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THE STORY
BEHIND MOZA'S
LIVE-COOKING
SUCCESS

HM TO GRACE GRAND MILITARY AND NAVAL PARADES

REFLECT THE RICH HERITAGE OF OMANI MARITIME HISTORY

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, will grace the Grand Military Parade to be staged at Al Fateh Square in the Governorate of Muscat on Thursday, within the context of the nationwide celebration of the Glorious National Day.

The parade will include participating units from the Royal Army of Oman, the Royal Air Force of Oman, the Royal Navy of Oman, the Royal Guard of Oman, the Sultan's Special Force, the Royal Oman Police, the Royal Court Affairs and the Firaq Forces, alongside joint and mounted military music bands.

This event occurs as the Sultan's Armed Forces, under the prosperous reign of His Majesty the Sultan, are achieving qualitative leaps in development and modernisation. These advancements have strengthened their combat readiness, operational efficiency, and active role in defending the nation and maintaining security and stability across Oman.

In a separate event, His Majesty the Sultan will also preside over the Naval Fleet Parade 2025 on Friday in the Governorate of Muscat.

Held in cooperation with the Secretariat-General for National Celebrations, the naval parade will feature a number of vessels from the Royal Navy of Oman, the Royal Yachts, and boats from the Royal Oman Police, with additional participation from ships belonging to the GCC navies.

This parade reflects the rich heritage of Omani maritime history, which for centuries has been a cornerstone of Oman's strength, stability and global engagement.

It highlights a renewed present where the sea serves as a strategic depth for Oman, fostering international cooperation, cultural exchange and development, while supporting economic diversification programmes under the Oman Vision 2040.

Both celebrations will be attended alongside His Majesty the Sultan by an assembly of Their Highnesses, Excellencies, senior military and civilian officials and a gathering of citizens.

— ONA



INBRIEF HM'S GREETINGS TO MONACO PRINCE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Albert II, Prince of Monaco on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to Prince Albert II. His Majesty also wished the people of Monaco further progress and prosperity.

GREETINGS TO IRAN CONVEYED

President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran received Sayyid Ya'arub bin Qahtan al Busaidy, upon the presentation of his credentials as Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The credentials presentation ceremony was held at the Republic Presidency Office in Tehran. SEE P3

FOREIGN POLICY ALIGNS WITH VISION 2040

The Foreign Ministry held its sixth annual meeting at the Diplomatic Club with the ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions and international organisations accredited to the Sultanate of Oman. The meeting served to exchange viewpoints on a number of current issues in the region and to review updates related to the national development march and Oman Vision 2040, alongside Omani foreign policy.

DETAILS ON P3

On National Day, we renew our pledge and continue the journey, reaffirming our loyalty to a land that has inherited glory across generations.

We move forward with hope as new horizons emerge before us, ensuring that the flag of Oman continues to rise high, affirming the path of progress and the vision toward a brighter tomorrow.

With hearts full of pride, we extend our warmest congratulations to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik**, to the honorable people of Oman, and to all residents of this blessed nation on the occasion of the National Day, praying that Oman may forever flourish in dignity, strength, and prosperity.

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SHORT TAKES



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali with Yasser Mohamed Ahmed Shaaban in Muscat on Tuesday.

SHURA CHAIRMAN
RECEIVES EGYPT,
ARMENIA,
UZBEKISTAN ENVOYS

MUSCAT: Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, received on Tuesday Yasser Mohamed Ahmed Shaaban, Ambassador of Egypt to the Sultanate of Oman.

The chairman welcomed the ambassador, highlighting the deep historical ties between Oman and Egypt, and the continuous progress in their relations reflecting the commitment of both leaderships to strengthening coordination across various fields, particularly in parliamentary and legislative areas.

The Egyptian ambassador expressed his pride in the fraternal relations between the two countries, noting Egypt’s aspiration to further develop joint cooperation and open new avenues for parliamentary, economic and cultural coordination. They also reviewed a number of issues of mutual interest and discussed ways to enhance future cooperation in a manner that serves shared interests and supports the Omani-Egyptian relations across various sectors.

Al Maawali also received Hratchya Poladian, Ambassador of Armenia to Oman, in a meeting aimed at strengthening avenues of cooperation between the two friendly nations.

The Armenian ambassador underscored the importance of enhancing bilateral cooperation, noting the constructive role played by Oman in supporting dialogue and international partnership.

They discussed a number of issues of mutual interest, in addition to exploring future areas of cooperation in ways that serve the mutual interests of Oman and Armenia.

In another meeting, Al Maawali met Abdesalam Khatimov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Oman, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

The chairman welcomed the ambassador, praising the level of Omani-Uzbek relations and the continuous progress they are witnessing across various fields. He affirmed the Majlis Ash’shura’s keenness to support initiatives aimed at enhancing cooperation in the legislative sphere and promoting the exchange of expertise in a manner that serves the shared interests of both countries.



Hratchya Poladian



Abdesalam Khatimov

MILITARY JUDICIARY BUILDING OPENS

The Military Judiciary Building in Al Qurum was inaugurated on Tuesday, coinciding with the country’s celebrations of the glorious National Day.

The opening was held under the auspices of Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Head of the Office of the Supreme Commander, and Supervisor of the Military Judiciary. The event was attended by a number of Ministers, Commanders of the Military and Security Services, and Commanders of the Sultan’s Armed Forces.

Al Numani unveiled the commemorative plaque, marking the official opening of the building. Afterwards, Al Numani and the attendees toured the halls of the main building and viewed its modern facilities and equipment. — **ONA**



Ministry event showcases
Omani heritage and values

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH &
MOHAMMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

OVER 50 journalists from 20 countries are attending the Ministry of Information’s event titled ‘Extended Civilisational Heritage Between Oman and the World.’ The event aims to highlight the civilisational and historical depth of the Sultanate of Oman and focus on its established roles in supporting global trends and issues.

“We are showcasing Omanis’ openness, contacts with the world, trade and cultural exchange. We are not following a global trend. This trait has been instilled in us for centuries, and we have learned it from our ancestors,” said Shaikha al Mahrouqi, Acting Director-General of International Media, Ministry of Information.

The first day of the five-day programme was held at the Oman National Museum with a panel discussion titled, ‘Oman and the World: an enduring cultural legacy.’

The main topics of the panel discussion were historical diplomatic relations, maritime heritage and the logistics sector, openness to the world, cultural and commercial exchange, historical trade relations and the significance of Oman’s unified promotional identity, investment in archaeological sites in the Sultanate of Oman and Zanzibar, and the shared heritage between Oman and the world.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Hashil al Maskari, Head of the GCC and Regional Neighbourhood Department, Foreign Ministry, explained that Oman’s foreign policy has always been built on dialogue and peaceful engagement rather than confrontation. He noted that this approach has sometimes placed Oman outside certain regional groupings, yet it has allowed Oman to keep a balanced and principled position.

“The roots of Omani diplomacy are deeply rooted in its cultural legacy,” he said.

He stated that Oman’s commitment to dialogue has enabled it to “build bridges between different sides and play an effective mediating role in addressing regional issues.”

He added that the clear and



International journalists at the Oman National Museum.

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Experts discuss Oman’s historical journey and civilisational achievements.

consistent policy — rooted in Oman’s values and diplomatic heritage — has strengthened Oman’s reputation as a trusted and neutral mediator in times of regional challenge.

HH Sayyid Dr Faris bin Turki al Said, Chairman of Oman’s Unified Promotional Identity Office, highlighted the importance of citizenship, identity and cultural continuity in shaping Oman’s future.

He emphasised that traditions may evolve in form but not in essence. He stressed that Oman can adopt new methods and modern lifestyles without losing its core values.

Saif bin Hamad al Mahrouqi, Director of Investments in Capital Markets, Oman Financial Authority, focused on the strategic partnerships between the authority and other investors.

“The investment fund is an example of economic diplomacy,” said Al Mahrouqi.

Dr Ibrahim bin Bakhit al Nudhairi, CEO of ASYAD Shipping, said Oman was known as the coast of the sea, and there are Chinese

manuscripts and Portuguese notes that talk about Omanis as seafarers. He explained, “Said bin Sultan built the Omani Empire further, and he had a fleet of 70 ships. He connected East Africa to India and the Gulf countries. He was known as the Sultan of the Sea because he used to travel back and forth. During the Renaissance, under the guidance of Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Port Sultan Qaboos advanced further and saw the launch of Salalah Port as well as Duqm, with its strategic location. ASYAD today uses a fleet of over 50 ships.”

Khaldoun Azhari, Head of Japan’s Pan-Orient News, said that Oman has prominent civilisational achievements, stressing that Oman existed before the establishment of many countries in the region, and was one of the first countries in the Arab region and the Arabian Peninsula to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge and culture. Oman expanded the bridges of civilisation to reach Africa, adding great human and civilisational value.

SHORT TAKES



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi with Abdulrahman al Mutairi in Kuwait City on Tuesday.

OMAN’S AS GUEST OF HONOUR IN KUWAIT BOOK FAIR REFLECTS DEPTH OF TIES

KUWAIT: Abdulrahman al Mutairi, Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs in the State of Kuwait, stated that the selection of the Sultanate of Oman as the Guest of Honour for the 48th Kuwait International Book Fair reflects the depth of the distinguished historical relations that unite the two countries.

This was said in a press statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) when the Kuwaiti minister received Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, upon his arrival in Kuwait to attend the fair’s opening events.

Al Mutairi added that being selected as the Guest of Honour confirms the cultural depth and ancient civilisational heritage of the Sultanate of Oman.

He clarified that the participation of the Sultanate of Oman also lends great knowledge and human value to the fair due to its intellectual production and literary creativity, which reflects the richness and diversity of Omani culture.

The 48th Kuwait International Book Fair is held under the auspices of Shaikh Ahmad Abdullah Al Ahmad al Sabah, Kuwait’s Prime Minister, under the slogan “Capital of Culture... Homeland of Books”.

This coincides with the selection of the State of Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture and Media for 2025. The events run from November 19-29, 2025. — **ONA**

CONFERENCE ON ILLICIT TRAFFICKING IN CULTURAL PROPERTY BEGINS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) and the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences organised a three-day regional conference on combating illicit trafficking in cultural property.

The conference, which kicked off in Muscat on Monday, seeks to highlight the role of the Sultanate of Oman in protecting cultural property and enhancing the country’s participation in addressing this phenomenon, alongside the global community.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam. It was attended by researchers, academics and specialists in cultural property. — **ONA**



HM 'S GREETINGS CONVEYED TO IRANIAN PRESIDENT

President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran received Sayyid Ya’arub bin Qahtan al Busaidy, upon the presentation of his credentials as Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The credentials presentation ceremony was held at the Republic Presidency Office in Tehran.

During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed the warmest greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Iranian President.

He further expressed His Majesty’s most sincere wishes for the President’s well-being and happiness, and for the continued advancement and prosperity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iranian President commended the enduring strength and resilience of the relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran. — **ONA**

Oman set to become best place for living, investing

THE Foreign Ministry on Tuesday held its sixth annual meeting at the Diplomatic Club with the ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions and international organisations accredited to the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting served to exchange viewpoints on a number of current issues in the region and to review updates related to the national development march and Oman Vision 2040, alongside Omani foreign policy.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, expressed his thanks and appreciation for the efforts made by the missions in Muscat to maintain and enhance relations of cooperation between their countries and the Sultanate of Oman. He lauded the opening of several missions over the past two years, including the embassies of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine, alongside the World Bank office, noting what this represents in terms of support for the diplomatic presence and existing partnerships with the Sultanate of Oman.

He addressed the ambitious approaches outlined in Oman Vision 2040 in the fields of international trade, foreign direct investment, joint projects and technological development, with a focus on the green transition. He emphasised that these elements form essential pillars for the next stage and that the Sultanate of Oman is working to become one of the most attractive countries in the region for living, working and investing, in addition to being a leading destination for visits.

In this context, he reviewed the decision to move towards implementing a personal income tax in the future, clarifying that this approach reflects a long-term vision to secure sustainable income sources for a stage where reliance

Foreign Minister addressed the ambitious approaches outlined in Oman Vision 2040 in the fields of international trade, foreign direct investment, joint projects and technological development, with a focus on the green transition



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy addresses ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions and international organisations in Muscat on Tuesday. — **ONA**

on oil and gas will no longer be the basis for cementing social solidarity. He stated that the fair and proportional contribution of citizens represents a financial base for the robustness and harmony of society, supporting the quality of life.

The Foreign Minister referred to the ratification by His Majesty the Sultan of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, considering it a pivotal step in aligning the Sultanate of Oman with international human rights frameworks and a fundamental contribution to the internal development march.

On the political front, he touched upon developments in the situation in the Palestinian territories, and the tragic conditions in the Gaza Strip in particular. He affirmed that Israel’s continued violation of international law through its occupation of the State of Palestine and military operations targeting civilians represents the most dangerous challenge to achieving security and stability in the region.

He expressed the Sultanate of Oman’s appreciation for the

countries that have granted full diplomatic recognition to the State of Palestine, as these steps have added strength to the position of the global majority supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent state.

He also addressed the ceasefire agreement reached on October 9, expressing the Sultanate of Oman’s appreciation for the role played by the parties that contributed to its achievement, notably the United States, Qatar, Egypt, Türkiye and Palestinian representatives. He simultaneously pointed out that Israel’s clear and repeated violations of this ceasefire, which led to the fall of hundreds of Palestinian martyrs, pose a serious challenge to the credibility of the commitment to this agreement.

Sayyid Badr called for every possible effort by the international community to exert effective pressure on Israel to ensure respect for the ceasefire as a minimum requirement to protect civilians and prepare the ground for any serious political effort. — **ONA**

Virtual reality technology eases mental stress of cancer patients

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada) launched the Mulhim VR project developed by Yusr Smart Solutions, which uses virtual reality for meditation, deep breathing and stress reduction.

The launch ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation, in the presence of Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Chairperson of the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED).

The project’s launch comes within the framework of Riyada’s efforts to

promote innovation and empower SMEs to develop technological solutions.

“Developed by skilled young Omanis across various sectors, this programme was designed to benefit the healthcare sector, particularly cancer patients requiring extended treatment. Experiences in institutions implementing this programme have demonstrated a reduction in stress, fatigue and exhaustion, as well as an improvement in mental well-being,” said Dr Al Mandhari.

Amira al Busaidy, CEO and founder of the Mulhim VR project, said: “The idea for the project stemmed from the patients’ need for an escape from the hospital environment that would help them



Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Chairperson of ASMED, with Amira al Busaidy, CEO and founder of the Mulhim VR project.

relax, reduce anxiety and raise their morale. I believe that technology like virtual reality can be effectively harnessed to support the patient’s mental health.”

The project relies on carefully designed therapeutic virtual environments that combine calming visuals with therapeutic sound effects to enhance users’ psychological well-being. The project is currently being implemented in three major healthcare institutions in the Sultanate of Oman: the Royal Hospital, Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCRC) and Ibri Hospital.

Yusr Smart Solutions is one of the companies incubated at Riyada’s

Creative Industries Incubator. It benefited from technical and mentorship support programmes that contributed to developing the project and transforming it into a viable product for healthcare institutions.

The Authority affirms that the project represents a successful model of entrepreneurial innovation and reflects the role of incubation programmes in empowering national talent to develop technological solutions that serve the community and support vital sectors.

The launch included the signing of cooperation agreements between Mulhim VR and OXY OMAN, Royal Hospital, SQCCRC and Ibri Hospital.

USHERING IN A NEW CHAPTER

C E L E B R A T E S G L O R I O U S N A T I O N A L D A Y O N T H U R S D A Y



Oman's education sector demonstrates positive development in academic and research infrastructure.



The Sultanate of Oman has further secured qualitative triumphs in the realm of organ transplantation.

THE Sultanate of Oman will mark on Thursday its Glorious National Day, commemorating the Al Busaid State Foundation Day on November 20 each year. This historic occasion embodies the patriotic spirit of this blessed nation's people as they advance with renewed determination to build their homeland under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The profound pride of the nation's Monarch in the people of Oman reflects the deep unity between the Leader and his loyal citizens. This national cohesion represents a fundamental element in the success of achievements realised during this era of renewed Renaissance. Throughout history, the Omanis have stood united as an impregnable fortress, guided by enlightened faith.

