

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y

SUNRISE 06:10 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:54 AM

DHUHR 11:56 PM

ASR 03:11 PM

MAGHRIB 05:36 PM

ISHA 06:47 PM

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12

FONSECA BEATS FOKINA TO WIN BIGGEST CAREER TITLE IN BASEL

INBRIEF

HM SENDS CABLES OF GREETINGS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Dr Patrick Herminie on the occasion of him taking the oath of office as the President of the Republic of Seychelles. In his cable, His Majesty wished President Herminie success in leading his country's people towards further progress and stability. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of congratulations to President Catherine Connolly on her victory in the presidential elections in Ireland. In his cable, His Majesty wished President Connolly success in realising further achievements for her country in various spheres in a manner that meets aspirations and hopes of the people of Ireland. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of greetings to President Petr Pavel of the Czech Republic on the occasion of his country's National Day.

HM THANKED BY EGYPT PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on the occasion of the 6th of October Anniversary. In his cable, President El Sisi expressed his thanks for His Majesty's sincere feelings and prayers, wishing His Majesty good health and happiness. President El Sisi also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity.

HM'S GREETINGS CONVEYED TO IRAN



President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran received Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, at the Presidential Headquarters in Tehran on Monday. During the meeting, the Minister of Interior conveyed the warm greetings and sincere best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Pezeshkian and the people of Iran. In response, President Pezeshkian asked the Minister of Interior to convey his own heartfelt greetings and profound respect to His Majesty, along with his sincere wishes of enduring well-being for His Majesty, and sustained advancement and prosperity for the Omani people. SEE ALSO P2

AIRCRAFT WHEEL, BRAKE REPAIR HUB AT MUSCAT AIRPORT

SalamAir, Oman's premier value-focused airline, has executed a comprehensive 10-year memorandum of understanding with Mach Aerospace International to establish advanced aircraft wheel and brake maintenance services in the Sultanate of Oman. Under the strategic partnership, SalamAir will provide a complete inventory of specialised tools and equipment dedicated to wheel and brake maintenance operations throughout the decade-long collaboration period. Mach Aerospace International will assume full responsibility for establishing and operationalising maintenance facilities at Muscat International Airport.

Law on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued Royal Decree No 92/2025 on the promulgation of the Law on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, after presenting the same before the Council of Oman.

Article (1) states that the

provisions of the Law on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, attached to this decree, shall be enforced.

Article (2) states that the Minister of Social Development shall issue the Executive Regulation of the attached law, as well as regulations and decisions

necessary for the implementation of its provisions. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be implemented with prejudice to the provisions of the attached law. Article (3) cancels Royal Decree No 63/2008 on the Welfare and Rehabilitation

of Persons with Disabilities Law. It also cancels all that contradicts the law attached to this decree or contravenes its provisions. Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publication. — ONA

74% of Oman Vision 2040 goals achieved targets

S U C C E S S F U L I M P L E M E N T A T I O N R E Q U I R E S P E R S I S T E N T C O O R D I N A T I O N

THE OMAN Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit has released its fourth periodic progress report for 2024-2025, documenting that 74 per cent of the Vision's performance indicators demonstrate measurable advancement towards achieving their established targets.

The comprehensive report details significant implementation efforts and concrete achievements across various units of the State Administrative Apparatus during the previous year (2024) and the first half of the current year (2025), demonstrating substantial progress towards realising the Vision's objectives across multiple economic and developmental sectors.

Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, emphasised that the report's publication reflects the government's institutional commitment to transparency and community engagement as fundamental components of the national work system.

The document provides a thorough assessment of national priority performance within the Vision's framework and presents detailed analysis of indicators measuring tangible progress towards target achievement.

Al Jabri stressed that the continued successful implementation of Oman Vision 2040 requires persistent coordination and integration across all sectors, noting that current achievements represent initial milestones in the Vision's ongoing journey towards the comprehensive realisation of its national goals and strategic targets.

EDUCATION SECTOR
In higher education, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) achieved significant advancement in global rankings, rising to 334th position from its previous ranking of 362nd, with its performance metric



The current achievements represent initial milestones.

improving from 31.7 to 42.3 points due to enhanced academic reputation, research quality and graduate employment outcomes. Additionally, three private institutions gained international accreditation for the first time, signalling the growing global competitiveness of Oman's higher education sector.

HEALTHCARE
The healthcare sector achieved measurable improvements in service quality and operational efficiency, marked by the enactment of the Public Health Law, the inauguration of 10 new healthcare facilities, and the enhancement of 21 existing institutions.

The sector celebrated the opening of the University Medical City and the Medical City for Military and Security Services, while achieving the milestone of Oman's first

successful heart transplant from a brain-dead donor.

Digital health transformation advanced through the implementation of virtual clinics and electronic reservation systems, complemented by expanded early screening programmes for genetic disorders.

DIVERSIFICATION
Oman's economic diversification strategy continues to enhance the contribution of non-hydrocarbon sectors to national GDP while strengthening resilience against global market fluctuations.

During 2024, non-oil sectors accounted for 72.8 per cent of economic output compared to 30.9 per cent from hydrocarbon activities, with manufacturing recording 8.3 per cent growth and agriculture and fisheries expanding by 2.8 per cent.

FULL REPORT ON P4

The Correspondent looks at crisis in Gaza

Oman Daily Observer's The Correspondent magazine is proud to announce its latest edition, titled '467 Days of Gaza War.' This issue delves into the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, two years after the conflict escalated in October 2023.

The issue features extensive reports on how the humanitarian crisis in Gaza persists, deepening significantly even after the ceasefire agreement that came into effect on October 10 this year.

Despite the truce, Gaza faces severe shortages of food, water,



and essential medical supplies, with humanitarian agencies warning that aid remains critically scarce.

The collection of articles in this edition is a gesture to the crisis in Gaza. The brutal war in Gaza has shown undeniable scenes of vicious atrocities. Footage and images can only shed light on the people's suffering, with exhausted faces of dire famine and indiscriminate strikes.

This issue also includes an extensive report on the collapse of the healthcare system in

Gaza. Hospitals, the places where people are supposed to find relief, have become dim to unknown fates under continuous bombings.

Throughout the dark course of events, the Gaza healthcare system could hardly stand still until the situation became apocalyptic, as described by the United Nations. The miserable story began as people chose to seek treatment for the injured, finding lost ones among the dead.

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SHORT TAKES



The meeting reviewed aspects of bilateral cooperation between Oman and Iran. — ONA

INTERIOR MINISTER MEETS IRANIAN OFFICIAL

TEHRAN: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, met in the Iranian capital, Tehran, on Monday Ali Larijani, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran.

The meeting reviewed aspects of bilateral cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran and discussed a set of topics of mutual interest, in addition to exchanging views on diverse regional and international developments.

The two sides emphasised the importance of continuing coordination and consultation in a manner that enhances the security and stability of the region and serves the common interests of the two countries. The meeting was attended by Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations, Shaikh Ahmed bin Hashel al Maskari, Head of the GCC and Regional Neighbourhood Department at the Foreign Ministry, and some Iranian officials. — ONA

STATE COUNCIL EXAMINES DATA GOVERNANCE



The session was held under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. — ONA

MUSCAT: The State Council convened its regular session on Monday under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, addressing several key agenda items during the proceedings.

The session featured a comprehensive review of the Technology and Innovation Committee’s study entitled “Data Management and Governance and Their Impact on the Digital Economy.”

This strategic study aims to strengthen the legislative and regulatory framework governing national records systems, leverage international best practices in data governance, and establish an integrated framework for data management and security.

Additionally, the study proposes enabling legislation to facilitate secure and efficient data sharing and exchange mechanisms.

The Council’s Office further deliberated on a draft proposal for the internal regulations governing the Council’s operations, alongside various substantive topics and reports presented by the members.

These discussions form part of ongoing institutional development initiatives designed to enhance the Council’s legislative oversight capabilities and operational effectiveness. — ONA

AL BATINAH SOUTH EXPANDS GREEN SPACES FOR WELL-BEING

AL RUSTAQ: The Al Batinah South Governorate continues to roll out quality projects aimed at developing health walkways and public parks across its wilayats, creating safe and attractive spaces for physical activity, recreation and community engagement.

The governorate’s development plan through 2025 includes four health walkway projects and eighteen new public parks in residential neighbourhoods, designed to be accessible, sustainable and comprehensive. Public parks serve as natural



retreats, promoting mental well-being, social interaction and community cohesion while offering tranquil spaces for relaxation.

“These projects focus on three key

dimensions,” said officials from the Al Batinah South Governorate. “The social dimension ensures integrated services that enhance residents’ well-being. The environmental dimension improves air quality, expands vegetation cover and reduces pollution.

Statistics from the governorate highlight significant progress: the total number of garden, park and green space projects reached 41, covering approximately 189,735 square metres of afforestation. The number of trees and shrubs planted rose to 9,652. —ONA

Labour ministry seeks to develop govt performance

BALQEES ALORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 27

THE Ministry of Labour (MoL) on Monday organised the 4th Forum on Institutional Innovation and Change Management.

Held in Muscat, the forum included the closing ceremony of the 3rd edition of the ‘National System for Institutional Innovation and Change Management’, which seeks to develop government performance and enhance the quality of services in the State’s Administrative Apparatus.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development.

Mohammed bin Mubarak al Kalbani, Director-General of Development and Quality Assurance at the Ministry of Labour, said, “The forum marks the culmination of a stage of action that stems from Oman Vision 2040 whose core mission is to promote institutional innovation in government units and build an institutional framework for



The forum reviewed a project themed ‘Governance of Change Management in the Government Sector’.

partnership and change management.”

The activities of the forum also included a visual presentation that showcased the achievements made during the 3rd edition of the “National System for Institutional Innovation and Change Management” and its implementation in government units. The outcomes of the implementation of the system ranged from “Spreading awareness about administrative practices” to “Fostering knowledge empowerment”

and “Consolidating communication and integration among government units in a manner that keeps pace with the latest trends and modern administrative approaches”.

As part of the forum, the Ministry of Labour signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with Al Shawamikh Oil Services Company, Weatherford Oil Equipment Middle East and Oman Film Society. The MoUs covered areas of specialised training and cooperation with civil society institutions.

The 3rd edition of the “National System for Institutional Innovation and Change Management” included two OQ Group practices, namely “Corporate Culture” and “Continuous Improvement Practice”, in addition to a paper titled “Empowerment Strategy in Intellectual Capital Management.” The forum reviewed a project themed ‘Governance of Change Management in the Government Sector’. The project, which saw the participation of 10 government departments, was a strategic initiative that aimed to establish a sustainable framework for governance.

Forum looks at strengthening cybersecurity

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, OCT 27

WITH Broad participation from government and private sector entities, the Cyber Partnership Forum for Security Awareness was inaugurated at the InterContinental Muscat with the aim at unifying efforts in the field of cybersecurity, enhancing response capabilities to security incidents, improving performance efficiency, and ensuring the sustainability of government digital services.

The forum brought together leading government institutions, including the Supreme Judicial Council, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, alongside several private sector companies specialising in cybersecurity.

The forum also featured panel discussions with experts from the Cyber Defence Center,



The forum brought together leading government institutions.

the Royal Oman Police, the Advanced Cybersecurity Academy, and the private sector to exchange expertise and discuss the latest developments in this vital field.

The event featured panel discussions and specialised workshops focusing on strengthening cooperation between the public and private sectors, showcasing best practices and advanced technologies to counter digital threats, and building national human capital in cybersecurity through interactive and practical training sessions.

In his opening remarks, Eng Badr al Salhi, Director-General of the National Center for Information Security at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, highlighted Oman’s strong position among the top countries worldwide in cybersecurity readiness, emphasising the importance of capacity-building and information sharing to foster a secure and resilient digital environment.

Eng Iman al Abri, representing the initiative’s

team, stated that since its inception, the Cyber Partnership Initiative has focused on enhancing awareness, unifying concepts, and strengthening cybersecurity culture across all sectors.

Eng Zahra al Abri, Head of the Electronic Information Security Section at the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, explained that the initiative seeks to activate national efforts to safeguard data and digital information, promoting collaboration between government entities, academia and the private sector

Ahmed al Sadiq from Fortinet Oman underscored the value of collaboration and information sharing between organisations to strengthen national capabilities in combating organised cyberattacks. Mariam al Balushi, Information Security Consultant at TÜV Rheinland, noted that private sector companies play an important role in supporting ministries and government institutions through awareness sessions, professional training, and ISO 27001 certification programmes.

SHORTTAKES



2025 edition saw 217 theatrical scripts received from across the Arab world.

2 OMANI WRITERS
SHORTLISTED FOR
THEATRICAL AWARD

MUSCAT: Two theatrical texts by Omani writers Yasser al Balushi and Dr Wafa al Shamsi have been shortlisted for the 17th Children’s Theatrical Text Writing Competition, organised by the Arab Theatre Authority.

This year’s competition was held under the artistic and humanitarian theme ‘Our Children: New Heroes in Our Folktales’, aimed at revitalising classical Arabic tales and freeing them from negative imagery, while reconnecting younger generations with their cultural heritage and preparing them for the future, according to a press release issued by the Authority.

The 2025 edition witnessed strong participation, receiving 217 theatrical scripts from across the Arab world, of which 200 met the entry requirements.

Following a rigorous review process, 20 scripts were shortlisted, representing a distinguished selection of creative works in children’s playwriting from Oman, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Libya.

Ismail Abdullah, Secretary-General of the Arab Theatre Authority, expressed appreciation for all the submissions, noting that the competition highlights the importance of addressing educational and cultural themes that strengthen children’s sense of belonging and pride in their Arab identity. — ONA

MANAH FORUM
HIGHLIGHTS KEY
DEVELOPMENT



The forum sought to outline priorities for the next phase and strengthen cooperation between government bodies.

MANAH: The third edition of the ‘Manah Advances You’ Forum, organised by the Office of the Wali of Manah at the Oman Across Ages Museum, reviewed major development and future projects in the wilayat.

The forum sought to outline priorities for the next phase and strengthen cooperation between government bodies, the private sector and the local community, thereby contributing to balanced and comprehensive development.

Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, said that the ‘Grants That Advance You’ initiative reflects the government’s approach to empowering governorates and promoting balanced development through administrative decentralisation and effective partnerships. He noted that these efforts align with Oman Vision 2040, particularly the priority of building sustainable governorates and cities to enhance service efficiency, investment appeal and quality of life.

He highlighted several vital projects completed in Manah this year, including an internal roads project, development of the public park, installation of a modern irrigation system at the wilayat’s entrance and the commercial area development project — all contributing to increased economic activity.

The Commercial Area Development Project is expected to be awarded soon, further enhancing services and supporting the local economy.

Dr Aflah bin Said al Hadhrami, Managing Director of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), stressed the importance of fostering innovation and leadership among Omani youth. — ONA

Dutch students explore Omani education and culture

NIZWA: A student delegation from St Michael’s School in Zaandam, the Netherlands, visited Al Dakhiliyah Governorate as part of the educational exchange programme between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, aimed at enhancing educational cooperation and cultural understanding between the two nations.

The visit builds upon last year’s successful exchange that hosted Dutch students in Dhofar Governorate, underscoring the ongoing collaboration between educational institutions in both countries to deepen knowledge and experience sharing.



During their visit, the Dutch students explored the educational experience at several schools in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Said bin Ali al Dhahli, Senior International Relations Specialist at the Ministry of Education and supervisor of the visit, said, “These exchange visits are part of the Ministry of Education’s efforts to strengthen international partnerships and build an educational system open to diverse cultures.” He added that the visit enabled the Dutch students to gain first-hand insight into Oman’s educational environment and engage directly with students and teachers. — ONA

Women key to sustainable
tourism entrepreneurship

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, OCT 27

A Forum on ‘Sustainable Women’s Tourism Projects’ was recently held in the Wilayat of Suhar, spotlighting the growing role of Omani women in advancing sustainable tourism and entrepreneurship. The event took place under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, and was organised by Rima Integrated Projects in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Al Batinah North.

The gathering brought together representatives from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Omani Journalists Association, along with experts, investors and entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

An accompanying exhibition titled ‘Tourism Creations’ showcased innovative initiatives led by women, spanning heritage and archaeological tourism, sports and adventure tourism, hospitality, and technology-driven projects. The exhibition reflected the creativity and determination of Omani women in advancing sustainable tourism practices aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

The forum featured two key panel discussions addressing policies and plans to support sustainable women’s tourism projects, as well



An exhibition titled ‘Tourism Creations’ showcased innovative initiatives led by women.

The forum featured key panel discussions addressing policies and plans to support sustainable women’s tourism projects

as the role of events and media in promoting women’s tourism initiatives.

The sessions provided a platform to discuss opportunities, challenges and strategies to further empower women entrepreneurs.

