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IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO TÜRKIYE AND CÔTE D’IVOIRE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye on the occasion of the Proclamation of the Republic. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Erdogan and the people of Türkiye. His Majesty wished the relations between Oman and Türkiye further progress in all areas to serve the joint interests. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of congratulations to President Dr Alassane Dramane Ouattara of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire on the occasion of his re-election as President of the Republic. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to President Ouattara in realising further progress and stability for the people of Côte d’Ivoire, wishing the relations of partnership and investment between Oman and Côte d’Ivoire further growth and prosperity.

RO 100 MILLION TOURISM BOOST



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has signed 36 usufruct contracts worth RO 100 million to develop a range of tourism projects across various governorates. **DETAILS ON P13**

Efficiency in projects saves RO 30 million

4 3 % R E D U C T I O N I N T E N D E R E S T I M A T E D C O S T S

THE PROJECTS, Tenders and Local Content Authority has announced significant performance improvements across the government projects sector during the previous year (2024) and the first half of the current year (2025). Key achievements include a substantial 43 per cent reduction in tender estimated costs, generating financial savings exceeding RO 30 million through enhanced governance frameworks and public expenditure optimisation initiatives.

Tender issuance demonstrated notable growth, reaching 100 tenders during 2024 with an additional 26 tenders released in the first half of 2025, reflecting strengthened advance planning capabilities and accelerated project implementation timelines. Change order management showed considerable improvement with a 24-per cent reduction, indicating advanced project monitoring mechanisms and technical oversight effectiveness.

Badr bin Salim al Maamari, Chairman of the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, emphasised that these outcomes demonstrate Oman’s strategic commitment to realising Oman Vision 2040 objectives through optimised public expenditure

“The reduction in estimated costs in tenders and substantial financial savings across government projects and procurement activities represent the successful implementation of project governance frameworks, cost control measures, updated regulatory bylaws and document cycle management.”

BADR BIN SALIM AL MAAMARI
Chairman of the Projects

and enhanced governance standards in government project management. “The reduction in estimated costs in tenders and substantial financial savings across government projects and procurement activities represent the successful implementation of project governance frameworks, cost control measures, updated regulatory bylaws and document cycle management,” said Al Maamari. He highlighted that coordinated integration among various government entities has been instrumental in achieving optimal resource utilisation and maximising value from public expenditure.

STEADY PROGRESS

He further noted that the authority maintains steady progress in developing comprehensive government project and contract management systems while implementing best international practices. “Our commitment to transparency and operational efficiency is demonstrated through electronic platform deployment for tender management and government project implementation, significantly enhancing performance metrics and accelerating developmental project execution that directly impacts

both society and national economic growth,” he added.

Al Maamari affirmed that these initiatives embody core principles of governance, sustainability and institutional integration, reinforcing Oman’s comprehensive approach to sustainable development while strengthening its position as an attractive investment destination and regional centre of excellence in government project management.

Eng Said bin Hamad al Amri, Director-General of Tenders at the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, reported a 13-per cent increase in awarded tender volume in 2024 compared to 2023 figures, while the total awarded value fell by 12.6 per cent to RO 786.6 million.

“The authority achieved financial savings exceeding RO 15 million through tender optimisation and an additional RO 6 million through enhanced project governance and advanced technical methodologies in contract evaluation and implementation,” Al Amri stated.

These results demonstrate the success of ongoing expenditure rationalisation, cost control measures, and continuous improvement in government project awarding and execution mechanisms. — ONA





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OMAN

SHORT TAKES

OMAN, UK DISCUSS YEMEN ISSUES



MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, received at the General Diwan of the Foreign Ministry Abda Sharif, UK Ambassador to Yemen. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on regional and international efforts to stabilise the situation in the region and support the Yemeni parties in reaching a political solution to the conflict in Yemen. — **ONA**

AL BATINAH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL BEGINS



The chosen slogan ‘Cinema and the Sea’ reflects the deep connection between nature and creativity.

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 28

The 3rd edition of Al Batinah International Film Festival began on Monday, themed ‘Cinema and the Sea’, with 62 films competing. The event is attended by international delegates, ambassadors, governors, guests, artists, directors and film enthusiasts from around the country.

Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Oman Film Society, highlighted the significance of the festival’s location by the Sea of Oman, describing it as a place where creativity meets the sea. He emphasised how cinema unites hearts, expresses humanity, and enhances awareness and beauty. The chosen slogan ‘Cinema and the Sea’ reflects the deep connection between nature and creativity, memory and image. The festival aims to support the cinematic movement in Oman, showcasing Omani identity through works that express values, heritage and humanity.

WORKSHOP INSPIRES STUDENTS TO EMBRACE IDENTITY



The workshop included a series of interactive activities.

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

As part of the cultural activity plan of the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, the Public Knowledge Library organised a workshop on Tuesday, titled ‘Al Asala Howayati’ that aimed at strengthening students’ understanding of Omani identity and pride in their national values.

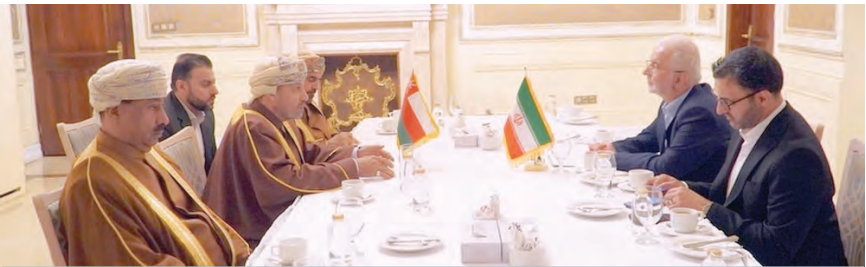
The workshop was conducted by Dr Laila al Salami, a specialist in leadership, strategic planning and self-development, with the participation of a group of school students from Muscat Governorate. The atmosphere combined learning with interaction. Dr Al Salami explained that Omani identity stands on four key pillars: Islam, the Arabic language, the geographical location of Oman, and its customs and traditions. She emphasised that these foundations “shape the Omani personality — a blend of authenticity, balance and openness to the world.”

She further elaborated that preserving identity requires three guiding principles: recognition, independence and confidence. “When we recognise our identity, respect its independence and trust it, we build a generation that knows who they are and where they belong,” she said.

Oman, Iran discuss ways to enhance cooperation

TEHRAN: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, met in Tehran on Tuesday with Eskandar Momeni, Minister of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The meeting took place within the context of Oman’s participation as a guest of honour in the fourth meeting of Interior Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) member states.

During the meeting, the two ministers discussed ways to enhance the existing cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran in areas of mutual interest. They also reviewed a set of regional topics related to the work of the Economic Cooperation



Sayyid Hamoud, Minister of Interior, met Eskandar Momeni, Minister of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran. — **ONA**

Organisation, particularly in the security fields. Both sides emphasised the importance of developing channels of cooperation and communication between the relevant departments in the two countries and exchanging expertise.

This aims to enhance joint efforts in addressing regional challenges and contribute to supporting security, stability and sustainable development. During the ECO meeting that was inaugurated in Tehran by President Dr Masoud

Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sayyid Hamoud emphasised the importance of enhancing joint cooperation among the Interior Ministers of the Organisation, particularly in light of the current regional and international challenges.

The meeting discussed ways to enhance joint security cooperation by addressing current security challenges, the importance of cooperation in the fields of border security, combating drugs and cybercrimes, in addition to exchanging information and expertise between security agencies, and developing joint training and capacity building. — **ONA**

Oman tops nighttime safety rankings: Survey

LIJU CHERIAN
MUSCAT, OCT 28

OMAN has emerged as one of the world’s safest countries to walk alone at night, according to the Gallup 2025 Global Safety Report, conducted in collaboration with Condé Nast, with a confidence rating of 94 per cent.

This places Oman alongside Singapore, China and Saudi Arabia in the top tier of global safety rankings, highlighting Oman’s strong institutions, reliable infrastructure and cohesive communities as the key foundations of its sense of security.

The report, which surveyed over 145,000 adults across 144 countries, asked participants whether they feel safe walking alone at night, their confidence in local police forces and whether they had experienced theft or assault in the past year. The results show that Omanis and residents enjoy a remarkable level of personal safety, reflecting visible law enforcement, well-maintained public spaces, and a culture of social responsibility that permeates both urban and rural areas.

Oman’s high ranking is the result of several interlinked factors, including strong institutional trust, with Omanis and residents expressing confidence in the Sultanate of Oman’s law enforcement agencies, particularly the Royal Oman Police, which maintain visible patrols and respond promptly to security concerns; well-maintained infrastructure, from well-lit streets and pedestrian-friendly pathways to secure public transport networks; and a tightly knit social fabric emphasising mutual respect, civility and collective responsibility,



Oman’s high ranking is the result of several interlinked factors, including strong institutional trust, with Omanis and residents expressing confidence in the Sultanate of Oman’s law enforcement agencies.

which fosters communities where people feel secure and supported.

The survey further notes that other countries rounding out the world’s ten safest nations to walk alone at night include Singapore (98 per cent), Tajikistan (95 per cent), China (94 per cent), Saudi Arabia (93 per cent), Hong Kong, SAR of China (91 per cent), Kuwait (91 per cent), Norway (91 per cent), Bahrain (90 per cent) and the United Arab Emirates (90 per cent), with the top-ranked nations sharing a combination of strong governance, visible law enforcement, social cohesion and investment in infrastructure that together create predictable, secure environments after dark. Globally, the survey highlights stark contrasts: Latin America and parts of sub-Saharan Africa, such as Brazil (51 per

cent), Nigeria (53 per cent) and South Africa (33 per cent), report weaker perceptions of safety, reflecting long-standing issues of crime, political instability and urban challenges, while countries like India (72 per cent), Bulgaria and Cyprus occupy a middle tier, showing progress but also revealing gaps in urban planning and social equity.

The Gallup Global Safety Report underscores that safety is not merely the absence of crime but is built through strong institutions, dependable infrastructure, visible law enforcement and cohesive communities, and Oman’s top ranking demonstrates how governance, cultural norms and community trust can combine to make residents feel secure, even after dark, offering a model for other nations seeking to enhance public confidence and safety.

Autism centre receives renewal of its accreditation

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

The Ministry of Social Development announced that the National Autism Centre has been renewed as an ‘Accredited Autism Centre’ by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) in the United States.

“The renewal of the centre’s international accreditation is not merely a technical measure to ensure quality. It represents a practical translation of the centre’s vision to provide a comprehensive and accessible educational and rehabilitation environment that takes into account the individual needs of people with autism spectrum disorder and enables their integration into society. It is also an important step that reflects the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to improve care



The phase for the renewal resulted in a 100-per cent pass rate for technical staff.

and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities, building a society that places people and their quality of life at the heart of its development priorities,” said Dr Nadia al Ajmi, Director of the National Autism Centre.

Myron Pincomb, Chairman and CEO of the International

Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), praised the centre’s efforts, emphasising that the renewal of the National Autism Centre’s accreditation reflects a strategic and ongoing investment in the readiness of its staff and the quality of its operational processes.

The ministry indicated that the preparation phase for the renewal of accreditation included subjecting 64 technical and administrative staff to an intensive and specialised training course, followed by the first international AC certification exam, which resulted in a 100-per cent pass rate for technical staff.

The renewal reflects the Ministry of Social Development’s efforts to consolidate the centre’s position as a leading institution locally and globally and raise community confidence in the quality of specialised services provided to individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

This benefit is directly reflected in enhancing the professional readiness of staff by ensuring they receive the latest knowledge and evidence-based training.

SHORT TAKES



The project includes 20 schools from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

MOE AND ESCWA LAUNCH SUSTAINABLE PROJECT

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education (MoE) has launched the pilot phase of the ‘Tales on Sustainable Development’ project, which aims to instil the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and principles in students, aligning with the values of the Arab region. The project includes 20 schools from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The project, implemented by the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), seeks to nurture youth on community values, responsible citizenship. — ONA

OMAN TAKES PART IN ARAB ENVIRONMENT MEET IN MAURITANIA



This meeting serves as a preparatory session for the 36th meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers and Heads of Environmental Authorities. — ONA

NOUAKCHOTT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, participated in the 26th meeting of the Technical Committee for Environment, affiliated to the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs. The meeting is being held in the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott. This meeting serves as a preparatory session for the 36th meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers and Heads of Environmental Authorities. It includes participation from delegations representing member states, as well as regional and international organisations concerned with environmental affairs. The meeting discusses the follow-up on the implementation of decisions issued by the Council in previous sessions. — ONA

Yemeni artists bring stories of resilience

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

Under the auspices of HH Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said, Bait Al Zubair hosted a cultural evening titled ‘Yemeni Arts Exhibition’ celebrating Yemeni artistic identity and its deep emotional and historical resonance. The public event brought together a diverse audience of Yemenis, Omanis and international guests, creating a gathering where art, memory and cultural heritage converged under one roof. The exhibition showcased artworks by Yemeni artists that narrated stories about their culture, strength and the traditions passed down through generations. Various artistic forms were displayed, including paintings, textiles and handcrafted pieces,



Visitors expressed admiration for the emotional depth and cultural authenticity of the artworks.

all inspired by Yemeni heritage and daily life. Dr Ashjan Hazem, the organiser of the exhibition, described the event as a journey that began with a simple wish. “I am Yemeni at heart and Omani in spirit,” she said. “This idea started from a small post on Facebook. It was a wish to gather in one space and show the beauty of Yemen without pain, to remind the world that Yemen carries art, soul and stories worth

celebrating. Today, I see that wish alive.” She expressed gratitude to Bait Al Zubair for hosting the exhibition and emphasised that this event marks the beginning of an ongoing cultural initiative that will continue to uplift Yemeni art. Among the participating artists, Ahmed Yahya, 23, shared the meaning behind his realist paintings. “I lean towards realism, especially drawing animals, because

it allows me to reflect on the beauty of creation,” he said. “Being here among friends from Oman and other nationalities is an honour. Showing my work at Bait Al Zubair is a special honour because it is a well-known place that celebrates art and culture.” Visitors expressed admiration for the emotional depth and cultural authenticity of the artworks. They were touched by the feelings and honesty shown in the artworks. The exhibition allowed people to experience the Yemeni story, not just hear about it. The evening highlighted how art can serve as a bridge — connecting histories, identities and people. The exhibition offered a reminder that culture endures, and beauty remains even in challenging times.

EA seeks to combat oil pollution in Musandam

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

The Environment Authority (EA), in cooperation with OQ Exploration and Production Company (OQEP), conducted the National Oil Spill Prevention Exercise ‘Nours 25’ in Musandam Governorate. The exercise is part of the National Oil Spill Prevention Plan in the Sultanate of Oman and is part of national efforts to enhance preparedness and effective response to oil spills. The exercise aims to activate the principle of unified command and control in managing marine environmental incidents, ensure



The exercise aims to activate the principle of unified command and control in managing marine environmental incidents.

the readiness of the systems and procedures adopted by various entities, evaluate the efficiency of the national response, and enhance the preparedness of emergency teams within the

relevant authorities. Musandam Governorate was selected as the site for the exercise due to its strategic location near the Strait of Hormuz and its high environmental sensitivity. Its location also

makes it a priority in national emergency plans, given its diverse environmental resources and the presence of marine, tourism and economic activities that require the highest levels of protection and preparedness. Eng Moza al Salami, Acting Director of the Environmental Emergency Centre at the Environment Authority, stated that the exercise is part of national efforts to enhance preparedness and raise the efficiency of the response system to oil pollution incidents, in line with the objectives of the National Oil Pollution Prevention Plan approved in the Sultanate of Oman.