The supreme commitment to developing education, higher education, scientific research, and innovation has been manifested in significant accomplishments aligned with Oman Vision 2040 priorities. During his visit to Sultan Faisal bin Turki School for Boys in the Wilayat of Al Amerat, His Majesty the Sultan emphasised the crucial importance of equipping students with knowledge in modern technology and integrating it into educational processes across schools destined to become future models. The total number of educators reached 66,379 male and female teachers, distributed across 1,303 schools. The number of administrative and technical staff in government schools stood at 11,183, comprising 4,420 males and 6,763 females. Regarding the number of teachers in special education schools, it totalled 241 male and female educators, with the aggregate count of administrative personnel in special education schools being 46 male and female administrators.

During this year (2025), 16 new school buildings were to be operationalised across 9 educational directorates. The construction of these schools has observed the highest standards of security and safety.

Oman's education sector demonstrates positive development in academic and research infrastructure, as evidenced by the 2026 rankings from the British institution Quacquarelli Symonds. The QS World University Rankings 2026 features five Omani higher education institutions, with

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) achieving remarkable progress by advancing 28 positions to secure 334th place globally.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Under the academic sector's Performance-Based Institutional Funding Program, support has been extended to approximately 2,228 research projects between 2018 and 2024. The past year alone witnessed the funding of 475 research initiatives with a total allocation of approximately RO 2.4 million. The Strategic Research Program, designed to address specific challenges within government entities, has supported 74 research projects. Meanwhile, the industrial sector's EJAAD Program has facilitated 61 research projects with a total investment of RO 2.5 million.

KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

The Sultanate of Oman is strategically enhancing its national scientific publishing infrastructure and elevating the standards of its peer-reviewed journals, in direct alignment with its transition towards a knowledge-based economy. This systematic development of scientific research and academic publishing frameworks represents a fundamental pillar in building a knowledge-driven society and strengthening the nation's competitive standing globally.

In the domain of development and social protection, the Sultanate of Oman persists in its efforts to build a comprehensive social care system. This system aims to provide social and economic support and empowerment to all segments of society, including the family, the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, children, and civil society organisations. The ultimate objective is to forge a society that is both economically and socially empowered through the introduction of a suite of new programmes and projects across various developmental sectors. These initiatives are designed to advance social work, support and empower the most vulnerable groups, establish effective social protection mechanisms, and strengthen family cohesion and social solidarity. This is in addition to activating community partnerships and enhancing resource efficiency to deliver high-quality social services.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

The social protection system in the Sultanate of Oman has undergone a comprehensive and qualitative transformation across all levels and trajectories. The Social Protection Law has redefined the very concept of protection to encompass all stages of life, from childhood to advanced age, establishing programmes that cover retirement, end-of-service benefits, maternity, disability, direct cash security for limited-income families, and savings.

Statistics released by the Social Protection Fund at the end of September 2025 indicate the participation of 92 active entities from the public sector and 29,370 from the private sector. The number of insured Omani workers surpassed 604,000 citizens, with over 121,000 active pensions disbursed. Regarding the sector for persons with disabilities, His Majesty the Sultan issued his lofty directives in September 2025 to establish a new sector at the level of an under-secretary within the structure of the Ministry of Social Development. This sector is tasked with overseeing all matters that would elevate the services provided to persons with disabilities. To formalise this, His Majesty the Sultan issued Royal Decree No 92/2025 in October 2025, promulgating the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This law embodies Oman's commitment to preserving the dignity of persons with disabilities and guaranteeing their rights. Moreover, His Majesty issued his Royal orders in April 2025, approving RO 7 million to establish the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Care and Rehabilitation Centre and to study the needs of the governorates for such centres.

CHILD PROTECTION

A number of specialised rehabilitative and productive programmes and projects are being implemented. The Child Protection Guide and the National Guide for the Care of Children in Foster Families have been launched. Furthermore, childcare centres and youth homes provide an alternative family environment that offers comprehensive care encompassing living, educational, social, psychological, and health aspects. The number of children enrolled in the centre by the end of the first half of 2025 reached 83 children, consisting of 33 males and 50 females, while the number of those enrolled in youth homes reached 77

youths. Meanwhile, the home care programme for the elderly served 1,327 beneficiaries.

The Sultanate of Oman confers supreme priority upon the healthcare sector, with the noble objective of delivering comprehensive and multifaceted medical care to its citizens and residents, embracing prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and health promotion. A strategic direction enshrining health as a paramount priority within Oman Vision 2040 has been articulated, crystallised in the pursuit of "a pioneering health system governed by global standards."

HEALTH SECTOR

The national report monitoring the indicators of Oman Vision 2040 for the health sector revealed conspicuous advancement in national indicators throughout 2024 and 2025. The Sultanate of Oman ascended to 55th position globally and 6th within the Middle East and North Africa in the Legatum Prosperity Index – Health

pillar, representing an advancement of six ranks since 2019.

The inauguration of the National Health Policy constitutes a definitive road map for establishing an integrated and sustainable health system. In parallel, specialised initiatives dedicated to the enhancement of maternal and child health have diligently pursued the refinement of specialised services via the National Screening Program

for Non-Communicable Diseases, the Diabetes Care Program, advanced fertility services, oncology care, cardiac care, and the combat of tuberculosis and respiratory diseases.

The Sultanate of Oman has further secured qualitative triumphs in the realm of organ transplantation, most eminent among them the National Centre's successful implantation of an artificial heart, the indigenisation of organ transplant services, and the successful recommencement of corneal transplant operations at Al Nahdha Hospital. Present endeavours are focused upon the establishment of an eye bank, aiming to achieve self-sufficiency within a five-year horizon. The inaugural phase of the organ transplantation programme witnessed a pronounced increase in kidney, liver, and corneal transplant procedures, crowned by the performance of the first heart transplant for an Omani citizen within the Sultanate of Oman. A regulatory statute was also promulgated to ensure the protection of the rights of donors and recipients within this vital domain. — ONA



The national cohesion represents a fundamental element in the success of achievements realised during this era of renewed Renaissance.

SHORT TAKES



Sulaiman bin Nasser al Hiji, MoH Under-Secretary, and other officials at the workshop in Al Seeb on Tuesday.

NATIONAL GUIDE TO ENSURE BEST SERVICES TO THE DISABLED

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

The Ministry of Social Development held an introductory workshop about the national guide on standards for licensing and classification of institutions that provide services to persons with disabilities. The workshop was held under the auspices of Sulaiman bin Nasser al Hiji, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative and Financial Affairs, at the National Autism Centre in Al Seeb on Tuesday.

The workshop included a visual presentation on the new national guide. The guide is an output of the Disability Services and Programmes Development Lab and serves as a practical reference to assist institutions and professionals working in the disability sector in adhering to the best standards. It aims to promote transparency and accountability in service delivery, encourage innovation and investment in the sector, and support efforts towards the comprehensive inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

Dr Nadia bint Ali al Ajmiyah, Director of the National Autism Centre, stated: “This guide is an important tool for all institutions working in the field of services for people with disabilities. It includes clear and comprehensive guidelines on regulating and developing licensing procedures for these institutions to conduct activities, programmes and services related to healthcare, treatment, rehabilitation, or education for people with disabilities. It also outlines the steps and requirements for licensing existing or newly established institutions or units, as well as the renewal of their licences and the licensing and renewal of specialised staff working in these institutions or units.”

The general framework of the national guide for governmental, non-profit, and private institutions providing services to people with disabilities was reviewed. The licensing requirements for institutions providing services and programmes for people with disabilities were also discussed, covering the licensing and renewal of licences for private or non-profit institutions or units owned by individuals, the licensing and renewal of licences for private or non-profit institutions or units owned through partnerships, and the licensing of professional staff working in private or non-profit institutions or units.

The guide represents a significant step towards achieving Oman Vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Oman Climate Week to be held in September 2026

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, NOV 18

THE Environment Authority on Tuesday announced the second edition of Oman Climate Week will be held from September 14 to 16, 2026. Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, while addressing a media conference in Muscat, explained the importance of gathering the experts from across the globe to fight many environmental challenges the world faces today, ranging from high temperatures that have been causing melting of ice, causing water levels to increase and depletion of oxygen in ocean waters.

“If we lose one whale, it is as though we are losing a forest. So it is important we gather our thoughts to protect the environment,” Dr Al Amri said.

The event is scheduled to take place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and many international working papers are expected to be published for the first time.

Organised by the Environment Authority in collaboration with the Arabian Research Bureau (ARB) and coordinated with a number of regional and international organisations, government agencies, academic institutions, research centres, universities and colleges, Oman Climate Week 2026 aims to foster collective action and



Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, and other dignitaries at the event in Muscat on Tuesday.

“If we lose one whale, it is as though we are losing a forest. So it is important we gather our thoughts to protect the environment

DR ABDULLAH AL AMRI
Chairman of the Environment Authority

innovation in addressing pressing environmental challenges.

Dr Al Amri emphasised the importance of Oman Climate Week as a national and regional platform for exploring effective solutions to diverse environmental issues, strengthening international cooperation, and ensuring alignment with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030. He highlighted the event’s role in supporting global environmental efforts, facilitating regional and international partnerships, encouraging private sector adoption of sustainable solutions, showcasing Oman’s pioneering contributions in environmental forums and promoting active

community engagement. The conference is to present high-level sessions on climate finance, energy transition, water and food security, biodiversity, women in sustainability, and climate leadership.

Amr bin Abdullah Baaboud, Chief Executive Officer of Arabian Research Bureau (ARB), outlined the key features of the upcoming edition, including the launch of the GreenX Exhibition.

He said that the innovative platform will promote concepts of environmental sustainability and green economy principles within the business sector.

Baaboud explained that the core goals for Oman Climate Week are fostering climate action, facilitating regional cooperation, driving local and regional business, supporting the adoption and scaling of solutions, and encouraging community engagement.

He noted that the exhibition is a dedicated showcase for the circular economy featuring recycling and waste management, clean energy, water reuse and biodiversity solutions.

The event is expected to attract more than 2,000 participants from regional and international organisations and countries worldwide, with over 200 speakers from Oman and abroad and more than 50 dialogue sessions covering a wide range of environmental topics and issues.

Over 30,000 people get diabetic check

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 18

As many as 30,799 people, comprising both citizens and expatriates, got themselves screened for diabetes and risk assessment at the 120 special centres over two days last week.

The screening entered into Guinness World Records by breaking the earlier record of 12,714 done in 24 hours in just 5 hours and 18 minutes.

This initiative was jointly arranged by the Ministry of



Dr Muhanna bin Nasser al Musalhi with the screening team who set a new Guinness World Record.

Health and Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals, coinciding with World Diabetes Day.

Speaking to the Observer, Dr

Muhanna bin Nasser al Musalhi, Director-General of Private Health Institutions, Ministry of Health, praised this joint initiative and the achievement.

“The community initiative achieved its goals, and the participation of more than 30,799 citizens and residents demonstrates the community’s awareness of the importance of early screening and prevention of chronic diseases. The ministry provides free checkups for Omanis aged 35 and above at its various health centres,

and I encourage citizens to take advantage of them. The Ministry of Health supports the private health sector and considers it an important partner and an integral part of the comprehensive health coverage system. The ministry maintains strict oversight of service quality and has conducted over 9,500 inspection visits in the last three years.”

This screening found 1,397 participants to be High Risk, 8,165 were found at moderate risk and 21,237 at low risk.

Omani wins GCC research award



RIYADH: Colonel Rashid bin Mohammed al Saidi, senior consultant in ophthalmology and eye surgery at the Medical City for Military and Security Services, won the Best Scientific Research Award at the level of the GCC countries for 2025.

The award was presented at a ceremony held at King Saud University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This honour is in appreciation of Al Saidi’s excellence of his scientific research and its scientific impact on developing treatment methods. — ONA

Tender Notice for the sale of used materials
Tender No. AW/T/PH1/01/2025

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

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

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

PUBLIC NOTICE – SALE OF FIXED ASSETS (AS-IS, WHERE-IS)

OMAN CERAMICS CO. SAOG (UNDER LIQUIDATION)

Oman Ceramics Co. SAOG (under liquidation) invites interested parties to submit offers to purchase certain fixed assets on an **as-is and where-is** basis.

Inspection (on site):

Date: Sunday, 23 November 2025

Time: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Location: Oman Ceramics Co SAOG, CJM2+5Q8, Sohar, Oman

Offer Submission:

- ♦ Offers to be submitted by email no later than **Sunday, 30 November 2025**.
- ♦ Email for submissions/queries: om_omanceramicscompany@pwc.com
- ♦ Offers must remain valid for a **minimum of 180 days** from the submission deadline.

Key Terms:

- ♦ Sale is on an **as-is, where-is** basis with **no warranties** expressed or implied.
- ♦ Prospective buyers are responsible for conducting their own inspection and due diligence.
- ♦ The Liquidator reserves the right to accept or reject any offer, in whole or in part, without assigning any reason.
- ♦ All costs relating to removal/transportation of purchased items are for the buyer’s account and must comply with site HSE and security requirements.

For directions, inspection coordination, or further information, please contact us on **+968 9729 6062 / +968 7920 8823** and or the email above.

WORLD

KIDNAPPINGRAIDS



Parents of students abducted sit around discarded shoes in Nigeria. — Reuters file photo

NIGERIA ORDERS ‘DAY AND NIGHT’ SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED SCHOOLGIRLS

LAGOS: A top Nigerian general has ordered his troops to fight “day and night” to rescue 25 schoolgirls whose kidnapping in the northwest has been seized on by US President Donald Trump’s followers. The early Monday morning raid on a secondary school in Kebbi State was the latest in a string of abductions of schoolchildren in northern Nigeria, more than a decade after Boko Haram’s infamous kidnapping of 276 girls in the northeast sparked international uproar.

While taking place in the north, the Kebbi kidnapping has become another flashpoint to draw the ire of the US right following Trump’s threats of military intervention over the alleged killing of Nigeria’s Christians. “You must continue day and night fighting.

We must find these children,” Major General Waidi Shaibu, recently promoted to chief of army staff, told troops deployed to Kebbi State on Monday. Shaibu urged the soldiers to “leave no stone unturned” in the search for the schoolgirls.

Though police rushed to the Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School in the town of Maga, the gang had managed to scale the fence and abduct the students after killing the school’s vice-principal. Kebbi is caught between the threat from neighbouring Niger and the scourge of criminal gangs who loot villages while ransoming, kidnapping and killing residents across the north of Africa’s most populous country.

Kebbi State police said on Tuesday that the abducted schoolchildren were all Muslim. But Republican Riley Moore of the US House of Representatives, in a post on X urging his followers to pray for the 25 girls, seized on the kidnapping to echo Trump’s claims of the persecution of Nigeria’s Christians. “While we don’t have all the details on this horrific attack, we know that the attack occurred in a Christian enclave in Northern Nigeria,” Moore wrote.

Amina Hassan, the wife of the murdered vice-principal, Hassan Makuku, told Nigerian television that she had tried to wake her husband up after hearing noise outside their house at 3:30 am, before the gunmen burst in.

“We started struggling with them and one of them pulled out his gun and shot my husband, then he dragged me by my hand outside the house and I told them to leave me alone, that I would not go with them since they have killed the father of my children,” Hassan said. “I was still arguing with them when my daughter came out, then they left me and went to her and took her with them,” she said, adding that her daughter managed to escape into the bush after the attackers got distracted by the schoolgirls.

Monday’s raid was the second mass school abduction in Kebbi in four years, following a June 2021 incident when bandits took more than 100 students and staff members from a government college. Those students were released in batches over two years after parents raised ransoms. — AFP

SYRIA OPENS FIRST TRIAL OVER COASTAL VIOLENCE AFTER ASSAD’S FALL

ALEPPO: Syria on Tuesday began the first trial of suspects in a wave of bloodshed in March during which pro-government fighters killed hundreds, a case seen as a test of President Ahmed al Sharaa’s promise of accountability. Judicial sources said the group of a dozen defendants was evenly split between people alleged to have taken part in attacks, and others accused of taking part in attacks on government forces by groups loyal to the ousted former president

Bashar al Assad, which sparked the violence.

