

Times

GOLDEN JUBILEE

OF OMAN



50

YEARS OF LEGACY

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HM THE SULTAN GRACES NATIONAL DAY MILITARY PARADE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, graced the Grand Military Parade staged at Al Fateh Square in the Governorate of Muscat on Thursday, on the occasion of the Sultanate of Oman's Glorious National Day. The event was held in the presence of Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman. Upon His Majesty the Sultan's arrival at the parade ground, he was received by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office and Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis Al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). **See also >A4**



OMAN ROLLS OUT OMR1.41BN PROJECTS

The initiatives reflect the continued progress and development the Sultanate is achieving under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In conjunction with Oman's National Day celebrations, the General Secretariat for National Celebrations has final-

ised the programme for inaugurating a series of major national development projects. The initiatives reflect the continued progress and development the Sultanate is achieving under

the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, with a total investment of approximately OMR1.41 billion covering infrastructure, healthcare, the economy, and food security. The inauguration schedule has been coordinated with relevant government authorities to ensure smooth execution. Major industrial and economic projects include the Polysilicon project in the Sohar Free Zone, costing OMR615 million, the Al-Ghaith Chemical Industries Factory at OMR25 million, and a sugar refinery at Sohar Port at OMR141.5 million. An industrial

bakery in Khazaen Economic City, South Al Batinah, has a budget of OMR25 million, while the development of Diba Fishing Port amounts to OMR39 million. In Khazaen, a plant for producing animal and fish feed has been allocated OMR36 million, alongside several projects executed by the OQ Group totalling OMR38.5 million. Infrastructure projects include the dualisation of the National Southern Highway in Al Wusta Governorate at OMR23.5 million and the development of National Road 23 towards Ras Markaz at OMR59.3 million. **>A3**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Tourism fuels Oman's economic diversification

1 The heritage and tourism sectors in Oman achieved good results during the first nine months of 2025, confirming their pivotal role in supporting the economic diversification process and consolidating the Sultanate of Oman's position as a sustainable tourism destination. **>A2**

OMAN Value of FDI in Oman exceeds \$78 billion

2 The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said foreign direct investment into Oman rose to over \$78bn. **>A6**

MARKET Broad money supply in Oman up by 4.3%

3 Broad money supply in the Sultanate of Oman witnessed a growth of 4.3 percent on an annual basis to reach OMR25.7 billion by the end of September 2025. **>B1**

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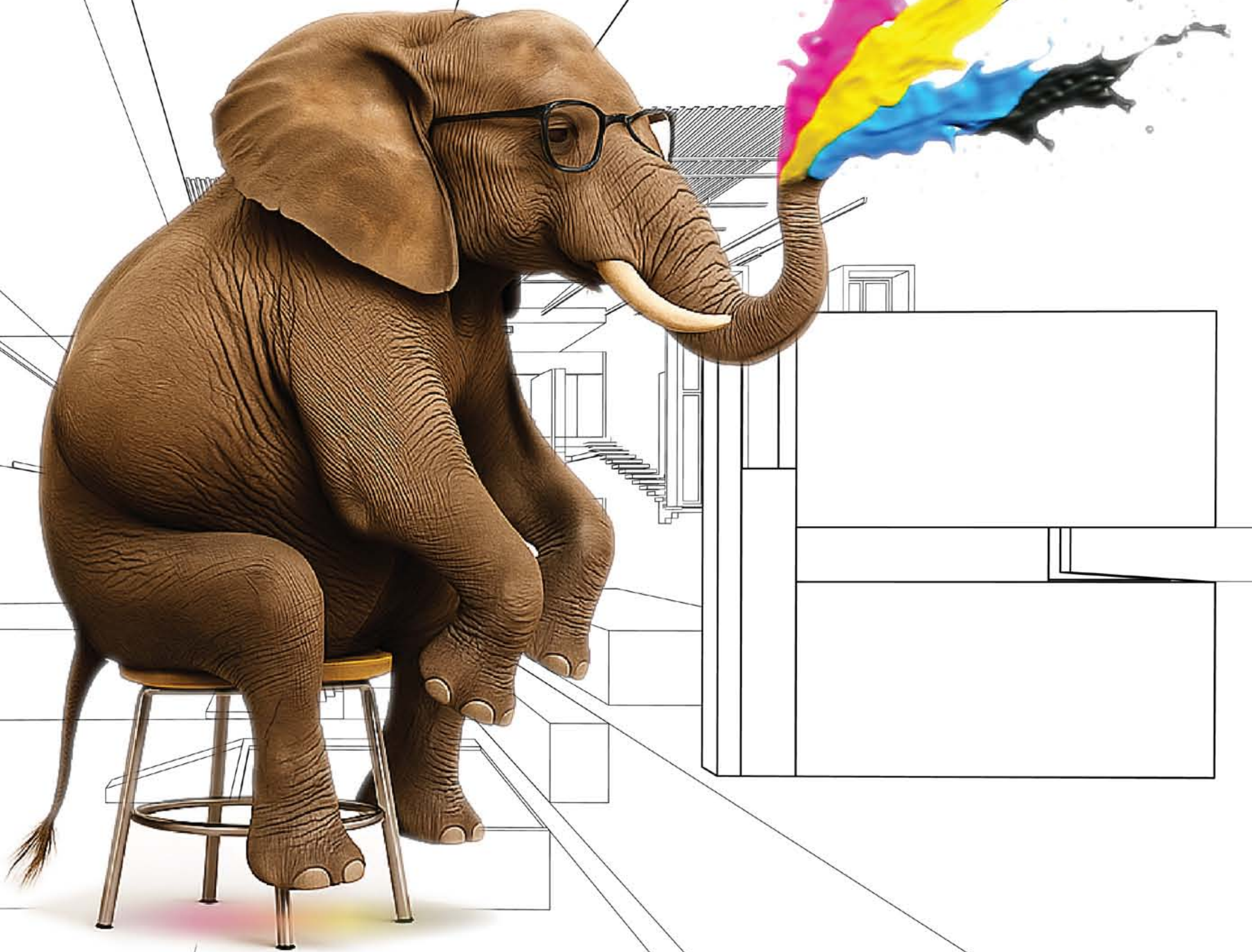
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OMAN

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COMMENTARY

The enduring legacy: Oman’s journey of renewal under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik



SADIQ MOHAMMED SAID AL-LAWATY *

On the occasion of the 281st anniversary of the founding of the Al Busaid dynasty, established by Imam Ahmed bin Said in 1744, I proudly and joyfully dedicate this article to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman, to the noble people of Oman, and to all our dear readers.

The dawn before the Renaissance

For much of its long history, Oman lived in isolation and stagnation. Plagued by backwardness, illiteracy, a high mortality rate, and isolation from the world, it was among the least known countries on the globe. This reality was captured by the observations of those few who visited Muscat, in an article about the topography and

natural conditions prevailing in the 1960s. One Shell-seconded employee described the inhabitants of Muscat and Oman with a phrase as harsh as the environment itself, underscoring the severe lack of development.

The late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour, in his own accounts, described the lives of Omanis and the environmental conditions, he observed a complete lack of electricity, running water, schools, paved roads, airports, and seaports. These harsh and similar conditions prevailed for a long period until the seismic shift of 23rd July 1970, when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may God have mercy on him, assumed power.

The architect of the modern state

Undoubtedly, the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour, who passed away on 10th January 2020, is one of the few transformative leaders of the 20th century whose memory will be forever etched in the minds of Omanis and all of humanity. He made the dreams of the Omani people a reality. On 23rd July 1970, the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour awakened the slumbering Sultanate, leading it through his visionary personal efforts to become the “paradise of the Gulf” in a rapid, peaceful, and universally admired transfor-

mation. His reign heralded the Omani Renaissance, renewing the nation’s rich history and opening a bright new chapter of development, prosperity, and socio-economic progress. The initial decades saw the foundational structures of the modern state put in place:

*1970s: Establishment of key ministries, followed by key councils like the National Defence Council, the Central Bank (1972), and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1973). The five-year development plan was drafted in 1975.

*1980s & 1990s: Institution of public participation through the Consultative Council (1981) and later the Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Assembly) in 1991.

*Governance: The landmark Basic Law of the State, issued in 1996, established a clear legal framework regulating and separating the functions of various authorities, defining the system of government and public rights. Subsequent decrees established the “Supreme Judicial Council” and the “Supreme Court” (1999), reinforcing the rule of law.

The new era: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the acceleration of Oman Vision 2040

The legacy of the Renaissance continues, but it has entered a dynamic phase of acceleration and institutional maturity under

the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the fifteenth Sultan of the Al Busaid dynasty. Assuming power in a remarkably smooth transition on 11th January 2020, Sultan Haitham immediately affirmed his commitment to the core principles established by his predecessor: foremost among them, Oman’s foreign policy of neutrality, peaceful, coexistence, and regional mediation.

However, the new era is defined by decisive structural and economic reforms aimed at securing Oman’s future beyond oil, championed through the national blueprint, Oman Vision 2040.

Economic diversification and fiscal resilience

Having previously headed the main committee overseeing Oman Vision 2040, His Majesty the Sultan has accelerated the implementation with a focus and institutional efficiency and financial sustainability. Key initiatives include:

*Fiscal stability: Implementing a medium-term fiscal plan to address public debt, rationalise spending, and diversify revenues, including the introduction of a Value Added Tax (VAT). These efforts, combined with prudent financial management, have helped stabilise public finances and improve Oman’s credit rating.

*The future economy: The vision targets a knowledge-based,

diversified economy, emphasising on-oil sectors like logistics, manufacturing, tourism, and especially Green Hydrogen and Renewable Energy. The establishment of the multi-dollar Oman Future Fund is dedicated to financing promising projects in these future economic sectors.

*Empowerment of youth and private sector: Directives have focused on creating tens of thousands of jobs and supporting entrepreneurs and SME’s, recognising the Oman youth as the core driver of economic change.

Institutional governance and decentralisation

To align the state with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, His Majesty the Sultan has executed a comprehensive programme of administrative and legislative modernisation.

* New Basic Law: In January 2021, a new Basic Law of the State was issued. This landmark constitutional-equivalent document formalised the mechanism for the smooth transfer of power, notably establishing the role of the Crown Prince (his eldest son, His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham). It also further reinforced the rule of law, guaranteed citizens’ rights and freedoms, and enhanced institutional oversight and accountability.

* Government restructuring: His Majesty the Sultan issued

Royal decrees to streamline bureaucracy, disbanding several councils and merging over 10 ministries to improve efficiency and reduce expenditure, ensuring a lean and accountable government structure.

*Decentralisation: New laws, such as the Governorates System Law and the Municipal Councils Law, were introduced to empower local communities. This strategic decentralisation aims to achieve balanced regional development by enabling governorates to manage their own resources and actively participate in national planning.

By prioritising efficiency, transparency, and diversification, His Majesty the Sultan is not only preserving the Renaissance legacy-based nation ready to complete on the global stage, ensuring a prosperous future for all Omanis. The vision is clear: to transform Oman into a developed nation with a sustainable economy and an enhanced quality of life by 2040. The journey of renewal is well underway.

Long Live Oman
May God protect His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and grant him success in leading Oman toward greater heights. Happy National Day.

***The writer is a retired training manager at Petroleum Development Oman**

Tourism sector playing a vital role in Oman’s economic diversification

In terms of hotel infrastructure and investments, the number of hotel establishments in the Sultanate of Oman reached 1,309 establishments, compared to 1,022 establishments last year, while the number of hotel rooms increased to 38,000 rooms, with a growth rate of 7.9 percent

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The heritage and tourism sectors in the Sultanate of Oman achieved good results during the first nine months of 2025, confirming their pivotal role in supporting the economic diversification process and consolidating the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a sustainable cultural and tourism destination that combines authenticity and modernity.

The results reflect the success of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in implementing its development plans and strengthening the partnership with the private sec-

tor in line with the objectives of “Oman Vision 2040”.

The direct added value of the tourism sector reached about OMR873 million, while the total tourism output reached about OMR1.99 billion, with tourism contributing 2.7 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Sultanate of Oman, a percentage that reinforces the sector’s position as one of the pillars of the non-oil economy.

Government revenues collected from the activities of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism amounted to approximately OMR13.55 million by the end of September 2025, reflecting the efficiency of the financial management of tourism resources and the growing demand for the activities and services provided.

Hotel revenues rose to OMR293.4 million, an increase of 6.1 percent over the previous year, as a result of improved occupancy rates and a diversification of tourism programmes.

The total number of visitors arriving in the Sultanate of Oman reached 2.83 million by the end of the third quarter of 2025, a decrease of 2.4 percent compared to 2024, while the number of local visitors increased to 13.6 million visitors with a growth rate of 5.1 percent, which reflects the growing activity of domestic and seasonal tourism thanks to local events and festivals.

The number of hotel guests reached 4.6 million, an increase of 4.6 percent, which confirms the continued confidence of visitors in the tourism services and modern infrastructure provided by the Ministry in cooperation with its partners.

As part of the promotional efforts undertaken by the Ministry and in implementation of the annual marketing plan, it has opened new tourism representation offices in a number of important tour-



ism markets, such as the Chinese, Russian and Spanish markets, and work is underway to open a tourism representation office that includes Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, bringing the number of tourism representation offices to 11 offices that carry out marketing campaigns in 25 countries with international tourism institutions in these markets, achieving direct economic returns amounting to more than OMR30 million.

As for foreign exhibitions, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism participated in more than 20 exhibitions and events abroad, which contributed to creating platforms that brought together Omani tourism institutions with their international counterparts.

The Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion also won awards for best design in the category of participating countries’ pavilions in a number of these exhibitions, for its design that combines authenticity and modernity, reflects the rich cultural identity of the Sultanate of Oman, and is distinguished by the use of modern technologies and digital screens that highlight heritage and tourism components and experiences.

The ministry continued its cooperation with international media organisations, most notably launching a television promotional campaign via CNN, where promotional films were broadcast on several channels and a digital advertisement was posted on the network’s website.

