     | Construction of New Classrooms – Phase 1                                | A006/2025-26 |
| 03     | Staff Medical Insurance Policy                                          | A007/2025-26 |
| 04     | General Insurance                                                       | A008/2025-26 |
| 05     | Cleaning and Housekeeping Services                                      | A009/2025-26 |
| 06     | Supply of Textbooks for the Year 2026–27                                | A010/2025-26 |
| 07     | Supply of Notebooks for the Year 2026–27                                | A011/2025-26 |
| 08     | Setting up of CSC Lab for Foundation Stage                              | A012/2025-26 |
| 09     | Running of School Canteen for Staff & Students                          | A013/2025-26 |
| 10     | School Safe Transportation                                              | A014/2025-26 |
| 11     | Grid-Connected Solar PV Project – 200 KW (DC)                           | A015/2025-26 |
| 12     | CCTV Installation for All Classrooms (Ground, First, and Second Floors) | A016/2025-26 |
| 13     | Running Track and Field Renovation                                      | A017/2025-26 |
| 14     | Supply of School Regular & PE Uniforms, Pullovers, and Blazers          | A018/2025-26 |
| 15     | Supply of School Furniture for New Classrooms                           | A019/2025-26 |
| 16     | Supply of Mini Sewage Treatment Plant for Irrigation Water purpose      | A020/2025-26 |
| 17     | Supply of Motion Sensors for School Lighting                            | A021/2025-26 |

1. Tender documents can be collected from the ISB office, till a day before the date of submission.

2. Inquiries and requests for clarifications regarding the above Tenders shall be submitted through emails to **PURCHASE@ISBOMAN.COM**

Sealed tenders, inscribing the tender Name and Tender Number only, on the envelope to be dropped in the tender box placed in ISB, on/before 01.00 PM of the tender submission date; along with all necessary details and supporting documents. ISB reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

SPORTS

# India secure T20I series 2-1



The visitors raced away to 52/0 in 4.5 overs against Australia before lightning and rain took over in Brisbane

**BRISBANE:** India claimed a 2-1 series victory over Australia in an anticlimax after the fifth and final T20I was abandoned due to heavy rain and thunderstorms in Brisbane.

After being sent in to bat, there had been intrigue over how India's top-order would fare on a Gabba surface with plenty of bounce and carry.

But with their nemesis Josh Hazlewood in Ashes prep mode and again not in the line-up, Abhishek Sharma and Shubman Gill plundered 52 runs before play came to a halt after 4.5 overs. Abhishek did have luck having been dropped twice, but Gill was in sweet touch as he smacked 29 off 16 balls.

The series ended the same way it began after rain ruined the



opening T20I in Canberra.

Australia dominated game two in front of 82,000 fans at the MCG, largely thanks to a rampant Hazlewood but India ultimately prevailed in the series after their spinners gained a stranglehold on slower surfaces in Hobart and the Gold Coast.

India will head home well pleased ahead of their T20 World Cup title defence on home soil. "The way everyone chipped in every game, it was a complete team effort with the bat, ball and in the field," India captain Suryakumar Yadav said.

"I saw what happened with the women's team winning the World Cup in India, having unbelievable support. When you play at home there is pressure but at the same time there is a lot of excitement."

In their final hit-out in the format before the T20 World Cup, Australia's aggressive batting approach against high-quality spin attacks has come under scrutiny although recriminations are unlikely amid Ashes hysteria.

"I don't think I can remember the last time we had so many rain interruptions," Australia captain

Mitchell Marsh said. "I think there are a lot of learnings to take forward, a lot of positives."

"The flexibility of our group and the squad that we're trying to build in a World Cup year has been amazing."

Earlier, a grinning Marsh once again won the toss but his mood soon soured after the start India's openers got.

There was no settling in for left-arm quick Ben Dwarshuis as Abhishek bludgeoned a trademark boundary over mid-off on the fourth delivery of the match.



He tried to repeat the dose on the next ball only to miscue high into the air where Glenn Maxwell nestled under having trudged back from mid-off. A resigned Abhishek had already begun walking off only for the unthinkable to happen, with Maxwell spilling a straight-forward catch.

While Abhishek lived dangerously, Gill was in sublime touch as he stroked four boundaries off Dwarshuis' second over with the best being a gorgeous cover drive. Gill was in the type of commanding form that had eluded him during a

tough tour - which started with an ODI series defeat in his captaincy debut in the format - and he looked determined to finish on a high.

Abhishek, on 11, received another life when he was dropped by Dwarshuis who ran in from fine-leg before compounding Nathan Ellis' misery by smashing him over midwicket for six. Typical for Brisbane this time of year, bad weather loomed large and the players went off due to lightning before heavy rain cascaded onto the ground in a major disappointment for the sold-out crowd. - Agencies

THIRD ODI AT FAISALABAD

## Ayub, Ahmed steer Pakistan to ODI series victory over SA

**FAISALABAD:** Saim Ayub scored 77 from 70 balls and spinner Abrar Ahmed picked four for 27 as Pakistan cruised to a seven-wicket victory over South Africa in the third and final One-Day International in Faisalabad on Saturday to clinch the series 2-1.

South Africa won the toss and elected to bat but a collapse from a commanding position saw them post a below-par 143 all out in 37.5 overs. That was never likely to challenge the home side and they reached their target with three wickets down and a huge 149 deliveries remaining.

South Africa made a good start to their innings with a 72-run opening stand between left-handers Quinton de Kock (53) and Lhuan-dre Pretorius (39), but lost their next nine wickets for the addition of only 71 runs.

Pakistan's spinners squeezed



the scoring rate and got the ball to grip off the surface, with Abrar Ahmed picking up career-best figures of 4-27. Salman Agha (2-18) and Mohammad Nawaz (2-31) were also excellent as they ripped through the middle order.

Abrar's first three wickets were all bowled as he bamboozled the South African batters with his variations. Pakistan lost opener Fakhar Zaman for a second successive duck in the opening over but Saim anchored their innings to



go with contributions from Babar Azam (27) and Mohammad Rizwan (32 not out).

The win meant Pakistan recorded their first home ODI series win over South Africa and Shaheen Shah Afridi, in his first series as

ODI skipper, lifted the trophy with his team.

Speaking at the presentation ceremony, skipper Afridi said: "It has been teamwork and we have worked very hard across the formats so credit goes to the players.

We didn't get so much help in the first five-six overs but when the spinners came in, they made it tough."

On rotating the team, he said: "When you play international cricket, you have to be ready for all situations. So every player who came in took their chances. As I said, it's teamwork and we played good cricket but we have another challenge coming up so now we have to prepare for that."

Pakistan begin a three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka on Tuesday, while South Africa stay on the sub-continent with the start of their two-match Test series against India on Friday.

**Brief scores:** South Africa 143 in 37.5 overs (De Kock 53; Abrar 4-27, Afridi 2-18, Agha 2-18) lost to Pakistan 144/3 in 25.1 overs (Ayub 77, Rizwan 32\*, Burger 1-29) beat by seven wickets. - Agencies

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RARE EARTH NETWORK

India stands poised to become a key player in the global rare-earth supply chain as the Donald Trump-Xi Jinping summit buys a one-year respite from China's export controls and decade-long monopoly, offering New Delhi a window to build its refining, magnet-making and downstream capabilities.

MARKET  
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MIDDLE EAST LPG SUMMIT

Oman will host the Middle East LPG Summit and Exhibition on 10-11 November, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the patronage of Qais bin Mohammed Al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

# MSX drops 66 points as profit-taking halts five-week rally

The MSX witnessed a decline of 34 percent in trading value and 16.8 percent in the total number of transactions executed during the week, affected by a decline in purchases by local investment funds and institutions

**MUSCAT:** The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) declined by 66 points at the end of the trading session on Thursday amid profit-taking by local investment funds and institutions. They reduced their purchases during the week leading the main index and sectoral indices to decline after five weeks of continuous gains, during which the main index managed to achieve gains of more than 500 points.

The main index closed at 5,544 points at the end of the week's trading. The financial sector index recorded a decline of 153 points, with bank stocks and a number of leading investment companies declining. The industrial sector index also lost 23 points while the services sector index fell by 13 points. However, the Sharia index managed to record an increase of about 4 points and closed at 475 points.

Local investment funds and institutions were net sellers with



sales accounting for 75.1 percent of total trading value compared to purchases of 69 percent while individual Omani investors were net buyers, with purchases accounting for 21.1 percent of total trading value compared to sales of 15.9 percent.

The Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed a decline of 34 percent in trading value and 16.8 percent in the total number of transactions executed during the week, affected by a decline in purchases by local investment funds and institutions. Trading value fell to OMR178.8 million during the week compared to OMR271.1 million in the week before. The number of transactions executed

decreased from more than 39,000 to 32,628 transactions.

Trading was concentrated on shares of Bank Muscat, Bank Sohar International, OQ Basic Industries, OQ Exploration and Production, and Asyad Shipping, which together saw trading worth OMR137.8 million, representing 77 percent of the total trading value.

The Muscat Stock Exchange also recorded a decline in the prices of 40 securities compared to 26 securities whose prices rose. However, the declines did not affect the total market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange, which maintained its previous level at OMR31.32 billion benefiting from the listing of the 77th issue of

## Omani stock market falls in weekly trading

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Omani stock market posted a negative performance during the week, declining 1.18% as it gave back some of October's gains on profit-taking sessions. This followed a period of solid, healthy momentum that has kept the index above the 5,000-point level, remaining at an eight-year high. The market's movement was similar to other regional stock markets.

Sector performances were broadly negative. The Financial sector led the decline, falling 1.66%. Key movers included Sohar International Bank (-4.38%), Bank Muscat (-1.48%), and National Bank Oman (-0.27%). The Services sector followed, registering a loss of 0.60%. This was driven by declines in OQ Gas Networks (-1.09%), Asyad Shipping (-2.30%), and Oman Telecom (-0.96%). The Industrial sector also posted a loss, shedding 0.33%. Notable declines came from Asaffa Foods (-2.04%), OQ Base Industries (-1.72%), and Jazeera Steel Products (-0.70%).

"The selloff in US technol-



ogy stocks impacted sentiment in the region and in Oman as fears of overvaluation in AI stocks spread to most markets worldwide. The decline could continue to weigh on the market's direction next week," said Joseph Dahrieh, Managing Principal at Tickmill.

At the same time, oil prices posted their second consecutive week of losses. Following an Opec+ meeting at the end of the week, the group decided

on a slight production increase and a pause in the first quarter of 2026.

"However, the news was not enough to overcome the general bearish outlook on the oil market, where a surplus and potential lower demand could continue to weigh on prices. An extension of crude price declines could remain a risk to many economies and markets in the region, including Oman," said Joseph Dahrieh.

While the market recorded a correction during the week, it could continue to find support in the positive results in the third quarter. At the same time, the Muscat Stock Exchange launched a new Alternative Investment Market this week. This market is aimed at SMEs and growth companies, featuring lighter listing requirements. "This opens a fresh funding channel for smaller firms and broadens the pipeline of potential listings, which could gradually deepen liquidity, diversify sector exposure, and enhance the overall attractiveness and resilience of the Omani stock market," said Joseph Dahrieh Managing Principal at Tickmill.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN



## CBO holds meeting on ways to develop Islamic banking sector in Oman

**MUSCAT:** The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) held a meeting with chief executive officers (CEOs) of banks operating in the Islamic banking sector to develop the Islamic banking sector and enhance its competitiveness and sustainability.

The meeting reviewed measures to consolidate Sharia governance and develop innovative banking products and services that comply with the provisions of Islamic Sharia. It also sought steps to train national cadres in the fields of Islamic banking.

The meeting looked into initiatives undertaken by the CBO to upgrade the Islamic Banking sector's contribution to the national economy and to future financial transition in the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting aimed to devise

a common vision (between the CBO and the Islamic banking sector) for shaping the structure of the next stage of growth and supporting the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

"The meeting constitutes a milestone in developing Islamic banking in the Sultanate of Oman and embodies the CBO's commitment to establish an innovative and sustainable financial environment that contributes to achieving comprehensive economic development," said Ahmed Jaafar Al Masallami, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman.

Since the launch of the Islamic banking service in Oman in 2012, the Islamic banking sector made rapid growth, reaching a market share of about 20 percent of total assets of the banking system by June 2025. -ONA

DATA

## Credit extended by Oman's banking sector tops OMR34bn by September end

**MUSCAT:** The total credit granted by the banking sector in Oman increased by 8 percent at the end of September 2025, reaching OMR34.5 billion. Data released by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) showed that credit granted to the private sector grew by 5.7 percent to reach OMR28.2 billion by the end of September 2025.

The data regarding the distribution across different sectors indicated that the non-financial corporate sector had the largest share at 46.7 percent, followed by the individuals sector at 44.7 percent, while the remaining percentage was distributed between the financial corporate sector at 5.8 percent and other sectors at 2.8 percent.

Total deposits in the banking sector grew by 4.7 percent to reach OMR33.1 billion by the end of September 2025. Within this total, private sector deposits in the



banking system increased by 7.5 percent to reach OMR22.3 billion by the end of September 2025.

Regarding the distribution of the total private sector deposit base

across different sectors, the figures indicate that the personal sector holds the largest share, amounting to about 50 percent, followed by the non-financial corporate sector

and the financial corporate sector with shares of 30.5 percent and 17.3 percent respectively, while the remaining 2.2 percent was distributed among other sectors. -ONA

GCC-STAT REPORT

## Pace of growth in GCC countries to accelerate and reach 4.3% by 2027



**MUSCAT:** A report by the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat) indicated that the economies of the GCC countries recorded a balanced performance during 2024 despite global challenges, as the real GDP growth rate reached about 1.9%, driven by a 4.4% growth in non-oil sectors — reflecting progress in implementing economic transformation strategies.

The report also projected that the growth pace will accelerate in the coming years to reach 4.3% by 2027, supported by expanding investments in tourism, renewable

energy, manufacturing, and technology sectors.

The GCC-Stat report, "Economic Performance Outlook 2024 - Enabling fiscal sustainability and enhancing non-oil growth", provides a comprehensive analytical overview of the macroeconomic performance of the GCC countries during 2024, including indicators of economic growth, inflation, public finance, public debt, fiscal sustainability as well as developments in financial markets, monetary and banking policy, foreign direct investment, foreign trade, and the Gulf labor market. -WAM



MARKET

# Summit to spotlight LPG’s global role and technological advancements

Middle East LPG Summit and Exhibition will include high-level panel discussions and specialised workshops focusing on energy transition, sustainability, safety, advanced technology deployment, the future of Autogas, human capital development, and women’s empowerment in the energy industry

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman will host the Middle East LPG Summit and Exhibition on Monday and Tuesday, 10–11 November, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the patronage of Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP). The two-day event will bring together leading global experts, policymakers, and senior executives from across the energy sector.

Organised by the World Liquid Gas Association (WLGA), in cooperation with MoCIIP, the summit



“

Hosting the Middle East LPG Summit and Exhibition in the Sultanate of Oman reflects the confidence of international organisations in Oman's advanced industrial environment and its readiness to lead global dialogue on energy transition and industrial transformation

**Eng. Khalid bin Saleem Al-Qassabi**  
Director General of Industry at MoCIIP

aims to serve as a key regional and international platform for discussing the future of the LPG industry and showcasing the latest technologies and innovations in this vital sector, which remains one of the main drivers of global energy-economy growth.

The summit is expected to attract more than 2,000 participants, including government offi-

cials, decision-makers, corporate leaders, and LPG experts. The accompanying international exhibition will showcase advanced technologies, new applications, and innovative solutions related to LPG operations, supply chain efficiency, safety standards, and infrastructure development, featuring manufacturers from around the world. The exhibition will



also be open to the public.

The programme will include high-level panel discussions and specialised workshops focusing on energy transition, sustainability, safety, advanced technology deployment, the future of Autogas, human capital development, and women’s empowerment in the energy industry.

In addition, the event will witness the launch of the first national chapter of the “Women in LPG” (WINLPG) network in the Sultanate of Oman — the first-ever established in the Middle East — representing a major milestone in Oman’s continued efforts to empower women and expand their contribution to industry, innovation, and the wider energy ecosystem aligned with Oman Vision 2040 objectives.

Eng. Khalid bin Saleem Al-Qassabi, Director General of Industry at MoCIIP, emphasised the importance of attracting such high-level conferences, noting that they directly align with the Industrial Strategy 2040 which aims to enhance innovation, raise industrial productivity, and accelerate technology adoption in the sector.

He stated that hosting the Middle East LPG Summit and Exhibition in the Sultanate reflects the confidence of international organisations in Oman’s advanced

industrial environment and its readiness to lead global dialogue on energy transition and industrial transformation. This, he said, will support the empowerment of the industrial sector and attract quality investments that contribute to sustainable energy and economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Eng. Al-Qassabi further highlighted the Ministry’s commitment to strengthening the industrial business ecosystem and advancing legislative and regulatory frameworks that enable the growth of the LPG sector.

