

O M A N عُمَان D A I L Y

Observer



VOL. 44, NO. 362
PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 06:18 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 05:00 AM

DHUHR 11:56 PM

ASR 03:06 PM

MAGHRIB 05:29 PM

ISHA 06:41 PM



11

EIGHTH PLACE
FOR AL HARTHY IN
BAHRAIN FINALE

ROYAL DECREE RATIFIES AIR SERVICES DEAL

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued Royal Decree No 95/2025 on ratifying the Agreement of Air Services between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, signed in Montreal on September 22, 2025, reading as follows: Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article (2) states that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

IN BRIEF

HM’S CONDOLENCES TO KUWAIT EMIR, SURINAME LEADER

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on the death of Shaikh Sabah Jaber Fahad Al Malik al Sabah. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies and heartfelt sentiments to Shaikh Mishal and the Al Sabah family. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased soul in peace in paradise and grant his family the fortitude to bear the loss. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik also has also sent a cable of condolences to President Jennifer Geerlings-Simons of the Republic of Suriname on the death of the former president, Ronald Venetiaan. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to President Jennifer and the people of her country.



HM’S GREETINGS TO KING OF BAHRAIN

King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain received Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, at Al Sakhir Palace in Manama. During the meeting, the Minister of Interior conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Majesty’s best wishes to him. His Majesty also wished the Bahraini people continued progress and prosperity. In his turn, the King conveyed his heartfelt sentiments to His Majesty the Sultan. He also lauded the continuous development and growth of relations between the two countries across various fields.

NATIONAL DAY HOLIDAY ON NOVEMBER 26, 27

At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, it has been decided that November 26 and 27 will be an official holiday for employees in units of the State’s Administrative Apparatus, other legal entities and private sector establishments on the occasion of the National Day of the Sultanate of Oman. Employers may agree with their respective employees to continue working during the above-mentioned two days, if deemed necessary, provided the workers be compensated for that.

State Council to discuss data and digital economy

MUSCAT: At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council on Sunday inaugurated the proceedings of the 3rd Ordinary Session of the 8th Term, in accordance with the provisions of Articles (38 and 41) of the Council of Oman Law. Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, said in his speech that

the Third Ordinary Session of the Eighth Term of the Council necessitates a determination to intensify parliamentary work, completing what was started during the previous two years of the First and Second Sessions. He stressed the importance of exerting effort to achieve goals and attain accomplishments that will have a prominent contribution to the

richness of the development and growth of the renewed renaissance. The Chairman of the State Council added that a packed legislative agenda includes many important draft laws that must be completed with the council, so that the legislative structure of the Council of Oman system is complete. He expressed his thanks to the members and to the General

Secretariat for their appreciated national efforts in ensuring the success of the council’s work and achieving its mission. He indicated that the agenda for the first session includes discussing the study presented by the Technology and Innovation Committee on “Data Management and Governance and its Impact on the Digital Economy”. **TURN TO P3**

REAL GDP EXPECTED TO GROW BY 2.9%

O M A N I E C O N O M Y S E E S R O B U S T G R O W T H I N 2 0 2 4

THE Central Bank of Oman’s (CBO) Annual Report reviews the domestic economic environment, highlighting trends in real activity, inflation, fiscal and external positions and the performance of the banking sector. Economic activity continued to expand in 2024, demonstrating its resilience, boosted by stronger non-hydrocarbon sector performance. The government advanced further on its comprehensive reform agenda, underpinned by Oman Vision 2040.

The report also provides a comprehensive assessment of the Sultanate of Oman’s macroeconomic and financial developments during 2024, while highlighting the positive outlook for 2025.

Oman’s outlook remains broadly positive despite global uncertainties. Real GDP is expected to grow by 2.9 per cent in 2025, led by non-hydrocarbon sectors. Inflation will remain low, fiscal and external balances are projected to record small deficits, and public debt is expected to remain sustainable at around 35.6 per cent of GDP.

The global economy showed notable resilience in 2024 despite earlier concerns of a prolonged slowdown. Aggressive monetary policy tightening in advanced economies, together with ongoing geopolitical tensions had initially weighed on confidence.

However, resilient labour markets, lower commodity prices, and improved supply conditions allowed major central banks to gradually shift towards more accommodative stances in the



Oman’s fiscal position continued to strengthen in 2024, maintaining a surplus driven by favourable oil prices.

“Despite challenges, the Omani economy delivered strong growth in 2024, driven by the government’s reform agenda and the continued expansion of the non-hydrocarbon sector.”

CBO ANNUAL REPORT

second half of the year.

Despite these challenges, the Omani economy delivered strong growth in 2024, driven by the government’s reform agenda and the continued expansion of the non-hydrocarbon sector. Inflation remained low, supported by well-coordinated monetary and fiscal policies. Fiscal and external balances posted surpluses in 2024, and public debt continued its declining path. Oman’s sovereign credit rating was upgraded to investment grade. The banking sector remained highly liquid and well capitalised. Backed by sound macroeconomic fundamentals, the domestic environment in 2024 provided a strong platform to

advance the next phase of structural transformation under Oman Vision 2040.

Oman’s economy performed strongly in 2024, expanding by 1.6 per cent compared to 1.4 per cent in 2023, supported by higher non-hydrocarbon activity and effective policy reforms. Non-hydrocarbon GDP grew by 3.5 per cent, reflecting robust gains in manufacturing, services, and logistics. Industrial output reversed the contraction of the previous year, with manufacturing alone growing by 7.5 per cent. Services expanded by 3.0 per cent, led by wholesale and retail trade (5.3 per cent) and transport and storage (4.0 per cent).

TURN TO P2

US airlines cancel flights as travel woes rise

WASHINGTON: US airlines cancelled 1,460 flights on Day 2 of government-mandated flight cuts across the country and thousands of flights were delayed, causing mounting travel woes as air-traffic-controller absences spiked amid the federal government shutdown.

The Federal Aviation Administration on Saturday reported major air traffic control staffing issues, impacting 37 airport towers and other centres and delaying



A United Airlines flight lands in front of the US Capitol at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia. — Reuters

flights in at least 12 major US cities - including Atlanta, Newark, San Francisco, Chicago and New York.

Some 6,000 flights were delayed on Saturday, down from Friday when 7,000 were delayed and 1,025 were cancelled.

The FAA had instructed airlines to cut 4 per cent of daily flights starting on Friday at 40 major airports because of air traffic control safety concerns. The shutdown, which has now reached a record 39 days, has led to shortages of air traffic

controllers who, like other federal employees, have not been paid for weeks.

Reductions in flights are mandated to rise to 6 per cent on Tuesday and then hit 10 per cent by November 14. The cuts, which began at 6 am ET (1100 GMT) on Friday, include about 700 flights from the four largest carriers: American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines. The four airlines cancelled about the same number of flights on Saturday. — Reuters

OMAN

برجيل
burjeel
hospital
by Burjeel Holdings

MOH 4219410/2025

24399777

burjeelhospitaloman.com

Empowering Women's Health.
Supporting You Through Every Life Stage

Dr. Dalia Nadeem Al-Hamoud
Specialist Obstetrics & Gynaecology

Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair

SHORT TAKES



Sayyid Badr meets with Tharwah Neimat, Jordan Ambassador. — ONA

JORDAN AMBASSADOR BIDS GOODBYE

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received Tharwah Neimat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty. Sayyid Badr lauded the efforts of the ambassador in enhancing relations between the two countries, wishing her success in her future endeavours. For her part, the Ambassador expressed her gratitude and appreciation for the constructive cooperation she received from the Foreign Ministry and all other entities in the Sultanate of Oman during her tenure. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Faisal bin Omar al Marhoon, Head of the Arab Department at the Foreign Ministry, and a number of officials. — ONA

REAL GDP EXPECTED TO GROW BY 2.9%

FROM PAGE 1

Inflation in Oman in 2024 was markedly lower than the previous year. A strong rial, combined with administrative and fiscal measures, helped contain inflation. The average consumer price inflation in Oman was 0.6 per cent in 2024, down from 0.9 per cent in 2023, reflecting continued declines in transport prices and moderated food prices. Oman's inflation remains among the lowest in the region, supported by sound monetary and fiscal policies. Oman's fiscal position continued to strengthen in 2024, maintaining a surplus driven by favourable oil prices, prudent policy measures and improved fiscal discipline. The government recorded a fiscal surplus of 1.3 per cent of GDP, marking steady progress towards its fiscal consolidation and intensified efforts to achieve fiscal sustainability. These efforts, supported by effective debt management, reduced the public debt-to-GDP ratio to 35.0 per cent in 2024, down from 37.1 per cent in 2023. The external sector remained robust in 2024. The current account recorded a surplus of 2.9 per cent of GDP, supported by favourable oil prices, growth in non-oil exports, the government's rationalisation of current expenditures, and attraction of various foreign direct investments (FDI). Importantly, worker remittances remained stable in 2024, in line with the economy's demand for foreign labour, and partly due to a growing inclination among Omanis towards private-sector employment. The exchange rate peg has been instrumental in delivering low and stable inflation, serving as an appropriate nominal anchor in light of Oman's economic structure. Throughout 2024, the CBO maintained its commitment to the established monetary policy framework, aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of liquidity management operations that support domestic economic activity, while remaining aligned with the accommodative monetary stance of the US Federal Reserve. Amidst these developments, CBO lowered its policy rate to reach 5.145 per cent by the end of December 2024. — ONA

Oman, Bahrain discuss security cooperation

MANAMA: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, met on Sunday in Manama with General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The meeting comes as part of the Interior Minister's official visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain. The meeting addressed ways to enhance joint security cooperation and exchange expertise in security fields, in addition to discussing regional developments of mutual concern and ways to unify efforts to confront security challenges in the region. The two ministers affirmed that the existing cooperation



Sayyid Hamoud holds talks with his Bahrain counterpart, General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa

between the Ministries of Interior in the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain reflects the depth of the fraternal relations between the two countries and reflects the mutual commitment to enhancing security and stability in the region. Both sides also stressed the importance of continuing the exchange of expertise and joint training, and developing

coordination mechanisms between the security agencies to face all challenges. Separately, a formal session of talks was held between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain. The session was chaired on the Omani side by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, and on the Bahraini side by General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Minister of Interior. During the session, the distinguished fraternal relations between the two countries were reviewed, and ways to enhance cooperation and develop bilateral security coordination programmes were discussed. — ONA

Oman joins global forum on Haj history, heritage

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 9

THE Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, will take part in the 'History of Haj and the Two Holy Mosques Forum', organised by the King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darah), in cooperation with the Ministry of Haj and Umrah and the Pilgrim Experience Programme. The forum will run from November 10 to 12, alongside the fifth edition of the Hajj Conference and Exhibition at the Super Dome in Jeddah. A delegation from the ministry will attend the forum, which aims to highlight Saudi Arabia's historical and organisational efforts in serving the Two Holy Mosques, document architectural and artistic transformations of the holy sites, and employ modern methods, including digital media, to study the history of Haj. The forum will also support specialised scholarly research and translate its outputs into educational and media content, showcasing the evolution of the Haj journey across the Islamic world. Over three days, the forum will feature more than 10 specialised panel sessions with over 50 experts, including historians, researchers and specialists in architecture, culture, media, and digital technologies, creating a distinctive scholarly and cultural platform for documenting Hajj rites through a modern lens. The proceedings will cover five



OMAN, SAUDI SIGN HAJ PACT

JEDDAH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by the Ministry of Haj and Umrah, signed the Haj arrangements agreement for the Haj season 1447 AH in Jeddah on Sunday. The signing of the agreement comes within the framework of the fraternal relations that unite the two countries and their keenness to regulate the affairs of pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman. The agreement was signed by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and on the Saudi side by Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan al Rabbiah, Minister of Haj and Umrah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. — ONA

main themes namely the organisation of Haj and Umrah and serving the Guests of Allah; developments in crowd management, transport and healthcare; digital transformation in documentation and guidance; historical chronicles and travellers' writings on Haj and the Two Holy Mosques; and architectural styles, visual identity in manuscripts and maps, cultural and literary memory and the role of modern technologies and AI in historical documentation. An accompanying exhibition, 'A Century of Care for the Two Holy Mosques,' will showcase the history of Haj over the past

hundred years through rare documents, photographs, manuscripts, artefacts, digital media and modern display technologies. A ministry spokesperson noted that the King Abdulaziz Foundation organises the forum as part of its mission to preserve and document the history of the Kingdom and the Two Holy Mosques. "The forum provides a national and global platform for documenting Haj rites and enhancing the Kingdom's civilisational image, aligning with Saudi Vision 2030 objectives in culture and tourism, through interactive scholarly and digital content that highlights the historical depth of Haj."

Oman, Algeria strengthen ties in agriculture

ALGIERS: The Sultanate of Oman and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing cooperation in agriculture, fisheries and food security, alongside Oman's participation as a guest of honour at the International Fisheries and Aquaculture Exhibition 'SIPA 2025' in Oran. The meeting between Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Yassine El Mahdi Oualid, Algeria's Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries,



Dr Saud al Habsi stressed the importance of collaboration in research and investment with Algeria to achieve sustainable food security.

focused on advancing joint initiatives in desert agriculture, digital transformation in the agricultural sector, marine fishing and value-added

industries. Both sides stressed the importance of collaboration in research, innovation and investment to achieve sustainable food security and ensure the responsible management of natural resources. Dr Al Habsi highlighted Oman's success in developing the blue economy, emphasising initiatives such as aquaculture, modern fish ports, and e-marketing platforms like Bahar that link producers to global markets. He noted that Oman's participation in SIPA 2025 reflects the depth

of Omani-Algerian relations and its growing regional role in sustainable fisheries management. The exhibition, held under the slogan "Innovation and Knowledge," gathers representatives from more than 25 countries and 35 emerging institutions, serving as a platform for knowledge exchange and showcasing innovative technologies in marine fishing and aquaculture. Oman's presence has drawn attention to its integrated value chains in the fisheries sector. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



6 films will be screened as part of the Omani Cinematic Night during the festival.

SPOTLIGHT ON OMAN AT THE RABAT INTL FILM FESTIVAL

RABAT: The Sultanate of Oman is participating as the Guest of Honour in the 30th edition of the Rabat International Author Film Festival, in celebration of the Omani cinematic movement and Oman’s efforts in supporting cultural and creative industries. The festival continues until November 14. The opening ceremony witnessed a special tribute to Omani cinema, attended by Khalid Salim Bamkhalef, Ambassador of Oman to Morocco, who indicated that this participation embodies the depth of the strong fraternal and historical relations between the two countries, and reflects the keenness to continuously enhance cultural and artistic cooperation.

The Oman Film Society is participating with a diverse programme that includes film screenings, seminars, and workshops, in addition to the participation of Director Ahmed al Hadhari on the International Jury, and Oman’s participation in the official competition with the film ‘Al Majhool’ (The Unknown) by Director Mohammed al Kindi.

An Omani Cinematic Night will be held during the festival events, featuring the screening of six films that represent new creative experiences in Omani cinema. This will be accompanied by a seminar on Omani-Moroccan cinematic relations, a presentation on the ‘Make Your Film in Oman’ initiative, and a scientific paper on Sociology between Oman and Morocco.

This participation affirms the prominent position that Omani cinema has come to occupy in international forums, the Sultanate of Oman’s continuous efforts to advance the creative industries sector, empower national talents, and solidify Oman’s cultural and artistic presence on the map of Arab and international cinema. — ONA

17 SMES, STARTUPS PARTICIPATE IN BIBAN 2025 FORUM



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 9

Riyada participated with 17 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and startups in the Biban 2025 forum, organised by the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (Monsha’at) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The four-day forum was themed ‘A Global Destination for Opportunities’ and included Omani participation across several tracks, such as startups, e-commerce, franchising and the marketplace. This participation aimed to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Kingdom and support local and international entrepreneurs.

The Biban 2025 Forum is one of the most prominent gatherings in the entrepreneurship sector, with participation from over 150 countries. It represents a broader, more global expansion of previous editions, empowering the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Kingdom and supporting local and international entrepreneurs.

This is achieved through seven main tracks covering entrepreneurship, innovation and investment, contributing to the provision of high-quality solutions and opportunities for growth and expansion. The forum contributed to creating a stimulating environment, enhancing administrative, financial, and technical skills, and encouraging entrepreneurs to launch their projects and connect with local and international experts.

This fostered a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, strengthening the sector and promoting a culture of innovation. The forum also discussed ideas and topics related to entrepreneurship and offered workshops, courses, advisory and mentoring sessions and specialised programs to improve the efficiency of businesses, enhance their performance and increase their contribution to the GDP.

be’ah, 8 governorates sign agreements in waste sector

MUSCAT: A set of agreements were signed on Sunday between the Oman Environmental Services Holding Company be’ah and a number of governorates in Oman for the transfer of duties and responsibilities for municipal waste collection and transport services from containers.

This transfer will cover the governorates of Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Dhahirah and Al Wusta.

The signing of these agreements is part of the government’s approach to enhancing institutional integration in the management of the solid municipal waste sector and



The agreements were signed for municipal waste collection and transport services from containers.

achieving the goals of governance and environmental sustainability.

The agreements aim to enhance the quality and efficiency of municipal services and ensure their management in accordance

with the highest modern technical and environmental standards.

This contributes to building more sustainable and cleaner cities and a safe and healthy urban environment.

The agreements stipulate that the governorates will begin gradually assuming the responsibility of supervising waste collection and transport operations from containers starting from December 1.

For its part, be’ah Company will continue to manage and operate its technical facilities, which include engineered landfills, transfer stations and facilities for treating healthcare waste and hazardous waste.

It will also focus on developing circular economy projects and enhancing the efficiency of resource management and benefiting from waste as a sustainable economic resource.

— ONA

SPF highlights monthly benefit for senior citizens

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, NOV 9

THE Social Protection Fund (SPF) has spotlighted one of its most compassionate initiatives — the Senior Benefit, which grants RO 115 per month to every Omani citizen aged 60 and above, as part of its ongoing mission to honour and support the nation’s elderly.

In an awareness post shared across its official platforms, the Fund noted that the benefit now covers more than 95 per cent of senior citizens nationwide, underscoring Oman’s commitment to ensuring dignity, financial stability, and inclusion for all its people.