In the cruise ship and charter voyage sector, and as a result of the promotional programme dedicated to revitalising these types of tourism, the Ministry has begun implementing the outputs and initiatives of the study of the cruise ship and yacht sector with the relevant authorities to regulate the sector, develop the infrastructure in the ports designated to receive cruise ships, raise their efficiency and improve their facilities.

The number of charter flights for the 2024-2025 season reached approximately 588 flights, compared to 466 flights in the 2023-2024 season. The number of tourists reached 93,000 visitors from various target markets, with this sector achieving an economic return estimated at US\$80 million, including accommodation fees, transportation, and tourist trips.

Promotional campaigns were also carried out through the

group’s global platforms and presence in its various races to promote the Sultanate of Oman. A group of local tourism events was implemented in partnership with governmental and private entities, amounting to 30 events with economic returns estimated at OMR4 million.

In terms of hotel infrastructure and investments, the number of hotel establishments in the Sultanate of Oman reached 1,309 establishments, compared to 1,022 establishments last year, while the number of hotel rooms increased to 38,000 rooms, with a growth rate of 7.9 percent. Occupancy rates stabilised at 36.8 percent for all categories, while they reached 52.6 percent in hotels classified from three to five stars.

The year witnessed an expansion in accommodation projects, with 383 preliminary approvals issued for new projects, and work is underway on 114 projects expected to open during the years 2025-2027. The volume of investments in integrated tourism complexes exceeded OMR11.5 billion, which confirms the continued confidence of investors in the Omani market and the growing economic viability of the sector.

Regarding future plans, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism signed 36 concession contracts to implement tourism projects with a total value of OMR100 million during the period from January to September of 2025.

As for the workforce, the number of workers in the tourism sector reached 169,800 workers by the end of September 2025, including 27.8 percent in activities supervised by the Ministry, and the overall Omanisation rate rose to 10.9 percent compared to 10.1 percent last year.

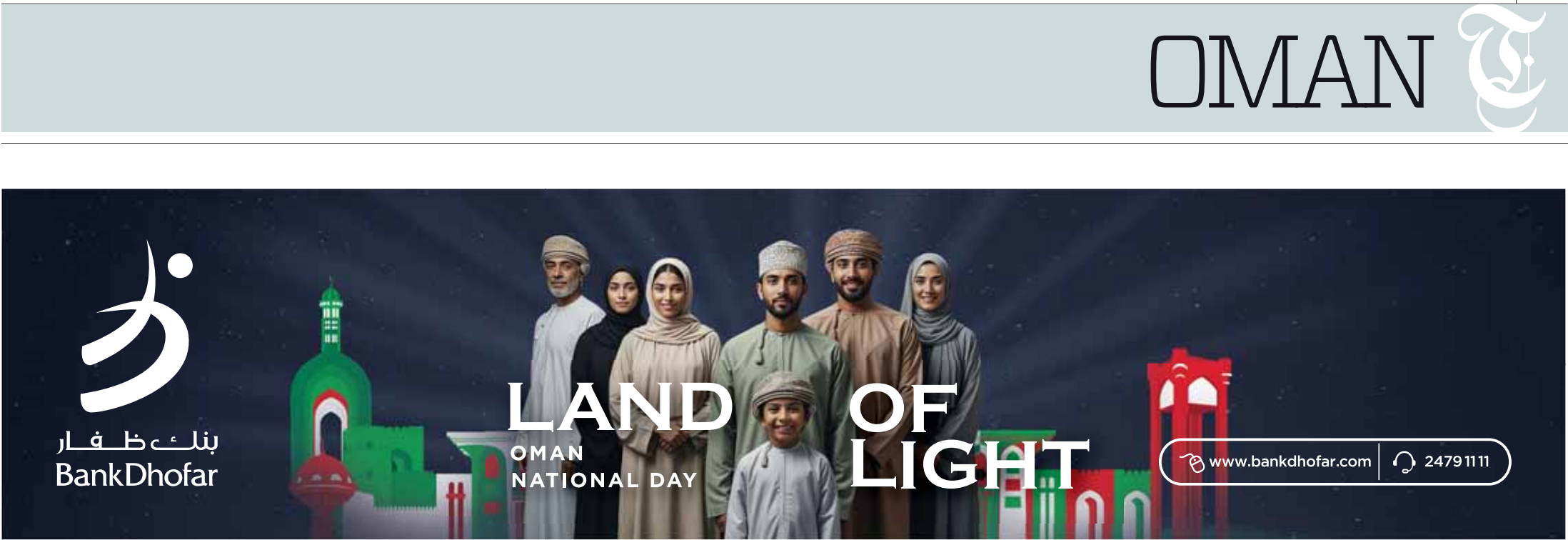
Historical sites

In the field of heritage, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism continues its efforts to preserve historical sites and maintain the national heritage, as the number of registered historical and archaeological sites in the Sultanate of Oman has reached 3,655 sites, including castles, forts, mosques and heritage houses, and 1,328 sites have been restored until the end of the third quarter of this year.

The ministry is working on preparing a comprehensive file to include the archaeological sites of Basya and Salut in the World Heritage List, alongside the Omani sites currently registered.

At the regional level, the Sultanate of Oman recorded an advanced performance among the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, as the hotel occupancy rate in the Muscat Governorate reached 66.7 percent and in the Salalah State 56.7 percent during September 2025.

This is attributed to the natural appeal and environmental tranquility that characterise the tourism experience in the Sultanate of Oman compared to regional markets. The Ministry’s policy of diversifying tourism activities from adventure to heritage and environmental tourism has also contributed to enhancing competitiveness in Gulf and global markets.



COMMENTARY

Understanding the economic cause for workforce reduction under Oman’s Labour Law

The Oman’s Labour Law establishes the “economic cause” not as a simple excuse for downsizing of the workers, but as a precisely calibrated legal instrument for corporate survival. The provision is reserved for genuine financial crises, turning it from a matter of managerial choice into a closely monitored process that balances a company’s need to overcome serious financial difficulties with strong protections for its employees.

Speaking exclusively to the Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Founding Partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, said that “an economic cause is fundamentally defined as a financial loss sustained by the employer for a minimum of two consecutive years. Critically, the law distinguishes this from a mere lack of profitability, explicitly stating that the failure to make profits or the closure of a branch for feasibility reasons alone does not qualify as a valid financial loss. It ensures the provision is reserved for situations of sustained financial distress, not temporary or strategic downturns.”

He further stated that “the application of this provision is not a unilateral decision by the employer. While it is recognised as legitimate grounds for contract termination, however, workforce reduction crucially requires prior approval from a special, committee.”

“This committee is estab-



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

lished by the Minister of Labour and is composed of a representative from the Ministry of Labour who chairs it, and members from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the General Federation for Workers of the Sultanate of Oman. The employer bears the responsibility of applying to this body and must present comprehensive evidence of both the economic cause and the rationale behind the proposed staff reductions,” he said.

He clarified that “upon confirming an economic cause exists, the committee’s primary mandate is to seek a mutual agreement between the employer and the workers on alternatives to termination. These alternatives can include a temporary reduction of working hours and wages, designated periods of unpaid leave distributed equally among the workforce, or a temporary re-



duction of wages by a specific percentage for all workers. The employer may only proceed with staff reductions if the committee finds these alternatives unfeasible and formally approves the application.”

He concluded by stating that “the economic cause provision ultimately serves as a procedural gateway, ensuring workforce reduction is a validated last resort rather than a discretionary management decision.”

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

ON FRIDAY

Indian Rupee hits life-time low of 232 against Omani Rial

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The INR hit a life time low on Friday against US dollar. This is the highest single day dip during the last three months. Exchange houses in Oman are offering over INR232 against one Omani Rial while online platforms like GlobalPay offering 232.25. This is the first time the INR crossed 232 against the greenback.

Speaking to Times of Oman, R. Madhusoodanan, a financial expert based in Muscat said that the INR has depreciated about 4.5 percent during 2025. On Friday INR opened at 88.66 against USD and intraday touched 89.70 and closed at 89.48 The rupee market witnessed the highest level of volatility on Friday. The sudden spike, at around 2 pm IST on Friday in the USDINR pair caused panicky in the forex market. Oflate, the INR was showing weakness due to the reason that there was delay in signing the trade agreement with the US, though communications were on between the two during the last 10 days. The situation worsened due to the lack of intervention by the Reserve Bank of India.

The global cues also included the higher yields of the Japanese Government Bonds (JGBs). The Bank of Japan (BOJ) raised the bench mark rates in a move to curb inflation and attract foreign investment. It may be noted that for decades, together there was zero interest scenario and when hiked, investors shift their money back from emerging markets like India as there is no advantage of “carry trade” Carry trade is an investment strategy where one borrow



likely to widen by 1.7 per cent of the GDP. This is mainly because of the affected export earnings and surge in import of gold and silver besides crude. This is not a good new for INR.

Outlook

The uncertainty surrounding the trade negotiations and US tariffs on Indian exports, the decision on further rate cut by the US Fed, strengthening of Dollar Index (DXY) are the global cues. The higher outflows on account of the lesser opportunities for the “carry trade”, intervention of RBI in the forex market are the domestic cues. RBI has a comfortable level of forex reserve at \$692.57 billion and hence the intervention of RBI cannot be ruled out in the coming days. However, it is unlikely that the INR may bounce back to the 88 levels in the in the short run Madhusoodanan added.



ACROSS GOVERNORATES

Several water services projects being undertaken

< FROM A1 Water services projects by Nama Water Services across multiple governorates total OMR408 million, featuring the reinforcement of water transmission lines in Al Dakhiliyah at OMR128.1 million, in North and South Al Batinah at OMR86 million, water network construction in North Al Sharqiyah at OMR65.5 million, and reinforcement of transmission lines in South and North Al Sharqiyah at OMR128.4 million.

These projects aim to enhance the efficiency of water systems, improve service quality, and expand coverage across the governorates.

Healthcare and community development initiatives include reference hospitals and integrated laboratories to strengthen the quality of health services.

Key projects include Suwaiq Reference Hospital in North Al Batinah with a budget of OMR78.5 million, the Central Public Health Laboratory at OMR30 million, and Khasab Reference Hospital in Musandam at OMR65.9 million. These projects collectively reflect Oman’s commitment to sustainable development and improving the lives of its citizens as the country celebrates its National Day.

Oman rapidly reshaping its financial, economic landscape

Oman is asserting its presence as an emerging economy with a stable and promising financing environment, and is preparing for a broader stage in attracting quality investments

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is rapidly reshaping its financial and economic reality, driven by a clear government will to transform the financing system, attract investment, and implement intensive legislative and financial reforms.

The banking sector achieved tangible growth, with credit jumping to more than OMR34 billion, and local banks in the Sultanate of Oman attracting increasing deposits that reflect the confidence of the private sector, while digital payment systems recorded record numbers.

With this continuous movement, the Sultanate of Oman is asserting its presence as an emerging economy with a stable and promising financing envi-



ronment, and is preparing for a broader stage in attracting quality investments in accordance with the objectives of the “Oman 2040” vision.

The sustainability of the state’s financial performance has contributed to consolidating international confidence in the Omani economy. Standard & Poor’s has affirmed the Sultanate of Oman’s credit rating at BBB- with a stable outlook, confirming the strength of the financial position and the government’s ability to manage public debt efficiently.

Moody’s has also raised the Sultanate of Oman’s credit rating to the investment grade of Baa3, reflecting the robustness of the financial position and the decline in the public debt-to-GDP ratio, which enhances the Sultanate of Oman’s ability to attract long-term foreign capital.

On the banking performance side, the latest data showed continued growth in bank credit, with the total credit balance granted by the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman increasing by 8 percent to reach OMR34.5 billion by the end of September 2025.

Data released by the Central Bank of Oman showed that credit

granted to the private sector grew by 5.7 percent to reach OMR28.2 billion by the end of September 2025.

Total deposits in the banking sector grew by 4.7 percent to reach OMR33.1 billion by the end of September 2025. Within this total, private sector deposits in the banking system increased by 7.5 percent to reach OMR22.3 billion by the end of September 2025.

Regarding the distribution of the total private sector deposit base across different sectors, the figures indicate that the personal sector holds the largest share, amounting to about 50 percent, followed by the non-financial corporate sector and the financial corporate sector with shares of 30.5 percent and 17.3 percent respectively. The remaining 2.2 percent was distributed among other sectors, reflecting growing credit activity and a greater flow of liquidity in the banking system.

This growth reflects the confidence of the private sector and individuals in Omani banks, the high demand for financing, and the expansion of non-oil economic sectors.

In addition to traditional banks, the Islamic finance sector has

witnessed remarkable growth in the volume of credit and deposits, providing broader financing options for investors, whether in the areas of trade finance or financing assets and small and medium enterprises. The initiatives of Islamic banks and finance companies have contributed to providing innovative products that meet the needs of both local and foreign investors.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) accounted for 3.7 percent of the loan portfolio. The Sultanate of Oman, through the Central Bank of Oman, the SME Development Authority, and local banks, is working on implementing a national strategy aimed at raising this percentage to 5 percent, while facilitating credit assessment procedures, reducing collateral requirements, and establishing specialised financing units within banks.

In the legislative context, the Sultanate of Oman is proceeding with updating the legal framework supporting the financial sector. The new Banking Law was issued, which represents a shift in regulating digital banking services, prohibits shell banks, and enhances governance requirements

and protection of the financial consumer.

The establishment of the Financial Services Authority also restructured the non-banking financial services sector, including oversight of the Muscat Stock Exchange, the insurance sector, and the accounting and auditing profession.

The Authority launched a comprehensive incentive program for the Muscat Stock Exchange aimed at encouraging family and private companies to transform into public or closed joint-stock companies, and to create a promising companies market to attract small and medium enterprises and startups. The program includes tax incentives and legislative and procedural facilities that encourage listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange and enhance companies’ ability to obtain long-term financing.