The ‘Inspiring Experiences’ segment highlighted successful models of women-led tourism ventures, offering real-life examples of how innovation and sustainability can coexist within the sector.

Commenting on the significance of the event, Dr Waleed bin Mohammed al Jabri, Director of the Events and Awareness Department at the Municipality of Al Batinah

North, said: “Empowering women in tourism is key to achieving balanced and sustainable economic growth. Their creativity and leadership bring new perspectives to the sector and help preserve the cultural and environmental heritage of Oman.”

The forum aimed to empower Omani women as active contributors to sustainable tourism, strengthen cooperation between entrepreneurs and supporting entities, and promote eco-friendly and socially responsible practices. By connecting innovation with inclusion, the event reaffirmed Suhar’s growing reputation as a hub for sustainable tourism and women’s entrepreneurship in Oman.

Tech helps rehabilitation for the disabled

MUSCAT: Oman attaches great importance to empowering persons with disabilities through the establishment of a specialised sector within the Ministry of Social Development. This sector is tasked with developing rehabilitation services and programmes aligned with the national vision to build an inclusive society that ensures equal opportunities for all.

Modern technologies have become a cornerstone of these efforts, offering innovative solutions that enhance the cognitive, functional and professional capabilities of persons with disabilities. Such technologies enable them to participate effectively in society and contribute to national development within the framework of digital transformation. Mohammed bin Ahmed al Mahrouqi,



The ministry seeks to employ AI in rehabilitation and educational programmes. — ONA

Director-General of the General Directorate of Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development, affirmed that adopting modern technologies in rehabilitation programmes is among the ministry’s main priorities. These technologies help empower individuals to integrate fully into society and acquire essential life and work skills. Al Mahrouqi said the

ministry is committed to facilitating access for children with disabilities and their families to prosthetic devices and assistive technologies that enhance independence and improve quality of life. He noted that the ministry also seeks to employ artificial intelligence in rehabilitation and educational programmes through cooperation with entities such as the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

This cooperation aims to enhance cognitive and motor skills, tailor rehabilitation programmes to individual abilities, and provide early vocational training and digital tools for teachers and specialists. Highlighting key initiatives, Al Mahrouqi mentioned the launch of the ‘Ta’heel’ platform in 2024 — a

national digital project designed to streamline rehabilitation services by linking all relevant entities within a unified system.

He also announced that the ministry is preparing to launch the National Registry for Persons with Disabilities, a comprehensive database that will organise and enhance the provision of services and programmes, improving planning efficiency and overall programme quality.

Al Mahrouqi further noted that in 2023, the ministry implemented a laboratory for developing services and programmes for persons with disabilities, which identified sector challenges and proposed innovative solutions. Among its notable outcomes was the initiative ‘Providing Assistive Devices and Technologies for Students with Visual and Hearing Impairments’. — ONA

OMAN

OMAN VISION 2040

74 PER CENT
OF INDICATORS
SHOW SUBSTANTIAL
PROGRESS



Oman Law Firm of the Year and Oman Lawyer of the Year; Big Wins for MAQ Legal at IFLR Middle East Awards 2025



Leading Omani law firm, Al Maamary, Al Abri & Co. (MAQ Legal) has won Oman Law Firm of the Year, and managing partner, Asad Qayyum, Oman Lawyer of the Year, at the IFLR Middle East Awards 2025. MAQ Legal also secured the prestigious Impact Deal of the Year accolade for its role as sole Oman law counsel advising OQEP and its banks on OQEP's record-breaking US\$8.1 billion IPO on the Muscat Stock Exchange. The team was also shortlisted for Islamic Finance Law Firm of the Year for the entire Middle East.

The awards ceremony took place at the Mandarin Oriental Jumeirah in Dubai on 22 October 2025.

Considered one of the leading global rankings, the annual IFLR Awards, now in their 20th year, reward excellence and innovation in the legal industry, with a special focus on cross-border transactions. The wins for MAQ Legal, recognise the firm's stand-out performance advising on Oman's most innovative and complex legal transactions including all recent IPOs, bond and sukuk issuances, fund establishments, banking

and project finance, oil and gas and other corporate deals.

Managing partner, Asad Qayyum, commented, "We are proud to have won Oman Law Firm of the Year by LexisNexis Middle East and Thomson's Reuters' Middle East Law Awards and now also by IFLR Middle East. In an increasingly competitive market for legal services, these independent research-based awards are a key mark of calibre and performance. They testify to the exceptional trust and collaboration between our clients and the firm's dedicated young team of Omani and international lawyers. We are committed to continuing to help shape Oman's legal and business landscape as the country accelerates implementation of projects under its transformative 2040 vision."

These awards follow on the heels of the firm's wins as Oman Law Firm of the Year at multiple other international awards this year. MAQ Legal is also the only law firm from Oman to have been awarded Rising Star Law Firm of the Year for the entire Middle East.



DR KHAMIS BIN
SAIF AL JABRI
Chairman of Oman
Vision 2040

progress report for 2024-2025, documenting that 74 per cent of the Vision's performance indicators demonstrate measurable advancement toward achieving their established targets.

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Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, emphasised that the report's publication reflects the government's institutional commitment to transparency and community engagement as fundamental components of the national work system. The document provides a thorough assessment of national priority performance within the Vision's framework and presents detailed analysis of indicators measuring tangible progress towards target achievement.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

He further observed that international developments directly impact national economies and development strategies, necessitating sophisticated flexibility in strategic management, adaptive response capabilities and efficient management of external influences.

He commended government entities for their substantial investments in institutional capacity development aligned with the comprehensive modernisation required to fulfil the Vision's objectives. This has been demonstrated through the effective implementation of numerous national and strategic programmes, projects and initiatives, supported by the coordinated efforts of national priority support teams, specialised technical units within the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, and their counterparts throughout government institutions.

Within the People and Society pillar, the report documents numerous qualitative achievements across education, healthcare, social welfare, protection systems, citizenship development and national heritage preservation. These components form the foundational framework for enhancing quality of life and citizen empowerment, translating national aspirations into tangible progress towards a prosperous, cohesive and advanced society.

The Sultanate of Oman continues to strengthen its integrated educational and research ecosystem with an emphasis on quality enhancement. The education sector has implemented curriculum modernisation through the adoption of international standards in science, English language and information technology, activated the national school evaluation framework and advanced digital literacy initiatives. A comprehensive national framework for technical and vocational education, developed in partnership with the private sector, is currently being implemented to equip Omani youth with the technical competencies required for future workplace demands.

In higher education, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) achieved significant advancement in global rankings, rising to 334th position from its previous ranking of 362nd, with its performance metric improving from 31.7 to 42.3 points due to enhanced

THE

OMAN
VISION 2040
Implementa-
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fourth
periodic

Omani universities attracted more than 3,400 international students through the "Study in Oman" initiative, approved 475 research projects, funded 61 applied research initiatives valued at over RO 2.5 million, registered 128 patents and engaged over 5,000 researchers on the "Shuaa"

The healthcare sector achieved measurable improvements in service quality and operational efficiency, marked by the enactment of the Public Health Law, the inauguration of 10 new healthcare facilities, and the enhancement of 21 existing institutions

Climate action advancements include the establishment of the Oman Net-Zero Centre to coordinate emissions reduction strategies, while protected natural areas expanded to 31 sites through the addition of five new reserves. National afforestation efforts have planted over 3.3 million trees and distributed 24 million seeds, with 44 engineered landfills developed to increase recycling rates to 38 per cent

Clean energy investments totalling RO 533 million include the Amin solar project, Ibri 2 station, and Manah 1 and 2 stations, supplemented by two green hydrogen agreements in Dhofar Governorate. With eight total projects and anticipated investments exceeding RO 6.5 billion by 2030, these initiatives accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy, particularly within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm where hydrogen and green steel projects are advancing rapidly

academic reputation, research quality and graduate employment outcomes.

GLOBAL INNOVATION

In innovation and research, Oman advanced five positions in the Global Innovation Index to reach 69th globally, achieved a remarkable 60-position improvement in the patent index to claim 38th place and rose to 47th position in the trademarks index. These advancements reflect the maturation of Oman's innovation ecosystem and entrepreneurship environment, alongside strengthened national incentives for scientific research and technological development.

Omani universities attracted more than 3,400 international students through the "Study in Oman" initiative, approved 475 research projects, funded 61 applied research initiatives valued at over RO 2.5 million, registered 128 patents and engaged over 5,000 researchers on the "Shuaa" digital platform. Innovation-driven programmes, including "Upgrade", the Oman Innovation Festival and the Cybersecurity Laboratory have successfully translated research concepts into practical applications and startup enterprises, contributing significantly to the knowledge-based economy.

The healthcare sector achieved measurable improvements in service quality and operational efficiency, marked by the enactment of the Public Health Law, the inauguration of 10 new healthcare facilities, and the enhancement of 21 existing institutions. The sector celebrated the opening of the University Medical City and the Medical City for Military and Security Services, while achieving the milestone of Oman's first successful heart transplant from a brain-dead donor.

Social welfare and protection systems demonstrated significant strengthening through the expansion of social housing programmes, including the launch of the "Iskan" initiative that has facilitated financing for over 61,000 families while reducing waiting periods to under six months. More than 200 new housing units valued at over RO 14 million have been allocated, while social protection coverage now encompasses all

categories of employment contracts, including mandatory registration for self-employed workers. Additional pension benefits have been disbursed to more than 76,000 eligible citizens, complemented by youth empowerment programmes such as the National Youth Strategy and the "Sanad" volunteer programme. Oman advanced nine positions in the Social Progress Index to rank 59th globally and fourth among GCC states.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Cultural development and national identity preservation achievements include the inauguration of the Oman Cultural Complex and the Oman Encyclopedia for Youth, the inclusion of the historical manuscript "Al Nuniyah Al Kubra (The Great Nuniyah)" in Unesco's Memory of the World Programme, and the recognition of the "Shabab Oman" sailing training vessel programme for peace and sustainable cultural dialogue through inscription on Unesco's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices for Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2024.

By May 2025, Oman had secured the inclusion of 17 cultural elements in Unesco's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage alongside five world heritage site designations. The Sultanate of Oman's global cultural presence has been further elevated through the Oman Gallery exhibition at Russia's Hermitage Museum and the prestigious Best Design award at the 2025 London Design Biennale, demonstrating the successful integration of creative expression into socioeconomic development while strengthening national identity.

Oman's economic diversification strategy continues to enhance the contribution of non-hydrocarbon sectors to national GDP while strengthening resilience against global market fluctuations. During 2024, non-oil sectors accounted for 72.8% of economic output compared to 30.9 per cent from hydrocarbon activities, with manufacturing recording 8.3% growth and agriculture and fisheries expanding by 2.8 per cent.

The current account achieved a surplus of 1.83 per cent for the third consecutive year, substantially exceeding the -7% target and reflecting Oman's strengthened financial capacity and growing foreign reserves.

Public expenditure increased to 29.5 per cent of GDP while non-oil revenues stabilised at 8.53% with an annual growth rate of 6.8% throughout the 2021-2024 period. Public debt decreased to RO 14.4 billion, representing 35.5 per cent of GDP and reinforcing fiscal sustainability.

Private sector investment rose to 17 per cent of GDP with an 8.4-per cent annual growth rate, while foreign direct investment increased by 18 per cent to reach RO 30.1 billion, accounting for 11.1 per cent of GDP and surpassing the Vision's annual target of 7 per cent. Oman maintained its 58th position globally in the 2025 Economic Freedom Index.

Entrepreneurship support mechanisms include dedicated programmes for startups and small-to-medium enterprises, streamlined regulatory processes through the "Invest Oman Lounge", and the Rapid Intervention Window which resolved 63 investor requests by mid-2025. Enhanced governance standards for family businesses ensure their long-term sustainability and contribution to economic development.

Five integrated economic clusters have been established to support industrial diversification, while the Royal Decree establishing the Promising Companies Market has been issued. The second phase of the "Nazdahir" programme has been launched to strengthen the national business environment, private sector development and international trade. The newly established National Foresight Office has introduced 29 leadership development programmes and initiatives to build national capacity for managing economic transformation and achieving institutional integration. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



Over 540 students are taking part in the qualifiers across various categories.

AL BATINAH SOUTH LAUNCHES INNOVATION AWARDS

AL RUSTAQ: *The Al Batinah South Education Innovation Award 2025 competitions kicked off on Sunday at the Directorate-General of Education in Al Batinah South Governorate, featuring scientific innovations, robotics and drone challenges. The competitions will run throughout the week.*

More than 540 students, representing 270 teams, are taking part in the qualifiers across various categories. 140 teams are competing in Student Scientific Innovations, 110 teams in Robotics competitions (Cube Moving and Fire Rescue) and 20 teams in the Drone Competition.

Khalil bin Mohammed al Luwaihi, Head of the Innovation and Science Olympiad Department at the Governorate's Education Department, said: "This award, in its second edition, serves as the local qualifier for the Student Science Innovation Competition and the Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Competitions."

Sulaiman bin Said al Muqbali, a senior innovation and science Olympiad specialist, highlighted the support from specialists, academics, researchers, and Omani inventors who will evaluate students' projects and provide feedback. — ONA

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 27

THE Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, organised a workshop on the Mobile Puppet Theatre Project aimed at promoting sustainable development concepts in early childhood education.

The workshop targeted preschool education faculty members and covered 20 schools in Muscat Governorate.

The initiative seeks to integrate sustainable development concepts into early learning by training educators to prepare theatrical scenarios and implement interactive puppet performances that convey key environmental and social values to young children.

The MoE works to ensure equitable, inclusive and quality education while promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. By 2030, it aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to advance sustainable development. The Mobile Puppet Theatre Project supports the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a global framework to improve lives by addressing



The workshop targeted preschool education faculty members and covered 20 schools in Muscat.

*The Mobile
Puppet
Theatre Project
supports the
17 Sustainable
Development
Goals*

pressing issues such as climate change, education and social inclusion.

Khalid bin Khalaf al Maawali, Assistant Director of the Education Sector at the Oman National Committee, said: "This workshop, organised in partnership with Ooredoo, aims to promote sustainable development concepts within early childhood education as part of the National Committee's efforts to achieve the fourth goal, seventh target. The project includes a mobile puppet theatre and four theatrical scenes covering five sustainable development goals. The first phase targeted 20 schools in Muscat, and future phases will expand to other governorates."

The puppet theatre encourages children to actively participate in achieving the SDGs by engaging in simple, everyday actions such as recycling, conserving water and helping others.

Farah al Harmi, Head of the School Education Department at the Oman National Commission, explained that the workshop was designed to introduce the Sustainable Development Goals to preschoolers in an age-appropriate manner.

“The goal is to reach this group indirectly through activities that align with the SDGs. Many such activities already take place in schools but are not explicitly linked to the goals.

By raising awareness, we can better connect classroom activities with the ministry's vision for achieving Goal 4: Quality Education," she said.

Linked closely with Oman's national curriculum – particularly the first cycle – the mobile puppet theatre incorporates Omani environmental themes and locally inspired puppet characters.

Ali bin Khalifa al Maamari,
School Activities Supervisor at the
MoE's Department of Educational
Activities, presented a paper titled
'Puppet Theatre: An Educational and
Teaching Tool.'

Powering
Dhofar

شركة ظفار لتوليد الكهرباء
Dhofar Generating Company SAOG

PO Box: 1571, PC: 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman.
www.dgcom.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

The Board of Directors is pleased to present the performance of your company, Dhofar Generating Company SAOG ("DGC" or "Company") for the nine months ended 30 September 2025.

At the core of our Company lies an unwavering commitment to safety. For over a decade, we have maintained an impeccable safety track record with zero Lost Time Incidents (LTIs). Our team remains ever vigilant, never granting safety a day off. Under the guidance by the Board, we uphold safety principles and ambitious goals.

This dedication to safety directly impacts our operational performance. Our assets boast an extraordinary reliability factor of over 99.4%. This excellence ensures not only smooth operations but also enables us to meet our financial obligations.

Overview

The business achieved excellent commercial availability factors of 99.6% and 99.2% during the nine months period for the 273MW and 445MW power plants respectively. From a financial perspective, the contractual revenue is highly seasonal during the calendar year, with higher revenue in the summer period compared to the winter period. Summer months include April, May, June, September and October. The financial results are reflective of the business's contractual arrangement and are in line with expectations.

Plant performance during the period

	273MW		445MW	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
30 September				
Reliability Factor	99.6%	99.4%	99.2%	99.4%
Load Factor	33.5%	24.0%	63.8%	57.9%
Energy Output (GWh)	602	435	1852	1687

273MW CGGT Power Plant

The CGGT plant demonstrated exceptional performance. The forced outage factor was at 0.4%, marginally better than the 2024 figure of 0.6%. Additionally, the load factor exceeded the corresponding period in 2024, aligning with grid demand.