The message — ‘Because the generation that built deserves to be appreciated’ — resonated deeply across Oman, where elders are regarded as pillars of wisdom, experience, and cultural identity.

Established under Royal Decree No 52/2023, the Senior Benefit is a cornerstone of the country’s comprehensive social protection framework, guaranteeing coverage



The allowance is managed digitally through an integrated platform connecting various government entities.

Experts have praised the programme for filling a critical gap in social security and redefining national protection

for citizens from childhood to old age.

All Omani citizens reaching 60 years of age are eligible to receive the monthly allowance, regardless of employment or pension history — extending support to those who may have worked outside formal systems, including farmers, homemakers and small business owners.

The SPF explained that the allowance is managed digitally through an integrated platform

connecting various government entities.

This system ensures automatic eligibility verification and transparent, timely payments — reflecting Oman’s advancement toward smart governance and efficient public service delivery.

Experts have praised the programme for filling a critical gap in social security and redefining national protection to encompass both economic and emotional well-being.

The Fund continues to enhance public understanding through its official website, SPF.gov.om, which provides comprehensive information, FAQs and direct communication channels to help citizens access their entitlements easily.

The Senior Benefit stands as a symbol of national gratitude — acknowledging those who once built and nurtured the nation.

It reflects Oman’s enduring promise under Oman Vision 2040 to build a just, inclusive and compassionate society where every citizen is valued and supported with dignity.

State Council to discuss digital economy

FROM PAGE 1

This study aims to enhance the legislative and regulatory framework for national registries, benefit from leading global experiences in data governance, establish a comprehensive framework for its management and security, and propose supportive legislation for secure and effective data sharing and exchange. The council also reviewed a number of reports related to its work.

SHURA COUNCIL

At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Shura Council inaugurated the proceedings of the Third Annual Session (2025-2026) of the Tenth Term (2023-2027).

Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council, affirmed in his speech during the Third Annual Session of the Council’s Tenth Term the magnitude of the responsibilities and efforts required by the national work process. This process mandates the Council to give its utmost



Shaikh Abdulmalik al Khalili

attention and prioritise these responsibilities within its annual plans and programs, and to address and examine them within the framework of the Basic Statute of the State and the Council of Oman Law.

He pointed to the importance of advancing the council’s work and exercising its powers to effectively contribute to moving the national work process forward. He noted the effective contribution and diligent work exerted by the council members during the past two sessions, both in the council and its committees, which enabled the Council to carry out its work and make numerous decisions and recommendations in the



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali

legislative fields.

During the session, a re-election was held for the supplementary members of the Council Office for the second half of its Tenth Term (2023-2027). The Bureau consists of the Chairman, his two deputies, and six members elected by the Council by relative majority. The following were elected as supplementary members of the Council Office: Hassan bin Ahmed al Nabhani (Representative of the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar), Badr bin Nasser al Jabri (Representative of the Wilayat of Nakhl), Said bin Mohammed al Saadi (Representative of the Wilayat of Ja’lan Bani Bu Ali), Dr Talal bin

Said al Maharbi (Representative of the Wilayat of Bidbid), Abdullah bin Al Waleed al Hinai (Representative of the Wilayat of Bahla), and Mohammed bin Hassan Al Ansi al Yaf’ei (Representative of the Wilayat of Salalah).

The council members were also briefed on the State’s General Budget Draft for the Fiscal Year 2026, the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan Draft (2026-2030), and a number of draft projects, laws, and agreements referred to the Council by the Council of Ministers.

The session also included a discussion of several topics, including: the Draft Amendment to the Unified Customs System for the GCC States, the Draft Amended Agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Austria for the Avoidance of Double Taxation, and the Draft United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (Singapore Convention on Mediation). — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

BRAKES ON
E-BIKES



RECKLESS USAGE
OR RIDING BIKES
WITHOUT GIVING
PRIORITY TO SAFETY
CAN CAUSE CASUALTIES
RANGING FROM
MODERATE TO SEVERE

KABEER YOUSUF

THE use of electric bikes should be limited to certain areas and not allowed on main roads, as they pose dangers to both riders and others, according to the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

There is a growing demand for such e-scooters and bikes, but most of them don't comply with regulations. Hence, the ROP has confiscated unregistered electric bikes, which are often heavily modified.

"We have been warning e-bike users not to venture out on main roads, as they pose a great threat to themselves as well as to others. These bikes can be ridden in private places and in less populated areas," a senior official said.

The Ministry of Education has prohibited them from school grounds, while Muscat Municipality has banned all bikes, including electric ones, from public parks, gardens, and beaches to protect visitors and prevent damage to the environment.



We have been warning e-bike users not to venture out on main roads, as they pose a great threat to themselves as well as to others. These bikes can be ridden in private places and in less populated areas

SENIOR OFFICIAL

People have raised concerns about the potential for accidents, especially among young riders who may lack driving experience.

"Added to it, there is a lack of dedicated paths for electric bikes in many areas, which increases the risk of collisions with pedestrians or vehicles."

Their usage is limited to certain areas as bikes can cause inconvenience to other visitors. "Not only these, such electric bikes can cause traffic snarls, especially on main roads, as they tend to cut across the main roads and pose dangers at signals as well," he adds.

Reckless usage or riding bikes without giving priority to safety can cause casualties ranging from moderate to severe, according to healthcare professionals.

Dr Mahmoud al Rahbi, a specialist in emergency medicine, opines that the dangers associated with riding such small bikes are manifold.

"Riding e-scooters without safety gear on main roads poses risks of various grades, as there are higher speed limits. Also, it's all the more risky to drive without a helmet, as it can result in head injury in the case of an accident. Such scooters should be limited to private properties or at less populated areas," Dr Al Rahbi adds.

According to the ROP statistics, accidents involving e-scooters are on the rise and have resulted in fatalities in numerous countries.

"Although there has been a rule since 2024, it was not fully operational. But taking into consideration the number of accidents involving e-scooters, we are strictly implementing the law," the official said.

SHORT TAKES



Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie is leading UTAS delegation at the Chinese Forum.

UTAS TAKES PART IN WORLD UNIVERSITY FORUM IN CHINA

HANGZHOU: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) is taking part in the World University Presidents Forum and the International Forum on Higher Education, being held in Hangzhou, the People’s Republic of China, from November 7 to 10.

The forum seeks to explore the future of higher education and the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in developing the global system of education and research. UTAS delegation was led by Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences. The programme of the forum includes panel discussions and bilateral meetings featuring several themes, including ‘innovation in higher education in the age of artificial intelligence’ and ‘developing digital education models’.

The forum brings together global university leaders, representatives of international organisations and experts in education and artificial intelligence from more than 40 countries. The programme of the forum includes panel discussions and bilateral meetings featuring several themes, including “innovation in higher education in the age of artificial intelligence”, “developing digital education models”, “promoting educational equity and research”, “streamlining higher education mechanisms to fit with real-world applications” and “establishing international partnerships to support the sustainability of higher education”. UTAS delegation participated in consultative meetings with representatives of international universities and educational institutions. The meetings dealt with prospects for cooperation in the fields of science and research, the exchange of students and university staff and the development of joint programmes in AI and technology disciplines. The participation of UTAS in the forum stems from the university’s drive towards global openness and leadership in the fields of technology and innovation in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. — **ONA**

Al Rahma Association unveils new identity

MUSCAT: The Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood Care marked a significant milestone with the launch of its new visual identity under the slogan ‘A Journey of Impact’, alongside the inauguration of its new headquarters in Al Khoudh, Al Seeb.

The event, held under the auspices of HH Sayyidah Mayyan bint Shihab al Said, began with a tour of the new facility. The guests visited the various sections, including administrative offices, meeting halls, centres for productive families, and exhibition areas dedicated to charitable initiatives.

In her address, Sanaa bint Abdulrahman al Khanjariyah, President of the Al Rahma Association, described the opening as a ‘turning point in the



The Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood Care inaugurated its new headquarters in Al Khoudh. — **ONA**

association’s journey.’ She noted that the new identity reflects a renewed vision and mission to serve the community, empower families, and strengthen volunteerism and social solidarity.

She added, “Al Rahma has always been a home of

humanitarian generosity and a haven for families in need. The move to this new building marks a new chapter of development and institutional excellence, reinforcing our partnership with the community and our commitment to organised charitable work.”

Constructed on a 4,000-square-metre plot with a total built-up area of 6,000 square metres at a cost of RO 1.4 million, the three-storey facility includes administrative offices, meeting rooms, exhibition spaces and workshops for productive families.

It also features two commercial centres and 20 retail units available for rent, contributing to the association’s financial sustainability.

The building integrates a modern Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to improve operational efficiency and service delivery.

Solar panels have been installed on the roof to promote sustainability and reduce energy consumption, in line with commitment to environmental responsibility. — **ONA**

Municipality urges strict adherence to building codes

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, NOV 9

MUSCAT Municipality has reaffirmed the importance of adhering to national building codes and construction guidelines, cautioning that any violation of these rules poses serious risks to people, property and the structural safety of buildings.

In a recent awareness campaign, the municipality underscored that non-compliance with approved standards — including unauthorised extensions, substandard materials, or lack of official permits — can lead to grave consequences such as structural failures, public infrastructure damage and threats to lives.

Officials noted that inspection and monitoring teams continue to identify and address violations to ensure all construction activities in the Governorate of Muscat conform to legal and engineering requirements.

“Building according to regulations is not just a technical requirement, but a civic duty,” the municipality emphasised, adding that compliance



The inspection teams will continue to address violations to ensure all construction activities in Muscat conform to legal requirements.

The initiative aligns with Oman’s broader vision of developing modern, safe and sustainable urban spaces

protects neighbourhoods, prevents accidents and preserves the city’s architectural character.

The initiative aligns with Oman’s broader vision of developing modern, safe and sustainable urban spaces.

Properly built structures, the municipality explained, are more durable, energy-efficient and resilient to external factors — reducing long-term maintenance costs and enhancing public safety. Property owners, contractors and

consultants were urged to strictly follow the Building Requirements and Construction Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, which serve as the official reference for all construction activities across Oman.

The ministry’s manual defines the technical, environmental and safety standards for every stage of construction — from design and material selection to execution and maintenance.

These standards aim to unify engineering practices and prevent disputes arising from unlicensed or non-compliant works.

Beyond enforcement, Muscat Municipality continues to raise awareness through media campaigns, community programmes and outreach initiatives to educate the public on the importance of proper planning, safety inspections and professional supervision.

Ultimately, the municipality reminded that compliance with construction laws is not merely about avoiding penalties — it is about safeguarding lives, protecting the nation’s urban identity, and contributing to a safer and more sustainable Muscat.

TENDER NOTICE

وزارة الثروة الزراعية والسمكية وموارد المياه

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tender:-

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
521/2025/MAFWR/HQ-1 Recall	Maintenance of a Rainfall Enhancement Stations	Tuesday 4/11/2025	Thursday 13/11/2025	Sunday 23/11/2025	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First, Second, Third, and Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.

- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.

- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.

- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968.24402244 or etenderhd@pttc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

WORKSHOP
REVIEWS
HAZARDOUS
MATERIAL
INCIDENTS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health is organizing a 4-day workshop on medical response to hazardous material incidents.

The workshop, which kicked off in Muscat on Sunday, reviews the latest developments in the fields of detection and removal of hazardous materials.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation.

— **ONA**

mcd

مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع

Muscat Clearing & Depository

TENDER NOTICE

Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (S.A.O.G) would like to invite qualified businesses to participate in the tender below:

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Participation Charges	Sale of Documents	Last Date-Time for Submission of Proposal by Vendors (Response to RFP)
CSD/ 2025/ C003	Request for Proposal: BMC Control-M software for a mission critical application for Muscat Clearing and Depository Company	Vendors specialized in this field	OMR 250/= (Non-refundable)	10 th to 14 th November, 2025	16 th November 2025 by 12 noon

Tender Documents (RFP) shall be obtained from Procurements & Services Department (email: 'Yahya Al Salmi' alsalmi@mcd.om), Muscat Clearing & Depository, First Floor, MBD, RUWI, Sultanate of Oman (Tel.: +968-24822207) during office hours after paying the participation charges mentioned above, to be paid into MCD Bank account details provided below.

All Vendors who are bidding must provide a bank guarantee from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (2%) of the tender value on behalf of MUSCAT CLEARING & DEPOSITORY COMPANY, valid for (90) days from the date of submission of the proposal in response to the RFP.

Riyada card holders from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) must attach a valid copy of the card in order to be exempted from tender fees and submission of bid bond.

MCD 's Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract Agreement shall be applicable.

MCD is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Tender.

MCD Bank Account details:-

Bank Name & Branch

Bank Account Name

Bank Account Number

SWIFT/BIC Code

: Bank Dhofar, MBD Branch

: Muscat Clearing & Depository Company

: 01010010875001

: BDOFOMRUXXX

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A staff member of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency searches for victims during rescue operation close to Langkawi. — Reuters

MALAYSIA SEARCHES FOR MIGRANTS AFTER DEADLY BOAT SINKING

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia was searching for survivors after a boat carrying migrants capsized near the Thai border, killing at least one and leaving many others missing, a maritime agency official said on Sunday. The group is believed to be part of at least 300 undocumented migrants who departed from Myanmar, before one of their boats capsized near Thailand’s Tarutao Island and just north of the Malaysian island resort of Langkawi. “So far, 11 people including one body have been found,” Romli Mustafa, director of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in Kedah state, said in a statement. There was a possibility of more victims being found at sea, he added. Kedah police chief Adzli Abu Shah told Malaysian media that the boat “carrying 90 people” is believed to have capsized three days ago. Two other vessels carrying a similar number of passengers each have also been reported missing, he was quoted as saying by the Free Malaysia Today news website. The body recovered was believed to be that of a woman from Myanmar’s persecuted Rohingya minority. — AFP

PAKISTAN COMMITTED TO ‘DIALOGUE’ DESPITE AFGHAN



An Afghan man stands in front of a damaged house, at a village in the Spin Boldak district of Kandahar. — AFP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan said on Sunday it was committed to “dialogue” with Afghanistan despite peace talks ending after deadly violence, with Islamabad stressing its security concerns persist. In its first acknowledgement that the negotiations were over, Islamabad said the third round of talks “concluded” on Friday. “Pakistan remains committed to (the) resolution of bilateral differences through dialogue. However, Pakistan’s core concern, i.e. terrorism emanating from Afghanistan needs to be addressed first and foremost,” the foreign ministry said in a statement. Pakistan’s foreign ministry said the Taliban government avoided “taking any measures on (the) ground and tried to back out of the commitments they had undertaken at the first round”. The statement came a day after the Afghan government said its ceasefire with Pakistan would remain even though their latest talks failed, blaming Islamabad’s “irresponsible and uncooperative” approach. “During the discussions, the Pakistani side attempted to shift all responsibility for its security to the Afghan government, while showing no willingness to take responsibility for either Afghanistan’s security or its own,” Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid wrote on social media. — AFP

FRAUD FACTORIES

Myanmar to demolish 150 scam hub buildings



Myanmar’s military said that it was demolishing nearly 150 buildings in a crackdown on a notorious Internet scam compound bordering Thailand. Sprawling fraud factories have boomed in Myanmar’s loosely governed border regions, housing workers targeting unsuspecting Internet users with business cons worth tens of billions of dollars annually. Military found 148 buildings, including dormitories, a hospital and a karaoke complex. — AFP

JAPAN OBSERVES TINY TSUNAMI FOLLOWING 6.9-MAGNITUDE QUAKE

TOKYO: Tiny tsunami waves hit Japan’s northern Pacific coast on Sunday after an offshore earthquake, the national weather service said. The first tsunami hit the northern city of Miyako at 5:37 pm (0837 GMT), but it was so small that the Japan Meteorological Agency said it could not measure its size. Later, ports in Kuji and Ofunato, located in the same region, saw waves as high as 20 centimetres (less than eight inches), while smaller waves reached other ports in Iwate, the meteorological agency said. The quake struck around 5:03 pm (0803 GMT) in waters off Iwate, according to the Japanese agency which initially estimated its strength at magnitude 6.7 but later revised it to 6.9. The US Geological Survey measured the quake as magnitude 6.8. The Japan Meteorological Agency had issued an advisory for a possible tsunami before lifting it shortly after 8 pm. The original quake was followed by aftershocks, the agency said. Six other offshore quakes hit the same region earlier on Sunday, but were barely felt on land and did not prompt tsunami advisories. The area may see stronger quakes, particularly in the next several days, warned Masashi Kiyomoto, an earthquake and tsunami official at the meteorological agency. “This is an area that has seen a series of seismic activities. It is possible that larger earthquakes will occur,” he said. — AFP

Fung-Wong makes landfall in Philippines, 2 dead

MORE than a million people have been evacuated and at least two people killed as floodwaters rose in the Philippines on Sunday before Super Typhoon Fung-wong’s expected landfall on the east coast. The storm, which comes just days after another typhoon ravaged the country, will slam into Aurora province, state weather forecaster Charmagne Varilla said. With a radius spanning nearly the whole of the Philippines, Fung-wong is expected to bring wind and heavy rain to swathes of the archipelago nation, which last week saw more than 220 people killed by Typhoon Kalmaegi.