His Excellency Abdullah bin Salem Al Salmi, Chairman of the Financial Services Authority, affirmed that the financial stimulus programme aims to encourage companies in general, including family businesses and emerging small and medium enterprises with high growth, to transform into more sustainable companies by adopting appropriate governance standards that ensure their stability and sustainability across generations. He pointed out that these companies represent the largest percentage of companies operating in the economy, add high value, provide products and services to the local market and for export, employ a workforce, and provide jobs for Omanis. — ONA



HM the Sultan graces National Day's Grand Military Parade

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, graced the Grand Military Parade staged at Al Fateh Square in the Governorate of Muscat on Thursday, on the occasion of the Sultanate of Oman's Glorious National Day. The event was held in the presence of Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman.

Upon His Majesty the Sultan's arrival at the parade ground, he was received by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office and Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis Al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sul-

tan's Armed Forces (SAF).

When His Majesty the Sultan ascended the Royal Dais, columns of the parade performed the military salute. The joint corps of military bands played the Royal Anthem, while the Sultan of Oman's Artillery at the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) fired a 21-gun salute to His Majesty the Sultan.

Then, the parade commander stepped forward on horseback to the Royal Dais, requesting His Majesty the Sultan to signal the start of the military parade.

The parade included participating units from the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), the Sultan's Special

Force (SSF) and the Royal Oman Police (ROP), in addition to joint and mounted military music bands.

The joint corps of military music bands representing the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), the ROP and the Royal Court Affairs (RCA) played sundry tunes as they marched in slow and normal pace before the Royal Dais, saluting His Majesty, the Supreme Commander.

Then, columns of the Protocols Guard joined the parade and performed ceremonial gestures to the accompaniment of melodies from the joint corps of military music bands—performing the military salute to His Majesty, the Supreme Commander.

This was followed by a parade of

the camouflage uniform column, representing the SAF, RGO, SSF and ROP. They passed by the Royal dais, performing the military salute for His Majesty.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan viewed a show performed by the Firaq Forces at the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), chanting the traditional Omani folklore locally called “Al Habout”. They passed before the Royal Dais, performing the military salute to His Majesty the Sultan.

His Majesty then witnessed a musical display on horseback staged by the mounted bands, passing in front of the Royal dais and performing the military salute to His Majesty.

Following that, aerial forma-

tions of several fighters and rotary-wing aircraft thundered across the sky above the parade ground, embodying the high level of combat efficiency and readiness, as well as the development and progress witnessed by the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.

Later, the columns of the parade performed an ensemble of cheers that proclaimed “Faith in Allah, Loyalty to the Sultan, Sacrifice for the Nation”. They chanted thrice “Long Live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander”.

Then, the joint corps of military music bands played the Royal

Anthem, while the columns of the parade performed the military salute marking the conclusion of the military show.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan left the parade ground.

The military parade was attended alongside His Majesty the Sultan by some Royal family members, dignitaries of Al Busaidi family, ministers, advisers, commanders of the SAF, commanders of military and security services, heads of the diplomatic missions of the Arab and foreign countries accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, members of the State Council and Shura Council, undersecretaries, senior military and security officers, retired officers and citizens. — **ONA**



HM presides over Fleet Parade 2025



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, on Friday graced the Fleet Parade 2025, within the context of the Sultanate of Oman's celebration of the Glorious National Day.

As the motorcade of His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Commander, passed along the maritime route in the Wilayat of Muttrah, crowds of citizens, residents, and school students lined both sides of the road to greet His Majesty. They carried His Majesty's portraits and the flags of the Sultanate of Oman, chanting expressions of loyalty and gratitude to His Majesty, while folk troupes performed a number of traditional Omani arts.

The Royal Yacht Fulk Al Salama, with His Majesty the Supreme Commander aboard, set sail from Sultan Qaboos Port in the Wilayat of Muttrah, accompanied by a fleet of traditional sailing ships. This scene embodied the Omani maritime heritage and the pride of the nation's people in their ancient history, reflecting Oman's maritime history adorned with values of authenticity and antiquity, and the development and modernity enjoyed by the Royal Navy of Oman.

Upon its approach to the parade area adjacent to Al Qurum Beach, the Royal Yacht was honoured with a 21-gun salute, fired from the Royal Navy of Oman's vessel Shabab Oman II, for His Majesty.

As the Royal Yacht Fulk Al Salama proceeded, the participating ships performed a naval military salute, their crews uniting in a triple acclamation: "Long Live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander." The Parade featured an assembly of naval vessels from the Royal Navy of Oman, the Royal Yachts, and crafts from the Royal Oman Police, alongside participating ships from the navies of the GCC states.

On this occasion, His Majesty the Sultan, the Supreme Com-

mander, accepted a commemorative gift, which was presented to His Majesty by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman.

The Fleet Parade was attended, alongside His Majesty the Sultan, by some Royal family members, ministers, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces and military and security services.

In celebration of this glorious occasion, coinciding with the nation's National Day festivities, a series of accompanying events were held on Al Qurum Beach.

The celebrations featured immersive technological displays, including interactive screens and laser shows projected from the participating vessels, complemented by dynamic lighting and sound technologies. The programme also included musical pieces from the Band of the Royal Navy of Oman, traditional Omani songs performed by folk and scout troupes, a participation by the Oman Kite Team, and a grand fireworks display.

The Royal Navy of Oman also organised an exhibition with the participation of several entities and departments. It highlighted the Navy's national tasks, roles, and its ongoing modernisation and development, while also featuring equipment, devices, and the most prominent innovations and modern technologies currently in use.

The Fleet Parade 2025 affirms the profound antiquity of Omani maritime history, which for centuries has been a firm pillar of Oman's strength, stability, and openness to the world. Today, this heritage is renewed as the sea constitutes a strategic depth for the nation—a vital channel through which Oman continues to extend bridges of cooperation and civilisational exchange, open avenues for development, and advance its economic diversification programmes within the framework of Oman Vision 2040. -ONA





55TH NATIONAL DAY

Bahla hosts grand equestrian festival

MUSCAT: The Seih Al-Shamkhat Equestrian Field in the Wilayat of Bahla witnessed a vibrant equestrian festival held in celebration of Oman's 55th National Day. Organised by the Bahla Equestrian Association, the event showcased the deep-rooted cultural heritage and national pride associated with the sport of horseback riding in the Sultanate.

The festival drew an impressive turnout of 170 riders who competed in seven main races, each named after historic and symbolic landmarks of Bahla. This thematic approach highlighted the strong connection between equestrianism and the rich cultural legacy of the region.

A highlight of the event was the Elite Race, dedicated to purebred

Arabian horses, covering a distance of 800 meters. The winner was awarded a traditional Arabian sword, a prestigious prize that drew fierce competition among the top riders of the governorate.

In addition to the races, the festival featured a variety of traditional and cultural performances, including horse and camel shows, tent pegging and archery demon-

strations, paragliding displays, and folk art performances. A traditional crafts exhibition also offered visitors a glimpse into Oman's artisanal heritage, with local craftsmen showcasing their handmade products.

The event was held under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Hilal bin Said Al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah.

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Oman's total value of foreign direct investment tops \$78bn

Through Invest Oman platform the ministry has moved from multiple paths and varying procedures to a unified system that includes more than 22 entities working within one channel

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is witnessing a broad qualitative transformation in the investment management and promotion system through the adoption of a unified national model under the umbrella of Invest Oman platform, which has become today the leading identity encompassing various governmental and private efforts



in attracting quality investments.

Ibtisam bint Ahmed Al Farooji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, said that this transformation represents a strategic step through which the Sultanate of Oman moved from multiple

paths and varying procedures to a unified system that includes more than 22 entities working within one channel, which contributed to accelerating and simplifying procedures and providing more efficient services to investors.

Her Excellency explained in a statement to the Oman News

Agency that Invest Oman is an integrated system that includes a unified hall for receiving investors, a specialised investor relations team that follows up on projects from the idea stage to operation, in addition to a national negotiation team that enhances the quality of contracts and preserves the interests of the state.

The system also includes an advanced digital investment map and a unified government link that provides fast tracks for priority projects.

Her Excellency emphasised that this transformation has strengthened the presence of the Sultanate of Oman on the global investment map and contributed to building a more flexible and competitive business environment.

She noted that the economic indicators during the past two years reflect the impact of government reforms, as the volume of foreign direct investment has increased

to more than \$78 billion with a growth rate exceeding 12 percent, in addition to the Sultanate of Oman rising to fourth place globally in the list of the most prominent entities in the field of foreign direct investment, which represents clear evidence of the international community's confidence in the Omani economy and the legislative and regulatory stability in the country. Her Excellency explained that these results came as a result of reforms that included the establishment of the Investment Court, the development of Golden Residency policies, and the promotion of digital integration between government agencies.

Regarding the targets for the years 2026-2028, Her Excellency indicated that the Sultanate of Oman is focusing on attracting quality companies operating in the green hydrogen, metal industries, advanced technologies, logistics, food security and tourism sectors, while giving priority to projects that transfer knowledge, provide high-value jobs and support the green economy.

Her Excellency added that future efforts include developing and localising ready investment opportunities within the digital platform to be complete with data and ready for direct negotiation,

which will accelerate the closing of deals and the signing of investment contracts.

She noted that the past period witnessed clear progress in several strategic projects, including a polysilicon production project in Sohar with an investment exceeding OMR520 million and a production capacity of up to 100,000 tonnes annually, and the JA Solar project for manufacturing solar cells and panels with an investment of approximately OMR217 million and a capacity exceeding 40 gigawatts annually in the Sohar Free Zone, in addition to a project specialising in one of the battery manufacturing chains in the Salalah Free Zone.

Her Excellency explained that these projects represent practical evidence of the success of the Invest Oman system in accelerating negotiations, facilitating procedures and providing an attractive investment environment that transforms opportunities into existing projects, stressing that the Sultanate of Oman is moving steadily towards strengthening its position as a promising economic center and an attractive destination for quality investments that contribute to diversifying the national economy and supporting the objectives of "Oman Vision 2040". — **ONA**

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Trump ‘surprised’ in meeting with mayor-elect Mamdani

The Friday meeting, which Mamdani had requested, suggested that both sides were prepared to explore common ground



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump extended a notably cordial welcome to New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani during their first face-to-face meeting at the White House, signalling a marked change in a relationship previously defined by public disagreements.

The Friday meeting, which Mamdani had requested, suggested that both sides were prepared to explore common ground. Mamdani, a democratic socialist who gained national attention after his unexpected victory earlier this month, sought the meeting to raise concerns about affordability and public safety in New York

City. Their private discussion appeared to prompt a more favourable response from Trump than many had anticipated. After the meeting, Trump told reporters he was “surprised” by how much the two agreed. “We had a meeting today that actually surprised me. He wants to see no

crime. He wants to see housing being built. He wants to see rents coming down. All things that I agree with,” he said, suggesting their priorities overlapped more than expected. Trump acknowledged differences in how to approach rising rents but said the goal was mutual. “One of the things I really gleaned very, very much today -- he’d like to see them come down ideally by building a lot of additional housing. That’s the ultimate way... He agrees with that and so do I,” he said, noting that both saw housing expansion as essential. Challenging media narratives of a strained relationship, Trump said, “If I read the newspapers and the stories, I don’t hear that. But I heard him say it today and I think that’s a very positive step... I expect to be helping him, not hurting him,” adding, “I want New York City to be great. I love New York City. It’s where I come from.”

The President also commended Mamdani’s successful run for mayor, describing it as an “incredible race against some very tough people, very smart people.” He added that “we agreed on a lot more than I thought,” stressing that both shared “one thing in common: we want this city of ours that we love to do very well.” Mamdani echoed this tone of cooperation, calling the meeting “productive.” He said their discussion centred on shared affection for the city and on the need to improve affordability. It was, he said, “focused on a place of shared admiration and love, which is New York City, and the need to deliver affordability to New Yorkers.” Trump, for his part, said he was prepared to support the incoming mayor. “The better he does the happier I am,” he said, signalling a willingness to set aside previous friction. -ANI

315 students and teachers kidnapped

LAGOS: The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) on Saturday gave a new tally from the previous day’s school abduction, saying 315 students and teachers had been seized by unknown attackers. Previous reports had spoken of 215 schoolchildren. The incident at St. Mary’s co-education school in Niger state comes on the heels of another attack in neighboring Kebbi state on Monday, where 25 girls were abducted from a secondary school. The abduction in Nigeria state is on the same scale as that in north-eastern Borno state more than a decade ago, when nearly 300 girls in the town of Chibok were kidnapped by jihadists from the Boko Haram group. CAN said Reverend Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, who is also the Catholic Bishop of Kontagora diocese, to which the school belongs, gave the revised toll after visiting St Mary’s. -DW

NATIONWIDE PROTESTS

Trade unions condemn new labour codes

NEW DELHI: Ten trade unions in India have slammed the government’s implementation of new labour codes, labelling them “deceptive fraud committed against the working people of the nation.” The coalition of unions, called the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions, released a statement late on Friday calling for nationwide protests on November 26. What are the new labour codes? The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi implemented four labor codes that were approved by parliament five years ago. The codes that have become effective are the code on wages, the industrial relations code, the social security code and the occupational safety, health and working conditions code. The Government is seeking to simplify work regulations with some dating to British colonial rule, while also looking to ease conditions for investment.

It also says the reforms will improve worker protections. “By modernising labour regulations, enhancing workers’ welfare and aligning the labour ecosystem with the evolving world of work, this landmark move lays the foundation for a future-ready workforce and stronger, resilient industries driving labour reforms,” the Labour Ministry said in a statement. Businesses have long called for India to modify its labor regulations, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which is a major pillar of the South Asian country’s economy. Meanwhile, the Association of Indian Entrepreneurs was cited by Reuters news agency as saying that the new rules would significantly increase costs for small and medium-sized enterprises. The group called for transitional support from New Delhi. Unions have strongly opposed the changes and have held multiple nationwide protests over the past five years. -DW

VANTARA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

This is better than I live: Donald Trump Jr.