The bloodshed marked one of the worst eruptions of violence since rebels led by Sharaa toppled Assad in December, ending 54 years of rule by the Assad family.

The defendants went on trial in a public session at the Aleppo Court of Justice in northern Syria. The judicial sources said they faced charges that included fomenting civil war, secession, premeditated murder and looting. Defendants

from both sides were questioned on charges of killing civilians and forming militias that carried out attacks on army checkpoints and government installations, according to a source in court.The prosecutor general has pressed charges against around 300 people linked to armed factions affiliated with the army, and around 265 who belonged to Assad-era paramilitary groups, Jumaa al Anzi, head of a fact-finding committee appointed by Sharaa, said. — Reuters

UN chief welcomes Security Council’s vote of Gaza plan

UNITED

Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday called the passing of a US-backed resolution on Gaza an important step in the consolidation of the ceasefire, in a statement sent to reporters. The UN Security Council on Monday voted to adopt a US-drafted resolution endorsing President Donald Trump’s plan to end the war in Gaza and authorising an international stabilisation force there. “It is essential now to translate the diplomatic momentum into concrete and urgently needed steps on the ground,” Guterres said in the statement, adding that the UN is committed to scaling up humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

Guterres also said it was important to continue advancing to the second phase of the US plan, leading to a political process to achieve a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians. UN agencies have complained that, more than a month after the ceasefire, they still cannot get enough aid into Gaza to meet the needs of millions of people displaced and traumatised by the two-year war. “We are managing to get more in, but it’s not enough,” Ricardo Pires, spokesperson for the UN children’s agency, told a Geneva press briefing on Tuesday.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin said that the UN Security Council’s adoption of a resolution endorsing US President Donald Trump’s plan to end the war in Gaza was a necessary first step on a long road towards peace. “The UN resolution is the first



A view of destroyed buildings in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

Guterres also said it was important to continue advancing to the second phase of the US plan, leading to a political process to achieve a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians

step in a long road towards peace. That step was needed because we could not embark on anything else before we had a ceasefire,” Shahin told reporters in Manila during a visit to the Philippines.

Shahin said there were still other issues that needed to be addressed, including Palestinian self-determination and eventual Palestinian independence, and that the process for implementing Trump’s plan must be governed by international law. She said that although Trump’s plan alludes to possible Palestinian statehood and only after the PA carries out reforms, that issue could be taken up later. “As long as these elements are in there, we’re happy with this first step,” Shahin said.

The Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority earlier welcomed the vote and has said it is ready to

take part in Trump’s plan, which doesn’t outline a clear role for the PA and makes vague references to statehood. European and Arab states have said that Gaza must be governed by the Palestinian Authority and that there must be a clear pathway to Palestinian independence. The Israeli government, which opposes the idea of an independent Palestinian state, rejects any involvement by the Palestinian Authority.

Under the initial stage of Trump’s plan, a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas came into effect on October 10. Both sides have accused each other of violating the truce, but it continues to hold. Hamas has since released most of the hostages from Gaza. The remains of three deceased hostages are still held.

The text of the resolution says member states can take part in the Trump-chaired Board of Peace, envisioned as a transitional authority that would oversee reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza. It also authorises the international stabilisation force, which would ensure a process of demilitarising Gaza, including by decommissioning weapons and destroying military infrastructure. Hamas, in a statement, reiterated that it will not disarm and argued that its fight against Israel is legitimate resistance, potentially pitting the militant group against the international force authorised by the resolution. “The resolution imposes an international guardianship mechanism on the Gaza Strip, which our people and their factions reject.” — Reuters

SAUDI ARABIA, US TO TALK OVER SUDAN

RIYDAH: Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was set to press US President Donald Trump to personally intervene to help end the war in Sudan during talks in Washington on Tuesday, five people familiar with the matter said. The sources — two Arab diplomats and three western diplomats — said the Saudi Crown Prince believed Trump’s direct pressure was needed to break a logjam in talks to end more than two and a half years of war.

In raising the issue with Trump, Saudi Arabia is seeking to appeal to the US president’s view of himself as a peacemaker, the sources said, with Trump having said repeatedly that he was seeking a Nobel Peace Prize for his work to address global conflicts. The Saudi government’s media office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Saudi plan to discuss Sudan with Trump was earlier reported by the Middle East Eye website. — Reuters

LARGEST SEIZURE

Singapore seizes record rhino horn haul



Singapore has seized over \$800,000 worth of illegal rhino horn and animal parts hidden in air cargo bound for Laos in the largest haul of its kind discovered in the city-state. Disguised as “furniture fittings”, the stash was found 10 days ago after a cargo handler “detected a strong odour” coming from a package, Singapore’s National Parks Board said. “This marks the largest seizure of rhinoceros horns in Singapore to date.” — AFP

PRIORITY TARGETS

Spain smashes ring of Mexican cartel



Spanish police said they had broken up the local operations of a powerful Mexican drug cartel designated a terrorist organisation by US President Donald Trump, making 20 arrests. The Jalisco New Generation Cartel smuggled “large shipments of cocaine and methamphetamine” from South America for distribution in Spain and other countries. Among the detainees were two “priority targets” of the US Drug Enforcement Administration. — AFP

THE FORCED VICTIMS

15 children dead from Colombian strikes



Colombian military strikes targeting guerrilla fighters have claimed the lives of 15 children since August, all of whom were abducted by armed groups in the soldiers’ crosshairs, authorities said. President Gustavo Petro reported the deaths of five children in two recent military bombings, adding to seven reported by the office of Colombia’s human rights ombudsman. All were “victims of forced recruitment by criminals who led them into hostilities,” Petro said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A person votes at Nivaagaards Malerisamling, an art museum, in Nivaa, Denmark. — Reuters

DANES LOCAL ELECTIONS MARRED BY CYBERATTACKS

COPENHAGEN: Denmark voted in local and regional elections expected to deliver a blow to Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen’s Social Democrats, after a campaign marred by cyberattacks. In Denmark, 75 per cent of public spending is managed through local governments, highlighting the importance of the elections. Tuesday’s vote follows a final week of campaigning marked by cyberattacks targeting the websites of the government, municipalities and political parties, claimed by pro-Russian hacker group NoName057(16). “DDoS attacks are part of the landscape,” the Danish Civil Protection Agency said in a statement, noting that the intelligence services had anticipated an increase in such attacks around the elections. DDoS (distributed denial-of-service) attacks halt access to a website by overloading its servers with traffic. Local issues such as schools, healthcare and elderly care have dominated the campaign, Moller Hansen said. — AFP

TWO UKRAINIANS SUSPECTED OF POLISH RAIL SABOTAGE

WARSAW: Two Ukrainians working for Moscow have been named as suspects in two cases of rail line sabotage in Poland, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said during a speech in parliament. The pair “have been operating and cooperating with Russian services for a long time”, Tusk said, citing information from prosecutors and investigating authorities. He added that authorities are aware of the suspects’ identities, but that they would not be made public pending further investigation. The two acts, which occurred between Saturday and Monday, damaged a railway line helping to supply close ally Ukraine. Tusk referred to the disruptions as “perhaps the most serious national security situation in Poland since the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine”. The first incident involved a steel clamp, which was attached to a track along the line and “likely intended to derail a train”, said Tusk. The second was the detonation of a military-grade explosive device during the passage of a freight train along the track. Tusk claimed that the purpose of the attack also involved its “social and political consequences,” including the buildup of anti-Ukrainian sentiments. — AFP

MACRON URGES ACTION ON MARSEILLE DRUGS AFTER ‘TURNING POINT’ MURDER

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron urged more measures against drug crime after the brother of a prominent anti-narcotics activist was murdered last week in the southern city of Marseille, a minister said. France’s second-largest city is struggling to battle drug crime, with more than a dozen people killed since the start of the year in turf wars and other disputes linked to cocaine and cannabis dealing. Macron convened an emergency meeting with cabinet ministers

after an unidentified gunman killed the 20-year old younger brother of activist and Greens party member Amine Kessaci, 22, in Marseille on Thursday last week. Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said after the meeting at the Elysee that Thursday’s murder had been a “turning point” and Macron had called on participants to “up” the battle against drug dealing. “Unfortunately, it’s an act of intimidation that is very directly linked to trafficking,” he said of the killing of Mehdi Kessaci, who had

no criminal record and wanted to be a police officer. Nunez said he and Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin would be heading to Marseille on Thursday, ahead of Macron visiting the southern city in December. Nunez said the president had asked ministers to work on better intercepting drugs entering France, including through “detection systems for flows at ports and airports” and more cooperation with the judicial authorities of foreign countries. — AFP

First draft of climate pact lands at COP30 in Brazil

COP30 hosts Brazil on Tuesday produced a first draft of an agreement between nations at the UN climate talks after negotiations on the sticking points stretched late into the night. The draft includes a sweep of options on the most difficult issues, reflecting the gulf between the nearly 200 nations in Belem and the work still ahead to refine a final compromise. The nine-page “Global Mutirao” document — a reference to an Indigenous concept of uniting toward a common goal — came after Brazil on Monday urged delegates to work day and night to produce an agreement by midweek. The text leaves open a wide range of possibilities on the flashpoint issues in Belem — trade measures, finance for poorer nations, and the global inadequacy of carbon-cutting goals. But the quick turnaround of a draft on these thorny points suggested the COP30 presidency was confident it could soon have an outcome, observers said. “It represents a steady progression from the previous iteration and is likely one of the earliest releases of such a clean text in recent COP history,” said Li Shuo, a climate analyst at the Asia Society Policy Institute. The draft reflects the stark division between a coalition wanting a “roadmap” on a fossil fuel phase-out, and a bloc led by oil-producing countries opposing any such effort. It proposes an optional “workshop” to discuss “low carbon solutions,” or a high-level ministerial roundtable on pathways to help countries “progressively overcome their dependency on fossil fuels.” A third option proposes no text at all. The draft also raises the possibility of assessing national climate pledges annually, instead of every five years, to assess global progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions more frequently. It also suggested financial assistance from wealthy countries to developing ones for adaptation to climate change should be tripled by 2030 or 2035 — a key demand from poorer nations. Proposals to address concerns over trade were also included, as China leads a push in



Indigenous people walk past a giant inflatable globe during the “Indigenous People Global March” in Belem, Brazil. — AFP

Belem against “unilateral” measures and the EU’s carbon price on imports in particular. On this sensitive issue, four proposals were outlined in the draft, including the creation of a summit under the UN Secretary-General on climate trade disputes. The marathon climate talks are supposed to end on Friday after close to two weeks of negotiation, but they frequently run into overtime. COP30 hosts Brazil on Monday extended negotiations into the night at the UN climate talks as they pushed for a rapid compromise among countries very much at deep odds. Following a difficult first week, Brazil set a deadline for nations to finalise “a significant part” of the negotiations by Tuesday evening for approval the following day. “It’s super difficult as you know... but all involved thought that it’s worth a try” said COP30 President Andre Correa do Lago in the rainforest city of Belem where the talks are underway. Sleepless nights are assured, with Correa do Lago extending the programme so

negotiators were “able to continue working at night.” They have their work cut out. China and India are leading a push for COP30 to adopt a decision against unilateral trade barriers, singling out the EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) for attack. Tested since 2023 and set to become fully operational in 2026, CBAM targets imports of carbon-intensive goods such as steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen. The head of China’s COP30 delegation, Li Gao, said last week that nations should “avoid the negative impact of, for example, geopolitical unilateralism or protectionism.” But the EU’s climate commissioner, Wopke Hoekstra, hit back at attacks over the bloc’s flagship policy and defended carbon pricing as “something that we need”. “We’re not going to be lured into the suggestion that actually CBAM is a unilateral trade measure. And in that realm, we’re also not going to discuss it,” Hoekstra said in a news conference. — AFP

UN says lacks billions of dollars to feed world’s hungry

ROME: The UN’s World Food Programme warned on Tuesday that funding cuts mean it will struggle to feed even a third of the 318 million people facing severe hunger in 2026. “Declines in global humanitarian funding are forcing WFP to prioritise food assistance to roughly one third of those in need,” targeting 110 million of the most vulnerable, it said in a statement. That would cost \$13 billion, the agency estimated – but warned that “current funding forecasts indicate WFP may only receive close to half that goal”. The WFP’s largest donor is the United States which, under President Donald Trump, has cut foreign aid, including to UN agencies. Other big donors, including some European nations, have also shrunk their humanitarian budgets. The 318 million people facing acute hunger is more than double the figure recorded in 2019, as conflict, extreme weather

and economic instability have taken their toll, the WFP said. UN agencies this year declared famine in Gaza and parts of Sudan, something that WFP executive director Cindy McCain called “completely unacceptable in the 21st century”. In a foreword to the WFP’s 2026 Global Outlook report, she said the world’s response “remains slow, fragmented and underfunded”. “Global aid now covers less than half of total needs, with steep reductions in food assistance. Almost all operations have had to cut food and cash, and prioritise which vulnerable group receive help,” she wrote. “At the same time, attacks on aid workers have surged, revealing a growing disregard for international humanitarian law.” For those facing hunger in 2026, 41 million people are classified as facing emergency or worse levels. Last week, both UN food agencies —



A World Food Programme’s flag flutters on the roof of WFP’s headquarters, in Rome. — Reuters

WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) — warned that millions more people around the globe could face famine, with

funding shortfalls worsening already dire conditions. The joint report from the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food

Programme said conflict and violence were driving acute food insecurity in the majority of the countries identified at risk. The Rome-based agencies listed Haiti, Mali, Palestine, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen as the worst, “where populations face an imminent risk of catastrophic hunger”. Also classified as a “very high concern” were Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria, with Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya and the situation of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh also making the list. “We are on the brink of a completely preventable hunger catastrophe that threatens widespread starvation in multiple countries,” said WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain, warning that a failure to act “will only drive further instability, migration, and conflict.” — AFP

OPINION

How children learn strength through our softness



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

WE often imagine resilience as something firm and unshakeable, a quality forged through grit, discipline and hard lessons. Yet, in the quiet realities of parenting, a different truth reveals itself: children do not grow strong because we are tough. They grow strong because we are soft. Softness is often misunderstood as weakness, but in the emotional world of childhood, softness is presence, attunement, and the steady reassurance that says, “I see you. I’m here. You don’t have to face this alone.”

When a child is met with softness, they develop a foundation far more powerful than toughness could ever offer. They learn that big emotions do not break relationships, and that moments of overwhelm are not something to fear or hide from. A child who cries and is met with calm presence learns that sadness is safe. A child who trembles with worry and is held gently learns that fear does not mean failure. A child who erupts in frustration and is guided rather than silenced, learns that anger can be understood rather than

punished.

In each of these moments, the child’s nervous system receives a message that becomes part of their internal architecture: “I can have feelings and still be safe. I can struggle and still be loved. I can fall apart and still belong.” This inner safety becomes the soil where resilience grows. It is not the absence of challenges, but the presence of connection that strengthens a child’s heart.

Softness, however, is not permissiveness. It does not mean saying yes to everything or avoiding boundaries. Softness means being grounded, steady, and firm in a way that is not frightening. When children experience boundaries delivered with warmth, they learn that limits are not punishments but expressions of care. They understand that guidance is not control but protection, and that structure is not a cage but a container that allows them to thrive. Through this, they internalise both respect for themselves and compassion for others: two qualities that sit at the heart of resilience.

Children do not learn resilience by watching us suppress or deny our emotions.

A child raised with softness grows into a person with an inner voice that is encouraging rather than critical. They approach difficulty with flexibility instead of fear. They trust themselves because they were trusted first.

They learn it by witnessing how we move through them. When a parent says, “I’m feeling overwhelmed, so I’m going to take a breath,” or “I’m frustrated, but I can handle this,” the child learns emotional regulation through example rather than instruction. They discover that emotions are not emergencies, that vulnerability is human, and that strength is the ability to navigate discomfort, not avoid it.