On Sunday, one of the already storm-stricken provinces in the central Philippines recorded the first known death from Fung-wong. Rescuer Juniel Tagarino in Catbalogan City said that the body of a 64-year-old woman attempting to evacuate had been pulled from under debris and fallen trees. “Last night, the wind was so strong and the rain was heavy... According to her family members, she might have forgotten something and went back inside her house,” Tagarino said, adding her relatives were just 50 metres (55 yards) away when they realised she was missing. A second death, a person who drowned in a flash flood on Catanduanes Island, was confirmed shortly thereafter by the civil defence office. In Aurora, where the eye of the storm is expected to make landfall, government worker Aries Ora was boarding up his home in Dipaculao town with steel sheets and wooden boards. “What really scares us is that the expected landfall is at night,” the 34-year-old said. “Unlike previous typhoons, we won’t be able to clearly see the movement of the wind and what’s happening around us.” Further north, in Cagayan province, the occupants of an evacuation centre said that fear of flooding had convinced them to leave their homes. “We often suffer flooding in our home, so when we were told to evacuate, we evacuated, because we would be trapped,” said Loretta Salquina. “The typhoon might blow away our roofs... We’re safer here.” Schools and government offices have been ordered closed on Monday across the main island of Luzon, including the capital Manila, where nearly 300 flights have been cancelled. Earlier on Sunday, Catanduanes was already being lashed by wind and rain, with storm surges sending waves hurtling over streets and floodwaters rising in some areas. “As we speak, they are feeling the impact of the typhoon, especially in Catanduanes, because the storm’s eye is closest there,” civil defence deputy administrator Rafaelito Alejandro said at a news briefing. “The waves started roaring around 7:00 am. When the waves hit the seawall, it felt like the ground was shaking,” Edson Casarino, 33, a resident of Catanduanes’ Virac town, said. In Guinobatan, a town of about 80,000 in the region’s Albay province, verified video showed streets transformed into a raging torrent of floodwaters. Typhoon Fung-wong is expected to bring at least 200 millimetres of rain to many parts of the country, according to government meteorologists. Scientists warn that storms are becoming more powerful due to human-driven climate change. Warmer oceans allow typhoons to strengthen rapidly, and a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, meaning heavier rainfall. Catanduanes rushed to prepare for the onslaught, with residents tying down their houses with ropes and putting weights on their roofs. “They decided to do our tradition of strapping down the roofs with big ropes and anchoring them on the ground, so they won’t be blown away by the wind,” provincial rescue official Roberto Monterola said. — AFP



Residents queue for food at an evacuation centre in Cauayan, Isabela, Philippines. — Reuters

Typhoon Fung-wong is expected to bring at least 200 millimetres of rain to many parts of the country. Scientists warn that storms are becoming more powerful due to human-driven climate change.

town with steel sheets and wooden boards. “What really scares us is that the expected landfall is at night,” the 34-year-old said. “Unlike previous typhoons, we won’t be able to clearly see the movement of the wind and what’s happening around us.” Further north, in Cagayan province, the occupants of an evacuation centre said that fear of flooding had convinced them to leave their homes. “We often suffer flooding in our home, so when we were told to evacuate, we evacuated, because we would be trapped,” said Loretta Salquina. “The typhoon might blow away our roofs... We’re safer here.” Schools and government offices have been ordered closed on Monday across the main island of Luzon, including the capital Manila,

US FORCES WORKING WITH ISRAEL ON GAZA AID

GAZA: US forces are taking part in overseeing and coordinating aid transfers into the Gaza Strip together with Israel as part of US President Donald Trump’s ceasefire plan, an Israeli security official said. The Washington Post reported that the US-led Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC) will replace Israel in overseeing aid into Gaza. It cited a US official and people familiar with the matter as saying Israel was part of the process but that CMCC would decide what aid enters Gaza and how. The CMCC began operating from southern Israel in late October, tasked with helping aid flow and stabilising security in Gaza, according to the US Central Command. While the truce was meant to unleash a torrent of aid across the tiny, crowded enclave where famine was confirmed in August and where almost all the 2.3 million inhabitants have lost their homes, humanitarian agencies said last week that far too little aid is reaching Gaza. Israel says it is fulfilling its obligations under the ceasefire agreement, which calls for an average of 600 trucks of supplies into Gaza per day. — Reuters

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Iraqis vote early ahead of upcoming polls



Members of Iraq’s security forces and its internally displaced population headed to the polls in early voting ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections. Polls opened for members of the armed forces, who account for 1.3 million of the more than 21 million eligible voters. More than 26,500 internally displaced people are also eligible for early voting. More than 7,740 candidates, nearly a third of them women, are running for the 329-seat parliament. — AFP

BUILDING DEMOLITION

S Korea recovers body from collapse rubble



South Korean rescue officials pulled a third body from the rubble after the collapse of a large structure at a power station. Four people remained buried, with the authorities unable to locate two of them, after the collapse of the decommissioned heating facility as workers were taking down parts of the massive steel structure to prepare for demolition. The structure mangled and toppled over, surrounded by similar structures. — Reuters

SHORTTAKES



Spain’s PM Pedro Sanchez delivers a press conference during the Leaders Summit, Para State, Brazil. — AFP

SPANISH PM CALLS FOR STRONGER TIES WITH MEXICO

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Sunday said improving ties with Mexico is a priority for his government after years of diplomatic tensions over Spain’s colonial past. Sanchez acknowledged the “light and shadow” in their shared history during an interview with El Pais daily, stressing that recognising both is key to building stronger relations. “I can guarantee that for Spain, normalising our relations with a country we consider very close is a priority,” he said.

The prime minister highlighted Mexico’s support for Spanish exiles after the 1936-39 civil war, noting the historic and cultural bonds between the two nations. Relations have been strained in recent years due to calls by Mexican leaders for an official apology from Spain for colonial-era abuses.

In response, Spain’s Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares acknowledged the “pain and injustice” inflicted on Indigenous peoples during the Spanish conquest of the Americas. “There was injustice — it is only fair to recognise it today, and fair to regret it. Because that is also part of our shared history, and we cannot deny or forget it,” he added. — AFP

US GROUNDS MD-11 CARGO PLANES



The US civil aviation regulator ordered that all MD-11 cargo planes remain grounded for inspections, after one of them was involved in a deadly crash in Kentucky this week. A McDonnell Douglas MD-11 aircraft operated by UPS exploded into flames when it crashed shortly after departing on Tuesday from the airport in Louisville, killing at least 14 people. A three-person crew was aboard. The Federal Aviation Administration issued an emergency directive that “prohibits further flight until the airplane is inspected and all applicable corrective actions are performed.” — AFP

FRENCH FM VOWS TO ‘DEFEAT’ DRUG TRADE ON COLOMBIA TRIP

PUETRO ANTIOQUIA: France’s foreign minister vowed to “defeat” rapidly spreading drug trafficking in Europe, as he spoke to AFP on a trip to Colombia, a major narcotics producer. Jean-Noel Barrot is in the South American country for a summit between the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which will take place in the city of Santa Marta on Sunday and Monday.

Speaking in nearby Puerto Antioquia, a port terminal in

northwestern Colombia where the powerful Clan del Golfo cartel operates, Barrot said France was “resolved to defeat trafficking of all kinds — not just in drugs — which raises public health (and safety) concerns.” He said Paris would not sit by and watch “the explosion of drug trafficking in Latin America, in the Caribbean, and also in Europe, where we are now seeing not only drugs flooding in, but also traffickers moving around and setting up laboratories.” “All of this must stop,” he said, adding that the

French government planned to open a regional academy in the Dominican Republic that will train investigators and customs officers to help combat organized crime.

The training programme, planned for next year, will take place in cooperation “with Colombia in particular, the (world’s) top cocaine producer,” Barrot said. The EU-CELAC summit risks being overshadowed by no-shows and disputes, with Colombia accusing the United States of pressuring countries to skip the event. — AFP

Ukraine scrambles for power after Russian drone attacks

UKRAINE was scrambling to turn lights and heating back on Sunday after Russian attacks targeting energy infrastructure, which had crippled some of the country’s power generation. Moscow, which has escalated attacks on Ukraine’s infrastructure in recent months, launched hundreds of drones at energy facilities across the country overnight into Saturday. Ukrainian strikes on Russia’s own infrastructure meanwhile left more than 20,000 people without power in regions bordering Ukraine, local authorities said. The Russian attacks interrupted electricity, heat and water supplies in several cities.

The strikes affected power plants of Centrenergo, one of Ukraine’s power generating companies. The company website says it used to power 15 per cent of Ukraine with three power plants — one of which is now in territory occupied by Russia. “Currently, power generation is down to zero,” Centrenergo said on Saturday. Power would be cut for between eight and 16 hours a day across most regions of Ukraine on Sunday, state power transmission system operator Ukrenergo said, while repairs were carried out and energy sourcing diverted.

Ukraine’s energy minister called it “one of the most difficult nights” since Russia sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. While the situation had somewhat stabilised, regions including Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Poltava, Chernigiv and Sumy could continue to see regular power cuts, Svitlana Grynchuk said on Saturday evening. “The enemy inflicted a massive strike with ballistic missiles, which are extremely difficult to shoot down. It is hard to recall such a number of direct strikes on energy facilities since the beginning of the attack,” she told local broadcaster United News.

Russian drones had targeted two nuclear power substations deep in western Ukraine, Kyiv’s Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga said, calling on the UN’s nuclear watchdog to respond. The substations powered the Khmelnytskyi and Rivne nuclear plants, around 120 and 95 kilometres (75 and 59



Ukrainian firefighters extinguish a fire at a site in the city of Chuguiv, Kharkiv region. — AFP

miles) respectively from Lutsk, he said. “Russia is deliberately endangering nuclear safety in Europe. We call for an urgent meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors to respond to these unacceptable risks,” he wrote on Telegram late on Saturday, referring to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Sybiga also urged China and India — traditionally large buyers of Russian oil — to pressure Moscow to cease its attacks.

Of the 458 drones and 45 missiles launched by Russia overnight into Saturday, Ukraine’s air force said it downed 406 drones and nine missiles. Experts said the strikes on energy infrastructure put Ukraine at risk of heating outages ahead of the winter months. Russia has targeted the power and heating grid throughout its almost four-year attack, destroying a large part of the key civilian infrastructure.

The barrage overnight into Saturday was the ninth massive attack on gas infrastructure since early October, Ukraine’s energy company Naftogaz said. Kyiv’s School of Economics estimated in a report that the attacks shut down half of Ukraine’s

natural gas production. Ukraine’s top energy expert, Oleksandr Kharchenko, told a media briefing on Wednesday that if Kyiv’s two power and heating plants went offline for more than three days when temperatures fall below minus 10C, the capital would face a “technological disaster”. He said Ukrainian cities, which mostly rely on central heating, should prepare contingency plans to prevent buildings from freezing in case heating supplies are destroyed.

Ukraine has in turn stepped up strikes on Russian oil depots and refineries in recent months, seeking to cut off Moscow’s vital energy exports and trigger fuel shortages across the country. Fires broke out at a power plant in the western Kursk region and the southern Voronezh region after Ukrainian strikes, the regional governors said on Sunday. Belgorod Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said the “electricity and heating supply network has suffered severe damage” in the regional capital of the same name, following a barrage from Kyiv, which Gladkov said left “more than 20,000 residents” without electricity. — AFP

Syrian president arrives in United States for landmark visit

WASHINGTON: Syria’s President Ahmed Al Sharaa arrived in the United States for a landmark official visit, his country’s state news agency reported, a day after Washington removed him from a terrorism blacklist. Sharaa, whose forces ousted longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad late last year, is due to meet US President Donald Trump at the White House on Monday. It’s the first such visit by a Syrian president since the country’s independence in 1946, according to analysts. The interim leader met Trump for the first time in Riyadh during the US president’s regional tour in May.

Washington’s envoy to Syria, Tom Barrack, said earlier this month that Sharaa would “hopefully” sign an agreement to join the international US-led alliance against the IS group. The United States plans to establish a military base near Damascus “to coordinate humanitarian aid and

observe developments between Syria and Israel,” a diplomatic source in Syria said.

State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said Sharaa’s government had been meeting US demands including on working to find missing Americans and on eliminating any remaining chemical weapons. “These actions are being taken in recognition of the progress demonstrated by the Syrian leadership after the departure of Bashar al Assad and more than 50 years of repression under the Assad regime,” Pigott said.

The spokesman added that the US delisting would promote “regional security and stability as well as an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process.” The Syrian interior ministry announced on Saturday that it had carried out 61 raids and made 71 arrests in a “proactive campaign to neutralise the threat” of IS,



Syria’s President Ahmad Al Sharaa walks on arrival at the General Plenary of Leaders in the framework of the COP30, in Belem, Para State, Brazil. — AFP

according to the official SANA news agency. It said the raids targeted locations where IS sleeper cells remain, including Aleppo,

Idlib, Hama, Homs, Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa and Damascus.

After his arrival, Sharaa met with representatives from Syrian organisations in Washington, according to his country’s official media. The Syrian foreign minister posted a social media video, filmed before Sharaa’s departure, of him playing basketball with CENTCOM commander Brad Cooper and Kevin Lambert, the head of the international anti-IS operation in Iraq, alongside the caption “work hard, play harder.”

Sharaa’s Washington trip comes after his landmark visit to the United Nations in September — his first time on US soil — where the ex-jihadist became the first Syrian president in decades to address the UN General Assembly in New York. On Thursday, Washington led a vote by the Security Council to remove UN sanctions against him. Sharaa’s group, Hayat Tahrir

al-Sham (HTS), was delisted as a terrorist group by Washington as recently as July. Since taking power, Syria’s new leaders have sought to break from their violent past and present a moderate image more tolerable to ordinary Syrians and foreign powers.

The White House visit “is further testament to the US commitment to the new Syria and a hugely symbolic moment for the country’s new leader, who thus marks another step in his astonishing transformation from militant leader to global statesman,” International Crisis Group US programme director Michael Hanna said. Sharaa is expected to seek funds for Syria, which faces significant challenges in rebuilding after 13 years of civil war. In October, the World Bank put a “conservative best estimate” of the cost of rebuilding Syria at \$216 billion. — AFP

OPINION

Aligning higher education with a changing world



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

In a world dominated by technology, automation and globalisation, there is no doubt that higher education needs to find ways to align its goals with specific market needs if it is to be of value to its major stakeholders – the students. There are many reasons why the value of higher education is being questioned. Basically, its ROI (Return on Investment) is sharply falling. This means that a 3-or 4-year degree is not a guarantee of a steady job any more. In fact, studies in North America show that students spend almost their entire lifetime paying off student loans. Another limitation is that universities offer academic courses which do not automatically translate into jobs. In our rapidly changing world, this is becoming ever truer. Traditionally, universities have focused on cultivating intellectual growth, research capabilities, and critical thinking. These remain important skills and qualities among the workforce, but they are also identified as theoretical skills which are not immediately translated into jobs. Worldwide, employers report difficulty finding candidates with the necessary skills, communication abilities, and problem-solving competencies, in spite

of having an increasing number of degree holders. There are many solutions to bridge this gap, and universities have started initiating necessary changes. One of the most effective strategies is to establish stronger collaboration between universities and businesses, government agencies, and professional organisations. Such collaborations can be through internships and joint research initiatives. This kind of engagement ensures that academic programmes remain relevant, while students gain first-hand experience and develop skills that enhance their employability. It also keeps the university aware of changing needs within the industry. In such a scenario, data is most important. By analysing market trends, employer satisfaction surveys and alumni outcomes, universities can make quick, informed decisions on programmes that are in tune with current trends and fill required gaps. It also helps to update academic programmes, modify or even phase out the ones that may seem outdated. For their part, curricula and programmes themselves should be dynamic and quick to change. This is only possible when academic

Universities must align their goals with industry needs without compromising academic integrity. The future of higher education lies in blending intellectual inquiry with practical skills that prepare students to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society

programmes are continuously reviewed for the extent to which they reflect market needs. Today, for example, traditional courses need to include aspects of technology, sustainability and data analytics to keep up with the next few decades. The best universities are the ones which adapt swiftly to such demands. Of course, this is not to say that the pursuit of knowledge, as we traditionally know it, is irrelevant to the present or the future. Aligning higher education with market needs does not mean sacrificing academic integrity or intellectual exploration. In fact, it involves balancing knowledge creation and dissemination with practical skills which empower students and contribute to society. As is well known, change is the only constant. By being aware of a rapidly transforming society and its needs, universities contribute meaningfully to shifts in knowledge production. Responding proactively to such needs empowers students and strengthens the industry. Adaptability and collaboration between academia and industry is not an option but is actually essential for the sustainable development of all stakeholders, particularly the youth.

STORM DAMAGE IN US HAS GONE UP TENFOLD SINCE 1980

CARSTEN HOEFER

Damage caused by severe storms and flooding has multiplied in major industrialised nations since 1980, according to the world’s largest reinsurer, Munich Re. The United States tops the disaster ranking of the 10 largest economies in the world with \$2.7 trillion in damage, followed by China with \$680 billion, according to an analysis published earlier last week by the German insurer’s geo scientists. Despite the high total measured in terms of national gross income, the damage in China has fallen in recent decades thanks to improved flood protection, according to the analysis, which was published on Thursday ahead of the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Brazil. Germany, where damage has increased around fivefold, is one of the hardest-hit nations, according to Munich Re. The company estimates the total damage caused by storms and floods in Germany from 1980 to 2024 at \$210 billion, putting it on a par with India in third place. In the US and Germany there has been a sharp increase in the damage when measured in terms of gross national income. In Germany, the devastating Ahr Valley floods in 2021 contributed significantly to this, causing \$42 billion in damage alone. Extreme weather events could erode the economic substance of even the largest economies, chief geoscientist Tobias Grimm and his colleagues wrote. According to the report, there have also been sharp increases in extreme weather damage in Canada, Italy and France, and somewhat less pronounced increases in India, Japan and Brazil. Apart from China, only the United Kingdom has seen a decline in extreme weather damage as a measure of gross national income. Munich Re sees a clear link with climate change: Not only are storms so occurring more frequently than in previous decades, they have also become more extreme. Also, the increasing losses are primarily driven by exposure growth (more assets, infrastructure in risk zones) and, to some extent, by climate-change influences (more moisture in atmosphere leading to heavier precipitation) — though attribution remains complex. One study found that for global losses in the Munich Re database: ~57 per cent of the increase since 1980 is attributable to North American storms/floods, ~15 per cent to Asian storms, ~8 per cent to European floods etc. — dpa

As COP30 gathers, what’s latest in climate science?