JAMNAGAR: Donald Trump Jr, who is visiting India, praised Anant Ambani’s Vantara animal conservation project, calling it “a wonder of the world” and saying the experience was unlike anything he had seen before. The son of US President Donald Trump arrived in Jamnagar on Thursday and left for Udaipur on Friday. It is his second visit to India. During his tour of the sprawling wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centre, Trump Jr. lauded the project’s scale, its conserva-

tion work, and the detailed effort taken to recreate natural habitats for rescued animals. In a video message recorded alongside Anant Ambani, he said the visit left a deep impression on him. “What an incredible experience. I saw here the vision, the conservation benefit of taking all these animals, rescuing them and giving them this life. This is better than I live,” he said. He added that seeing the animals thriving in environments crafted to resemble their natural homes was “spectacular”. -ANI

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2	Aluminum Profiles (Random Lengths)	Ghala.				

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Contact details: 24502581/82- Extn. 149/150. GSM: 9294 7637 / 7722 8166

PROTESTS

Normalcy returns to Nepal’s Bara after Gen-Z protests

BARA: After two days of violent protest, Simara city in the Bara district of Nepal is returning to normalcy, with security seen as the major concern for locals ahead of the upcoming election. Tension started to flare up in Simara Chowk of Bara district after CPN-UML cadres charged at the Gen-Z protestors who were staging a peaceful protest on Wednesday. Tension continued for the second day, with Gen-Z protestors alleging that police had let those inciting violence go free. “On Wednesday and Thursday, the situation was quite tense here. The Gen-Z were on the street in large numbers and protesting. (District) Leaders of the CPN-UML had attacked the Gen-Z (District Coordinator) Samrat (Upadhyay), which flared up the tension, but since yesterday, the condition is returning to normalcy,” Gopal Rijal, an auto rickshaw driver in Simara, told ANI. The situation continued to simmer after the police arrested three individuals, who included two elected ward chairs from the CPN-UML -- Dhan Bahadur Shrestha and Kaimuddin Ansari. Shrestha is the chair of Ward 2, while Ansari is of Ward 6. Another accused, Arvind Sah, named as the main perpetrator and planner of the attack on the Gen-Z group, was arrested in Hetauda on Thursday night. “The situation around here had started to fall back to normal since yesterday morning. There hasn’t been any violence or clashes since yesterday. The Gen-Z groups had gone for talks with the authorities in Pathlaiya. The situation has continued to remain normal; there isn’t an environment of fear till now,” said Lokendra Prasad



Baral, another resident of Simara, to ANI as he continued his business on Saturday morning. The disgruntled Gen-Z protestors, on the late evening of Friday, reached a verbal agreement with the local authorities to address their demands. The two parties reached an agreement two days after the claimed attack on the Gen-Z youths by the CPN-UML (Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist) cadres on Wednesday in Simara Chowk. As per the verbal agreement, the agitated group has given a three-day ultimatum to authorities to fulfil the demand; otherwise, they will again return to the streets. With about three months left for the parliamentary elections, the violence and clashes in Simara have increased concerns for locals in the Bara district. “Security has been a challenge now. There are numerous groups increasing the security challenges. This has increased the fear that it would hamper the conduct of the election, as the challenges have continued to pile up. There are many factions and sub-fac-

tions with their own interests, and there is a lack of unity and uniformity amongst the people themselves,” Rijal said. The two-day protest in one of the districts in the southern plains of the Himalayan nation left at least six people injured in the clashes. The police also had to use tear gas and fire into the air to disperse the protestors on Thursday. “After this incident, security has emerged to be a challenge for the government to conduct the election on March 5, 2026. The provocative statements given by the political leaders are irking the Gen-Z groups, for which the government should take some strict measures to maintain security,” resident Baral told ANI. The Gen-Z protestors have demanded action against District Police Chief Santosh Tamang and Deputy Superintendent of Police Bed Prakash Joshi, prosecution of UML supporters involved in the assault, examination of call records of detainee Arbind Sah, free treatment and compensation for the injured, adding two names of alleged assailants to the existing complaint. -ANI



وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology



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

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
184/2025/ MTCIT/ Recall -1	Optimal Human Resources Planning Project Based on Workload	19-11-2025	3-12-2025	24-12-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE PROJECT, TENDERS AND LOCAL CONTENT AUTHORITY (FIRST CLASSES)	(25/-) TWENTY-FIVE OMANI RIALS (LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMPANIES) (10/-) TEN OMANI RIALS (SMEs) NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website

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Internal Tenders Committee

Head’s 69-ball ton powers Australia to win in Perth

Hosts romp to eight-wicket victory over England in Ashes opener

PERTH: Travis Head smacked an explosive 69-ball century to power Australia to victory in a high-octane first Ashes Test on Saturday as England meekly surrendered in the Perth Stadium cauldron.

Chasing 205 to win, Head slammed 123 as the hosts romped home on day two by eight wickets in an electric start to the five-match series. Marnus Labuschagne was not-out 51 and Steve Smith on two.

“Wow, what a couple of days. It’s been unbelievable,” said Head. “The emotions are pretty high.

“They (England) were seriously good out there yesterday and started to drag it back, so we knew we couldn’t afford to let the game slip. To be able to contribute the way I did, it feels pretty special.”

Head’s heroics came on the back of a blistering spell from marauding pace pair Scott Boland and Mitchell Starc after lunch that sparked a stunning England collapse. The tourists were cruising at 65-1 and building an ominous second-innings lead, but Boland and Starc left them reeling with four wickets in as many overs.

A ruthless Boland accounted for Ben Duckett (28), Ollie Pope (33) and Harry Brook (0) in the space of 11 balls, then two deliveries later Starc sent Joe Root packing for eight.

When Starc removed skipper



Ben Stokes (2), England were flailing at 88-6 and the veteran pace-man had bagged a 10-wicket haul for only the third time after his first innings 7-58, a career-best.

England were partially rescued by a crucial 50-run stand between Gus Atkinson (37) and Brydon Carse (20) before being rolled for 164 at tea.

“Little bit shell-shocked there,” said Stokes. “Travis Head was phenomenal, jeez that was some knock.

“We tried 3-4 different plans there, he was going like a train. The runs were coming through quickly, he is really hard to stop when he plays like that.”

“We’ll obviously let this sink in. Obviously it hurts extremely, but we got to get our heads round and move on to Brisbane, and then hit the ground running there.”

When they returned, Usman Khawaja again failed to show as opener as he battled back stiffness, with Australia signalling their in-

tent by sending in Head.

Head, who has opened nine times previously in Test cricket, quickly got into his destructive rhythm, crunching some lovely boundaries including big sixes off Carse and Mark Wood.

He made it look easy, making a mockery of the struggles other batsmen had on the bouncy track, bringing up his half-century in 36 balls, passing 4,000 Test runs in the process.

Looking to emulate him, debu-



tant Jake Weatherald also went on the attack, but it cost him, out for 23 after a mistimed pull shot was taken by Ben Duckett off Carse.

An unruffled Head kept the pressure on, slamming four boundaries in one Stokes over and sending a six back over the head of Jofra Archer on his way to a 10th Test ton.

He eventually fell to Carse, going for another big hit.

Starc stars

Australia resumed on a paltry 123-9 in their first innings and added just nine before Nathan Lyon was removed by Carse for four to leave England with a 40-run advantage.

Stokes was the star of the show, claiming 5-23 off just 36 balls to give England a golden opportunity to win a Test in Australia for the first time since the 2010-11 series.

They had been all out for 172 at the hands of Starc on day one.

Australia were banking on the 35-year-old to emulate his ex-

ploits in the second innings and he whipped the sold-out Perth Stadium crowd into a frenzy when he removed Zak Crawley in his first over.

Duckett and Pope settled in, safely reaching lunch at 59-1.

But Boland began to find his radar when they returned. Duckett edged to Steve Smith in the slips then Pope did the same to wicketkeeper Alex Carey before Brook repeated the feat to Khawaja.

After a first innings duck Joe Root was desperate for runs, but he was no match for the relentless Starc, dragging a thick edge onto his stumps to cap a miserable start to the series.

Brendan Doggett then cleaned up Jamie Smith, (15), Carse and Archer (5).

Brief scores: Australia 132 and 205/2 (Head 123, Labuschagne 51*, Carse 2-44) beat England 172 and 164 (Atkinson 37, Boland 4-33, Starc 3-55) by eight wickets. - **Agencies**

ODI SERIES VS WEST INDIES

NZ complete series sweep



HAMILTON: Matt Henry took 4-43 and Mark Chapman crafted 64 as New Zealand coasted to a four-wicket win over the West Indies in the third ODI here at Seddon Park on Saturday for a 3-0 series sweep.

The tourists’ top order failed to fire once again, skittled for 161 in Hamilton before New Zealand eased to 162-6 off 30.2 overs.

The chase started poorly, with the home side reduced to 32-3, before Chapman’s steady knock was supplemented by an unbeaten 40 from Michael Bracewell.

The most one-sided match of the series left New Zealand savouring a 3-0 triumph, following their 3-1 win in the T20 series.

The teams will next contest three Tests, starting in Christchurch on December 2.

Henry, expected to be a key figure in the Test series, hoped they could continue their winning momentum into the longer format.

“It’s an exciting little stretch of

cricket coming up,” he said.

“We’ve been playing some really good cricket and we’ve been winning some of the key moments, which has got us over the line. “Everyone’s stepping up in different ways, which is great.”

The West Indies won the toss but their specialist batsmen struggled to establish themselves, a problem evident throughout both white-ball series.

Captain Shai Hope scored a century in game two but he lamented the inability of their top order to build big scores across the series. He said it was unacceptable for their innings to last just 36.2 overs at Seddon Park. “Again, we’re just not clicking with the bat unfortunately,” he said.

“We haven’t assessed the conditions and adapted as quickly as we should, that was a big issue in this game in particular. “We just didn’t get in. We didn’t get that flow.”

Henry rocked the visitors early with two wickets in the space of

three balls in his third over, removing opener Ackeeem Auguste for 17 and Keacy Carty without scoring. Wickets fell regularly from that point, including that of Hope, caught down the leg side for 16 off the bowling of Zak Foulkes to follow his century in game two.

With his team teetering at 95-7, Roston Chase led a low-order rear-guard with 38.

Top order trio Devon Conway, Rachin Ravindra and Will Young all departed early for New Zealand but Chapman combined with Bracewell for 75 runs for the fifth wicket to make the outcome safe.

Chapman swatted 19 runs off Matthew Forde in the 27th over to lift the 31-year-old past 50 for a seventh time. His 63-ball knock featured eight fours and two sixes.

Brief scores: New Zealand 162/6 in 30.3 overs (Chapman 64, Bracewell 40*, Seales 2-35, Forde 2-46) beat West Indies 161 in 36.2 overs (Chase 38, Henry 4-43, Duffy 2-27, Santner 2-27) by 4 wickets. - **Agencies**

SECOND TEST VS SOUTH AFRICA



Kuldeep gives India the edge

GUWAHATI: Spinner Kuldeep Yadav took three wickets as India rattled South Africa with late strikes on the first day of the second Test in Guwahati on Saturday. The tourists were 247-6 at stumps.

Tristan Stubbs, who made 49, and captain Temba Bavuma (41) put on 84 runs for the third wicket after the Proteas elected to bat in their bid for a first Test series win in India in 25 years.

The World Test Championship (WTC) winners won the first Test of the two-match series by 30 runs at Kolkata’s Eden Gardens.

Ravindra Jadeja sent back Bavuma with his left-arm spin in the final session before Kuldeep denied Stubbs his fifty to raise the noise of a large weekend crowd.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep (3-48) dismissed Wiaan Mulder for 13 and pace bowler Mohammed Siraj ended Tony de Zorzi’s defiance on 28 with the second new

ball to further dent South Africa. Left-hander Senuran Muthusamy, on 25, and wicketkeeper-batsman Kyle Verreynne, on one, were batting when bad light forced stumps with only 81.5 overs possible, fewer than the usual 90 overs in a day.

Aiden Markram, who scored 38, and Ryan Rickelton (35) fell to either side of the first break to Jasprit Bumrah and Kuldeep after an opening partnership of 82.

Bavuma and Stubbs, promoted to No.3 in the batting order, then got to the grind and slowly took the attack to the hosts with regular boundaries as the pair used their feet against the Indian spinners.

Jadeja broke through with his left-arm spin to dismiss in-form Bavuma, who scored the only fifty in the opener in Kolkata, after the batsman chipped to mid-off. Stubbs attempted to keep up the tempo as he hit Jadeja for a six but soon Kuldeep had him caught at slip.

Play started 30 minutes earlier than usual, with the order of the session breaks reversed, meaning tea came before lunch at India’s newest Test venue, which attracted an opening-day crowd of over 15,000 fans.

Bumrah had Markram bowled at the stroke of tea when the batsman inside-edged a delivery on to his stumps.

Kuldeep struck on the third ball after the break to cut short Rickelton’s 82-ball stay.

The openers had started cautiously and Markram got off the mark on his 17th ball with a crunching cover drive for four off Bumrah. Bumrah nearly had his revenge next ball only for KL Rahul to drop a regulation chance at second slip. The bowler covered his face in dismay.

Brief scores: South Africa 247/6 (Stubbs 49, Bavuma 41, Kuldeep 3-48) vs India. - **Agencies**

T20I

Pakistan outplay Sri Lanka to remain unbeaten in tri-series

RAWALPINDI: Spinner Mohammad Nawaz spun a web with ball to claim three wickets and opener Sahibzada Farhan slammed an explosive unbeaten 80 as hosts Pakistan eased to a six-wicket win to stay unbeaten in the T20I tri-series at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

Nawaz’s spell, including two wickets in two balls, restricted Sri Lanka to 128-7 before the hosts

reached their target with 4.3 overs to spare.

Farhan hit his sixth T20I half-century, hitting five sixes and six fours in an unbeaten 80 off 45 balls, as Pakistan made in two in two in the tri-nation tournament, having-beat Zimbabwe by five wickets in the series opener.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, have no wins in two with the defeat following a humbling at the hands

on Zimbabwe on Thursday.