Entrepreneurship among women goes international

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, OCT 28

THE Oman-Uzbekistan Business Women Forum in Tashkent organised a meeting recently that combined inspiration, positive energy and real opportunities for female entrepreneurs from both countries. Dr Siham al Harthy, Chairperson of OCCI’s Tourism Committee and CEO of Siham Development and Investment, stated that the meeting was not just an event but a platform for forging partnerships and building bridges between markets. The meeting resulted in the signing of agreements and partnerships in the fields of trade, tourism, service, education, technology and entrepreneurship. It also included cognitive exchange and training programmes that empowered startups and opened new horizons for growth and innovation. Dr Siham noted, “It’s the beginning of a path of sustainable cooperation that reflects the power of Omani and Uzbek women in



The Oman-Uzbekistan Business Women Forum resulted in the signing of agreements and partnerships in trade, tourism and entrepreneurship.

driving economic change and strengthening relations between the two countries. It is proof that ambition, when combined with hard work, makes a real impact.” She added, “This engagement reflects our shared belief that when women connect, they don’t just share ideas - they build bridges of growth, innovation and empowerment.” Oman’s real estate sector is

extremely important, and for Dr Siham al Harthy, it is a market to be explored. “Work in real estate development is something I really enjoy because we can help people change their lifestyle by creating a living environment,” she said, acknowledging that the real estate development field can be challenging. Dr Siham reflected, “If you are passionate and enjoy what

you are doing, and if you have a dream, everything will become easy. I entered real estate because I love this industry. I dream of making people live happily where there are facilities for kids to easily go to school and for families to gather without the hassle of traffic.” She expressed her desire to design spaces where residents can work out for fitness.



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SPOTLIGHT

LEAD POISONING

Hidden household danger

AHMED AL KAABI

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH has issued a public awareness bulletin highlighting the serious risks of lead poisoning, a ‘silent’ but dangerous threat to human health and the environment.

Lead, a toxic metal, can be found in many unexpected places, and even small amounts accumulating over time can have severe consequences, particularly for children. The ministry emphasised that prevention begins with awareness and careful selection of safe products.

Titled ‘Lead: The Toxic Element That May Exist in Unexpected Places’, the bulletin underscores the importance of recognising hidden sources of lead exposure. Children are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning, which can affect brain development, the nervous system and multiple organs. The ministry stressed that parents and caregivers must pay close attention to seemingly harmless everyday items that may carry lead.

Among the common sources identified, brightly coloured toys are a major concern. Not all paints or plastics are safe, and some may contain harmful levels of lead. Consumers are advised to always check for certified quality marks before purchasing toys.

Similarly, certain spices with

Lead poisoning is often undetected in its early stages but can cause permanent damage over time and may result in delayed growth among children.

DR MONA MOHAMMED, Health expert

vivid colours may be adulterated with lead-containing substances. The ministry recommended buying spices from trusted sources with clear, verified labelling.

Cheap jewellery is another potential risk, particularly when accessible to children. Lead in jewellery can cause serious health complications if swallowed or mouthed. Traditional remedies, such as ‘Bint Al Dhahab’ (Daughter of Gold), may also contain toxic substances, and the ministry strongly advised using only treatments prescribed by qualified medical professionals.

Lead exposure is not limited to consumer products. Pottery, glazed or cast cookware, can leach lead into food during cooking or storage. Families are encouraged to use cookware made from stainless steel, glass, or cast iron and avoid unverified products. Old keys, metal objects and unregulated cosmetics, including kohl, are additional sources of lead, highlighting the need for vigilance in everyday household items.

The bulletin also raised concerns about environmental exposure. Lead can leach into drinking water through old pipes and water tanks made or welded with lead materials. Ensuring the cleanliness of water systems and using verified water sources are crucial preventive measures.

Contaminated soil near industrial areas or heavily trafficked roads can pose a risk, particularly to children who play outdoors. Washing hands before meals and avoiding contact with old paint or corroded metal objects are simple but effective precautions.

Health experts, including Dr Mona Mohammed, stressed that lead poisoning is often undetected in its early stages but can cause permanent damage over time. In children, it may result in delayed growth, learning difficulties, speech and behavioural problems, and developmental disorders. Adults exposed to lead may experience anaemia, high blood pressure, kidney damage and reproductive issues.

Dr Mona highlighted that even minimal exposure can impair concentration and cognitive development, emphasising the importance of preventive measures and early testing in suspected cases.

The Ministry of Health concluded its bulletin by reinforcing the message that awareness is the first line of defence. Families should prioritise certified and safe products, maintain clean indoor and outdoor environments, and seek prompt medical advice if lead exposure is suspected.

Testing and treatment are available under the supervision of specialised physicians, and early intervention can prevent irreversible health consequences.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH URGES THE PUBLIC TO CHOOSE SAFE, CERTIFIED PRODUCTS AND STAY VIGILANT

Youth are driven by aspirations

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 28

FOLLOWING the Omani Youth Day which was celebrated with vigour and zest on Sunday, the youth stated that they are driven by ambition, purpose and vision, inspired by the renewed Renaissance. They have excelled in a multitude of areas, ranging from astrophysics to social conscience, as well as the paths previously trodden by past generations in fields such as medicine and engineering. The energy, creativity and vision of Omani youth light the way forward, second to none in their capability to drive innovation and progress. Young people bring fresh perspectives, creativity and new ideas to the table, shaping the future course of the country. Waheeda Abdulaziz aspires to give Oman the attention it deserves. She hopes that Oman will develop in the best way possible and be known worldwide for the kindness, hospitality and love of its people.



The energy, creativity and vision of Omani youth light the way forward, second to none in their capability to drive innovation and progress.

“I aspire to become an architect in hopes that I can bring innovative designs that contribute to the development of the country’s ever-changing landscape,” said Al Waqas al Shaqsi, a Grade 12 student. Al Qasim al Ismaili, a Grade 12 student, hopes to become a cybersecurity analyst to help ensure the data of Oman’s residents remains secure, especially during a time when digital crimes are increasing exponentially. “My hope for my country is for it to remain free and peaceful forever. My aspiration for Oman is for it

to remain cultured, beautiful and unique. I want it to be well-known for its culture so that when visitors come to Oman, they can learn about who we are, what we like and what we do,” aspires another student, adding that she also wants her country to work together with other nations, share ideas and stay united as one. Omar al Azizi, a Grade 10 student, has an even bigger perspective for his nation. “I will contribute to Oman by, if given the chance, becoming a soldier and protecting the best country in the world, Oman. I will always be keen to have good manners.”

FSO photo exhibition from Thursday

MUSCAT: FSO Muscat (Friday Shootout Oman), one of Oman’s leading photography communities, will mark its 13th Anniversary with a three-day Photography Exhibition at MGM Phase 3 Podium from October 30 to November 1. The exhibition will be inaugurated by the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman on October 30 at 7:30 pm, and will feature an inspiring collection of images celebrating the landscapes, culture and people of Oman.

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2025/34	Technical Pre-Qualification for Completion of Remaining Works for the Two Gaboro Quaries and Construction of an Exporting Jetty at Kharmat Milaha, Sultanate of Oman	2,000 QAR	N/A	One Bid (Technical)	11 November 2025 01:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.doc@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter in the designated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID. Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 108 St. No. 303, Bui Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
- Tender fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-65111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. (QA 18 CRQA 0000 0000 4050 65111 006) Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the queries in the Form of Tender Bulletin. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is 10% of the contract value and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa.
- Location of the new building.



For further Inquiry, please send your queries at email to tender@qpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.qpmc.qa

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وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية

Ministry of Social Development



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
561/2025	Purchase a binary verification system (two factor verification)	Companies specialized in the field of designing, installing and maintaining information programs and systems / equipping information data centers registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Monday 17-11-2025 02:00 PM	Sunday 07-12-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
562/2025	Preparing and producing a podcast for the Ministry of Social Development	Companies specialized in television, film and radio production services and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Monday 17-11-2025 02:00 PM	Sunday 07-12-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
565/2025	Supplying personal hygiene tools to residents of the Social Care Home at Rustaq	Companies specialized in supplying food, beverages and accessories and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 04-11-2025 02:00 PM	Wednesday 12-11-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) . On **Wednesday 29/10/2025**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Farmers process harvested corn using a thresher to separate the grains from the cobs in a field Maharashtra. — Reuters

MONSOON PROMISE
TURNS SOUR FOR
INDIA’S CROPS RUINED
BY LATE DOWNPOURS

DHARASHIV: Indian farmers’ hopes for bumper crops following this year’s abundant monsoon rains were dashed by heavy downpours just before harvest that damaged their fields, crushing the dreams of millions who rely solely on agriculture for their livelihoods.

The losses to crops such as cotton and soybean are expected to slow agricultural growth, boost farmers’ debt and cap rural consumption, which had been set to rise after New Delhi slashed taxes on hundreds of consumer items.

“We had hoped to harvest 10 to 12 quintals of soybean per acre, but now we’ll be lucky to get 2 to 3 quintals - and even that will require significant additional expenses,” said Kishore Hangargekar, using a unit equivalent to 100 kg (220 lb).

He was speaking after two days of unrelenting rain that flooded his fields and submerged his crops in the district of Dharashiv in the western state of Maharashtra. Until then, the soybean crop had been thriving, and farmers were readying for harvest. The reduction in yields from excessive rainfall is likely to halve agricultural growth to 3 per cent to 3.5 per cent in the December quarter, down from 6.6 per cent a year earlier, said Garima Kapoor, economist at Elara Securities. Summer-sown crops such as soybean, cotton, rice, pulses and vegetables mature from September, a month that saw rains of 15 per cent above average this year, with some regions getting as much as 115 per cent more than normal. — Reuters

CYCLONE MONTHA
SLAMS INDIA’S
SOUTHERN COAST

New Delhi: Heavy rain and gusty winds lashed India’s southern coast as Cyclone Montha started to make landfall on Tuesday, officials said, disrupting flights and triggering waterlogging in low-lying areas.

Cyclones, the equivalent of hurricanes in the North Atlantic or typhoons in the northwestern Pacific, are a regular and deadly menace in the northern Indian Ocean.

“Latest observations indicate that the landfall process has commenced,” India’s national weather bureau said in a statement.

It said Montha would cross the coast of the southeastern state of Andhra Pradesh over several hours as a “severe cyclonic storm”, with a maximum sustained wind speed of 90-100 kilometres (55-60 miles) per hour.

Nara Lokesh, a minister in the state government, said that some four million people may be affected. Local media reported that heavy rain earlier in the day flooded some areas in Andhra Pradesh’s coastal districts, and resulted in the cancellation of more than 30 flights. Schools in numerous districts were ordered shut and fishing activities suspended until Wednesday. — Reuters

TRIAL STARTS

Suspect pleads guilty in Abe murder



TOKYO: The man accused of assassinating former Japanese Pm Shinzo Abe pleaded guilty at the start of his trial on Tuesday. Tetsuya Yamagami, 45, is accused of shooting Japan’s former PM in 2022. Yamagami reportedly said he acted out of hatred for tUnification Church, which was founded in South Korea in 1954 by staunch anti-communist Sun Myung Moon, and supported in Japan by Abe’s grandfather, former PM Nobusuke Kishi.

11 DEAD IN
KENYA LIGHT
AIRCRAFT
CRASH

NAIROBI: A small plane travelling from Kenya’s coast crashed on Tuesday, killing all 11 people on board, including foreigners, the airline said.

The small plane was en route to Kichwa Tembo — an airstrip located in the Maasai Mara National Park — from the tourist hotspot of Diani when it came down at around 5:30 am local time (0230 GMT).

Mombasa Air Safari chairman John Cleave confirmed the accident,

and said there were 10 passengers — eight Hungarians, two Germans — and a Kenyan captain.

“Sadly, there are no survivors,” he said in a statement, citing preliminary information, adding that they had “activated our emergency response team” and were cooperating with local authorities.

“Our hearts and prayers are with all those affected by this tragic event,” the statement said.

An earlier statement from the

Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) said the aircraft had been carrying 12 people at the time of the crash.

The KCAA gave no further details, but said that government agencies were already on site to establish the cause of the accident.

In August, a light aircraft belonging to the medical NGO Amref crashed on the outskirts of the capital Nairobi, killing six and injuring two more. — AFP

Talks between Pakistan,
and Afghanistan collapse

NEGOTIATIONS between Afghanistan and Pakistan to secure a lasting truce after their bloodiest clashes in years collapsed in Istanbul on Tuesday, Afghan state media and a Pakistan security source said on Tuesday.

Dozens of people were killed on both sides of the border in the worst such violence since the Taliban returned to power in 2021.

The one-time allies have had frosty relations since then, with the Taliban government denying accusations from Islamabad that it harbours militant groups which stage attacks in Pakistan.

After an initial 48-hour ceasefire between the warring neighbours lapsed, a second truce emerged on October 19 following talks in Doha, mediated by Qatar and Türkiye, though its terms remain unclear.

Talks in Istanbul began on Saturday and aimed to establish long-term peace.

They stretched into an 18-hour marathon session on Monday, according to Pakistan’s state-run Radio Pakistan.

A Pakistani security source said the Afghan Taliban delegation initially agreed to Islamabad’s call for “credible and decisive action” against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militant group, also known as the Pakistani Taliban.

But the Afghan side “reversed its position repeatedly after instructions from Kabul”, said the source, who was not authorised to discuss the talks publicly.

Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Asif had warned on Saturday that failure to reach a deal could lead to “open war”.

“We have the option, if no agreement takes place, we have an open war with them,” he said ahead of the Istanbul talks.

Abdul Mateen Qani, spokesman for Afghanistan’s interior ministry, said that any attack would be met with a response



A Taliban security member stands guard as deported Afghan refugees from Pakistan arrive in the Spin Boldak district of Kandahar province on Monday. — AFP

“that will serve as a lesson for Pakistan and a message for others”.

“It’s true that we do not possess nuclear weapons, but neither did Nato nor the United States manage to subdue Afghanistan despite 20 years of war,” Qani told Afghan media outlet Ariana News.

The fighting broke out after explosions in Kabul on October 9, which the Taliban government blamed on Pakistan and launched a retaliatory border offensive.

The border between the two neighbours has been closed for two weeks, with only Afghans expelled from Pakistan allowed to cross. In the Afghan border town of Spin

Boldak, a driver said that “fruit is rotting” in trucks. “There are 50 to 60 trucks, some with apples, others with pomegranates and grapes,” said 25-year-old Gul, who only gave his first name.

“We wait and call on the government to reopen” the border, he said.