ALISON WITHERS & KATY DAIGLE

WITH the pace of climate change speeding up, extreme weather and other impacts are taking an increasing toll on populations and environments across the globe. Here are some of the developments this year in climate science: Global temperatures are not just climbing, they are now climbing faster than before, with new records logged for 2023 and 2024, and at points in 2025. That finding was part of a key study in June that updated baseline data used in the science reports done every few years by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The new research shows the average global temperature rising at a rate of 0.27 degrees Celsius each decade - or almost 50 per cent faster than in the 1990s and 2000s when the warming rate was around 0.2 °C per decade. Sea levels are rising faster now too - at about 4.5 millimetres per year over the last decade, compared with 1.85 mm per year measured across the decades since 1900. The world is now on track to cross the 1.5 °C warming threshold around 2030, after which scientists warn we will likely trigger catastrophic, irreversible impacts. Already, the world has warmed by 1.3-1.4 °C since the pre-industrial era, according to the World Meteorological Organization. Warm-water corals are in an almost irreversible die-off from successive marine heatwaves - marking what would be the first so-called climate tipping point, when an environmental system begins to shift into a different state. Researchers in October also warned that the Amazon rainforest could begin to die back and transform



View of the logo of the COP30 UN Climate Change Conference, in Belem, Para state, Brazil. — AFP

Global temperatures are rising faster, sea levels are increasing rapidly as coral die-off marks first climate tipping point, Amazon and Atlantic current are at risk

into a different ecosystem, such as savannah, if rapid deforestation continues as global warming crosses 1.5 °C, which is earlier than previously estimated. They said meltwater from the thawing ice sheet atop Greenland could help cause an earlier collapse in the ocean current called the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, or AMOC, that keeps winters mild in Europe. In Antarctica, where ice sheets are also under threat, scientists are worried about declining sea ice surrounding the southernmost continent. Similar to what is happening in the Arctic, ice loss exposes dark water that can absorb more solar radiation - which amplifies the overall warming trend. It also jeopardises the growth of phytoplankton that consume much of the world’s CO2. Along with heatwaves and drought, wildfires still threaten to be frequent and severe. This year’s State of Wildfires report, led by a group of weather agencies and universities, counted some 3.7 million square kilometres as having burned between March 2024 and February 2025 — an area about the size of India and Norway combined.

That was slightly less than the annual average burned for the last two decades. But the fires produced higher CO2 emissions than before, as more carbon-dense forests burned. Researchers are working on ways to assess heat-related health risks and tolls, as UN health and weather agencies estimate about half the world’s population is already struggling. The agencies also estimate worker productivity dropping 2-3 per cent for every degree above 20 °C, while another study in the Lancet journal in October estimates global losses of more than \$1 trillion from that lost productivity for last year alone. There is no consistent international definition for a heat-related death, but technological advances are helping scientists to bridge data gaps and compare conditions from place to place. For example, in Europe, one team at the UK’s Imperial College used mortality trends to estimate more than 24,400 deaths this summer related to heat exposure across about 30 per cent of the European population. They attributed up to 70 per cent of those deaths to climate-fuelled heat, based on the same mortality trends applied to a model of Europe without global warming. For last year’s record-hot European summer, another team used computer modelling to examine mortality statistics along with temperature data and health parameters, estimating more than 62,700 heat-related deaths across 32 countries, or about 70 per cent of the continent’s population. The US administration under climate-denying President Donald Trump is hoping to slash funding for agencies that collect and monitor climate and weather data, worrying a scientific community that says US leadership will be hard to replace. — Reuters

Build your bridge not their cage



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and
communications
professional

THERE are some people who live their whole lives in rooms without windows. They shut the curtains on anything new that comes across them. They are afraid that what lies beyond might challenge what they have always believed. They call it being realistic, but it is just a hidden fear of change, growth or being wrong. They are called narrow-minded!

We all encounter them at some point — people who refuse to look beyond their own beliefs, who reject unfamiliar ideas and who seem almost allergic to change. At first, you might think you can influence them, maybe even inspire them to see things differently. But over time, you learn that spending too much energy around narrow-minded people can suffocate your own growth, joy and sense of possibility.

And if you stay around them too long, their fear will start whispering into your dreams. You will begin to shrink yourself just to fit into their comfort zone. You were not made to live small, but to expand, to evolve and to grow.

Sometimes, narrow-minded people will tell you that your ideas are foolish, your dreams are too big and your optimism is naive! Thus, don't let their limits become your own. What they call impossible is simply something they have never seen done.

When you meet those people, always try to protect your energy. You don't need to argue with those who refuse to understand. You don't need to convince those who have already chosen not to see. Instead, walk forward with quiet confidence and let your life become the proof of what open-mindedness can do.

When you do have to deal with them, do so with grace. Don't waste your breath trying to change their minds — some people defend their narrowness like a fortress. Boundaries are not walls; they are filters letting in what helps you grow and keeping out what holds you back.

Yes, you can love people and still surpass them. You can care for them and still choose peace over conflict, curiosity over criticism, expansion over stagnation. Setting boundaries is not cruel; it is how you make space for the person you are becoming. You don't owe anyone your energy, especially those who refuse to see beyond their own walls.

Therefore, try to surround yourself with those who inspire you — the ones who ask questions, who listen deeply, who dream wildly. The people who remind you that there is always more to learn, more to give, more to see. The people whose energy will water your spirit, not drain it.

Life is far too huge to be viewed through

Life is far too huge to be viewed through someone else's narrow lens. Don't let anyone convince you that their small world is all there is. Open the window, step outside and breathe in the fresh air of possibility

someone else's narrow lens. Don't let anyone convince you that their small world is all there is. Open the window, step outside and breathe in the fresh air of possibility. Everyone was born to see the world in colours — not in the dull shades of someone else's fear.

One must keep growing, developing and exploring new horizons. Because the most beautiful thing you can ever become is exactly who narrow minds said you never could be. Just always remember to have in your circle people who open windows, not those who close doors. The world belongs to those who stay curious enough to see it fully.

Choosing to distance yourself from narrow-minded people doesn't mean you hate them. It is not arrogance, but self-preservation. It simply means you value your peace more than conflict. It is about creating space for voices that uplift you, conversations that broaden your perspective and relationships that bring mutual respect.

Life is not meant to be lived in small rooms, and everyone is allowed to experience change, challenge and discovery. You grow when you question, when you listen, when you dare to believe that there is always more to learn. Open-mindedness is the courage to admit that you don't know everything, and the wisdom to keep learning anyway.

PALESTINIANS RECOUNT 'BLACK HOLE' OF ISRAELI DETENTION

ANNE-SOPHIE LABADIE AND FUAD ABUGOSH

Denied contact with his lawyer for months, now freed Palestinian prisoner Shady Abu Sedo said he lost all sense of time while he was held in Israeli jails during the war in Gaza.

The 35-year-old resident of the Palestinian territory was arrested in March 2024, five months into the war sparked after the October 7, 2023 attack. Abu Sedo, a photojournalist, said he was arrested while working at Al Shifa hospital in Gaza City and detained at Sde Teiman prison, a military facility in Israel used to hold Gazans during the war.

At the time of his arrest, the Al Shifa complex was at the centre of the war, with humanitarian organisations accusing Israel of rights violations.

Abu Sedo was held under Israel's "unlawful combatants" law, which permits the detention of suspected members of "hostile forces" for months on end without charge.

Abu Sedo said he was repeatedly confronted with claims from the Israelis that "they had killed our children, our women and bombed our homes".

"So, when I saw (my children), honestly, it was a shock," he said by telephone after his release to Gaza on October 13 under the US-brokered ceasefire. The truce, which came into effect on October 10, saw 20 living captives returned by Hamas to Israel in exchange for approximately 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

"Imagine, 100 days from five in the morning until 11 at night, sitting on your knees, handcuffed, blindfolded, forbidden to speak or talk," Abu Sedo said.

"You don't know the time, you don't know the days, you don't know where you are."

"After 100 days of torture, they took me for interrogation to confirm my identity. They tortured me without knowing who I was," he said, describing eye and ear injuries.

Then came a transfer to Ofer military prison in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where he said conditions were "beyond imagination".

During his incarceration, Abu Sedo was able to speak with his lawyer only twice. He said he hadn't been charged and that his detention had been "automatically extended" without explanation.

The Israeli military declined to comment on his case.

The Israel prison service says all inmates "are held according to legal procedures, and their rights, including access to medical care and adequate living conditions, are upheld".

According to the Red Cross, the term "unlawful combatant" refers to someone who "belongs to an armed group, in a context where either the individual or the group do not fulfil the conditions for combatant status."

The term emerged in the United States after the September 11, 2001 attacks, when the administration of George W Bush used it to justify the detention of suspects. — AFP

AI wants our water...

AI is often portrayed as the harbinger of a prosperous, more efficient future. But the machines driving this revolution depend on a resource far older – and far more contested – than data or electricity: water.

As the Heinrich Böll Foundation's recent Water Atlas makes clear, AI's rapid growth is depleting local water reserves around the world, from drought-stricken Chile to South Africa. Its physical footprint reflects a new form of colonial extraction; instead of silver and soy, now it is the cooling water that keeps the digital economy running.

While the debate about AI's energy use focuses on the power needed to train and operate large language models, what is often overlooked is the vast amount of water required to cool data centres, not to mention the water used in energy production and hardware manufacturing.

ChatGPT is a prime example. Training GPT-3 required roughly 700,000 litres of water for cooling alone. A Greenpeace study estimates that data centres will consume 664 billion litres annually by 2030, compared to 239 billion litres in 2024.

AI's benefits are concentrated in the Global North, yet its environmental costs increasingly fall on the Global South. In 2023, mass protests erupted in Uruguay over a proposed Google data centre as the country suffered its worst drought in 70 years. With reservoirs running dry, authorities began pumping brackish water from the Río de la Plata estuary into public systems, granting Google permits to draw from the remaining freshwater reserves even as working-class families boiled salty tap water to drink.

A similar conflict has unfolded in Chile, one of Latin America's most drought-prone countries. In Santiago's Cerrillos district, a proposed Google data centre was projected to consume 7.6 million litres of water per day – roughly equal to the entire community's annual use. In response, activists from the local group MOSACAT launched a legal and political campaign that forced a redesign of the cooling system and a new environmental review.

These community struggles



A Greenpeace study estimates that data centres will consume 664 billion litres annually by 2030, compared to 239 billion litres in 2024.



FRIEDERIKE
ROHDE

The writer is
Research Associate
at the Berlin Ethics
Lab at Technical
University Berlin



PAZ PEÑA

The writer is a
Mozilla Senior
Fellow

highlight a familiar pattern in which corporations and governments present data centres as engines of modernisation while downplaying their environmental costs. In Mexico's Querétaro region, where rural and indigenous communities already face severe water scarcity, the problems go far beyond depletion: diesel emissions from backup generators cause air and noise pollution; electronic waste imported from the Global North continues to pile up; and growing demand for land, housing, and electricity is driving up costs and straining local infrastructure.

Regulation has done little to slow this expansion or improve environmental standards. While the European Union's 2024 AI Act mandates transparency on energy demand and computing power, it says nothing about water use. Even the Energy Efficiency Directive, which requires data centres to report water consumption, applies only to data facilities within the EU. Moreover, reporting is not the same as reform: efficiency – limited by technology and the Jevons paradox (which occurs when greater efficiency boosts demand for a resource) – too often distracts from the deeper question of sufficiency.

At the same time, many developing economies compete for tech investment by offering generous tax breaks and fast-tracking environmental permits with minimal oversight.

Governments tend to frame this as advancing data sovereignty, but Big Tech ultimately holds the power. Moreover, contrary to official promises, data centres create few jobs, and structural inequalities continue to impede the growth of local AI industries. For example, criticism of Brazil's data centre policy highlights its focus on attracting large tech firms, while neglecting fair competition for domestic companies.

Environmental impact assessments are another weak link. Studies show they are frequently incomplete, inaccurate, or hidden from public scrutiny. In Chile, regulators approved Google's project despite unresolved issues concerning groundwater rights. In Mexico, activists spent months fighting for access to water-use documents. And in South Africa and Brazil, companies often negotiate directly with national ministries, bypassing local authorities altogether.

All of this raises a critical question: Who gets a say when digital growth depends on local water sources? Like its benefits, the risks of AI are unequally distributed. For many Latin American and African communities, opposition to data centres is not a rejection of progress but an effort to redefine it. Their defence of water reserves challenges the fantasy of infinite digital expansion in a world of finite resources. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Salalah player controls the ball.

SALALAH STUN MASIRAH IN BASKETBALL LEAGUE

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 9

Salalah Club pulled off a dramatic and valuable victory over Masirah, winning 64–59 after overturning a first-half deficit in the 2025–2026 Oman General Basketball League match. The game took place at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex auxiliary hall in Bausher.

A THRILLING MATCH AND SHARED CONTROL

The clash was intense and competitive from the outset, with both sides alternating control of the game. Masirah appeared more organised in the first half, while Salalah regained its rhythm in the second half, showing impressive fitness and fighting spirit in the closing minutes. The match featured a fast pace and continuous offensive exchanges, with both teams’ defenders excelling on several occasions. The first quarter was evenly matched as both teams attempted to impose their attacking style. Masirah showed good defensive organisation and quick offensive transitions, ending the quarter ahead 12–11.

In the second quarter, Masirah maintained its offensive momentum, extending the lead with accurate three-point shooting and rapid transitions, scoring 19 points to Salalah’s 13 to close the half 31–24 in Masirah’s favour.

At the start of the third quarter, Salalah adopted a more balanced approach, relying on fast breaks led by Mishal Kafkaf and Moheeb al Habsi, who narrowed the gap by scoring 16 points to Masirah’s 14, bringing the score to 45–40. The fourth quarter witnessed a dramatic turnaround, as Salalah delivered its best performance of the match in both attack and defence. Thanks to the brilliance of Qaisar al Balushi and Faisal Beit Abd Al Nabi, who excelled in scoring and defensive rebounds, Salalah dominated the period 24–14 and clinched the match with a final score of 64–59.

From Salalah’s side, standout players included Mishal Kafkaf, Qaisar al Balushi, Moheeb al Habsi, and Faisal Beit Abd Al Nabi, who combined speed and precision under the basket. For Masirah, Mohammed al Mahrami, Ayham al Sahi, Yousuf al Kharousi, and Ahmed al Mashrafi shone as key threats throughout the game, particularly with their three-point accuracy and fast counterattacks.

The match was officiated by international referee Rashid al Mushaifri (head referee), international referee Wafaa al Samri (second), and Taha al Amri (third), while the scorer’s table was managed by Mohsin al Owimri, Abeer al Hashmi, and Majid al Makhzumi.

Ahli Sidab and Al Amerat clash for HM’s Hockey title

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 9

AHLI Sidab and Al Amerat clubs advanced to the final match of the 2025 His Majesty the Sultan’s Cup for Hockey, held at the Oman Hockey Stadium in Al Amerat, after impressive victories in the semifinals.

Ahli Sidab reached the final after defeating Sohar 5–1, while Al Amerat booked their spot with a commanding 8–0 win over Salalah.

The final will be played today (Monday), at 7 pm. At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, will preside over the final of the 55th edition of His Majesty the Sultan’s Hockey Cup 2025.

AHLI SIDAB SECURE FINAL BERTH WITH A 5-1 WIN IVER SOHAR

The match between Ahli Sidab and Sohar started evenly, with both teams sharing possession and creating chances without a real threat. Ahli Sidab relied on the movements of Pardeep Singh and Rashid al Fazari, while Sohar threatened on the counter through Said bin Salim al Nofali and Mohammed bin Darwish al Maamari. The first quarter ended goalless.

In the second quarter, both sides maintained balanced play despite Ahli Sidab’s attempts through Mohammed Zamir and Asaad al Qasmi. Still, Sohar’s goalkeeper, Mohammed bin Khamis al Nofali, made several crucial saves to keep it level at halftime.

The third quarter saw Ahli Sidab launch an attacking surge. Pardeep Singh opened the scoring in the 36th minute with a field goal (FG), followed by ASJIT SINGH doubling the lead in the 40th minute. Rashid al Fazari then made it 3–0 a minute later, ending the quarter with a comfortable advantage.

Ahli Sidab continued their dominance in the fourth quarter as Pardeep Singh netted his second goal in the 49th minute. Sohar managed to pull one back through



Ahli Sidab vs Sohar, semifinal of His Majesty the Sultan’s Hockey Cup.



HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU.

PRATAP LAKRA from a penalty stroke (PS) in the 51st minute. Still, Sand bin Salim al Fazari sealed the victory with a penalty corner (PC) goal in the 53rd minute, ending the match 5–1 and sending Ahli Sidab into the final.

AL AMERAT CRUSH SALALAH 8-0 TO REACH THE FINAL

Al Amerat entered their semifinal with aggressive intent, opening the scoring in the 3rd minute through JONGHYUN JANG (FG). Osama Ramadan added the second a

minute later, and Uttam Singh made it 3–0 in the 6th minute.

JONGHYUN JANG then struck twice more in the 11th and 13th minutes, the first a field goal and the second from a penalty corner (PC), to end the first quarter with Al Amerat leading 5–0.

In the second quarter, Salalah tried to get back into the match through Adnan bin Khalil al Hasani and Raza Ali Nasser, but Al Amerat’s defence and goalkeeper Fahd al Nofali remained solid.

The third quarter saw Al Amerat extend their lead to 6–0 as Osama Ramadan scored again in the 32nd minute following a pass from Akram Ashour Ramadan al Shami.

In the fourth quarter, Aliyas al Nofali scored a beautiful goal in the 52nd minute, before JONGHYUN JANG completed his personal quadruple and sealed the eighth goal for Al Amerat in the 54th minute from a penalty corner (PC).

The match ended in an emphatic 8–0 win for Al Amerat, who will face Ahli Sidab in the much-anticipated final.

Strong start for Al Amerat, Mirbat and Al Oruba in beach soccer league

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 9

Defending champions Al Amerat opened their 2025/2026 domestic beach soccer league campaign in style recently with a commanding 5-2 comeback win over Masirah in the opening round of matches, setting an early tone for their title defence.

Under the guidance of former national team star Jalal al Sinani, Al Amerat displayed solid teamwork and attacking flair, led by several key members of the national beach soccer team, including Salim al Oraimi, Yahya al Murkhi, and Khalid al Oraimi. The defending champions overturned an early deficit with goals from Salim al Oraimi, Yahya al Murkhi, Khalid al Oraimi, Al Yaqadhan al Hindasi, and Sami al Balushi. Masirah’s two goals were netted by Younis al Owaisi. Elsewhere, Al Oruba and Mirbat made strong statements of their own with convincing victories. Al Oruba cruised to a 7-2 triumph over



Al Oruba and Taqah players in action.

Taqah, courtesy of a balanced offensive performance. The goal scorers for Al Oruba were Mohammed al Oraimi (2), Enad al Farsi, Musallam al Oraimi, Sameer al Saad, Khalid al Farsi, and Mohammed Jasim, while Ahmed Dorbeen and Fawzan Basheer found the net for Taqah.