A child raised with softness grows into a person with an inner voice that is encouraging rather than critical. They approach difficulty with flexibility instead of fear. They trust themselves because they were trusted first. They know how to soothe themselves because someone once soothed them.

This is resilience: not the hardened surface we often imagine, but a steady inner confidence shaped through connection. Softness builds children who can bend without breaking, feel without drowning, and rise again with courage. In the end, it is through our softness that their strength is born.

COP-AND-TRADE? TARIFFS, CARBON TAX WEIGH ON CLIMATE TALKS

ISSAM AHMED

In Belem, the Brazilian city hosting COP30, it’s hard to miss the BYD Dolphin Mini — the Chinese hatchback that’s dominating the local electric vehicle market, even as the company races to catch up in Europe and is absent in North America.

Trade-restrictive measures loom large over this year’s UN climate summit, with China pushing for wider market access for its green technologies and major developing economies challenging Europe over its new carbon border tax on carbon-intensive imports like steel and fertilizer.

Even smaller developing countries whose exports aren’t targeted by Europe’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) fear broader measures to come.

“Trade, at this COP, unlike previous COPs, has already been elevated,” Li Shuo, director of the China Climate Hub at the Asia Society Policy Institute, told AFP. “We can already expect that trade will form the most prominent part of the outcome.”

Traditionally, climate ambition and finance have dominated discussions — how far major emitters will curb pollution, and how much money rich nations will provide to help developing countries adapt and accelerate their transition away from fossil fuels.

Countries including China, India and Brazil have repeatedly tried to put trade on COP agendas, without success. That’s changing.

A draft text issued by the Brazilian presidency on Tuesday — seen as paving the way for the final outcome text — listed trade as the second of its four top bullet points.

The tone was set earlier at a leaders’ summit in November, when Chinese Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang urged countries to “remove trade barriers and ensure the free flow of quality green products.”

The EU imposes steep tariffs on Chinese EVs — reaching up to over 45 per cent depending on the company — while Canada and the United States go far higher still, exceeding 100 per cent.

A Southeast Asian negotiator said these realities rankle countries in Asia, which are buying up cheap Chinese green tech to accelerate their transitions, and find it “illogical” and “inconsistent” that Western nations are spurning the chance to do the same.

“We need to achieve the radical decarbonisation of the global economy in the next two decades if we are to meet the Paris temperature goals,” Alden Meyer of the think tank E3G said.

“To the extent trade policies are creating barriers to achieving that objective, that’s a legitimate topic.” — AFP

Gen Z’s digital crusade and rise of Mamdani

AND so it begins, texted President Trump on the Truth Social, four words that cut like a scimitar through the fog of New York’s electoral euphoria. Zoran Mamdani, the 34-year-old democratic socialist of Ugandan-Indian extraction, has stormed City Hall, riding a tidal wave of TikTok reels, Instagram firestorms and Gen Z angst. This is no ordinary victory; it is a digital intifada against the old order, packaged in viral videos and One Piece pirate flags. Yet beneath the celebratory memes lies a deeper question: is this the dawn of youthful renewal or the harbinger of ideological conquest?

The global Gen Z uprising is borderless, its battle cry echoing from Kathmandu to Jakarta, from La Paz to Paris. In Nepal, the Straw Hat Jolly Roger — symbol of the anime pirates fighting a corrupt world government — flew atop burning buildings as youth toppled a prime minister. In Indonesia, a conservative lawmaker branded its display treason. From Madagascar to Morocco, the same skull-and-straw-hat defies authority. This is not coincidence; it is the power of the internet unbound, where grievances over inequality, housing costs and corruption converge in a common digital tongue. Mamdani mastered this language. His campaign was less policy wonkery, more neighborly banter — birthday announcements as clapbacks, man-on-the-street candor that made politics feel human again.

Yet victory unmasked the manifesto. Mamdani’s speech was no olive branch; it was a declaration of war on capitalism itself. “The system that enabled someone like Trump to rise must be dismantled,” he thundered, promising not reform but revolution — government control over everything, private wealth



New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani. — AFP



DR IMRAN KHALID

The writer is freelance columnist on international affairs

Gen Z’s digital crusade can renew or rupture. The choice is ours: harness connectivity for inclusive growth, or flirt with ideologies that seduce with fairness yet shackle with control.

suspect, the American dream replaced by state largesse. This is Cold War socialism rebooted for the smartphone era, where redistribution trumps opportunity. Trump’s riposte was swift: obstruct federal immigration enforcement, face arrest. This is not petty partisanship; it is a clash over sovereignty. If a mayor can nullify national laws, what stops anarchy?

The irony is rich. Mamdani celebrates immigrants — Yemeni bodega owners, Mexican grandmothers, Senegalese cabbies — yet omits native-born Americans who built New York across generations. Diversity as strength? Absolutely. But when it becomes a replacement, forging tribal silos without shared values, it fragments the republic. Elon Musk, himself an immigrant who embraced American exceptionalism, warns: “When newcomers refuse to assimilate... that’s not immigration — it’s colonization.” Harsh? Perhaps. But history judges by outcomes, not

intentions.

Gen Z’s rage is legitimate. Homeownership is now a middle-age milestone, student debt a trillion-dollar shackle, wages lagging living costs — the social contract lies in tatters. Mamdani diagnoses correctly: the system is rigged. But his cure? Centralize power in government, and corruption merely relocates from boardrooms to bureaucracies. Venezuela’s collapse — from resource-rich prosperity to socialist ruin — is the mirror we dare not ignore. True capitalism is competition, not cronyism; anyone with grit can rise. What we have is feudalism in designer suits, where lobbyists pick winners and bailouts shield losers.

Mamdani’s backers include Alex Soros, heir to billions cheering state consolidation of power. This is not liberation; it is elite capture under populist guise. Raise taxes on the rich, and the rich depart — taking jobs, innovation and tax revenue. Working families, trapped, bear the brunt as services crumble. Recall 1970s New York: near-bankruptcy, crime surge, business exodus. Recovery demanded decades. Will history repeat?

This Gen Z wave is not left-exclusive. Germany’s AfD tripled its under-24 vote via TikTok savvy; Charlie Kirk mobilized conservative youth with anti-woke memes, aiding Trump’s 2024 gains. The medium is neutral; the message defines destiny. Democrats eyeing recovery must learn digital fluency, authenticity and fresh ideas — not socialist sirens that promise equality but deliver penury.

“And so it begins” — yes, but what ends? Gen Z’s digital crusade can renew or rupture. The choice is ours: harness connectivity for inclusive growth, or flirt with ideologies that seduce with fairness yet shackle with control.

What makes National Day celebrations unique



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

Nation's National Day is not merely a date on the calendar; it serves as a reminder to its citizens of their unity — a defining characteristic —and showcases pride in the nation's founding, as well as the joy of sharing in its progress. These emotions are experienced by people of all ages and generations.

In the Sultanate of Oman, National Day is a time when the nation shines with happiness, reflection, and pride. It is a moment for citizens and residents to come together and express their gratitude for peace, safety, and progress.

The day serves as a reminder of how far the nation has progressed under visionary leadership and how deeply its cultural roots endure.

After living in this wonderful country for nearly 25 years, I can proudly assert that Oman stands out as one of the rare stable, cohesive, and thriving nations not only in the Gulf but also globally.

Although I am not currently in Oman and miss the amazing National Day celebrations, having been part of the Omani media, I am well aware of how these celebrations take place.

Television channels, radio stations, and online platforms broadcast special programmes dedicated to the occasion. Documentaries, cultural performances, and interviews with citizens and residents highlight the significance of the day.

Storytelling becomes a powerful tool during this time, as people share their personal experiences, family traditions, and memories connected to National Day. The digital age has enabled Omani citizens to showcase their celebrations to the world, spreading a message of unity and cultural pride beyond national borders.

I still envision the vibrant red, green, and white flags soaring high, colourful LED lights illuminating the streets, and the spirit of patriotism flowing through every city and village. Whether in bustling Muscat or remote villages, the same spirit is felt throughout the land. This shared celebration reflects national solidarity and love for the homeland.

The atmosphere becomes festive and heartwarming as Omani families and communities gather to participate in parades, cultural events, and fireworks. What makes National Day even more unique is the seamless blending of tradition with modern celebrations.

While traditional dances, poetry, and costumes highlight the country's cultural roots, modern technology adds new dimensions to the festivities. Schools, government offices, and public spaces host cultural programmes and events that celebrate the values of Oman's rich heritage.

But let me say that I still can't believe it has been over three years since I permanently left Oman, even though I have visited a couple of times in between. It's not that the time flew

Let me say that I still can't believe it has been over three years since I permanently left Oman, even though I have revisited a couple of times in between. Not because the time flew by, but because it feels as though I have lived a lifetime in this graceful country

by, but rather that it feels as though I have lived a lifetime in this graceful country.

Over the decades, Oman's leadership has guided the country with foresight and compassion. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's commitment to welfare, education, and development has helped maintain the nation's stability and prosperity.

National Day, therefore, is also a celebration of gratitude towards those who have led the country with dignity and ensured that its citizens live with pride and security. Under its Oman Vision 2040 development plan, the country has been working towards achieving comprehensive and sustainable progress across economic, social, and developmental sectors.

To strengthen the role of various sectors of Omani society in shaping the future, this long-term development framework prioritises education, healthcare, and other social services to foster a knowledge-driven, diversified, and competitive economy.

One of the significant aspects of Oman Vision 2040 is its emphasis on comprehensive human and urban development. From a time when schooling was conducted under trees to today's high-tech, modern buildings where children receive education, all testify to this phenomenal growth. Definitely, Oman is a country that many others seek to emulate, particularly in its commitment to sustainability across industry, food security, the environment, health and education.

EUROPE LOOKS TO CATCH UP WITH US IN AI RACE

CLEMENT KASSER AND SAM REEVES

Europe must strive to lead in the AI race, top officials urged on Tuesday at a summit focused on propelling the region to the forefront of the digital era and reducing its reliance on US tech titans.

As the Berlin gathering got under way, the EU also announced that Amazon and Microsoft cloud services could face stricter competition rules in the bloc as Brussels probes their market power.

The summit brought together leaders from Europe's tech sector, and was to be addressed by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and French President Emmanuel Macron later in the day.

"Europe's goal is very simple: we want to lead, not follow, on AI and frontier technologies," European Commission digital chief Henna Virkkunen told the opening of the event.

"We have the market, we have the talent, we have the ambition. Now we must deliver scale in investment, innovation and uptake."

Europe is responding to calls to blaze its own digital path and take steps to catch up in the AI race against China and the United States.

Concerns about US tech dominance have also grown as ties with Washington become increasingly uneasy under the "America First" administration of Donald Trump.

Despite the US-Europe tensions, a senior official from the French presidency said the summit was not about "confrontation" with the United States or even China.

Rather, it is about "how we protect our core sovereignty and what rules need to be established, especially at the European level", said the official.

Also speaking at the opening, German Digital Minister Karsten Wildberger said that "for too long, Europe has been mainly a customer and a bystander. "Now we must become a creator".

But the continent is "not moving fast enough," he said, adding that "regulation is too complex and infrastructure is still behind".

His comments came a day before the EU was set to propose a rollback of its rules on AI and data protection - a move welcomed by businesses, but criticised by privacy advocates.

Virkkunen also announced the move against Amazon and Microsoft cloud services in Berlin, saying that twin investigations aim to assess whether the tech giants "should be designated as the gatekeepers on cloud computing".

The European Commission, the bloc's digital regulator, said it will investigate whether Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Microsoft's Azure should come under the scope of the Digital Markets Act (DMA). Efforts to build up "sovereign" EU cloud computing capabilities, which proponents argue would better protect Europeans' data, were also being discussed in Berlin.

Digital ministers from across Europe, as well as CEOs of tech firms like France's Mistral and Germany's SAP, were attending, and announcements on new digital initiatives were expected. — AFP

Climate and development finance must be integrated

FOR Decades, the international community has operated under the illusion that climate action and development are different pursuits, each with its own goals, institutions, and funding mechanisms. This approach has hindered progress on both agendas.

The world leaders gathered in Belém, Brazil, for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) must recognise this and begin transforming the fragmented, underperforming climate-finance system into an integrated framework that delivers on both climate and development objectives. As they embark on this process, it is worth considering the main takeaways from Policy-Driven Climate and Development Finance: Strategies for Equitable Solutions, the forthcoming volume of essays that I edited.

While making the global financial architecture more equitable and efficient is a long-term project, delegates at COP30 can take important steps forward. First, they must deliver a replicable and scalable model for climate finance that translates pledges into predictable flows, provides measurable results, and allows for country ownership. This is necessary to narrow the climate-finance gap, especially because developing countries will require between \$5.1-6.8 trillion through 2030 to meet their nationally determined contributions, while their adaptation finance needs are 10-18 times greater than international public-finance flows.

A good example of this kind of model is the Tropical Forests Forever Facility, an ambitious blended-finance mechanism designed to unlock large amounts of both public and private capital for the conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests. If this facility successfully channels annual payments to tropical forest countries, it will show how climate finance that is anchored in outcomes can preserve biodiversity, support local livelihoods, and, crucially, advance development.



The climate-finance system is not only underfunded but also fragmented.



MAHMOUD MOHIELDIN

The writer is UN Special Envoy on Financing Sustainable Development and Co-Chair of the Expert Group on Debt, is a former minister of investment of Egypt (2004-10), former senior vice-president of the World Bank Group, and former executive director of the International Monetary Fund

COP30 must also focus on efficiency. The climate-finance system is not only underfunded but also fragmented. Developing countries are forced to navigate an ever-growing number of funds, each with its own procedures and reporting requirements. This bureaucratic thicket, coupled with co-financing conditions and weak coordination among institutions, can delay projects for years, while too much money is wasted on transaction costs.

At the heart of this inefficiency lies the cost of capital. Green investments often come with high interest rates for developing economies. According to the International Energy Agency, the cost of financing green energy in developing countries can be 2-3 times higher than in advanced economies, significantly constraining the pace of the low-carbon transition. This disparity is less about project risk and more about structural biases, such as sovereign credit ratings that underestimate resilience, volatile currencies, and persistent debt overhangs.

The G20 has recognised the problem and recently hosted a high-level dialogue with the African Union on debt sustainability, the cost of capital, and financing reforms. The group must now deliver viable solutions: more dynamic and liquid local capital markets, financial instruments that

reduce currency risk, and de-risking mechanisms that attract private investors on fair terms. Multilateral development banks, for their part, should reform their mandates and risk frameworks to provide more capital, more cheaply and more quickly.

But increasing efficiency also requires injecting a new sense of urgency into the process. For communities at risk of being displaced by floods and droughts, a year-long approval cycle for climate financing can turn a disaster into a catastrophe. COP30 must push for accelerated disbursement standards, simplified access procedures, and other measures to streamline operations.

Lastly, there is the question of fairness. The majority of climate-finance flows are concentrated within the G20 and focused on mitigation. At the same time, developing countries are grappling with unsustainable debt burdens, which have narrowed their fiscal space and crowded out climate and development spending.

The 11 recommendations by the UN Secretary-General's Expert Group on Debt offer a road map for addressing this silent debt crisis. The proposed reforms cover three broad areas: restructuring and modernising the multilateral financial system; providing borrowing countries with technical and capacity-building assistance; and encouraging borrowers to adopt more effective strategies for debt management. Implementing these recommendations would help low- and middle-income countries redirect resources from debt service toward investment in sustainable growth. Instruments such as debt-for-climate and debt-for-nature swaps can complement these efforts by ensuring that financial relief is linked to climate and environmental protection and creating fiscal space for spending on development goals. A just climate transition requires concessional finance, which should be seen not as charity, but rather as a shared investment in global resilience.

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SPORTS

THIRDDAY



At the end of the event the winners were crowned with the trophies.

‘MUKHIFAH’, ‘HAMLOULAH’, ‘MASEERAH’ LEAD RCC ACQUISITIONS

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

The Royal Camel Corps (RCC) continued its selection of elite racing camels for purchase on the third day, Tuesday, of the valuation races at Al Felaij Track in the Wilayat of Barka, which saw strong performances in the Lagaya category.