The violence killed at least 50 Afghan civilians and wounded 447 others in one week, the United Nations mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said.

Pakistan’s military said on October 12 that 23 personnel had been killed and 29 wounded, without detailing civilian casualties. — AFP



LOOKING FOR BODIES IN GAZA

People work at a site where searches for deceased hostages, kidnapped by Hamas during the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, are underway, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. Hamas said on Tuesday it would hand over the body of another Israeli hostage in the evening, just hours after returning remains that turned out to belong to someone already buried in Israel. The Palestinian group’s armed wing, the Al Qassam Brigades, said on Telegram that the body, found in a tunnel, would be transferred to Israel at 8 pm (1800 GMT). Such handovers are typically conducted via the International Committee of the Red Cross. — Reuters

EYE ON AI

Saudi hosts world’s business elite



RIYADH: Saudi Arabia kicked off a major investment conference featuring heads of state and the global business elite as it seeks support for its sprawling “gigaprojects” and sky-high AI ambitions. FII, dubbed “Davos in the desert”, will once again try to lure dollars to Saudi Arabia. Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng, joined by more than 150 business leaders, and Syria’s interim president are attending the Future Investment Initiative.

POSITIVE SIGNALS

China hints at Xi meeting with Takaichi



BEIJING: China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday talked up “high-level exchanges” in a call with Japanese counterpart Toshimitsu Motegi, hinting at a potential meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japan’s new premier, Sanae Takaichi. Xi and Takaichi will attend Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in South Korea, offering a window for a meeting on neutral ground between the Chinese leader and a Japanese prime minister.

SHORT TAKES



Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed addresses parliament members on in Addis Ababa on Tuesday. — Reuters

Ethiopia PM seeks mediation with Eritrea over sea access

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia’s leader called on Tuesday for international “mediation” with Eritrea over access to the sea, insisting on an “irreversible” claim to the coastline as tensions rise between the Horn of Africa neighbours.

Relations are once again strained more than 30 years after Eritrea gained independence and left Ethiopia landlocked.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed won a Nobel Peace Prize for forging a peace deal with Eritrea in 2018.

But his insistent demands on sea access have provoked anger in Eritrea, which says Ethiopia covets its southeastern port city of Assab on the Red Sea. “Ethiopia’s request for access to the sea is irreversible. We have no intention of going to war with Eritrea. On the contrary, we are convinced that this issue can be resolved peacefully,” Abiy told parliament on Tuesday.

Abiy said he had held discussions on the issue with the United States, Russia, China, African Union and European Union.

“We... have requested their mediation to find a lasting solution,” he said. Eritrean Information Minister Yemane Ghebremeskel did not respond to a request for comment from AFP. After Eritrean independence in 1993, the two countries fought a bloody border war from 1998 to 2000, leaving tens of thousands dead. — AFP

Strongest storm of the year closes in on Jamaica

HURRICANE Melissa was expected to bring catastrophe as it makes landfall in Jamaica with storm surges, flash floods and landslides in the worst storm to hit the Caribbean island this century, a UN weather official said on Tuesday.

The Category 5 storm, the strongest possible on the Saffir-Simpson scale, will bring wind gusts of over 300 km per hour (186 miles per hour) and widespread devastation to the island, where authorities have ordered mandatory evacuations.

“It’s a catastrophic situation expected in Jamaica,” the World Meteorological Organization’s tropical cyclone specialist Anne-Claire Fontan told a Geneva press briefing. “For Jamaica, it will be the storm of the century for sure.”

Storm surges of up to four meters were expected, she said, with rainfall set to exceed 70 cm (2.3 ft), causing “catastrophic flash flooding and landslides,” she said.

The US National Hurricane Center expects the storm to hit Jamaica early on Tuesday, and then cross eastern Cuba to move over the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos by Wednesday.

Melissa’s slow movement over unusually tepid Caribbean water had contributed to its ballooning size and strength, NHC forecasters said, threatening Jamaica with days of never-before-seen catastrophic winds and rain.

The International Federation of the Red Cross said up to 1.5 million in Jamaica were expected to be directly affected by the storm.



Campaign hats for Republican presidential candidate and former US President Donald Trump.



Today will be very difficult for tens of thousands, if not millions of people in Jamaica.. Roofs will be tested, flood waters will rise, isolation will become a harsh reality for many

NECEPHOR MGHENDI
IFRC official

“Today will be very difficult for tens of thousands, if not millions of people in Jamaica,” IFRC’s Necephor Mghendi said via video link from Port of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago.

“Roofs will be tested, flood waters will rise, isolation will become a harsh reality for many.”

To enable swift relief distribution, essential items - tarpaulins, hygiene kits, blankets and safe drinking water - had been pre-positioned in Red Cross branches on the island, he said, with over 800 shelters set up for evacuees.

On Monday, Prime Minister Andrew Holness ordered mandatory evacuations for parts of southern Jamaica, including the historic town of Port Royal.

He warned of damage to farmlands, homes and infrastructure on the island, which is roughly the size of Connecticut and whose main airports sit close to sea level.

“There is no infrastructure in the region that can withstand a Category 5,” he said.

Holness said his government was as prepared as can be, with an emergency response budget of \$33 million and insurance and credit provisions for damage a little larger than that sustained from last year’s devastating Hurricane Beryl.

Beryl was the earliest and fastest Atlantic hurricane on record to reach Category 5, but scientists warn that storms are becoming stronger faster as a result of climate change warming ocean waters.

“Slow-moving major hurricanes often go down in history as some of the deadliest and most destructive storms on record,” said AccuWeather Chief Meteorologist Jonathan Porter. “This is a dire situation unfolding in slow motion.”

Damian Anderson, a teacher from Hagley Gap, a town nestled in Jamaica’s Blue Mountains, said on Monday impassable roads had already cut off his community.

“We can’t move,” Anderson, 47, said. “We’re scared. We’ve never seen a multi-day event like this before.”

Nearby Haiti and the Dominican Republic have faced days of torrential downpours leading to at least four deaths, authorities said.

“Melissa will continue to track towards South Cuba and then the Bahamas, bringing again, a lot of rain and destructive wind as well as storm surges,” said the WMO’s Fontan.

Bahamian Prime Minister Philip Davis ordered evacuations for people in southern and eastern parts of the archipelago.

In Cuba, authorities said they had evacuated upwards of 500,000 people from areas vulnerable to winds and flooding. — Reuters

Gates: Climate change won’t lead to humanity’s demise

WASHINGTON: Climate change “will not lead to humanity’s demise,” billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates has argued in a long memo calling for a proportionate and pragmatic approach to tackling human-caused global warming.

The missive was published on Monday, days ahead of the COP30 climate summit in Brazil. Gates praised the meeting’s focus on climate adaptation and human development.

The Microsoft founder, a major backer of green technologies through his Breakthrough Energy organisation, acknowledged that climate change will have “serious consequences” but added: “People will be able to live and thrive in most places on Earth for the foreseeable future.”

He said he knew some climate advocates would disagree and call him a hypocrite because of his carbon footprint, which he said he fully offsets with “legitimate” carbon credits. Gates outlined his “Three tough truths about climate:” climate change will not end industrialisation, temperature is not the best measure of progress, health and prosperity are the strongest defences against a warming world.

While the planet is dangerously off course



Our chief goal should be to prevent suffering, particularly for those in the toughest conditions who live in the world’s poorest countries

BILL GATES

in meeting the Paris Agreement’s goal of limiting long-term warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, Gates argued that rather than fixating on the precise figure, the world should recognise progress in cutting emissions.

For most of the world’s poor, he added, poverty and disease remain the more pressing problems.

“Our chief goal should be to prevent suffering, particularly for those in the toughest conditions who live in the world’s poorest countries,” he said. That means, for example, less focus on limiting extremely hot and cold

days, and more on ensuring “fewer people live in poverty and poor health so that extreme weather isn’t such a threat to them.”

Looking ahead, Gates said a key climate strategy should be to reduce the so-called green premium — the cost difference between clean and dirty ways of doing something — to zero for materials such as cement, steel, and jet fuel.

He compared the memo to one he wrote at Microsoft 30 years ago urging the company to put the internet at the heart of everything it did. Likewise, he said, the climate community needs a “strategic pivot” at COP30 and beyond. “Prioritise the things that have the greatest impact on human welfare,” he said. He called for a shift in focus toward improving human welfare, particularly in vulnerable regions, through investments in energy access, healthcare, and agricultural resilience.

These areas, he argued, offered more equitable benefits than temperature goals and should be central to climate strategies discussed at COP30.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the World Meteorological Organization last week urged countries to set up disaster warning systems to protect people against extreme weather. — AFP



JAPAN BONDING

United States Navy Admiral Samuel Paparo (R) greets US President Donald Trump (L) and Japan’s Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi as they arrive on board the US Navy’s USS George Washington aircraft carrier at the US naval base in Yokosuka on Tuesday. — AFP

Recall

KIA Cerato (BD)

RECALL DATE: 29-10-2025

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production*	#Number of Affected Commodities
KIA Cerato (BD)	June 21, 2021 - July05, 2024	461

*Not all vehicles in this production period, are affected.
#Subject to revision, based on the information received from the manufacturer, from time to time.

Recall consequence

On some Cerato (BD) model produced within specific production date range, while modifying ESC logic, ABS lamp activation logic was missed. Due to logic missing ABS warning lamp signal cannot be processed during ignition ON & ABS fail condition. So ABS lamp will not show during Key ON condition and ABS activation or failed condition.

Recall Action

Verify affected vehicles as per the VIN list and upgrade software of cluster as per KMC recommendation.

To check the serial number of the affected items, please visit the recalls and warnings website by scanning the QR code.

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الإصدار : 04

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OPINION

The quiet intelligence that lives within us



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

FROM ten to ten to eleven: it is the quiet unfolding of life's intelligence within us. What begins as an invisible blueprint becomes a seed, a speck, a baby, and eventually a body made of trillions of living cells - each carrying within it the memory of creation and the potential for renewal.

We often think of intelligence as something that lives only in the mind. Yet long before our first thought, our body already knew what to do. It knew how to divide cells, shape organs, beat a heart, and weave the delicate network of a nervous system that would one day allow us to feel, think, and love. There was no manual, no instruction, only an inner knowing - a quiet wisdom at work behind the scenes.

Just as a single telephone line once connected two voices and later evolved into an entire world of communication, one cell multiplied into a vast ecosystem of intelligence. The body is not merely a vessel; it is a universe of connection. Each

atom, neuron, and breath participates in a conversation between energy and matter, creation and continuation, the visible and the unseen. This same intelligence that once built us is still within us. If we allow it, it heals our wounds, restores balance, and renews what has been damaged. Yet, in our fast-paced, overthinking world, we often forget that the body doesn't always need our control. Sometimes, it simply needs our trust. Healing is not only a medical act; it is a return to faith in the body's innate wisdom: the quiet confidence that life itself knows what it's doing.

Consider that the same life force that turned a cluster of cells into YOU is still active, still knowing, still listening. Every thought, every feeling, every breath is part of this intricate communication system. When we pause the noise and turn inward, we begin to sense the harmony beneath the chaos: the body's natural rhythm of regeneration and the deep intelligence of stillness that has always guided us.

Modern life often pulls us away from

Consider that the same life force that turned a cluster of cells into YOU is still active, still knowing, still listening. Every thought, every feeling, every breath is part of this intricate communication system.

this truth. We live in our heads, comparing, controlling, measuring and forgetting that the same intelligence that created galaxies is the one beating in our hearts. It doesn't need to be taught, it only needs to be remembered. To remember is to return to alignment, where body, mind, and spirit speak the same language of wholeness.

The journey from blueprint to being, from ten to ten to eleven, is not just biological. It is spiritual. It is the unfolding of consciousness through form.

To recognise this is to understand that healing and transformation were never external pursuits. They were always encoded into our very existence.

So, when you feel fragmented, uncertain, or disconnected, simply pause. Remember that the same intelligence that built your body is still building you: moment by moment, breath by breath. Within you lies not just memory, but mastery - the quiet, constant knowing that life itself is on your side, patiently guiding you back to balance, harmony and peace.

TRUMP, CHINA AND STALLED DIPLOMACY: FIVE TAKEAWAYS FROM ASEAN SUMMIT

ISABELLE LEONG

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) concluded on Tuesday its biannual summit attended by foreign leaders including US President Donald Trump, with trade and regional tensions on the agenda. Here are five takeaways from the meeting in Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur.

TRUMP SHOW

Trump jetted into Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, his presence eclipsing the usual ASEAN agenda. Aside from his trademark "fist-pump" routine with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on the tarmac, all eyes were on the US president as he unveiled a flurry of deals and met with leaders and officials. Trump, on his first trip to Asia since returning to the White House in January, secured promises of greater cooperation on rare earths from four Southeast Asian nations, as Washington scrambles to break China's stranglehold on the crucial industry. The US president also oversaw the signing of a ceasefire pact he helped to broker between Cambodia and Thailand.

CHINA TIES

China signed an "upgraded" free trade agreement with ASEAN, its largest trading partner. Trade between China and ASEAN member states amounted to \$771 billion in 2024. Chinese Premier Li Qiang, who oversaw the signing, said Beijing was willing to work with Southeast Asian governments to "eliminate external interference, jointly resist risks and challenges, and create a bright future for us all".

NEW MEMBER

East Timor formally joined the bloc as its 11th member, after 14 years of campaigning. Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao said joining ASEAN was "a powerful affirmation" for the young nation.

MYANMAR STALEMATE

Despite repeated calls for progress, ASEAN remains largely powerless in stopping the civil war in Myanmar, a member state.

ROAD AHEAD

Malaysia handed over the ASEAN gavel to Philippines, which will take charge in 2026. The regional grouping is expected to grapple with familiar challenges. Territorial tensions in the South China Sea are likely to intensify as four member states — Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam — lay overlapping claims, challenging China's sweeping assertions of sovereignty. — AFP

Looking beyond ESG: Why purpose is the new profit?

IN my twenty-five years working across sustainability, social investment, and entrepreneurship, I have rarely witnessed a clearer signal of global transformation than the one I saw recently at Muscat University. During a Green Entrepreneurship workshop organised by the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) in partnership with ASYAD and the European Union, more than ninety per cent of participants, students, founders, and professionals, voted that their top priority today is for the ecosystem to create incentives that make entrepreneurship more sustainable.

This result was more than a workshop statistic; it was a revelation. It reflected a paradigm shift in how people, especially Generation Z, think about the future. The conversation is no longer confined to traditional frameworks like the Triple Bottom Line of People, Planet, and Profit or the ESG lens of Environment, Social, and Governance. A new and deeper layer has emerged: Purpose.

THE FOURTH BOTTOM LINE

Purpose is not philanthropy, nor is it a marketing slogan. It is a core strategy that gives meaning to performance and direction to progress. Companies that place purpose at the heart of their operations consistently outperform those that don't. Deloitte's 2024 Human Capital Report found that purpose-driven companies are 42 per cent more likely to achieve sustained profitability and 30 per cent more resilient during economic crises. A 2023 Harvard Business Review study showed that employees in purpose-led organisations demonstrate 1.4 times higher engagement and 50 per cent lower turnover.