He noted that the recently issued LPG Activities Regulation constitutes a significant milestone that enhances operational efficiency, reinforces sustainability, and elevates safety standards across the entire supply chain.

He expressed confidence that this summit will serve as a catalyst for knowledge exchange, new partnerships, and future investments — contributing to the achievement of Oman Vision 2040 goals in building a competitive, innovative, and sustainable industrial economy. He reaffirmed that the Ministry’s participation in this global platform underscores its strategic role in supporting the LPG sector, enhancing its competitiveness, and keeping pace with the rapid

developments and opportunities emerging in this growing industry.

Dr. Rachid Majjad, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Gas Company (NGC) SAOG, stated that hosting the Middle East LPG Summit and Exhibition in the Sultanate of Oman for the first time represents a major milestone for the country, as it will contribute to strengthening the growth and competitiveness of energy companies operating in the sector. This momentum, he noted, will positively impact national economic development and support the strategic ambitions of Oman Vision 2040 towards sustainable value creation and industrial advancement.

He added that the Summit and Exhibition programme will feature a series of specialised workshops focused on safety standards, LPG handling and filling operations, in addition to a dedicated workshop on Autogas technologies.

These sessions will play an essential role in enabling knowledge exchange, developing technical capabilities, and exploring advanced operational solutions that will accelerate innovation and support the Sultanate of Oman’s industrial transformation journey within the energy domain. The workshops are open free of charge to all industry stakeholders.

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KEY PLAYER

## India may become 3rd pillar in US-Japan rare earth network after Trump-Xi deal

**NEW DELHI:** India stands poised to become a key player in the global rare-earth supply chain as the Donald Trump-Xi Jinping summit buys a one-year respite from China’s export controls and decade-long monopoly, offering New Delhi a window to build its refining, magnet-making and downstream capabilities, according to a recent analysis in *The Diplomat*.

India has significant raw-material potential- its beach-sand deposits contain rich reserves of monazite, bastnaesite, and other rare-earth minerals, but the country’s processing capacity and environmental rules have lagged. That is now changing, says Jianli Yang in the magazine which reports on events across the Asia-Pacific region.

“With strong political will and a growing technological ecosystem, India could soon emerge as the third pillar - alongside the United States and Japan - of a democratic rare-earth network,” *The Diplomat* analysis noted.

The Trump-Xi summit in South Korea last month has “bought breathing space” and “India now offers a path to breathe freely,” the publication said.

According to a White House fact sheet, Beijing has after a meeting of Xi and Trump in Busan, South Korea last month, agreed to delay specific export controls on rare earth materials for one year following a trade agreement with Washington.

In June this year, India announced that it is negotiating with companies and planning a fiscal incentive scheme for domestic rare-earth magnet manufacturing, aimed at reducing reliance on China. Indian companies such as Sona Comstar are setting up magnet production lines. State-owned Indian Rare Earths Ltd. has been tasked with expanding refining capability, and the Indian Space Research Organisation is helping adapt high-purity separation technology initially designed for satel-

India has significant raw-material potential - its beach-sand deposits contain rich reserves of monazite, bastnaesite, and other rare-earth minerals, but the country’s processing capacity and environmental rules have lagged. That is now changing

lite components, writes Yang.

Even more significantly, India is linking these domestic moves to strategic partnerships abroad. Talks with the United States, Japan, and Australia under the Quad framework have accelerated joint exploration, co-financing and technology-transfer projects, the research fellow at the Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University wrote in *The Diplomat*.

The fifth largest economy in the world, the author says, “brings both scale and credibility” to the rare earths race with a manufacturing base large enough to absorb downstream industries - magnets, motors, batteries - that smaller rare earth producers like Australia or Brazil cannot fully host.

Yang points out that while Australia remains indispensable for mining and early-stage processing, Brazil brings much-needed Western Hemisphere diversification and the US has made progress in producing NdPr metal in California and magnets in Texas - all of them cannot alone can offset China’s dominance.

“India, however, changes the calculus by linking supply diversification with market demand,” the author notes adding the country can consume what it produces, export what it refines, and - if integrated with allied partners - become a hub for both production and processing. India’s strategy is also less vulnerable to short-term political reversals as Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “Atmanirbhar Bharat” (self-reliant India) agenda enjoys bipartisan support, he says.

Washington should treat India not just as a partner in defence or semiconductors but as a cornerstone of a new “rare earth alignment” says the analysis, which lists out several steps including exploring co-financing magnet plants in India through US International Development Finance Corporation loans or EXIM guarantees.

India and the US can also establish reciprocal stockpiles, says the author noting that “fast-tracking technology sharing on refining and waste treatment will allow India to leap-frog costly trial-and-error phases that slowed the United States and Australia.”

Further, it notes that rare earth cooperation should be “embedded into the core agenda” of the Quadrilateral grouping- that includes India, Japan, Australia, and the United States- making it as central as joint naval exercises or semiconductor collaboration.

Yang says that India’s recent success in attracting high-tech manufacturing, from Apple assembly lines to chip design centres, shows it can deliver when strategic alignment and financial incentives converge.

The industrial push by the PM Narendra Modi led government coupled with Quad alignment and global manufacturing leverage could work in India’s favour. “If the United States, Japan, Australia, and Brazil “rally behind India’s rise as a credible supplier and processor”, they can lay the foundation for a truly pluralistic rare-earth market and with it, greater geopolitical resilience,” says Yang. -ANI

  
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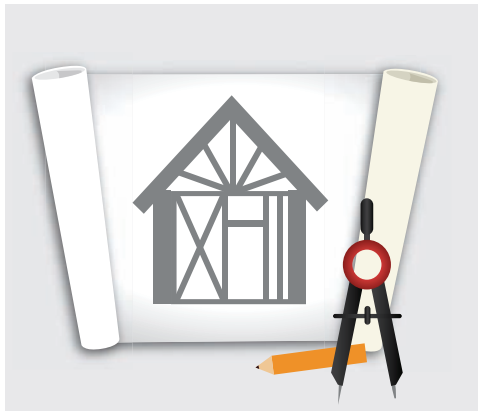
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**LOGISTICS**

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ENTERTAINMENT

# Tom Cruise hails Glen Powell’s new movie ‘The Running Man’

Notably, this is not the first time that Tom Cruise was seen supporting Powell

**LOS ANGELES:** Tom Cruise arrived full of support at the screening of Glen Powell’s new film, ‘The Running Man’. Taking to his Instagram handle, the actor couldn’t help but share his fun experience after watching the film.

The ‘Mission: Impossible’ star kicked off his post with a happy picture, showing him posing with Glen Powell as the duo held onto special popcorn boxes that featured the film’s title.

He followed up with another picture with the rest of the team, including director Edgar Wright and actors Coleman Domingo, Lee Pace, and Emilia Jones. “Another great night out with my friends at the movies! You guys crushed it, congratulations! I laughed, was on the edge of my seat, and ate way too much popcorn.” Tom Cruise wrote in his caption.

Glen Powell also shared a similar set of pictures on Instagram, giving a shoutout to Cruise as he wrote, “The Running Man with THE Running Man.”

Notably, this is not the first time that Tom Cruise was seen supporting Powell. At the London premiere of ‘Twisters’, Cruise made sure to mark his attendance, a picture of which was later shared by Powell.

“When your wingman follows you into the storm,” he wrote at the time.

Also, Cruise and Powell have worked together in the 2022 film, ‘Top Gun: Maverick’, which



grossed USD 1.5 billion globally at the box office.

A film adaptation of the Stephen King novel of the same name, ‘The Running Man’, follows the story of a working-class man, who com-

petes on a TV show to help his sick daughter.

“In the TV show, contestants, known as Runners, must survive 30 days while being hunted by professional assassins, with every

move broadcast to a bloodthirsty public and each day bringing a greater cash reward,” states the official synopsis, as per Variety.

‘The Running Man’ will hit theatres on November 14. **-ANI**

AFTER PROLONGED ILLNESS



## Veteran singer-actor Sulakshana Pandit passes away

**MUMBAI:** The final rites of veteran playback singer and actress Sulakshana Pandit were performed on Friday, marking a solemn farewell to one of India’s most melodious voices.

According to a statement issued by her family, the late singer’s cremation was held on the afternoon of November 7, at the Pawan Hans Crematorium in Mumbai.