445MW CGGT Power Plant

In Q3 2025, our CGGT plant achieved a remarkable reliability factor of 99.2%. While this slightly decreased from the 2024 value of 99.4%, it remains highly dependable. The load factor for this plant is closely tied to grid demand and follows instructions from the load dispatch center.

Plant performance is a direct result of the operator's proficient approach towards operations, maintenance and HSE principles.

Maintenance activities during the period

The third quarter of the year includes two winter months and one summer month. The team kept its focus on preventive and predictive maintenance activities during the quarter to ensure high availability of equipment. GTRI Major Inspection was carried out in February-March period, in addition to it BoreScope Inspection was carried out for some units. The management has ensured that all required permits were valid during the period.

Financial highlights

	Nine Months Ended	
	30-Sep-25	30-Sep-24
Income Statement in OMR '000		
Total revenues	49,604	44,502
Operating costs	(42,425)	(37,057)
Gross profit	7,178	7,445
Other costs	(5,641)	(5,710)
Loss after tax	1,538	1,735
Loss per share – B2/share	7	8

Revenues

The revenue for the nine months has increased by OMR 5.1 m due to higher fuel revenue on account of higher load compared to the corresponding period in 2024.

Operating Costs

Operating cost has increased by OMR 5.3 m mainly due to higher fuel cost on higher load and higher maintenance costs compared to the corresponding period in 2024.

Other Costs

Other costs are lower by OMR 0.6 m mainly due to lower finance cost.

Net profit after Tax

Net profit is reflective of the variances noted above.

Balance Sheet OMR '000	Period Ended 30-Sep-2025	Year Ended 2024
Total assets	186.0	191.3
Net shareholder's equity	54.7	54.7
Paid up capital	22.2	22.2
Cash	1.6	3.3
Current ratio	1.1	1.1
Gearing ratio	2.4	2.5
Net assets per share – OMR	0.246	0.246

Cash flows and Dividends

The Company has met its obligations to the lenders by the timely debt service of OMR 11.9 m during the period. Interest payments are monthly while principal payments are due in July and January of each year.

The Cash Sweep Mechanism under the financing arrangements commenced from 31 July 2021 enabled the ability of the Company to make any future dividend distributions.

The Cash Sweep Mechanism will remain effective until the balloon amount is fully prepaid, which is expected to continue for the remaining term of Power Purchase Agreement (i.e. expiring on 1 January 2033).

The above restricts the Company to make any dividend distributions unless the Cash Sweep Mechanism is reversed, which is subject to (1) arrangement of acceptable Backstop DSRA LC, and (2) unanimous approval of project lenders.

Future outlook

The Dhofar Grid is experiencing a substantial increase in demand due to emerging industries in the Dhofar region as seen throughout 2025. The demand is expected to continue in the future. This increased demand has triggered a revision in the maintenance regime for the 273MW plant to ensure safe and reliable operations. Upcoming quarter two months will fall in winter and one month in the summer period under the PPA. The Company and operator will continue their proactive approach towards plant operations to ensure a high reliability factor which is of paramount importance for all stakeholders.

Acknowledgement

The Board would like to thank the entire team for its diligent efforts which has resulted in the excellent performance. Finally, the Board of Directors would like to conclude by expressing their immense gratitude for the privilege of the vision, guidance, wisdom and crucial support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and His Government.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2025

	30-Sep-25 RO	31-Dec-24 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	131,145,592	134,059,390
Right of use assets	1,992,999	1,630,045
Finance lease receivable	29,647,718	31,674,585
Trade and other receivables	2,923,470	2,807,308
Prepayments	1,019,078	932,551
Derivative financial instruments	504,340	1,366,552
Total non-current assets	166,853,197	172,533,431
Current assets		
Inventories	5,408,255	5,501,376
Finance lease receivable	3,570,002	3,205,488
Trade and other receivables	8,075,904	5,823,260
Advances and prepayments	357,442	483,858
Derivative financial instruments	142,250	385,438
Cash and cash equivalents	1,6	



ISG CELEBRATES CREATIVITY AND EXCELLENCE

MUSCAT: The Annual Day of ISG International, held on Thursday, October 16, unfolded as a spectacular celebration of talent, teamwork and triumph. Students, teachers and guests gathered for an enchanting night of performances that captivated from start to finish.

Kawther al Suleimani, Assistant Director of the Foreign Schools Office, graced the occasion as the chief guest. Also present were Ahmed Rayees, President of the School Management Committee, and other distinguished members of the school community.



المجلس الأعلى للقضاء
The Supreme Judicial Council

Tenders Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to Submit the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
46/2025	Supply of Sandbox Solution	06/11/2025	01/12/2025	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-
47/2025	Supply Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) Solution	06/11/2025	01/12/2025	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-
48/2025	Supply Network Detection and Response (NDR) Solution	06/11/2025	01/12/2025	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-
49/2025	Cyber Security Awareness	06/11/2025	01/12/2025	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-
50/2025	New SIEM Solution	06/11/2025	01/12/2025	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-

Where you can buy the more detailed tender documents electronically via the link below website:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders must submit a letter of commitment to the bid, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tenders Committee of the Supreme Judicial Council, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tenders Council and the latest updates to the electronic bidding system. Based on Circular No. (1/2024) issued by the General Secretariat of the Tender Board.

- 1- **For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:**
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- 2- **For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:**
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A Taliban security personnel stands guard along a road near the Ghulam Khan zero-point border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan in Gurbuz district. — AFP

AFGHANISTAN URGES ‘UNDERSTANDING’ AS PAKISTAN TRUCE TALKS CONTINUE

KABUL: Afghanistan and Pakistan entered a third day of negotiations on Monday to secure a lasting ceasefire, with Kabul urging “dialogue and understanding” after Islamabad warned of war if talks collapse.

Two weeks ago, Afghanistan launched a border offensive after explosions in Kabul the Taliban authorities blamed on Pakistan, sparking fierce clashes that left dozens dead on both sides, including civilians.

Islamabad responded with strikes against armed groups on Afghan soil, prompting further violence and a short-lived 48-hour ceasefire that collapsed soon after.

A second truce emerged following talks in Doha, mediated by Qatar and Turkey, though its terms remain unclear.

The Istanbul round, which began on Saturday, aims to establish mechanisms to uphold the fragile truce and prevent renewed fighting.

“The second phase of negotiations is ongoing; we cannot predict the outcome and must wait for the end of the meeting,” Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said on Monday.

“The only solution to resolve the recent issue with Pakistan is dialogue and understanding,” he added.

“Further progress in the talks depends on the positive attitude of the Afghan Taliban,” Pakistani security sources said on Sunday.

They accused Taliban negotiators of showing “stubbornness and a lack of seriousness”.

Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Asif 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.

Pakistan has demanded “verifiable action” against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which it says launches attacks from Afghan soil.

Kabul denies harbouring militants and insists on safeguarding Afghanistan’s territorial integrity.

Taliban negotiators have reportedly asked Pakistan to stop violating Afghan airspace and refrain from supporting opposition groups.

On the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in Malaysia, US President Donald Trump said he could “solve the Afghanistan-Pakistan crisis very quickly”. — AFP

DEADLY CLIMB

2 die on Nepal’s Ama Dablam Mountain



A mountaineer from France and another from South Korea died during expeditions to Nepal’s Mount Ama Dablam, a picturesque but difficult peak to climb, an official said.

Hugo Lazaro, 65, fell sick while descending the 6,812-metre peak last week. “He was flown to Kathmandu on a helicopter on Wednesday and passed away the next day.”

Hong Khy Park, 66, died between Camp 1 and Camp 2 while ascending Mount Ama Dablam on Saturday.

MILITARY TIES

Putin hosts N.Korea top diplomat



Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country’s ties with North Korea were developing “as planned”, as he hosted Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui (pictured) in the Kremlin.

Choe passed on “warm wishes” from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un after she had earlier hailed the “spiritual closeness” between Moscow and Pyongyang during a meeting with her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

The visit is the latest in a flurry of diplomatic exchanges.

CATEGORY FIVE

Jamaica braces for Hurricane Melissa



Hurricane Melissa has continued to gain strength off the coast of Jamaica, reaching the highest hurricane category five, according to the US National Hurricane Center on Monday.

With sustained wind speeds of 260 km per hour, the hurricane was still about 250 km from Jamaica’s capital, Kingston, on Monday morning, the Miami-based centre said.

It warned that the storm could continue to gain strength during the course of the day.

2 people killed in Israeli attack in southern Gaza



Displaced Palestinian woman Amal Alyan and her children sit on the rubble of homes destroyed during Israeli strikes on Al Shati camp, in Gaza City. — Reuters

PALESTINIAN MEDICAL sources in Gaza on Monday said two people were killed and three were injured in an Israeli attack on the town of Abasan al Kabira, as the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas remains fragile.

The sources at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis said one person killed was male.

When asked to comment, the Israeli military said the people had crossed the “yellow line,” a line behind which the Israeli army withdrew as part of the ceasefire.

Abasan al Kabira, located to the east of Khan Yunis, is under Israeli military control and lies behind the yellow line.

The military said the Palestinians had approached its soldiers and “conducted suspicious activities,” without giving further details.

In order to “eliminate the threat,” the military attacked the people involved, it said.

The Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that the Israeli military used a drone to

attack a group of people in Abasan al Kabira who had been looking to inspect their homes following the ceasefire.

According to the report, some sustained serious injuries.

It was initially not possible to independently verify the claims from either side.

Israel has lifted the state of emergency for areas near the border with Gaza for the first time since Hamas’s October 2023 attack, Defence Minister Israel Katz announced on Monday.

“I have decided to adopt the Israeli military’s recommendation and to lift, for the first time since October 7, the special state on the home front,” a statement from Katz’s office said.

The decision “reflects the new security reality in the south of the country” and came as a ceasefire that began on October 10 largely continued to hold.

The state of emergency, which was active up to 80 kilometres from Gaza in southern Israel, granted authorities special powers to maintain public order and ensure civilian safety.

The same state of emergency was temporarily expanded to the whole of Israel in June 2025 after Israeli strikes on Iran that prompted retaliatory missile launches from the Islamic republic.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on Monday that only countries that are “at least fair” to Israel could send troops to secure war-torn Gaza, ruling out Türkiye’s participation.

Under a US-brokered ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, a coalition of mainly Arab and Muslim nations is expected to deploy forces in the Palestinian territory devastated by conflict since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks across the border.

Türkiye has been keen to join a planned international stabilisation force, an idea Israel firmly opposes.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said that Israel would decide which countries it would allow to join the security force.

“I would say that countries that want or are ready to send armed forces should be at least fair to Israel,” Saar said at a press conference alongside his Hungarian counterpart. — dpa and AFP

CYCLONE COMING



Fishing boats are moored to a safer area at the Marina beach as a preventive measure ahead of Cyclone Montha in Chennai on Monday.

India moved 50,000 people to relief camps on Monday as it began evacuations a day before Cyclone Montha, intensifying over the Bay of Bengal, is set to bring strong winds and heavy rains to its east coast, officials said.

Authorities cancelled holidays for emergency staff and ordered schools and colleges to close in coastal areas of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh and the eastern state of Odisha forecast to be hit by the harsh weather. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Paul Biya and his wife Chantal Biya. — AFP

PAUL BIYA, WORLD’S OLDEST PRESIDENT, WINS RE-ELECTION

YAOUNDE: Cameroon’s President Paul Biya has been re-elected for an eighth term at the age of 92, the country’s Constitutional Court announced on Monday.

The world’s oldest head of state won more than 53 per cent of the vote, his worst result since 1992.

Former minister Issa Tchiroma Bakary came in second with around 35 per cent, according to official figures. Tchiroma has rejected the result and called on Cameroonians to rise up.

Demonstrations broke out in several cities on Sunday, and dozens of Tchiroma’s supporters have been arrested.

Authorities said four people were killed in the port city of Douala.

Several other opposition candidates lodged appeals citing electoral irregularities, all of which were rejected.

Elections in Cameroon are widely viewed as unfair. Biya, who has been president since 1982 after serving as prime minister from 1975, is one of the world’s longest-serving leaders, second only to the dictator of neighbouring Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo.

Cameroon has a population of around 30 million, half of whom are children. Around 8 million people are registered to vote.

The country was once a German colony, and was divided between France and Great Britain after World War I.

A conflict between the French-speaking majority and separatists in the English-speaking regions has claimed at least 6,500 lives and displaced hundreds of thousands since 2017. In the north, terrorists continue to stage attacks. — AFP

TRUMP IN JAPAN



US President Donald Trump meets with Japan’s Emperor Naruhito at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Monday. — AFP

EU’S KALLAS SAYS BLOC LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SUPPORT ICC

BRUSSELS: European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said on Monday that the international legal order was under “assault” and the bloc was looking at options for supporting the International Criminal Court.

The US imposed sanctions on six judges and three prosecutors at the ICC earlier this year, including its chief prosecutor who stepped aside temporarily in May. Washington is also considering sanctions against the entire court.

Speaking at the College of Europe, a university based in Bruges, Kallas said “a broad assault is going on against the international legal order, human rights, internationally agreed norms, and the institutions we have established to enforce them.” All EU countries are members of the ICC, but Hungary is in the process of leaving.

“One member state has announced its intention to withdraw from the ICC, but all member states are legally bound by

decisions that are adopted by the Council, including the decision in support of the ICC and including in the case of a withdrawal,” Kallas said, meaning that Hungary would still be bound by the Council’s decision to support the ICC after its planned exit as a member of the court.

“In Brussels, we are currently looking at all available options, including specific mitigating measures, for how we can make this support count for the ICC in its time of struggle,” she said. — AFP

Trump: Putin should end the war, not test missiles

US President Donald Trump said on Monday Russian President Vladimir Putin should end the war in Ukraine instead of testing a nuclear-powered missile, and that the United States had a nuclear submarine positioned off Russia’s coast.

Putin said on Sunday Russia had successfully tested its nuclear-powered Burevestnik cruise missile, a nuclear-capable weapon Moscow says can pierce any defence shield, and will move towards deploying the weapon.

Moscow said the 9M730 Burevestnik (Storm Petrel) had flown for 14,000 km. Asked on Air Force One about the test of the missile, dubbed the SSC-X-9 Skyfall by Nato, Trump said the United States did not need to fly so far as it had a nuclear submarine off the coast of Russia.

“They know we have a nuclear submarine, the greatest in the world, right off their shores, so I mean, it doesn’t have to go 8,000 miles,” Trump told reporters, according to an audio file posted by the White House.

“I don’t think it’s an appropriate thing for Putin to be saying, either, by the way: You ought to get the war ended, the war that should have taken one week is now in ... its fourth year, that’s what you ought to do instead of testing missiles.”

Since first announcing the 9M730 Burevestnik in 2018, Putin has cast the weapon as a response to US moves to build a missile defence shield after Washington in 2001 unilaterally withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and to enlarge the Nato military alliance.

Asked about Trump’s remarks, the Kremlin said Russia would be guided by its own national interests but saw no reason for the missile test to strain relations with the White House. Russia said Monday its troops had captured three more villages in Ukraine, with Moscow trying to press its advantage on the battlefield amid stalled peace efforts.

Moscow’s defence ministry said in a social media statement that its forces had seized the settlements of Novomykolaivka and Pryvilne in Zaporizhzhia region, and Yegorivka in Dnipropetrovsk region.

Russia claims the southern Zaporizhzhia



A man walks past Russia Iranian drone Shahed 136 (Geranium-2), a new exhibit of open-air exhibition destroyed Russian equipment in Kyiv on Monday, amid Russian attack on Ukraine. — AFP

region as its own, though has made no formal claim over the Dnipropetrovsk region, which its troops pushed into for the first time earlier this year.

Though it holds an advantage in manpower and weapons on the sprawling front, Russia’s territorial advances have been slow and costly.

Over the last year, its army has captured around 6,000 square kilometres, or one per cent of Ukraine’s territory, according to an AFP analysis of data from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), which works with the Critical Threats Project.

Ukraine’s army said over the weekend that around 200 Russian troops had entered the city of Pokrovsk, which Moscow has been trying to encircle and capture for months.

Russia has “concentrated their main attack force” around the city, creating a “difficult” situation, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday.

Russia is also targeting Kupiansk, a strategically important city in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

After a diplomatic flurry this year and the first direct talks between Russia and Ukraine in more than three years, efforts to end the war have frozen with little sign of progress.

US President Donald Trump last week scrapped a planned summit with Russia’s President Vladimir Putin and hit Moscow with his first significant sanctions package, targeting two top oil companies, after saying he was frustrated that Russia had not halted its offensive. — Agencies

Argentina’s Milei vows more reforms after stunning election win

Buenos Aires: Argentine President Javier Milei hailed his party’s runaway victory in Sunday’s midterm elections as a “turning point” for the country and vowed to charge ahead with his agenda of shrinking the state and deregulating the economy.

