

OMAN
عمان
DAILY
Observer

SUNRISE 06:51 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:32 AM
DHUHR 12:20 PM
ASR 03:24 PM
MAGHRIB 05:45 PM
ISHA 06:59 PM



2010000387405

10

AL ZUBAIR ALL SET FOR MIDDLE EAST RALLY IN SUHAR ON JANUARY 23



Bahrain King begins visit on Tuesday

TWO LEADERS TO EXPLORE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF JOINT INTEREST

KING HAMAD BIN ISSA AL KHALIFA of the Kingdom of Bahrain, will pay a state visit to the Sultanate of Oman with effect from Tuesday.

The Diwan of Royal Court issued a statement to this effect, reading as follows: “King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, will pay a state visit to the Sultanate of Oman, with effect from Tuesday (January 14). The visit comes in response to an invitation from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

“The two leaders will explore some aspects of joint interest and various topics that contribute to promoting the joint Gulf action. They will also exchange views on the regional and international developments.

“May the Almighty Allah grant success to the two leaderships for the good of their peoples, and the Arab and Islamic nations!”

The Sultanate of Oman and the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain are looking forward to further partnerships that reflect the strong ties between the two countries. The Omani-Bahraini summit, to be held on Tuesday at Al Alam Palace, under the leadership of His

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa

Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa, is an embodiment of this historical depth, strategic cooperation and continuous coordination.

Omani-Bahraini relations represent a model to be emulated in the journey of the Gulf Cooperation Council, especially since the roots of these ties extend to decades, and were built on solid foundations of brotherhood and mutual understanding, and were built on solid foundations since the prehistoric era of pearl fishing and trade, and the frankincense trade, which was popular between the two countries and peoples.

His Majesty’s visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2022, which witnessed the signing of a number of cooperation agreements, memoranda of understanding, and executive programmes, confirmed the determination and sincere will to translate the two countries’ long-standing relations into tangible and evident benefits.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information shows that the volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and Bahrain amounted to about RO 247.1 million (\$642.6 million) in 2023. — ONA SEE ALSO P2

FIREWORKS LIGHT UP SKIES TO MARK RENEWED RENAISSANCE DAY

A fireworks show was held to mark the fifth anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s Accession Day in the Wilayat of Seeb in Muscat Governorate, on Sunday. The skies were lit up with dazzling firework formations that captured the admiration of viewers as citizens and residents expressed jubilation over the Renewed Renaissance Day, an auspicious occasion celebrated on January 11 annually.

PHOTO BY
HUSSEIN AL MAQBALI

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, head of the Sultanate of Oman’s delegation, at the meeting in Riyadh.

CALL FOR JOINT EFFORTS ON SYRIA

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry, participated in the enhanced Arab meeting on Syria held in the Saudi capital Riyadh on Sunday to discuss regional and international efforts to achieve stability in Syria.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, head of the Sultanate of Oman’s delegation, said the meeting constitutes an important step in supporting Syria to restore its natural position in its Arab, regional and international surroundings.

The foreign minister underscored the importance of joint action to support the aspirations of the Syrian people for the future and participate in shaping it to achieve security, unity, development, reconstruction and the lifting of international economic sanctions.

The foreign minister stressed the importance of continuing to demand that the United Nations and the Security Council assume their responsibilities and take firm measures to ensure the Israeli withdrawal from Mount Hermon, Quneitra Governorate and all Syrian territories and full commitment to the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.

The foreign minister said that the meeting reflects the positive spirit of collective cooperation and shared responsibility in supporting Syria and consolidating peace and stability in the region.

— ONA

Trump bashes California leaders over fire response

LOS ANGELES: US president-elect Donald Trump on Sunday sharpened his criticism of California’s handling of the wildfires roaring around Los Angeles, as the state’s governor urged him to come witness the damage in person.

“The fires are still raging in L.A. The incompetent pols (politicians) have no idea how to put them out,” Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

“This is one of the worst catastrophes in the history of

our country. They just can’t put out the fires. What’s wrong with them?” he wrote.

Democratic governor Gavin Newsom, long a target of Trump’s criticism, pushed back in an interview which aired on Sunday, but also offered a conciliatory hand.

“Responding to Donald Trump’s insults, we would spend another month,” he said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” “Every elected official that he disagrees with is very familiar with them.”

But in a pivot, the governor

Firefighters put out flames in the Mandeville Canyon neighbourhood of Los Angeles, California, on Sunday. — AFP

added, “I called for him to come out, take a look for himself. We want to do it in the spirit of an open hand, not a closed fist. He’s the president-elect.”

Trump has frequently clashed with Newsom, a man seen as a possible Democratic presidential candidate in 2028.