Skipper Dasun Shunaka won the toss and elected to bat with openers Kamil Mishara and Pathum Nissanka tearing into Pakistan’s bowling. Mishara enterprising 22 off 12 ended when Faheem Ashraf dismissed him.

One-drop Kusal Mendis, didn’t last long as he was run out and Sri Lanka ended the powerplay at 44/2. Nissanka was caught at long-off for

a sluggish 23-ball 17 and Sri Lanka trudged to 65-3. Kusal Perera made 25 off 19 but Nawaz’s double-wicket burst left Sri Lanka reeling. From 78-3, Sri Lanka slipped to 86-6 when Nawaz had Kamindu Mendis caught in the deep. Janith Liyanage hit a valiant 41 not out and along with Wanindu Hasaranga helped the team cross 100 before restricting them to 128/7.

Pakistan got off to a flyer in the

chase, Saim Ayub (20) and Farhan reaching 47 in five overs before Ayub was out but not before bringing up his 1000 runs in T20Is.

Sahibzada, though, was unfazed as Pakistan ended the powerplay at 53-1 and Pakistan were well-placed after ending the first 10 overs at 68-1. At the other end, Babar Azam (16) got his first boundary on the 17th ball but Dushmantha Chameera hit back by cleaning

up Babar and trapping captain Salman Ali Agha lbw off consecutive balls in the 14th over and score 116/3. With Farhan at the crease, Pakistan had no late jitters and the right-hander lifted Malinga for four to seal a comfortable victory.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 128/7 (Janith Liyanage 41, Kusal Perera 25; Mohammad Nawaz 3/16) lost to Pakistan 131/3 in 15.3 overs (Sahibzada Farhan 80*). - **Agencies**

RETAIL EXPANSION WAVE

India's retail revolution is moving beyond its metros, with smaller cities fast emerging as powerful growth engines for the country's retail real estate sector. Leasing volumes in Tier II and Tier III cities have surged this year, signalling strong retailer confidence and shifting consumer behaviour.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



CBO AUCTION RESULTS

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has announced the auction results of the 78th & 79th Government Development Bonds (GDB) issues, which received overwhelming response from investors, worth a total applied amount of OMR224,766,000.



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Muscat Stock Exchange index falls 76 points in weekly trading

The main index has registered a number of record levels this year, supported by rising stock prices and increased buying activity from local investment funds and institutions

MUSCAT: The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange declined by 76 points during the week amid selling pressure on a number of stocks that had recorded consecutive gains in previous weeks.

The main index closed at ,5647 points at the end of the week's trading, thus abandoning the 5,700-point level it had reached on November 12, recording its best level in more than 8 years.

The main index has recorded a number of record levels this year, supported by rising stock prices and increased buying activity from local investment funds and institutions.

The sectoral indices followed the lead of the main index, with the financial sector index recording a decline of 103 points, the industrial sector index declining by 20 points, and the services sector index losing 28 points, while the Sharia index managed to rise by 3 points, benefiting from the rise in the shares of a number of companies listed in the index sample, such as Ooredoo, Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles, and Pearl Real Estate Investment Fund.

The pressures witnessed by



stocks in the week led to a decline in the prices of 47 securities, compared to 15 securities whose prices rose and 21 securities that remained unchanged at their previous levels. The declines witnessed by stocks also pushed the total market value of the Muscat Stock Exchange to record losses of OMR386.4 million, ending the week's trading at OMR31.38 billion.

Trading value during the week fell to OMR134.6 million, compared to OMR215.4 million in the previous week, registering a drop of 37.5 percent. The number of transactions executed also decreased by 30.8 percent, from 35,000 transactions to 24,556 transactions.

Trading was concentrated on Bank Muscat shares, which saw trades worth OMR25.4 million, accounting for 18.8 percent of the total trading value. Bank Sohar International came in second with trades of OMR20.3 million, OQ

Exploration and Production came in third with trades of OMR17.6 million, OQ Basic Industries came in fourth with trades of OMR14.8 million, and Abraj Energy Services came in fifth with trades of OMR14.1 million, representing 10.5 percent of the total trading value.

Dhofar Insurance shares led the gainers, rising 10 percent to close at 220 baisa, Ooredoo shares climbed to 285 baisa, up 8.3 percent, and Al Sharqiyah Investment Holding shares rose 4.7 percent to close at 88 baisa.

The Financial Services stock led the losing stocks, declining by 18.4 percent and closing at 128 baisa. Salalah Port Services stock fell to 300 baisa, recording a decline of 9 percent, and Muscat City Desalination stock declined to 76 baisa, a decrease of 8.4 percent.

In company news: The National Bank of Oman said it has completed the issuance of \$450 million in Tier 1 perpetual capital securities,

MSX retreats as investors move to book profits

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market retreated during the week as investors moved to book profits after a robust rally that had recently pushed the index to an eight-year high, according to an industry watcher.

"Trading values and volumes moderated compared to previous weeks, but the underlying momentum remains broadly healthy, suggesting a potential correction phase," said Abdullah Mahfoodh Al Wahaibi, Coach and analyst in global financial markets.

The pullback was largely driven by a global risk-off sentiment. This shift stemmed from renewed doubts over valuations of US technology stocks and growing talk of an AI bubble despite strong Nvidia results. Uncertainty around the Federal Reserve's policy path added to the pressure, with markets now pricing a lower probability of a December rate cut.

At the same time, oil prices were under pressure, with Brent slipping back toward



the low-60s as the market unwound part of the recent war-risk premium and refocused on the oversupply narrative. This weaker oil backdrop further weighed on GCC risk appetite, reinforcing the cautious tone in Oman, he further added.

The Services sector declined by 1.20%, weighed down by broad-based losses. Abraj Energy Services fell by 3.33%, while OQ Gas Net-

works retreated by 1.60%. Oman Telecom also faced selling pressure, ending the week lower by 3.78%. Additionally, OQ Exploration and Production dipped by 1.06%; although the company released positive nine-month results, the earnings were not sufficient to offset this week's negative market mood.

The Financial sector also faced headwinds, recording a decrease of 1.33%. The sector was dragged down by heavy-weight Bank Muscat, which declined by 1.18%, while Sohar International Bank registered steeper losses of 3.70%. Al Anwar Investment further contributed to the downward trend, closing lower by 1.92%.

The Industrial sector posted a marginal decline of 0.28%, with a mixed performance among its constituents. Gulf International Chemicals was the hardest hit, dropping by 5.41%, followed by Oman Flour Mills, which lost 3.16%. Other declines included Gulf Mushroom Products, which shed 0.70%, and Voltamp Energy, which ended the week lower by 0.75%.

noting that the subscription witnessed broad demand at the local, regional and international levels, with demand exceeding 5 times the reference issuance size.

The bank explained that these securities carry an interest rate of 6.6 percent and are listed for trading on the Euronext exchange in Dublin, confirming that it will use

these securities to strengthen its overall capital base and for its general corporate purposes, including refinancing or redeeming existing securities.

During the week, Raysut Cement Company held an extraordinary general meeting during which it informed shareholders of the reasons for the erosion of capi-

tal. During the meeting, the Board of Directors was authorised to take the necessary measures to restore the company's capital. The financial statements indicated that the accumulated losses of the company amounted to OMR54.4 million by the end of September, while the capital amounts to OMR20 million. - ONA

ADVANCING LOCAL TRADE

Credit Oman's total value of insured sales surpass OMR296 million

MUSCAT: Credit Oman, the government-owned company, continues its national efforts to enhance the economic development of the Sultanate of Oman by advancing local trade and increasing exports to establish a presence for Omani products in global markets through a comprehensive range of insurance services and solutions.

Haitham bin Abdullah Al-Yaqoubi, Acting CEO of Credit Oman, stated that the company aims to support Omani manufacturers and exporters through its services, which help protect them from commercial and non-commercial risks and enhance their ability to access global markets. This reflects Credit Oman's commitment to supporting the national economy and enhancing the competitiveness of Omani products.

It is noteworthy that the Omani economy has continued its accelerated growth over the past five years due to the economic and political improvements carried out by the government through various national initiatives and the enactment of new legislation that aligns with the upcoming phase, positively impacting the country's credit rating.

Al-Yaqoubi pointed out that



Credit Oman continues its awareness initiatives across the provinces and states of the Sultanate through various programs. This year alone, more than 12 workshops have been conducted to introduce its role in supporting Omani exporters and manufacturers and to raise awareness about the importance of credit insurance.

He added that the statistics at Credit Oman show continuous growth in Omani exports and local sales insured by Credit Oman. The total insured sales at Credit Oman reached OMR296.59 million by the end of the third quarter of this year, compared to OMR272.80



million during the same period last year.

The insured export sales at Credit Oman amounted to OMR159.96 million by the end of the third quarter of 2025, while the value of insured local sales reached OMR136.63 million.

Al-Yaqoubi clarified that Credit Oman's role is not limited to providing insurance services but also includes offering consultations to Omani exporters and finding buyers for them worldwide, contributing to the presence of Omani products in global markets. Many products are exported to the United States and European countries,

particularly in construction materials, as well as petrochemicals and plastics.

The Acting CEO emphasised that Omani products enjoy a distinguished reputation in global markets due to their high quality and complete adherence to international standards and specifications in product manufacturing.

Al-Yaqoubi concluded by stating: "We invite companies, workers in the Sultanate of Oman, and manufacturers to take advantage of the services provided by Credit Oman to safeguard their commercial rights and increase their sales volume both locally and globally. - ONA

STATISTICS

Broad money supply in Oman rises by 4.3% to reach OMR25.7bn

MUSCAT: Broad money supply in the Sultanate of Oman witnessed a growth of 4.3 percent on an annual basis to reach OMR25.7 billion by the end of September 2025.

Statistics issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) indicated that this increase came as a result of a rise in narrow money by 13 percent and quasi-money by 1 percent, which consists of the sum of savings deposits and time deposits in Omani rials plus certificates of deposit issued by banks, in addition to margin accounts and all foreign currency deposits in the banking sector.

During the same period, cash in the public decreased by 2.13 percent, while demand deposits increased by 16.2 percent.

Regarding the interest rate structure of conventional commercial banks, the weighted average interest rate on Omani Rial deposits decreased from 2.679 percent in September 2024 to 2.568 percent in September 2025, and the weighted average



interest rate on Omani Rial loans decreased from 5.604 percent to 5.479 percent during the same period.

The average interest rate in the overnight interbank lending market was 3.815 percent in September 2025, compared to 4.896 percent in September 2024.

This came as a result of the weighted average interest rate on repurchase operations falling to 4.892 percent compared to 5.790 percent during the same period last year, in line with the policies of the US Federal Reserve. - ONA

MARKET

Strong investor demand for 78th and 79th GDB issues totalling OMR224.7mn

The 78th GDB issue, has received applications amounting OMR182,015,400 with allotment amount of OMR 100,000,000 while 79th GDB issue, has received applications amounting OMR 42,750,600 with allotment amount of OMR 20,000,000

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has announced the auction results of the 78th & 79th Government Development Bonds (GDB) issues, which received overwhelming response from investors, worth a total applied amount of OMR 224,766,000. According to a media release issued by CBO's Market Operations Department, the 78th GDB issue, has received applications amounting OMR 182,015,400

with allotment amount of OMR 100,000,000. The average yield was 4.14 percent at an equivalent price of OMR 100.360, while the highest yield was 4.18 percent at an equivalent price of OMR 100.120 and the lowest yield was 4.10 percent at an equivalent price of OMR 100.605. The 79th GDB issue, has received applications amounting OMR 42,750,600 with allotment amount of OMR 20,000,000.



The average yield was 4.29 percent at an equivalent price of OMR 100.485, while the highest yield was 4.30 percent at an equivalent price of OMR 100.405 and the lowest yield was 4.24 percent at an equivalent price of OMR 100.890. Both issues will be settled on Sunday 23 November 2025. The 78th GDB issue, carrying a coupon rate of 4.2% p.a, will mature on 23 November 2032. Meanwhile, the 79th GDB issue, carrying a coupon rate of 4.35% p.a, will mature on 23 November 2035. -ONA

REPORT

Tier II and III cities drive India's new retail expansion wave



NEW DELHI: India's retail revolution is moving beyond its metros, with smaller cities fast emerging as powerful growth engines for the country's retail real estate sector. According to Cushman & Wakefield's Q3 2025 Retail Market Beat, leasing volumes in Tier II and Tier III cities have surged this year, signalling strong retailer confidence and shifting consumer behaviour. The Colliers-CII report, "Real Estate @ 2047: Building India's Future Growth Corridors," also supports this shift. It projects India's real estate market could touch USD 10 trillion by 2047,

with a major share of future retail development expected in these smaller cities. **Combination factors** The combination of rising incomes, better infrastructure, and increased brand reach is driving this expansion. Consumers in these cities are spending more on experiences and lifestyle, leading to retail formats that blend shopping with entertainment and dining. Nandini Taneja, CEO of Bhumi-ka Enterprises, says, "Beyond the metros, India's smaller cities are

quickly becoming important retail markets. Consumers in Tier II and Tier III cities are more aspirational today and are spending more on lifestyle and experiences. Because of this, retail in these markets is shifting from unorganised shops to modern, well-designed spaces." Prakhar Agrawal, Director, Rama Group, highlights how cities such as Raipur, Vizag, and Bhubaneswar are now central to the sector's growth. He says, "As India's retail real estate sector expands beyond metros, these cities are emerging as key growth engines. Rising consumer aspira-

tions, improved infrastructure, and demand for branded retail and leisure experiences are driving this transformation." Data from Cushman & Wakefield's Q3 2025 report shows fashion, food and beverage, and entertainment continue to lead leasing momentum in emerging markets. These segments mirror how consumers are prioritising experiences over pure retail spending. Adish Oswal, Chairman of Oswal Group, says, "India's retail story is changing fast, and some of the strongest action is now coming from Tier II cities. Places like Lu-

diana, Indore, Jaipur, and Lucknow are seeing rising incomes, better connectivity and a new sense of aspiration, all of which are creating a real demand for modern retail and lifestyle spaces." For developers, investors, and brands, these cities offer exciting opportunities to reach new audiences, innovate in retail experiences, and participate in India's next phase of organised retail growth. The sector's next chapter is multi-city, driven by the aspirations of consumers across the country and the confidence of investors in emerging markets. -ANI

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LIMITED RENEWABLE POWER

Portugal faces energy hurdles amid data centre boom

LISBON: What once seemed like an overly optimistic vision is now gradually moving toward reality: Across Portugal large-scale data centres are planned, promising thousands of jobs and substantial investment. Crucially, this development is not limited to its coastal economic centres, but is expanding into long-neglected inland regions. Once characterized by outward migration, these areas are now seeing mayors announce multimillion and even multibillion euro projects aimed at generating new employment and boosting local economies.