Milei’s small La Libertad Avanza (LLA) party rebounded from a series of setbacks to win 40.84 per cent of the votes cast for members of Congress, far outpacing the opposition in an election closely watched by jittery investors.

“Today we reached a turning point, today begins the construction of a great Argentina,” the 55-year old president told supporters at a victory party in Buenos Aires.

He promised to continue on the reform path with what he predicted would be “the most reformist Congress in Argentina’s history.”

US President Donald Trump, a close ally, congratulated Milei and

said his Argentine counterpart was doing a “wonderful job!”

Half of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and one-third of the Senate seats were up for grabs on Sunday.

Milei said LLA had more than tripled its seat count, winning 101 seats in the lower house Chamber of Deputies, up from 37, and 20 seats in the Senate, up from six.

The center-left Peronist movement, in power for much of Argentina’s post-war history, trailed in second place with 31.64 per cent.

“Far more Argentines want to move forward than go backwards,” Milei said on the demise of the opposition.

The elections were the first national test of Milei’s support since he won office two years ago on a promise to revive the long-ailing Argentine economy through a series of painful reforms.

The run-up to the vote was marked by a run on the national



President Javier Milei (C) waves to supporters in Buenos Aires on Monday. — AFP

currency, the peso, that forced Milei to seek a bailout from Trump.

“Our confidence in him was justified by the People of Argentina,” the US president said on Monday.

At the LLA election party,

hundreds of Milei’s supporters celebrated the results with cheers, hugs, chants and even tears.

“I’m very happy and excited; I didn’t expect such a large number,” Facundo Campos, a 38-year-old marketing consultant, said, comparing the joy to the “last goal of the last World Cup won by Argentina!”

Ahead of the election, several Milei voters had spoken to AFP about their disappointment with his leadership, particularly the corruption scandals involving members of his inner circle.

But they remained viscerally opposed to the Peronist movement, whose figurehead, former president Cristina Kirchner, is under house arrest after being convicted of corruption.

At 67.9 per cent, turnout was the lowest in a national election in four decades, reflecting disillusionment with the entire political class. — AFP

OPINION

Oman’s youth lead the way through innovation



A nation that is home to a diverse population, Oman has demonstrated that economic vitality and innovation can be cultivated from within.

The country’s thriving ecosystem of homegrown businesses, from food and beverage ventures to tech-driven transportation solutions, is a testament to the strength of local entrepreneurship and the vision of a government that believes in its youth. Take, for example, the transformation of the public transportation sector. While Uber revolutionised the global taxi industry with its app-based model, Oman didn’t merely adopt the concept — it localised it. Omani start-ups have embraced the Uber model and tailored it to the country’s unique needs, offering competitive pricing and enhanced safety while redefining the way people move around. These companies are not just surviving — they are flourishing. This entrepreneurial spirit is not confined to transportation.

Omani-run cafes, restaurants and boutiques are increasingly competing with, and in some cases outperforming, their international counterparts. This success is not accidental. It is the result of deliberate and sustained support from the government, which has recognised the immense potential of its youth — nearly 536,000 strong in the 18 to 29 age group, representing 18 per

cent of the population. At the heart of this transformation is Vision 2040, a national blueprint that places young people at the centre of Oman’s development goals.

Oman Vision 2040 emphasises education, scientific research, innovation and entrepreneurship as the pillars of a modern, diversified economy. It is a vision that sees youth not as passive beneficiaries of progress, but as active architects of the nation’s future. To this end, Oman has launched a series of initiatives aimed at promoting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly those rooted in invention, artificial intelligence and advanced technologies.

Training programmes and empowerment initiatives are equipping young Omanis with the skills and confidence they need to seize emerging opportunities and create new ones. HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, praised the dedication, awareness and sense of responsibility demonstrated by Oman’s youth. His words reflect a broader national ethos — one that sees young people not as a challenge to be managed, but as a resource to be unleashed.

Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman has embraced what it calls the Renewed Renaissance — a period of revitalisation driven by the energy

Omani start-ups have embraced the Uber model and tailored it to the country’s unique needs, offering competitive pricing and enhanced safety while redefining the way people move around. These companies are not just surviving — they are flourishing. This entrepreneurial spirit is not confined to transportation

and creativity of its youth. In his address to the nation, His Majesty underscored the importance of aligning employment systems with the evolving needs of the economy and society. He called on state institutions to revise their approaches and ensure that education and training are in sync with the aspirations of young Omanis. One of the most significant tools in this effort is the Omani Youth Development Index. Designed to track progress at both the national and governorate levels, the index provides a data-driven framework for understanding the factors that influence youth development. It enables policymakers to identify areas of success, prioritise investment and monitor outcomes over time.

By aggregating data and presenting it in a clear, actionable format, the index helps ensure that policies are grounded in evidence and responsive to real-world needs. In a world where economic success is too often equated with the presence of foreign brands, Oman is charting a different course — one that values local innovation, empowers its youth and builds prosperity from the inside out. The country’s experience offers a compelling lesson: true development is not about mimicking others, but about unlocking the potential within. Oman’s youth are not waiting for the future — they are building it.

NY COST OF LIVING PROPELS SOCIALIST’S MAYORAL BID

GREGORY WALTON & RAPHAELLE PELTIER

A giant yellow banner on a busy expressway linking New York’s Brooklyn and Queens boroughs proclaims: “Vote Zohran - for a city we can afford.”

The city’s soaring cost of living, perhaps more than any other issue, has propelled the unlikely Democratic socialist candidate Zohran Mamdani to the front of the Big Apple’s mayoral race.

Early voting began on Saturday and election day is November 4. Astronomical rents and housing scarcity are pervasive problems in America’s most populous city of 8.5 million people where one in four people cannot afford life’s essentials. In June, the median New York rent exceeded \$4,000 for the first time, according to the StreetEasy property site - more than double the US average. Unregulated rents increased 5.6 per cent in the first quarter of 2025 compared to 2024.

Mamdani has said he wants to freeze rents for the two million rent-stabilised tenants whose housing increases are governed by the city, and build 200,000 additional homes in the next decade. Critics say his policies will deter maintenance and investment.

“Whatever you need to live in this city, that is not something that you should be priced out of,” he said on the hugely popular Breakfast Club radio show. “We can’t let the market determine who gets to live that dignified life.”

Under outgoing mayor Eric Adams, regulated rents have gone up 12.6 per cent since he took over in 2022, approved by an independent board Mamdani could shake up. “(Mamdani) realises that everything is - after Covid (and) inflation - very expensive, and people feel strained,” said Daniel Schlozman, an associate professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University. “He was speaking to those issues in ways that his leading rival Andrew Cuomo was not.”

Outside a recent Mamdani rally, Santiago, a 69-year-old retiree who did not give his last name, brandished a banner reading “we want affordable housing for our community.”

“We are overwhelmed by housing costs,” he said in the shadow of the George Washington Bridge that links the city to New Jersey, the neighbouring state where many New York families have been forced to move in search of lower rents.

Santiago gave the Bronx as an example where lower average wages have been outstripped by rising rents. — AFP

As the leaves fall in Berlin

AS the leaves begin to fall in Berlin, and the wind picks up speed, I find myself standing at a new threshold — starting my fellowship at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (Leibniz Center for Modern Orient or ZMO). The crisp air and shifting palettes outside mirror my own process of reflection and metamorphosis. This fellowship marks not only an academic pursuit but also a personal reckoning, as I study and contemplate Omani digital practices over the years alongside my own evolving relationship with the world.

Berlin’s autumn invites introspection. Each falling leaf feels like a reminder of what must be shed to make space for new growth. My research focuses on how Omanis have navigated digital spaces — from Nokia mobile phones in the 1990s, to early online forums (Seblah and Yahoo chatrooms), and to today’s complex digital ecosystems.

Through these practices, I see traces of connection, creativity and control, revealing how technology both liberates and constrains collective narratives. In examining others’ digital histories, I inevitably turn inward, confronting my own shadows: the impulsive actions, the moments of silence, the unexamined beliefs which have shaped my participation in these same networks.

The Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, located in the quiet Berlin district of Dahlem, provides an ideal setting for this kind of deep reflection. Founded in 1996, ZMO is Germany’s only research institute devoted to the interdisciplinary study of the Middle East, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and their entanglements with Europe. It fosters critical dialogue on how societies in these regions have experienced and conceptualised modernity, mobility and transformation. Within its historic villa, the air hums with multilingual conversations — Arabic, German, English, French, Urdu, Swahili,



The digital traces we leave behind are echoes of our humanity, constantly reshaped by the worlds — real and virtual



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

Tagalog — each representing a different story of encounter, migration and exchange.

Their commitment to collaborative inquiry mirrors my own desire to situate Omani digital life within broader global conversations about change, adaptation and identity.

What excites me most about ZMO’s approach is its emphasis on connected histories — on understanding regions not in isolation but through the webs of relationships that tie them together. This perspective encourages me to consider how Omani digital practices, though rooted in local culture, are shaped by global flows of technology, capital and discourse.

ZMO’s research themes — such as moral orders, mobility and temporality — resonate deeply with my work. The institute’s interdisciplinary ethos encourages me to bridge digital ethnography with cultural analysis, to think of technology not as an abstract system but as a lived experience intertwined with politics, memory and emotion. There is also something quietly transformative

about being in Berlin itself. The city’s layered history — of division and reunification, destruction and rebuilding — echoes the very themes I grapple with in my research: continuity and rupture, forgetting and remembering. Just as Berlin continuously reinvents itself while preserving its scars, Oman’s digital landscape tells a story of resilience, adaptation and redefinition. As the Berlin days grow shorter, I walk through the tree-lined streets towards ZMO each morning, carrying with me questions about what it means to be modern, to be (an) Omani (woman), and to be human in an increasingly digital world.

Ultimately, this fellowship is more than a scholarly milestone — it is a moment of release. As the fallen leaves dropped on rain-drenched sidewalks multiply, I hope that this season of research and reflection at ZMO will help me see more clearly how the digital traces we leave behind are not merely artefacts of technology but echoes of our humanity, constantly reshaped by the worlds — real and virtual — we inhabit.

Trying to figure out Gen Z...



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

WHAT can I do without a phone, mom? asked a little girl while waiting at the backstage. She looked so disappointed, and her mother gave in and handed her the mobile phone. A little later, the same little girl walked onto the stage professionally with a bouquet to greet one of the officials on the dais. While the world is still trying to figure out Gen Z, there are a whole lot of young children in the world who are growing up not even noticing the world around them because they are so engrossed in their mobile phone games. What they see is when they look up from the screens. Thankfully, they cannot take mobile phones to schools. The concern is that most of the communication skills are developed early from interaction and observation. Main Quest psychotherapy says, “As technology continues to advance, video games have become more immersive, engaging, and accessible than ever before. However, with this increased accessibility comes a greater risk of developing an addiction to gaming.” Whether they are children or adults, the impact is a lack of movement, isolation and even a lack of nutrition. The teenagers and professional gamers might end up spending more time with virtual friends than with their family and friends.

Now, obviously, a ground for conflict is being developed, and parents might even hesitate to bring up the topic. But professionals point out it is important to have an open dialogue and, if need be, even get counselling. On the other hand, experts also say gaming can teach quite a few skills. Gaming enthusiasts are always on the lookout for the time to play. And parents and family members are wondering how to get their time. In another part of the world, the situation is different. Children are involved in collecting food. A statement by Unicef Middle East and North Africa Regional Director Edouard Beigbeder said, “Children have endured unimaginable suffering; more than 64,000 children have reportedly been killed or injured, and more than 58,000 have lost a parent during the conflict. Entire cities have been flattened and critical systems destroyed.” One million children have endured the daily horrors of surviving in the world’s most dangerous place to be a child, leaving them with wounds of fear, loss, and grief. “The importance of restoring education in this early recovery work cannot be overstated. After two lost years, families know that a return to proper education will provide a foundation for learning, healing, hope and long-term social cohesion in their

Whether they are children or adults, the impact is a lack of movement, isolation and even a lack of nutrition. The teenagers and professional gamers might end up spending more time with virtual friends than with their family and friends

communities,” the statement added. “Unicef succeeded in bringing more than 100,000 children back to face-to-face learning during the war and now aims, together with education partners, to return all 650,000 school-age children to school. In most parts of the world, children take it all for granted - safety, playgrounds, running water, classrooms, books, teachers, and schools. It is through interactions and observations that we develop empathy. When someone hurts us, we realise the hurt that can be caused by words. Do we mimic the behaviour, or do we prefer to stay true to our values? But how do we know what our values are when we have no time away from our virtual reality? I was at a nursery school event, and children enacted their respective roles in the drama that was based on good habits and principles. They sang and danced, and on some occasions we could hear one or two crying out, “Mama.” And then the principal spoke, “Parents, don’t worry if you hear your child cry. What is important is that the children be on stage and face the audience.” It is true, is it not? The drama of life continues - from play school to classrooms to boardrooms. And it is all about whether we react or respond; being at the right place at the right time.

TRUMP DISMISSES 2028 VP RUN AS ‘TOO CUTE’

TREVOR HUNNICUTT

US President Donald Trump on Monday ruled out running for vice-president in the 2028 election but declined to definitively say he would not seek a third term, keeping alive speculation about how he might seek to extend his time in office. Trump has repeatedly flirted with the idea of serving beyond the constitutionally mandated two terms, joking about it at rallies and teasing supporters with “Trump 2028” hats. Some allies have taken those signals seriously, suggesting that they are exploring legal or political pathways to make it happen — a possibility dismissed by most constitutional scholars. The 22nd Amendment of the US Constitution bars anyone from being elected to the US presidency a third time. Some supporters have suggested that one way around the prohibition would be for Trump to run as vice-president, while another candidate stood for election as president and resigned, letting Trump again assume the presidency. “I’d be allowed to do that,” Trump said on Monday, in an exchange with reporters aboard Air Force One as he flew from Malaysia to Tokyo. But he added: “I wouldn’t do that. I think it’s too cute. Yeah, I would rule that out because it’s too cute. I think the people wouldn’t like that. It’s too cute. It’s not — it wouldn’t be right.” Scholars say Trump is barred from running for vice-president because he is not eligible to be president. The 12th Amendment to the US Constitution reads, “No person constitutionally ineligible to the office of President shall be eligible to that of Vice-President of the United States.” Referring to the possibility of a third term, Trump said: “I would love to do it. I have my best numbers ever.” When pressed by a reporter whether he was not ruling out a third term, he said, “Am I not ruling it out? I mean you’ll have to tell me.” Asked about whether he would be willing to fight in court over the legality of another presidential bid, Trump responded, “I haven’t really thought about it.” Trump also said Vice-President J D Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio were “great people” who could seek the presidency in 2028. “I think if they ever formed a group, it’d be unstoppable,” he said. “I really do. I believe that.” Rubio, standing behind Trump in the plane cabin, chuckled and bowed his head sheepishly as Trump predicted a bright political future for him and nodded when Trump brought up Vance. Trump’s statements about a third term have muddled the Republican Party’s future, with jockeying already under way among potential Republican successors even as some Trump allies back the idea of him remaining in office. In an interview last week, Steve Bannon said there was a plan to circumvent the 22nd Amendment. — Reuters

The right way to finance Ukraine’s defence

RARELY do Western political leaders impress us with decisive resolve in the face of geopolitical problems. More often, their response is to express deep concern without mustering the courage to intervene and minimise their costs. But there have been exceptions. On a few occasions in modern history, Western leaders truly proved equal to the moment. One example was in March 2022, when Western governments intervened decisively to immobilise most Russian Sovereign Assets (RSAs) held outside Russia. An estimated \$300 billion (€260 billion) was frozen, with the bulk of it in the European Union, primarily in Belgium (Euroclear). Those funds have remained frozen in all affected countries, and thanks to bipartisan congressional leadership in the United States, the president is authorised to seize, confiscate, and transfer all Russian sovereign assets within US jurisdiction to aid Ukraine. Western leaders impressed us again at the G7 Leaders’ Summit in June 2024, when they agreed to provide a \$50 billion Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) loan, backed by the revenue generated by the frozen Russian assets. This breakthrough involved a series of national commitments and guarantees, not least from the US, which helped spearhead the effort. Today, most of the ERA funds have been disbursed to Ukraine, which has used them to support an economy devastated by the exogenous shock of Russian war. As of early October 2025, they constituted the country’s third-largest source of external financing, behind only the EU and the US. But despite these efforts, the war rages on, and Ukraine urgently needs tens of billions of dollars more to defend against Russian attacks, and to underwrite its economic survival. Back in 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky suggested that the war carried echoes of the



An estimated \$300 billion was frozen, with the bulk of it in the European Union, primarily in Belgium.