Mirbat wrapped up the first-round fixtures with a powerful 7-3 victory over Salalah, marking themselves

as another early contender in this season’s competition.

A total of seven teams are competing in the league: Al Amerat, Masirah, Saham, Taqah, Salalah, Mirbat and Al Oruba. The tournament follows a single-round league format, with the team collecting the highest number of points crowned as champions.

The Oman Football Association (OFA) allocated

attractive prizes for the top three finishers including the champions will receive RO 5,000 and 25 gold medals, the runner-up will take home RO 3,000 and 25 silver medals, while the third-place team will earn RO 2,000 and 25 bronze medals.

Meanwhile, Oman’s national beach soccer coaching staff, headed by experienced coach Talib Hilal, are closely monitoring the league matches. The technical team aims to identify standout players to join the national squad ahead of upcoming international events. Oman’s beach soccer team last presence was at the Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup Seychelles 2025, where they bowed out in the group stage. The national side faced tough competition, falling to Italy (7-4) and Brazil (11-1), before defeating El Salvador via penalties after a 4-4 draw. The national team could not manage to move into the knockout stage for the first time in history in their sixth participation at the beach soccer world championships.

SHORT TAKES



Chelsea's Wesley Fofana in action. — Reuters

CHELSEA THRASH WOLVES TO CLIMB 2ND IN PL

LONDON: Malo Gusto, Joao Pedro and Pedro Neto struck in the second half as Chelsea outclassed Wolverhampton Wanderers 3-0 on Saturday to climb to second in the Premier League table and extend the visitors’ winless run.

Enzo Maresca’s men are six points behind leaders Arsenal with 20 points after 11 games, with Manchester City (19) hosting Liverpool (18) on Sunday. Wolves, who were managed by Under-21 coach James Collins after Vitor Pereira was sacked last week, are bottom on two points after the worst start to a season in the club’s history.

Chelsea seized control from the outset but a wasteful first half had the Stamford Bridge fans booing them off the pitch at the break.

They were significantly better in the second half, and Gusto finally broke the deadlock in the 51st minute with his first senior goal in 98 games since joining Chelsea from Lyon, when he nodded Alejandro Garnacho’s cross in at the back post from short range. The goal lifted the mood in a game that had provided little excitement in the first half.

Pedro doubled Chelsea’s lead in the 65th minute when Brazilian Estevao beat a defender before pulling the ball back to his compatriot who slotted home from the middle of the box.

Neto scored against his former team to put the game out of reach eight minutes later when he tapped in an excellent cross from Garnacho.

Chelsea had 18 shots, including seven on target, to the visitors’ three, and they swarmed Wolverhampton’s net until the final whistle with substitute Marc Guiu and Neto squandering late chances.

Wolves’ catastrophic start to the season has them eight points adrift of the safety zone, and no team has ever stayed up in the England’s top flight with two points after 11 games. They have scored the joint-fewest goals in the division while simultaneously boasting the league’s leakiest defence.

Rob Edwards could be next in line to attempt to turn the team around after second-tier Middlesbrough gave him permission on Saturday to speak to the club about the managerial vacancy. Edwards previously guided Luton Town to the Premier League in his first season. — Reuters



Al Harthy during the Bahrain International Circuit race.

EIGHTH PLACE FOR AL HARTHY IN BAHRAIN FINALE

SEVERAL difficulties during the finale of the FIA World Endurance Championship season at Bahrain International Circuit on Saturday, November 8th, prevented Ahmad al Harthy from adding to his 2025 points tally.

Hoping to mount a strong challenge from ninth on the LMGT3 grid, the eight-hour race began well for the Omani with an impressive and committed first few laps elevating him to sixth position and putting the No.46 BMW M4 LMGT3 into the thick of the points-paying places.

From there the race tailed off and performance was impacted by a confluence of issues, which meant Team WRT’s Al Harthy, Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde had to settle for an eventual 15th place finish despite their very best efforts behind the wheel.

In terms of the championship battles, OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), and Experience Oman supported racer Al Harthy ends the FIA WEC campaign eighth in the driver standings with Rossi and van der Linde. In the team championship, the squad was also eighth.

FRUSTRATING FINISH TO AL HARTHY’S THIRD WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON

Lining up ninth in LMGT3 for the start of the Bapco Energies 8 hours of Bahrain, Al Harthy made a good launch and quickly climbed into eighth place during the first few turns. Getting ahead of Team WRT’s

FINAL RACE OF FIA WEC DOESN'T GO TO PLAN FOR OMAN'S AHMAD AL HARTHY

BMW RACER AND TEAM-MATES ROSSI AND VAN DER LINDE SETTLE FOR P15

AL HARTHY TAKES POSITIVES FROM OVERALL COMPETITIVE AND ENJOYABLE SEASON

EIGHTH IN LMGT3 CHAMPIONSHIP FOR DOUBLE 2025 PODIUM FINISHERS

sister BMW midway around the opening lap, he held seventh and heavily pressured the No.27 Aston Martin before sweeping past into the first corner at the beginning of the next tour.

Setting his sights on the next group, Al Harthy closed within no time and was the fastest driver in LMGT3 at that point. Things plateaued for a while but at the start of lap 11 the Aston Martin went back through, elbowing Al Harthy to seventh, and the No.46 BMW then slipped to ninth on lap 17.

Making the team’s first pit-stop of the race just after the 50-minute mark, one of the earliest drivers to do so, the Omani re-emerged in 17th position but when the race order had settled after the initial round of stops were complete, he was in 12th place.

As the race moved on, performance stalled. After pit-stop number two Al Harthy was in 18th position but he climbed into 14th before the third pit visit with two hours and 40 minutes elapsed.

Rossi got behind the wheel for his first race miles and he was 14th at the three hour mark, before then moving back up towards the top 10 after the next round of pit visits.

Driving well during the middle portion of the race, into hour five Rossi was ninth and he soon handed the car over to van der Linde. Joining the action around the top 15, he climbed as high as 12th before Rossi then returned to the driving seat with two and a half hours to go.

Thereafter, the race was very much a thankless task with no opportunity to make any progress for either Rossi or van der Linde. When the chequered flag flew at 22.00 local time, the No.46 BMW

crossed the line in 15th position.

“It’s unfortunate how the final round of the season turned out for us, we all tried our absolute best but we had some issues which meant we couldn’t fight as we wanted or had planned. Qualifying was as good as we could have hoped, I was pleased with my performance in the first part of the race but after this we were always fighting an uphill battle,” Al Harthy said.

BAPCO ENERGIES 8 HOURS OF BAHRAIN LMGT3 RACE RESULT:

1st Jose Maria Lopez / Clemens Schmid / Petru Umbrurescu (Akkodis ASP Team / Lexus RC F)

2nd Maxime Martin / Christian Ried / Lin Hoenius (Iron Lynx / Mercedes-AMG)

3rd Mattia Drudi / Ian James / Zacharie Robichon (Heart of Racing / Aston Martin Vantage)

15th Ahmad al Harthy / Valentino Rossi / Kelvin van der Linde (Team WRT / BMW M4)

FINAL 2025 FIA WEC LMGT3 DRIVER STANDINGS:

1st Riccardo Pera / Richard Leitz / Ryan Hardwick, 123pts

2nd Alessio Rovera / Francois Heriau / Simon Mann, 109pts

3rd Jose Maria Lopez / Clemens Schmid / Petru Umbrurescu, 95pts

8th Ahmad al Harthy / Valentino Rossi / Kelvin van der Linde, 52pts

FINAL 2025 FIA WEC LMGT3 TEAM STANDINGS:

1st Manthey 1ST Phorm (Porsche 911 GT3 R), 123pts

2nd Vista AF Corse (Ferrari 296), 109pts

3rd Akkodis ASP Team (Lexus RC F), 95pts

8th Team WRT (BMW M4 LMGT3), 52pts

Bezzecchi dominates Portuguese GP for second win of season

PORTIMAO, Portugal: Aprilia’s Marco Bezzecchi delivered a commanding lights-to-flag victory at the Portuguese Grand Prix on Sunday, claiming his second win of the season and strengthening his grip on third place in the championship with just one round remaining. The polesitter made amends for a lacklustre on Saturday sprint performance , where he could only manage third, by controlling the race from start to finish ahead of Gresini Racing’s Alex Marquez and KTM’s Pedro Acosta.

Bezzecchi’s dominance was emphatic, as he finished more than 2.5 seconds clear of Marquez to become the sixth different winner in the last six MotoGP races, while Acosta’s late race pace had him close in on his compatriot but settled for third. Ducati’s Francesco Bagnaia, who is battling with Bezzecchi for third in the championship behind



Aprilia Racing’s Marco Bezzecchi celebrates on the podium with a trophy after winning the MotoGP race with second placed BK8 Gresini Racing MotoGP’s Alex Marquez and third placed Red Bull KTM Factory Racing’s Pedro Acosta. — Reuters

champion Marc Marquez and runner-up Alex, crashed out of fourth place and finds himself 35 points behind before the final round in Valencia.

‘FANTASTIC RACE’ FOR BEZZECCHI

“It was a fantastic race for me. This morning I felt better and yesterday

evening we worked a lot in the box to try to find that last step that we missed,” Bezzecchi said.

“I was super afraid of Pedro and Alex because yesterday they were super quick, but I was also very motivated to try to get a win... I’m very happy, super important to be back on the top of the podium.”

Just as in the sprint, Bezzecchi took the lead into turn one ahead of Acosta while Marquez moved up from fifth to third again, before the Gresini Racing rider then used the KTM’s slipstream at the start of lap two to move up to second.

But unlike the sprint, there was no wheel-to-wheel battle this time as Bezzecchi and Marquez peeled away. Before long, the three riders were split by nearly two seconds at the halfway mark.

FOURTH STRAIGHT RETIREMENT FOR BAGNAIA

Bagnaia was running in fourth when the Ducati rider suddenly crashed out, marking his fourth straight on Sunday retirement — the first time it has happened to the two-time champion since his rookie year in MotoGP in 2019.

With five laps left, Marquez showed no signs of being able

to catch up with Bezzecchi, who was nearly four seconds clear in the lead before the Italian eased off the throttle to conserve his tyres until the chequered flag. Acosta then found a second wind in the dying stages of the race but Marquez responded to his younger compatriot’s charge to defend his second place.

“We are missing a lot of pace and a lot of traction at the beginning of the race,” Acosta said.

“It doesn’t matter how much we manage the tyre. At the end, if we are missing it at the beginning, we lose anyway.” The race was also a chance for an emotional Miguel Oliveira to say farewell on home turf, with the Portuguese rider making the switch to World Superbikes after 15 years in Moto3, Moto2 and MotoGP. The final round of the season is the Valencia Grand Prix next weekend. — Reuters

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Sebastien Ogier (R) and his co-driver Vincent Landais of France celebrate their victory with Toyota Gazoo Racing chairman Akio Toyoda (C) during the podium ceremony of the Rally Japan. — AFP

OGIER WINS RALLY JAPAN TO TAKE WORLD TITLE FIGHT TO FINAL RACE

JAPAN: Sebastien Ogier took the World Rally Championship battle to the final event of the season after winning Rally Japan on Sunday and slashing Elfyn Evans’ lead in the standings to three points.

Ogier kept his hopes of a record-equalling ninth world title alive to set up a showdown with Welshman Evans at the season-ending Rally Saudi Arabia later this month.

Finland’s Kalle Roivanpera is 24 points behind Evans after finishing sixth, still with a mathematical chance of winning a third world championship.

Evans had the chance to clinch his first world championship in Japan but his Toyota teammate Ogier refused to throw in the towel with a typically tenacious performance.

The 41-year old finished 11.6sec ahead of runner-up Evans on a final day lashed by rain on the twisting, leaf-strewn asphalt roads.

Ogier said it was the “perfect result” after hitting a tree at last month’s Central European Rally.

“It’s been a challenging weekend because of this rain today, nothing was certain, it was the start of a new rally this morning,” said Ogier, who climbed on top of his car to celebrate after crossing the finish line.

Ogier began the final day 6.5sec ahead of Evans but steady rain brought radically different conditions after three days of sunshine.

The Frenchman was equal to the task, winning three stages and taking the maximum five Sunday points. Evans snapped at his rival’s heels throughout the day and remains in pole position to clinch the title in Saudi Arabia.

The Welshman, who has finished as championship runner-up four times, said Ogier was “always tough” to compete against.

— AFP



Sebastien Ogier and his co-driver Vincent Landais of France drive their Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 during the SS16 Lake Mikawako section of the Rally Japan. — AFP



Kazakhstan’s Elena Rybakina celebrates with the trophy. — Reuters

Rybakina downs Aryna Sabalenka, wins WTA

ELENA RYBAKINA clinched her biggest title since Wimbledon in 2022 by defeating world number one Aryna Sabalenka 6-3, 7-6(7/0) at the WTA Finals in Riyadh on Saturday.

The world number six put on yet another serving masterclass and was at her returning best as she became the first Kazakh and the first player representing an Asian country to lift the WTA Finals singles trophy.

Having gone 3-0 in round-robin play, Rybakina earned a record \$5.235 million and will finish the year ranked number five in the world.

“It’s been an incredible week, I honestly didn’t expect any result, and to go so far, it’s just incredible,” said Rybakina, who battled a shoulder injury all week.

“I want to congratulate Aryna also for being number one for the second year in a row, it’s an amazing achievement. Today was such a tough battle, some moments I got lucky, but this is tennis. I hope we’re going to play many more finals together.”

The ace leader on tour with 516 struck this season, Rybakina fired 13 against Sabalenka on Saturday, and finished the week with a total of 48 in Riyadh.

Rybakina was the last of the eight players in the singles field to qualify for the WTA Finals in Riyadh, and she did it by winning the 500-level title in Ningbo and reaching the semifinals in Tokyo before withdrawing from the tournament.

Her winning streak now stands at 11 matches and she improved her head-to-head record against Sabalenka to 6-8.



Kazakhstan’s Elena Rybakina poses with the trophy after winning the final match, alongside runner-up Belarus’ Aryna Sabalenka. — Reuters

Squaring off for the 14th time, Sabalenka and Rybakina form one of the most gripping rivalries of the WTA, dating back to 2019.

Rybakina entered the final carrying a 10-match winning streak. The last player to beat her was Sabalenka, who knocked out the Kazakh in the Wuhan quarterfinals four weeks ago.

HARD-HITTING DUEL

Both players brought their A-game from the start, showcasing their signature brand of boom-boom tennis to stay neck and neck through the first five games.

It was Rybakina’s defence though that paid off in game six, her desperate lob drawing the error from Sabalenka, who netted the overhead to get broken.

That one break was all Rybakina needed to secure the opening set in 44 minutes.

Rybakina was untouchable on serve in the second set, dropping just two points on serve through four service games.

Sabalenka was more vulnerable in that department, feeling the pressure on her own serve but still finding ways to save four break points, including two crucial ones at 4-4.

Against the momentum, Sabalenka suddenly got her hands on two set points on Rybakina’s serve in game 10 but the Kazakh stood her ground to level for 5-5.

The set fittingly went to a tiebreak, and despite her remarkable 22-2 tiebreak record for the season, Sabalenka couldn’t halt Rybakina, who sealed the deal after one hour and 47 minutes of play.

Rybakina finished the match with 36 winners against just 22 unforced errors.

Despite the loss, Sabalenka set a new WTA Tour record for most prize money earned in a single season, her \$15,008,519 surpassing the \$12,385,572 Serena Williams made in 2013.

“Not the best performance from me but Elena, you were definitely a better player today. You literally smashed me out of the court. Very well done. I’m happy to see you back playing your best tennis,” Sabalenka said during the trophy ceremony.

Fighting tears, the Belarusian addressed her team, saying: “Maybe not the result we all wanted today, but so many things we... I guess I’m getting old, I’m getting really sensitive. So many things to be proud of. Thanks guys.” — AFP

Djokovic edges Musetti to win 101st career title in Athens

PARIS: Novak Djokovic won the 101st title of his career when he came from behind to beat Lorenzo Musetti 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 in the final of the ATP event in Athens on Saturday.

The Serb is one of just three men to have racked up a century of titles — he still needs two to equal Roger Federer’s 103 while Jimmy Connors heads the list with 109.

At 38 years and five months old, the 24-time Grand Slam winner is the oldest tournament winner since Australia’s Ken Rosewall, who was 43 when he won in Hong Kong in 1977.

“An incredible battle... Three hours of a gruelling match, physically,” said Djokovic. “It could have been anybody’s match, so

congrats to Lorenzo for an amazing performance. I’m just very proud of myself to get through this one.”

It was Djokovic’s second title of 2025, having won on the clay of Geneva in May.

“Novak, there are not many words to say about you and your career,” said Musetti, who fell to 1-9 against Djokovic.

“You are proving, still at your age, that you can kick us, like me today. Every time I share the court with you, I take it as a lesson, so thanks for that.”

Musetti had initially needed to win the title to secure the eighth and final place at next week’s ATP Finals. His defeat handed Felix



Serbia’s Novak Djokovic celebrates with the trophy after winning his final match against Italy’s Lorenzo Musetti. — Reuters

Auger-Aliassime a spot in Turin instead, but Djokovic’s subsequent withdrawal paved the way for Musetti as well.

Musetti, who saved a match point in his semi-final win over Sebastian Korda, has lost each of his last six finals. His only ATP titles came at Hamburg and Naples in 2022.

Djokovic had long since qualified for Turin, but kept everyone guessing about his participation in the prestigious end-of-season tournament. He eventually decided to bring an early end to his season, skipping the ATP Finals for the second year in a row.

The Athens event, directed by Djokovic’s younger brother Djordje,

was supposed to be held in Belgrade, as it was in 2024.

But in August, the ATP announced that the tournament would instead take place in Athens, without specifying the reasons for the relocation.

Djokovic, who had previously avoided making political statements, has in recent months on several occasions expressed support for the students who have been protesting for a year against the government of President Aleksandar Vucic.

Since then, he has fallen out of favour with the authorities in Serbia and become a target of pro-government tabloids. — AFP



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
5,573.280

BUSINESS



ظفار الإسلامي
DHOFAR ISLAMIC

LEARNING HAS NO LIMITS
with profit rates starting at

3.49%

on education financing.