In Fundao, a small town in central Portugal near the Spanish border, the mayor is promoting a €4 billion (\$4.63 billion) data centre initiative. Around 100 kilometres (60 miles) further south in Abrantes, a new data centre is projected to cost €7 billion. By 2030, officials expect this centre alone will create 450 direct jobs and several hundred indirect positions. Abrantes' mayor Manuel Jorge Valamatos told DW that the municipality has more data centres "in the pipeline," and highlights the advantage of a gas-fired power plant with grid access nearby that is capable of supplying extra electricity to meet demand.

Flagship project in Sines Portugal's largest such facility — described as the flagship of the country's data centre strategy — is being built in Sines on the southern coast. Backed by €8.5 billion in investment, it includes a connection to a transatlantic fiber-optic cable from the United States. Current plans also include an artificial intelligence (AI) "gigafactory" estimated to cost €4 billion. The first of six buildings in the project has already been completed. But the project has sparked political fallout, contributing to the resignations of a government minister and the former Prime Minister Antonio Costa, both of whom are being investigated for alleged corruption.



Energy consumption a key problem Developers of all planned facilities have registered an energy demand of 26.5 gigawatts (GW) — an amount exceeding Portugal's current production capacity of roughly 23.4 GW. In all of the projects renewable and low-cost power is supposed to be the main source of energy. But electricity and grid expert Joao Pecas Lopes of the University of Porto sees no problem concerning future energy supply. "Portugal has abundant renewable energy resources. We benefit from strong solar, wind, and hydropower capacity," he told DW, noting that companies often declare energy needs "well above actual requirements," sometimes for multiple locations despite ultimately choosing only one. Still, he notes that even if the declared demand were halved, "energy consumption remains extremely high." **Expanding renewables and storage capacity** Data centres consume substantial amounts of electricity, both for daily operations and for cooling in summer or heating in winter. According to Pecas Lopes, meeting this demand will require expanded solar capacity and new offshore wind facilities, as onshore locations are largely exhausted. Offshore construction, however, is more costly, he said, par-

ticularly as floating wind farms are the only feasible solution off Portugal's coast. Additionally, high-voltage transmission lines and storage infrastructure will also be needed. "To store solar power generated during the day for use overnight, there are two primary options: large-scale batteries or reversible hydroelectric systems," Pecas Lopes said. The latter involves pumping water uphill during peak production and releasing it at night to power turbines. The grid expert from the University of Porto expects three such hydropower plants to be built in the coming years after Portugal's government announced a plan to invest around €13 billion in electrical infrastructure over the next five years. **Environmental pushback** Environmental groups are increasingly concerned about these developments. Protests are growing against large-scale wind and solar installations, many of which were approved with limited environmental oversight, including in protected natural areas. That is now likely to change, according to Francisco Ferreira of environmental group Zero, who told DW that the activists would support the development of data centres "in principle." "But new wind or solar projects must be built with minimum ecological impact," he added. -DW



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SALES/MARKETING

Sales, Marketing with 7 yrs experience in FMCG & valid Oman D/L seeks job. Contact: 94803644

Sales & Marketing Manager MBA Indian 28 yrs experience for consumer durables, FMCG. Strong relationships with major retailers across Oman. Contact: 93340457

Indian Male with 20 yrs of Oman experience in Business transformation, sales, marketing, finance, supply chain looking for the management role. Contact: 76492535

Indian, MBA, 20yrs of experience in Sales(FMCG/retail) with D/L seeks suitable placement. Contact: 95548480

Indian Male, 08 yrs experience having Oman D/L looking for suitable placement in Sales and Marketing. Contact: 94566786

Indian Male MMS (Master in Management Studies) with 2 yrs of experience in Data Entry and Sales , looking for suitable position. available to join immediately. Contact:: 91415250 Email: tambesalwan@gmail.com

Trump seeks Zelenskyy’s approval for Russia-Ukraine peace proposal

US President remarks come amid heightened discussions over a new US-drafted peace plan that is currently being considered by Kyiv

WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump on Friday (local time) expressed confidence that Washington has identified a possible path to achieving peace between Ukraine and Russia, but stressed that the proposal would move forward only if Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy approves it, CNN reported.

“We think we have a way of getting peace, he’s going to have to approve it. I think they’re getting reasonably close, but I don’t want to predict,” Trump said while speaking to the reporters at the Oval Office.

His remarks come amid height-



ened discussions over a new US-drafted peace plan that is currently being considered by Kyiv. The proposal, according to CNN, is still under development and is expected to undergo significant revisions as negotiations continue.

Earlier on Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned that the country is facing one of the most challenging moments in its history, as it weighs the implications of the US proposal, Al Jazeera reported.

Speaking at a public gathering outside his office in Kyiv, Zelenskyy stressed the need for national unity and reiterated that he would never betray the Ukrainian people.

“Now is one of the most difficult moments of our history ... Now, Ukraine can face a very difficult choice -- either losing dignity or risk losing a major partner,” Zelenskyy said.

“I will fight 24/7 to ensure that at least two points in the plan are not overlooked - the dignity and

freedom of Ukrainians,” he added.

A new Ukraine peace proposal being discussed within the Trump administration could involve Kyiv ceding territory in the eastern Donbas region and agreeing to limits on its military capabilities in exchange for US-backed security guarantees, CNN reported, citing a Western official familiar with the ongoing deliberations.

According to CNN, the US officials said the proposal remains a work in progress, noting that any

Kyiv discusses US peace plan with European allies

BERLIN: Kyiv authorities and European officials alike are scrambling to find responses to a 28-point peace plan put forward by the US Trump administration.

Both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha say they have discussed possible next steps with European allies, while European leaders are to meet on the sidelines of the G20 summit in South Africa to talk about the plan.

Meanwhile, Russia claims

to have taken more villages in eastern Ukraine.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on the platform X he had “outlined the logic of our further steps” in a call with European counterparts.

He described his discussion with the foreign ministers of France, Britain, Poland, Finland, the EU’s foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas, as well as representatives of Italy and Germany, as “timely and meaningful”.

-DW

G20 LEADERS’ SUMMIT

India and Australia pledge for deeper strategic cooperation in Johannesburg

JOHANNESBURG : Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese, met on Friday on the sidelines of the G20 Leaders’ Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, a press release from the Ministry of External Affairs said.

“Both leaders expressed satisfaction at the deepening and diversification of cooperation between India and Australia in the last five years following the elevation of the relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2020. Prime Minister Albanese offered his solidarity on the recent terror attack in India. The leaders committed to strengthening the global fight against terrorism,” the press release added.

Both leaders reviewed ways to further deepen bilateral cooperation across a broad spectrum of areas, including political and strategic ties, defence and security, energy, trade and investment, critical minerals, technology, mobility, education, and people-to-people exchanges. The prime ministers also shared perspectives on global matters of mutual concern.

During their meeting, PM Modi and PM Albanese noted that regu-



lar high-level engagements have added significant momentum to the relationship between India and Australia. Reaffirming their shared vision, the two leaders pledged to elevate the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to new heights.

PM Modi arrives at G-20 Summit venue

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived at the venue of the G-20 Summit in Johannesburg on Saturday, marking India’s participation at the high-level gathering.

Prime Minister Modi received a warm reception upon his arrival on Friday, where a cultural troupe

greeted him at the airport and bowed to him as a sign of respect. His welcome set the tone for a visit that reflects India’s long-standing engagement with South Africa.

As part of this continued engagement, the visit marks Prime Minister Modi’s fourth official trip to the country, following earlier engagements for the BRICS Summits in 2018 and 2023 and a bilateral visit in 2016. His repeated visits underline the deepening partnership between the two nations.

Placing his trip in a broader context, this year’s G-20 also fits into a broader trend, as it continues the summit’s rotation through the Global South for the fourth

consecutive year, after Indonesia, India and Brazil. South Africa has assumed the presidency for 2025, further highlighting the region’s expanding leadership role.

Alongside the multilateral setting, Prime Minister Modi began his bilateral engagements on Friday by meeting Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. Their discussion focused on cooperation and ongoing areas of engagement between their countries, adding momentum to India’s diplomatic outreach ahead of the summit proceedings.

Prime Minister Modi also met a group of Indian-origin tech entrepreneurs in Johannesburg. He wrote on X, “Met the winners of the Bharat Ko Janiye (Know India) Quiz in South Africa. This Quiz encourages members of our diaspora to learn more about India’s history, culture and more. It truly strengthens our diaspora’s connect with India.”

Continuing his interactions, Prime Minister Modi held discussions with the chairman and CEO of Naspers about expanding investments in India’s digital ecosystem, reflecting growing global interest in India’s tech landscape. -ANI

TREMORS

Bangladesh shakes again within 24 hours of earthquake

DHAKA: Less than 24 hours later, another earthquake was felt in Bangladesh. The tremors were recorded by the Earthquake Observation and Research Centre of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department. A 3.3 magnitude tremor on the Richter scale was recorded at 10:36 am on Saturday in Bypile, Ashulia, Dhaka.

Nizam Uddin Ahmed, an official at the Earthquake Monitoring and Research Centre, confirmed this information. He said, “This is a minor earthquake. Its epicentre is Bypail.”

Earlier, the death toll from a magnitude 5.7 earthquake that struck Bangladesh on Friday has risen to nine. More than a hundred people were injured across the country in the quake. Muhammad Yunus, the chief adviser to the interim government, expressed deep sorrow over the casualties in the quake.

In Dhaka, bricks and tiles fell from the side walls and cornice of an 8-story building in the Kosaituli area of Armanitola, where a beef stall was located.

Shoppers and pedestrians were injured.

Locals took them to the hospital before the fire service arrived. After being taken to the hospital, doctors declared three people dead. Maksud (50), a security guard at a building under construction in Mugda Medinabagh, was killed when the railing collapsed. The deceased’s home is in Ramgati Upazila of Lakshmipur district, the Chief Adviser’s office said. In Narshingdi, according to initial information, more than a hundred people have been injured in various parts of the district, and four people have been killed so far as they rushed down from high-rise buildings in panic due to the earthquake.

Four people were injured when construction materials from an under-construction building fell on them at Gabtali in Chinishpur Union of Sadar upazila; two of them, who sustained serious head injuries, have been sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment. -ANI

REMOTE PART OF CANADA

Grizzly bear attack on school group leaves 4 seriously hurt

OTTAWA: Four people, including three children, were injured after a grizzly bear attacked a school group in a remote part of Canada.

Two of the injured were in critical condition and two in serious condition, the Health Services Authority said Friday. All four remain hospitalised.

The attack occurred on Thursday in the Bella Coola area of British Columbia (BC), when a bear charged a group of 20 children and their teachers.

“In my 34 years of experience, I have not seen a [bear] attack like this with such a large group of people,” Inspector Kevin Van Damme of the BC Conservation Officer Service told reporters.

Authorities have urged people to stay out of the area while they search for the bear.

Teachers fought off the grizzly

The students and teachers had stopped on the trail when the bear emerged from the forest and attacked the group.

According to conservation of-



ficials, teachers intervened, using bear spray and a bear banger to repel the attack and “put themselves in harm’s way to protect the children.”

“I want to thank the teachers for their heroism,” provincial Premier David Eby said.

The group was from the Acwsalcta School, run by the Indigenous Nuxalk Nation.

Bear-human encounters rise as winter nears

Conflicts with humans often increase as winter approaches, when grizzlies seek fat reserves for hibernation.

Reports of bear encounters have risen in Bella Coola, which has a large grizzly population. But officials warn this doesn’t mean bears are becoming more aggressive overall.

“One individual bear could increase conflicts,” Inspector Van Damme said. “It’s not necessarily generic across the population.” -DW

IMPORTANT MEETING

Railway system is backbone of economy, says Pakistan PM

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the railway system in any country served as backbone of economy and communication network.

Chairing an important meeting on the matters related to Pakistan Railways, at the PM’s House, the prime minister directed that legal and economic experts of international standards should be engaged, particularly for the projects related to regional connectivity and international train links.

He further stressed that a public-private partnership model should be adopted for matters related to railway property and land.

The prime minister also appreciated the steps taken towards restoration of the railways system and commended Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi and his team for their work on the revival and up-gradation of Pakistan Railways.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, Minister for Economic Af-



fairs Ahad Khan Cheema and other senior government officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was given a detailed briefing on the measures being taken to improve Pakistan Railways.

It was informed that seven digital portals under ‘Rabta’ initiative were operational for the digitalization of Pakistan Railways, 56 trains had been shifted on it and 54 railway stations had been digitised. The participants were informed that free wi-fi facility was provided at Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Faisalabad rail-

way stations while an additional 48 stations would get free wi-fi service by 31 December this year.

It was further informed that an online freight booking system had been introduced. A pilot project for a digital weighing bridge was launched at Karachi City Railway Station whereas in the next phase, this facility would be extended at Pipri, Karachi Cantonment, Port Qasim, Lahore, and Rawalpindi stations. At Rawalpindi railway station, 148 AI-powered surveillance cameras had been installed. ATM machines of various banks were being installed at the railway stations. -APP

The team achieved this milestone by pairing artificial intelligence (AI) with advanced numerical simulation techniques

RESEARCHERS USE AI TO CREATE FIRST 100-BILLION-STAR MILKY WAY SIMULATION

Researchers combined deep learning with high-resolution physics to create the first Milky Way model that tracks over 100 billion stars individually.