‘Mukhifah’, owned by Salim bin Salim al Wahibi, earned purchase after claiming first place in the second round. ‘Hamloulah’, owned by Abdullah bin Sultan al Ghafili, secured acquisition after finishing runner-up in the same round. Meanwhile, ‘Maseerah’, owned by Hammoud bin Sultan al Ghafili, joined the purchased list after topping the fourth round with a commanding performance.

During the fourth race of the 2025–26 camel racing season, organised by the Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF) in cooperation with the RCC, as well as include qualifications for HM’s Cup scheduled for April 2026.

The day featured a total of 24 rounds for the Lagaya category, three years old, over a distance of 5 km, with competitive fields and strong participation from camel owners across the Sultanate of Oman.

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

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

Al Felaij Track Results – Lagaya category- 5km (Read as round number, camel, owner)

1. Al Dhaby, Mohsen bin Ali al wahibi
2. Mukhifah, Salim bin Salim al wahibi
3. Al Dheebah, Ahmed bin Hamoud al wahibi
4. Maseerah, Hammoud bin Sultan al Ghafili
5. Ab’aad, Ali bin Rashid al Amri
6. Qasaed, Khalifah bin Huweidan al Mahri
7. Azaaem, Saif bin Marhoon al Maamari
8. Al Reem, Mohammed bin Hamoud al Balushi
9. Thameenah, Khalid bin Ghadir al Jahafi
10. Al Ain, Hamad bin Salim al Ghafili
11. Sheyboub, Hammoud bin al Sagheer al wahibi
12. Al Dheebah, Khalifah bin Ghadir al wahibi
13. Hassas, Saeed bin Mehna al Fuzari
14. Hamloulah, Abdullah bin Said al Makhamri
15. Nabah, Badr bin Nasser al wahibi
16. Anshoudah, Saeed bin Mohammed al wahibi
17. Mufawwad, Rashid bin Obaid al wahibi
18. Inthar, Khalid bin Obaid al Balushi
19. Shaheen, Saeed bin Azeez al Darai
20. Al Dawhah, Jumah bin Ali al Rubie
21. Thameen, Rams bin Hamad al Mabihsi
22. Ehtilal, Sultan bin Hamad al Janibi
23. Marhi, Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Saadi
24. Al Theeb, Abdullah bin Said al Makhamri



Mukhifah owned by Salim bin Salim al Wahibi.

Star sprinter Ali al Balushi wins 100m gold in Riyadh



Oman’s Ali bin Anwar al Balushi (left) finishes first in the 100 metres final at the Islamic Solidarity Games 2025 in Riyadh on Monday.

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
[@anuroop_ath](#)

STAR sprinter Ali bin Anwar al Balushi clinched Oman’s first gold medal in the ongoing Islamic Solidarity Games Riyadh 2025 on Monday.

Ali al Balushi came home in 10.30 seconds as his team-mate Mulham al Balushi (10.41) finished fourth in the final of 100 metres.

Hosts Saudi Arabia’s Abdulaziz Atafi claimed silver in 10.32 seconds while Cameroonian sprinter Esem Emmanuel Alobwede took bronze (10.32).

Both the Omani runners had qualified for the final after impressive performances in the heats, with Ali finishing first in his heat with a time of 10.26 seconds and Mulham second in his with a time of 10.34 seconds.

Ali al Balushi expressed his overwhelming joy after becoming the fastest man in the Games, dedicating the victory is “a humble gift to the nation on its glorious National Day, and to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

He explained that this gold medal is the culmination of continuous work over the past period, saying, “My goal was to raise the Sultanate of Oman’s flag high at this great event, and thank God I was able to achieve that. I thank my technical and administrative staff, the Olympic Committee, and the Ministry for their tremendous support, and I promise the fans that I will strive even harder in future competitions.”

Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, Deputy Head of the Omani delegation, affirmed that this achievement reflects the capabilities of Omani athletes, qualifying them to compete in the most prestigious sporting events. He noted that Ali’s gold medal and the weightlifting results are



Oman’s Ali bin Anwar al Balushi with his gold medal on the podium in Riyadh.

“the fruit of continuous support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), the follow-up of the Omani Olympic Committee, and the collaboration of the sports federations.”

He added that the delegation enters this tournament with a clear ambition to win more medals in various sports, considering today’s achievement a strong incentive for the other teams to continue their efforts.

OMAN IN 22ND SPOT
Oman are 22nd in the medals table after

winning a gold, silver and bronze each. Türkiye are leading the table with a total 123 medals including 61 gold, 36 silver and 26 bronze. Uzbekistan are second (22, 25, 22) and Iran are third (18, 16, 23). Hosts Saudi are sixth with 34 medals which include nine gold.

Last week, Olympian weightlifter Ammar bin Salim al Khanjari won a silver and a bronze for Oman.

The Tokyo Olympics 2020 participant claimed a silver medal in the Clean and Jerk and a bronze in the overall category in the 88 kg category.

Al Khanjari lifted a total of 354 kg, finishing behind Uzbekistan’s Sarvar Zavarkhonov, who won gold with 363 kg, and Iran’s Elia Salehi Pour, who took silver with 359 kg at the Boulevard SEF Arena in Riyadh.

Brigadier General (Retired) Said bin Mohammed al Hajri, Chairman of the Oman Athletics Association, said this achievement confirms that the training and development programmes are beginning to bear fruit.

“Our athletes are capable of reaching higher levels when provided with a comprehensive training environment. Ali al Balushi’s feat is an important message to young talents about the necessity of commitment and development.”

Elsewhere, Omani fencer Harith al Harthy was eliminated from the Games after losing to Iran’s Amir Hossein 12-15 in the Round of 16, while Ahmed Kaskas also exited in the same round after losing to Uzbekistan’s Amirkhan Doritikov 9-15.

On Tuesday, Oman’s Mohammed al Sulaimani was eliminated from the 800m qualifying rounds.

In fencing, Jana al Sharji lost against Uzbekistan’s Sevara 15–9 in the quarterfinals. Jana had reached the last eight after a win over team-mate Salma al Daghishi 15–6.

SHORTTAKES



Paige Greco died on Sunday at her Adelaide home.

PARALYMPICS GOLD MEDALLIST GRECO DIES AT 28

SYDNEY: Australian Paralympics gold medal-winning cyclist Paige Greco has died aged 28 after a “sudden medical episode”, her family said on Monday.

Greco smashed her own world record in storming to victory in the women's C1-C3 class 3,000m individual pursuit at the Tokyo Games in 2021.

She went on to add bronze in the C1-3 road race and time trial, cementing her status as a top competitor across both track and road.

Greco died on Sunday at her Adelaide home.

“While we are devastated by her loss, we are incredibly proud of the person she was and the way she represented Australia,” her mother Natalie Greco said in a statement released through AusCycling.

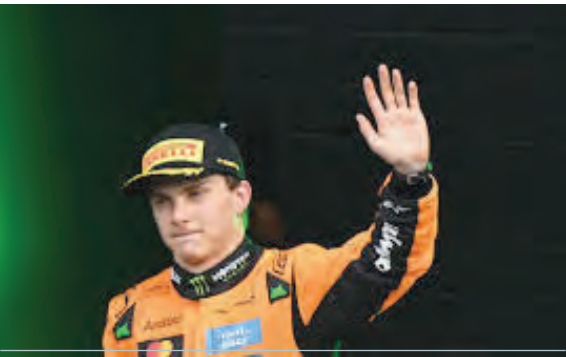
“Paige cherished the connections she made through her sport, and we take comfort in knowing how widely she was loved.”

Greco also claimed multiple world championship titles, most recently earning bronze in the 2025 world championship road race at Belgium in August.

“Paige was an extraordinary athlete who achieved outstanding accomplishments at the highest levels of our sport,” said AusCycling chief executive Marne Fechner.

“Much more than that, she touched the lives of everyone around her with her positive spirit and courageous outlook.” — AFP

F1 STAR PIASTRI WINS AUSTRALIA’S TOP SPORTS HONOUR



Oscar Piastri has won nine Formula 1 Grand Prix.

MELBOURNE: Nine-time Grand Prix winner Oscar Piastri has won Australian sport’s highest honour, the Don Award, with the Formula One star calling it a “massive privilege”.

The 24-year old has spring-boarded into the elite this year, igniting national pride as he bids to become Australia’s third Formula One world champion after Jack Brabham and Alan Jones. He has a battle on his hands, losing the lead in the title race at last month’s Mexico City Grand Prix and is now 24 points behind McLaren teammate Lando Norris with three races left.

Piastri was recognised at the annual Sport Australia Hall Of Fame awards on Thursday night in his hometown Melbourne, which honours the Australian athlete or team who most inspired the nation in the past 12 months. The Don Award is named after legendary Australian cricketer Donald Bradman.

“Winning an award in the name of Sir Donald Bradman is a massive privilege,” Piastri said.

“Everyone in Australia knows exactly what he represented and the legacy he has in Australian sport, so it’s not lost on me how major this award is.

“It’s always an amazing feeling to represent our country on the world stage and do well for ourselves,” he added.

“Thank you to everyone that waves the flag and cheers me on at all the Grand Prix races around the world.”

Previous winners have included Ian Thorpe, Cathy Freeman, Adam Scott, Ashleigh Barty and the Australia women’s football team. — AFP

WC singles champion to be crowned in Muscat today

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

THE World Cup of Snooker in Muscat reaches its most decisive phase on Wednesday, as the singles category concludes with the semifinals followed by the grand finale, in which the 2025 world champion will be crowned.

After four consecutive days of intense competition — beginning with the group stage on Saturday, followed by the last 34 and last 32 rounds on Monday, and then the last 32, last 16 and quarterfinals on Tuesday — the Oman Automobile Association’s Active Oman Hall is now set to host the event’s most anticipated day.

The team event will begin on Thursday and continue until November 23, opening a new window of excitement amid strong fan attendance and international praise for Oman’s organisation.

The Round of 16 featured several powerful and decisive matchups, as many of the world’s top players continued their excellent form on their way toward the final stages. Denys Khmelevskiy was the first to secure his spot after defeating Poland’s Tomasz Skalski, setting up a quarterfinal clash against England’s Harvey Chandler, who advanced with a solid victory over the UAE’s Mohamed Shehab.

China’s Chang Yu Kiu continued his impressive run with an important win over India’s Aditya Mehta, earning a place in the next stage where he will face Iran’s Amir Sarkhosh, who clinched qualification after a thrilling battle against Ukraine’s Mykhailo Larkov.

In the remaining fixtures, Pakistan’s Asjad Iqbal claimed a deserved win over Mina Awad, booking a quarterfinal meeting with India’s star Pankaj Advani, who advanced after defeating Brijesh Damani. Meanwhile, Hong Kong China’s Nansen Wan maintained his strong form by eliminating Chau Hon Man, and will now face France’s Nicolas Mortreux, who overcame Pakistan’s Muhammad Asif.

Ukraine’s Denys Khmelevskiy booked his place with a victory over Poland’s Tomasz Skalski, setting up a quarterfinal clash with England’s Harvey Chandler, who advanced



Action at the Snooker World Cup singles in Muscat.



India’s Pankaj Advani advanced after defeating Brijesh Damani.

after defeating the UAE’s Mohamed Shehab.

Moosa al Bakri, an Omani snooker referee, said that hosting the World Snooker Championship marks a major milestone for Oman and for the sport, noting that participants from more than 32 countries provide valuable exposure for Omani players and referees. He emphasised that such global events help develop national talent, adding that our goal is to earn the Asian badge and eventually reach world-level officiating.

Al Bakri highlighted the strong level of competition, with several players achieving century breaks, reflecting the high technical quality of the championship.

Belgian referee Peter Adrian praised the organisation in Muscat, describing IBSF events as among the best in the world. He said the matches show clear strength and smooth, enjoyable performance, adding that refereeing at this level gives him “the best seat in the hall” as he follows the match directly at the table. He also commended the professionalism and expertise of the refereeing team in this edition.

Top-ranked players in action as main draw of WTT Star Contender Muscat starts today

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

The main draw action of WTT Star Contender Muscat 2025 will begin in Muscat on Wednesday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Oman’s Ahmed al Riyami, ranked as 840, will face a challenging opening match against Turkey’s Abdullah Yangilar, ranked 181 in the world. Al Riyami, who earned direct qualification to the main draw, will aim to deliver a strong performance and overcome the experienced Turkish opponent.

Seventh world ranked player, Felix Lebrun, will begin his campaign at WTT Star Contender Muscat 2025 from last 32 beside Egyptian player Omar Asar, Dimitrij Ovtcharov, Oh Junsung, Darko Jorgic, Milosz Redzinski, Yukiya Uda and other top-ranked players.

The major TT event, organised by the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) in collaboration with World Table Tennis (WTT), is underway as the top-ranked international stars begin their quest for the prestigious titles across five categories including: men’s singles, women’s singles, men’s doubles, women’s doubles and mixed doubles.



The major TT event is organised by the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) in collaboration with World Table Tennis.

In the qualifying preliminary rounds, Korean competitor Kwon Hyuk had a a perfect start as he registered a solid win over Abdulaziz Bu Shulaybi from Saudi Arabia by 3-0 (12-10, 11-3, 11-9). He continued his top show as he earned a surprise victory over third qualifying seed Yuhi Sakai in their evening brawl (12-14, 11-4, 11-8, 11-8). Kwon, who is currently positioned at World No 221, showcased thrilling form throughout the contest. Dropping a narrow first game in deuce, the Korean proceeded to rev into high gear, as he went on to win three games on the trot to seal the win and a spot in Tuesday’s qualifying action.

Romanian talent Darius Movileanu commenced his campaign in style with a straight game victory over Oman national team player Bilal al Rashdi by 3-0 (11-1, 11-5, 11-6), before then surprising fans with a spectacular triumph over sixth qualifying seed Mohamed Elbeiali from Egypt, Movileanu winning in four dramatic games by 3-1 (11-9, 13-11, 4-11, 11-6).

The preliminary rounds featured several intense battles. Korean Lim Jonghoon advanced to the third and final qualifying stage after defeating Slovakia’s Yang Wang 3-1. Saudi Arabia’s Ali al Khadraoui fell 3-0 to

France’s Vincent Picard, while another French contender, Joe Seyfried, progressed after a 3-1 victory over Poland’s Mateusz Zalewski. India’s Akash Pal survived a five-set thriller to defeat another Japanese competitor 3-2. Romania’s Darius Movileanu overcame Egypt’s Mohamed Elbelal 3-1.

Oman’s Muhannad al Balushi suffered a tough loss to Korean Kim by 3-0, while India’s Snehit Suravajjula advanced with a 3-0 win over compatriot Modit Dani. Iran’s Hamid Shams was defeated 3-0 by Vladimir Sidorenko and Romania’s Florent Lampe claimed a straight-set win over Germany’s Vaho Meng.

In the women’s singles qualifiers, Russia’s Elizabet Abramian overcame India’s Anusha 3-1, while Sirin Lynn earned a convincing 3-0 victory over Brazil’s Karenia.

Romania’s Darius Movileanu highlighted the escalating intensity of the event. “The competition will become even tougher now that the main draw is starting. Every round gets more challenging, and all players aim to prove themselves. I hope to secure one of the qualifying spots and advance as far as possible,” he said.

SPORTS

NBALEAGUE



New Orleans Pelicans guard Bryce McGowens (11) drives to the basket against Oklahoma City Thunder centre/forward Chet Holmgren (7) during the second half at Smoothie King Center. — **Imagn Images**

THUNDER EDGE
PELICANS, PISTONS
OVERPOWER PACERS

LOS ANGELES: The Oklahoma City Thunder breezed past the New Orleans Pelicans to maintain their lead in the NBA Western Conference on Monday as the Detroit Pistons rolled to a 10th straight win to extend their advantage at the top of the Eastern Conference standings.

The defending NBA champion Thunder improved to 14-1 for the season with a 126-109 victory on the road in New Orleans thanks to 26 points from Chet Holmgren while Shai Gilgeous-Alexander chipped in with 23.