But perhaps heedful of Trump’s past threat—in a dispute over water management—that if elected he might cut federal wildfire aid to California, Newsom tempered his own approach. — AFP

Terms and conitions apply



Empower your future today

With **BankDhofar** Ladies Account

Start Saving with BankDhofar Ladies account!
To know more, visit [www.bankdhofar.com](#)

2479 1111

[www.bankdhofar.com](#)



bankdhofar



بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

OMAN, BAHRAIN LOOK FORWARD FOR MORE PARTNERSHIPS



THE ERA OF HIS MAJESTY
SULTAN HAITHAM BIN
TARIK AND KING HAMAD
BIN ISSA AL KHALIFA
OUTLINE THE FEATURES
OF A BRIGHT FUTURE
BETWEEN THE TWO
COUNTRIES

THE VISIT EMBODIES
COMMITMENT OF THE
TWO COUNTRIES TO JOIN
HANDS TO CONFRONT
CHALLENGES, AND
ENHANCE SECURITY AND
STABILITY IN THE REGION

THE OMAN-BAHRAIN
RELATIONS REPRESENT A
ROLE MODEL IN THE GCC
MARCH SINCE THE ROOTS
OF THESE TIES EXTEND
BACK FOR DECADES

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN and the Kingdom of Bahrain look forward to more partnerships that reflect the advanced ties between the two countries. The Oman-Bahrain meeting on Tuesday, at Al Alam Palace, led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, is an embodiment of the historical, strategic cooperation and constant coordination.

The Oman-Bahrain relations represent a role model in the GCC march, since the roots of these ties extend back decades. These ties were established on solid foundations of affinity and mutual understanding and were built on firm ground since the prehistoric era of pearl fishing trade and the frankincense trade. This trade was prosperous between the two countries and their peoples as the Omani and Bahraini grandfathers and fathers ventured into the seas while mastering this trade and connection. The civilisations of Magan and Dilmun represented the cornerstone of a firm and strategic relationship, which has grown stronger year after year. The era of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa outlines the features of a bright future between the two countries.

His Majesty's visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2022, which witnessed the signing of several cooperation agreements, memoranda of understanding, and executive programmes, confirmed the determination and sincere will to translate the two countries' long-standing relations into tangible benefits.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Bahrain stood at about RO 247.1 million (\$642.6 million) in 2023. It declined at the end of

September 2024 to RO 131.1 million (\$340.8 million).

Statistics also indicated that the value of Omani exports to the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2023 stood at about RO 41.6 million (\$108.3 million), decreasing at the end of September 2024 to RO 29 million (\$75.6 million).

As for the volume of Bahraini investment in the Sultanate of Oman, the number of companies with Bahraini shares increased significantly by the end of October 2024 to about 315 companies, compared to 296 companies in 2023.

The value of the Bahraini contribution amounted to RO 27.7 million (\$72.1 million), or 80.1 per cent of the total invested capital. Omani companies invest in the Kingdom of Bahrain mainly in the commercial and service sectors.

Sayyid Faisal bin Hareb al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Bahrain, said in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) that King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa will be a dear guest of the Sultanate of Oman, its leadership, government

THE VISIT BEARS
TESTIMONY TO THE
DEPTH OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS AND THAT
IT WILL OPEN UP VISTAS
FOR COOPERATION
IN VARIOUS FIELDS
LEADING TO
INTEGRATION

VOLUME OF TRADE
EXCHANGE BETWEEN
OMAN AND THE
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN
STOOD AT ABOUT RO
247.1 MILLION IN 2023

876 BAHRAINI
COMPANIES DO
BUSINESS IN OMAN,
WHILE THE NUMBER
OF OMANI COMPANIES
OPERATING IN
THE KINGDOM OF
BAHRAIN IS ABOUT 270
COMPANIES

and people.

The ambassador added that the historical visit of the King of Bahrain to Oman embodies the depth of the advanced and close bilateral relations and translates the nature and strength of the relationship between the two wise leaderships and their brotherly peoples in various spheres. The bilateral relations have been witnessing progress and prosperity. He pointed out that the state visit of the King of Bahrain to Oman establishes a promising phase of sincere, fruitful joint cooperation in various fields. This visit, the ambassador affirmed, will constitute a milestone in the nature of the fraternal relationship and bilateral cooperation in accordance with the farsighted vision of the two leaderships.

He explained that this visit is a testament to the historical Oman-Bahrain relations. It represents great significance and political value that enhances the strength of relations between the two countries towards broader horizons that reflect the two countries and the aspirations of their peoples. This visit, the ambassador asserted, will seek to achieve further cooperation, integration, and harmony in all spheres in light of the two countries' common visions, namely Oman Vision 2040 and Bahrain Vision 2030.

Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Sultanate of Oman, said that the "State Visit" of King Hamad bin Issa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, to the Sultanate of Oman constitutes an embodiment of bilateral relations that have been established for decades, the ties that stem from the common bonds of fraternity between the two countries and the two brotherly peoples.

Al Kaabi described the Bahraini-Omani relations as deep-rooted in history and that they were established by the fathers and forefathers of both nations. "They are fraternal relations that go deep into history from the sites of civilisations in Dilmun (Bahrain) and Magan (Oman), coupled with the strategic, commercial, and cultural relations and based on bonds of amity and kinship. Today, bilateral relations are at their peak, thanks to the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa and their enlightened visions that will continue to invigorate bilateral relations and upgrade them further," he added.