 [www.dhofarislamic.com](#)

 24775777

*Terms and Conditions Apply.

SHORTTAKES



Non-oil exports continued to perform strongly, rising by 9.4 per cent to RO 4.421 billion.

OMAN’S TRADE SURPLUS HITS RO 3.9 BILLION

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman recorded a trade surplus of RO 3.93 billion by the end of August 2025, down 36.1 per cent from RO 6.145 billion during the same period in 2024, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The decline was mainly driven by a sharp drop in oil and gas exports, which fell 16.8 per cent to RO 9.775 billion, compared to RO 11.753 billion in the previous year. Overall merchandise exports stood at RO 15.318 billion, down 9.5 per cent from RO 16.926 billion recorded a year earlier.

Despite the fall in hydrocarbon earnings, non-oil exports continued to perform strongly, rising by 9.4 per cent to RO 4.421 billion, compared with RO 4.042 billion in August 2024. The increase underscores ongoing efforts to diversify Oman’s export base and strengthen industrial and manufacturing output.

Re-exports, however, dipped slightly by 0.8 per cent to RO 1.122 billion, compared with RO 1.131 billion a year earlier. Meanwhile, merchandise imports into the Sultanate of Oman grew 5.6 per cent to RO 11.389 billion, up from RO 10.780 billion in the same period of 2024, reflecting rising domestic demand and capital goods inflows.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) maintained its position as Oman’s top trade partner. Exports to the UAE surged 28.8 per cent to RO 821 million, while re-exports reached RO 433 million. The UAE was also the leading source of imports, supplying goods worth RO 2.733 billion to Oman.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranked second in Omani non-oil exports at RO 784 million, followed by India with RO 436 million. In terms of re-exports, Iran came second with RO 202 million, followed by Saudi Arabia at RO 98 million.

New tourism zone to redefine coastal living

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 9

A masterplan for the development of a Tourism Zone within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) envisions a diverse mix of luxury hotels, residences, mixed-use areas, retail, adventure attractions and leisure and recreational facilities — designed to complement Al Duqm’s industrial identity with a vibrant lifestyle component.

An overview of this ambitious plan, which spans 16 kilometres of pristine beachfront and covers around 35 square kilometres, was unveiled at the Duqm Economic Forum 2025 by representatives of an international consortium of consultants commissioned by SEZAD to masterplan the zone.

Romil Sheth, Principal Urban Designer and Partner at Sasaki, an international interdisciplinary architecture, planning, landscape and design firm, outlined the key principles driving Duqm’s evolution into what he described as a “dynamic and vibrant hub”.

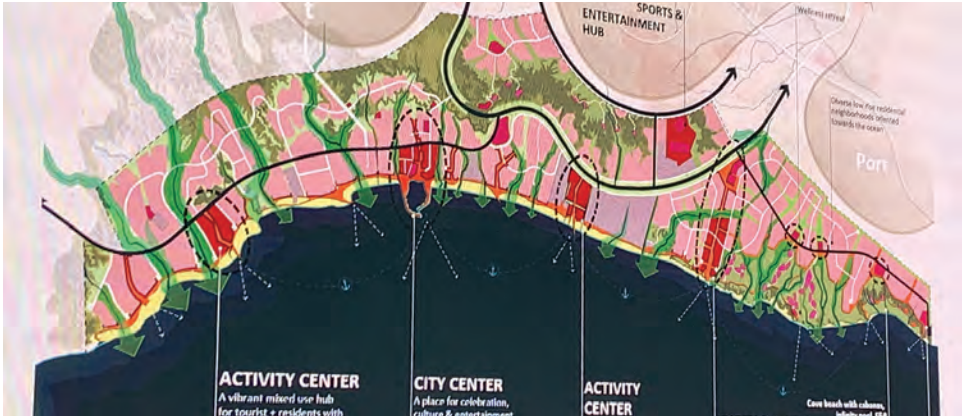
“Al Duqm is very special”, he remarked. “It’s rooted in deep history, culture and ecology shaped around water and terrain. It has a powerful economic engine — with a port, logistics and energy industries — but also a growing leadership in sustainable energy. These are essential ingredients for creating a green and sustainable city. The coastal zone we’re masterplanning covers about 3,700 hectares of land and 16 kilometres of uninterrupted waterfront ready for development”.

Adding to its allure, he noted,



Al Duqm is very special. It’s rooted in deep history, culture and ecology shaped around water and terrain. It has a powerful economic engine — with a port, logistics and energy industries — but also a growing leadership in sustainable energy. These are essential ingredients for creating a green and sustainable city.

ROMIL SHETH
Principal Urban Designer and Partner at Sasaki



The Tourism Zone will complement Al Duqm’s industrial identity with a vibrant lifestyle component.

are Al Duqm’s striking natural features — iconic rock formations, white sandy beaches, dramatic landscapes and hilltops offering panoramic views, as well as an elevated plateau that enhances connectivity and value creation.

“We want to leverage these incredible natural conditions to create something distinctive and authentic to Al Duqm”, Sheth continued. “Together with its natural wadis and pleasant climate, our goal is to establish a unique lifestyle destination in the city”.

The masterplan aims to offer residents, investors and workers relocating to Al Duqm diverse housing and lifestyle options, while capitalising on the coastal environment to attract a wide range of hospitality developments.

“We want to create an iconic waterfront that’s open and welcoming to everyone”, said Sheth. “Public accessibility is key — ensuring engagement through entertainment, cafés, restaurants, retail, water sports and a continuous pedestrian promenade

connecting all these experiences”.

The design also integrates the natural terrain for health, wellness and ecotourism activities, promoting outdoor living and sustainability.

At the heart of the zone will be an iconic city centre anchored by a marina — envisioned as a cultural and entertainment focal point for Al Duqm and Oman; and a future regional destination. Surrounding it are plans for adventure and leisure activities such as camel and horse racing, windsurfing, sailing, kite surfing and diving. Supporting this vibrant setting will be a full-fledged residential and community infrastructure, complete with quality schools, community centres and mixed-use developments serving as public activity nodes. These nodes will line a pedestrian-friendly promenade that ties the entire coastal stretch together. Another defining feature of the masterplan is its low- to mid-rise development profile, deliberately avoiding high-rises to preserve the natural skyline.

Contract awarded for RO 45 million Al Mouj Road development

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, NOV 9

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has awarded a contract worth RO 44.94 million to leading construction firm Strabag Oman for the development of the Al Mouj Road and its connection to 18 November Street in Muscat.

An agreement to this effect was signed yesterday, November 9, 2025, on behalf of the Ministry by Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, while Strabag Oman was represented by Shaikh Hamid bin Abdulqawi al Yafei, Chief Executive Officer. Speaking after the signing, Eng Al Shammakhi highlighted key details of the development. “The project is one of the initiatives to enhance road efficiency in Muscat to address traffic congestion. One of the most affected areas is Al Mouj and the surrounding streets, whether on 18 November Street or the connecting roads such as the route leading to Ishraq Roundabout and from there to Al Hail, as well as the road connecting to Al Mawaleh



Officials signing the agreement on Sunday.

Roundabout in the Al Bahja area”, he said.

“The goal of the project and the method we will use, is to focus on addressing congestion specifically at the roundabout. We also want to make sure the congestion does not simply move to the next roundabouts. For example, if we only built a bridge at Al Mouj Roundabout, traffic would shift to the following intersections. So the project was redesigned and a numerical traffic simulation model was carried out with several scenarios, which led us to the proposed solutions”, he added.

An integral part of the project is an underpass at the roundabout leading towards the Civil Aviation Authority, Al Mouj and Al Bahja in the opposite direction. “This tunnel will improve flow and above it there will be an elevated roundabout to distribute local traffic. We also addressed the next roundabout in Ishraq, as the road from Al Mouj to Ishraq will become dual-carriage. We widened the roads there in the direction of Sultan Qaboos Street as well. Overall, these solutions should resolve the congestion happening around Al Mouj”, he

further stated.

According to the Ministry, the project’s scope includes several major upgrades across the corridor. This includes adding a third lane in each direction from the Airport Bridge to Al Ishraq Roundabout towards Al Seeb Beach; constructing a bridge and four-way traffic signals at Al Mouj Roundabout; and building an elevated roundabout and a vehicle underpass at the existing Al Bahja Roundabout. The project also includes converting Al Ishraq Roundabout into a three-way signalised intersection with lanes that allow continuous movement towards Al Seeb Beach; adding a third lane from Al Mouj Roundabout to Al Mawaleh Bridge; and constructing two vehicle underpasses for traffic heading from 18 November Street towards Al Mawaleh Bridge.

Construction preparations will begin immediately, with work expected to start within two months. “The full duration is 32 months (30 months plus 2 months for preparations). This takes us to late 2026 or around mid-2028 at the latest. But for urban road projects, we usually finish sections and open them gradually”, the Under-Secretary said.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The Bank continues to play an active role in structuring and managing capital-market transactions

OMAN INVESTMENT BANK JOINT LEAD MANAGER FOR OETC’S \$750 MILLION GREEN SUKUK

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Bank congratulates Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), a Nama Group subsidiary and the sole operator of the Sultanate of Oman’s power-transmission network, on the successful pricing and issuance of its inaugural \$750 million (RO 288.5 million) 5-year Green Sukuk under OETC’s newly established Green Financing Framework.

The RegS/144A issuance was launched and priced on October 22, 2025 and listed on the London Stock Exchange on October 29.

Following a day of investor marketing, the transaction attracted strong demand exceeding \$2.25 billion (excluding Joint Lead Manager interest), allowing pricing to tighten 35 basis points from initial guidance to 110 basis points over US Treasuries. Around half of the issuance was placed with institutional investors across the United States and Europe.

Proceeds from the transaction will be used to finance and refinance eligible green projects, including renewable-energy interconnection, grid modernisation and transmission-system upgrades that enhance the integration of clean energy into the national grid.

Oman Investment Bank acted as Joint Lead Manager and Joint Bookrunner for this landmark transaction, marking the first corporate Green Sukuk issuance from the Sultanate of Oman.

The Bank continues to play an active role in structuring and managing capital-market transactions that contribute to the growth and diversification of Oman’s financial sector.

Commenting on the transaction, Mohamed al Habsi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Oman Investment Bank, said: “This milestone issuance demonstrates the increasing depth and maturity of Oman’s capital markets and the continued appetite for sustainable investments among global investors.

We are pleased to have partnered with OETC on this landmark transaction, which highlights the strength of Omani issuers and the increasing relevance of green financing in supporting the nation’s economic development”.

JW MARRIOTT HOTEL MUSCAT RECEIVES MULTIPLE INTERNATIONAL AWARDS



MUSCAT: JW Marriott Hotel Muscat is delighted to announce that the luxury urban resort has received multiple international awards and recognition from the prestigious World Travel Awards 2025, World Luxury Awards 2025 and Hotelier Middle East 2025, namely:

- Best Luxury Conference & Event Hotel in the Middle East — World Luxury Awards 2025
- Best Luxury Family Hotel in Oman — World Luxury Awards 2025
- Best General Manager in Oman (Samir Messaoudi) — World Luxury Awards 2025
- Oman’s Leading Business

Hotel 2025 — World Travel Awards 2025

- Oman’s Leading Conference Hotel 2025 — World Travel Awards 2025
- GM Powerlist 2025 (Samir Messaoudi) — Hotelier Middle East 2025

Samir Messaoudi, General Manager of the hotel said, “We are honoured to receive such prestigious international awards.

This is a reflection of the dedication of our whole team in providing unparalleled service and memorable experiences to all our guests”.

bp Oman launches Gift to the Nation initiative

BP OMAN has partnered with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Governor of Al Dhahirah’s office to launch a national multi-year initiative focused on creating equal opportunities for Omanis with disabilities through training and accessible education.

“We are proud of our partnership with The Sultanate of Oman to create inclusive opportunities. By empowering more than 44,000 people with disabilities through education and training, we are honoured to support His Majesty’s directive for a more equitable and inclusive society; one where every individual can thrive and contribute to Oman”.

Nader Zaki, bp’s regional president Middle East and North Africa.

“bp is pleased to continue to invest in the people of Oman with another national initiative aimed at supporting the country



The initiative is focused on creating opportunities for Omanis with disabilities through training and accessible education.

achieve Oman Vision 2040 goals — this time focused on Omanis with disabilities.

This is a continuation of our social investment programmes which have benefitted over 250,000 Omanis since launched in 2014. Najla bint Zuhair al Jamaliyah, bp Oman president.

The new bp Oman Gift to the Nation (GTN) initiative has two programmes — creating an accessible digital curriculum and training for both for

government employees and job seekers with disabilities.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the first programme will convert existing curricula into interactive, accessible digital formats for students with hearing and visual disabilities.

The programme will:

- Provide learning resources tailored to different needs, enabling students to learn beyond the classroom

through digital tools.

- Equip teachers and parents with new ways to support inclusive learning.

This builds on bp’s ongoing 2020 GTN which digitised the national education curriculum to the benefit over 800,000 students.

This new intervention aims to make the digital curriculum more inclusive for grades 1-4, benefitting an additional 8,000 people.

ASYAD EXPRESS LAUNCHES NEW E-FULFILMENT CENTRE

Asyad Express, part of Asyad Group, continues to strengthen its position as a reliable partner and growth enabler to SMEs and start-ups across Oman. Through its cutting-edge e-Fulfilment Centre spanning over 5,700 m², the company operates one of the leading facilities dedicated to delivering a full suite of services designed to serve the growing needs of the e-commerce sector locally and regionally.

Positioned as a strategic platform for entrepreneurs and SMEs, the e-Fulfilment Centre offers a fully integrated range of smart logistics solutions covering every stage of the order fulfilment process. From



Covering an area of 5,700 m2, the e-Fulfilment Centre offers a fully integrated range of smart logistics solutions.

receiving goods from suppliers and providing secure storage in both ambient and temperature-controlled environments, to advanced automated inventory management, precise order

picking, packing, labelling, dispatch, and last-mile delivery, the Centre ensures seamless, end-to-end efficiency and reliability.

The e-Fulfilment Centre integrates directly with SME business systems, enabling streamlined operations, faster order processing, and scalable productivity with uncompromising efficiency and precision. With fulfilment times ranging from 24 to 72 hours for local and regional deliveries, supported by full 360-degree tracking, SMEs gain complete visibility of every stage of their orders, from receipt to delivery.

Leveraging Asyad Group’s

global network spanning more than 220 destinations worldwide, Asyad Express e-Fulfilment Centre offers fast, reliable, and cost-efficient shipping and delivery solutions.

The state-of-the-art e-Fulfilment Centre is backed by world-class warehousing capabilities, one of the world’s most advanced Logistics Management Systems (LMS), fully automated inventory management, and in-house customs clearance for international shipments, establishing the company as a one-stop logistics partner, delivering full-cycle solutions across multiple industries.

BankDhofar unveils renewed focus on carbon footprint reduction

MUSCAT: In a move that reinforces its long-term commitment to sustainability and responsible growth, BankDhofar has unveiled a renewed focus on carbon footprint reduction — a key pillar of its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy.

These efforts are fully aligned with Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises economic diversification, environmental stewardship and sustainable development. Recognising that operational efficiency and sustainability go hand in hand, BankDhofar has launched a variety of strategic measures to streamline



BankDhofar has launched a variety of strategic measures to streamline processes, enhance energy use and reduce resource consumption.

processes, enhance energy use and reduce resource consumption. Its Data & Analytics Department now provides data-driven insights via dynamic dashboards, ensuring that service processes remain agile and meet turnaround benchmarks.

The Bank has also fully digitalised its onboarding process, cutting paper use, improving efficiency and delivering a smoother experience for its employees and customers.

Within the ESG road map, BankDhofar’s Sustainability Office has taken the lead. Having developed a comprehensive ESG framework to guide the Bank’s sustainability trajectory, the Office

also published BankDhofar’s Sustainability Report, documenting its climate and resource-use progress transparently.

To ensure sustainability becomes a daily operational instinct, the Office continues rolling out initiatives embedded in that framework. In pursuit of this focus on environmental performance, BankDhofar has introduced several key new initiatives.

The Bank has transitioned a portion of its vehicle fleet to hybrids, bringing the total number of hybrid cars to 38 and replacing conventional vehicles, with further expansion planned.

SHORTTAKES



The forum aimed to highlight major projects and investment opportunities in Al Wusta Governorate.

Al Wusta Governorate hosts Fourth Energy and Minerals Forum

AL DUQM: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals organised the Fourth Energy and Minerals Forum in the Wilayat of Al Duqm, Al Wusta Governorate, under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

The forum aimed to highlight major projects and investment opportunities in Al Wusta Governorate while enhancing collaboration between government entities and the private sector across oil and gas, mining, renewable energy and green hydrogen. Presentations covered key topics such as oil and gas development, mineral resources, renewable energy, hydrogen, and net-zero initiatives — reflecting the Ministry’s progress in advancing sustainable energy and economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

In his address, Eng Salim al Aufi said the forum demonstrates the Ministry’s commitment to ongoing dialogue with its partners to ensure the sustainable growth of the energy and minerals sectors. He stressed that Al Wusta Governorate plays a pivotal role in Oman’s energy landscape, with 12 oil and gas concession areas — eight already awarded — and 10 mining concessions covering minerals such as silica, salt, kaolin, potash and pyrite.

The Governorate is also home to key renewable projects, including the Ras Madrakah initiative and the Mahout Wind Power Plant, which will have a capacity of 400 MW and is expected to begin operations in 2027. Additionally, the Masirah–Mahout power interconnection project, operating at 132 kV across 60 kilometres, is scheduled for completion in 2026.

Al Aufi reaffirmed the Ministry’s commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2050, supported by the Oman Net Zero Centre and initiatives that reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency.

CEOTALK

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 9

THE Sultanate of Oman enters the 2026–2030 execution cycle with a fourfold mandate for its financial system, to deepen capital markets, diversify products, protect investors and align its progress with Oman Vision 2040 and Net-Zero 2050.

In this CEO Talk interview, Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), outlines the FSA’s road map for delivering on this mandate through the enactment of market enhancement measures, capacity-building and cross-border alignment that puts the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on the global market radar.