GREG WILSON

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The writer is an alternate executive director at the International Monetary Fund

Manichean struggle depicted in Star Wars. Ultimately, he declared, “the light will win over darkness.” Fast forward to September 2025, and US President Donald Trump seemed to agree that with the support of Europe, the Ukrainians can indeed “fight and win all of Ukraine back in its original form.” Yet Ukraine cannot achieve this victory without immediate, large-scale financial assistance from its Western allies. As Chrystia Freeland, Canada’s former deputy prime minister and current representative for Ukrainian reconstruction, recently argued, the West “need(s) to work with Ukraine today, to support it and its war economy, and to lay the foundations for its future prosperity.” So, Western leaders again have an opportunity to act decisively. The frozen Russian assets can support Ukraine’s military and economic needs, even without full legal confiscation. In fact, the first steps in this direction have already been taken. In her State of Europe address last month, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called for the immobilised cash sitting in Euroclear – approximately €170 billion – to be made

immediately available to Ukraine through a reparations loan, in conjunction with the country’s next International Monetary Fund programme. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz also recently voiced support for a similar approach, proposing “an interest-free loan” secured by the frozen Russian assets, to “be repaid only once Russia has compensated Ukraine for the damage it has caused during this war.” These newly mobilised funds, he stressed, would be sufficient to “secure Ukraine’s defence capabilities for several years.” Moreover, European Council President António Costa, High Representative Kaja Kallas, and Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo have all endorsed this idea in the name of defending international law and norms. And during their recent virtual meeting in Ottawa, the G7 ministers of finance declared that they are ready to develop “a wide range of options to address Ukraine’s financing needs and to ensure that Russia cannot wait it out. Amongst others, these measures include using, in a coordinated way, the full value of the RSAs immobilised in our jurisdictions.” ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

GOODSTART



Seeb defeated Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh 3-2 in Group B.

SEEB, AL SHABAB EYE SECOND STRAIGHT WIN IN AFC CHALLENGE LEAGUE

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 27

Oman’s representatives Al Shabab Club and Seeb Club will eye their second straight win in the 2025-26 AFC Challenge League (ACGL) as they will look to build on their opening-day victories and edge closer to qualification for the next stage of the Asian tournament.

Al Shabab will meet FC Abdysh-Ata from Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday at Changlimithang Stadium in Bhutan. The match will kick off at 1 pm (Oman time). On the other hand, Seeb will take on hosts Kuwait club on Tuesday at Jaber Al Mubarak Al Sabah Stadium. The match will start at 8 pm (Oman time). Both teams began their continental campaigns on a high note and will aim to collect their second successive wins to move to six points.

After defeating hosts Paro FC of Bhutan 1-0 in their Group A opener, Al Shabab will face FC Abdysh-Ata (Kyrgyzstan) on Tuesday at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu. The Al Shabab Club under the guidance of head coach Hassan Rustam, have trained intensively over the past two days and are in top form ahead of the crucial fixture. The coach is expected to maintain the same line-up and tactical structure that secured victory in their debut appearance.

Abdysh-Ata suffered a 1-0 loss to Altyn Asyr FC of Turkmenistan in their opening game and will be desperate to revive their campaign. A second defeat would all but end their hopes of progressing, while Al Shabab will aim to capitalise on their confidence and attacking rhythm to secure back-to-back wins. The battle in Group A remains finely poised as both Al Shabab and Altyn Asyr FC targeting six points before meeting each other in what is expected to be a decisive match on Friday.

SEEB IN TOUGH ASSIGNMENT

In Group B, Seeb Club will take on hosts Kuwait SC in one of the most tight clashes of the group stage. The match will kick off at 8 pm (Oman time) on Tuesday at the Jaber Al Mubarak Al Sabah Stadium in Kuwait City. Both teams began their campaigns with thrilling 3-2 victories as Seeb defeated Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh while Kuwait SC overcame Lebanon’s Al Ansar FC by the same scoreline.

With both sides level on points, Tuesday’s encounter could determine the group leader and potentially decide qualification to the knockout stage. Kuwait will have the advantage of playing at home with strong fan support, but Seeb will rely on their international experience and composure under pressure.

Head coach Nicola is expected to depend on his key players including Abdulaziz al Maqbali, Zahir al Aghbari, Salah al Yahyaie and Ali al Busaidy to deliver another strong performance. Seeb, crowned AFC Cup champions in 2022, will aim to rekindle those golden memories as they continue their mission to reclaim continental glory.

According to the ACGL format, the three group winners and the best second-placed team from the West Zone will advance to the quarterfinals, while the top two teams from the East Zone groups will progress as well.

Optimist sailing opens in Musannah, 180 in fray

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSANNAH, OCT 27

THE 2025 Optimist Asian & Oceanian Championship officially opened on Monday at Barcelo Musannah Resort with more than 180 young sailors from 25 countries across Asia and Oceania. Racing will take place daily at the Oman Sail Sailing School in Al Musannah until October 31 when the closing and prize-giving ceremony will take place.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Khamis bin Salim al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, and attended by Ajay Narang, Vice-President of the International Optimist Dinghy Association (Ioda) for Africa, Asia and Oceania, along with sports officials, partners and national delegations.

The ceremony featured the raising of the championship flag. The sailors oath was delivered by Omani sailor Layan al Ruzaiqi and the Judges oath was presented by South Korean referee Sukkong Kim, reflecting unity, sportsmanship and the spirit of fair play among young competitors.

In his speech, Ajay Narang, Vice-President of IODA for Asia, Africa and Oceania, expressed his delight at returning to Oman and praised the exceptional organisation and hospitality, saying: “It is a great honour to welcome young sailors from across Asia and Oceania and the rest of the world to Musannah Sailing School. Seeing this gathering of talented young sailors fills us with pride and optimism for the future of our sport. Each of you carries your nation’s colours and embodies the courage, friendship, and adventure that define the Optimist class – the starting point of every great sailor’s journey.”

“On behalf of IODA, I extend our sincere appreciation to Oman Sail, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), and all partners for their professionalism and dedication.”

Narang praised Oman Sail for its exceptional organisation and world class facilities, emphasising that Oman



Ajay Narang, Vice-President of IODA for Africa, Asia and Oceania, centre along with other dignitaries.



Japan players pose at Barcelo Musannah Resort.

has become a regional leader in hosting international sailing events and nurturing young sailing talent. Sultan al Zadjali, Optimist Coach and Assistant Head Coach at Oman Sail, said: “We are competing this year with a promising group of sailors who have undergone intensive preparation. Our goal is to deliver strong performances

that reflect the progress of sailing in Oman while building confidence and experience by racing against some of the best sailors in the region.”

Representing Oman at the 2025 Optimist Asian & Oceanian Championship are 10 sailors from Oman Sail’s national sailing schools: Mohammed al Balushi, Habib al Hassani, 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.

Mohammed al Otaibi, Head of the Saudi Arabian delegation, expressed appreciation for Oman’s excellent hosting, saying: “We are delighted to participate in this prestigious continental event hosted by our brothers in Oman, this is the second time the championship has been held in Al Musannah, and we can see remarkable progress in organisation and facilities, the weather and wind conditions are perfect, creating an ideal environment for the competition. Beyond results, this event strengthens regional ties and gives our young sailors invaluable international experience.”

Al Falahi first Omani to join World Coaches Conference

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 27

Mohammed al Falahi, assistant coach of the Oman national tennis teams, is participating in the World Tennis Coaches Conference, hosted in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, from October 28 to November 2. The event brings together an elite group of leading coaches, experts and international federations from around the world.

The conference is considered one of the most significant global training events in the sport of tennis, covering the latest scientific approaches in physical and mental training, and the development of players’ skills across all age groups and professional levels.

Al Falahi is the first Omani coach to take part in such a prestigious international programme, a milestone that adds to his professional record and reflects the Oman Tennis Association’s (OTA) commitment to developing national talent and providing opportunities to engage with international expertise and best practices. Through this participation, the association aims to transfer global knowledge and experience into Oman’s local coaching ecosystem, enhancing the preparation and performance levels of national players and teams in the future.

This nomination is part of the OTA strategic plan to develop national technical staff by encouraging



Mohammed al Falahi is regarded as one of Oman’s promising young tennis coaching talents.

participation in international conferences and courses that raise coaching competencies and introduce the latest global advancements in physical, technical, and psychological preparation methods, keeping pace with the sport’s global evolution. Al Falahi is regarded as one of Oman’s promising young coaching talents, having served as an assistant to several foreign coaches within the national teams and overseen the training of numerous players across different age groups. His contributions have directly improved the performance of players who

went on to compete in regional and Gulf tournaments, establishing his reputation as one of the rising names in Omani tennis coaching.

In a special statement, Mohammed al Falahi said: “My participation in the World Tennis Coaches Conference is a unique and valuable opportunity to learn about the latest internationally recognised training methodologies and to exchange experiences with top coaches from different continents. I am truly proud to be the first Omani coach to represent my country in this global event, and I feel a great responsibility to transfer the knowledge and insights I gain to my colleagues in the national teams and local clubs. I sincerely thank the Oman Tennis Association for its trust and continuous support for national coaches, and for its commitment to investing in local talent to elevate the level of tennis in the Sultanate of Oman.”

Al Falahi added that the conference will cover a wide range of topics, including strategic training planning, talent management, modern performance technologies, nutrition and players’ mental preparation. He emphasised that these areas are essential for the future development of Oman’s tennis ecosystem and expressed his determination to benefit fully from all sessions, lectures and workshops presented by experts from the International Tennis Federation throughout the conference.

SHORTTAKE



The meeting was attended by representatives of all Gulf tennis federations.

GULF TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS CALENDAR FINALISED

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 27

The Oman Tennis Association took part in the meeting of the Gulf Tennis Organising Committee held in Bahrain, represented by Osman al Raisi. The meeting was attended by representatives of all Gulf tennis federations and chaired by Shaikh Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al Khalifa, President of Bahrain Tennis Federation.

During the meeting, several key topics were discussed, most notably the calendar of age-category competitions among the national teams of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The committee approved a number of tournaments, including the Gulf Teams Championship for the U12, U16 and Open categories, to be hosted in Saudi Arabia, with the proposed timing set immediately after the Eid Al Fitr holiday.

Additionally, it was agreed to hold the Gulf Women's Championship during the same period and in the same country, for both U16 and women's categories. The Gulf Singles and Doubles Championship 2026 was also approved, with the hosting country and date to be determined later, as well as the Gulf U10 Championship 2026, whose venue and date will likewise be confirmed in due course.

The meeting also discussed various aspects related to hosting and facilitating the participation of all Gulf teams to ensure the success of their involvement. Members of the organising committee placed particular emphasis on the importance of developing youth and junior teams, which are seen as the foundation for building future national squads, as well as on maintaining the continuity of organising Gulf tournaments on a regular basis.

BRENNAN WINS UTAH CROWN FOR FIRST US PGA TITLE



LOS ANGELES, United States: American Michael Brennan birdied five of the first nine holes on Sunday on his way to capturing the Bank of Utah Championship for his first US PGA Tour title.

Playing on a sponsor exemption in only his third career PGA start and first as a professional, the 23-year old former college star at Wake Forest fired a closing five-under par 66 to finish 72 holes on 22-under 262 at Black Desert Resort in Ivins, Utah.

That was enough to defeat Rico Hoey of the Philippines by four strokes and take a \$1.08 million top prize from the \$6 million purse.

"It's an amazing feeling," Brennan said. "Winning golf tournaments is one of the better feelings in the world. It takes a lot to play professional golf. Mental fortitude or focus has gotten a lot better. Definitely have been a lot of technical things that have improved, around the green and on the green, and I think that showed this week."

A third-place pack on 268 included Dane Thorbjorn Olesen, Canada's Ben Silverman and Americans David Ford, Pierceson Coody, Justin Lower and 2024 Utah winner Matt McCarty. Brennan became the second PGA Tour winner in as many seasons on a sponsor exemption, the first since Nick Dunlap at last year's American Express event in the California desert. — AFP



Adel bin Khalifa al Wahaibi, head coach of the taekwondo team, expressed his relative satisfaction with the team's technical performance.

Taekwondo, equestrian teams end campaign

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 27

THE OMAN taekwondo and equestrian teams concluded their participation in the third Asian Youth Games in Bahrain without securing any medals, despite the strong performances displayed by the players against top Asian teams. Oman continue to compete in swimming and esports events.

The Games feature more than 5,000 athletes representing 45 Asian National Olympic Committees, competing across 24 sports and 253 events held in major venues such as Isa Sports City, Khalifa Sports City and the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre.

Oman's athletics team achieved the delegation's standout result through runner Al Yazan al Shamsi, who won a bronze medal in the 800 metres race.

The taekwondo and equestrian teams were unable to reach the podium despite the great efforts of their athletes and technical staff. The teams noted that limited experience, short preparation periods and lack of sufficient training camps created a noticeable performance gap compared to other Asian nations. Several coaches and committee heads emphasised the need for a comprehensive evaluation of

the participation and the establishment of future development plans focusing on early preparation and greater support from both public and private sectors.

Talal bin Mohammed al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Taekwondo Committee, described the Games as a valuable opportunity for exposure and experience, stressing the importance of holding regular domestic and international training camps, diversifying training environments and increasing opportunities to engage with various technical schools to enhance both the technical and mental capabilities of athletes.

AL FARSI MISSES FINALS

Swimmer Mohammed al Farsi failed to qualify for the finals of the 50 metres freestyle event, despite finishing second in his heat with a time of 24.83 seconds, as advancement depended on the top eight times across all seven heats. Al Farsi will continue his participation in the 100m freestyle, as well as the 50m and 100m backstroke events in the coming days, hoping to achieve positive results.

The national esports team arrived in Manama to compete in the Rocket League tournament, scheduled from October 29 to 30. The team includes players Sultan bin Kamran al Balushi, Mishari bin Ammar al

Ajmi and Abdullah bin Badr al Amri, under the supervision of team manager Hamad bin Yaqub al Jahwari and coach Abdullah bin Nasser al Atiqi.

Adel bin Khalifa al Wahaibi, head coach of the taekwondo team, expressed his relative satisfaction with the team's technical performance despite not achieving the desired results, noting that the upcoming period will include a comprehensive technical evaluation and the development of advanced preparation plans for future competitions.

For his part, Ziyad bin Ayoob al Balushi, coach of the equestrian team, explained that the lack of long-term international training camps and intensive preparation programmes affected the riders' performances, despite their talent and ambition. Rider Taha al Balushi added that while the team aimed for stronger results, several factors, such as limited technical support and few training opportunities, affected their readiness. He emphasised that the team needs a long-term training plan and greater support to keep pace with the rapid development of equestrian sports in the region. At the conclusion of Oman's participation, the technical staff of all teams agreed that the next phase requires a clear strategic vision based on continuous analysis and post-competition evaluations.

Young riders in focus at Al Majd Show Jumping League

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
BARKA, OCT 27

The Al Majd Show Jumping League 2025-26 kicked off under the supervision of the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation, jointly organised by Al Said Stables, the Olympic Equestrian Training Centre, Al Rayan Stables and Horseira Equestrian Club.

The opening round took place at the Olympic Equestrian Training Center arena, featuring a large number of riders from various government cavalry units and private stables.

The event included four categories: 50 cm, 70 cm, 90 cm (ages 10–16), and 90 cm Open, attracting families, friends and horse lovers who added great enthusiasm and support to the young competitors. Several local youth projects also participated

with food and beverage stalls, creating a lively and social atmosphere.

In the 50 cm category, Abdulrahman al Wahibi from Al Asayel Stables claimed first place, followed by Adil al Jahdhami in second, Clements Victoria in third, Layan al Waeli in fourth, and Sarah Marisha in fifth. The 70 cm category, which featured 46 riders, was won by Ayman al Harrasi from Horseira Club, with Mohammed Zakariya and Abdullah Hamed taking second and third.

Anas al Wahibi, Mutawasim Ahmed, Doha al Hashmi, Eman al Rashdi, Hamza Mohammed, Tania Taimur and Karma Ibrahim completed the top ten.

In the 90 cm ages 10–16 category, Emila from Said al Hashmi Stables took first place, while Nasser al Rahbi finished second. Meanwhile, in the 90 cm



In the 50 cm category, Abdulrahman al Wahibi from Al Asayel Stables claimed first place.

Open category, Wafaa Rashid from the Royal Oman Police topped the standings, followed by Al Qasim al Mandhari, Mohammed al Touqi, Hamad al Manji, Mohammed Zakariya, Jamal al Raisi and Nasser al Harasi.

At the end of each category, riders were awarded trophies and medals. Colonel Retd Farooq al Adawi emphasised that such competitions lay the foundation for building a strong base of show jumping riders who can compete at higher levels in the future.

Hammoud al Touqi, owner of the Olympic Equestrian Training Centre, noted that the league was inspired by a shared vision among the four stables to empower young riders and prepare them for official competitions.

Abeer Riyadh Sultan, owner of Horseira Equestrian Club, highlighted that the partnership aims to develop the sport by focusing on beginners and juniors, fostering competitive spirit and attracting more talented riders and quality horses to the sport's future.