— ONA



SAYYID FAISAL
BIN HAREB AL
BUSAIIDY

*Ambassador of the
Sultanate of Oman
to the Kingdom of
Bahrain*



JUMA BIN
AHMED AL
KAABI

*Ambassador of the
Kingdom of Bahrain
to the Sultanate of
Oman*



‘Need to overcome challenges through cooperation’

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 12

SAYYID Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, reaffirmed Oman's commitment to supporting initiatives that foster cooperation, trust, understanding, and justice among all nations, urging all countries to overcome challenges through constructive cooperation.

In his recent visit to Iran, Sayyid Badr sat for an interview with XYZ, the Iranian news channel, where he discussed Oman's "positive, productive and progressive partnership with Iran, and shared his perspective on events in the wider region.

Sayyid Badr urged all countries to overcome challenges by focussing on "the positive elements that bind us, that bring regional countries together." He confirmed that his meetings with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had been effective in advancing shared goals.

During his interview, Sayyid Badr specifically recognised the "capacity of the people in the region to build a better future."

Both Iran and Oman are vocal advocates for Palestinian justice. With the global majority in favour of a ceasefire, adherence

to international law, and a fair resolution, Sayyid Badr expressed his belief that "diplomacy will prevail."

He stated that there remains uncertainty over how best to enforce UN Security Council resolutions and bring an immediate end to the ongoing genocide, in which Israel has killed more than 50,000 people in Palestine and Lebanon.

When asked his opinion on Syria, Sayyid Badr responded, "the Syrian issue should be resolved by the Syrian people. We can only help that process," he said, adding that Oman adopts a similar policy of supportive non-interference in Palestine, Yemen and Sudan, reasoning that outside powers often fail adequately to incorporate people's legitimate demands, leading to unsustainable resolutions.

Despite significant barriers to peace in the region, recent comments from Omani and Iranian officials reflect a determination to engage constructively and an enduring belief that justice will prevail.



Warm felicitations to His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the 5th Anniversary
of His Majesty's Accession.



شركة ظفار لتوليد الكهرباء ش.م.ع
Dhofar Generating Company SA O G

KR

كيمجي رامداس

KHIMJI RAMDAS

In your triumph is ours

نحن نقدم بثقة

Moving Forward with Confidence

رؤية عمان 2040

Oman Vision 2040

Five Years of Visionary Leadership

Boundless Horizons Ahead

On the occasion of the **5th anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's** accession to the throne, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty and best wishes to the people of Oman.

At Khimji Ramdas, we affirm our unwavering pledge to co-create and contribute to the goals of Oman Vision 2040, advancing progress and sustainability for the nation.

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



LOW PRESSURE TO AFFECT OMAN IN THE COMING DAYS

MUSCAT: The Oman Meteorology Department has reported that a trough of Oman low pressure is expected to affect the Sultanate of Oman starting on Monday. According to the latest weather charts, there are chances of scattered rainfall over Musandam Governorate and parts of the Sea of Oman coasts. The forecast also indicates the likelihood of cloud formation over parts of the Al Hajar Mountains.



The Omani national team players are aiming to secure numerous international ranking points and compete for top positions in this tournament.

ASIAN TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP FROM TODAY

MUSCAT: The Asian and International U-14 Tennis Championship and the West and Central Asia regional qualifiers, organised by the Oman Tennis Association, will kick off today (Monday). The tournament runs from November 13 to 23, with the participation of 13 Asian countries. The matches will be held at the tennis courts of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Thirteen Asian federations have confirmed their participation in the championship and qualifiers, representing Oman (the host country), Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The boys' category includes 26 participants, while the girls' category has 19 players competing in both championships. The Omani national team players are aiming to secure numerous international ranking points and compete for top positions in this tournament. The team has completed its preparations through a comprehensive training programme led by the national team's technical staff over the past few days.

The ‘Unshook Agreement’ to have Arabic translation

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

THE ‘Unshook Agreement’, the treaty between the Sultanate of Oman and the UK that documented the mutual declaration for the relationship to remain steadfast and unshaken in 1800, will have an Arabic translation on its 225th anniversary year. On January 18th, 1800, Oman and Britain signed a treaty expressing the hope that ‘the friendship of the two states may remain unshook until the end of time. The new revised third edition and an Arabic translation are planned for release later this year. “In 2025, we are celebrating the 225th anniversary of this historic agreement that was culminated from the long, friendly bonds between the Sultanate of Oman and Britain,” said Maggie Jeans, OBE. The many historic ties between Oman and Britain are explained in a book of the same name, ‘Unshook Till the End of Time,’ first published in 2012 and written by two former British Ambassadors to Oman, Robert Alston (1986-1990) and Stuart Laing (2002-2005). Robert Alston and his wife, Pat, were in Oman a few



In 2025, we are celebrating the 225th anniversary of this historic agreement that was culminated from the long, friendly bonds between the Sultanate of Oman and Britain.