The game was effectively sealed in the opening quarter, as Oklahoma City poured in a franchise-record 49 points to take the game away from New Orleans.

Once again, Oklahoma City’s balanced offence proved decisive, with six players finishing in double digits in a wire-to-wire victory.

Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Gilgeous-Alexander has now logged 87 consecutive games in which he has scored 20 points or more.

Only NBA great Wilt Chamberlain, who leads the all-time rankings with 20-point game scoring streaks of 92 and 126 games, has achieved more.

Jeremiah Fears led the Pelicans scorers with 24 points as New Orleans slumped to their 12th defeat of the season.

Oklahoma City lead the West from second-placed Denver, who were downed 130-127 by the Chicago Bulls on Monday.

Nikola Jokic scored a 36-point triple double for the Nuggets, but the Bulls held off a fourth-quarter rally to snatch victory.

In Detroit, the pace-setting Pistons extended their winning streak to 10 games with a confident 127-112 defeat of the struggling Pacers.

Indiana, beaten by Oklahoma City in last season’s NBA Finals, have endured a nightmare start to the new campaign and are now 1-13 and rooted to the bottom of the Eastern Conference.

Jalen Duren did the damage for Detroit with 31 points while Daniss Jenkins scored 26, with five Detroit players making double figures.

“We’ve gotta be better, really, in all areas,” Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said.

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell’s 37-point salvo helped the Cavaliers to a 118-106 win over the Milwaukee Bucks. The Bucks jumped out to an early 14-point lead in the first quarter but were gradually reeled in by the Cavs. — **AFP**



Detroit Pistons center Jalen Duren (0) fouls Indiana Pacers forward Jarace Walker (5) during the first quarter at Little Caesars Arena. — **Imagn Images**



GERMANY and NETHERLANDS went on goal sprees as they wrapped up World Cup qualification with resounding wins in their last European group matches on Monday.

“Every player played well today and worked like a dog,” Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann told German broadcaster ZDF.

Both European giants needed only to draw to be sure of reaching the global footballing showpiece in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Instead, both went on the attack.

Germany took early control as they beat Slovakia 6-0 in Leipzig. The Netherlands took longer to pull away before overcoming Lithuania 4-0 in Amsterdam.

Slovakia finished second in Group A. Poland, who survived a scare to win 3-2 in Malta, ended up second to the Dutch in Group G. Second spot secures a place in the 16-team European play-offs in March.

Northern Ireland’s 1-0 win over Luxembourg in Belfast could not lift them out of third in Group A but they will make the play-offs because of their Nations League performance.

In Group L, Croatia, already assured of first place, scored twice in the last 18 minutes to come from behind and win 3-2 away to Montenegro. The Czech Republic, in second, slaughtered visiting Gibraltar 6-0.

In Leipzig, four times winners Germany started the night level on points with opponents Slovakia atop Group A but with an edge in goal difference. Slovakia, who beat Germany earlier in qualifying, created some threatening moments but could not take them. Nick Woltemade headed the Germans into an 18th minute lead. Once Serge Gnabry added a second 11 minutes later, the hosts were in total control. Leroy Sane scored twice before half time and substitutes Ridle Baku and Assan Ouedraogo struck in the second half. “We’re relieved. It’s a great moment,” Woltemade told Germany’s ZDF. “I’m playing, I’m scoring goals and I’m hopefully playing at the World Cup.”

“Tonight we showed the quality we have in this team. It was a pleasure.”

Nagelsmann praised his team’s attitude. “We showed incredible team spirit and pushed ourselves on the pitch from the very beginning,” he said.

HIGH-TEMPO DUTCH
In Amsterdam, Ronald Koeman’s Dutch team entertained the 50,000 spectators as their

GERMANY,
NETHERLANDS
LOCK UP
WORLD CUP
SPOTS IN STYLE

high-tempo play constantly pinned Lithuania back in their own half.

Tijani Reijnders perfectly set up by Frenkie de Jong gave the hosts a 15-minute lead but the massed visiting defence and a spectacular first-half display by goalkeeper Edvinas Gertmonas held the Dutch at bay until the 58th minute.

Cody Gakpo added a second from the penalty spot before Xavi Simons and Donyell Malen struck in the next four minutes allowing Koeman to bring on five substitutes.

Like Woltemade, the 27-year-old Reijnders was excited to be heading to the World Cup. He did not make his Netherlands debut until after the 2022 Qatar finals.

“I watched it at home, on the couch, with my Oranje shirt on,” he said.

“This time round it’s obviously going to be very different for me. I’ll have to wait a while until it comes around, but I’m really looking forward to taking part for the first time.”

In Malta, Poland were given a scare on the way to a victory which ultimately did not lift them out of second place.

Robert Lewandowski, whose unhappiness at a reduced role in the team led to a coaching change earlier in the campaign, gave the Poles the lead after 32 minutes.

Irvin Cardona replied for the home four minutes later.

Lewandowski then set up Pawel Wszolek after 59 minutes but the game took a wild

swing to Malta in the 68th minute.

Karol Swiderski finished a Polish counter-attack by sticking the ball into the net but a video check showed that at the start of the move Jakub Kiwior had fouled Cardona in the Polish box.

Teddy Teuma levelled from the penalty. But Piotr Zielinski’s long-range strike flew in off a post after 85 minutes to give Poland victory. — **AFP**

EUROPEAN 2026 WORLD CUP QUALIFYING
RESULTS ON MONDAY:

Group A
In Leipzig:
Germany 6 (Woltemade 18, Gnabry 29, Sane 36, 41, Baku 67, Ouedraogo 79) Slovakia 0
In Belfast: Northern Ireland 1 (Donley 44-pen) Luxembourg 0
Group G
In Ta’Qali:
Malta 2 (Cardona 36, Teuma 68-pen) Poland 3 (Lewandowski 32, Wszolek 59, Zielinski 85)
In Amsterdam:
Netherlands 4 (Reijnders 16, Gakpo 58-pen, Simons 60, Malen 62) Lithuania 0
Group L
In Pogorica
Montenegro 2 (Osmajic 3, Krstovic 17) Croatia 3 (Perisic 37-pen, Jakic 72, Vlasic 87)
In Olomouc
Czech Republic 6 (Doudera 5, Chory 18, Coufal 32, Karabec 39, Soucek 44, Hranac 51) Gibraltar 0

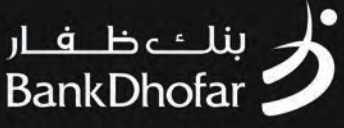


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SHORTTAKES



The initiative aims to equip government officials and private-sector employees with the knowledge needed to navigate international trade instruments.

Trade guarantees drive export confidence in Oman

SUHAR: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in partnership with Credit Oman, has held a specialised programme on international trade guarantee instruments in Al Batinah North Governorate, underscoring efforts to build stronger understanding of tools that support safer and more efficient global trade.

The initiative aims to equip government officials and private-sector employees with the knowledge needed to navigate international trade instruments that underpin trust between trading partners, ease the flow of goods and services across borders, and mitigate commercial risks.

The event, held under the auspices of Shaikh Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, opened with remarks from Saeed bin Rashid al Balushi, Director of the Investment Promotion Department, who highlighted the importance of familiarising Omani exporters with the conditions, mechanisms and benefits of trade assurance tools.

He said the programme contributes to strengthening export readiness through improved compliance with global standards, ultimately supporting the competitiveness of national products abroad and aligning with Oman Vision 2040 focus on economic diversification and a more efficient business environment.

Haitham bin Abdullah al Yaqoubi, Acting CEO of Credit Oman, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to advancing Oman's economic development by expanding export capacity and safeguarding local manufacturers from both commercial and non-commercial risks. — ONA

Report: Oman records strong development gains

THE Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Statistical Centre has released a new report highlighting the Sultanate of Oman's continued economic and social progress, reaffirming its position among the region's most steadily advancing nations.

The findings come as Oman marks its National Day, underscoring achievements driven by diversification efforts that have gradually reduced reliance on oil and strengthened non-oil sectors.

The contribution of non-oil activities to GDP at current prices rose to 68.2 per cent in 2024, up from 66.7 per cent the previous year.

By the end of the first quarter of 2025, Oman's GDP at market prices increased by 4.7 per cent to RO 10.5302 billion, compared with RO 10.0566 billion in the same period of 2024. This growth was largely supported by non-oil activities which expanded by 4.1 per cent to RO 7.1326 billion.

Despite a 34.3 per cent decline in the trade balance surplus — recorded at RO 3.088 billion by June 2025, compared with RO 4.697 billion a year earlier — the national economy continued to demonstrate resilience.

Financial indicators reinforced this momentum: commercial banks' total assets grew from RO 35.8 billion in 2020 to RO 44.5 billion in 2024, while foreign reserve assets increased by 22.5 per cent over the same period to RO 7.1 billion. The tourism sector also registered robust



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development, with the number of hotel establishments rising from 548 in 2020 to 1,031 in 2024, an 88.1 per cent increase.

Oman welcomed around 2.7 million visitors in 2024, generating an estimated \$2.6 billion in tourism spending. Healthcare and education continue to serve as core pillars of Oman's development strategy.

The number of public and private hospitals reached 94 in 2024, supported by skilled medical professionals whose capabilities have been steadily enhanced.

The physician-to-population ratio now stands at 21.4 per 10,000 people.

In education, the student population grew to 897,700 in the 2023/2024 academic year, marking a 19.9 per cent rise compared with

2019/2020. Youth literacy reached an impressive 99.6 per cent in 2024.

Oman's global competitiveness has also advanced, with the country ranking fourth worldwide in both the Quality of Life Index 2025 and the Gallup International Index 2025, particularly in perceptions of personal safety.

It also secured the top regional ranking as the least polluted country in the Numbeo Global Pollution Index 2025.

The GCC Statistical Centre affirmed that Oman's development journey continues with confidence under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, with progress reflecting the country's long-term vision for sustainable growth and national prosperity. — ONA

Greenfield Omani minerals port targeted for launch in H1 2029

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 18

A new bulk minerals port planned at Al Shuwaimiyah on Oman's southern coast is targeted to come into operation in the first half of 2029, paving the way for the large-scale export of Omani industrial minerals — such as gypsum and limestone — to international markets.

Under agreements signed on Monday, November 17, 2025, Minerals Development Oman (MDO), the mining and minerals investment arm of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and JSW Overseas FZE, a subsidiary of leading Indian port operator JSW Infrastructure, have joined hands to develop the greenfield port facility as a dedicated minerals export terminal.

In a statement, JSW Overseas FZE announced that it had entered into a Share Subscription and Purchase Agreement with a special purpose vehicle (SPV) named South Minerals Port Company



The South Minerals Port is set to become a critical gateway, enabling the efficient movement of bulk minerals from MDO's concessions (Picture for illustration only).

SAOC, established by MDO to develop and operate the terminal. Under this agreement, the Indian partner acquired a 51% stake in South Minerals Port Company, with MDO retaining the remaining 49%.

The Port SPV has been set up to spearhead the development and operation of the port facility, which will support the South Minerals Project in the Dhofar Governorate.

“Under the terms of the transaction, the Port SPV will develop and operate a new port facility with a capacity of 27 million tonnes per annum (MTPA). The total project capital expenditure is estimated at \$419 million.

Construction is expected to span 36 months, with the commencement of commercial operations (COD) targeted for the first half of calendar year 2029”, JSW Overseas FZE stated.

It quoted Sajjan Jindal, Chairman of JSW Group, as saying: “Our collaboration with Minerals Development Oman (MDO) marks a proud milestone in strengthening the historic ties between India and the Sultanate of Oman.

This strategic investment will lay the foundation for deeper trade connectivity and economic cooperation. Together, we aim to build world-class assets that strengthen our long-term partnership and set a new benchmark for regional growth”.

According to JSW Infrastructure, Oman's prime position along major international shipping lanes — supported by its modern logistics infrastructure and close access to high-growth markets in South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Africa — positions the Sultanate of Oman as a natural centre for mineral exports.

With substantial deposits of limestone, gypsum and dolomite — key raw materials for India's steel and cement sectors — the country holds significant export advantages.

The proposed minerals port is set to become a critical gateway, enabling the efficient movement of bulk minerals from MDO's concessions while enhancing supply-chain performance and strengthening regional trade connectivity, it added.

For JSW Infrastructure, currently the second-largest private port operator in India, the pact with MDO further expands its footprint in the GCC. The company operates a 465,000-cubic-

metre liquid tank storage facility in Fujairah (UAE) and manages operations at two dry bulk terminals in Fujairah and Dibba. In India, the company operates 10 ports and terminal concessions with a total cargo-handling capacity of 177 million tonnes per annum, covering dry bulk, breakbulk, liquid bulk, gases and containers.

According to MDO, the South Minerals Project will help unlock and commercialise the vast mineral potential of three concessions covering a total area of 1,500 km² in the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands, Dhofar Governorate.

While a deepwater terminal will handle exports of the bulk minerals, the project will also open opportunities for investment in downstream industries. It will reinforce value-added supply chains that support regional industrial expansion and fuel economic diversification, positioning the region for sustained long-term growth.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The Club shifted the creative focus to what passengers genuinely see and feel within the vehicle.

Backseat Creators Club showcases UGC storytelling from the backseat perspective

MUSCAT: Jetour Oman, distributed exclusively in the Sultanate of Oman by MHD Automobiles, in collaboration with Nikon Oman exclusively distributed in the sultanate of Oman by Khimji Ramdas, has successfully concluded the first edition of the Backseat Creators Club — a user-generated content (UGC) campaign designed to empower young filmmakers across Oman.

The initiative challenged creators to produce original short videos captured entirely from the backseat of the Jetour T1, showcasing real moments, true perspectives and the authentic in-car experience.

Breaking away from traditional automotive campaigns that spotlight dashboards, exteriors and performance imagery, the Backseat Creators Club shifted the creative focus to what passengers genuinely see and feel within the vehicle.

Participants transformed the Jetour T1 into a moving creative studio, capturing journeys, emotions and narrative elements framed through windows, interior angles and the natural movement of the car.

To facilitate their creative process, Jetour Oman and Nikon Oman provided participants with the Jetour T1, Nikon Z5II cameras and professional gimbal equipment — offering complete freedom to interpret and express the backseat storytelling theme in their own style.

Final submissions were assessed based on creativity, authenticity and the effectiveness of conveying the backseat perspective.

To honour the top creators, Jetour and Nikon hosted an award ceremony on 15th November at Cinepolis Oman Avenues Mall.

The event featured brand presentations, product showcase videos, screenings of award-winning entries, behind-the-scenes footage and interactive Q&A sessions with each finalist.

Winners were presented with cash prizes, certificates of achievement and exclusive branded merchandise in recognition of their skill and creative effort.

The campaign surpassed expectations with impressive digital results — garnering over 1.5 million views and more than 4 million impressions across social platforms. The overwhelming engagement achieved through UGC-driven storytelling marks a significant milestone, underscoring the strong connection between the brand and local audiences.

Speaking on the success of the campaign, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles, said: “At MHD Automobiles, we believe in nurturing creative talent and embracing innovative forms of storytelling. The Backseat Creators Club reflects Jetour’s forward-thinking spirit and its commitment to engaging with the youth of Oman.”

Bank Muscat: A successful journey in advancing sustainable development

MUSCAT: For more than four decades of excellence and innovation, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has firmly established itself as one of the pillars of the national economy.

The bank has played a vital role in supporting sustainable economic and social development; and continues to contribute to Oman’s renewed renaissance under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Since its establishment in 1982, Bank Muscat has embodied the values of leadership and national responsibility. Guided by a strategic vision aligned with Oman Vision 2040, the bank has focused on innovation, empowering Omani talent and advancing various banking sectors to serve the national economy.

Throughout its successful journey, the



Bank Muscat has embodied the values of leadership and national responsibility.

bank has been instrumental in developing the corporate and institutional sector through the banking services and facilities it offers, contributing to the growth of businesses and supporting economic expansion across the

Sohar Intl launches “The Market” at Al Mouj Muscat

Al Mouj Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman’s premier lifestyle destination, hosted “The Market” by Sohar International at Al Mouj Walk, a dynamic platform designed to empower small businesses and celebrate the nation’s homegrown talent.