Sulakshana Pandit passed away on Thursday evening after a prolonged illness, her family said. She was 71.

Sister of popular music composer duo Jatin-Lalit and yesteryear actor Vijayta Pandit, the late singer is best known for crooning ‘Bekrar Dil Tu Gaye Ja’, and ‘Somwar Ko Hum Mile Mangalwar Ko Nain’ with Kishore Kumar.

Her track ‘Pardesiya Tere Desh Mein’ with music icon Mohammed Rafi was also loved by many. The duo together created several musical gems such as Sona Re Tujhe Kaisa Miloon, Yeh Pyara Lage Tera Chehra, Jab Aati Hogi Yaad Meri and Yeh Pyar Kiya Hai. And no one can forget her ‘Saat Samundar Paar’ duet with legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar.



In 1976, she received a Filmfare Award for the song ‘Tu Hi Sagar Tu Hi Kinara’ from the film Sankalp.

Sulakshana began her cinematic journey with the 1975 release Uljhan, where she starred opposite the legendary Sanjeev Kumar. The duo reportedly shared a warm and close rapport during the shoot. Coincidentally, November 6 also marked the 40th death anniversary of Sanjeev Kumar, a cherished icon of Indian cinema.

Her other film credits include Hera Pheri (1976), Dharam Kanta (1982), Do Waqt Ki Roti (1988), and Goraa (1987), among others. **-ANI**

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

## Prague expects visitor boost from new Dan Brown novel

**PRAGUE:** The latest blockbuster from best-selling author Dan Brown is not only set in Prague, the Czech capital is actually one of the main characters in the novel. The city expects a surge in visits from fans of Brown’s novels.

The Czech capital, Prague, is the setting for Dan Brown’s latest novel.

Prague is inextricably linked to Franz Kafka, one of the best-known German-language authors in the world.

Born in the Czech capital in 1883, Kafka attracts many visitors to Prague even 100 years after his death.

Kafka was part of the city’s German-speaking Jewish minority and wrote novels, short stories and letters in German, including the world-famous “The Metamorphosis” and “The Trial.”

Fans of the author can go on Kafka-related tours that take in the various stations of his life or visit sights such as the Statue of Franz Kafka, the house where he was born or the Franz Kafka Museum.

Now, Prague has another major literary claim to fame, only this time, the city is itself the scene of a massive global bestseller.

### Dan Brown’s popularity in Czechia

“The Secret of Secrets,” the latest novel by US thriller writer Dan Brown, has been topping bestseller lists all over the world since its release in early September.

In Czechia, which has a population of 10 million, about 120,000 copies were sold in the first week alone — a record, says literary critic Jana Podskalska.

“The Czechs love Brown’s style of writing and the way he works with puzzles. At the sales launch at the City Hall in Prague’s Old Town, people camped out overnight and stood in line from the early morning. The last time that happened was when Harry Potter books went on sale.”



But Prague is not just the setting for Brown’s novel. It also plays a significant role in the book. “We guessed that Prague would play a big role in Dan’s new novel about human consciousness,” said Petr Onufer, the Czech translator of the book, in the podcast Sbaleno. “But when I received the first version of the manuscript, I was really surprised. I very quickly realized that Prague itself was one of the main characters in the story.”

This is confirmed by Hana Gelnarova, director of programming at Argo, which published the Czech edition of the novel. “Dan Brown himself says that Prague is one of the main characters in the book.”

### Brown’s love of the Czech capital

“The Secret of Secrets” was published on September 9 in 50 languages. Czechia was one of the first countries worldwide where Brown himself launched the book in person.

The world-famous author was



even invited to Prague Castle by Czech President Petr Pavel. Prague Mayor Bohuslav Svoboda also presented Brown with the Key to the City.

“Prague is one of those places where you, for example, stand on Charles Bridge and look up at the castle and the towers and feel like you’re in a fantasy film. It’s hard to believe it’s all real. It’s wonderful,” Brown told Czech television,

adding that he first visited the city in 1984.

Brown says that his latest release is his most sophisticated work to date: “It is the longest, has the most complex plot and the most characters,” he said.

### Why Brown’s choice of Prague isn’t surprising

For Hana Gelnarova, the success was not a surprise. “His ear-



lier books were bestsellers, so we reckoned this one would be, too,” she said.

Nor was the selection of Prague as the setting for the book a coincidence.

“Brown has been here several times,” said Gelnarova.

“He was fascinated by some things and specifically asked to be able to visit certain places. Sometimes he came incognito. Once before, over ten years ago, we thought he was maybe considering Prague as a setting for one of his books.”

Most Czech critics have been very positive about the book. “The Secret of Secrets’ is obviously his most ambitious work yet,” says literary critic Podskalska. “He uses recent findings from the field of neuroscience. It is relatively complex, long and includes a lot of Prague sights.”

### A magnet for tourists

Prague and Czechia as a whole quickly realized that a Dan Brown bestseller set in the capital had the potential to provide a huge boost for tourism, which only recently recovered fully from the losses incurred during the COVID pandemic.

“Dan Brown’s latest book has enormous potential for making Czechia known worldwide,”

Frantisek Reismüller, director of CzechTourism, told DW.

“Prague features on the pages of a global bestseller, and readers will want to experience the atmosphere of the story for themselves.”

In early September, around the time of the book’s release, Prague launched a special program of tours in Czech and English relating to the book.

“The interest is huge. These tours take visitors around Prague to the various stations of Dan Brown’s book. At the moment, they are booked out for weeks in advance,” Klara Janderova, spokesperson for Prague City Tourism, told DW.

“We’ll be adding new tours to the programme in the new year.”

Podskalska says that the novel takes in a surprising number of locations in Prague, including some that are off the beaten tourist track.

“In the story about artificial intelligence, the possibilities of the human subconscious and traditional secret codes, he [Brown] has included not only well-known places such as Charles Bridge and Prague Castle, but also the Clementinum, the Petschek Villa or Bastion XV and the Folimanka underground bunker in a very clever way,” says Podskalska.



FEATURE

# ALONE AT SEA, UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE MINORS IN MORTAL DANGER

Search-and-rescue organisations are sounding the alarm, warning that many children and youths are venturing across the Mediterranean, along one of the world’s most dangerous refugee routes, on their own

“**NO ONE WOULD** risk their life at sea if there were a better way. But there’s no alternative. That’s why we risk our lives.”

These are the words of a 15-year-old boy from Guinea rescued as an unaccompanied minor at sea by the Berlin-based NGO, SOS Humanity.

The organisation, which has been saving refugees and migrants at sea for the last decade, warns that more and more children and minors are setting out alone from Libya or Tunisia to Europe in overcrowded boats that are often not seaworthy. Around a fifth of those rescued have been minors.

Esther, a German clinical psychologist, volunteered as a mental health officer on Mediterranean rescue missions in November and December 2024.

During a press conference in Berlin last month, where Esther did not give her surname, she said that during her time at sea six boats carrying 347 people were rescued. Among them were 43 young people, mostly unaccompanied minors, in poor physical and mental health.

“They’d often been at sea without food or drink for several days and nights, were dehydrated, seasick and often had burns from fuel and salt water. Many also had scabies or other infections and wounds, because they had been held in camps in Libya for long periods. All of them were emotionally exhausted,” she said.

**Children at grave risk in Libya’s camps**

Conditions in Libyan detention camps — where those intercepted by the the

country’s coast guard are returned after failed attempts to cross the Mediterranean — are catastrophic, especially for young people.

For years, Libya — which, under a multimillion-euro agreement with the European Union, is meant to take over border control and drastically reduce migrant numbers — has faced intense criticism for serious human rights violations.

“Young people told me about extreme violence, torture, child labour, losing relatives and cases of human trafficking involving women,” Esther recounted. “Some of these young people showed me physical evidence of what they’ve been through. Some had scars from torture, as well as photos and videos taken at the Libyan camps showing them tied up and beaten.”

**Over 3,500 minors reported dead or missing**

Minors who manage to escape from the camps face even greater danger during the crossing.

According to UNICEF estimates from April, around 3,500 children have died or disappeared in the last 10 years while attempting to reach Italy via the central Mediterranean route. That means nearly one dead or missing child per day for an entire decade.

This statistic has SOS Humanity calling for an immediate end to the EU’s cooperation with Libya and Tunisia.

“The proportion of minors among those fleeing has actually been rising steadily over the last 10 years. Around one-fifth of all arrivals in Italy are mi-



nors. In our rescues, the average is even more than one-third,” said Till Rummenhohl, managing director of SOS Humanity.