SPORTS

SWISSINDOORS



Brazil’s Joao Fonseca celebrates with the trophy after winning his final against Spain’s Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. — Reuters

FONSECA BEATS FOKINA TO WIN BIGGEST CAREER TITLE IN BASEL

BASEL, Switzerland: Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca clinched the biggest title of his career on Sunday, storming past Spanish eighth seed Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-3 6-4 to win the Swiss Indoors Championships in Basel. The victory marks the 19-year-old’s second tour-level title, his maiden triumph coming in Buenos Aires in February, and his first at the ATP 500 level.

Fonseca also became the first Brazilian to claim a title above the ATP 250 level since former world number one Gustavo Kuerten won the ATP Masters 1000 in Cincinnati back in 2001. “It is crazy,” Fonseca said. “I want to thank my family and my coaches who helped me achieve this amazing effort.”

“My parents just came from Brazil. They were coming to Paris and changed their flights and came here one hour before the match with my uncles. It is just amazing to have them here for the biggest title of my career.

“It is a pleasure playing this sport and this tournament and I am very happy.” Fonseca’s triumph will propel him into the top 30 of the ATP world rankings for the first time when the updated standings are released on Monday. He is currently ranked 46th.

Fonseca set the tone early in the contest, breaking Davidovich Fokina to race into a 3-0 lead in the opening set. Although Davidovich Fokina managed to break back, Fonseca’s power proved too much for the 26-year old.

Fonseca fired 15 winners in the first set, closing it out with relative ease. He started the second set in similar fashion, breaking early to take a 2-0 lead. He remained composed after failing to convert a championship point on return at 5-3, sealing the win in one hour and 25 minutes. “We keep going. It’s the first ATP 500, but not going to be the last hopefully,” Fonseca said.

He also reflected on his childhood inspiration, Swiss maestro and record 10-times Basel champion Roger Federer. “I watched on TV Roger playing this tournament since I was young and winning like 10 times if I’m not mistaken. It’s a pleasure playing on this court and playing here for the first time. For sure it won’t be the last time,” Fonseca said.

“It’s crazy how everywhere I go, there are some Brazilians cheering and calling my name. It’s a pleasure representing this amazing country. Thanks so much to everyone who came and cheered for me today.”

For Davidovich Fokina, the loss marked his fourth final loss this year and fifth overall.

— Reuters



McLaren’s Lando Norris celebrates with a trophy on the podium after winning the Mexico City Grand Prix. — Reuters

Norris wins in Mexico to take F1 lead from Piastri

LANDO NORRIS shrugged off boos from the Mexican crowd on Sunday after the Briton seized back the Formula One championship lead from teammate Oscar Piastri with a dominant win from pole position.

The boos, the reason for which was unclear, could be heard as Norris spoke after the race and as he took the top step of the podium at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez.

“People can do what they want, honestly. They have the right to do it if they want to do it. So I think that’s sport sometimes,” he told reporters.

“I don’t know why I can’t stop laughing when I get booed. I think it makes it more entertaining for me. So, yeah, they can keep doing it if they want.

“Of course, you don’t want it. I prefer if people cheer for me. But I don’t know. I just concentrate on doing my things. It was the same in Monza and a few other places.”

A Mexican reporter suggested to Norris in a later press conference that some fans felt he was being gifted the championship at the expense of his Australian teammate.

He said a recent poll for his publication posed the question, “What should Lando do?”, with the most popular answer being “return the three points”.

The reference was to this year’s Italian Grand Prix where Norris was leading the race but lost out to Piastri on a slow second pit stop, with the team then ordering the



McLaren’s Lando Norris after winning the Mexico City Grand Prix. — Reuters

drivers to reverse positions to finish second and third.

The situation had been the opposite in Hungary last year, where Norris let Piastri past to win on team orders. Other reports indicated local fans were still upset by comments Norris made about home hero Sergio Perez last year when the Mexican was being trounced by teammate Max Verstappen, third on Sunday, at Red Bull.

Whatever the reason, Norris said they had a right to think what they wanted.

“As a team, of course, we try and do things fairly,” he said.

“But, yeah. Like Oscar deserved the win last year in Budapest, I deserved to be ahead at Monza. Simple as that.” — Reuters



McLaren’s Lando Norris celebrates on the podium after winning the Mexico City Grand Prix.

Sinner beat Zverev to claim second Vienna Open title

VIENNA: Italian top seed Jannik Sinner produced a spirited comeback to defeat Germany’s Alexander Zverev 3-6 6-3 7-5 in the Vienna Open final on Sunday, securing his fourth ATP Tour title of the season and his second triumph in Austria’s capital.

Sinner, who beat Zverev in straight sets at this year’s Australian Open, has now won 21 consecutive matches on indoor hardcourts. The 24-year-old has now also notched 22 tour-level titles and 51 career wins against fellow top-10 players.

The world number two banged down 11 aces and unleashed 44 winners in a thrilling contest that lasted two hours and 28 minutes. “It feels amazing,” Sinner said. “It was such a difficult start in the final

for me. Down a break ... I had some chances in the first set, couldn’t use them. He was serving very well.”

“I tried to stick there mentally. Trying to play my best tennis when it counts. Third set was a bit of a roller-coaster. I was feeling very well the ball at times. I tried to push.”

“Very happy to win another title. It’s very special.”

The win also allowed the four-times Grand Slam champion to level his head-to-head record against Zverev at four wins apiece.

“I’d like to congratulate Jannik, whose level has been off the charts these last two years,” Zverev said. “Currently for me you’re the best player in the world.

“What an amazing year. Four Grand Slam finals and two Grand



Italy’s Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy in Vienna. — Reuters

Slam titles. This week of course, simply the best player here in Vienna...”

World No 3 Zverev saved a break point to hold the opening game before getting a break over Sinner to go 3-1 up in the first set. Zverev won the set 6-3, landing four aces while Sinner had two, with the 28-year-old German dominating the rallies.

Sinner fought back in the second set, outwitting Zverev with a crosscourt dropshot to get his first break, going 2-0 up.

The Italian was more in control of the rallies, making his opponent chase forehands near the sidelines as Zverev won only two points in the last two games the Italian served on his way to securing the set 6-3.

The deciding set was a gripping

battle as both players exchanged blows, with the score locked at 4-4. Sinner appeared to be struggling with cramp in his left hamstring during the seventh game of the set, but he refused to back down.

Zverev briefly looked set to seize victory after edging ahead 5-4, but Sinner dug deep to level the match before producing a crucial break for 6-5. Sinner then held his nerve to serve out the match and secure his second title in Vienna.

“Yeah it was very difficult, of course,” Sinner said.

“Most important is trying to not give up. Trying to stay there. Trying to see what the situation is. I just tried to make the right choices at the right time. I think that was the key today.” — Reuters

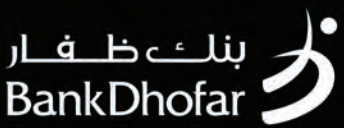


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The forum showcases Oman’s leadership in economic development and strategic competitiveness.

DUQM FORUM 2025 LAUNCHES NEW ERA OF GROWTH

SAEED AL MASHARFI
AL DUQM, OCT 27

“Duqm Leads Change” — the Duqm Economic Forum 2025 brought together over 400 participants and more than 50 speakers from around the world, showcasing Oman’s leadership in economic development and strategic competitiveness.

Held under the auspices of Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, on October 27 -28, the forum explored key themes including green industries, finance, artificial intelligence, tourism and smart cities, highlighting investment and innovation opportunities in one of the Middle East’s largest economic zones.

In his speech, Eng Ahmed Akaak, CEO of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), highlighted the significant progress achieved since the first forum, noting that many ambitions, particularly in green industries and renewable energy, have become tangible realities.

He described Al Duqm as “a promising gateway to the future, where investment opportunities meet a bold national vision, transforming it into an industrial and investment hub that fosters innovation and sustainable development”.

Committed investments in the zone surpassed RO 6.3 billion by mid-2025, reflecting confidence in Oman’s investment environment and Al Duqm’s role as a promising economic and tourism hub.

Major deals in energy, logistics and tourism

SAEED AL MASHARFI
AL DUQM, OCT 27

THE Duqm Economic Forum 2025 opened with a series of landmark agreements that underscored the Sultanate of Oman’s growing influence as a regional hub for sustainable industries, logistics and tourism.

Bringing together international investors, experts and officials, the two-day event focused on advancing Duqm’s role as a model for economic diversification and green growth.

A key highlight of the forum was the signing of a strategic partnership between Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO) and Dutch multinational Royal Vopak.

The agreement involves establishing and operating state-of-the-art petroleum and chemical storage facilities within the Duqm Special Economic Zone, with future expansion plans into green ammonia and hydrogen projects.

The collaboration aims to enhance Oman’s standing as an international logistics hub and accelerate its transition towards clean energy solutions.

Eng Salem bin Marhoon al Hashmi, CEO of OTTCO, said the partnership marks a pivotal moment in Duqm’s development.

“This strategic step reinforces Duqm’s position as a competitive global economic zone and contributes to building an integrated energy ecosystem that supports the global shift towards sustainable systems”, he said.



The two-day event focused on advancing Duqm’s role as a model for economic diversification and green growth.

The agreement involves establishing and operating state-of-the-art petroleum and chemical storage facilities within the Duqm Special Economic Zone, with future expansion plans into green ammonia and hydrogen projects.

The new joint venture, with OTTCO holding a 51 per cent stake and Vopak 49 per cent, will develop advanced storage and export facilities tailored to meet global energy flow requirements.

Another key agreement saw Tanmia Energy Oman and Japan’s Sumitomo Corporation form a partnership to establish a company dedicated to energy supply chain management in Oman.

This initiative aims to enhance efficiency and sustainability in the country’s growing energy sector.

In the tourism and real estate sector, the Duqm Special Economic Zone Authority signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Tatweer and Al Abrar Real Estate, part of the Al Siyabi Group, to develop an integrated tourism, residential and commercial complex.

The project is expected to contribute to Duqm’s urban development and attract more investors and visitors to the

region. Further reinforcing its commitment to innovation, Marafiq Duqm signed a strategic agreement with the German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech).

Under the deal, Marafiq will finance the construction of a social complex, while GUtech will employ advanced 3D printing technology for construction and manage the facility’s operations long-term.

Rounding off the forum’s first day, Port of Duqm inked an MoU with Japanese shipping giant Nippon Yusen Line (NYK) to bolster cooperation in maritime transport and port infrastructure.

The agreement aims to strengthen Port of Duqm’s role as a strategic maritime and logistics gateway connecting regional and global trade routes.

Together, these partnerships mark a significant leap in Duqm’s journey to becoming a diversified, innovation-driven, and globally connected economic powerhouse.

Oman and Lebanon strengthen economic partnership

MUSCAT: The Omani-Lebanese Economic Forum and its accompanying exhibition opened on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, highlighting the shared goal of deepening trade, investment and industrial ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the Lebanese Republic.

Organised jointly by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) and Lebanon’s Ministry of Economy and Trade, in cooperation with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Lebanon, the forum brought together a wide range of government officials, investors and business leaders from both nations.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said that Oman and Lebanon have long enjoyed historic trade relations that have fostered cultural and knowledge exchange. “We look forward to translating these strong ties into deeper cooperation and integration between our economies”, he said.

“Both governments continue to provide the necessary incentives and facilities that empower the private sector to drive



The forum together a wide range of government officials, investors and business leaders from both nations.

prosperity and sustainable growth”.

Dr Amer al Bassat, Lebanon’s Minister of Economy and Trade, described the relationship between the two countries as one grounded in mutual respect and shared aspirations for stability and development.

He called for practical steps to strengthen collaboration, including the formation of a permanent joint economic committee to follow up on forum outcomes and the creation of platforms linking the private sectors of both countries to facilitate partnerships and knowledge transfer.

“The forum provides an opportunity to establish genuine, productive and

sustainable partnerships that contribute to our countries’ economic resilience”, he said.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), noted that the forum embodies a shared vision to enhance economic cooperation and expand trade horizons.

“This event offers a valuable platform for exchanging expertise and exploring investment opportunities”, he said, adding that such initiatives go beyond product showcases to build relationships that can lead to new joint ventures and sustainable development.

Dr Ali Hassan Mahdi, CEO of Al Haqaiq

Exhibitions and Conferences, said the forum aims to lay the groundwork for joint industrial and commercial projects and pave the way for new investment agreements.

Lebanese businessman Nehme Agram, Chairman and CEO of INDEVCO Industrial Group, proposed the creation of a Lebanese-Omani Industrial, Commercial, Tourism and Investment Partnership Council to serve as a permanent platform for exchange between public and private sectors.

The first day of the event featured a special session titled “Prospects for Economic Integration between the Sultanate of Oman and Lebanon: Towards a Sustainable Industrial, Commercial and Investment Partnership”, which brought together experts from both countries to explore collaboration opportunities across sectors such as industry, tourism, agriculture, services and technology.

On the sidelines of the forum, the Lebanese-Omani Economic, Commercial and Industrial Exhibition was inaugurated, showcasing products and services from over 100 companies representing diverse sectors, including manufacturing, food, tourism and logistics. The exhibition provided participants with opportunities to form partnerships and explore potential ventures.

ADVERTORIALS

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The exhibition was inaugurated under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, in the presence of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Sohar International sponsors International Dates and Honey Exhibition 2025

MUSCAT: In line with its national commitment and continued support for economic diversification and sustainable development, Sohar International announced its main sponsorship of the 3rd International Dates and Honey Exhibition, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from October 23-29, 2025.

The exhibition was inaugurated under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, in the presence of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; and witnessed the participation of over 250 local and international exhibitors representing 20 countries worldwide.

Sohar International’s sponsorship underscores its contribution towards achieving Oman’s national goal of positioning the Sultanate of Oman as a global hub for dates by 2026, while promoting traditional food industries, empowering local innovators and farmers; and enriching the national economy with sustainable growth that endures across generations.

Abdul Qadir al Sumali, Chief Retail & Premier Banking Officer, stated: “Championing sectors that advance Oman’s self-sufficiency and economic resilience is not merely an act of sponsorship — it is an investment in the nation’s sustainable future.

The Dates and Honey Festival showcases the strength and potential of Oman’s agrifood industries, highlighting the excellence of local produce while creating meaningful opportunities for farmers, producers and small enterprises to expand their reach and impact.

At Sohar International, we view it as our responsibility to facilitate the growth of such strategic sectors that align with Oman Vision 2040, fostering innovation, stimulating local enterprise and strengthening non-oil industries”.

The exhibition is a platform that harmoniously blends heritage with innovation and engages all segments of society.

Visitors explored a wide array of pavilions showcasing honey, dates and their derivatives, alongside modern production technologies, handicrafts, Omani sweets and creative culinary experiences. The event also featured panel discussions, cultural performances, educational seminars and interactive activities for children.

The exhibition witnessed the signing of several local and international cooperation agreements, further strengthening Oman’s agricultural and food industries; and inspiring present and future generations to preserve the nation’s agricultural heritage and enhance its contribution to income diversification.

BANKDHOFAR WINS AT MIDDLE EAST TECHNOLOGY EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2025

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second-largest bank in Oman by branch network size, has been named the winner of the Middle East Technology Excellence Awards 2025 in the category of Banking Technology — Financial Technology (Fintech).

Organised by MiddleEastBusiness.com, the Middle East Technology Excellence Awards celebrate organisations across the region that have demonstrated leadership in digital



transformation, innovation and the deployment of advanced technology solutions. This year’s programme introduced a country-level spotlight across categories such as Fintech, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud and Cybersecurity — ensuring national champions of innovation are duly recognised.

Winning in the Fintech category carries particular weight, given the sector’s rapid growth and pivotal role in shaping the region’s digital economy.

BYD Oman unveils Shark 6 DMO hybrid pick-up

IN an extraordinary evening celebrating innovation, sustainability and technological excellence, World Auto Business, the distributor of BYD vehicles in Oman, unveiled the much-anticipated BYD Shark 6, Oman’s first DMO- Plug-in hybrid pick-up at a grand event held at the Sheraton Oman Hotel, Muscat.

The gathering brought together distinguished guests, esteemed partners and automotive enthusiasts from across Oman, making it a truly remarkable occasion.

This launch was not merely the introduction of a vehicle; it marked a transformative milestone in Oman’s automotive landscape, heralding a new era of mobility defined by power, intelligence and sustainability.

The evening commenced with a welcome address from a World Auto Business spokesperson. The speech highlighted that the Shark 6 is far more than a vehicle, it is a symbol of progress, purpose and the future of mobility in Oman. It emphasised that the Shark 6 is engineered for every terrain



The BYD Shark 6 exemplifies the perfect harmony of performance, intelligence and eco-responsibility, redefining expectations of what a pickup can achieve.

and every journey, combining strength, performance and environmental consciousness. It is a vehicle for those who refuse to compromise between power and sustainability, offering a driving experience that exudes agility, confidence and dominance.