MAGGIE JEANS



Robert Alston and his wife, Pat, were in Oman recently.

days ago cherishing their time in Oman. The relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom can be traced back over two centuries, with the two sides always seeking to explore new ways of improving them on various fronts, including but not limited to diplomacy, education, trade and commerce, culture, and people-to-people relations. “The accession to the throne

Al Qudra wins karate championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

The 10th Shotokan Karate Open Championship concluded on Saturday at Al Amal Sports Club Hall in Muscat Governorate as part of the Muscat Nights events. The championship witnessed intense competition among participants from various local and international clubs, with 34 clubs from 9 countries participating. Al Qudra Karate Club was crowned the champion, delivering an outstanding performance by winning 18 gold medals, four silver medals and six bronze medals. While Shotokan Karate Center secured second place with 10 gold medals, 13 silver medals and 14 bronze medals, reaffirming its strong presence in the competition. Shitoryu Oman Club claimed third place after



The championship witnessed intense competition among participants.

winning 10 gold medals, seven silver medals and 36 bronze medals, reflecting remarkable performance across various categories. Kuwait Force Club finished fourth, earning 8 gold medals, 2 silver medals and 4 bronze medals. Ali bin Said bin Saif al Shabibi, coach of the national karate team, emphasised that the timing of this championship was highly appropriate. He highlighted that the championship achieved record-breaking participation with

over 400 players, reflecting the significant interest from players, coaches and parents in karate. Al Shabibi added that the championship's success, from his perspective, was 100 per cent, noting that many national team players proved their worth by securing top positions and multiple gold medals. Additionally, the direct interaction with international players greatly enhanced their experience and skills. Al Shabibi stressed the importance of such tournaments for Omani players and residents in Oman, explaining that the participation of international teams with their top players provides local athletes with real opportunities to engage with high-level competition, contributing to their skill development and helping them gain valuable experience for their athletic careers.

‘Experience South Al Batinah’ festival — a celebration of culture, adventure

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JAN 12

Coinciding with the celebrations of His Majesty's accession to the throne, the second edition of the ‘Experience South Al Batinah’ festival was recently launched at Khabbat Al Qadaan in the Wilayat of Nakhal, in Al Batinah South Governorate. This event, which has attracted visitors from across Oman, is a remarkable blend of cultural heritage, sports competitions, consumer markets, and outdoor entertainment programmes tailored for all age groups. Badr bin Mohammed al Saidi, General Director of Al Batinah South Municipality and the Chairman of the Organising Committee, stated that the festival's main goal is to offer a unique experience that reflects Omani identity and culture. “This edition aims to showcase the governorate's cultural and touristic

richness while fostering community engagement through diverse activities,” he stated. At the core of the festival lies the Heritage Village, which offers an exciting journey into Omani traditions. Visitors can explore handcrafted artefacts such as palm products, incense and embroidery, as well as traditional dishes that embody the Omani spirit. The village also features interactive workshops, teaching traditional arts and crafts, which have drawn significant interest from visitors of all ages. The festival was influenced by Al Batinah South's cool and pleasant weather that created a memorable experience for families and adventure enthusiasts. Activities include open-air cinemas, kite displays and a thrilling showcase of adventure vehicles against the backdrop of the governorate's natural beauty.



Children have also found joy at a dedicated kids’ stage featuring games, competitions, and performances by cartoon characters. This lively atmosphere has become a magnet for families, adding a delightful dimension to the event. The food court is another highlight, serving an array of dishes

that cater to diverse tastes, including traditional Omani treats like halwa and sweet potatoes, which have won the hearts of attendees. Dr Hiba al Balushi, head of the Omani Women's Association in the Wilayat of Al Musannah and a key participant in the event, emphasised the importance of preserving Omani heritage. “This festival reflects the essence of our cultural identity, especially through the Heritage Village. These workshops are designed to ensure the younger generation understands and values the traditional crafts that are part of our national identity,” she said. Running until the end of the month, ‘Experience South Al Batinah’ continues to attract visitors with its rich programmes. It serves as a platform to promote local talents, strengthen community roots, and highlight the governorate's cultural and tourism potential.

RO 29m in aid highlights development drive

THE Ministry of Social Development has launched a series of impactful programmes and activities designed to uplift various segments of society, fostering a prosperous and cohesive community while supporting sustainable development goals.

The ministry has been actively implementing initiatives to empower individuals and families, helping them achieve a decent standard of living. Programmes include social care, rehabilitation, and skills training aimed at enabling self-reliance and social integration. As part of its commitment to transparency and public engagement, the ministry also launched the marketing campaign ‘We Reach You,’ aligning its services with Oman’s digital transformation strategy. From January 2021 to June 2024, the ministry provided disaster assistance to 3,655 cases, amounting to RO 2.29 million.

Additionally, temporary, emergency, and special cash assistance totalling RO 29.19 million was disbursed during the same period, supporting families and individuals facing hardship.

The National Centre for Autism serves 221 individuals aged 2–30 years, offering behavioural therapy,



The ministry provided disaster assistance to 3,655 cases from January 2021 to June 2024

speech therapy, vocational training, and recreational activities such as swimming and sports. Meanwhile, the government-run Al Wafa Centres for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities support 3,889 enrollees aged 2–14 across 41 centres nationwide.