“We recently had a whole boat of just minors, 120, on board. They were completely panicked young people who were traveling alone and jumped into the water out of fear of the Libyan coast guard,” he added.

**Trump’s USAID cuts have dramatic consequences**

The growing number of children and adolescents embarking on the dangerous journey to Europe may worsen in the future, warned Lanna Idriss, the head of SOS Children’s Villages Worldwide. The reason: the US government under President Donald Trump has dissolved the development aid agency USAID, with dramatic consequences.

In a study published this summer, the medical journal The Lancet calculated that USAID cuts could result in more than 14 million deaths globally over the next five years, including up to 5 million children under the age of 5. Germany has also cut its development aid by almost €1 billion (\$1.2 billion).

“We are entering a vicious cycle that will lead to more children taking this route,” said Idriss, citing Somalia as an example. “The country was 80% dependent on USAID. Last year, we reached 4.5 million children and adolescents in Somalia; this year, only 1.3 million. Why? Because the camps intended to support these children have been empty since the summer.”

Vera Magali Keller heads a law firm in Berlin that specialises in supporting humanitarian organizations, including those that carry out sea rescues.

Children and young people must be

given priority protection and evacuation during sea rescues, the lawyer told DW, referring to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which all UN member states have committed themselves.

“In several European countries, there are special prospects for obtaining residence, protection entitlements and rights to family reunification. In Italy, for example, these often apply until the age of legal adulthood. As a general rule, children and adolescents must be accommodated separately from adults and given special protection. Detention should be avoided wherever possible,” said Keller.

**German government cuts funding for sea rescue**

SOS Humanity has announced plans to deploy another rescue vessel in the Mediterranean in 2026. The ship will primarily operate off the coast of Tunisia, searching for migrant boats and monitoring human rights violations.

To do this, the sea rescue organisation will rely on donations, as the German government has discontinued its annual €2 million funding for civilian sea rescue. This is one reason why Keller is pessimistic about the future.

“Given the current political and legal developments, I don’t see any positive prospects,” she said. “I fear that the criminalisation and repression of civilian sea rescue will intensify under the current coalition. The already disastrous protection and reception standards for refugees in Europe will likely continue to deteriorate.” -dw



SPORTS

# ICC agrees to expand Women's World Cup 2029 to ten teams



The ICC board also revealed that the LA28 Olympics will have 28 games in total

**DUBAI:** “Keen to build on the success” of the recently concluded Women’s World Cup, the ICC has agreed to expand the next edition of the tournament (2029) to ten teams. The ICC had announced the expansion of the women’s game on International Women’s Day back in 2021, and a recent release reaffirmed the board’s “commitment to the growth of women’s cricket” after the success of the 2025 edition. Since 2000, only eight teams have featured in the main tournament of the Women’s ODI World Cup. As compared to the 31 matches in the recent World Cup, the 2029 edition will have 10 teams playing 48 games.

The Women’s T20 World Cup next year will also be expanded to 12 teams, up from the 10 that fea-



tured last year in the UAE.

“Nearly 300,000 fans watched the event in stadia breaking the record for tournament attendance for any women’s Cricket event,” the ICC release said. “The tournament also witnessed viewership growth and new records being set for on-screen audiences across the world with nearly 500 million viewers in India.”

The ICC board also ratified the

appointment of a number of members of the ICC Women’s Cricket Committee, namely Ashley De Silva, Mithali Raj, Amol Muzumdar, Ben Sawyer, Charlotte Edwards, and Sala Stella Siale-Vaea.

**Cricket at the LA 2028 Olympics, Brisbane 2032**

The Board also revealed that the Olympics event in Los Angeles in 2028 will have 28 games in total,

across both the men’s and women’s competitions. The six teams in each competition will comprise the top-ranked side from each of the five regions (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania), including the hosts USA. The sixth team will be identified through a qualifier, for which details are not currently known. The events, as reported earlier, will begin on July 12 and be played at the purpose-built Fairgrounds Stadium, around 50km outside of Los Angeles.

Before then, cricket will also feature in multi-sport games at the Asian Games in 2026 in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, the African Games in Cairo, Egypt, in 2027 as well as the PanAm Games in Lima, Peru, in 2027. Talks have also begun on cricket’s inclusion for the 2032 Olympic Games in Brisbane, Australia. Sanjog Gupta, the ICC CEO, is believed to have told members at the meeting that he held “meaningful discussions with Brisbane 2032 for cricket’s inclusion in their program.

Along with the ICC chair Jay Shah, Gupta had meetings in Lausanne, Switzerland, recently with teams from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), LA28 and Brisbane 2032, where they discussed event delivery, competition formats and qualification scenarios. - Agencies

Women’s World Cup final equals viewership record of 2024 Men’s T20 World Cup final



**DUBAI:** The recent 2025 Women’s ODI World Cup final in Navi Mumbai, where hosts India beat South Africa to lift their maiden title, attracted a record 185 million users on JioHotstar, the official streaming platform in India.

It equalled the viewership of the 2024 Men’s T20 World Cup final and exceeded the average daily reach of the 2025 IPL. Apart from that, 92 million tuned in on Connected TV (CTV), equalling the CTV viewership of the 2024 Men’s T20 World Cup 2024 final and the 2023 Men’s ODI World Cup 2023 final, which also involved India as one of

the teams. Overall, the World Cup recorded a reach of 446 million on digital in India, the highest ever for a women’s tournament, greater than the combined total of the last three editions.

Earlier, the India-Pakistan group-stage match on October 5 had set a record for the most viewers tuning in for a women’s international match: 28.4 million. That pales in comparison to the number of viewers the final drew.

The DY Patil Stadium, the venue for the final, was also packed to capacity, with 39,555 watching India make history. - Agencies

ODI SERIES

## Eshan Malinga picked for white-ball tour of Pakistan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka’s fast bowler Eshan Malinga is in line to make his debut in the T20I tri-series while also being included in the ODI squad for the three matches against Pakistan before the tri-series begins.

Dasun Shanaka has been named Sri Lanka’s vice-captain for the upcoming T20I tri-series that will also involve Pakistan and Zimbabwe. Uncapped middle-order batter Pavan Rathnayake, 23, is named in the ODI squad. This is reward for longer-term domestic performance rather than recent form, though he did hit a List A hundred at the end of July.

Dilshan Madushanka has been ruled out of the ODI series as he hasn’t yet recovered from a knee injury, and was replaced by Malinga, whereas Matheesha Pathirana isn’t a part of the T20I squad as he is recovering from an upper respiratory tract infection. Pathirana was replaced by Asitha Fernando.

Top-order batter Bhanuka Rajapaksa, who last played a T20I at the start of the year, was back in the squad for the shortest format, having missed two bilateral series and the Asia Cup since then.

His recall is partly down to some explosive batting in the recent SLC T20 tournament, in which he struck at 163 across four innings. Sri Lanka have generally struggled for firepower in the middle order.

Left-arm spinner Dunith Welalage didn’t find a spot in either of the 16-member squads, but he will lead Sri Lanka A in the Rising Stars T20 Asia Cup in Doha later this month, with Nuwanidu also named in that squad.

Sri Lanka’s ODIs against Pakistan are all scheduled to be played



in Rawalpindi, on November 11, 13 and 15. Those will be followed by the tri-series from November 17 in Rawalpindi and Lahore, with the final slated for November 29.

**Sri Lanka squads:**

**ODIs:** Charith Asalanka (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Lahiru Udara, Kamil Mishara, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kamindu Mendis, Janith Liyanage, Pavan Rathnayake, Wanindu Hasaranaga, Maheesh Theekshana, Jeffrey Vandersay, Dushmantha Chameera, Asitha Fernando, Pramod Madushan, Eshan Malinga.

**T20I tri-series:** Charith Asalanka (capt), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis, Kusal Perera, Kamil Mishara, Dasun Shanaka (vice-capt), Kamindu Mendis, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Janith Liyanage, Wanindu Hasaranaga, Maheesh Theekshana, Dushan Hemantha, Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Asitha Fernando, Eshan Malinga. - Agencies

AUSTRALIAN CRICKETER

## Cummins ramps up bowling with eye on second Test

**SYDNEY:** Australia’s Pat Cummins has ramped up his bowling at New South Wales training as the Australia captain aims to be fit for the second Test of the Ashes.

Already ruled out of the eagerly anticipated opener in Perth, starting on November 21, Cummins is shaping as a genuine chance to feature in the day-night Test at the Gabba.