These numbers make one truth unmistakable: Purpose is good economics. It aligns shareholder value with societal value and converts ethical awareness into a



The conversation is no longer confined to traditional frameworks. A new and deeper layer has emerged: Purpose



KHALID AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

competitive advantage. In a world increasingly driven by AI, data, automation, and quarterly targets, purpose re-centres strategy around humanity.

FROM SCARCITY TO SUFFICIENCY

Across the world, headlines focus on competition, races for rare minerals, dominance in artificial intelligence, or supremacy in digital currencies. The new trade wars are not fought with weapons but with algorithms and tariffs, driven by the belief that resources are finite and only the fastest will win. Yet, our true problem is not scarcity, it is our inability to define sufficiency.

Purpose challenges this mindset. It reminds us that the aim of progress is not to consume endlessly but to enable dignity, justice, and sustainability.

The next generation understands this intuitively. Global surveys show that 77 per cent of Gen Z professionals would rather work for a company whose values align with

their own, even if it means earning less. For them, purpose is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

PURPOSE AS RESILIENCE

When nations and corporations define success only through domination, conflict becomes inevitable. But when they define success through shared well-being, collaboration follows. Purpose, in this sense, becomes a peace framework, an antidote to polarisation and short-termism.

We are entering an age where meaning may be our most undervalued asset. Trade wars and resource conflicts thrive in a moral vacuum; purpose fills that vacuum with direction and responsibility. By re-embedding purpose in business and policy, we can slow the race to the bottom and replace rivalry with reciprocity.

The Sultanate of Oman, with its historic culture of dialogue and balance, is uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. Its economic diversification, green investment, and youth innovation agenda can become global examples of how prosperity and peace reinforce each other when guided by purpose.

CALL TO ACTION

Finance executives and sustainability advocates share more in common than they realise. Both seek continuity, resilience, and trust, qualities rooted in purpose. A purposeful economy humanises capital, measures progress by collective well-being, and builds systems that people want to sustain, not exploit.

Our world is not short of innovation, technology, or capital. What it lacks is shared direction. The future will belong not to those who accumulate the most resources, but to those who use them with meaning. By bringing purpose back to the centre of our economies, we can transform growth into progress and profit into peace.

For a less violent world without war



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

TODAY, the world is seeking peace. However, what we witness instead are wars and conflicts that persistently imprison our world, leaving a trail of devastation and despair in their wake.

It is not only visible violence that disrupts our world; structural violence, economic inequality and systemic oppression also profoundly affect the core of modern society.

Researchers may debate the specific details, but generally speaking, there have been no historical periods entirely free of war. Much of recorded history has been marked by imperial or colonial occupations, during which dominant nations used force to govern other peoples.

I recently participated in a conference discussing whether peace is an unattainable dream. Many attendees expressed the view that it was inappropriate to discuss global peace while reports of war and conflict were widespread.

When an individual or country ridicules another based on a specific prejudice, it fosters feelings of resentment and a desire for retribution in the mind of the targeted individual or nation.

Kofi Annan, the former secretary-general of the United Nations, stated, “Peace is never a flawless achievement.” The idea of peace-building involves actively seeking harmony and collaboration, ensuring fairness and safety for all individuals.

I believe that the direction of human history is toward greater knowledge, increased freedom and more broadly shared prosperity. Peaceful societies experience a stronger sense of happiness among their citizens.

The 2025 Global Peace Index report indicates that global peacefulness declined by 0.36 per cent in 2025. While this may seem insignificant, it is important to note that since the index began in 2008, this marks the thirteenth time the average has decreased, with the overall country score dropping by 5.4 per cent.

Wars and conflicts cause food shortages and severely disrupt economic activities, threatening the survival of entire populations. Additionally, wars often trigger the displacement of large numbers of people, cutting them off from their food supplies and livelihoods.

Look at Gaza, where a ceasefire was established under US President Donald Trump to restore peace to the ravaged Strip; however, humanitarian workers still lack unrestricted access, safety and the necessary assistance.

Achieving humanitarian objectives requires increased crossings and operational corridors, secure transit for aid personnel and civilians and the unrestricted import of goods and fuel; however, these conditions are currently lacking in Palestinian territory.

In the current climate, there is an excess of hostility, anger, sorrow, hatred

I believe that the direction of human history is towards greater knowledge, increased freedom and more broadly shared prosperity. Peaceful societies experience a stronger sense of happiness among their citizens

and scepticism between the two groups, making it difficult to achieve genuine peace independently. But I still believe that, with the encouragement of the global community, this is the only viable option.

Factors contributing to peace include education, universal goodwill, respect for human rights and international cooperation. However, challenges such as geopolitical tensions and climate-induced conflicts complicate the path forward.

As the gap between rich and poor nations widens and the technology of warfare advances and spreads, envisioning a peaceful world becomes increasingly unrealistic. Genuine, lasting and stable peace requires trust and solidarity among people—qualities that quickly unravel when old grudges continually resurface.

More distressingly, all of this is occurring amid a World Bank report estimating that approximately 808 million to 838 million people will be living in extreme poverty in 2025, surviving on less than \$3.20 per day.

A recent Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report estimates that 1.1 billion people across 109 countries live in multidimensional poverty, with nearly 80 per cent of them exposed to climate hazards.

However, world peace is a goal worth pursuing. By setting it as our objective, we can develop strategies to move closer to a less violent world without war. Although it may seem naive or impossible, I believe it is attainable.

TAKAICHI, TRUMP SWAP PRAISE FOR ‘NEW GOLDEN AGE’ OF BILATERAL TIES

AURELIA END AND ALICE PHILIPSON

Japan’s new premier Sanae Takaichi lavished US leader Donald Trump with praise and vows of a “golden age” of ties on his visit to Tokyo on Tuesday, before inking a deal with Washington aimed at securing critical minerals.

Takaichi — Japan’s first woman prime minister — pulled out all the stops for Trump in her opening test on the international stage, and even announced she would nominate him for a Nobel Peace Prize, the White House said.

Trump has become increasingly focused on the Nobel since his return to power in January, and claims to have ended several conflicts around the world, a role that experts, however, downplay.

In return for Takaichi’s plaudits, Trump, who was meeting the conservative premier for the first time on an Asia tour that aims for a deal with China, said Washington was an ally of the “strongest level”.

“It’s a great honour to be with you, especially so early in what will be, I think, one of the greatest prime ministers,” Trump told Takaichi at the Akasaka Palace state guest house. Takaichi praised Trump’s efforts towards a ceasefire between Thailand and Cambodia and his “unprecedented historic achievement” of the Gaza deal.

She also gifted him a golf bag signed by star player Hideki Matsuyama and a putter belonging to assassinated former prime minister Shinzo Abe, who had a close personal relationship with Trump, the White House said.

“I would like to realise a new golden age of the Japan-US Alliance, where both Japan and the United States will become stronger and also more prosperous,” Takaichi said.

Speaking later alongside Trump on board the USS George Washington near Tokyo, Takaichi told a crowd of hundreds of sailors that she was “committed to fundamentally reinforce” Japan’s defence capabilities, noting her nation faces “unprecedented” security dangers.

Trump, who came to the stage pumping his fist, waving and clapping as the audience cheered, said he had approved the first batch of missiles to be delivered to Japan’s Self-Defence Forces for their F-35 fighter jets and they would arrive this week.

He also said the United States was going to be working with Japan on “making ships”, as Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Tuesday signed an MoU to boost cooperation in shipbuilding. China dominates the global shipbuilding industry which has been in steady decline in the United States — but Trump has promised a revival of the sector. The two sides earlier signed an agreement aimed at “achieving resilience and security of critical minerals and rare earths supply chains”, a statement said. — AFP

Ukraine needs a ‘Victory First’ aid strategy...

SINCE Russia’s full-scale war in February 2022, Ukraine has received \$145 billion in international financial assistance. While this support, generously provided by partner countries and other donors, has been immensely valuable, it has come with strings attached. The most significant restriction is that these funds can be used only for non-military purposes, such as healthcare, education, and public servants’ salaries.

Consider the World Bank-managed Public Expenditures for Administrative Capacity Endurance (PEACE) Fund, which provides financing for government salaries, including ministry staff, teachers, first responders, and healthcare workers, as well as pensions and other social services, through the state budget. With this civilian-focused approach, Ukraine’s Western allies have sought to avoid the Kremlin’s ire. But deploying aid this way encourages Russia, while also creating distortions that undermine Ukraine’s war effort and generate waste.

For example, in September 2024, the Ukrainian parliament was forced to increase the state budget by around 12 per cent, or 495 billion hryvnia (\$12 billion), to cover military expenditures. In July, the Ukrainian government further raised defence spending by around 400 billion hryvnia, and on October 21, it allocated more than 300 billion hryvnia in additional financing for the defence ministry.

At the same time, the Ukrainian government recently allocated more money to school meals and other social programmes. And since October 2024, it has spent four billion hryvnia on a rebate programme for domestic products — a project with an unclear economic impact. While this money constitutes a small portion of overall expenses, it could finance around 276,000 basic FPV drones, a weapon which now accounts for 80 per cent of Russian losses.



The war-ravaged Ukrainian economy cannot keep pace with Russian military expenditures.



ANASTASSIA FEDYK

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ILONA SOLOGOUB

The writer is Editor of VoxUkraine

These budgetary developments illustrate how the constraints of the current foreign-aid structure create perverse incentives. To make international assistance for Ukraine more efficient, we must recognise two facts. First, defence is the most important spending item, because all other considerations — from social programmes to reconstruction — depend on the continued existence of the Ukrainian state. Second, the war-ravaged Ukrainian economy cannot keep pace with Russian military expenditures, which totalled \$149 billion in 2024, compared to Ukraine’s significantly smaller \$65 billion.

Given this, Ukraine’s partners must support military spending, rather than social programmes. After all, bolstering Ukrainian defences protects Europe’s security, and the Ukrainian army imposes the most forceful “sanctions” on Russia.

Ensuring the effectiveness of foreign aid is particularly important now, as European leaders discuss using frozen Russian assets to provide a “reparations loan” to Ukraine. While these funds could help sustain Ukraine’s people and

economy, it is more important to fund their defence (as German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has proposed) — in other words, to tackle the existential challenge posed by Russia’s war.

Ukraine’s allies should be laser-focused on winning the war, which is the sole precondition for peace, Ukraine’s reconstruction, and European Union integration. This implies placing more emphasis on helping Ukraine repel Russian forces than on designing security guarantees for “when the war stops” or preparing a European defence plan to be ready by 2030.

Various reports suggest that Ukraine uses only one-third of its drone-production capacity, owing to limited funding. With direct financial support from foreign donors, Ukraine could quickly increase its drone output, thereby blunting Russia’s assaults. It would also send the signal that Ukraine’s will to fight is backed by a robust financial lifeline from the West. These measures would make the war more costly for the Kremlin and may even motivate Russia to engage in genuine peace talks.

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SPORTS

MUSCAT VS SEEB



Seeb player aims towards Ahli Sidab goal.

UNDER-17 HANDBALL LEAGUE FINAL TODAY

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

The curtain falls on Wednesday on the 2025-26 Under-17 Handball League with an exciting final showdown between defending champions Muscat and Seeb, aiming for their long-awaited first title.

The match kicks off at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, under the auspices of Jihad al Shaikh, Vice-Chairman of Oman Club and in the presence of Musa al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Handball Association (OHA), along with board members and club representatives.

Before the grand final, Nizwa and Ahli Sidab will face off to determine the third and fourth positions.

Muscat enter the final with strong momentum after an impressive season, highlighted by their 36-22 victory over Nizwa in the semifinal second leg, following a close 23-21 win in the first. Led by national coach Majid al Hasani, Muscat rely on disciplined defence and quick counter-attacks.

The team seeks to defend its crown and extend its golden record, having claimed the title six times, the most recent being last season cementing its dominance in youth handball.

On the other side, Seeb approach the match with confidence after defeating Ahli Sidab twice, 32-26 and 26-17, to book their place in the final. Under the guidance of national coach Ali al Balushi, Seeb are determined to end their runner-up streak, having finished second in the last three consecutive seasons and to finally lift the championship trophy. Wednesday's clash promises to be thrilling, pitting Muscat's experience against Seeb's youthful energy, with both sides eager to prove their strength in front of passionate fans at the Bausher complex.

The 2025/2026 U17 Handball League featured eight clubs, divided into two groups and was open to players born in 2008 and later. The Oman Handball Association has allocated trophies, medals and financial rewards for the top three teams, reaffirming its commitment to nurturing young talent and supporting the future of Omani handball.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

The fifth round of the Jindal Football League for the 2025-2026 season will kick off on Wednesday amid increasingly competitive atmospheres between clubs seeking to strengthen their positions in the overall standings. Al Nahda currently lead the table with 10 points after the conclusion of Round 4, ahead of second-placed Seeb, who share the same tally, while Bahla, Al Shabab and Oman Club follow closely behind with 9 points each, in tightly packed positions that fuel the intensity of the title race.

League leaders Al Nahda will host Sur at 5 pm at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex in a match that appears, on paper, to favour the home side. Al Nahda enter the game with

great confidence after a series of strong performances. At the same time, Sur remain at the bottom of the table with just a single point and will be hoping for a surprise result that reshuffles the competition.

In the second match on the same evening, fifth-placed Oman Club (with 9 points) will be a tough visitor to Al Khabourah, who currently sit 10th with 4 points, at 7:20 pm at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex. The match is crucial for both sides, as a win could push Oman Club closer to the top, while a victory would revive Al Khabourah's hopes of improving their position.

The round continues on Thursday evening with three additional encounters, the most notable of which sees Dhofar face Samail at 5:15 pm at the Al Saada



League leaders Al Nahda will host Sur at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex at 5 pm in a key Jindal League match on Wednesday.

Sports Complex in Salalah. It is an evenly balanced duel between ninth-placed Dhofar with 4 points and eighth-

placed Samail with 5 points, as both sides search for a victory that would lift them to mid-table and provide a

Al Shabab post second win in AFC Challenge League



Majid al Sadi and Mohammed al Ghafri struck targets in Al Shabab's second straight win in Group A of the AFC Challenge League.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

OMAN'S Al Shabab Club impressed in their debut campaign at the 2025/26 AFC Challenge League (ACGL) following a thrilling 2-1 victory over FC Abdylsh-Ata from Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu, Bhutan.

The triumph marked Al Shabab's second successive win in Group A, taking them to six points and placing them on the brink of qualification for the quarterfinals of the continental competition. The team will now shift their focus to their decisive final group match against Altyn Asyr FC of Turkmenistan on Friday.

After a narrow 1-0 win over hosts Paro FC in their opening match, Al Shabab once again displayed their fighting spirit and composure to register a strong comeback to claim another crucial victory for Oman.

Artem Bilyi opened the scoring as he netted the first-half goal in the ninth minute

while Majid al Saadi equalised before the completion of the first half. Mohamed al Ghafri gave his side maximum points and put them a step closer to the quarterfinals as he scored the second and winning goal in the 77th minute.