These centres provide comprehensive care, including education and awareness activities. Family guidance and counselling services reached 10,126 cases between January 2021 and June 2024, addressing social, economic, and psychological challenges.

The ministry also oversees 355 nurseries that cater to children aged six months to three-and-a-half years,

benefiting 8,706 boys and girls across Oman.

The ‘Tamkeen’ programme targets individuals receiving social protection benefits, helping them transition into productive roles through training and employment opportunities.

The ministry launched the ‘Joud’ digital donation platform, facilitating electronic contributions to registered charitable associations and volunteer teams.

As of June 2024, the platform has registered 99 charitable teams, 30 charitable associations, and one government entity, reinforcing Oman’s culture of giving. Another initiative, the ‘Ta’heel’ platform, focuses on providing resources and facilities for people with disabilities and their families, streamlining the establishment of rehabilitation centres.

Through programmes like the ‘Laboratory for Developing Services and Programmes for Persons with Disabilities,’ the ministry aligns its initiatives with the Oman Vision 2040 framework. The laboratory has launched over 30 projects, including initiatives for empowerment, sustainable financing, and enhanced health, education, and rehabilitation services for people with disabilities.

— ONA



Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Announcement of an Internal Tenders

Tender No.	6/2025/MHT/HQ-2	Tenders Name	Mail Handling, Packing, and Shipping of Outbound and Inbound Mail (Documents, Letters, Documents, and Promotional Materials) of the Ministry to Outside the Sultanate and Vice Versa in 2025.
	8/2025/MHT/HQ-3		Supply and Installation of Road Sign for Ministry of Heritage & Tourism.
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		25 O.R	
Tender Document Sales End Date		28/1/2025	
Last Date for Bid Submission	6/2025/MHT/HQ-2	19/2/2025	
	8/2025/MHT/HQ-3	18/2/2025	
Grade	6/2025/MHT/HQ-2	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	
	8/2025/MHT/HQ-3	Excellent, First	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	
- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. - The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid. - The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids - The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).			
Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@gstb.gov.om or 24402200		
For further information	Email : solic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085		



Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
16/2025	Providing and maintaining photocopiers in the central management system for both the General Directorate of Social Development at Muscat Governorate, the General Directorate of Family Development, the General Directorate of Persons with Disabilities, and the General Directorate of Social Development at Al Dakhiliyah Governorate	Companies specialized in the field of supplying communications and information technology devices and their accessories and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent or first degree.	Thursday 30-01-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 20-02-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
17/2025	Providing and maintaining photocopiers in the central management system for both the General Directorate of Social Development at Al Dhahirah Governorate, the Department of Social Development at Musandam, and the Department of Social Development at Al Buraimi	Companies specialized in the field of supplying communications and information technology devices and their accessories and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent or first degree.	Thursday 30-01-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 20-02-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
18/2025	Providing and maintaining photocopiers in the central management system for both the General Directorate of Social Development at South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, the General Directorate of Social Development at North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, the Department of Social Development at Mahout, and the Department of Social Development at Al Wusta	Companies specialized in the field of supplying communications and information technology devices and their accessories and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent or first degree.	Thursday 30-01-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 20-02-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
19/2025	Providing and maintaining photocopiers in the central management system for both the General Directorate of Social Development at South Al Batinah Governorate and the General Directorate of Social Development at North Al Batinah Governorate	Companies specialized in the field of supplying communications and information technology devices and their accessories and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent or first degree.	Thursday 30-01-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 20-02-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
20/2025	Providing and maintaining photocopiers in the central administration system of the General Directorate of Social Development at Dhofar Governorate	Companies specialized in the field of supplying communications and information technology devices and their accessories and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent or first degree.	Thursday 30-01-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 20-02-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
21/2025	General maintenance work for the building of the Department of Social Development at Thumrait State	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second or third degree.	Sunday 2-02-2025 02:00 PM	Sunday 2-03-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
22/2025	Establishing a warehouse for the Social Development Department building at Bahla	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the fourth degree.	Sunday 2-02-2025 02:00 PM	Sunday 2-03-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Monday 13/1/2025**.
- For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Malala Yousafzai speaking at the ‘Girls’ Education in Muslim Communities: Challenges and Opportunities’ summit in Islamabad. — Reuters

MALALA TELLS LEADERS NOT TO ‘LEGITIMISE’ TALIBAN

ISLAMABAD: Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai urged leaders on Sunday not to legitimise the Afghan Taliban government and to “show true leadership” over their assault on women’s rights. “Do not legitimise them,” she said at a summit focused on girls’ education in Islamic nations being held in Pakistan’s capital Islamabad. “As Muslim leaders, now is the time to raise your voices, use your power. You can show true leadership. You can show true Islam,” said 27-year-old Yousafzai. The two-day conference has brought together ministers and education officials from dozens of Muslim-majority countries, backed by the Muslim World League (MWL). Delegates from Afghanistan’s Taliban government did not attend the event despite being invited, Pakistan Education Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said on Saturday. “Simply put, the Taliban do not see women as human beings,” Yousafzai told the conference. —AFP



Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya

JAPAN FM TO ATTEND TRUMP INAUGURATION

TOKYO: Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya said he planned to attend Donald Trump’s inauguration as US president on January 20, as Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba’s government hopes to maintain close ties with its security ally. “We aim to build a relationship of trust with the Trump administration securely,” Iwaya told a talk show on public broadcaster NHK. He said he was seeking a meeting with Senator Marco Rubio, Trump’s pick to be secretary of state. India and Australia also announced that their foreign ministers would attend the swearing-in as Trump returns to the White House. It will be Iwaya’s first visit to the United States since he became foreign minister in October. Japan, a longtime US ally that enjoyed good relations with Trump during his first administration, is keen to get off to a good start in his second. Ishiba is looking into visiting the US as early as in the first half of February for his first summit with Trump, Japan’s Yomiuri Shimbun reported on Sunday. Ishiba unsuccessfully sought a meeting in November, shortly after Trump beat Joe Biden in a presidential comeback, sources said at the time. — Reuters

DIRECT FLIGHTS RECONNECT ROME AND TRIPOLI

ROME: Direct flights between Rome and Tripoli resumed on Sunday after a 10-year hiatus, with Italy’s foreign ministry citing a “concerted effort” to strengthen ties with its former colony Libya. Italy’s flag carrier ITA Airways announced it had launched its first commercial flight between Tripoli’s Mitiga airport and Rome’s Fiumicino, with flights scheduled for twice a week. Resumption of flights between the two countries after a decade “is part of a constant and concerted

effort by Italian institutions and the business system, with the aim of strengthening ties with Libya, a strategic and privileged partner for our country,” wrote Italy’s foreign ministry in a statement. Italy had announced in October that ITA flights between the two capitols would resume in December. During a visit to Tripoli by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in October signed a package of development, investment and infrastructure deals aimed at boosting cooperation.

Meloni considers oil-rich Libya a key part of Italy’s ‘Mattei Plan’ for Africa, aimed in part at reducing irregular migration from African countries, including Libya, via investment in the continent. The country remains split between the UN -recognised government of Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah in Tripoli and a rival authority in the east backed by Khalifa Haftar. The European Union still bans Libyan civil aviation from its airspace. — AFP

EU ministers to discuss Syria sanctions

EUROPEAN foreign ministers will meet at the end of January to discuss the lifting of sanctions on Syria, the EU foreign policy chief said on Sunday in Riyadh ahead of a meeting of top Middle Eastern and Western diplomats and Syria’s new foreign minister.

Kaja Kallas, the EU foreign policy chief, said the foreign ministers would convene in Brussels on January 27 in an effort to decide how the 27-nation bloc would relax sanctions on Syria.

Any European decision to ease sanctions would be conditional on the new Syrian administration’s approach to governing, which must include “different groups” and women and “no radicalisation”, Kallas said, without elaborating.

“If we see the developments going to the right direction, we are ready to do the next steps...If we see that it’s not going to the right direction, then we can also move back on this.”

Sunday’s conference, the first such meeting of Western and regional leaders hosted by Saudi Arabia since Assad’s ouster, comes as Damascus urges the West to lift sanctions to help international funding flow more freely.

The US, Britain, the European Union and others imposed tough sanctions on Syria after a crackdown by Assad on pro-democracy protests in 2011 that spiralled into civil war. But the new reality in Syria has been complicated by sanctions on HTS - and some leaders - for its days as an al Qaeda affiliate.

Germany, which is leading the EU’s discussion on sanctions, on



Foreign Ministers of Kuwait, Germany, Bahrain and UAE pose with the participants of a meeting of top diplomats from the Middle East and Europe to discuss Syria in Riyadh. —AFP



Riyadh talks come a month on from Assad’s ouster as EU ministers to meet on January 27 to discuss sanctions easing

Sunday proposed allowing relief for the Syrian population, but retaining sanctions on Assad allies who “committed serious crimes” during Syria’s war.

“Syrians now need a quick dividend from the transition of power, and we continue to help those in Syria who have nothing, as we have done all the years of civil war,” German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock told reporters in

Riyadh.

She said Germany would provide a further €50 million for food, emergency shelters and medical care.

The United States on Monday issued a six month exemption of its sanctions for transactions with governing institutions in Syria to try to ease the flow of humanitarian assistance and allow some energy transactions. —Reuters



INNOCENCE AMIDST DESTRUCTION IN GAZA

A girl dresses a doll as she sits outside a tent at a cemetery where families displaced by conflict are taking shelter in Deir el Balah in the central Gaza Strip amid the ongoing war in the Palestinian territory between Israel and Hamas. The health ministry in Gaza said that 28 people were killed in the Palestinian territory in the past 24 hours, taking the overall death toll to 46,565. The ministry said at least 109,660 people have been wounded in more than 15 months of war, triggered by the Palestinian group’s October 7, 2023 attack. — AFP

PREMEDITATED MURDER

Thai murder suspect acted out of ‘gratitude’



BANGKOK: A Thai man accused of killing a former Cambodian opposition lawmaker in Bangkok said he committed the crime to repay someone who helped him during a tough period in his life. Ekkalak Paenoi confessed to the crime in a livestream video after being charged with premeditated murder and unauthorised gun ownership. Lim Kimya was gunned down by a motorcyclist. — AFP