Cummins this week conceded playing unchanged from the second Test until the end of the series was unlikely given he is recovering from stress in his back.

Cummins put in a solid session at the SCG on Saturday as NSW prepare to host Victoria in the Sheffield Shield, starting Monday. Hewas sending balls down at full pace in the nets in an encouraging sign. Australia will go into the first Test with Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Boland, with all three to play in the Shield before heading to Perth.



When Australia’s squad was released this week, the English press predictably labelled it “Dad’s Army” given Cameron Green is the only one out of the 15 players aged under 30. But Hazlewood was adamant Australia’s experience is a strength, not a weakness.

“We bounce off each other out there and know each other’s game

so well and help each other out there,” he told reporters in Sydney on Saturday. “There’ll come a time no doubt [when the team is too old], but I don’t think it’s yet.

“We’ve been together a long time, taken a heap of wickets, but the times off the field as well have been so great. We know each other so well, so we can pull each other up from time to time when

the rhythm’s not quite there.”

Hazlewood approaches the start of the Ashes on 295 Test wickets. When he almost certainly gets to the milestone, Hazlewood will join the other three long-serving members of the Australian team - Starc, Cummins and Nathan Lyon - to have taken 300 wickets.

But he quickly insists he is genuinely not even thinking about the five more wickets he needs. When Hazlewood hasn’t been injured his form has been consistently outstanding. His four Tests this year have yielded 16 wickets, while also dominating in white-ball cricket.

“I feel in the best shape I’ve been in a long time,” Hazlewood said. “Over the last four or five years, I’ve had a lot of confidence. My numbers suggest that. Just staying in the park, probably since Covid [pandemic], has been hard.” - Agencies

TIMOR-LESTE CRICKETERS

## First father-son duo to play international cricket together

**BALI:** Timor-Leste’s Suhail Sattar, 50, and Yahya Suhail, 17, are the first father and son duo to play together in an international match. They achieved the unique feat, and batted together, in Timor-Leste’s first international match, against hosts Indonesia in Bali on November 6.

Yahya and Sattar, though, are not the first parent and child to play together in an international match. The Switzerland women’s team had a mother-daughter duo - Metty Fernandes and Naina Metty Sajou - playing six T20Is together this year.

There are other instances of

father-son duos playing with each other - as well as against each other - in domestic cricket. Shivnarine Chanderpaul and his son Tagenarine played 11 first-class games together for Guyana, with Shivnarine even captaining his son in a game against Windward Islands at Providence Stadium in March 2014.

More recently, in the 2025 Shpageeza Cricket League final, Afghanistan’s Mohammad Nabi played against his son Hassan Eisakhil. Timor-Leste have had a rough start to international cricket, suffering ten-wicket defeats in each of their first three games. - Agencies



SAO PAULO GRAND PRIX

‘Good start’ says Norris after winning sprint pole at Sao Paulo

**SAO PAULO:** McLaren’s Lando Norris said taking pole position for Saturday’s sprint race was a “good start” to his Sao Paulo Grand Prix weekend. The Briton said he was “confident” in dry conditions, but the sprint could be affected by an expected overnight storm.

“We have to prepare for both conditions,” said Norris, who starts two places ahead of teammate and title rival Oscar Piastri.

“I expect the morning to be heavy rain and incredibly windy. Let’s wait and see what happens.”

Norris, who leads Piastri by one point in the championship after winning the Mexico City Grand Prix two weeks ago, beat Mercedes’ Kimi Antonelli by 0.097 seconds in sprint qualifying, while Piastri was 0.185secs adrift of the Briton in third.

Red Bull’s Max Verstappen, the

only other realistic title contender at 36 points behind Norris, could manage only sixth, beaten by Mercedes’ George Russell and Aston Martin’s Fernando Alonso.

Norris added: “Car has been performing well. Not nice enough that I’m happy about everything. Some things to improve on for qualifying. Sprint race, if I can cruise to victory, that would be beautiful.”

Lewis Hamilton was knocked out in the second session and qualified 11th in his Ferrari, his final lap in the second session ruined when team-mate Charles Leclerc spun in front of him out of Turn 10.

Hamilton also faced an investigation for failing to slow sufficiently for the yellow flags waved when Leclerc lost control but was let off with a reprimand, because of the short time a yellow signal was visible to him and the fact he



had hesitated before applying the throttle.

Norris’ result is the best possible start to the weekend and gives him the opportunity to build his championship lead - eight points are awarded to the winner of the sprint, seven for second and so on down to eighth place.



Norris topped two of the three sessions in sprint qualifying and had a comfortable advantage over Piastri throughout.

He said: “It was a little bit tougher than I would have liked. But we did the job we needed to do, which was to be fastest today.

“Qualifying is always one of the

best things here. It’s difficult, it’s bumpy, it’s tricky, always a joy, always puts a smile on your face.

“But a long weekend, another qualifying and another couple of races to go but a good start.”

Piastri, who comes to Brazil off the back of two difficult races in the US and Mexico, said: “A cou-

ple of big moments on my first lap, which wasn’t ideal.

**Alpine retain Colapinto for 2026**

Meanwhile, Alpine have retained Franco Colapinto for the 2026 Formula 1 season.

The 22-year-old Argentine’s position was in doubt after failing to impress executive adviser Flavio Briatore earlier in the season, but improved performances have secured Colapinto a new contract.

He will partner Frenchman Pierre Gasly, who signed a new multi-year contract in September. “I’ve been following Franco’s progress throughout his time in F1 and I have always believed that he has the right attributes and potential to be a top driver who can grow with the team,” Briatore said. - **Agencies**

MANCHESTER CITY MANAGER

Guardiola to take charge of his 1,000th game

**MANCHESTER:** Pep Guardiola will take charge of his 1,000th game when Manchester City host Liverpool in the Premier League on Sunday and the Spanish manager is in awe of the numbers he has achieved in his career.

Guardiola has collected 715 victories in all competitions since first taking charge of Barcelona B in 2007, going on to lift 12 top-flight titles at Barcelona, Bayern Munich and City, as well as three Champions League crowns.

The 54-year-old has lost only 128 matches, claiming another 14 cup victories during his illustrious career.

Asked by BBC Sport if he knows how many wins he has achieved over the course of his time in management, Guardiola replied: “Of course I know, a lot. The numbers are insane, I’m sorry to tell you.

“I’m not thinking how many but when you have the milestones and you read what you have done, the victories, the average, not just in Premier League but in the Champions League too, we have won incredible things in Barcelona, Bayern Munich and here.

“It is difficult to reach and if I start again I would not reach it, it is too much games. A few defeats, comparing 1,000 games and hopefully on Sunday I hope we can continue.”

Guardiola is seen as changing the face of English football with a style of play that has been imitated by other managers across the country.

He has also achieved incredible numbers at City, leading the team to become the first to reach 100 points in the league, the first team

to achieve the domestic treble and becoming the first side to win four league titles in a row.

Guardiola said: “It looks like I have false humility but this amount of percentage, beyond 70% of victories - [it means] every 10 games we win seven and will draw one or two.

“It can happen because you are at Barcelona, Munich and City with the players I have. After that, it is a lot of hard work. Dedication, passion, love - in that nobody [can] beat me.

“I love to scrutinise the secrets of what you can do to opponents, convince the players and go in together. All the times the players follow me. All the time.”

Asked for his response on being called the greatest manager of all time by some, Guardiola said with a smile: “They are completely right!

“The influence of every manager has been through history. Of course, I can say I’ve been part of that because the numbers explain, I’ve had success and it’s been nice to watch my teams.

“So I’m there. But I never started thinking ‘I want to be the best.’”

The Spaniard was inducted into the League Managers Association (LMA) hall of fame for reaching the milestone, with ex-Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson saying the longevity in achieving the landmark “can never be underestimated”.

On Sunday, Guardiola and City come up against a Liverpool side that they have forged a classic rivalry with, as one of the two teams have won the Premier League in each of the past eight seasons. - **Agencies**



‘Sincaraz’ heads for fitting final chapter

Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner to battle out for the ATP year-end No.1 trophy



**TURIN:** Carlos Alcaraz emphasised the rivalry with Jannik Sinner by using two emojis - a No.1 and a sword fight - in an Instagram post of him posing with Jannik Sinner after their pre-ATP Finals practice in Turin, Italy, on Friday.

Whether Alcaraz or Sinner will finish as the year-end world No.1 is a key point of interest at this week’s season-ending event in Turin.