The initiative provides entrepreneurs an opportunity to showcase their products and services in one of Muscat’s most vibrant community hubs, blending commerce, culture and creativity.

Held every Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm throughout February 2026, The Market will feature more than 50 vendors each week. Visitors can discover an eclectic mix of offerings, from fresh produce and artisanal crafts to jewelry, fashion, desserts and other local delicacies.

Each edition is a chance for the community to experience the breadth and diversity of Oman’s entrepreneurial talent firsthand.

Delivered by Sohar International, the initiative underscores a shared commitment to innovation, sustainable economic growth and the development of Oman’s private sector.

Together, the two institutions are creating meaningful opportunities for small businesses to flourish while enriching the community’s lifestyle experience.

“The Market by Sohar International acts as a platform to support small local entrepreneurs to showcase their talent and creativity, a place where businesses can grow, ideas can flourish and visitors can experience the energy that makes our community truly unique”, said Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat.



Held every Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm throughout February 2026, The Market will feature more than 50 vendors each week.

The Market embodies Al Mouj Muscat’s mission to create experiences that connect people, nurture local enterprise and celebrate Omani creativity all while contributing to Oman’s long-term development goals.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi, CEO of Sohar International added: “Flagship initiatives such as The Market presented by Sohar International embody the Bank’s national role in supporting economic development and strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem in line with the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040.

Our objective extends beyond providing a commercial platform; we are building an enabling environment for small Omani enterprises that contributes to economic diversification, fosters innovation and creates sustainable income opportunities for citizens.

Empowering Omani entrepreneurs and connecting them with the community serves

as an essential driver of national growth. Our role is to leverage our expertise and capabilities to unlock broader opportunities that advance the private sector and enhance its readiness to serve as a key engine of Oman’s future economy.

Our partnership with Al Mouj Muscat reflects our sustained commitment to fostering integrated national collaboration, ensuring long-term economic and social impact that benefits the nation and society at large”.

The Market embodies Al Mouj Muscat’s mission to create experiences that connect people, nurture local enterprise and celebrate Omani creativity all while contributing to Oman’s long-term development goals.

BANKDHOFAR POWERS OMAN’S SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to Oman Vision 2040 and the national drive towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy, BankDhofar — the Sultanate of Oman’s largest bank by network size — is taking proactive steps to advance sustainability both through its financing portfolio and within its own operations.

Through an expanding suite of sustainability-linked and green financing solutions, BankDhofar enables businesses, developers and institutions to invest confidently in energy-efficient construction, retrofitting and renewable energy technologies.

These instruments not only promote compliance with green building standards but also help organisations future-proof assets,



BankDhofar enables businesses, developers and institutions to invest confidently in energy-efficient construction, retrofitting and renewable energy technologies.

reduce long-term operational costs and align with global environmental benchmarks. Yet BankDhofar’s leadership in

sustainability goes well beyond its lending portfolio.

The Bank recognises that meaningful change begins within — by embedding the same principles it advocates across its own premises, processes and people.

As an office-based institution with a relatively modest emissions footprint, BankDhofar nonetheless places strong emphasis on energy efficiency, responsible resource management and data-driven performance improvement.

A standout example of this commitment is the Bank’s LED Lighting Conversion Programme, a multi-phase initiative designed to boost the energy performance of its facilities.

In Phase I, the Bank replaced conventional tube lights with LED

lamps across 34 new branches and 30 existing branches, achieving immediate and measurable savings in both cost and energy use.

The initiative also led to a 50% reduction in lighting-related complaints, reflecting enhanced reliability, visibility and user comfort.

Phase II will extend the programme to all remaining branches and departmental floors, ensuring that every BankDhofar workspace reflects best-in-class lighting efficiency.

Looking ahead, the Bank is evaluating the deployment of smart sensors — including motion detectors and daylight-responsive controls — to further optimise energy consumption and building performance.

SHORTTAKES



Speakers provided a range of perspectives relevant to the private sector.

CEO Summit highlights leadership priorities for economic transition in Oman

MUSCAT: The Fourth CEO Summit was held on Monday, bringing together senior executives, policymakers and global thinkers for discussions centred on leadership, economic transition and investment trends shaping Oman's future.

Sponsored by Oman Arab Bank and held in collaboration with Crossroads by Harvard Business School, focused on the implications of rapid technological change and the country's Oman Vision 2040 objectives.

CEO of Oman Arab Bank, Sulaiman al Harthi, said corporate leaders in Oman are expected to navigate increasingly complex market conditions as technology, global supply chains and capital flows evolve. He emphasised leadership models that prioritise collaboration, adaptability and ecosystem-building to support national development.

A keynote address by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, highlighted the centrality of energy transition and innovation to the country's long-term economic strategy. He noted that new investments in renewables, hydrogen and efficiency measures will require agile leadership capable of balancing growth with sustainability.

Speakers provided a range of perspectives relevant to the private sector. Saleh Lootah discussed the growing influence of the Harvard Business School GCC network in shaping regional leadership trends. Longgen Zhang (Sam) offered insights into shifting global capital markets, particularly as emerging economies reposition themselves amidst geopolitical and technological realignments.

Omani firm transforms waste tyres into innovative rubber solutions

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

AN OMANI company specialising in eco-friendly rubber solutions has unveiled a range of high-quality products fashioned from recycled used tyres, thus contributing to waste reduction and promoting a cleaner, more sustainable environment.

RubbelX, which operates its recycling and processing facilities at Samail Industrial City, recently participated in Project Oman 2025, the 4th International Construction Technology, Infrastructure and Building Materials Exhibition and Conference, held on November 3-5, 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The company highlighted its commitment to sustainable innovation through the reinvention, supply and installation of



RubbelX, which operates its recycling and processing facilities at Samail Industrial City, recently participated in Project Oman 2025, the 4th International Construction Technology, Infrastructure and Building Materials Exhibition and Conference.

CRYPTO CAUTION

Bitcoin drops below \$90,000



Bitcoin slipped under \$90,000 for the first time in seven months as investors retreated from risky assets. The cryptocurrency has erased all gains made this year and is now nearly 30% below its October peak of over \$126,000. Early European trading saw Bitcoin at \$90,907 after touching \$89,286. Around \$1.2 trillion in crypto market value has vanished in six weeks, according to CoinGecko. — Reuters

EXPORT SURGE

China's car exports jump 16%



China's car exports climbed 15.7% year-on-year in the first ten months, reaching more than 5.6 million units, according to automobile manufacturers. New energy vehicle exports rose sharply to 2.01 million, up 90.4%. In October alone, total car exports increased 22.9%, while NEV shipments nearly doubled, surging by 99.9%, underscoring China's widening lead in global automotive trade. — ONA

SANCTIONS IMPACT

US curbs hit Russian oil revenue



US sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil are already squeezing Russia's oil earnings, according to the US Treasury. OFAC said the measures, announced on October 22, are pushing Russian oil prices down, limiting Moscow's ability to fund its war in Ukraine. The sanctions require companies to end dealings with the firms by November 21 or risk losing access to the global financial system. — ONA

OPINION

Financing the new-energy future: Oman as the test case



ALENA DIQUE

The writer is the Founder of ESG Middle East Insights.

GREEN energy ambitions are rising rapidly across the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is betting on giga-scale solar and hydrogen, the UAE is advancing renewables and clean-fuel exports; and even smaller Gulf states are embracing decarbonisation.

But can the region sustain a full energy transition? Oil-rich sovereign wealth funds may seem inexhaustible, yet the scale and risk of clean-energy infrastructure — from green hydrogen to battery storage — demand more than capital: they require regulation, strategy and global partnerships.

For mid-sized Gulf economies like Oman, financial capacity is a litmus test. Unlike wealthier neighbours, it lacks gargantuan oil surpluses but is betting smartly on renewables, advanced energy technologies and clean molecules. Its approach could serve as a blueprint for other regional states aiming for a meaningful low-carbon transition.

OMAN’S RENEWABLE STRATEGY & FISCAL CAPACITY

Oman Vision 2040 targets a shift to renewables — particularly solar and wind — and green molecules like hydrogen and ammonia. The Ministry of Energy and Minerals aims for 30% of electricity from renewables by 2030, with large-scale projects underway in wind-rich governorates such as Al Wusta and Dhofar.

By early-to-mid 2025, renewables provide ~11.5% of electricity, with initiatives like the 3 GW “Solar PV IPPs 2030” project (\$1–1.5

billion) and additional multi-billion-dollar investments planned. Institutional capacity is growing. The Oman Investment Authority (OIA), alongside Future Fund Oman (FFO), mobilises national resources. In July 2025, OIA and Templewater launched a \$200 million Energy Transition Fund for Oman-based clean tech, renewables, energy storage and green molecules. Modest globally, the fund is catalytic — designed to attract co-investors and unlock further capital for Oman’s clean-energy ambitions.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS & DOMESTIC FOCUS

Oman’s macroeconomic fundamentals support its energy transition. Public debt has fallen to RO 14.4 billion (~35.5% of GDP), with net financial assets expected to turn positive by 2026 (~2% of GDP, IMF). Current account surpluses (~1.8% of GDP) provide an external buffer and Moody’s 2025 investment-grade upgrade (“Baa3”) signals improved fiscal space.

While less robust than some Gulf peers, efforts to diversify revenues — including raising non-oil contributions, developing green hydrogen and expanding LNG by 2030 — enhance fiscal stability and enable green investments.

Private-sector and international partnerships are growing. TotalEnergies and OQAE signed agreements for 300 MW of renewable capacity, while the Ibri III project combines a 500 MW solar plant with 100 MWh battery storage via Masdar, KOMIPO and OQAE. Oman is also positioning itself as

Oman Vision 2040 targets a shift to renewables — particularly solar and wind — and green molecules like hydrogen and ammonia. The Ministry of Energy and Minerals aims for 30% of electricity from renewables by 2030, with large-scale projects underway in wind-rich governorates such as Al Wusta and Dhofar.

a green hydrogen exporter, leveraging abundant solar and wind with strategic logistics hubs.

Challenges remain: full-scale transition requires billions for storage, grid upgrades, hydrogen infrastructure and downstream products like ammonia and green methanol.

Continued hydrocarbon reliance adds financial exposure and technological and market risks — especially in green hydrogen — make returns dependent on global demand, regulation and evolving costs.

THE ENERGY TRANSITION FUND

The Energy Transition Fund, seeded with \$200 million (split equally between FFO and Templewater), is Oman’s most tangible commitment to date. Its mission is catalytic: unlock further capital, channel expertise and support scalable clean-energy projects aligned with Oman’s climate and industrial goals. The fund focuses on: Clean molecules (eg, green hydrogen); Energy storage; Smart mobility; Renewables (solar + wind); and Green data centres.

Oman’s approach is fully domestic-focused, investing exclusively in Oman-based projects to build a homegrown clean-energy ecosystem. According to the OECD, Oman could generate ~8 TWh of renewable electricity by 2027 from its current pipeline, with much potential still untapped.

By investing domestically, the fund strengthens Oman’s technical, regulatory and industrial capacity while positioning the country as a credible player in the global low-carbon supply chain.

THE FUTURE OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION WILL BE FRACTURED, BUMPY AND LONG

RON BOUSSO

As COP30 kicks off its second week in Brazil, much has changed since the landmark Paris climate agreement was penned 10 years ago.

The spirit of cooperation that once reigned has been shattered by economic rivalries and a stark divergence in climate policies among the world’s biggest polluters.

The landmark UN COP21 climate agreement signed in Paris on December 12, 2015 saw 195 nations commit to setting binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming to “well below” 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial levels. The ambition has in recent years been strengthened to 1.5 degrees.

Ten years on and global renewables consumption has tripled, with solar alone growing more than seven-fold, according to the Energy Institute’s 2024 Statistical Review. But the hard truth is that fossil fuel consumption has continued rising, with the share of wind and solar in the world’s energy mix growing from 4% to 9% of the mix over the past decade.

Perhaps just as significantly, the energy transition in recent years has split into three distinct paths represented by the United States, China and Europe, as regional economic and political realities trump global cooperation.

China — the world’s largest energy consumer and CO₂ emitter — has had to import vast volumes of oil, gas and coal in the past three decades at an enormous cost to fuel the growth of its industry, cities and middle class.

Beijing’s energy policy is therefore increasingly being shaped by an ambition to reduce its reliance on imports. This has driven investments in domestic sources of energy, be they coal, oil, gas or renewables, while also scaling up electric vehicle manufacturing and other green technologies to reduce demand for imported fossil fuels over the long term.

Indeed, China is today the undisputed leader in many of the technologies and materials that underpin the world’s energy transition, such as solar panels, batteries and rare earths.

It is also by far the largest deployer of clean power, accounting for over 60% of all renewables capacity added worldwide last year.

By the end of 2024, China’s wind and solar capacity exceeded 1,400 gigawatt, six years ahead of its declared target, according to the International Energy Agency. Of course, China is continuing to expand its fleet of cheap coal-fired power plants to meet growing demand and deal with renewables’ intermittency. China aims to reach carbon neutrality by 2060 and its emissions may have already peaked. — Reuters

Microgrids as a catalyst for energy resilience

AS Oman accelerates its transition towards sustainable energy utilisation under Oman Vision 2040, one question remains critical: how do we ensure reliable power for communities far from the national grid? Remote regions such as Musandam Governorate and Al Wusta Governorate face unique challenges, rugged terrain, dispersed populations and high costs of grid extension. Enter microgrids, a localised energy solution that promises resilience, sustainability and independence.

OMAN’S RENEWABLE ENERGY MOMENTUM

Oman’s energy landscape is changing, especially in its remote areas, where microgrids powered by renewable energy can provide a meshed, unified and reliable source of energy. According to Nama Power & Water Procurement (PWP), solar and wind energy accounted for approximately 11.5% of total electricity generation in Oman during the first five months of 2025. This marks a significant increase from 4.9% at the end of 2024.

This period saw renewable energy generation reach 1.88 TWh, approaching the 2024 level when renewables produced 2.4 TWh.

Additionally, Oman’s total electricity generation increased by 12.6%, totalling 18,948.9 GWh by the end of May 2025. This increase in electricity generation indicates a rise in power supply for both urban and remote areas of Oman.

WHY MICROGRIDS MATTER FOR REMOTE COMMUNITIES?

Isolated areas commonly use diesel generators to meet electricity demands; however, these are expensive, cause pollution and are hard to get to. There are challenges associated with these generators, where transporting fuel to islands and mountainous areas is more expensive and raises more environmental hazards.



Oman’s energy landscape is changing, especially in its remote areas, where microgrids powered by renewable energy can provide a meshed, unified and reliable source of energy.



MARYAM AHMED AL NOFLI

The writer is Researcher, Academic Faculty and Head of the Continuous Education and Community Service Department at University of Technology and Applied Sciences - Musandam

Solar and wind-powered microgrids can remove these challenges and provide reliable electricity to homes, schools and health facilities. Microgrids can also provide more than just basic electricity. They can support essential systems, including telecommunications and desalination, which are vital for community health and economic activity. Additionally, clean and reliable energy can enhance hospitality and draw investment in areas reliant on tourism.

GLOBAL MOMENTUM FOR MICROGRIDS

Microgrids being implemented worldwide are showcasing their effectiveness and versatility. The Red Sea New City Project in Saudi Arabia features a 400 MW solar-plus-storage microgrid, which includes 1.3 GWh of battery storage. This project serves as an international landmark for clean energy generation and utilisation. It ranks among the largest off-grid energy systems globally, playing a crucial role in powering this sustainable tourism destination.

Tesla SolarCity’s microgrid on the remote island of Ta’u in American Samoa provides the island’s only source of electricity, utilising 1.4 MW of solar energy and 6 MWh of battery storage to replace costly diesel imports.

Meanwhile, in Alaska, Mission Critical Facilities has implemented

20 modular MicroGENIUS™ microgrids to supply power to telecommunications towers scattered across hundreds of miles of wilderness. The microgrids function in extreme temperatures of -50°C and can maintain autonomous operation for several weeks, effectively connecting remote communities that previously lacked electricity.