LIQUIDITY, LISTINGS AND CLASSIFICATION UPGRADE
The FSA sees market depth and liquidity as the heart of fair pricing. That means sound disclosure, active participation and tools that keep trading continuous. “We have introduced market makers and liquidity providers, which have already improved turnover this year”, Al Salmi says, adding that retail investors are essential for daily liquidity alongside institutions.
The primary market, where companies issue new securities to raise capital, remains the main driver of market activity. Issuance topped more than RO 4 billion in 2024, averaging RO 2.1 billion a year since 2022. New deals have expanded the retail base by about 97 per cent from the 2022 baseline and broadened MSX coverage in energy, logistics and financials. The work



“Build market depth, protect investors and place sustainable finance as default”.
FSA Executive President

ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SALMI
Executive President of the Financial Services Authority

Oman’s FinTech market to hit RO 1.1 billion by 2025

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, NOV 9

THE Sultanate of Oman is on the cusp of a revolutionary change in its financial landscape, with the burgeoning FinTech market projected to reach RO 1.1 billion by 2025. This staggering valuation represents an impressive 16% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), solidifying Oman’s commitment to becoming a regional hub for financial technology innovation. This comprehensive picture of a sector in transition was presented during the “Building a Future-Ready Bank” summit held on Wednesday by IBS Intelligence and Cedar. This rapid expansion is no accident; it is the direct result of a proactive and strategic regulatory environment spearheaded by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).



The number of FinTech firms in Oman has surged from 26 to 42 in just one year, signalling robust entrepreneurial interest and greater confidence among investors.

The CBO has been central to accelerating the FinTech ecosystem by launching its Innovation Acceleration Programme, designed specifically to advance pilot projects and regulate technology testing through a dedicated sandbox. Most significantly, authorities have now unveiled a new digital-bank licensing road map, introducing

progressive entry tiers linked to specific capital requirements and localisation commitments, a move designed to nurture a new, digitally-native banking generation while protecting consumers.
The impact of this regulatory clarity has been immediate and dramatic. The number of FinTech firms in Oman has surged from 26 to 42 in just one year, signalling robust entrepreneurial interest and greater confidence among investors. In 2025 alone, 16 FinTech licences were approved, with a further 52 applications currently under review by the CBO. To draw international investment and expertise, the country has also actively promoted its Regulatory Sandbox, which functions as a low-risk testing ground specifically targeting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from global FinTech players.

now is to bring mining, agriculture and fisheries, tourism, healthcare and education to market so the bourse mirrors the real economy.
To attract global capital, the Sultanate of Oman is pursuing an MSX reclassification from frontier to emerging market status, coordinated by the FSA, MSX, Ministry of Finance and Oman Investment Authority, to enhance liquidity, diversify products and lift visibility for foreign investors. “MSX is one of the region’s most open markets; the upgrade would enhance our profile with global funds”, he said.

CAPITAL MARKET INCENTIVE PROGRAMME
The programme represents a key driver in the efforts of the Sultanate of Oman to encourage private-sector participation and broaden the base of listed companies. Its core objective is to encourage enterprises, particularly SMEs, to access the capital market, benefit from financing opportunities and strengthen their governance and disclosure practices.
“Companies will move when they see tangible value in the scheme”, he emphasised. Within this framework, the Alternative Investment Market (AIM), established as a secondary market under the FSA’s regulatory framework on August 10, 2025, will serve as a foundational platform to support the programme’s implementation.
AIM will provide a gradual entry point for companies seeking to experience the public market under a lighter regulatory regime. It will enable them to familiarise themselves with financial reporting and corporate-governance requirements through a simplified version of IFRS, preparing them for

an eventual transition to the main market in MSX. The platform has already attracted notable interest from companies, with several applications received ahead of its official launch on November 3, 2025.
“The primary goal of AIM is to nurture and grow SMEs, allowing them to practise market participation, access capital for expansion and build long-term sustainability. Over time, companies listed on AIM are expected to develop the capacity and governance maturity required for full-fledged listing on the main market in MSX”, he added.
Furthermore, participating companies will benefit from a five-year incentive period, with an additional five years granted to those that enter the main market in MSX before the initial term concludes, providing up to ten years of comprehensive support.

INVESTOR PROTECTION AND ENFORCEMENT
Financial fraud has risen globally and the Sultanate of Oman is not immune. “An informed investor is far better protected than an uninformed one”, Al Salmi says, urging the public to treat “too-good-to-be-true” promises with caution and verify licences before engaging. The FSA has launched an ‘Investor Protection Portal’ on their official website and taken legal action against unauthorised entities, securing court rulings and publicising outcomes to deter misconduct. Oversight of intermediaries is tightening, as are disclosure rules and minority-shareholder protections, voting, board representation and fair treatment, alongside stronger investor relations at listed firms.

SUPER-HARD MATERIALS

China lifts dual-use export ban to US



China has suspended a ban on approving exports of “dual-use items” related to gallium, germanium, antimony and super-hard materials to the US, the commerce ministry said on Sunday. The suspension takes effect from Sunday until November 27, 2026. The ministry also suspended the stricter end-user and end-use purpose checks for exports of dual-use graphite to the US, which were announced alongside the ban. — Reuters

COMPANY LOOMS

Lukoil operations face fallout from sanctions



Lukoil’s international operations faced mounting disruptions on Friday as a US deadline for companies to cut off business with the Russian oil company looms and after a hoped-for sale of the operations to Swiss trader Gunvor collapsed.
The US Treasury, which would have to approve any sale as Lukoil is under US sanctions, on Thursday labelled Gunvor a Kremlin “puppet” and signalled its opposition to the deal. — Reuters

ROLLER-COASTER WEEK

Wall St ends mixed on shutdown progress



The Nasdaq closed lower but the S&P 500 and the Dow eked out late-session gains on Friday as investors turned the page on a roller-coaster week with economic worries, the longest-ever federal government shutdown and sky-high tech stock valuations dampening risk appetite.
All three major US stock indexes spent much of the session lower, but losses shrank, with the S&P 500 and the Dow turning higher late in the day. — Reuters

OPINION

How do ChatGPT and Gemini think?



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies.



V CH MADHU SUDHANA RAO KONDAVEETI

The writer is a USA-based AI researcher.

BEHIND the sleek interfaces of today’s chatbots lies a labyrinth of code, data and unanswered questions. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become humanity’s most impressive mirror, reflecting our collective knowledge, creativity and confusion.

From Microsoft’s Copilot to Google’s Gemini and OpenAI’s ChatGPT, these systems appear almost magical. Ask them to summarise a report, write poetry, or translate a medical abstract and they reply in seconds. Yet few, even among the engineers who build them, truly understand what happens behind the screen, or how much of it remains a mystery.

At the core of every modern chatbot lies a Large Language Model (LLM), a digital brain with hundreds of billions, sometimes trillions, of parameters. These parameters are not programmed rules, but emergent correlations derived from analysing massive libraries of human textbooks, websites, code and research papers.

These internal representations and pathways are highly complex, intricate and nonlinear, making it difficult to trace how a given output is generated from a specific input. No engineer can point to a single neuron and say, “This one understands irony”. Instead, intelligence emerges. Layers of mathematical connections detect subtle

linguistic rhythms and semantic patterns. Why some clusters “light up” when asked moral or creative questions is still unknown. Even at OpenAI and Google DeepMind, teams describe their models as “black boxes” whose inner logic defies full explanation.

The reason an AI writes what it writes is often as mysterious to its creators as it is to its users. Before these systems speak, they undergo an immense and largely unseen process of data cleaning, human feedback and reinforcement.

Thousands of annotators across the globe review text, rate AI responses; and guide tone and ethics through Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF).

This phase doesn’t teach reasoning; it teaches acceptable behaviour. Over millions of interactions, the AI learns which answers sound “helpful” or “harmless”, a definition shaped by human judgment rather than complex logic.

While companies emphasise ethical data sourcing, the reality is opaque. Much of the internet contains bias and misinformation; and these, inevitably, seep into AI memory.

Proprietary and licensed datasets, including snippets from publishers, academic databases and coding sites, supplement public data. Engineers often work with pre-processed corpora and never see every source. This phenomenon, called data opacity, means even developers cannot

At the core of every modern chatbot lies a Large Language Model (LLM), a digital brain with hundreds of billions, sometimes trillions, of parameters. These parameters are not programmed rules, but emergent correlations derived from analysing massive libraries of human textbooks, websites, code and research papers.

always trace the full origin of what their model “knows”. The synthetic knowledge and the illusion of understanding when ChatGPT or Gemini replies are not recalling facts but performing an ultra-fast probability game, predicting the most likely word sequence. The result feels intelligent because language itself is patterned.

Researchers call this synthetic cognition: intelligence without comprehension. When an AI fabricates a citation or misquotes a figure, it is not deceiving; it is completing a linguistic pattern that statistically fits.

Peering Inside the Black Box reveals that new research in mechanistic interpretability seeks to map how these internal circuits represent ideas such as empathy or arithmetic.

Early findings show “concept neurons” that consistently activate for abstract categories such as cities or melodies. Still, most scientists admit they are steering a ship whose navigation system they only partly understand. The gap between creation and comprehension remains wide.

AI today is both a marvel and a mystery, a tool advancing faster than our theories can keep up with. Engineers can train and align it, yet they cannot fully explain its mind. Perhaps that is what makes artificial intelligence profoundly unique: it works beautifully, even when its creators don’t quite know how.

BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS AS A TOOL TO RESHAPE MARKETING IN OMAN



RAYYAN NADER AL JABRI

The writer is an economics student at Sultan Qaboos University with a keen interest in analytical research and innovative projects.

CONSUMER decisions today are no longer driven by logic alone; they reflect complex psychological and economic interactions. This is where behavioural economics plays a vital role revealing how cognitive biases shape purchasing behaviour and transforming the understanding of consumers from theoretical insight into applied science. The Omani market now stands at an important point where adopting this science

can lead to smarter and more realistic marketing strategies. Behavioural economics is no longer an intellectual luxury but an institutional necessity. Having a behavioural economist in every marketing team has become essential for interpreting consumer motivations and designing campaigns based on science rather than intuition. Companies that neglect this analysis risk making superficial and inaccurate marketing decisions. One of the most powerful concepts in marketing is loss aversion and the endowment effect the idea that consumers fear losing what they already have more than they desire gaining new benefits. This explains why strategies such as free trials or temporary access periods are so effective: they create a temporary sense of ownership that makes consumers reluctant to give up the product or service once the trial ends.

In the Omani market, this can be clearly seen in the promotional strategies of telecom companies such as Omantel and Ooredoo, which often offer customers limited-time experiences such as a free one-day unlimited data plan or a temporary speed upgrade.

These offers generate a psychological sense of ownership, making users more likely to continue the service afterward, perfectly illustrating how loss aversion becomes a practical marketing tool.

Another cornerstone in consumer perception is the reference point people do not evaluate prices in absolute terms but in comparison to what they perceive as “fair”.

Businesses can influence this perception through smart discount design or by introducing higher-priced options that make other products seem more reasonable. In Oman, consumers tend to compare prices within their local circles rather than global markets, allowing companies to influence demand by adjusting local reference standards instead of changing the actual price.

UK bosses issue make or break tax warning

THE manufacturing industry has warned the government to prioritise growth in the Budget as the sector fights back from a year-long downturn in the face of “existential threats”. Manufacturers have faced mounting pressures over the last 12 months as business costs soared in the aftermath of the Labour government’s first Budget before tariff uncertainty and persistently high energy costs sucked confidence from the sector.

The latest Purchasing Manager’s Index (PMI) from S&P Global showed the industry has bounced to a 13-month high — with a reading of 49.7 — powered by Jaguar Land Rover’s return to form after a cyber attack crippled production across its sites and wider supply chain.

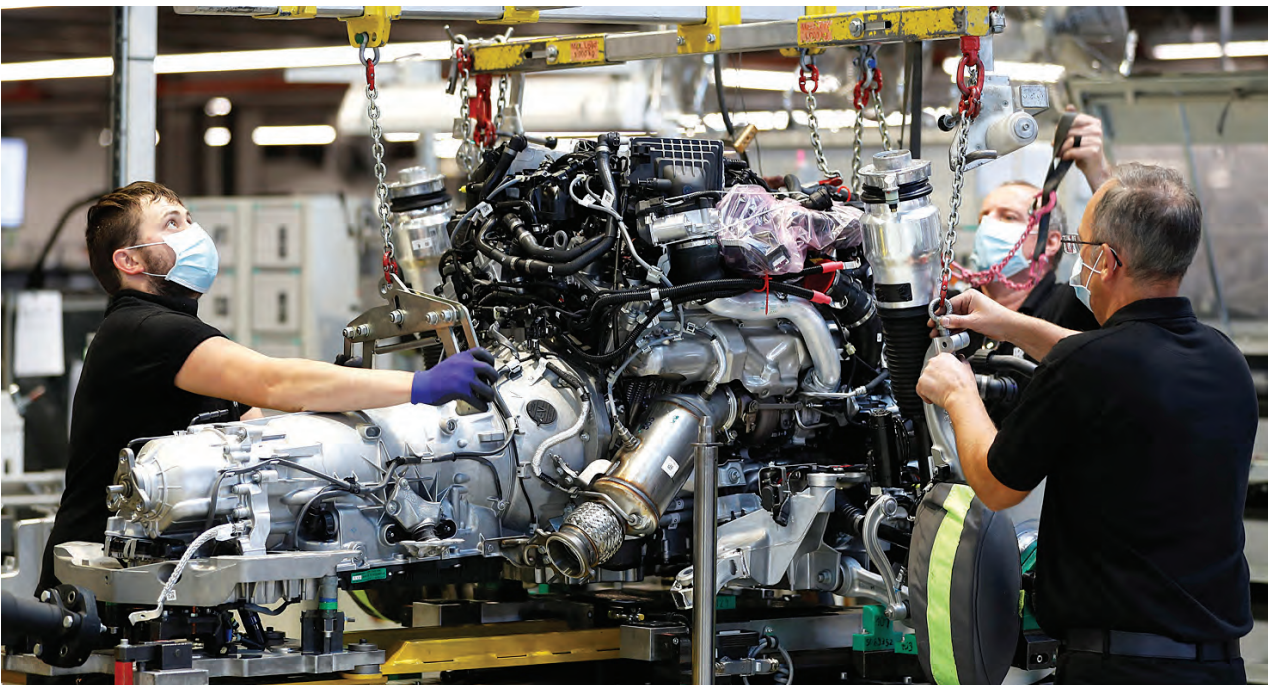
But the state of factory output across the country remained below the all-important 50.0 threshold which would denote growth in the sector. Experts warned the recovery could remain “short-lived” if the government piles pressure on firms at the autumn Budget.

The sector’s industry body Make UK said companies fear further burdens and costs from changes to inheritance tax hitting family firms along with the implications of the looming Employment Rights Bill.

Chief executive of Make UK Stephen Phipson, said businesses were battling a “potent combination of weak demand at home and abroad, as well as escalating costs across the board”.

Make UK has now called for a commitment from the government of no further national insurance hikes and a targeted exemption from business rates for investments in green technologies. The manufacturing PMI figures released this month showed employment shrank for the twelfth consecutive month in October, with labour costs cited as the primary factor.

Director at S&P Global market Intelligence, Rob Dobson, said: “There are also concerns the forthcoming Budget will exacerbate the lingering challenges created by last year’s Budget, especially in relation to the impact of national



Technicians work on a Rolls-Royce engine prior to it being installed in a car on the production line of the Rolls-Royce Goodwood factory, near Chichester, Britain. — Reuters

Manufacturers have faced mounting pressures over the last 12 months as business costs soared in the aftermath of the Labour government’s first Budget before tariff uncertainty and persistently high energy costs sucked confidence from the sector.



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

minimum wage and employer NIC on costs, demand and production.

Phipson urged: If we are to get growth off the floor, then it is going to be business that provides it and this Budget simply has to have growth as the number one focus”. He added: “The government needs to stop sitting on its hands on the energy support scheme and continually kicking the can down the road hoping the problem will resolve itself”.

Make UK said there remained an “existential threat” to the survival of many companies due to the rising price of industrial electricity prices.

In a speech from Downing Street last week, the Chancellor addressed the “speculation about the choices I will make”, saying “it is important that people understand the circumstances we are facing, the principles guiding my choices — and why I believe they will be the right choices for the country”.

Meanwhile, a group of young entrepreneurs has issued a fresh warning that a prolonged hike to income tax will hit the self-

employed hardest. In a clarion call ahead of this month’s Budget, the Young Entrepreneurs Forum warned that a mooted 2p rise in income tax alongside a cut in employers’ national insurance would “devastate freelancers, contractors and start-up founders — the very people Britain needs to power growth”.

The Treasury is reportedly considering a radical shake-up of the way it taxes work next month, that would see it unveil a two per cent hike to income tax mirrored by an equal cut to national insurance.

Chair of the Young Entrepreneurs Forum, Sean Kohli, said the overhaul would “send a message that Britain would rather tax enterprise than encourage it”, because founders and the self-employed would also miss out on the NI cut.

“If Britain wants growth, it needs to back those with the will to build, the founders who create jobs, take risks and power our future economy”, he said. “Instead, the government seems intent on taxing that will out of existence”.

Oman boosts industrial standards

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening Oman's quality infrastructure and supporting sustainable industrial development through standards and accreditation.

This was highlighted during the seminar titled "Standards and Accreditation for Sustainable Industry", held at W Muscat Hotel under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The event brought together experts, policymakers and private sector representatives to discuss how standards and accreditation can boost industrial



The event brought together experts, policymakers and private sector representatives to discuss how standards and accreditation can boost industrial competitiveness.

competitiveness, support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and align Oman's economy with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Imad bin Khamis al Shukaili, Director General

of Standards and Metrology, said that standardisation and accreditation are vital for industrial development, ensuring that Omani products meet global quality benchmarks.

The Ministry, he noted, has made significant progress in building a comprehensive national quality system —training more than 250 professionals as assessors, conducting 31 laboratory inspection visits and implementing 15 technical training programmes involving public and private entities.

Al Shukaili added that MoCIIP aims to empower SMEs by involving them in precious metals laboratories and hallmarking activities. Cooperation with the SME Development Authority will also expand entrepreneurs' opportunities in manufacturing, import certification and conformity assessment. So far this year, the Directorate General of Standards and Metrology has

issued 203 new Omani standards and reviewed 983 Gulf standards, ensuring alignment with regional and international requirements.