Ending a long and gruelling season as the best player on the tour is a prestigious accolade, rewarding their brilliance and consistency over the previous 12 months.

Sinner retaining the title would be even more remarkable given the 24-year-old Italian did not

play for three months, having been banned for failing two doping tests.

Spain’s Alcaraz finally usurped his rival at the top of the rankings in September, ending Sinner’s 65-week stint by winning the final Grand Slam of 2025 in New York.

Now the clear two-horse race goes to the last event of the season, with 22-year-old Alcaraz looking the favourite to win their duel. “If Carlos plays really well there is no chance, it doesn’t matter what my result is,” said Sinner.

For the second season in a row, “Sincaraz” has been the absorbing

narrative of the ATP Tour.

So it feels fitting that the pair’s battle for supremacy in 2025 - like all engrossing stories - will have a gripping final chapter.

Alcaraz goes into Turin in pole position, holding a lead of 1,050 points over Sinner when the latest rankings are released on Monday.

This is what each has to do over the next eight days to finish as the year-end No.1. Sinner must defend the title to stand any chance of overtaking Alcaraz; Sinner needs Alcaraz to lose a group match and not reach the final; Alcaraz will secure the year-end top

spot by reaching the final; Alcaraz can guarantee the position by winning all three group matches.

“Ending as the number one has been an important goal for me since halfway through the year,” said Alcaraz, who previously claimed the accolade in 2022.

The pair have dominated the men’s game once again this year, sweeping all four Grand Slam titles between them for a second successive season and leading the regular tour by a considerable margin. Sinner defended the Australian Open in January - his final tournament before being sidelined - and was beaten by Alcaraz in a classic French Open final on his return to major action.

A month later, the pair met again in the Wimbledon final, where Sinner demonstrated the quality of his mental strength to triumph and admirably bounce back from his Paris heartbreak.

The last stanza of their compelling Grand Slam trilogy took place in New York, with Alcaraz producing what he regarded as one of the finest performances of his career to ensure an even split of the four majors in 2025. - **Agencies**

ENGLAND SQUAD

Bellingham, Foden recalled

**LONDON:** England manager Thomas Tuchel said that Real Madrid’s Jude Bellingham and Manchester City’s Phil Foden have been “immense” for their clubs recently as he recalled the pair to his squad for next week’s World Cup qualifiers against Serbia and Albania.

The German added that Bournemouth midfielder Alex Scott “deserves” his first senior call-up, with England having already sealed their place at next summer’s tournament. “Tuchel has resisted calls to include Brighton striker Danny Welbeck in his latest squad while attacking midfielder Jack Grealish, who is on loan at Everton from Manchester City, and right-back Trent Alexander-Arnold miss out.

FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Al Harthy ready to fight from fifth row in Bahrain finale

**MUSCAT:** Oman’s Ahmad Al Harthy will start the season-ending Bapco Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain from the fifth row of the grid after a strong qualifying effort for Team WRT in the final round of the 2025 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) on Friday.

Sharing the No.46 BMW M4 LMGT3 with international stars Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde, Al Harthy delivered an assured performance in qualifying at the Bahrain International Circuit, guiding the Omani-flagged entry into the Hyperpole shootout.

“It’s fantastic to be racing back in the Middle East,” said Al Harthy. “Qualifying went really well — we hit our goal of reaching Hyperpole, and Vale [Rossi] did a great job finishing it off. Starting P9 in an eight-hour race gives us a strong



platform to fight from. Anything can happen in endurance racing, so we’ll focus on our own performance and strategy. Hopefully we

can finish the season on a high.”

Making his first regional appearance since the season opener in Qatar, Al Harthy showed strong



pace from the outset. His best lap of 2m03.534s in the opening 12-minute session placed him seventh and earned the team a place

in Hyperpole.

Rossi then took over for the decisive run, posting a 2m03.067s lap to secure ninth on the grid for Saturday’s race — a solid fifth-row start for the WRT trio in their BMW M4 LMGT3.

Earlier free practice sessions had also shown promise, with Team WRT posting the fourth-quickest time in FP1 before focusing on long-run pace and race balance.

With two podium finishes already this season, Al Harthy and his teammates are aiming for one final push to close the campaign on a high note.

“We’ve been competitive all year and the atmosphere in the team is fantastic,” he said. “Everyone has worked so hard, and it would be great to reward that with a big result here in Bahrain.”



# Al Dakhiliyah

Governorate building a diversified economy based on knowledge and sustainability

The governorate has worked to adopt balanced development policies that keep pace with the aspirations of the people

**NIZWA:** The Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is working to enhance its position in the comprehensive development path through an integrated framework that combines institutional planning and field implementation, based on an integrated partnership between government agencies and institutions, the private sector, and local community institutions.

The governorate's approach represents a clear and practical translation of the objectives of "Oman Vision 2040" in building a diversified economy based on knowledge and sustainability, which enhances the quality of life and achieves well-being for citizens in the various states of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The governorate has worked to adopt balanced development policies that keep pace with the aspirations of the people in the Sultanate of Oman, placing them at the heart of the development process, through projects that enhance the infrastructure and preserve the cultural identity in thought and action, while investing in natural resources in accordance with official directions.

In this context, the governorate launched during the current year the "Development Strategy (2026-2030)", which is the comprehensive executive framework for its directions during the next five years.

The governorate's strategy focuses on the smart infrastructure, the productive local economy, social and cultural development, environmental sustainability and local content, digital transformation and governance in an effort to maximise the developmental impact, enhance the efficiency of government spending and expand the participation of the private sector and the local community in the building process.

Sheikh Hilal Said Al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, stated: "The governorate is moving confidently towards integrated development that contributes to improving the quality of life, through projects with a direct return on the local economy and society at the same time, noting that the current stage is witnessing a qualitative shift in project management through the governance system, and close monitoring of institutional performance indicators."

He added that the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is today an integrated model of balanced development and effective exemplary partnership, as its projects are based on a clear vision that targets the human being and enhances the value of the place, relying on an institutional system that embodies the supreme directives in order to empower the governorates to be, in turn, essential pillars in the sustainable development of the Sultanate of Oman.

The Governor said that with the implementation of the new development strategy and the integration of sectoral plans, the governorate continues to move forward steadily towards a prosperous future, embodying its enduring motto: "Developing people and places with a national vision and global horizons."

He explained that the strategic plan (2026-2030), which was launched this year and is entitled "Horizons", constitutes a practical roadmap for determining development and investment priorities, through alignment with national policies and the involvement of the local community in formulating development directions, stressing that fairness in the distribution of resources between states is a



firmly established principle in the approach to development work.

He pointed out that the total number of projects in the various states of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate until the end of October 2025 amounted to about 137 with a total cost estimated at about OMR79.4 million, including 50 projects that are being implemented at a cost exceeding OMR42.3 million, 8 projects at a cost of OMR12.4 million, and 79 projects that the governorate received at a cost estimated at OMR24.7 million.

The implementation rate of the governorate development programme projects exceeded 82 percent by mid-October. These projects include the consultancy study for the development of the Falaj Al-Khatmeen water channel in Birkat Al-Maouj in the Wilayat of Nizwa, the activation of the Nizwa Gate, the design and implementation of internal roads in the Wilayat of Bahla, the development and rehabilitation of the public park in the Al-Ma'moura area in the Wilayat of Bahla, the development and rehabilitation of the Al-Khatm Park and the restrooms in the market in the Wilayat of Manah, the establishment of a market equipped for vegetables and fruits in the centre of the Wilayat of Izki, and consultancy services for the development of the entrance to the Wilayat of Bidbid.

He explained that these projects are part of a broader strategy to enhance balanced development across the governorate's nine districts by supporting initiatives with a direct economic impact, particularly those targeting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are a cornerstone of local growth.

The percentage of projects allocated to these SMEs increased from 34.5 percent in 2024 to 51.7 percent in 2025, with a value exceeding OMR6 million by the end of the third quarter of this year, reflecting the approach of economically empowering the local community.

The governorate also achieved 90.24 percent of the total relative weight of local content indicators in 2025.

The province is witnessing significant economic activity in the industrial sector, with a growth rate of 6.3 percent.

The total number of cumulative industrial licenses issued to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the sector has reached 23,137.

This growth is attributed to several factors, including strengthening the business environment in the province through partnerships with various governmental and private entities, signing cooperation agreements with academic institutions to exchange expertise in commercial, industrial, investment, and technological fields, as well as in standards and metrology, and promoting innovation. Efforts have also been unified to enhance integration among stakeholders in establishing joint programs and events, addressing sector challenges, and studying the business environment to facilitate economic activities.