The opponent side took the lead early when Artem Bilyi struck in the ninth minute as his low shot slipping just beyond the reach of Al Shabab goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini. Al Shabab responded immediately with attacking pressure as Musab al Maamari came close twice but his long-range strike rattling the crossbar in the 28th minute after an earlier effort was saved by Sultan Chomoev. Al Shabab's persistence was finally rewarded moments before half-time. Yousuf al Malki's free-kick forced a rebound from Chomoev and Majid al Saadi reacted quickest to slot home the equaliser, marking a spirited comeback by the Omani side.

In the deciding half, Al Shabab took full control of the match. Their pressing game and quick transitions stretched the Kyrgyz defence, with Kenean Maleko testing the

goalkeeper in the 56th minute and Al Saadi heading narrowly wide in the 68th.

A goal from Mohammed al Ghafri was disallowed for offside, but the midfielder would soon make amends. The breakthrough came in the 77th minute when Hatim al Roushdi delivered a lofted pass that split the defence. Al Ghafri timed his run perfectly, sprinted through the middle, rounded the advancing goalkeeper, and calmly finished into an empty net. The victory secured all three points and sealing a memorable comeback win.

Head coach Hassan Rustam expressed pride in his players' determination and discipline throughout the encounter. "Congratulations to all the players. The team managed to deliver a top match. Also, they could manage to return back to the match and earned an essential victory. It was not an easy match and we expected it will be a tough game. We read the opponent and managed to reduce their attacking in our box. There is one more game in the group and we will fight for another victory," he said.

Al Nahda look to extend lead as Jindal League enters fifth round

valuable morale boost before the next break.

Later, Sohar, who have 6 points, will take on Ibri with just a single point, at 6:05 pm at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex. The match will be a difficult test for Ibri, who are yet to taste victory and seek to correct their course before the gap widens further in the standings. Meanwhile, the Rustaq Sports Complex will host a 7:30 pm clash between bottom-placed Al Rustaq, still without points, and Saham, who sit 11th with 4 points, in a crucial match for the home side, who will fight for their first breakthrough to escape the relegation zone.

Away from this week's direct action, two matches, Al Shabab vs Al Nasr and Seeb vs Bahla have been postponed to a later date due to the clubs' participation in the AFC Challenge Cup. Seeb

play their group matches in Kuwait, while Al Shabab are competing in Bhutan. This adds further complexity to the battle at the top and opens the door for possible shifts in the standings depending on the outcomes of the rescheduled fixtures.

The fifth round is considered a pivotal stage for clubs clinging to their ambitions. Al Nahda seek to maintain their lead and reinforce their dominance, while mid-table teams aim to close the gap toward the summit, and those near the bottom hope to secure an early escape from the relegation struggle. Between the pursuit of the title and the fight for survival, the league remains wide open to all possibilities in a round that could significantly reshape the landscape of the competition.

SUPER WOMEN SERIES



Jayadhanya Gunasekar in action during the tournament.

OMAN DUO GAINS VALUABLE EXPOSURE IN MALAYSIA

MUSCAT: Oman women cricketers, Jayadhanya Gunasekar and Lujaina Sajid, returned home with invaluable experience after featuring in the YSD Malaysian Super Women Series 2025, a franchise-based T20 cricket tournament that brought together leading players from across ICC Associate nations.

The third edition of the event, held at the Borneo Cricket Ground in Kuching, Sarawak, concluded late last month with the Southern Jaguars lifting the title. The competition featured 40 Malaysian players and 35 overseas cricketers from seven associate countries, who were drafted into five teams — Central Super Girls, Eastern Lioness, Northern Queens, Southern Jaguars, and Western Wonder Women.

Representing Oman and Western Wonder Women, Jayadhanya made a strong impact, taking eight wickets in five matches to finish among the tournament’s top five wicket-takers. Her best figures of 3 for 7 underlined her growing consistency and confidence with the ball.

Speaking on her return, Jayadhanya said: “The third edition of the YSD Malaysian Super Women Series was an unforgettable experience. It was my first time taking part in this league, and it will remain one of the most cherished tournaments in my life.”

She added: “I thank Oman Cricket for giving me this opportunity and the Malaysian Cricket Association for conducting such a well-organised event. Playing with and against top players from various Associate countries was truly remarkable and a great learning experience.”

Her compatriot Lujaina Sajid, who represented the Eastern Lioness, did not get a chance to feature in a match but described the tour as a significant learning curve. “My tour to Malaysia was a valuable learning experience. Representing my country abroad for the first time taught me professionalism and confidence. Interacting with senior players from different countries gave me new perspectives and inspired me to keep improving,” she said.

This is the second year in a row that Oman Cricket has sent women cricketers to play in the tournament. Last year, Fiza Javed and Sameera Khan had represented in the Malaysian Super Women Series. For Oman’s developing women’s cricket programme, such international exposure marks an encouraging step forward. The recent participation in the Malaysian franchise series reflects the growing opportunities for Omani cricketers to compete and learn on global platforms, building the foundation for a stronger and more experienced national side.



Mohammed al Farsi competed in Heat 1 of the 100m freestyle qualifiers, finishing in third place with a time of 57.74 seconds. — Nawaf al Busaidy

Al Farsi delivers strong show, esports team set for debut

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 28

OMAN’S national esports team begins its first appearance at the third Asian Youth Games in Bahrain on Wednesday at 12 pm (Oman time), competing in Rocket League after completing an intensive training programme and arriving in high spirits.

In swimming, national team swimmer Mohammed al Farsi competed in Heat 1 of the 100m freestyle qualifiers, finishing in third place with a time of 57.74 seconds. Despite the strong effort, the result was not enough to qualify for the final due to the fierce competition led by the Chinese swimmers, who topped the standings with 51.18 seconds.

The Asian Youth Games features more than 5,000 athletes representing 45 Asian National Olympic Committees across 24 sports and 253 events. Competitions are held at major venues including Isa Sports City, Khalifa Sports City, Endurance Village and the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre.

Coach Abdelhafid Rahmani Goudari praised Al Farsi’s performance, stating that the event marks a key milestone in the swimmer’s career at the end of the 2025 season. He noted that the swimmer underwent a demanding preparation schedule of eight to nine weekly sessions, supplemented with strength and conditioning training.

He added that Al Farsi, 17, specialises in the 50m and 200m freestyle and backstroke events and has shown clear progress throughout the year. The coach emphasised that the main objective of this participation is to gain high-level Asian experience and



Nine Omani referees and officials have been nominated by the Asian federations. — Nawaf al Busaidy

aim for qualification to the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games.

Al Farsi said he greatly benefited from the participation, despite missing the final. He described it as the toughest competition in his career so far and expressed determination to break his personal records in future races.

INTENSIVE TRAINING

Meanwhile, the esports team continued intensive training sessions focused on improving coordination, tactical strategies and reaction speed. The atmosphere in the camp has been highly motivated, with strong determination to deliver a top-level performance.

Hamad bin Yaqoub al Jahouri confirmed that the team enters the Rocket League competition with full readiness and ambitious goals, noting that they have a talented group of players aiming to reflect the rapid development of esports in Oman.

He added that the team expects tough opposition from 20 Asian countries, but confidence remains high after qualifying for

the World Cup Finals in Saudi Arabia next December as the first Gulf and Arab team to do so, alongside the host nation.

Head coach Abdullah bin Nasser al Atiqi affirmed the players’ full physical and mental readiness, mentioning that the final tactical adjustments were completed ahead of Wednesday’s kickoff.

NINE OMANI REFEREES

Nine Omani referees and officials have been nominated by the Asian federations to officiate in various sports throughout the Games, recognising their strong performances in previous championships.

The delegation includes international swimming technical official Mal Allah al Busaidy on the swimming technical committee, athletics referee Abdullah al Thahli, beach volleyball referee Badr al Sarmi, handball referees Omar al Shehhi and Khamis al Wahaibi, handball official Abeer al Zadjali, futsal referee Maryam al Hadrami and international taekwondo referee Jassim al Rashdi.

Oman take top spot as UAE claim second and third in Ironman 70.3

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Hundreds of athletes from over 61 countries including Oman and the UAE recently vied for the top positions of the Dhofar Municipality Ironman 70.3 championship which concluded with great success at the Hawana Salalah by Orascom Development and Omran where the participants showed their grit and endurance marking clear, impressive regional wins.

The event featured strong regional participation from, besides the Sultanate, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE, alongside international athletes from Germany, France, the United States and Asia.

In the end of the Global Ironman

70.3 hosted for the fourth consecutive year in Hawana Salalah, hosts Oman were ranked in first place while UAE athletes bagged both second and third places and the winners were celebrated during a spectacular awards ceremony held on the evening of October 25.

While Oman, UAE and UK, delivered exceptional performances, earning top positions across men’s, women’s, and mixed relay categories, in addition to multiple finishes in individual age-group competitions, the Ironman 70.3 course tested athletes with a 1.9 km swim, 90 km bike ride and 21.1 km run, in addition to Ironkids which inspired young champions to enjoy the programme of activities, all against the picturesque backdrop of the coastal



Hundreds of athletes from 61 countries participated in the Dhofar Municipality Ironman 70.3 championship.

and mountainous landscapes.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Eng Wael al Lawati, CEO of Muriya, said that welcoming athletes from over 61 countries is a testament to the event’s growing global prominence and location’s position as a leading destination for sports tourism.

“We are incredibly proud of the resounding success of this year’s Ironman 70.3 at Hawana Salalah. Beyond showcasing Oman’s natural beauty, this event reinforces the nation’s capacity to host world-class sporting experiences with excellence and ambition, we look forward to hosting many more global events welcoming tourists and visitors from around the world,” Al Lawati said.

Representing the Dhofar Municipality, Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen

al Ghassani, Chairman, said hosting Dhofar Municipality Ironman 70.3 for another consecutive year is a strong validation of Salalah’s appeal and capability in delivering international-scale events.

“Our strategic public-private sector collaboration continues to elevate the experience year after year, encouraging athletes and visitors to return and discover more of what Dhofar has to offer.”

“This year’s edition marked a significant milestone in both global participation and high-caliber execution. The world-class infrastructure and fully integrated environment continue to make it a standout venue for global sporting events,” adds Mohammed al Obaidani, CEO and Founder of MGE.

SPORTS

TRAININGCAMP



Oman national handball team.

OMAN HANDBALL TEAM GEARS UP FOR ASIAN TOURNEY

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 28



NABIL AL BALUSHI,
Head coach of
Oman handball
team

The Oman national handball team began its first phase of preparations on Tuesday ahead of the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship, which will take place in Kuwait from January 15 to 26, 2026, at Shaikh Saad Al Abdullah Sports Complex in Sabah Al Salem City. The championship serves as a crucial

qualifying gateway to the 2027 IHF Men's World Championship in Germany, where the top four teams from Asia will secure their spots.

Oman have been drawn in Group A, alongside defending champions Qatar and South Korea, in what promises to be one of the most competitive groups in the tournament. Training sessions kicked off at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, led by head coach Nabil bin Hassan al Balushi and assistant coach Ahmed bin Salem Ambusaidi, with 26 players called up for the initial training camp. The squad will later be reduced to the final list that will represent Oman in Kuwait.

The team's preparation programme includes domestic and international training camps, as well as friendly matches designed to enhance physical readiness, tactical coordination and overall team chemistry, the coaching staff is counting on the players' experience, discipline and fighting spirit to deliver a strong performance and reflect the steady progress of Omani handball at the continental level. The preliminary squad includes Abdulkakim al Siyabi, Bashar al Hina'i, Mohammed al Araimi, Sameeh al Azzan, Abdulaziz al Majrafi, Mohammed and Ahmed al Dighaishi, Mahmood al Wahibi, Said and Qais al Hasani, Issam al Balushi, Qusai al Battashi, Abdulaziz and Abdullah al Siyabi, Mohammed and Abdulmajid al Balushi, Al Azhar al Hadidi, Nawaf, Saud, Mohammed and Hamad al Hasani, Khalid al Jabri, Azan al Maashari, Muhammad al Zarafi, Waleed al Hina'i, Omar al Dighaishi, and Hassan al Balushi.

Anwar al Balushi, Head of the Handball Department at the Oman Handball Association, emphasised the importance of this phase. "This preparation period is vital for laying the technical and mental foundations ahead of the Asian Championship. It gives the coaching staff a clear opportunity to assess player readiness and foster greater team cohesion. Our goal is to build a team capable of competing strongly and reaching the semifinals, reflecting the continuous growth of Oman handball." The Asian Championship will feature 15 teams divided into four groups, with the top two from each group advancing to the quarterfinals. The top four teams will qualify for the 2027 World Championship in Germany.



Action during the first day of racing at the 2025 Optimist Asian and Oceanian Championship on Monday at Oman Sail's Musannah Sailing School, Barcelo Resort.

Optimist sailing underway with qualifying races

THE OPENING races of the 2025 Optimist Asian and Oceanian Championship got underway on Monday at Oman Sail's Musannah Sailing School, Barcelo Resort. Organised by Oman Sail in collaboration with the Oman Marine Sports Committee and the International Optimist Dinghy Association (IODA), the championship brings together 180 sailors from 25 countries across Asia and Oceania for a week of world-class racing.

The first day of competition took place in ideal sailing conditions with steady winds allowing smooth progress of the qualifying rounds, which will continue over two days to determine the final Gold, Silver, and Bronze fleets. Sailors have been divided into three colour groups — red, yellow and blue — each completing four qualifying races to decide their ranking and fleet allocation for the next stage.

This qualifying phase is a crucial point in the championship as the top sailors will advance to the Gold Fleet, where the event's leading competitors will battle for top honours, while the remaining participants continue in the Silver and Bronze Fleets. The qualifying races continue on Tuesday, followed by team racing on Wednesday, and the final races on Thursday and Friday to determine the overall champions in the Asian, Oceanian and Girls' categories, as well as the overall and team results. Prizes for the top three in each category will be presented during the closing ceremony.

Representing the host nation, the Oman

national team comprises ten young sailors: Mohammed al Balushi, Habib al Hussaini, Al Khalil al Foori, Mohammed al Qasmi, Khalid al Sarihi, Hood al Nofli, Khamis al Mashaikhi, Hadeel al Mushaifri, Tarteel al Hasani and Layan al Ruzaiqi.

They join a diverse field of competitors from the GCC, as well as from South America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania — highlighting the championship's global character. A total of 180 sailors aged between 8 and 15 are taking part, alongside coaches, team leaders, and support staff. The Optimist class is the official entry-level dinghy for youth sailors worldwide, offering a vital foundation for developing future champions in the sport of sailing.

Nawaf bin Yaqoob al Ghadhani, Race Manager, highlighted that the success of any race depends on precise preparation and adherence to international regulations, saying: "Our work begins by preparing the race instructions, which outline all rules, systems, and requirements to ensure a well-organised event. We then verify every technical detail, such as buoy colours, the number of boats and officials, and electronic devices used to measure wind speed and direction. A trial day is conducted before the start to test all tools and systems. During racing, every start and finish line is carefully recorded, and in the event of any protest, our race management team is ready to provide detailed evidence and reports to assist the jury in making fair decisions." He added: "Over the past decade,

we have not encountered any major issues, as all competitions have been conducted with full fairness. Everyone praises the professionalism of the Omani race management team, which reflects the high capability of our national staff. The three days leading up to the championship are dedicated to official training for all teams, during which they receive equipment, data on wind and current conditions, and the chance to familiarise themselves with the racing area for optimal preparation."