TURNING POINT

Sudanese army advances to retake city



CAIRO: Sudan’s army said it had entered the central city of Wad Madani and was pushing out its paramilitary rivals the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a step which if completed successfully would be its biggest gain in nearly two years of war. The army posted a video appearing to show troops inside the city, which is the capital of El Gezira state, an agricultural and trading hub that has been held by the RSF since December 2023. —Reuters

BOOSTING RUSSIAN FORCES

Seoul confirms Ukraine held N Korean soldiers



SEOUL: South Korea’s intelligence service backed up Ukraine’s account of having captured two wounded North Korean soldiers in Russia. Ukraine, the US and South Korea have accused North Korea of sending more than 10,000 soldiers to help bolster Russian forces. Seoul’s National Intelligence Service (NIS) said it has “confirmed that the Ukrainian military captured two North Korean soldiers on January 9 in the Kursk battlefield in Russia”. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Croatian President and presidential candidate Zoran Milanovic votes at a polling station in Zagreb, Croatia. — Reuters

CROATIANS VOTE FOR PRESIDENT, INCUMBENT AHEAD

ZAGREB: Croatians were voting on Sunday in a presidential runoff election, with opinion polls giving incumbent Zoran Milanovic a lead over Dragan Primorac, the ruling party’s challenger for the largely ceremonial position. Polling stations opened at 06:00 GMT and will close at 18:00 GMT, with exit polls expected minutes later. Preliminary results will be known by about 19:00 GMT and full, official results are expected in the following days. Around 3.8 million people in the Nato and European Union member are eligible to vote in Sunday’s second round. The state election commission said turnout by 11.30 am was 13.8 per cent. In the first round two weeks ago, Milanovic of the Social Democratic Party came first with 49.1 per cent support, with Primorac - who represents the ruling Croatia’s Democratic Union — in second place on 19.35 per cent. An opinion poll published on Friday by Nova TV Daily News showed Milanovic winning the deciding runoff vote with 67.4 per cent. It gave Primorac support of less than 27 per cent. — Reuters



CZECH RESTAURANT FIRE KILLS 6 PEOPLE

PRAGUE: A restaurant fire in a northwestern city of the Czech Republic killed six people and injured eight in a suspected heating accident, rescue services said. “The fire spread extremely fast after a patio gas heater was probably knocked over,” the local fire service posted on Facebook. The fire broke out in a wooden beer garden adjacent to the U Kojota (‘Coyote’) restaurant at a housing estate in the city of Most, about 70 kilometres northwest of the capital Prague. It was reported on Saturday and was under control by midnight, the fire service said. “Despite all efforts... the fire had tragic consequences for six people,” it said. — AFP

GERMANY’S AFD VOTES TO REPLACE YOUTH WING

BERLIN: Germany’s far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) has voted to swap out its controversial youth organisation with a new one. At a party conference, the party leadership introduced a motion with the aim of binding the AfD’s youth organisation more closely to the party. The motion then passed with the necessary two-thirds majority. The current Junge Alternative (JA) has been steeped in scandal in recent years. In 2023, Germany’s intelligence

services found evidence the organisation had anti-democratic aspirations and classified it as a right-wing extremist organisation, a move which the AfD and the JA are fighting in ongoing legal proceedings. The JA is relatively independent from the AfD. Members of the youth organisation do not have to be members of the party, unless they are board members. However, in future members of youth organisation who are over 18, will have to be members of the AfD

as well. The AfD’s leadership said it hopes that this reform will give it greater power, for example in the event of misconduct. Experts say the youth organisation will also be better protected against possible bans if it is no longer an independent association, which they believe also motivated the step. The AfD’s executive board has proposed that the new group be called ‘Patriotic Youth,’ but the name has not yet been confirmed. — dpa

Los Angeles firefighters race as blazes spread

FIREFIGHTERS were slowly making progress in their battle to contain the inferno that has razed swathes of Los Angeles’ Pacific Palisades neighbourhood to the ground, but still-spreading flames threatened communities in the populous San Fernando Valley on Sunday.

Aircraft dropped water and fire retardant on steep hills to stem the eastward spread of the Palisades Fire and KTLA television reported that ground crews had managed to save a number of houses, although others were lost.

“LA County had another night of unimaginable terror and heartbreak,” Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath said.

Six simultaneous blazes that have ripped across the United States’ second-largest city since Tuesday had killed at least 16 people as of late on Saturday, the Washington Post and other media reported, citing the Los Angeles County medical examiner’s office. Reuters could not reach the coroner.

At least 13 people are estimated to be missing. The blazes have damaged or destroyed 12,000 structures, fire officials said. The flames have reduced whole neighbourhoods to smouldering ruins, destroying the homes of the rich and famous and ordinary folk alike and leaving an apocalyptic landscape.

Over the past 24 hours, the Palisades Fire spread over an additional 1,000 acres, consuming more homes, officials reported.

Cal Fire official Todd Hopkins said that while 11 per cent of the Palisades Fire was now contained, it has burned more than 22,000 acres.