Engineer Muslim al Buraq, Secretary of the Arab Accreditation Cooperation, praised Oman's progress in establishing a robust accreditation framework. He said the creation of the Oman Accreditation Centre and its signing of the Multilateral Recognition Agreement mark a major step in achieving international recognition. This move, he added, reinforces Oman's reputation as a trusted player in regional and global quality systems and helps strengthen the country's investment environment through greater confidence and transparency.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIT. VACANT

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

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

Phone : +96896965333
Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

URGENTLY REQUIRED FOR CONTRACTING COMPANY

1- Electrical Foreman.
2- Civil foreman (Experience in Piping work).
3- Civil Supervisor.
Contact @Mr.Mohmmaed GSM : 92563101 send CV to mohammed92563101@gmail.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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

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

COCKROACH
BEDBUG
SNAKE
RODENT
TERMITE
FLIES

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease



FOR RENT/SALE

Fish Plant & Accommodation Building FOR RENT/SALE

LOCATION: MULANDHA INDUSTRIAL AREA
3511 sqmt Plant with Cold Store / Blast Freezers / Office & Other facilities
1663 sqmt with number of Offices
3084 sqmt Accommodation Block with Flats, Restaurants, Stores & other facilities.

Contact Nos.: 99643760/ 92192020

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

FOR RENT

10000 sqm
plus area of
open yard fully
blacktop with
compound
wall, wide gate
& CCTV for
immediate rent
in Jifnain.
Contact
99853040

OMAN DAILY

Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

*** NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY**

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

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



ART/LIFE



A S Y M P H O N Y O F P A T R I O T I S M

MILITARY
TATTOO
2025 > 20

ART EXPO

Students turn simplicity into art



ZUWAINA AL SULIEMANI

Al Murooj School opened its doors to a vibrant world of colour, creativity and inspiration through its exhibition titled ‘Colours and Wood’ recently. The event beautifully combined natural materials with artistic imagination, transforming simple wooden objects into expressive works of art.

The exhibition encouraged students to explore new artistic possibilities using wood as a canvas. Participants experimented with paint, texture and form to produce unique pieces that reflected their creativity and skill. From hand-painted cooking spoons and forks to colourful decorative items, each piece showcased how ordinary materials can be turned into extraordinary creations.

What made the exhibition stand out was its celebration of creativity through simplicity. Students used every day wooden kitchen materials and transformed them into vibrant, vintage-style pieces painted in diverse colours and patterns. The artworks carried a deeper message of sustainability, innovation and the joy of creating something meaningful from simple beginnings.

The event’s success was the result of teamwork and dedication. It was organised by Activities Coordinators Ameera Baamer and Amina Baamer, with guidance from Art Teachers Maryam al Mahd, Ameera al Kaifi and Maysa al Nasri. The exhibition was held under the supervision of School Principal Tofool Jaboob, who continues to encourage initiatives that nurture creativity and collaboration.

Teachers, parents and visitors admired the variety and detail in the artworks, creating a warm and inspiring atmosphere where students proudly shared their creations.

More than just an art show, ‘Colours and Wood’ was a celebration of imagination, patience and the power of turning the ordinary into the extraordinary.

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



ART

People look at Johannes Vermeer’s painting, Girl with a Pearl Earring, at the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague, Netherlands. — Reuters



FASHION

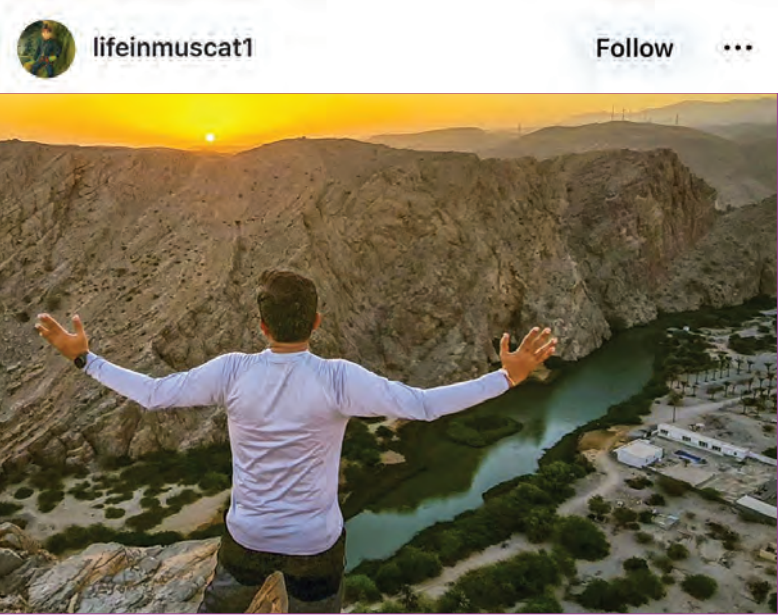
Canadian actress Shay Mitchell attends the 2025 Baby2Baby Gala at the Pacific Design Centre in West Hollywood. — AFP



TRIBUTE

Britain’s Prince George of Wales and Britain’s Catherine, Princess of Wales attend The Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance event at the Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Nature paints beauty of Yiti



The spirit of the wild

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Rock Hall welcomes Cyndi Lauper, Outkast, White Stripes

Cyndi Lauper, Outkast, the White Stripes and Soundgarden were among this year’s inductees to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, adding their names to the pantheon of music’s most esteemed and beloved acts.

New Yorker Lauper, who burst onto the pop scene with colourful punk looks and infectious tunes like “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun”, “True Colours” and “Time After Time”, was inducted by “Pink Pony Club” singer Chappell Roan.

Praising her “four-octave range” and unapologetic style, Roan thanked Lauper for being an icon for any artist who may be called “too much, too loud, too eccentric or all of the above — their honesty becomes their greatest strength”.

To induct Detroit rock band The White Stripes — known for sports arena favourite “Seven Nation Army” and “Fell in Love with a Girl”, among others — singer Iggy Pop gave an exuberant speech peppered with curse words and his own screeching impressions of the band’s raucous sound.

Singer-guitarist Jack White accepted on behalf of himself and drummer Meg White, who did not attend. He named a long list of industry heavies and bands before adding: “To the homeless and the powerless and the forgotten, we always say thank you”.

Other inducted American performers included Atlanta’s hip-hop duo Outkast, who



Cyndi Lauper attends the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Los Angeles.

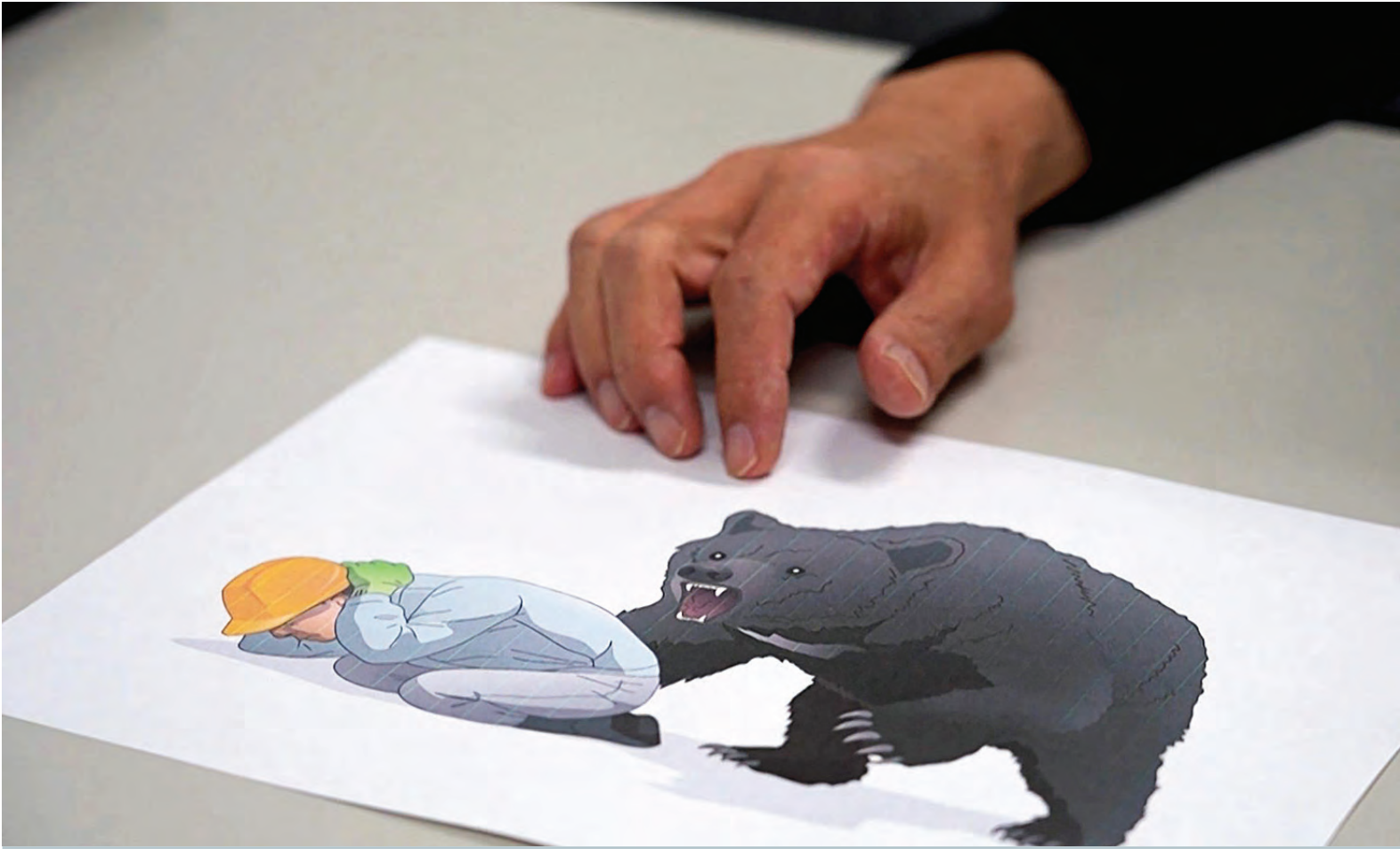
— Reuters

topped charts with “Hey Ya”, “Ms Jackson” and “The Way You Move”, and Seattle’s grunge band Soundgarden, who had hits with “Black Hole Sun” and “Spoonman”.

English singer Joe Cocker, who died in 2014, was inducted posthumously to honour his bluesy music, including “You Are So Beautiful”, his cover of the Beatles’ “With a Little Help from My Friends” and the Grammy-winning duet with Jennifer Warnes “Up Where We Belong”.

Other inductees included arena rockers Bad Company, who sang “Can’t Get Enough” and “The Twist” singer Chubby Checker.

Groundbreaking New York hip-hop trio Salt-N-Pepa was honoured with a Musical Influence Award for their hit songs “Push It” and “Shoop”, which celebrate women’s independence with playful charm in a male-dominated genre. — AFP



Akita University Hospital’s Professor of Emergency and Critical Medicine Hajime Nakae showing a bear attack safety illustration in Akita. — AFP

HIROSHI HIYAMA AND CAROLINE GARDIN

THE sense of fear is palpable in parts of northern Japan, where some locals have fastened bells to their bags hoping the noise will keep bears away, while signs warn people to be on guard.

The animals have killed a record 13 across the country since April, with a steady flow of reports of bears entering homes, roaming near schools and rampaging in supermarkets.

“We hear news almost every day about people being attacked or injured”, said 28-year-old Kakeru Matsuhashi, a traditional ‘Matagi’ hunter, as he walked through a forest clutching a knife.

“It’s becoming something that feels personal and it’s simply frightening”, he added in the northern prefecture of Akita, an area hit by a series of attacks.

This year, the number of fatalities is double the previous record of 2023-24, with five months of the fiscal year still to go. Data is patchy from certain regions, but in recent years, Japan has seen among the highest number of fatal attacks globally.

Keiji Minatoya, also from Akita, knows this too well — a bear leapt from his garage, pinned him to the ground and sank its teeth into his face in 2023.

“I was thinking: ‘This is how I die’”, said 68-year-old Minatoya, who managed to escape and take refuge inside his home. The government is now scrambling to deal with the surge in attacks, which scientists say is being driven by a fast-growing bear population combined with this year’s bad acorn harvest, leaving some mountains “overcrowded” with hungry bears.

Troops have been deployed to provide logistical help for trapping and hunting bears, while riot police will be allowed to use rifles to shoot the animals, which can weigh half a tonne and outrun a human.

The victims include a 67-year-old man in Iwate, a region next to Akita, whose body was found outside his home, with animal bite marks and scars.

SPIKE IN BEAR ATTACKS HITS JAPAN ‘ALMOST EVERY DAY’

Bears in Japan

These are two species of bears that inhabit Japan and their main characteristics.



Keiji Minatoya, a confectionery shop owner who was attacked by a black bear in front of the garage in his backyard points to a scar on his face from the attack, in Kitaakita, Akita Prefecture. — Reuters

A major issue is the expanding bear population, which is growing fast due to an abundance of food under the influence of a warming climate, say experts

Official data show the number of wounded is also on course to be a record, tallying over 100 people in the six months to September.

‘Overcrowded’ with bears
A major issue is the expanding bear population, which is growing fast due to an abundance of food — including acorns, deer and boars — under the influence of a warming climate, experts say.
Japan’s brown bear population has doubled

in three decades, and now stands at around 12,000, while the number of Asian black bears has climbed on the country’s main Honshu island, reaching 42,000, according to a recent government report.

Some mountains have become “overcrowded”, according to Naoki Ohnishi, researcher at the Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute. “Put simply, the size of the bear population has gone beyond the capacity of the mountains to hold them”, he said.

Although rising temperatures have led to more frequent bumper crops of acorns, the nuts still produce good and bad harvests every two to five years as part of their normal crop cycle.

This year, as well as in 2023 — the year Minatoya was attacked — there is a poor supply.

While most bears still stay in the mountains, recent bad harvests have led some — together with their cubs — to wander into towns to look for food, said Shinsuke Koike, professor at the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology.

With exposure to humans, cubs in particular become less fearful and develop a taste for farmed produce and common fruits such as persimmon, Koike added.

Steady rural depopulation due to a chronically low birthrate and young people moving to cities has also reduced the human presence at the edges of forests and mountains, blurring the traditional boundaries between people and bears. — AFP

FEATURES

A SYMPHONY OF PATRIOTISM



GEORGINA BENISON

THE annual Military Tattoo, performed in the grand maidan of the Royal Opera House Muscat, always instils a deep sense of patriotism and pride in the Sultanate of Oman from all who attend. This year was no exception.

With the tight new organisation put in place by ROHM staff there was ample seating for everyone, a punctual start and smooth running of the majestic production.

Before the main performance at 7 pm each evening the public was treated to a lively foretaste of the Military Jazz and Steel Bands to come while waiting in their seats.

The show began with a video, projected onto a huge screen erected in front of the Opera House facade, of highlights from last year’s production. Throughout the 75 minute spectacle last weekend the whole performance was screened via CCTV to enable everyone to see the performance clearly. Sometimes close-up, sometimes from an aerial drone, viewers could watch the intricate patterns created on the maidan’s marble floor.

The Guard of Honour by the Military Band of the Royal Army of Oman began proceedings to welcome the Guest of Honour, HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said.

The opening ‘Fanfare’ was given by the ‘Pipes and Drums of the Combined Forces of Oman’ with arrangements of Classical pieces. Popular favourites included Rossini’s, “William Tell Overture”, the “Toreador Song” from Bizet’s ‘Carmen’ and Strauss’s beloved clap-along chestnut, “Radetzky March”, beguiling an awe struck audience. The Jazz Band, under director Douglas Hill, added a rhythmic and visual feast and featured a splendid Xylophone and metallophone section.

Guest musicians this year were from the ‘Royal Symphonic Band of Belgian Guides’. Men and women alike marched in perfect formation with meticulous footwork, resplendent in black attire with mauve leg stripes, accompanied by their rousing brass and woodwind sections.

Bugles and percussion heralded a dazzling virtuoso Xylophone solo over lush brass chords. Shrill clarinets and piccolos from the woodwinds created a movie-like

MILITARY
TATTOO 2025
MARKS

75
GLORIOUS
YEARS

THE GRAND FINALE WAS A TOUR-DE-FORCE INVOLVING ALL PARTICIPANTS IN AN ASTOUNDING ‘DISPLAY OF COMBINED FORCES AND GUESTS’



PHOTO CREDIT: KHALID AL BUSAIDI



texture, building up to a huge sense of tension at the final climax.

The following slow march saw the participants performing goose steps in perfectly coordinated choreography to military trumpets and a warm trombone chorus. A driving cross-rhythm repeated in anticipation, punctuated by massive booms from the gong. Stirring timpani and bass drum interruptions exploded into another filmic ending. The visitors received a rousing applause as they left the arena to a Straussian March.

The men and women of the ‘Combined Military Bands’ performed Scottish and Omani marching tunes featuring bagpipes and drums, mesmerisingly rich in colour and variation. Three drum majors led the marchers, twirling maces while drum sticks were spinning in this visual and aural frenzy.

A highlight of the evening came with combined choirs, operatic chorus, pipes and drums, the jazz band and Dhofari folk dancers in traditional costumes. The ladies entered the arena in deep red velvet dresses bearing incense burners and spreading puffs of rich frankincense clouds throughout the square. Men jumped and whirled ceremonial swords and khanjars in traditional gesture. This was a most popular item and was received with resounding applause and yelps. It commanded pride and adulation from an appreciative crowd, spellbound by the exciting choreography.

The men and women of the ‘Combined Inter-service Massed Bands’ performed the final slow march, vibrant in their many coloured jackets and pipers proud in their green tartan costumes.

The Grand Finale was a tour-de-force involving all participants in an astounding ‘Display of Combined Forces and Guests’. Music was arranged for the entire company, opening with a quick-step March which included the Steel Band with a syncopated drum rhythm. The choirs and Brass sections performed the magnificent, “I am Omani” – the effect was overwhelmingly powerful.

After the formal conclusion to the evening the Steel Band, under the expert baton of Caribbean-born Lennox Jordan, played the dancing audience out into the night with some familiar reggae and pop numbers, bringing the 2025 festivities to a close for another year.