The BYD Shark 6 exemplifies the perfect harmony of performance, intelligence and eco-responsibility, redefining

expectations of what a pickup can achieve.

The BYD Oman team shared insightful presentations highlighting the technological marvels of the Shark 6. They spoke of BYD’s record-breaking U9 Xtreme supercar, which achieved a world-record top speed of 496.22 km/h earlier this year and showcased how the same spirit of engineering excellence, innovation and

sustainability has been seamlessly infused into the Shark 6.

They highlighted how BYD’s global expertise in high-performance electric vehicles, DMO- Plug-in Hybrid technology and sustainable innovations has shaped the Shark 6, ensuring that customers in Oman benefit from the very latest in advanced mobility solutions.

At the heart of the Shark 6 lies BYD’s revolutionary DMO Super Plug-in Hybrid Off-Road Platform, featuring Dual Mode DMO technology and the world-renowned Blade Battery. This state-of-the-art platform delivers instant torque, exceptional efficiency and superior control, enabling the Shark 6 to master Oman’s diverse terrains, from rugged mountains and sweeping deserts to urban streets, without compromise.

Equipped with dual-motor AWD, intelligent all-wheel drive, multiple terrain modes and a reinforced body-on-frame construction with high-strength steel, the vehicle combines rugged durability with sophisticated engineering.

ORBIT CAR RENTAL & LEASE PARTNERS WITH OMAN 3165 EXPEDITION

MUSCAT: Towell Group’s Orbit Car Rental & Lease has announced its partnership with the groundbreaking Oman 3165 Expedition, a first-of-its-kind exploratory and awareness initiative that aims to highlight the importance of ocean conservation along the Sultanate of Oman’s coastline.

As part of this collaboration, Orbit Car Rental & Lease is providing a fully equipped off-the-road SUV for the expedition crew, covering all required maintenance expense throughout the expedition period. This contribution reinforces Orbit’s commitment to supporting projects that promote environmental sustainability and national pride. “We are proud to partner with the Oman 3165 Expedition, a project that resonates deeply with our values of sustainability, innovation and community support”, said Riyadh Ali Sultan, General Manager, Towell Auto Group.

“Through this initiative, we aim to contribute to a cause that highlights Oman’s natural heritage



The initiative aims to highlight the importance of ocean conservation along Oman’s coastline.

and inspires collective action for a better planet”. The Oman 3165 Expedition embarks on an extraordinary 70-day journey from Musandam in

the north to Dhalkout in the far south, tracing the full length of Oman’s stunning coastline.

Led by renowned British explorer and MBE award recipient Mark Evans, the solo expedition will see him paddle approximately 30 kilometres per day in a 5-metre kayak inspired by traditional Inuit designs. Along the way, the expedition will transform into a floating laboratory, collecting environmental data and marine samples with underwater listening devices (hydrophones) and other scientific tools for analysis by marine experts.

Beyond scientific exploration, the initiative serves a broader purpose — to raise global awareness about the vital role of oceans and to inspire younger generations to become “planetary caretakers”.

Through podcasts, social media and satellite communications, the expedition will share real-time insights, fostering dialogue on sustainability and ocean preservation.

Bank Muscat organises workshop to combat electronic fraud

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, organised a workshop titled “Together against Electronic Fraud” at its head office in Airport Heights.

The event brought together representatives from various security, regulatory and financial institutions, in the Sultanate of Oman. This initiative comes as part of the Bank’s ongoing efforts to strengthen cybersecurity, raise community awareness about the risks of electronic fraud and enhance cooperation to combat such threats. It also aimed to foster



This initiative aims to strengthen cybersecurity, raise community awareness about the risks of electronic fraud and enhance cooperation to combat such threats.

the exchange of expertise and experiences in combating electronic fraud and to develop robust digital protection systems at both the institutional and national levels.

These efforts align with Bank Muscat’s strategy to promote a culture of secure and responsible use of modern banking technologies, emphasising the importance of collaboration among banking, regulatory and security entities.

The Bank also seeks to enhance internal protection systems within financial institutions by adopting the latest technological solutions and building human capabilities

capable of efficiently detecting and responding to potential threats.

During the event, Bank Muscat’s specialised team presented a series of interactive presentations to deepen participants’ understanding of current security challenges and to highlight the interconnections between technology, law and the digital economy.

The team covered a variety of key topics, including global trends in combating cybercrime, which reviewed the latest international practices and technologies used to counter financial fraud and enhance information security.

SHORTTAKES



The Marafiq Social Complex will serve as a vibrant hub for local engagement.

PACT SIGNED TO BUILD 3D-PRINTED SOCIAL COMPLEX IN AL DUQM

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 27

MARAFIQ and the German University of Technology in Oman (GUTech) have announced a landmark partnership to construct the Marafiq Social Complex in Al Duqm — one of the first large-scale facilities in the Sultanate of Oman to be built using advanced 3D printing technology.

Under the agreement, Marafiq will fund the project as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, while GUTech will design, 3D print and manage the complex upon completion. The project reflects a shared commitment to innovation, sustainability and community development in Al Duqm.

The Marafiq Social Complex will serve as a vibrant hub for local engagement, featuring a nursery, an autism centre, a children’s playground, a multipurpose hall and small shops supporting local SMEs. A dedicated women’s building will offer empowerment and entrepreneurship programmes, complemented by a coffee shop and library to foster learning and creativity.

Aligned with Marafiq’s environmental vision, the complex will recycle and reuse all wastewater for irrigation, promoting sustainable landscaping and greener surroundings.

GUTech’s pioneering use of 3D printing highlights a shift towards faster, more efficient and environmentally friendly construction methods — setting a new benchmark for social infrastructure in Oman. Through this collaboration, Marafiq and GUTech aim to strengthen innovation-led community development and inspire future projects that combine technology, sustainability and social impact in Al Duqm and beyond.

MSX ANNOUNCES 6TH EDITION OF MSX CHAIRMAN’S DIALOGUE

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has announced the upcoming edition of its flagship Chairman’s Dialogue, to be held on November 10, 2025, under the theme “Maximising Finance for Development”.

Hosted by Mohammed bin Mahfoodh al Ardhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of MSX, the session will feature Wendy Werner, Country Manager of the World Bank Group for the Sultanate of Oman, as the guest speaker.

The event will be conducted

in a hybrid format, welcoming distinguished guests to the physical venue and streaming it live online to broaden public engagement and access.

Wendy Werner leads the World Bank Group’s engagement across the World Bank (IBRD/IDA), IFC and MIGA. In this role, she oversees initiatives that advance sustainability, promote private-sector development and drive economic diversification in Oman.

She possesses over 20 years of experience leading development

and investment projects in emerging markets globally and has previously headed IFC’s operations across India, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

Speaking about the initiative, Mohammed Mahfoodh al Ardhi said, “The Chairman’s Dialogue is a platform for connecting global expertise with national priorities. Each session allows us to explore ideas that can shape Oman’s economic future and strengthen the role of the capital market in the nation’s sustainable development.

CEOTALK

Design is storytelling with economic impact

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, OCT 27

INTERIOR architect Eng Sumw Tabook, founder of Sumw Design Studio, believes good design is more than decoration; it is a language that shapes behaviour, productivity and place. “Design must connect culture, function and beauty”, she says. “When a space tells a clear story, people feel it — and performance follows”.

Tabook launched her Salalah-based studio in 2019 after graduating in Interior Architecture from Dhofar University. Early work across concept and execution gave her a view of both the creative and commercial realities of the industry. She saw a clear market gap for interiors that blend Omani identity with modern global aesthetics, respecting heritage while meeting contemporary use.

Starting out brought familiar hurdles: winning trust, pricing creative work fairly and managing operations without diluting the studio’s design standards. “We had to balance ambition with discipline — deliver on time, on cost and still



Design must connect culture, function and beauty. When a space tells a clear story, people feel it — and performance follows.

ENG SUMW TABOOK
Founder of Sumw Design Studio

push for meaning”, she says. That discipline, she adds, is what turns a beautiful idea into a useful, lasting space.

Tabook argues the design sector can be a direct contributor to the economy, not a luxury add-on. She calls for stronger platforms that connect designers with developers and investors, simpler procedures for creative start-ups and recognition of design as a strategic input in projects — from homes and workplaces to hospitality and public spaces. Training, funding and international exposure should sit at the core of policy support, she notes, because “a design-literate market raises the standard for everyone”.

Looking ahead, she sees design intersecting with tourism, sustainability and technology — three growth pillars for Oman. Human-centred layouts improve customer flow and staff wellbeing in hotels and retail. Sustainable materials and adaptive reuse of heritage reduce waste and deepen identity. And digital tools, from rapid visualisation to early-stage AI assistance, are changing how ideas are tested and presented.

“Technology helps you show

the story faster”, she says. “But the story still comes first”.

Leadership inside the studio is built on integrity, empathy and clarity. Tabook insists on rigorous reviews and transparent feedback while giving young designers room to experiment.

“You can be exacting and kind at the same time”, she says. The aim is a culture where innovation sits next to craft and every project is measured against function, narrative and longevity.

Her advice to new designers is blunt: define vision before style. Avoid chasing trends, be curious and consistent; and let the work speak with intention. “Trends fade. Meaning stays”, she says.

Sumw Design Studio has multiple projects in progress, each with its own brief and narrative. What excites Tabook most is the moment a concept crosses from sketch to site — when the user’s experience confirms (or challenges) the idea. Long term, she wants a portfolio recognised not just for aesthetics but for how it changes the way people experience place in Oman.

“A legacy is built project by project — useful today, relevant tomorrow”.

Omani green iron offered to revive British steel industry

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 27

MERANTI Green Steel, a Southeast Asian investor in low-carbon iron feedstock for steel mills, is offering a lifeline to Britain’s embattled steel industry by setting aside part of its output from a proposed green iron project in the Sultanate of Oman.

Britain’s steel sector is struggling with outdated plants, high energy and labour costs; and decades of underinvestment in modern technology. Compounded by competition from more efficient global producers and the costly challenge of decarbonising to meet net-zero targets, the industry now risks decline without urgent renewal and innovation.

In a recent commentary published in the British business daily City AM, Meranti Founder and CEO Sebastian Langendorf proposed a remedy that lies at the heart of Meranti’s low-carbon iron feedstock model. The concept



SEBASTIAN LANGENDORF
Founder and CEO
Meranti Green Steel

involves producing low-carbon Hot Briquetted Iron (HBI) in locations with abundant green energy — such as Oman — and then shipping this feedstock to existing steel mills in the UK.

“We will replace blast furnaces and coking coal with Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) plants and green hydrogen to produce Hot Briquetted Iron (HBI), which can be used in electric arc furnaces. By building our DRI plant in Oman, we tap into plentiful supplies of green hydrogen and natural gas to produce HBI economically with a minimal CO₂ footprint. Our HBI will provide a cost-effective alternative to conventionally reduced iron and feed green steel plants elsewhere”, Langendorf explained.

This approach, he noted, could transform steelmaking by decarbonising its most emissions-intensive stage. For Britain, the opportunity lies in importing low-carbon HBI from partners like Oman instead of refining iron domestically.

Combined with clean electric arc furnaces and domestic scrap, the UK could produce premium steels more efficiently — playing to its strengths in advanced manufacturing, innovation and high-value industries such as automotive, aerospace, energy and infrastructure.

“Under such a model, the UK would move away from outdated blast furnaces and, through partnerships, take its place at the top of a secure supply chain for clean iron, while protecting jobs and keeping industry relevant.

At the same time, it would align with global markets, where demand for low-carbon steel is rising and policies such as Europe’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism will penalise

high-emission imports”, he added. In Oman, the Singapore-headquartered Meranti plans to establish a 2.5-million-tonne-per-annum (mtpa) HBI plant in the first phase at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). The project will be powered by a calibrated mix of natural gas and green hydrogen, with the hydrogen share progressively increased to achieve lower-carbon production.

While part of the output is earmarked for Meranti’s upcoming green steel plant in Rayong, Thailand, a portion will be made available to UK steelmakers interested in low-carbon feedstock.

“At Meranti Green Steel, we will be demonstrating this model in practice.

In addition to supplying our own steel plant in Thailand with HBI from Oman, we look forward to partnering with European steelmakers. Our HBI will not only have a minimal carbon footprint, but it will also be of high quality and metallisation”, Langendorf added in a separate post.

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

China seeks stronger trade ties



China called for deeper economic cooperation and freer trade at a regional summit in Malaysia, following US President Donald Trump’s departure.

While Trump’s visit yielded several regional trade agreements and a ceasefire pact between Cambodia and Thailand, steep US tariffs on Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam remained intact. Beijing urged ASEAN nations to pursue open markets. — Reuters

MARKET REACTION

Oil slips after US-China deal framework



Oil prices dropped over 1% on Monday after the United States and China outlined a trade deal framework aimed at easing tensions.

The agreement would avert 100% US tariffs on Chinese goods and delay China’s rare-earth export curbs. Brent crude fell 75 cents to \$64.57 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate futures declined 71 cents to \$60.88 amidst renewed market uncertainty. — Reuters

MONETARY POLICY

Fed set to cut rates again



The US Federal Reserve is expected to cut short-term interest rates by a quarter point this week, marking the second reduction this year. The move aims to counter slowing labour market momentum, as rising unemployment claims signal weaker demand.

Analysts predict more rate cuts ahead, with the government shutdown delaying economic data, including unemployment, last recorded at 4.3% in August. — Reuters

OPINION

Be careful! Farmhouse scams are on the rise



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is
the founder of
Knowledge Oman

My friend Khalid's niece, a cheerful and kindhearted university student, was excited to organise a small getaway with her friends to celebrate their successful completion of their first term at one of the local universities in Oman. They wanted to book a farmhouse for the week that is peaceful, away from Muscat and surrounded by a feel of nature. They wanted to utilise the farmhouse as a university break to play games, have laughter and increase bonds among the friends. Like many other friends and families, she searched for a farmhouse using Instagram (being one of the popular social networking sites for the same) and quickly found the perfect place. The Instagram farmhouse account looked professional; it had beautiful quality photos, many followers, positive comments and even videos showcasing the facilities, area and rooms. Khalid's niece said, "This is the perfect farmhouse getaway" and went ahead to transfer RO 120 as a deposit to the polite owner of the Instagram account, only to realise it was a well-crafted and planned scam. Though she was excited, felt comfortable with the owner of the Instagram account and transferred the money requested, yet within a few minutes later, especially after the owner of the Instagram account confirmed to have received the money, she noticed something strange. First, those rapid, polite and kind responses stopped. Second, her account was blocked. Third, the mobile number she was given

was suddenly switched off. It was then that she realised that she was tricked/scammed. When Khalid explained to me the incident, I told him, She is not alone and unfortunately her story is not unique. I therefore decided to write an article about it. Popular social media and networking apps, as well as messaging platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and WhatsApp, have become integrated into our daily lives. Virtually everyone today is using these apps to communicate, do business and stay connected and/or updated with the latest news. On the other hand, hackers, mischief-makers and scammers have found creative ways to exploit people's trust and excitement. Farmhouse rental scams have become increasingly common across the region, especially during weekends, public holidays and festive seasons when families and youth are searching for leisure getaways. I can confidently tell you that Khalid's niece's incident is just a drop in the sea here in Muscat, let alone the entire region. Despite the repeated warnings from authorities on social media frauds, many people continue to encounter and be scammed. Scammers have learnt to create convincing profiles, steal photos and videos from legitimate listings and pose as owners of attractive farmhouse properties. They rely on emotional triggers, eg, excitement, urgency and trust. Once the victim (eg, Khalid's niece) is convinced, they ask for a "deposit" to secure the booking. The moment the transfer of money is successful, they stop communicating

Farmhouse rental scams have become increasingly common across the region, especially during weekends, public holidays and festive seasons when families and youth are searching for leisure getaways.

with the victim, block and delete the account and ultimately vanish. The strange part is that despite most of the victims being smart, educated and cautious (Khalid's niece being a university student as well), scammers continue to succeed. Why? Because they use psychology, not just technology. Scammers are often skilled at manipulating emotions and perceptions. They build trust quickly by using polite communication, attractive visuals and fake positive reviews that make their offers seem genuine. To pressure their victims, they create a sense of urgency, claiming that other people are asking for the same place or that only one slot is left. Many even use real businesses' logos to appear authentic. So how can one protect themselves? First, verify the identity of the owner to ensure the place is real and that the person actually has access to it. Second, check the account's history carefully for signs such as a recent creation date, limited posts, or generic comments that sound repetitive or automated. Lastly, do not transfer money without proper verification. I would recommend utilising trusted booking platforms (eg, Booking.com, Airbnb, or the like) and ensuring secure payment systems are in place. As a bonus, check reviews or consult other people/guests for recommendations. Online platforms have made our lives more convenient but also more vulnerable. My friend's niece is a painful reminder that in today's digital world, trust must be verified, not assumed.