These instances illustrate how microgrids enhance sustainability, foster a social focus within business systems and develop environmentally friendly and climate-adaptive solutions. Such solutions promote luxury tourism, empower isolated islands and help preserve essential services in harsh climatic conditions.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Although the initial costs can be high, the savings from the reduction in fuel imports as well as maintenance costs in the future are significant. Microgrids also provide the opportunity to create installations, operations and maintenance jobs that foster community participation and build technical capacity.

Environmentally, replacing the diesel generators with microgrids powered by renewables will significantly reduce the greenhouse gases emitted. This also goes hand in hand with Oman’s obligations to the Paris Agreement and its national climate action plans.

LOOKING AHEAD

Microgrids offer more than just an energy solution; they represent a pathway to resilience, sustainability and inclusive development. For the remote communities in Oman, these systems promise reliable power, a reduced environmental impact and an improved quality of life.

As technology costs decrease and policy support increases, microgrids have the potential to play a pivotal role in Oman’s renewable energy strategy.

Hotel revenues in Oman surge

MUSCAT: Hotel revenues in Oman’s 3–5-star segment grew significantly in the first nine months of 2025, supported by stronger visitor arrivals and improved occupancy levels, according to the latest data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Total revenues increased by 18.2%, reaching RO 193.36 million by the end of September 2025, compared with RO 163.63 million in the same period of 2024. The rise reflects continued momentum



Total revenues increased by 18.2%, reaching RO 193.36 million by the end of September 2025.

in Oman’s tourism sector and the steady return of international travel.

Guest numbers also rose by 9%, with hotels receiving 1,687,112 guests compared with 1,547,523 a year earlier. This growth translated into a stronger occupancy rate, which climbed to 52.8%, up from 46.7% in 2024 — an improvement of 13.1%.

International source markets showed notable growth. Visitors from Oceania recorded the highest increase at 47.8%, reaching 32,121

guests. African guests rose by 22% to 10,769, while arrivals from the Americas grew by 31%, totalling 55,321 guests.

European visitors also expanded by 21.9%, with 416,857 guests recorded by the end of September 2025.

The strong performance across key hotel indicators underscores the continued recovery and expansion of Oman’s tourism industry as it moves towards national targets under Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

CLASSIFIEDS

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ART/LIFE

A TASTE OF OMAN

THE STORY BEHIND MOZA 'S LIVE-COOKING SUCCESS > 20



FROM TODAY

Royal Opera House Opens Exhibition on Omani Musical Heritage



STAFF REPORTER

The Royal Opera House Muscat has announced the opening of *Rhythm of Life: Richness and Diversity in Omani Arts*, an expansive new exhibition celebrating the depth and evolution of the Sultanate of Oman's musical heritage. Running from November 19, 2025 to February 7, 2026 at the Exhibition Hall of the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts, the exhibition welcomes visitors daily except on Fridays, from 10 am to 9 pm.

Designed as an immersive journey through Oman's varied musical landscapes, the exhibition highlights the rhythms of the coast and desert, the lyrical traditions of the mountains and the distinctive sounds of rural regions. It features a rich display of traditional instruments, regional performance styles and the artistic innovations that have shaped Oman's cultural renaissance over recent decades.

A central feature is an acoustic dome offering an interactive sound experience, where visitors can listen to archival recordings, explore digital instruments and engage with the living traditions that continue to define Omani musical identity.

The exhibition also presents a curated selection of rare publications, scholarly studies and commemorative stamps, underscoring national efforts to document and preserve this cultural legacy.

Complementing the display is a series of public talks by leading researchers and musicians, including Musallam al Kathiri on December 10 on vocal styles in Muscat and Dhofar; Ali bin Suhail al Maashani on December 17 on Dhofar's vocal traditions; Fathi al Balushi on January 14 on the Omani Oud Players Association; Amir Awad on January 21 on the Oman Centre for Traditional Music; and Maestro Hamdan al Shuaili on February 4 on the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra.

QUICK FEATURES

EVENTS

Jennifer Aniston attends ELLE's Women in Hollywood Celebration in Los Angeles, California, US. — **Reuters**

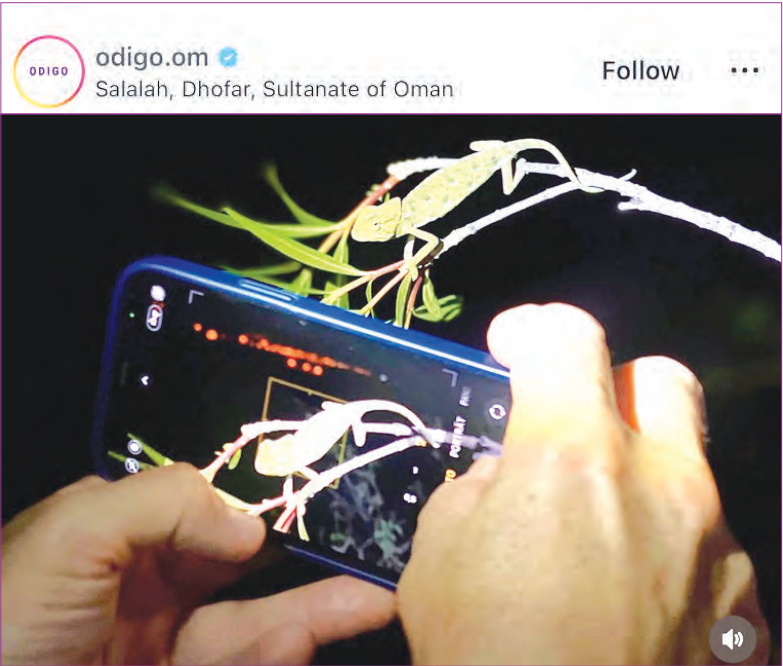
NATURE

Two hikers take a rest on the stunning view of Uisangbong Peak trail in the Bukhansan National Park in Seoul. — **AFP**

ART

A gallery assistant looks at a bicycle and notepad prop created for *The French Dispatch* film at the Wes Anderson Exhibition located in The Design Museum in London. — **Reuters**

INSTA PICKS



Fascinating Reptilian found in Dhofar Governorate



Farmers in Nizwa Souq

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Iran’s first woman orchestra conductor inspires



Paniz Faryousefi leads the Iranian symphony orchestra at the Vahdat hall in Tehran. — AFP

TEHRAN: When Paniz Faryousefi mounts the podium and reaches for her baton, she represents more than just the hope of a thrilling orchestral performance.

The eyes turned towards her in Tehran’s renowned Vahdat Hall include those of many young women musicians inspired by her taking her place as Iran’s first woman philharmonic conductor.

“When I stepped onto the stage, I noticed that all eyes were on a woman conducting the orchestra and I felt an immense responsibility”, she said after the performance.

And since a 12-day war with Israel earlier this year, Iranians have been pushing social boundaries further still.

Analysts say the authorities have shown greater tolerance, while keeping as close an eye as ever for any signals of political dissent.

Several women in the audience at the concert did not wear their scarves. The conductor wore hers, covering her hair as the law demands,

but her arrival at the podium was in itself a sign of greater openness.

The crowd shared Faryousefi’s enthusiasm, particularly the young women, who seemed aware that they were witnessing a historic moment.

Faryousefi was born into an artistic family and her mother dreamed of her becoming a *cheffe d’orchestre* — but Iranian performing arts academies do not teach conducting.

She briefly attended classes in Armenia before returning to build a trailblazing career.

“Young women need to persevere and follow their dreams”, she said.

At the podium, she led the 50-strong orchestra through works by Austria’s Franz Schubert, Finland’s Jean Sibelius and the Soviet-Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian.

“I hope this marks a new era for young Iranian women and that they will understand that... they should not be afraid”, she said. “It is the only gateway to emancipation. — AFP



SAUD AL ANSARI

THE Gulf Film Festival 2025 in Muscat is drawing a wide audience of filmmakers and cinema enthusiasts. The second day featured a rich programme of training workshops and film screenings, ranging from short fiction and documentary films to full-length features, reflecting the growing cinematic movement across GCC countries.

The day began with a workshop on cinematic makeup delivered by Bahraini theatre director Yasser Saif, who discussed the fundamentals of makeup design and its role in building a character, in addition to advanced techniques that shape a film’s visual identity. Saif explained that makeup is the final stage in an actor’s journey to fully embody a character, noting that audiences first encounter a character through the face before observing the rest of the performance. He emphasized that the success and visual presence of a character rely greatly on the accuracy and quality of makeup.

The programme also included a workshop by sound engineer and producer Ammar al Hudhaifi, who showcased professional methods for designing and producing sound effects that add depth and realism to visual scenes. He highlighted modern tools for recording and audio processing, and demonstrated how sound can create atmosphere, enhance emotion, and transform the cinematic experience into a cohesive audiovisual world. The workshop aimed to equip participants with a solid understanding of the vital role sound plays in building and enriching cinematic storytelling.

The festival further screened a selection of participating films across three sessions in the amphitheatre, alongside a special screening of “Baqshat Saad” attended by Kuwaiti actor Saad al Faraj.

“From Story to Screen: Gulf Narratives Inspiring Cinema” brought together actor Abdul Mohsen al Namir, Bahraini writer Sheikha Suha al Khalifa, Emirati writer Mohammed Hassan Ahmed, Omani director Mohammed al Kindi,

FILM FESTIVAL DISCUSSIONS FOCUS ON STORY TELLING, VISUAL IDENTITY

The second day featured a rich programme of training workshops and film screenings, ranging from short fiction and documentary films to full-length features, reflecting the growing cinematic movement across GCC countries.

and Kuwaiti writer Ziyad al Hussaini. The session was moderated by Mohammed Al Alawi.

Omani filmmaker Mohammed bin Suleiman Al Kindi stressed that the essence of cinematic creativity lies in the story itself, and that artists—writers, producers, and directors alike—derive their vision from the ability to tell a story in a fresh and distinctive way. He highlighted the importance of collaboration among the three pillars of filmmaking, where differing perspectives help elevate the artistic quality of a project. Al Kindi also spoke about his award-winning film “The Unknown: The Disappearance of Mousa,” which won Best Feature Film at the Rabat International Film Festival. He noted that the screenplay blends elements of Omani folklore with a modern visual approach that makes use of the country’s diverse landscapes—mountains, forts, and traditional architecture—creating a cinematic environment rooted in Omani identity.

Emirati writer Mohammed Hassan Ahmed explained that his connection to storytelling began with place before character, as everyday details in his surroundings were his earliest source of inspiration after the year 2000. He said that transforming oral traditions into cinematic language requires a visual reconstruction based on image, character, location, and music, since a story alone is not enough to make a film. Small, seemingly ordinary details in the real world, he added, often spark the beginnings of a larger narrative. The

task of a screenwriter, he emphasized, is to uncover the deeper essence of a story rather than simply reproduce it.

Saudi actor Abdul Mohsen al Namir highlighted the major challenge of adapting Gulf novels into visual works, pointing to weaknesses in screenwriting despite the region’s abundance of rich stories. He explained that many literary works struggle in adaptation due to a shortage of qualified screenwriters, in addition to the high production costs of historical settings and detailed scenes. Nevertheless, he expressed optimism about the growing focus on training talent and the rapid expansion of the cinema market in the GCC—especially in Saudi Arabia—providing filmmakers with a stronger audience base and a more mature industry environment.

Bahraini writer Shaikha Suha al Khalifa offered a personal reflection on her experience in screenwriting, noting that one reason behind the success of “Rashash”—which reached Hollywood—was its ability to evoke genuine human emotions, particularly the scene depicting the loss of a father. She shared that the authenticity of this moment stemmed from her own experience with her father’s passing, allowing her to infuse the scene with emotional depth. She stressed that cinema resonates most powerfully when it springs from sincere feelings, and that personal pain, when channelled artistically, can become a source of creative strength capable of touching audiences everywhere.

FEATURES

A T A S T E O F O M A N

THE STORY BEHIND

MOZA'S



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

At every festival's tent, hotel courtyard and national celebration she enters, the first thing people notice is her flame. A quiet flame, steady, intentional and rooted. It flickers in front of her as she moves with practiced ease, rolling dough, lifting it, stretching it until it becomes impossibly thin. This is not just cooking. It is storytelling. And the storyteller is Moza al Mammari, an Omani woman whose determination, talent and love for tradition have transformed a childhood dream into a cultural mission.

Today, Moza is known across the Sultanate of Oman for her live preparation of khubz rakhal, the delicate, paper-thin Omani bread. But her journey began long before her name appeared on event rosters and hotel invitations. It began in the fourth grade, when she first imagined becoming a cooking instructor, teaching all kinds of dishes. As she grew older, her dream transformed: "After high school, I realised I wanted to revive Omani heritage inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman", she explains.

When she began her university studies, her vision sharpened further. She wanted to bring traditional Omani cooking into hotels, reviving heritage not in theory, but in a living, visible way. Most hotels turned her down. They couldn't imagine why live cooking of traditional bread deserved a place on their platforms. But Moza persisted, knocking on doors until one finally opened. Intercity Hotel Muscat welcomed her idea and from that moment, her path began to expand. Nowadays, her phone doesn't stop ringing, requests come in from government institutions, private companies, national events and heritage festivals.

Fundamentally, Moza's upbringing has made a massive impact on her craft. In fact, her cooking style is rooted in her family's legacy. "I was deeply influenced by my mother and grandmother", she says. Their kitchen was her first classroom and from them she inherited not just recipes, but intuition, the real heart of traditional cooking. She still relies on their methods, though she adds her own touches, especially in presentation and flavour balance.

To watch Moza prepare rakhal is to watch heritage come alive. Her setup becomes a stage; the dough, a script. Guests gather around as she works in rhythmic motions,

LIVE-COOKING

SUCCESS



“After high school, I realised I wanted to revive Omani heritage inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman

MOZA AL MAMMARI

mixing, kneading and smoothing the dough in one swift movement over the hot pan. The fragrance of ghee rises, warm and familiar. And with each bread, she invites people back to their childhoods.

The comments she cherishes most echo that nostalgia: "You reminded us of our mothers". "This tastes exactly like the bread from our childhood". "You brought back old memories".

For Moza, preserving and reviving these memories is her greatest reward.

But her path has not been without challenges. Many people underestimated traditional Omani dishes. Others mocked her idea, or dismissed heritage cooking as "simple". Then there were practical difficulties: events without proper kitchens, high ingredient costs and the logistics required for live cooking stations. Yet Moza kept pushing forward, driven by her faith in her craft and by her belief that Omani cuisine deserves a proud place in modern spaces.

She now participates in heritage festivals, weddings, national gatherings and corporate events. She offers a variety of flavours too, classic rakhal, or bread layered with honey, cheese, chocolate, spices and more. She even created package systems tailored to client tastes. Flexibility is part of her signature. "I listen to people", she says. "I prepare everything based on their choices".

Looking ahead, Moza's most sought after dream is to own a fully equipped mobile rakhal truck, allowing her to move easily between major events. She also hopes to teach training workshops, passing the craft on to the next generation so that the tradition doesn't fade. "This heritage must continue", she says firmly.

She sees a bright future for traditional Omani food at events. As people grow more interested in cultural identity, they seek authenticity and food is one of the most powerful forms of identity. Oman, she adds, has preserved its culinary traditions remarkably well, even when modern twists are introduced, such as new presentations of shuwa.

Social media has also played a major role in her rise. It helped people discover her work, her presence and her authenticity. But she acknowledges its challenges, the competition, the negativity and the risks of misrepresentation. "It is a double-edged sword", she says. "If used incorrectly, it can harm the project".

Through it all, Moza al Mammari stands as a symbol of the modern Omani woman: determined, deeply connected to her roots and bold enough to carve space for tradition in a fast-changing world. Her work proves that heritage is not something stored in books or museums — it is something lived, cooked, kneaded and shared. Every time she stretches a sheet of dough over the flame, she is not just making bread. She is preserving memory. She is passing on culture. She is honouring the hands that taught her. And she is showing that Omani women can carry heritage forward, one beautiful, golden circle at a time.