Al Ghadhani also addressed the impact of weather conditions, stating: "Naturally, weather plays a major role in racing. There are safe limits for wind speed and wave height; if these limits are exceeded, races are postponed to ensure sailor safety. Safety is always our top priority. If the full schedule cannot be completed due to weather, the results of completed races are validated provided the minimum number of races required has been achieved."

Emerald Jacobsen from Team Australia said: "I've been preparing for this championship through several training camps with my team to make sure we're fully ready and can start strong. We completed one race yesterday in very light and choppy wind conditions, which made it quite challenging, but our goal is to sail our best and make the most of our growing experience here in Oman. The organisation has been excellent, the venue is impressive, and although the weather is quite hot, it's been a great experience so far."

OFA concludes Fifa-certified women's refereeing course

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

The Oman Football Association (OFA) concluded its women's refereeing course accredited by Fifa, hosted at Al Amal Club from October 23 to 27, with the participation of 20 Omani referees, in addition to one referee from Bahrain and another from Iraq. The selected participants were chosen following a series of practical assessment workshops organised by the association to identify promising female refereeing talent.

The course, delivered by international instructor Ali al Turaifi, focused on updating knowledge of the Laws of the Game and enhancing the referees' physical and technical skills. This initiative supports the

association's strategy to develop female officials and enable their active involvement in managing matches at the local, regional, and international levels, in line with Fifa's vision to advance women's football worldwide. The course was attended by Referees Committee Chairman Hamad al Miyahi, committee members Saif al Ghafri and Khalid al Shaqsi, and the association's Refereeing Department Director Abdullah al Jardani.

At the closing of the programme, Board Member and Chair of the Women's Committee Hajar al Mazini emphasised the strong engagement shown by the participants. She noted that the course followed a careful selection process to ensure the participation of the most capable



The course featured 20 Omani referees, one referee from Bahrain and another from Iraq.

candidates, aiming to raise the overall standard of female referees.

Al Mazini highlighted the importance of empowering women officials to manage domestic competitions and eventually represent Oman in regional and international tournaments. She

stated that Omani women have demonstrated excellence in various sports sectors, and refereeing is no exception, expressing confidence in their ability to leave a distinguished mark that contributes to strengthening Oman's presence in women's football.

Participant Safa al Siyabi described the course as rich in knowledge and highly beneficial, adding that she gained essential skills both practically on the field and theoretically regarding refereeing decision-making. She explained that the experience has strengthened her ambition to earn the international referee badge.

Another participant, Laila al Alawi, expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity and said she learned valuable lessons in confidence and making accurate decisions under pressure. She explained that her passion for refereeing began at the age of 17. Despite not being accepted initially due to age requirements, she reapplied in 2025 and is determined to continue pursuing her goal of obtaining the international badge.

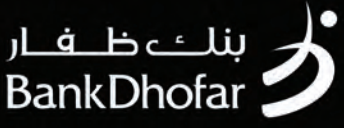


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The agreement was signed by Dr Saud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Raed al Shehhi, Chairman of MGIC.

OMANI OPERATOR TO MANAGE KHASAB FISHERY PORT

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 28

Musandam Global Investment Company (MGIC) has officially launched its newest branch, MP World, signalling a significant strategic move to transform the Musandam Governorate into a premier maritime gateway. This initiative kicked off with the signing of a pivotal 10-year agreement for the development and operation of the Khasab Fishery Port.

The agreement, which marks a new era for sustainable development in the region, was signed by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Raed al Shehhi, Chairman of MGIC.

The Khasab Fishery Port is designated exclusively for advancing Oman's fisheries infrastructure, ensuring dedicated support for the nation's growing blue economy.

MGIC, a publicly listed closed joint-stock company on the MSX with deep roots in the community — boasting 1,885 shareholders from Musandam — has already established itself as a key driver of regional prosperity since its founding in 2023.

Beyond this new maritime venture, the company's portfolio includes substantial strategic projects, such as the major Tilal Al Nakheel (Palm Hills) residential development in Khasab and a partnership to establish Musandam Drydock and Marine Industries.

RO 100 million tourism boost across Oman

THE Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has signed 36 usufruct contracts worth RO 100 million to develop a range of tourism projects across multiple governorates, reinforcing Oman's strategy to expand its hospitality sector and attract domestic and international investors.

The projects — covering hotels, integrated resorts and eco-tourism camps — aim to enhance the country's tourism infrastructure, create jobs for local communities and support the growth of small and medium enterprises within the sector.

Officials said the move is aligned with Oman Vision 2040 goal of promoting sustainable tourism and diversifying the economy.



The projects aim to enhance the country's tourism infrastructure, create jobs for local communities and support the growth of small and medium enterprises within the sector.

Al Batinah South Governorate signed four contracts, while Al Buraimi Governorate signed one for an integrated resort.

Al Sharqiyah North Governorate led the count with 11 contracts, concentrated mainly in the Wilayat of Bidiyah, including several tourist camps, three-star resorts and a commercial tourism investment project in the Wilayat of Ibra.

Al Dakhiliyah Governorate saw the signing of 10 contracts, ranging from three-star hotels to five-star resorts, including a tourist camp in Jabal Shams and a one-star hotel in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

contract for an integrated tourism complex in the Wilayat of Khasab.

The Ministry emphasised that these investments will not only provide economic and social benefits but also strengthen Oman's position as a high-quality tourism destination. By increasing hotel capacity and improving service standards, the projects aim to deliver integrated experiences for visitors that highlight Oman's natural beauty, cultural heritage and diverse landscapes.

Officials added that the projects will support local supply chains, encourage innovation in tourism

offerings and empower SMEs to play a larger role in the sector.

With a focus on sustainable development, the Ministry said the contracts will contribute to enhancing Oman's tourism ecosystem while generating long-term employment opportunities for communities across the Sultanate of Oman.

This strategic push comes as part of Oman's broader plan to balance economic growth with cultural preservation and environmental stewardship, ensuring that tourism contributes positively to the nation's social and economic development goals. — ONA

OIA generates RO 7.3 billion cumulative profit

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 28

THE Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has emerged as one of the central engines driving the Sultanate of Oman's economic transformation, delivering solid financial performance and spearheading diversification under the framework of Oman Vision 2040. In its progress report, from 2021 to 2024, OIA's reform and investment strategies have not only boosted profitability among state-owned enterprises (SOEs) but also positioned Oman as a rising regional hub for innovation, clean energy and private sector growth. At the heart of OIA's progress lies its ambitious transformation of state-owned enterprises, a cornerstone of Oman's economic restructuring agenda. Over the past four years, the Authority has

recorded cumulative profits of RO 7.3 billion, signalling a sharp turnaround in operational efficiency and corporate governance.

This profitability has been underpinned by RO 9.7 billion in capital expenditure, channelled into projects that fuel economic diversification and enhance collaboration with the private sector. By rationalising debt and enforcing financial discipline, OIA successfully reduced total SOE debt from RO 11.4 billion to RO 8.8 billion — a move that not only strengthened corporate balance sheets but also contributed to improving Oman's sovereign credit ratings.

Beyond fiscal achievements, OIA's mandate is deeply rooted in promoting inclusive growth and in-country value. In 2024 alone, its initiatives created 1,393 new jobs for Omani nationals, significantly



The Authority achieved RO 265.5m in local content spending last year.

surpassing its annual target of 800. This strong performance underscores OIA's role in national employment generation and capacity building.

The Authority also achieved RO 265.5 million in local content spending last year, reinforcing its commitment to empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and local suppliers. Through structured initiatives such as mandatory procurement

lists, supplier development programmes and business allocation opportunities, OIA is driving entrepreneurship and ensuring that national companies play an active role in major projects.

Economic diversification remains a strategic imperative for OIA and its recent efforts reflect a shift from state dependence to private sector empowerment. In a move that deepens market participation, the Authority has strategically

reduced its stakes in entities such as OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP), Abraj Energy Services, ASYAD Shipping and OQ Gas Networks (OQGN).

These divestments generated over RO 1.5 billion in total revenues and opened the door for private sector participation in key national assets. In parallel, OIA's efforts helped attract over RO 3.3 billion in foreign investment in 2024, signalling growing international confidence in Oman's economic trajectory and investment climate.

Central to OIA's long-term strategy is the launch of the Future Fund Oman, a flagship investment vehicle with a capital of RO 2 billion over five years. The Fund is designed to stimulate local projects and channel capital into strategic growth sectors.

Since its inception, it has received more than 300 project submissions,

approving 104 projects valued at RO 1.316 billion. The Fund is becoming a key pillar of Oman's diversification strategy, financing ventures that span manufacturing, logistics, technology and sustainable industries.

The OIA's Omani Angle Technology Localisation initiative is advancing Oman's position in the knowledge economy. Among its key projects are Saliency Labs' smart energy management systems, BioGenomics Limited's insulin manufacturing venture — marking a breakthrough for Oman's biopharmaceutical ambitions — and Electric Hydrogen, which is developing affordable green hydrogen solutions.

These projects demonstrate how OIA is aligning investment with innovation, technology transfer and industrial sustainability.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The award highlights the outstanding services and technical leadership demonstrated by DGEC.

DGEC wins NAMA award for ‘Best Design Consultant on Major Projects 2025’

MUSCAT: Design Group Engineering Consultants LLC (DGEC) is thrilled to announce that its Electrical Transmission & Distribution Division has been honoured with the prestigious “Best Design Consultant on Major Projects 2025 Award”. The recognition was presented by Nama Electricity Distribution Company (NEDC) at the prominent NAMA Partner 10 Meet, organised by NEDC and IEEE.

This esteemed award specifically highlights the outstanding services and technical leadership demonstrated by DGEC in delivering innovative designs and engineering solutions for major projects. The accolade recognises the company’s commitment to providing creative, reliable and high-quality design and consulting solutions that are vital to NAMA’s major infrastructure developments.

“This is a tremendous honour for our entire team. It validates our focused expertise in designing and managing efficient power transmission and distribution projects.

To be recognised by NAMA (NEDC) and IEEE at the Partner 10 event underscores our successful collaboration in accelerating the development of the power sector and supporting regional economic progress”, quoted Damodar R Katti, Founder and Managing Director, DGEC.

The award specifically celebrated DGEC’s success in areas such as:

- Designing, managing and delivering power projects for NEDC Oman, ensuring timely completion and adherence to the highest technical and quality standards.
- Implementing advanced integration and engineering solutions that enhance the reliability, efficiency and sustainability of NEDC’s power distribution infrastructure.

Design Group Engineering Consultants (DGEC) is a leading engineering consultancy specialising in power transmission and distribution.

With expertise spanning from concept to commissioning, we provide end-to-end solutions covering transmission and distribution systems grid and substation designs, renewable energy and specialised power studies.

Established in 2010 and recognised across the Middle East, Asia and East Africa, we have steadily grown in scale, capability and reputation, delivering high-value engineering and design services to major clients across the region.

Our strength lies in our ability to integrate advanced Building Information Modelling (BIM) technology across all project verticals, including architectural, structural and MEP services.

THAWANI PAY SECURES VISA LICENCE TO ISSUE CREDIT CARDS

MUSCAT: In a landmark achievement for Oman’s fintech sector, Thawani Pay has officially become the first fintech company in the Sultanate of Oman licensed by Visa to issue credit cards, marking a new era in the nation’s digital financial evolution.

The milestone was celebrated at an exclusive signing ceremony held in Muscat, attended by senior representatives from Visa and Thawani Pay. The event highlighted Thawani Pay’s commitment to innovation and financial inclusion



as it continues to redefine digital payment solutions in Oman. Through this licensing, Thawani Pay will soon introduce a new line of Visa-powered credit cards, providing customers with a seamless digital experience, global acceptance and enhanced security features — fully integrated within Thawani’s smart payment platform. Majid al Amri, CEO of Thawani Pay, stated, “This milestone represents a defining moment for Thawani Pay and for Oman’s fintech journey.

Strong response to 3% cashback credit card

FOLLOWING the resounding success of its recent 3% Cashback Credit Card campaign, Sohar International, in partnership with Visa, announced that the initiative has witnessed an overwhelming response from customers, marked by a surge in card applications and engagement.

The success underscores the growing appeal of value-driven banking solutions that combine convenience, rewards and financial empowerment, reaffirming both institutions’ shared commitment to enhancing everyday banking experiences through thoughtful innovation.

Commenting on the achievement, Abdul Qader al Sumali, Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International stated, “Success for us has always been defined by how deeply we understand our customers — not just their financial needs, but their evolving lifestyles and aspirations. True progress lies in transforming that understanding into purposeful



The success underscores the growing appeal of value-driven banking solutions.

action that adds value to their everyday lives.

At Sohar International, we innovate with purpose, creating solutions that are relevant, impactful and enduring. Our collaboration with Visa reflects this very ethos, uniting expertise and forward thinking to deliver products that resonate with how people live, spend and aspire today”.

Echoing these perspectives, Nasser Bdeir, Visa’s Country Manager for Oman, said, “Visa’s partnership with

Sohar International is a great example of how collaboration can accelerate innovation and create meaningful impact for Visa cardholders. This initiative enhances the rewards experience for the bank’s customers while promoting greater digital payment adoption across the market.

It also underscores Visa’s commitment to supporting our financial institution partners in delivering products that combine global innovation with local relevance.

Our continued collaboration with Sohar International reflects a shared goal of advancing secure, digital-first solutions that enrich everyday commerce and drive long-term value for customers and the wider economy”.

The new 3% Cashback Credit Card exemplifies Sohar International’s drive to create meaningful financial solutions in partnership with Visa. Designed to offer more than conventional rewards, it opens new opportunities for customers to make the most of their everyday spending while gaining measurable value in return.

The product combines financial flexibility, lifestyle benefits and global accessibility — enhanced by Visa’s advanced network and digital infrastructure, ensuring transactions are fast, seamless and secure worldwide.

Accepted at over 150 million merchant locations worldwide, the Visa card offers unmatched convenience for everyday purchases and international travel alike.

Pact signed to advance open Banking integration in Oman

MUSCAT: Taageer Finance reinforces its digital transformation agenda with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Bank of Oman (NBO). The agreement focuses on integrating Open Banking frameworks to enhance customer service, credit assessment and provide accelerated approvals.

By combining Taageer Finance’s customer-focused approach with NBO’s digital banking initiatives, the MoU is set to deliver greater



The MoU is set to deliver greater transparency and streamlined approvals.

transparency and streamlined approvals.

The partnership reflects a shared vision to modernise financial services in Oman, aligning with evolving global standards.

“This initiative enables Taageer Finance get closer to its digital road map; in line with global trends.