BUILDING
CONFIDENCE: OMAN'S
NEW INVESTMENT
MINDSET

MUSCAT: Oman's reform story is not just about laws and platforms — it is about trust. Over the past few years, the Sultanate of Oman has reshaped its investment climate with one goal in mind: to build confidence among foreign and local investors alike. That confidence is beginning to take root, supported by a series of bold measures that demonstrate both pragmatism and intent. The Foreign Capital Investment Law allowing 100 per cent foreign ownership was a pivotal step. It signalled a fundamental shift from protectionism to partnership. Combined with new public-private partnership and privatisation laws, Oman has made it clear that it sees the private sector as a driver of national growth rather than a guest in the economy. The government's decision to abolish minimum capital requirements and reduce commercial registry fees further underlines its commitment to a liberalised business environment. What sets Oman apart from many other reforming economies is its practical approach. It does not pursue change for headline appeal, but for tangible results. The reduction of real estate transfer fees from 5 to 3 per cent, for instance, was a technical but powerful gesture — one that immediately boosted property transactions and liquidity. Similarly, capping environmental permit fees at RO 900 for three years has encouraged compliance without discouraging investment. These small but significant measures form the backbone of investor trust. At the same time, Oman has recognised that transparency must accompany liberalisation. The government's digitalisation drive ensures that company registration, permit approvals and environmental clearances follow a traceable, standardised process. For investors, predictability is the highest form of reassurance and Oman's new systems are designed to deliver exactly that. Of course, reform without consistency risks creating frustration. Some investors still face delays due to overlapping jurisdictions or uneven interpretation of rules between agencies. The "Invest in Oman" Service Centre was established to resolve this — acting as a single coordination point for large investments. Its success, however, will depend on how much authority it is given to act across ministries, not just to observe them. What investors seek now is one decision, one platform and one accountable entity. Another test of credibility lies in the labour market. The Omanisation policy aims to balance opportunity for citizens with flexibility for business.

White gold renaissance:
From Dhofar to the world

OMAN Vision 2040 is a bold mandate for transformation — a call to diversify the economy, empower the private sector and cultivate new industries built on our distinctive strengths. Among these, none shine brighter or smell sweeter than frankincense — lubān — Oman's timeless 'white gold'. Harvested for millennia from the Boswellia sacra trees of Dhofar, Omani frankincense has perfumed temples, palaces and trade routes since antiquity. It is more than a resin; it is the soul of Oman, enshrined by Unesco and revered along the ancient Frankincense Trail. Yet today, this proud legacy stands at a crossroads. The story of Omani frankincense is world-renowned — but its economic promise remains largely unrealised. We continue to export raw resin while the true wealth — perfumes, cosmetics and wellness products — is captured abroad. For Oman's diversification vision to succeed, we must move from trading our past to manufacturing our future. The global fragrance industry is booming — valued at over \$56 billion in 2024 and projected to surpass \$74 billion by 2030. The GCC alone will represent \$4.2 billion by 2025 — a market deeply rooted in the region's culture of scent and luxury. Yet Oman's participation remains limited. Our exports of finished perfumes and toilet waters are modest, while imports, particularly from the UAE, remain significant. This imbalance is not merely a trade statistic — it reflects lost value and untapped potential. Despite enjoying duty-free access to the world's largest premium market through the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement, our perfume exports to the United States remain minimal compared to our neighbouring countries. Clearly, the challenge is not market access, but the absence of scalable, export-ready Omani products and brands. Oman is not starting from zero. We possess what could be called



Harvested for millennia from the Boswellia sacra trees of Dhofar, Omani frankincense has perfumed temples, palaces and trade routes since antiquity.



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The writer is
founder and CEO -
Smart Investment
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our Olfactive Trinity — Dhofar's frankincense, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar's roses and the native myrrh of our deserts. Each embodies authenticity and natural luxury, the very qualities driving global consumer demand. We also have Amouage, Oman's flagship perfume house, now a global brand with estimated annual sales exceeding \$210 million. Amouage stands as proof that an Omani brand can compete — and win — at the top of the luxury market. But an ecosystem cannot thrive on a single success story. Beyond Amouage, our national brand landscape remains thin, with few mid-tier or artisanal Omani perfume labels able to scale internationally. Our biggest gap lies in the midstream — the industrial backbone that sustains a manufacturing economy. Oman does not yet produce high-quality perfume bottles, pumps, or decorative caps. We depend on imports, raising costs and limiting innovation. For SME Omani perfume houses, barriers remain high: establishing GMP-compliant facilities, securing international certifications and sourcing components. Globally, consumers are gravitating towards niche, authentic and sustainable fragrances — the very strengths Oman possesses. What we need is an ecosystem that empowers our SMEs to compete, not constrains them.

Fortunately, Oman's policy framework is evolving in the right direction. Our world-class ports and free zones in Suhar, Salalah and Al Duqm provide ideal platforms for export-oriented industries. The new Unified Law for Special Economic and Free Zones offers streamlined incentives and tax holidays that could anchor a manufacturing hub. Yet one barrier persists: ambiguity in our Foreign Capital Investment Law, which currently restricts foreign investment in "traditional handmade cosmetics". This rule must be clarified — to safeguard local artisans, yes, but also to welcome strategic joint ventures in packaging, component manufacturing and raw material processing. Without such partnerships, our value chain will remain incomplete. Our ambition should be nothing less than the creation of an Oman Fragrance Valley — a national ecosystem linking heritage, sustainability, innovation and global trade. Picture Dhofar's sacred frankincense trees, harvested sustainably as our ancestors once did, their resin transformed in state-of-the-art extraction labs. Imagine local entrepreneurs crafting perfumes in modern facilities, packaged in Omani-made glass and sold to the world with the proud label "Made in Oman". This vision could also anchor a Scented Tourism experience — inviting visitors to trace the journey of Oman's white gold from ancient groves to contemporary luxury. To turn vision into value, we must focus on concrete steps. First, we should launch a National Mark of Authenticity by registering "Omani Frankincense" as a Geographical Indication (GI). This would serve as a White Gold Standard — protecting our heritage, ensuring product integrity and securing a global premium price. Second, we should create a Plug-and-Play Perfumery Hub — a shared manufacturing facility where Omani SMEs can access GMP-certified labs and production lines at low cost.

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ART/LIFE



WHERE HISTORY SHAPES BEAUTY

EXPLORING SOUTH KOREA 'S HERITAGE, COSMETIC INNOVATION TOGETHER

COMMUNITY

Cultural forum finds a home in the desert



The Cultural Club has launched the first literary phase of the Third Cultural Forum in the Wilayat of Maqshin, Dhofar Governorate. The event, which runs until November 18, is being organised in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and aims to expand cultural engagement beyond Muscat by promoting creativity across the Sultanate of Oman's diverse regions.

The forum consists of three cultural and literary phases designed to involve various segments of the community. It seeks to establish dialogue spaces that unite intellectuals, researchers and creatives, reinforcing the concept of cultural decentralisation in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Balushi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Cultural Club, emphasised the need to balance cultural activity between the centre and the peripheries. He said, "Oman today strives to ensure that culture is not confined to major cities but shared across all regions. Cultural decentralisation is essential for cognitive sustainability and for empowering local communities to participate in the nation's development".

Dr Al Balushi explained that organising forums such as the Maqshin Cultural Forum represents a shift in Omani cultural thinking. "By holding this forum on the edge of the Empty Quarter, we are not merely moving cultural activity to a new location; we are redistributing the radiance of culture to new borders and landscapes", he said. "The desert here is not a void but a space rich in memory, beauty and history".

The programme features a range of workshops and sessions tailored to the local environment and community, including 'How to Tell Your Story', 'Artificial Intelligence Applications in the Desert' and 'Creating Artistic Sculptures with Sand and Clay'. These activities aim to connect heritage with technology and encourage creative expression among children, mothers and teachers.

The forum also highlights heritage as a living source of inspiration, with storytelling, art and reading sessions designed to strengthen cultural identity and community belonging. "When children mold sand into sculptures or mothers learn to nurture reading habits, they participate in building a generation that values both knowledge and the land", Dr Al Balushi said.

He praised the role of PDO in supporting the forum, describing the partnership as a model of cooperation between the cultural and economic sectors. "Such collaboration reflects a shared vision that culture is not secondary, but a core driver of sustainable development", he added. — ONA

QUICK FEATURES



COMIC CON

A cosplayer in a Spider-Man costume uses a phone at the MCM Comic Con at ExCeL exhibition centre in London. — AFP



GASTRONOMY

A waiter carries a thali tray with an assortment of Indian food at an Indian restaurant in Beijing, China. — AFP



ROYALTY

Members of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment ride past autumn foliage during the Changing of the King's Life Guard ceremony in London. — Reuters

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Bloomsbury chief: AI sparks creativity and can beat writer’s block



More authors will lean on AI to spark creativity and beat writer’s block, the boss of “Harry Potter” publisher Bloomsbury has said.

Nigel Newton, the publisher’s founder and chief executive, said the technology can support almost all of the creative arts but that it would not have the power to replace big names.

“I think AI will probably help creativity, because it will enable the 8 billion people on the planet to get started on some creative area where they might have hesitated to take the first step”, he said.

He used the example of writers’ block, saying: “AI gets them going and writes the first paragraph, or first chapter and gets them back in the zone.

“And it can do similar things with painting and music composition and with almost all of the creative arts”.

Newton, who signed JK Rowling to the publisher in the 1990s, acknowledged concerns that AI could be used to write entire books, saying that would be a “problem”.

But he stressed that, ultimately, readers want to read books penned by well-known writers.

“We are programmed deep in our DNA to be comforted by the authority and the reliability of big brand names and that applies more than ever to the names of big writers”, he said.

“There will be some shoddy content out there so people will turn increasingly to sources of authority for reassurance” that they will spend hours reading something good, the chief executive said.

Bloomsbury’s sales have been boosted in recent years by a handful of best-selling authors, namely fantasy writer Sarah J Maas. — dpa



Motorcycles wind up Tham Ma Pass, one of the most scenic stretches of road along the Ha Giang Loop in northern Vietnam

DEREK M NORMAN

DOZENS of honking motorbikes jockeyed for space as they zigzagged up Quan Ba Pass. I clutched and throttled between low gears on my Honda XR while keeping one eye on the narrow road and the other on my guide, who was riding his own motorcycle about 15 feet ahead.

Suddenly, the land along our right side dropped away, revealing a sweeping view of rolling hills, terraced farmland and layers of mountains lurking in the midday haze. I quickly understood why locals call this stretch of road Heaven’s Gate.

I was beginning a two-wheeled journey on the Ha Giang Loop, a roughly 230-mile circular network of roads in the highlands of northern Vietnam that was one of The New York Times 52 Places to Go in 2023. This route, nicknamed Happiness Road for its desired effect on the region, has been attracting adventure seekers for about a decade, and I was eager to see why.

From Heaven’s Gate, our four-day trip in late March would take us veering through switchbacks squeezed between rugged rock formations, soaring along cliff-side paths and coasting through verdant valleys. We would ride about 60 miles per day — stopping frequently to stretch our legs at places like open-air cafes, textile workshops and French colonial ruins — before settling into local hostels known as homestays each evening, in villages inhabited by ethnic groups like the Hmong, Tay and Dao.

The Ha Giang Loop is not for the faint of heart. The slim roads dip, climb and curve through the mountainous landscape, often along pulse-quickenning drop-offs and through villages teeming with rural life.

I learned the hard way that a US driver’s license — or even a US-issued international driving permit — is not valid here; most Americans need an approved Vietnamese license to drive legally. On my first day, a police officer at a checkpoint waved me down and thumbed through my documents. I paid a fine of 3 million dong, or about \$115,

VIETNAM’S THRILLING ‘HAPPINESS ROAD’



Children play traditional flute music for visitors at a stop along Tham Ma Pass in northern Vietnam

The limestone karst formations shaped over centuries are a signature of the Dong Van Karst Plateau. According to Hmong legend, a fairy who fell in love with a mortal but had to leave their child behind on earth created the twin hills, which made the land fertile



and thankfully, the receipt he provided me gave me a pass the next and only other time an officer pulled me over.

Most travellers on the loop choose to ride on the back of a motorbike with a local guide driving — a setup known as an easy rider. Not only does this avoid the whole driver’s license issue, the arrangement is actually cheaper and gives riders, with or without motorcycle experience, the freedom to focus on the views rather than the road.

But being an avid motorcycle rider, I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to navigate these roads myself, so I splurged for a guided, self-riding private tour from Bong Backpacker Hostel in Ha Giang City. The popular tour-operating hostel is one of many that have popped up in Ha Giang province, about a six-hour bus ride north of Hanoi, Vietnam’s capital, near the border with China. The tour cost just over 9 million dong and included the bus rides to and from Hanoi.

— The New York Times

FEATURES

EXPLORING SOUTH KOREA’S HERITAGE, COSMETIC INNOVATION TOGETHER

WHERE HISTORY SHAPES BEAUTY



MAI AL ABRI

As my plane descended into Seoul on a clear, sunlit morning, the city unfolded beneath me — a tapestry of modern towers, winding streets and distant green hills. In the parks, small groups strolled; on the sidewalks, locals carried out their daily routines with ease and cheer, as though Korea’s rhythm welcomed every newcomer to its steady pulse.

From that serene arrival, I stepped into a whirlwind of exploration. Over the next several days, I embarked on a curated journey through Korea’s heritage, media landscape, diplomatic halls and public diplomacy efforts. From the solemn halls of history to the frontlines of Korean media, each visit offered new insight into the spirit and energy of this nation — and set the stage for a deeper appreciation of Korea’s evolving identity.

That identity is increasingly tied not just to culture or policy, but to the growing global reputation of its skincare and cosmetic surgery industries. South Korea is swiftly emerging as a medical aesthetic hotspot and its appeal is surging among patients from the Middle East.

In 2024, Korea treated 1,170,467 foreign patients — nearly double the number from the previous year — generating over 1.4 trillion won in medical spending. Remarkably, 85.4 per cent of those patients visited clinics and hospitals in the Seoul metropolitan area, reinforcing the capital’s dominance as the region’s aesthetic hub.

What draws international clientele — including from Gulf nations — is not just the quantity but the quality of service. Korea leads with deep specialisation in facial sculpting, double eyelid surgery, rhinoplasty and increasingly refined minimally invasive skin treatments like lasers, injectables and regenerative therapies. In fact, dermatology accounted for 56.6 per cent of foreign medical visits in 2024, while plastic surgery made up 11.4 per cent.

But technical skill and innovation are just part of the equation. Behind the scenes lies a fortified ecosystem of trust.

Korea’s competitiveness is underpinned by strict foreign patient registration, hospital accreditation, mandatory malpractice insurance and multilingual patient support systems. Clinics integrate post-treatment follow-ups and telemedicine support — vital for overseas clients who travel for care.

For Middle Eastern clients especially, Korea presents a compelling package: cosmetic excellence anchored by robust oversight, competitive total cost and — crucially — the soft power of K-Beauty and Korean popular culture.

Clinics increasingly tailor their offerings — Arabic interpreters, privacy-conscious workflows, concierge services — to match regional expectations. What’s emerging is not just a destination for procedures, but a holistic aesthetic journey rooted in quality, trust and cultural resonance. Many Arab patients report high satisfaction with results, seamless logistics and a strong awareness of cultural sensitivities like privacy and



South Korea is swiftly emerging as a medical aesthetic hotspot and its appeal is surging among patients from the Middle East

language.

Yet to truly understand how Korea fuses modern aspiration with deep historical roots, I traced a thread through its past. Early in the programme, I joined a docent-guided tour through the National Museum of Korean Contemporary History. Located in Seoul’s Jongno district, directly opposite Gyeongbokgung Palace, the museum houses four permanent exhibition halls, covering eras from the late 19th century through liberation, war, rapid modernisation and contemporary life.

Walking through these exhibits, I witnessed Korea’s story of resilience and transformation: the struggles against colonial rule, the grim chapters of the Korean War and the bold surge towards economic and democratic development. The displays — rich with artefacts, images and interactive media — created a bridge between past and present.

Some rooms resonated with somber dignity, others with the optimism of a nation moving forward. A highlight was the rooftop garden, from which one can gaze across rooftops toward Gyeongbokgung and feel the convergence of tradition and modernity. The museum’s free entry policy opens its doors to all, making it a meaningful public space in Seoul.

One of the most powerful moments of the trip was our visit to the DMZ (Demilitarised Zone). Exploring sites such as the Paju Dora Observatory, the 3rd Tunnel and other border landmarks was deeply moving. Peering into the North Korean landscape from observation decks, the weight of division, the stories of those separated and the longing for reunification all resonated strongly. It’s a place where history, politics and the human condition collide.