These efforts have included field visits and inspections, and have expedited the processing of over 1,236 certificates of origin, 54 industrial license applications, and 56 customs exemption applications.

The government offers a range of incentives and enablers to promote the small and medium enterprises sector in the governorate,



including training and qualification programs, the establishment of business incubators, financing projects on easy terms, and providing technical, administrative and financial consultations and training, along with granting an entrepreneurship card that allows the institution to obtain government incentives and facilities.

The Governor of Al Dakhiliyah affirmed that the governorate is committed to establishing a comprehensive development model based on partnership and integration between government entities, the private sector, and the local community.

He noted that the achievements of recent years embody the wise vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in empowering the governorates to be active drivers of sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman. Road projects are among the most prominent pillars of local development, as they contribute to connecting the governorate's districts and enhancing economic and tourism activity.

The governorate is working in conjunction with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology to implement quality projects. The ministry is currently implementing several strategic projects in the governorate, the most important of which is the dualisation of the Izki-Nizwa road with a length of 32.2 kilometres and a cost of approximately OMR47 million, and the Jebel Shams road, in addition to the project to design and implement the Aqaba Afri road and the Al-Saqari village road in Samail and Izki with a completion rate of 49.6 percent and a total cost of OMR4,596,000 until the end of October 2025.

The governorate also witnessed the launch of a tender for the project to dualise the Marfa'a Daris-Jabrin road, with a length of 40 kilometres, which will be implemented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology during the coming period and includes the construction of traffic lights, a number of roundabouts and tunnels for pedestrians and vehicles, and its implementation is scheduled to begin at the beginning of 2026.

The governorate is also witnessing work on the Al-Tasawir - Al-Washahi road project linking the state of Izki and the North Al Sharqiyah governorate to enhance regional connectivity and support domestic tourism.

The governorate, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, seeks to implement the Al-Madra dual carriageway project in the Wilayat of Samail during the coming period, as the consultancy studies for the project have been completed and it is hoped that it will be launched during the next year.

Road projects contribute to improving traffic flow, reducing accidents, and enhancing social and economic interdependence be-

tween states, as well as supporting trade, services, and tourism transport activities.

The Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has given considerable attention to developing health and education services and ensuring their equitable distribution across its districts. In the health sector, the new Samail Hospital project is a key strategic initiative with a capacity of 170 beds, a cost exceeding OMR45 million, and a completion rate of 73 percent as of the end of last October.

Work is currently underway to expand the Somrah Health Centre, with a completion rate of 98 percent, and to establish a new health centre in Saih Al Maashi in the Wilayat of Bahla, in addition to a kidney dialysis unit and a medical warehouse in Adam Hospital, with a completion rate of 80 percent.

The health sector projects in the governorate seek to achieve fairness in the distribution of health services and raise their operational efficiency in line with the aspirations of the local community, as the governorate works in conjunction with the Ministry of Health in implementing the national survey of non-communicable diseases, as one of the most important preventive projects to improve general health indicators.

In the education sector, which is a cornerstone of human development in the governorate, seven new schools were constructed in the wilayats of Nizwa, Bahla, Bidbid, Manah, and Samail during 2025, with an 80% completion rate. In addition, 33 new educational facilities were built, including laboratories, classrooms, and service facilities. The governorate also has 336 schools serving various educational levels.

The Ministry of Education launched a new secondary school project for boys in the state of Samail as part of the first phase of the 2025 educational infrastructure plan.

As part of supporting scientific innovation and nurturing talented individuals, the governorate launched the National Program for Identifying Talented Students, which targets sixth-grade students and measures their abilities in the areas of originality, flexible thinking, and intellectual generation.

The Science and Technology Centre in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate also witnessed the implementation of an integrated summer program in which about 600 male and female students participated in workshops and scientific and applied laboratories, in addition to launching the scientific caravan that toured a number of schools in the governorate to spread the culture of innovation and scientific thinking.

In the context of developing the professional and technical track within school education, the Ministry of Education launched the "Travel and Tourism" specialisa-



tion in the governorate's schools starting from the academic year 2025/2026. This specialisation is the first of its kind at the level of general education, and it focuses on guest service skills, tourism operations management, and destination marketing, in line with the Sultanate of Oman's directions to develop the tourism sector as a major economic driver.

The governorate gives special attention to the heritage and tourism sector by adopting an approach based on the purple economy, due to its role in achieving economic diversification and investing in elements of culture and national identity in support of sustainable development.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is implementing a number of restoration and rehabilitation projects for the old neighborhoods, castles, fortresses and historical sites in the governorate, in order to preserve their authentic value and transform them into an economic and tourist resource that enriches the visitor's cultural experience and contributes to revitalizing the tourism and economic activity in the governorate.

The governorate is also involving the local community and entrepreneurs in investing in heritage sites through small and medium projects that contribute to generating job opportunities and supporting the local economy.

The governorate continues to implement a number of development and heritage projects across its districts, aimed at improving public facilities, preserving historical neighborhoods, and revitalising tourism.

The restoration of the Al-Aqr wall is 70% complete, while the rehabilitation and development of the Bahla market has reached 54%, and the development of the Jabrin and Basya entrances is 25% complete. Development work is also underway in the Al-Bilad neighbourhood in the Wilayat of Manah and the Misfat Al-Abriyeen neighbourhood in the Wilayat of Al-Hamra, both with a completion rate of 25%.

The castles and fortresses in the governorate recorded 302,000 visitors during the first half of 2025, reflecting the effectiveness of promotional programs and tourism initiatives aimed at making the interior a sustainable destination for cultural and environmental tourism.

The small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is a key driver of economic and social development, given its role in fostering innovation, creating jobs, and stimulating commercial activity. In 2024, the sector witnessed a 6% growth, bringing the total number of registered enterprises to over 16,000, along with a 109% increase in the number of active commercial registrations compared to 2023, reflecting the growing spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship among the governorate's residents.

The Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah collaborates with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority and other relevant entities to implement empowerment programs that include training, technical support, facilitating access to finance, and providing investment incentives to enhance the competitiveness of enterprises.

It also works to enable SMEs to participate in local development projects and government tenders, and supports the establishment of incubators and accelerators that provide a stimulating business environment contributing to the sustainability of projects and the development of entrepreneurs' capabilities, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 to build a diversified economy based on innovation and productivity.

The governorate is proceeding according to an integrated urban vision that responds to population growth and the development of cities, through quality projects such as the Interior Square in the Wilayat of Nizwa, the implementation of 35 parks and gardens with an area exceeding 1.35 million square meters, the Nizwa Future City project, and the Al Zain Fort neighborhood in the Wilayat of Bidbid, which includes 639 investment housing units at a cost of OMR30 million.

In the water and agriculture sector, the project to transfer water from Al Khoudh station to Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is being implemented at a cost of OMR128 million, with a length of 173 kilometers and a storage capacity of 350,000 cubic metres, and the water distribution network project in Al Hamra State at a value of OMR26 million to supply 82 villages with water services.

The governorate recently witnessed the completion of the water network project in the Wilayat of Manah, at a total cost of more than OMR25 million. The project includes a main reservoir with a storage capacity of 21,800 cubic metres, in addition to main water transmission lines with a length of 12 kilometres and a water distribution network with a length of 400 kilometres.

The governorate, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, also presented 36 investment opportunities worth OMR30 million in the fields of agriculture, environment and water, which contributed to an increase in agricultural activities by 9 percent to reach OMR50 million, and the growth of non-oil activities by 3.9 percent until the end of 2024.

In the area of youth and culture, the governorate gives youth the highest priority as they are the force of change and the makers of the future, as it implements quality programs in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, including student sports development centers, the "Future Pioneers" programme to enhance entrepreneurship skills, and the "Our Safe Home" initiative that targets the youth category from 13 to 28 years old to promote mental health and family cohesion.

The governorate is also witnessing the development of an integrated sports infrastructure in its states, enabling young people to practice their activities in a safe and stimulating environment, which contributes to consolidating the values of creativity and positive competition.

In the social sphere, social development in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has shifted from providing basic services to empowering and building a sustainable community. The number of beneficiaries of the social protection system reached 205,265, while the number of beneficiaries of community support programs reached 46,446. The Directorate General of Social Development is working to promote volunteer work and empower productive families through marketing incubators.

It is worth noting that the Interior Governorate achieved an advanced performance in the index of the number of registered volunteers at the governorate level, which reflects the maturity of the local community and its awareness of the importance of participating in national development.

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