Researchers led by Keiya Hirashima at the RIKEN Centre for Interdisciplinary Theoretical and Mathematical Sciences (iTHEMS) in Japan, working with partners from the University of Tokyo and Universitat de Barcelona in Spain, have created the first Milky Way simulation capable of tracking more than 100 billion individual stars across 10 thousand years of evolution.

Their AI learned how gas behaves after supernovae, removing one of the biggest computational bottlenecks in galactic modelling. The result is a simulation hundreds of times faster than current methods.

The team achieved this milestone by pairing artificial intelligence (AI) with advanced numerical simulation techniques.

Their model includes 100 times more stars than the most sophisticated earlier simulations and was generated more than 100 times faster.

The work, presented at the international super-computing conference SC '25, marks a major step forward for astrophysics, high-performance computing, and AI-assisted modelling.

The same strategy could also be applied to large-scale Earth system studies, including climate and weather research.

Scientists have not previously been able to model a galaxy as large as the Milky Way while maintaining fine detail at the level of single stars.

Current cutting-edge simulations can represent systems with the equivalent mass of about one billion suns, far below the more than 100 billion stars that make up the Milky Way.

As a result, the smallest "particle" in those models usually represents a group of roughly 100 stars, which averages away the behaviour of individual stars and limits the accuracy of small-scale processes.

The challenge is tied to the interval between computational steps: to capture rapid events such as supernova evolution, the simulation must advance in very small time increments.

Shrinking the time-step means dramatically greater computational effort. Even with today's best physics-based models, simulating the Milky Way star by star would require

about 315 hours for every 1 million years of galactic evolution.

At that rate, generating 1 billion years of activity would take over 36 years of real time. Simply adding more supercomputer cores is not a practical solution, as energy use becomes excessive and efficiency drops as more cores are added.

A New Deep Learning Approach

To overcome these barriers, Hirashima and his team designed a method that blends a deep learning surrogate model with standard physical simulations.

The surrogate was trained using high-resolution supernova simulations and learned to predict how gas spreads during the 100,000 years following a supernova explosion without requiring additional resources from the main simulation.

This AI component allowed the researchers to capture the galaxy's overall behaviour while still modelling small-scale events, including the fine details of individual supernovae.

The team validated the approach by comparing its results against large-scale runs on RIKEN's Fugaku supercomputer and The University of Tokyo's Miyabi Supercomputer System.

This hybrid AI approach could reshape many areas of computational science that require linking small-scale physics with large-scale behaviour.

Fields such as meteorology, oceanography, and climate modelling face similar challenges and could benefit from tools that accelerate complex, multi-scale simulations.

"I believe that integrating AI with high-performance computing marks a fundamental shift in how we tackle multi-scale, multi-physics problems across the computational sciences," says Hirashima.

"This achievement also shows that AI-accelerated simulations can move beyond pattern recognition to become a genuine tool for scientific discovery -- helping us trace how the elements that formed life itself emerged within our galaxy," added Hirashima. -ANI

The challenge is tied to the interval between computational steps: to capture rapid events such as supernova evolution, the simulation must advance in very small time increments



Norris clinches Las Vegas pole

McLaren driver beat Red Bull's Verstappen by 0.323s in a wet qualifying session

LAS VEGAS: McLaren's Lando Norris took pole position in a wet qualifying session for the Las Vegas Grand Prix on Friday, with team-mate and title rival Oscar Piastri only fifth.

Norris beat Red Bull's Max Verstappen, the only other driver still vaguely in title contention, by 0.323secs. Williams' Carlos Sainz was third, ahead of Mercedes' George Russell and Piastri.

Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton, whose team-mate Charles Leclerc was ninth, was 20th, the seventh-time champion knocked out in the first session and complaining he could not get his tyres to work.

Norris, who leads Piastri by 24 points with three races to go, took his third consecutive pole position as he continues to look like a world champion in waiting.

Despite the track being slippery and visibility being extremely difficult, there were no red flags during qualifying

The qualifying conditions were treacherous, the session starting after heavy rain on a track wet enough for the extreme wet tyres, which nearly all drivers used throughout the first two sessions.

Norris was not especially fast on the extreme wet tyres, but once on to the intermediate tyres in the final session he was consistently the fastest driver on track.

Verstappen, usually so strong in wet conditions, was not quite on the Briton's level but his second place on the grid makes him a serious threat for the lead into the first corner given his usually aggressive start to the race.



Norris survived a wobble on his final lap when he hit the kerb through the Turns 14-15-16 chicane but was still fast enough for pole as others behind him were affected by a yellow flag.

Among those were Piastri, who had to back off on his last lap.

"That was stressful, stressful as hell," Norris said. "I didn't know no-one else would get a lap after me. The first two sectors were good. As soon as you hit the kerb a little bit wrong it's tricky, it snapped one way and then the other but good enough for the pole.

"No-one's driven here in the wet before. After Q1, every corner you felt like you could crash every corner. One lap at a time. It was a tricky one."

Piastri told Sky Sports: "There

was more out there that we didn't get to use. We've got a good car underneath us that seems to be working well in all conditions so we can have a strong race tomorrow and hopefully make up some spots."

Verstappen said: "It's already slippery in the dry, but in the wet it's not fun. It felt more like driving on ice. "I did feel we were a little more competitive on the extreme tyre. We were not quite competitive enough to fight for pole but second is still good.

"Excited for tomorrow, I hope the inside [of the grid] is OK in terms of grip but we will see."

Sainz's run to third was a strong performance in a car not expected to be quick in the wet. He was investigated for rejoining the track unsafely in the first session but the

stewards took no action.

Behind Piastri, the Racing Bulls of Liam Lawson and Isack Hadjar were sixth and eighth, split by Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso.

Leclerc and Alpine's Pierre Gasly were ninth and 10th.

Hamilton struggled throughout the first session and qualified last on outright pace for the first time in his career. "It was very slippery and the first set of tyres didn't work for us and I just struggled to generate the heat in the tyres for some reason," he said.

"It's a shame because the guys have done such a great job and the car was feeling a awesome in FP3 and I really felt like we had good pace, but then the rain came. There's not a lot to say, to be honest." - Agencies

AGAINST BELGIUM

Cobolli wins epic tie-break to send Italy into Davis Cup final

BOLOGNA: Flavio Cobolli said sealing Italy's place in the Davis Cup final was "one of the best days of my life" after he saved seven match points to win a dramatic 32-point tie-break against Belgium's Zizou Bergs on Friday.

Cobolli tore off his shirt in celebration as a party atmosphere erupted among the home support in Bologna once the 23-year-old took his seventh match point to prevail 6-3, 6-7 (5-7), 7-6 (17-15) after more than three hours.

Following the thrilling conclusion, which stands as the sixth-longest tie-break in the Davis Cup's 125-year history, two-time defending champions Italy will face Spain or Germany in Sunday's final.

Amid the pandemonium, Cobolli comforted Bergs as his distraught opponent sat on the Belgium team bench with his head in his hands. Speaking in his on-court interview, world No.22 Cobolli said: "It's really tough to say something about this match.

"We played for our countries and fought a lot for this win. In the end, I realised my dream and we are now in the final.

"I played an amazing match against a great opponent. I played for all of [the supporters], for all of my team, my family, for me. It



is one of the best days of my life."

Italy team captain Filippo Volandri said: "In my five years as captain I have never seen something like that.

"It was an unbelievable match. At the end I just said [it was] 5% tactics and 95% heart. This guy gave everything he had - I am really proud. "We have an unbelievable bench, Matteo [Berrettini, Cobolli's team-mate] lost his voice.

"But it is not the last match. We celebrate tonight and then we focus on the final."

Berrettini once again gave Italy the perfect start as, backed by the majority of a passionate, sell-out crowd of 10,000 fans, he overpowered Raphael Collignon in straight sets.

With Cobolli's victory, Italy

became the first nation to reach three consecutive Davis Cup finals since Australia in 2001.

Despite the absence of their top two men's singles players - world No.2 Jannik Sinner and eighth-ranked Lorenzo Musetti - Italy will now seek to become the first nation to win three consecutive Davis Cup titles for 53 years.

It would be the longest spell of dominance in the competition since the United States won their fourth title in a row in 1972.

Sinner, a key member of the Italian team which triumphed at the past two editions of the Davis Cup, elected to maximise his recovery at the beginning of the sport's brief six-week off-season after triumphing at last week's ATP Finals. - Agencies

CHELSEA FORWARD



Palmer fractures toe at home

LONDON: Chelsea forward Cole Palmer will be sidelined for at least another week after fracturing a toe when he stubbed it on a door on Wednesday night, said Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca.

The 23-year-old had been close to returning to first-team training following two months out with a groin issue, but the latest injury means he will remain unavailable slightly longer.

As a result, Palmer will miss Chelsea's next three matches.

"He is probably not available for Saturday for sure, Barcelona for sure or Arsenal for sure," Maresca said on Friday.

Maresca explained that the setback occurred in unusual circumstances, saying: "Unfortunately, he had an accident at home where he hit his toe. It is nothing important, but he won't be back next week."

Palmer's last appearance came in the 2-1 defeat at Manchester United on 20 September. - Xinhua

FORMULA ONE

Wolff sells 15% stake in Mercedes F1 team

LAS VEGAS: Team Principal Toto Wolff has sold 15% of his shareholding in the Mercedes Formula 1 team to American billionaire George Kurtz.

Kurtz, 55, is the founder of the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, which is a sponsor of Mercedes.

The deal values Mercedes F1 at \$6bn (£4.6bn), a record for an F1 team. McLaren were valued at £3.5bn in a change of ownership structure in September.

Wolff's holding company owns one-third of Mercedes F1, so the shareholding he is selling equates to 5% of the team. Wolff, who will net \$300m (£230m) from the deal, will stay on as team principal and chief executive officer, while the governance of Mercedes F1 continues unchanged.

Kurtz, whose stake is coming out of his personal funds rather than his company's, said the valuation put on the team was "in line with the market", adding that "if you look at sports [valuations] across the globe, they are all up".

Kurtz said: "Formula 1 is really at an inflection point where it is a thriving business.

"If you're making an investment like this, you believe that the sport is going to grow, F1 is going to grow and the team valuations are going to grow, and you're going to be able to



contribute to that growth."

Kurtz will not be on the main board but will join the team's strategic steering committee, on which Ola Kallenius, the chairman of the management board of the Mercedes Group, Ineos chairman Sir Jim Ratcliffe and Wolff meet to discuss issues to do with the team.

Kurtz described his role as "nothing more than a seat at the table to provide input and discussions".

Wolff said: "George's background is unusual in its breadth: he's a racer, a loyal sporting ambassador for Mercedes-AMG, and an exceptional entrepreneur.

"He understands both the demands of racing and the realities of building and scaling technology businesses. That combination brings specific insight that is increasingly relevant to the future of Formula 1." - Agencies

FORMER FRANCE INTERNATIONAL

Pogba set to make first appearance since doping ban for Monaco

MONACO: Monaco midfielder Paul Pogba is set to make his long-awaited return from a doping ban this weekend.

The 32-year-old joined the Ligue 1 club last summer, after his four-year doping ban was reduced to 19 months by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Pogba's last competitive appearance came in September 2023, when he featured for Juventus in a Serie A match against Empoli.

The former Manchester United midfielder has been given time to build up his fitness in Monaco and had been earmarked for selection against Lens on 8 November, only

for an ankle injury to postpone his debut.

However, Pogba has been named in Monaco's squad, to face Rennes on Saturday night.

"We try to help him reach his full potential so that the team comes out on top," Monaco manager Sebastien Pocognoli said of Pogba on Friday.

"He has the qualities to adapt to what we want to implement in midfield - he hasn't lost his vision or his technique.

"[He will bring] experience and leadership, both on and off the pitch, not to mention his qualities, which will need to adapt to



the pace of competition."

Pogba was provisionally banned from football for four years after a positive test for dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) in February 2024, following a doping test in August 2023.

Pogba maintained it was a mistake and that he was given a supplement without knowing it contained a banned substance.

The France international, a 2018 World Cup winner, was permitted to return to football in March following the decision to reduce his ban.

Should Pogba make his Monaco debut against Rennes, it would

be his first ever Ligue 1 appearance.

He came through the ranks at Le Havre, but joined Manchester United before making a senior appearance for the club.

Pogba joined Juventus on a free transfer in 2012, before returning to Old Trafford in a then world record £89m four years later.

He went back to Juventus following the expiry of his six-year deal with United in 2022, but made just 12 appearances before his contract was mutually terminated.

Pogba scored as France beat Croatia 4-2 in the 2018 World Cup final. - Agencies

Oman fencers lead medal charge at Riyadh 2025

Women’s foil team gold and men’s team bronze medals in foil and epee headline Sultanate’s impressive total haul of nine medals at the sixth Islamic Solidarity Games

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omani athletes concluded a memorable campaign at the sixth Islamic Solidarity Games (ISG) in Riyadh, bringing home two gold, two silver, and five bronze medals across fencing, athletics, and weightlifting.

The spotlight shone brightest on Oman’s fencers, who dominated the medal table for the nation.

On November 19, the women’s foil team—Salma Al Dughaisi, Ghzal Al Fulaiti, and Israa Al Siyabi—stormed to gold with a 45-28 win over Bahrain. Israa had earlier claimed bronze in the individual foil, cementing her status as one of Oman’s top fencing stars.

At Boulevard Riyadh City, Israa won her individual medal with a win over Indonesia’s Putri Yanti in the quarterfinals before falling to Türkiye’s eventual champion Alara Atmaca in the semifinals.

Oman’s men’s fencing team—Saeed Al Shuaibi, Ahmed Al Keskes, Ali Al Harthi, and Ali Al Busaidi—added two bronze medals, one in the men’s epee team event



and another in the foil team event.

Earlier at the Games, Oman’s sprint sensation Ali Al Balushi captured gold in the men’s 100m, while the men’s 4x100m relay team—Rashid Al Aasmi, Malham Al Balushi, Mohamed Al Sadi, and Ali Anwar Al Balushi—secured silver, and high jumper Fatek Abdul Ghafoor Bait Jabooob won bronze.