By integrating Open Banking frameworks, we are creating a platform that not only enhances transparency but also allows customers to benefit from quicker, more reliable decision-

making”, said Muhammad Kashif Yaqoob, Acting CEO of Taageer Finance.

“NBO has always been at the forefront of digital innovation in banking.

Our collaboration with Taageer Finance reaffirms this commitment, ensuring that customers have access to solutions that are modern, efficient and aligned with global standards”, stated Mohammed bin Yahya al Jabri, Assistant General Manager and Head of Global Transaction Banking at National Bank of Oman.

NBO supports government programme through Tajawob platform

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has announced supporting the “Enhancing Skills in Dealing with Beneficiaries” training programme, launched by several government institutions, which aims to develop the capabilities and skills of staff working in government entities under the Tajawob platform.

Focusing on improving employees’ ability to provide accurate first-time service, respond precisely to inquiries and reduce the need for follow-up or repeated requests, the NBO-supported programme aims to strengthen communication skills while empowering participants to effectively handle feedback and reports submitted through



NBO organises three workshops in Muscat with up to 300 participants.

the Tajawob platform, boosting beneficiaries’ trust, overall satisfaction and the quality of government services.

NBO actively supported the programme by organising three workshops in Muscat with up to 300 participants, one in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate with up to 150 participants and three in Dhofar Governorate with up to 300 participants in total.

The partnership leverages the bank’s expertise in customer service to enhance government operations and improve beneficiary experiences, serving as a practical example of national integration and shared responsibility.

The Tajawob platform is one

of Oman’s pioneering national initiatives to develop the government services system.

It allows beneficiaries to submit suggestions, complaints and reports through a unified channel, enhancing response efficiency and service quality. Since its launch, the platform has expanded to include 54 government entities and recorded more than 86,000 transactions across suggestions, complaints, reports and inquiries.

Through supporting these initiatives, NBO aims to enhance government service delivery, foster greater trust and satisfaction among beneficiaries and unlock new opportunities for collaboration and innovation across the public sector.

SHORTTAKES



Transport and storage activities posted the highest non-oil sector growth at 6.5 per cent.

GCC NON-OIL GDP UP BY 4.4% IN 2024

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 28

NON-OIL GDP across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries expanded by 4.4 per cent in 2024, driving the overall 1.9 per cent rise in real GDP, according to preliminary data issued by the GCC Statistical Centre.

The value-added of non-oil activities increased from \$1,237.2 billion in 2023 to \$1,292.1 billion in 2024.

“This expansion highlights the growing contribution of non-oil activities to the regional economy and the tangible progress of economic diversification initiatives across member states”, the report stated.

Transport and storage recorded the highest growth among non-oil sectors, rising 6.5 per cent, followed by agriculture and fishing at 6.4 per cent. Accommodation services expanded 6.3 per cent, reflecting strengthening tourism flows and continued sector investment.

Construction, trade and financial services grew between 5.0 and 5.5 per cent, supported by large-scale development projects and stronger domestic demand. In contrast, oil-sector value-added declined by 3.8 per cent due to ongoing OPEC+ output reduction commitments.

Looking ahead, GCCStat forecasts non-oil growth to moderate to 3.5 per cent in 2025, before accelerating to 4.2 per cent in 2026 and 5.2 per cent in 2027, driven by tourism, logistics, manufacturing and renewable energy projects.

“The private sector is expected to play a central role”, the GCC Statistical Centre emphasised, citing continued reforms and rapid digital transformation.

The report noted that diversification agendas remain critical to sustaining long-term economic expansion and reducing reliance on hydrocarbons.

Duqm boosts energy hub with EDO-Sumitomo JV

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 28

DUQM'S growing regional importance as a hub for energy logistics was further reinforced on Monday, October 27, 2025, with the signing of a joint venture agreement to establish Oman's first integrated energy supply chain management company in the Special Economic Zone.

The partners in the joint venture are Energy Development Oman (EDO), the wholly Omani state-owned energy holding company and the Middle East division of Japanese trading and investment conglomerate Sumitomo Corporation. The signing took place on the opening day of the Duqm Economic Forum 2025, held in the SEZ.

Mazin al Lamki, Managing Director of EDO and Masahiro Yoshimura, General Manager of Sumitomo Corporation, signed on behalf of their respective organisations.

“This strategic partnership marks a key step in strengthening the national energy ecosystem through investment in local content development, the advancement of industrial value chains and the growth of Omani talent, while positioning Duqm as a central hub for logistics and energy-related industries”, EDO said in a post.

“Anchored in Al Duqm's strategic location at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the partnership will elevate the role of supply chains from a supporting function to a driver of economic growth — connecting investment, industry and



Mazin al Lamki, Managing Director of EDO and Masahiro Yoshimura, General Manager of Sumitomo Corporation, at the signing.

innovation under one integrated framework”, the holding company added.

According to Sumitomo, integrated supply chain management enables the Japanese trading giant to coordinate the procurement, storage and just-in-time delivery of tubular products — also known as Oil Country Tubular Goods (OCTG) — to Oman's oil and gas fields with maximum efficiency and minimal downtime. By centralising logistics through its Duqm hub, Sumitomo ensures cost-effective, reliable and locally supported access to critical well-construction materials.

Sumitomo Corporation Middle East (SCME) is a

longstanding supplier of OCTG to Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). EDO, by virtue of its 60 per cent ownership of oil resources and 100 per cent ownership of non-associated gas resources in Block 6 operated by PDO, is by far the largest consumer of OCTG in Oman.

Tubular product supplies began in 2003, when parent company Sumitomo Corporation, together with Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corporation (NSSMC), signed agreements to provide high-quality tubular goods to PDO, the Sultanate of Oman's largest hydrocarbon producer.

A specialised storage area for OCTG has since been established in the Port of Duqm's logistics

zone as part of a ‘Mill to Well’ model designed to optimise supply chain efficiencies related to the delivery of these pipes to PDO.

In remarks to the *Observer*, Sumitomo's Yoshimura described the strategic partnership as another milestone in enhancing the supply chain model for tubular steel products, which are pivotal to sustaining hydrocarbon operations in the country.

“More than 20 years ago, I was part of the Sumitomo Corporation team that launched inventory operations for PDO”, he recalled. “We started in Dubai due to the absence of free zones in Oman at the time. But when SOHAR Port and Freezone was established, we moved our base there before coming here to Al Duqm. We are very pleased once again to contribute to Oman's growth — this time together with EDO”.

The Duqm hub, Yoshimura explained, will provide more than just physical inventory management services for tubular steel products. It will employ state-of-the-art software to ensure effective and efficient control of inventory levels, thereby avoiding unnecessary stockpiling and wastage.

“What we are providing is efficient operational and technical know-how. Together with EDO, we aim to establish a world-class, highly efficient supply chain model in Oman”.

While the energy logistics hub will primarily serve Oman, Sumitomo will also explore the potential to work with EDO to expand the scope of the partnership to support not only oilfield-related hardware but also equipment for solar and wind energy generation, he added.

Forum sessions in Al Duqm highlight innovation and sustainability

SAEED AL MASHARFI
AL DUQM, OCT 28

THE second day of the Duqm Economic Forum 2025, held under the theme “Duqm Leads Change”, featured five sessions that highlighted the city's role as a gateway to innovation, investment, sustainability and future ready urbanisation.

With the participation of senior officials, industry leaders and international experts, the discussions underlined Duqm's ambition to become a global hub that connects industries, communities and opportunities for sustainable growth.

On its second day, the forum featured “The Art of Agility: Manufacturing in a Fast-Paced World”, which highlighted how



The discussions underlined Duqm's ambition to become a global hub that connects industries, communities and opportunities for sustainable growth.

Duqm's manufacturing sector is embracing IoT, predictive analytics and artificial intelligence to increase efficiency, shorten product cycles and build more resilient supply chains. Panelists emphasised that such technologies could position Duqm as a regional leader in advanced manufacturing.

This was followed by “Greenfield Development, Blue Sky Thinking: Duqm Urban Infrastructure Design”, which explored the opportunities of building a city from the ground up. Discussions focused on sustainable construction methods, innovative water management, AI-enabled planning and participatory

community design, presenting Duqm as a living laboratory for modern urban development.

The session “The Smart Frontier: Positioning Duqm as a Leader in Future Ready Urbanisation” examined how the city can pioneer smart growth by integrating renewable energy, advanced mobility and digital infrastructure.

Panelists emphasised how such initiatives align with Oman Vision 2040, ensuring Duqm becomes a model of climate-friendly and future-ready development.

Attention then turned to people and talent in “Talent Magnet: Live, Work & Play”. Speakers highlighted that with 65 per cent of Oman's population under the age of 35, Al Duqm can serve as a destination for young professionals. Vibrant neighbourhoods, cultural

opportunities and digital services were discussed as vital to creating a city where innovation and quality of life come together. The final session, “It Takes a Village: Empowering Communities Through Tourism Development”, stressed the importance of involving local communities in shaping tourism experiences. Drawing on examples from Misfat Al Abriyeen and Nizwa, panelists presented innovative models such as scattered hotels and cultural tourism initiatives that generate jobs, preserve heritage and strengthen long-term community engagement.

Overall, the Duqm Economic Forum 2025 reaffirmed its importance as a strategic platform that brings together government, industry and communities to shape a future-ready city.

TRADE SECURITY

US, Japan sign rare earths deal



Japan and the United States signed agreements on new-generation nuclear reactors and rare earths, aiming to reduce China's dominance in critical electronics.

The framework, endorsed by US President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at Tokyo's Akasaka Palace, secures rare earth supplies vital for cars, fighter jets and other technologies. The deal also paves the way for Japan to regain access to international nuclear markets. — *Reuters*

TECH LAYOFFS

Amazon to cut 14,000 jobs



Amazon announced plans to eliminate around 14,000 corporate positions amidst workforce restructuring influenced by AI adoption. The Seattle-based tech giant is trimming jobs after its pandemic-era hiring spree, with reports suggesting total cuts could reach 30,000 over multiple waves.

Affected employees have 90 days to apply for other roles within the company, while new positions are expected to open in different departments. — *dpa*

ENERGY MARKETS

Oil prices dip 2% on sanctions



Oil prices dropped 2% on Tuesday, continuing a three-day decline as investors evaluated the impact of US sanctions on Russia's top oil firms and potential OPEC+ output increases. Brent crude fell to \$64.33 a barrel and US West Texas Intermediate slipped to \$60.11.

Traders also considered progress in US-China trade talks and the broader supply outlook, reflecting cautious sentiment in global energy markets. — *Reuters*

OPINION

Countries ask if UK’s US trade deal is WTO compliant



EMMA FARGE

The writer is Senior Correspondent at Reuters

SEVERAL STATES have quizzed Britain about whether its trade deal with the United States is compliant with World Trade Organization rules, a document showed on Tuesday, as the country undergoes its first trade policy review at the global body.

Britain, which is a vocal backer of the WTO system, locked in a 10 per cent baseline tariff rate with the United States in May in the first such deal agreed by US President Donald Trump after he unleashed a tariff war earlier this year.

Brexit granted Britain its own seat at the WTO and it is subject to a policy review at a series of WTO meetings in Geneva this week - a process of scrutiny which all members undergo.

Britain said it had started well and that its trade minister Chris Bryant had set out a “bold, growth-focused strategy”.

“We’re fundamentally a free and fair trade country, and that’s what we think our destiny is. That’s the role we want to play,” Bryant told reporters on the sidelines of the meeting at the WTO. But some members questioned whether Britain is in compliance with the Geneva-based watchdog’s Most Favoured Nation terms, which require all members to treat each other equally, according to a document marked “restricted” that included hundreds

of questions submitted by states ahead of the meeting.

Japan asked Britain about its “preferential” treatment accorded to U.S. beef and ethanol imports.

“Does the UK intend to extend such treatment on a most-favoured-nation (MFN) basis to all WTO Members?,” it said.

Singapore and Russia asked general questions about the deal’s WTO compliance and China sought clarification on the terms of the deal for steel and pharmaceuticals.

GENEVA MEETINGS

Asked about the U.S. trade deal and compliance with WTO terms, Bryant said he was not aware if this issue had been raised in the Geneva meetings, adding that the deal was a form of free trade agreement on which work was ongoing. Since Trump began to roll out his tariffs, the amount of global trade that is conducted on WTO terms has fallen to less than three-quarters of the total, raising questions about the organisation’s future.

Bryant said the body faces an “existential moment”.

“So we are in the business of wanting to make sure that the WTO works, but there is a danger that it will dwindle into insignificance over the coming years,” he said. (Reporting by Emma Farge; Additional reporting by Alistair Smout in London; Editing by Friederike Heine and Conor

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Humphries)

Britain’s trade minister insisted Tuesday that a strong World Trade Organization was vital for global commerce, stressing the need for reforms and urging countries to defend the WTO in an “existential moment”.

The global trade body is contemplating reforms as it grapples with shifting geopolitical realities, and protectionist tendencies dramatically exacerbated by US President Donald Trump’s tariff policies.

“We are very keen to maintain the strength of the WTO,” Britain’s new trade minister Chris Bryant told reporters at the organisation’s headquarters in Geneva.

Bryant, guiding Britain through its first Trade Policy Review at the WTO since it left the European Union in 2020, highlighted his country’s ambition to be a champion of free and fair trade.

“You only get a free- and fair-trade world, which enables greater prosperity for everybody, if you have a rules-based order,” he said, adding that therefore, “you’ve got to have a WTO, and it’s got to be a WTO that can function”.

Bryant pointed out that, even before Trump’s wave of tariffs, global trade had been under pressure.

Last week, United Nations chief Antonio Guterres warned that the rules-based international trade system was in danger of coming off the rails.

CREDIT CARDS: POWERFUL TOOL OR HIDDEN TRAP?



R MADHU-SOODANAN

The writer is Executive Advisor to the Board, Global Money Exchange, Muscat.

CREDIT cards are often called a ‘double-edged sword’ — and rightly so. They are powerful financial tools, but only when used with responsibility and discipline. As credit cards represent unsecured borrowing, not everyone manages them effectively. Developing sound card management habits is therefore crucial to maintaining financial stability.

Credit cards are attractive for their multiple benefits — interest-free periods, loyalty points, complimentary lounge access, free purchase insurance, term coverage, EMI options and discounts on online purchases or entertainment. However, it is essential to remember: credit cards do not offer free money. Wise usage and timely repayment are the cornerstones of responsible credit management.

Smart ways to manage your credit card:

- 1. Maximise the interest-free period**
Most credit cards offer an interest-free period of 45–50 days. To get the maximum benefit, avoid making large purchases or payments just before your billing date. Consider holding two cards with different billing cycles to extend this facility strategically.
- 2. Pay on time — always**
Credit cards carry heavy interest and penalty charges on overdue payments. Paying only the “minimum amount due” is a trap that leads to compounding debt. Always pay the full amount before or on the due date — set a reminder or auto-debit to ensure timely payment.
- 3. Control impulsive spending**
Track your expenses carefully and avoid unnecessary swiping, especially for dining or shopping sprees. Using cash for discretionary purchases can help curb overspending and maintain control.
- 4. Keep your utilisation below 50 per cent**
Your credit utilisation ratio impacts your credit score. Try not to exceed 50 per cent of your card limit. If your spending needs are higher, request a limit increase or use another card with a different billing cycle.
- 5. Avoid cash withdrawals**
Withdrawing cash from ATMs using your credit card attracts high charges and immediate interest. Use this facility only in emergencies.
- 6. Restrict international usage**
Foreign transactions may include conversion and service fees. Use credit cards abroad only when essential — prepaid travel cards or local currency are more economical and safer options.