The men’s 4x100m relay clocked 39.21 seconds while Saudi Arabia clinched gold with 39.19, and Nigeria claimed bronze in 39.51. For Ali Al Balushi, who established himself as the fastest man in the competition, the relay silver softened the blow of his agonising fourth-place finish in the 200m final, where he missed the bronze by just 0.01 seconds.

Cameroon’s Esem Emmanuel Alobwede won gold in 20.55s, Saudi Arabia’s Abdulaziz Atafi secured silver, and Cameroon’s Itoun-gue Claude edged out Al Balushi for bronze with 20.84s to his 20.85.

In weightlifting, Amer Al Khan-jari earned a silver and bronze in the 88kg clean and jerk and total to open Oman’s medal account.

Overall, Oman finished 21st in the medal table among 57 countries, with Türkiye topping the Games with 72 golds, 44 silvers, and 39 bronzes.

Abdullah Bamakhalef, secretary general of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), congratulated the athletes, and said, “Omani athletes have delivered outstanding performances on the international stage.”

GCC 3X3 BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Oman women clinch bronze in Bahrain

MUSCAT: The Oman women’s 3x3 basketball team capped their Bahrain trip with a proud podium finish, edging Kuwait 9-7 to secure the bronze medal at the GCC Championship on Friday.

Oman set the tone early, staying compact on defence and forcing Kuwait into rushed attempts.

While Kuwait rallied late, the Omani quartet held firm, closing out the final minutes with disciplined ball movement and smart shot selection to seal third place.

Coach Wafa Zaghdood oversaw the campaign, guiding a squad comprising Shams Al Khonji, Fatma Al Numani, Nareen Al Maamari, Ruba Al Kalbani, Reema Al Mughairi, Zainab Al Busaidi,



Malak Al Salmi, Sayyida Lamar Al Busaidi, Reem Al Shirawi, and Aisha Al Yafei.

Meanwhile, the men’s youth 3x3 team also turned in a spirited showing, narrowly missing out on a medal after a 16-14 loss to Bah-

rain A in the third-place playoff.

In a fast, free-scoring encounter, Oman matched the hosts basket for basket until Bahrain edged ahead in the dying seconds.

The youth squad, coached by Mohammed Al Owaisi, featured

Mishal Qafqaf, Muhab Al Humay-sim, Mazen Al Owaisi, Ibrahim Al Balushi, Azd Al Bahlani, Azzan Al Ajmi, Adam Al Hina, and Akram Al Rashdi, with team manager Ghassan Al Busaidi.

Completing the national programme’s trip to Bahrain, the men’s 3x3 squad concluded their intensive camp ahead of the upcoming Arab 3x3 Basketball Championship, set to take place at Al Mouj Muscat.

The men’s roster includes Ahmed Al Hilali, Hadeed Beit Bakhiit, Osama Al Riyami, Abdulrahman Al Maamari, Ahmed Al Si-nani, Rashid Al Zuhailmi, Ahmed Al Maamari, and Abdulrahman Al Shuaibi.

23RD EDITION

Auditor’s Cup from Dec 1



MUSCAT: The Oman Auditor’s Cup 2025, organised by Jazz Boys Club, will be played from December 1-3 at the Oman Cricket Academy Grounds in Al Amerat, featuring leading audit firms in the tournament’s 23rd edition.

Defending champions BDO headline a field that includes EY, Deloitte, KPMG, PwC, Moore, Crowe and newcomers BAF.

The event follows a group-stage league format, with three days of competitive fixtures, starting with BAF facing Moore.

Players and teams will compete for awards including player of the match, best wicketkeeper, best batter, best bowler, best fielder, maximum sixes, best dressed team, player of the tournament, second runners-up, runners-up and the champions’ trophy.

QUARTER-FINALS STAGE

Top teams advance at 2025 Oman World Cup of Snooker



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Team India-1, featuring Pankaj Advani, Brijesh Damani, and Aditya Mehta, delivered a commanding performance throughout the group stage to secure the No.1 seed heading into the quarter-finals of the 2025 Oman World Cup of Snooker at Active Oman Centre, Oman Automobile Association, on Friday night.

The intensity of the team competition is expected to touch a new peak when the high-stakes knockout phase begins with the last eight stage rounds.

The final will be held on Sunday at 7pm under the patronage of Basil bin Ahmed Al Rawas, Under-secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth.

Following the conclusion of round robin stage, the top contenders were officially locked in for the championship run toward the coveted World Cup trophy.

India-1 consistency in scoring, strong frame win ratio, and technical precision made them the stand-out team of the opening phase.

In one of the closest seed battles of the tournament, Hong Kong China-2, represented by Chau Hon



Man and Nansen Wan, secured the second seed, edging out competitors due to a superior frame average.

Despite having the same frame statistics as India-1, they were placed second due to a lower highest break tally, a testament to just how tight the competition was at the top.

The remaining two direct quarterfinal spots were filled by strong performances from third seed - Hong Kong China-1 (Chang Yu Kiu & Fung Kwok Wai) and fourth seed - Pakistan (Muhammad Asif & Asjad Iqbal).

Both teams displayed impres-

sive teamwork and tactical depth, earning their place among the elite four.

With the top four seeds advancing directly, the next eight teams from the standings faced off in a high-pressure pre-quarter round.

France defeated Indonesia 3-2 to secure a quarter-final clash against India-1 while Qatar overcame Iraq 1-3-2 victory to set up a last eight clash against Pakistan.

The winners of these two quarter-final matches will face-off in the semi-finals, with chances of an exciting India-Pakistan last-four clash in the offing.

Egypt claimed an important 3-1

win over India 2, to set up a quarter-final meeting with Hong Kong China-1 and Malaysia delivered a standout performance with a 3-0 win over Afghanistan to advance and lock horns with Hong Kong China-2 in the last quarter-final matchup.

Quarter-finals: India-1 vs France, Pakistan vs Qatar, Hong Kong China-1 vs Egypt, and Hong Kong China-2 vs Malaysia.

Chandler crowned champion Earlier on Thursday, England’s Harvey Chandler lifted the World Cup of Snooker 2025 (singles event). In a commanding final

performance, Chandler defeated Pakistan’s Asjad Iqbal 5-2 to lift the coveted title and cap off a remarkable tournament run.

Asjad was also honoured with the Highest Break of the Tournament for his exceptional 142 break.

Chang Yu Kiu of Hong Kong China and France’s Nicolas Mortreux secured the bronze medals.

For Mortreux, this marks his second consecutive podium finish on his Middle East tour after winning bronze at the World Snooker Championship 2025 in Doha last week.



ROUND-UP

Sohar International launches ‘Maal’ national payment card

The Maal card is designed to operate through the national payment network OmanNet, ensuring that all domestic transactions — whether through point-of-sale (POS) terminals, ATMs, or e-commerce channels — are processed securely within Oman

MUSCAT: In alignment with the national direction toward strengthening financial infrastructure and accelerating digital transformation, Sohar International has announced the launch of the national payment card “Maal”, a strategic initiative led by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) to advance the Sultanate’s national card system.

The initiative represents a major step in promoting the digital economy, enhancing financial inclusion, and supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 for a more innovative and less cash-dependent society.

The Maal card is designed to operate through the national payment network OmanNet, ensuring that all domestic transactions—whether through point-of-sale (POS) terminals, ATMs, or e-commerce channels — are processed



securely within Oman. The project is part of a broader national effort to strengthen payment system infrastructure, enhance data security and localisation, and support innovation in modern financial technologies. It is also expected to reduce transaction-related costs for banks, merchants, government

entities, and cardholders, while expanding access to financial services across society.

In this regard, Abdulwahid Mohamed Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated: “At Sohar International, we believe that true progress lies in building systems that strengthen

national resilience and empower future generations. This approach is fully aligned with the path of national development, fostering a secure, inclusive, and innovation-driven economy. Beyond enhancing the way people transact, it symbolizes the collective commitment of the public and private

sectors to shaping a stronger, more sustainable future for the nation. In support of this national vision, we are proud to contribute by launching our ‘Maal’ Card, reinforcing Oman’s journey toward financial independence and digital advancement.”

The card supports a wide range

of domestic transactions such as POS payments (contact and contactless), ATM withdrawals, e-commerce purchases, and government service payments. The Maal national payment card adheres to the highest global security standards, including PCI-DSS for card data protection and ISO standards for payment systems, ensuring a secure and reliable payment environment for all users. The project will advance the national shift toward electronic payments, reduce reliance on cash, lower operational costs across the ecosystem, and support long-term sustainable economic development.

The launch of the Sohar International ‘Maal’ card reflects the bank’s commitment to supporting and keeping pace with both the local and global digital economy, while advancing the Sultanate’s ambitions to drive significant technological, economic, and societal transformations. Market indicators show that payments made through point-of-sale terminals and electronic payment gateways accounted for approximately 92% of all transactions on the national network, and the number of active cards in the Sultanate reached around 4.9 million in 2024.

These figures highlight the market’s readiness to adopt the national card from its official launch. Sohar International will continue to dedicate the necessary resources to support the widespread adoption of this domestic card, reinforcing the national digital economy and enabling greater financial inclusion.

Sohar International encourages its customers to visit the nearest branch to obtain the Maal card—an initiative that supports national priorities, strengthens the financial sector, and contributes to Oman’s comprehensive economic development. With this step, the bank reaffirms its ongoing commitment to empowering customers with secure, modern payment solutions that align with Oman’s future-ready digital vision.

EMPOWERING OMANI YOUTH



ahlibank launches 11th cohort of its flagship HIMAM programme

MUSCAT: Demonstrating a deep commitment to empowering Omani youth through comprehensive, knowledge-driven development initiatives, ahlibank has launched the 11th cohort of its flagship graduate development programme, HIMAM. This milestone marks a decade of meaningful investment in national talent, reinforcing the bank’s ongoing efforts to nurture a new generation of highly skilled Omani banking professionals.

Since its inception in 2015, the HIMAM programme has served as a cornerstone in ahlibank’s strategy to support young graduates and prepare them for meaningful, long-term careers within the banking sector. The programme focuses on developing administrative, technical, and leadership competencies while fostering participants’ confidence and professional readiness. Through a combination of hands-

on experience and structured mentorship, HIMAM graduates acquire a comprehensive understanding of banking operations, positioning them for successful careers and enabling them to make a significant contribution to the bank’s broader vision.

To date, more than 120 Omani graduates have successfully completed the HIMAM programme, with many now holding key positions within ahlibank’s expanding workforce. Their achievements serve as a testament to the program’s enduring impact and its significant contribution to both the bank and the nation’s development.

ahlibank’s HIMAM initiative plays a vital role in advancing Omanization by equipping young Omanis with the skills, knowledge, and practical experience required to excel and contribute meaningfully to the nation’s banking sector.

This commitment aligns closely with the national agenda and Oman Vision 2040, which emphasizes the development of a high-performing workforce capable of driving sustainable economic growth.

Through such programs, ahlibank continues to uphold its promise as the Partner in Excellence, going beyond the provision of comprehensive banking and financial solutions to create meaningful, real-world impact in the communities it serves, while fostering talent development, innovation, and sustainable socio-economic progress.

Applications for the 11th batch of HIMAM are now open, inviting ambitious graduates from a wide range of academic disciplines to join this transformative journey and become part of ahlibank’s continued legacy of excellence.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

MoU signed to support Tamkeen training programme



MUSCAT: Reaffirming its commitment to fostering socio-economic development through impactful community partnerships, Sohar International has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dar Al Atta’a to expand opportunities for Omani job seekers through specialised training in the healthcare sector under the Tamkeen Training Programme.

The collaboration underscores the bank’s continued efforts to enhance education, skill development, and sustainable employment across key national sectors. The agreement was signed between Maryam bint Issa Al Zadjali, founder and chairperson of Dar Al Atta’a Association and Mazin Mahmood Al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer of Sohar International.

Commenting on the partnership, Mazin Mahmood Al Raisi stated, “At Sohar International, our purpose extends beyond financial services—it lies in creating meaningful opportunities that enable individuals to thrive while strengthening communities. This collaboration with Dar Al Atta’a reinforces our commitment to national capacity building and social advancement, both of which are integral to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. By supporting initiatives that blend education with employability, we

aim to transform potential into progress—enabling people to develop the skills and confidence needed to succeed in a dynamic economy. Investing in learning is, ultimately, an investment in the nation’s future.”

Maryam bint Issa Al Zadjali added, “This partnership with Sohar International allows us to take a significant step forward in empowering Omani youth through sustainable skill development. The Tamkeen Training Program is designed to equip participants with practical knowledge and professional qualifications that open doors to meaningful employment, contributing directly to stronger families and more resilient communities. Together, we are creating opportunities that not only transform lives but also support the nation’s social and economic progress.”

The Tamkeen Training Program is an educational initiative aimed at equipping Omani job seekers with certified training and academic qualifications in the healthcare sector. Designed to empower 25 selected individuals from families registered with Dar Al Atta’a, the program focuses on developing practical expertise and enhancing employability through structured, hands-on learning experiences.

Participants will undergo spe-

cialized training across three disciplines—Multi-Disciplinary Health Assistant, Dental Health Assistant, and Sterilization Specialist—with course durations ranging from six to seven months and totaling 660 to 920 instructional hours. By bridging education with industry requirements, the initiative seeks to create sustainable income opportunities and contribute to the nation’s healthcare readiness.

Aligned with Oman’s broader social development objectives, the Tamkeen Training Program reflects a shared commitment between Sohar International and Dar Al Atta’a to empower individuals, nurture local talent, and promote long-term self-sufficiency. Through this partnership, Sohar International continues to translate its corporate responsibility into tangible outcomes—driving inclusive growth, fostering social resilience, and reinforcing the values of opportunity and progress that define its community engagement efforts.

Sohar International continues to reaffirm its role as a purpose-driven institution contributing to Oman’s long-term development narrative. The bank remains focused on fostering meaningful partnerships that drive sustainable growth and enduring community impact.

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