Rich country debt will spur tax and price hikes

GOVERNMENT BORROWING is unsustainable in the United States and much of Europe. There is also huge pressure to increase spending on climate, defence and ageing populations. Some mixture of higher taxes and inflation will ultimately be unavoidable.

Global public debt as a percentage of output has been rising almost without a break since the mid-1970s. It will reach over 100% of GDP by 2030, the highest level since World War Two, according to a forecast by the International Monetary Fund.

The problem is that governments are spending more than they are raising in taxes. Borrowing can only be sustainable if it is stable or falling as a percentage of gross domestic product.

But that is only true if the annual budget deficit as a proportion of output is equal or less than nominal growth — an economy’s growth rate before adjusting for inflation.

Among the Group of Seven rich countries, the United States, France and the United Kingdom have the biggest problems. Their governments’ deficits are forecast to be 7.4%, 5.4% and 4.3% of GDP this year respectively, according to the IMF. Meanwhile, their economies’ sustainable nominal growth rates are probably no more than 4%, assuming both growth and inflation of 2%. With debt at 121%, 113% and 101% of GDP respectively in 2024, something will have to change.

The other G7 countries’ debts are not on an upward path because their annual deficits are more or less under control. But Japan’s debt at 237% of GDP and Italy’s at 135% are uncomfortably high. Only Germany and Canada are in reasonable shape.

WAYS TO CUT DEBT

An unsustainable debt load does not necessarily lead to a financial crisis. Rich countries typically have a lot of rope with which to hang themselves.

This is especially true of countries which print their own currencies, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. It is less so of France and Italy, which must live by the monetary policy set by the European Central Bank.

But even if the day of reckoning



HUGO DIXON

The writer is Commentator-at-Large for Reuters. He was the founding chair and editor-in-chief of Breakingviews.

Among the Group of Seven rich countries, the United States, France and the United Kingdom have the biggest problems. Their governments’ deficits are forecast to be 7.4%, 5.4% and 4.3% of GDP this year respectively, according to the IMF.



Woman holds US dollar banknotes in this illustration. — Reuters

is not round the corner, borrowing cannot rise forever. The problem is that there are few easy ways to bring it under control.

The best option would be to increase growth. But unless artificial intelligence provides a miraculous boost to their economies, rich countries seem more likely to slow down in the coming years — not least because US President Donald Trump is undermining the world trading system with his tariffs.

Another option is to cut government spending. But there is massive public resistance to this. Just look at how France is unwilling to put up the age at which its citizens receive pensions.

In fact, “structural headwinds” could boost public spending by around 3% of GDP in coming years, according to Erik Nielsen, senior advisor at Independent Economics.

The biggest items are ageing populations which push up pension and healthcare costs, defence spending, climate-related outlays and infrastructure.

Yet another way to control mounting debt is “financial

repression” — policies that artificially suppress the interest rate that savers get for funding the government. But this is only possible if a country restricts cross-border capital flows. This is not possible for countries such as France that share the single currency.

It also only works if a country has a current account surplus. That is not the case for the United States and Britain, which export less than they import and rely on foreign capital to fund themselves.

Defaulting on debt is another way to bring it down.

But that is not a serious option for any G7 country — although there is always a risk that a game of chicken between the White House and Congress could result in Washington missing a debt payment by accident.

That leaves two other ways to stabilise borrowing levels: higher taxes and inflation, which itself is like a silent tax. Both are extremely unpopular.

But the United States, Britain and France will ultimately be driven to some mixture of these choices.

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VISUAL STORIES

Omani wins ‘Photographer of the Year’ award



SALIM BIN
SULTAN AL HAJRI

OMANI PHOTOGRAPHER
Salim bin Sultan al Hajri has won the HIPA ‘Photographer of the Year’ award in recognition of his projects that tell poignant visual stories aimed at preserving, celebrating, and

presenting Omani and Arab cultural heritage to the world. These projects embody the region’s rich identity with vibrant and emotionally moving images that connect ancient traditions with present-day narratives, in addition to his continuous and constructive efforts to provide growth and development opportunities for Omani and Gulf photographers.

This came during the announcement by the General Secretariat of the Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum International Photography Award (HIPA) on Tuesday of the winners of the special awards for the award’s 14th edition, which was titled ‘Power.’

This edition featured three special award categories: the Content Creator Award, the HIPA Photographer of the Year Award, and the Appreciation Award, which recognises photographers who have made positive and influential contributions to the photography industry.

The 14th Annual Appreciation Award was awarded to American photographer Rick Smolan, for his contributions throughout his career as a highly influential photographer, author and speaker. He has received dozens of prestigious awards, titles and honours, and some of his books have been considered among the most influential. He has also been credited with attracting global attention to important humanitarian issues.

It is worth noting that Omani photographer Salim bin Sultan al Hajri is known for his moving visual stories, which focus on preserving and celebrating Omani and Arab cultural heritage. Through his lens, he captures the region’s rich identity in vibrant, emotionally moving images that connect ancient traditions with present-day narratives. Al Hajri has won numerous prestigious awards, both regionally and internationally, including the gold medal in the black and white category as part of the Omani team in the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP) International Competition. — ONA

QUICK FEATURES



ENTERTAINMENT

US actor Elle Fanning poses on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the UK special screening of “Predator: Badlands” at the BFI IMAX in London.

— AFP



FESTIVALS

People look at an illuminated head of a Mexican dog as part of the International Festival of Lights as part of the Day of the Dead celebrations in Mexico City.

— AFP



MUSIC

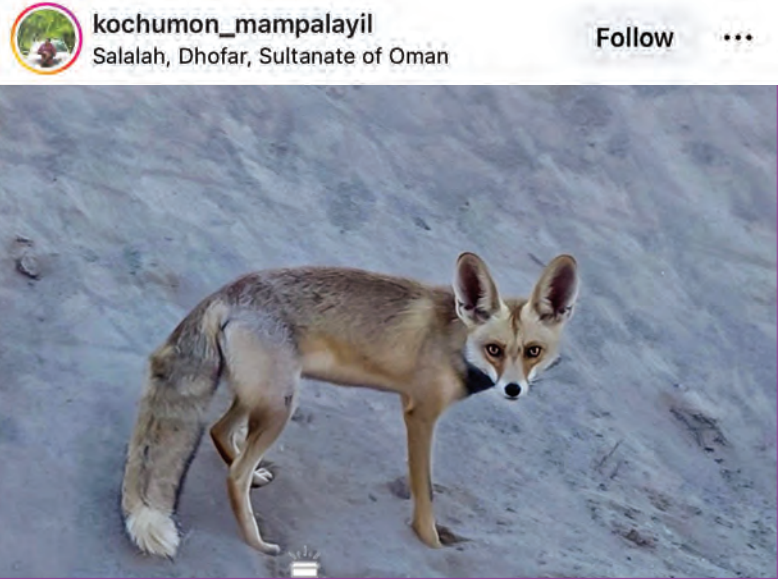
French singer Sylvie Vartan during the premiere of a documentary “Sylvie Vartan. Out of Love”, part of CineLibri film and literature festival in Sofia.

— AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Close to nature



Golden mystery

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Archaeologists unearth clues on French colonial massacre in Senegal



HOLES in the ground, clods of earth next to headstones, dislocated concrete outlines: the Thiaroye military cemetery near Dakar bears the marks of recent excavations meant to unearth the truth behind a WWII-era massacre by French colonial forces.

In November 1944 around 1,600 soldiers from several west African countries were sent to the Thiaroye camp after being captured by Germany while fighting for France.

Discontent soon mounted over unpaid back pay and unmet demands that they be treated on a par with white soldiers. On December 1, French forces opened fire on them.

The circumstances surrounding the massacre, the number of riflemen killed and their place of burial all remain unclear.

An AFP team recently visited the camp's cemetery, where

archaeologists are conducting landmark excavations to find and examine the remains of those interred there.

Rows of 202 graves, marked with white headstones and cement demarcations, are covered with shells.

It is not known who exactly is in all the graves, or if there are even bodies at each marker. The researchers have so far only been able to excavate a very small percentage of them.

The cemetery was created in 1926 by colonial France to bury African soldiers. Some researchers believe that riflemen killed in the Thiaroye massacre were buried there.

Unearthed burial containers, since covered in blue plastic, bear testament to the archaeologists' work.

Senegal alleges it was difficult to access the French colonial archives to study the massacre in full. — AFP



ARWA AL HASHIMI

In Oman's ever-evolving sports scene, where youthful energy meets boundless ambition, Nawah stands out as a pioneering initiative under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. It is dedicated to empowering Omani women runners and expanding their presence in mountain running, a sport that blends physical strength, endurance and the spirit of adventure in nature's embrace.

The idea behind the platform, as recounted by as explained by Suhaila al Toobi, the team leader of Nawah, was born out of personal experience and shared challenges among women runners in the Sultanate of Oman.

"We noticed a lack of support and few opportunities for knowledge exchange among women in this sport", Suhaila explains. "Mountain running requires awareness and proper understanding before getting involved in it. From these shared experiences, the idea of Nawah was born, a space that brings women runners together to exchange knowledge and experiences and to train and prepare them to pursue this passion with confidence and awareness".

According to Suhaila, this official status has facilitated event organisation, permits and collaborations, while also enhancing the platform's credibility among its members, partners and supporters.

Today, Nawah includes more than 150 runners aged between 18 and 30, offering up to eight training programmes per year. These programmes range from foundational workshops — such as choosing the right running shoes to advanced preparation in mountain running. Each programme aims to build strong technical and mental foundations for women stepping into this challenging sport.

One of the platform's defining moments was winning the Youth Excellence Award, which Suhaila describes as "a turning point that opened wide opportunities for collaboration with sports teams and private organisations, while also providing financial support

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ADVENTURE



Nawah is dedicated to empowering Omani women runners and expanding their presence in mountain running, a sport that blends physical strength, endurance and the spirit of adventure in nature's embrace

that helped us develop and elevate the initiative".

This recognition brought not only pride but also greater responsibility to continue the journey of excellence, expand participation and inspire more women to join this growing and dynamic community of mountain runners.

The award significantly strengthened Nawah's presence at the local level, granting it official recognition for its impact in empowering Omani women in sports. It also opened doors to cooperation with media and sports institutions, raising public awareness about the platform's mission and values.

The journey, however, was not without challenges. The team faced logistical and financial difficulties in organising its first pilot event and year-long training programme. Yet, through teamwork, dedication and the moral support of the Ministry, Nawah turned those

obstacles into opportunities for growth and resilience.

Nawah now looks towards the future with confidence and ambition. Its upcoming plans include joint training camps, professional-level races and building lasting partnerships with public and private institutions to support and sponsor female runners in Oman. Suhaila concludes: "We believe Nawah's impact on the future of running for girls in Oman will be deep and lasting not only athletically but also by promoting a healthy lifestyle, self-confidence and belonging to the sports community".

Today, Nawah represents more than just a sports platform, it embodies a youth-led women's movement redefining challenge and empowerment through sport. It is a space that combines fitness with awareness, inspiring every runner to believe that one step on the track can be the start of a journey towards change and inspiration.

FEATURES



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

It began with the pull of a lever, a swirl of creamy sweetness landing perfectly in a paper cup and suddenly, Oman was under a spell. Self-serve ice cream shops have become the latest national craze, rivalling Dubai’s obsession with Dubai chocolate and America’s viral Crumbl cookies. What started as a humble experiment in Nizwa has spiraled into a full-blown cultural phenomenon, one soft-serve swirl at a time.

The story begins with Fursaad, a small self-serve ice cream shop tucked away in the heart of Nizwa. The idea was simple but charming: customers could dispense their own ice cream straight from soft-serve machines and crown it with whatever toppings they desired. At first, it was a fun novelty, a do-it-yourself dessert bar that drew families and young visitors alike. But it wasn’t until Fursaad opened its second branch in Muscat that the trend truly exploded.

The capital, buzzing with youthful energy and social media fervor, was

fertile ground for this kind of trend to bloom. Located near Sultan Qaboos University, the Muscat branch quickly became the hangout spot for students. Lines snaked out the door as young Omanis documented their personalised creations, rainbow sprinkles, cookie crumbles, chocolate drizzles, through endless Snapchat streaks and Instagram stories. Suddenly, having your own signature swirl was not just dessert, it was digital currency.

Soon enough, business owners across the Sultanate of Oman caught wind of the frenzy. One after another, self-serve ice cream shops began popping up like mushrooms after a summer rain, from Muscat to Suhar, Salalah to Nizwa again. Each promised a “unique experience”, but the magic was already in the act itself.

What makes this phenomenon so fascinating is not the concept, after all, self-serve frozen yoghurt chains like Pinkberry have existed since the early 2000s, but the reaction. Oman’s version turned an old concept into a modern movement. The shops became less

The self-serve ice cream scene in Oman shows no sign of melting away. If anything, it’s expanding, creatively, culturally and socially. New shops continue to open, each trying to out do the last with bolder flavours, sleeker interiors and ever more Instagrammable experiences

about convenience and more about creativity.

Speaking to Oman Observer, Food blogger and founder of @eatwithzara Instagram account, Zahra al Balushi, believes the appeal lies in the experience itself. “It’s not just about eating ice cream”, she explains. “It’s about making it, the feeling of accomplishment when your cup looks exactly how you imagined it. It’s like a child watching their teddy bear come to life. That little spark of achievement keeps people coming back”.

But there’s another layer, a unique Omani twist, to why this particular trend struck such a chord. According to Sam al Shaihani, an undergraduate student at Majan University College and a devoted patron who has toured most self-serve ice cream shops across the country, the secret is in the flavours. “From the beginning, Fursaad experimented with Omani-inspired tastes, amba (green mango), betham (raspberry), even fursaad, the blackberry it’s named after”, he says. “It felt like something new but familiar. Like rediscovering our culture

through dessert”.

That fusion of global format and local flavour is perhaps what sets Oman’s soft-serve revolution apart. It’s not just about sugar and toppings, it’s about self-expression, culture and connection. It’s where nostalgia meets novelty, where tradition gets a modern makeover in a cup.

Today, the self-serve ice cream scene in Oman shows no sign of melting away. If anything, it’s expanding, creatively, culturally and socially. New shops continue to open, each trying to out do the last with bolder flavours, sleeker interiors and ever more Instagrammable experiences.

And maybe that’s the real secret behind the trend: it’s not only ice cream people are scooping, it’s a taste of joy, ownership and a shared moment in a rapidly changing food scene.

So the next time you walk past a self-serve ice cream counter in Oman, don’t be surprised to find a line of eager hands holding cups, ready to pull the lever. Because in this viral trend, everyone gets to be the chef and the child at heart.