Hopkins told a press conference that fire had spread into the Mandeville Canyon and threatened to jump into Brentwood, an upscale neighbourhood that is home to many celebrities, and the San Fernando Valley. It also inched towards the north-south 405 freeway.

Although the Santa Ana winds that have fanned the flames were calmer on Saturday, the National Weather Service warned that stronger gusts of up to 70 mph could return early next week.



Flames and smoke are seen near power lines as the Palisades fire grows near the Mandeville Canyon neighborhood and Encino, California. — AFP



Firefighters work to put out flames in the Mandeville Canyon neighbourhood of Los Angeles, California as the Palisades Fire continues to burn. — AFP

Red Flag warnings remain in effect for LA and Ventura counties through to Wednesday, the NWS said. “These winds, combined with dry air and dry vegetation, will keep the fire weather threat in the area,” it said. Conditions were expected to moderate by Thursday. On Saturday, some residents were allowed to return to the sites of their ruined homes to see what they could salvage from

the wreckage. Teams with the LA County Sheriff’s Department were working to sift through the rubble with sniffer dogs to search for human remains. Evacuation orders throughout the Los Angeles area now cover 153,000 residents. Another 166,000 residents have been warned that they may have to evacuate, Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said. — Reuters

Cyclone-ravaged Mayotte on high alert as new storm approaches

MAMOUDZOU: Residents of the French territory of Mayotte braced on Sunday for a storm expected to bring strong winds and flash floods less than a month after the Indian Ocean archipelago was devastated by a deadly cyclone. Mayotte was placed on red alert from 19:00 GMT on Saturday in anticipation of the passage of Dikeledi, a storm forecast to skirt about 100 kilometres south of the territory. It hit the northern coast of Madagascar as a cyclone on Saturday evening and weakened into a severe tropical storm, but is expected to regain intensity as it moves towards Mayotte. It could be reclassified as a cyclone by Monday morning, according to French weather service Meteo-France. At around 6 am local time the storm was around 260 kilometres southeast of Mayotte, moving at 22



President of French far right party Marine Le Pen during a meeting with local citizen associations ahead of her departure at the end of her visit on the French Indian Ocean territory of Mayotte, weeks after a devastating cyclone hit the archipelago in Mamoudzou. — AFP

kilometres per hour.

“In terms of impact, Antsiranana province in Madagascar has sustained the most intense conditions in recent hours,” Meteo-France said, referring to the island’s northern tip.

Authorities called for “extreme vigilance” on Mayotte following the devastation wrought by Cyclone Chido in mid-December. “Very heavy rains could generate flash floods,” Meteo-France said in its update, warning that “floods

and landslides are expected in the coming hours”. Wind gusts could reach 90 km/h on the French territory, while “dangerous sea conditions” are also forecast. Residents were advised to seek

shelter and stock up on food and water. “Nothing is being left to chance,” Manuel Valls, France’s overseas territories minister, said. Cyclone Chido, the most devastating storm to hit France’s poorest department in 90 years, caused colossal damage last month, killing at least 39 people and injuring more than 5,600. Francois-Xavier Bieuville, the top Paris-appointed official on the territory, said Mayotte was placed on a red weather alert from 19:00 GMT on Saturday to allow the public to take shelter. “I have decided to bring forward this red alert to 10:00 pm to allow everyone to take shelter, to confine themselves, to take care of the people close to you, your children, your families,” Bieuville said on television. During the alert all travel is banned except for rescue and other authorised personnel. — AFP

OPINION

The transformative power of gratitude letters



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

At a recent workshop on stress management, I invited the participants to write a letter to a person in their lives, expressing gratitude for something good that person had done for them. The purpose of this exercise was to encourage participants to reflect on positive influences in their lives and foster a sense of thankfulness, which is known to reduce stress and improve emotional well-being. After writing their letters, the participants were asked to read them aloud to the whole group. The contents of the letters varied greatly, with each participant sharing a unique and heartfelt story. One participant wrote a touching letter to his high school teacher, thanking them for motivating him and believing in his abilities during a difficult time. Another participant addressed their letter to their mother, recalling how she used to walk him to the village mosque for morning prayers and waited outside until he entered, ensuring his safety. As each letter was read aloud, the room

filled with different emotions ranging from joy to tears. The stories reminded everyone present of the power of simple acts of kindness and the lasting impact they can have on a person's life. The exercise also created a supportive atmosphere, where participants felt comfortable sharing personal moments and expressing vulnerability. Some participants commented afterward on how the activity had a therapeutic effect, helping them feel lighter and more connected to the people around them. Many admitted that they rarely take the time to express their gratitude and found this exercise to be a valuable reminder of the importance of doing so. Research has shown that gratitude plays a significant role in stress management. It shifts focus away from negative emotions and helps individuals recognise the positive aspects of their lives. By reflecting on these positive experiences and expressing appreciation, people can cultivate a more optimistic outlook, reducing stress levels.

Research has shown that gratitude plays a significant role in stress management by shifting the focus on the positive aspects of our lives

Incorporating gratitude exercises into daily life can be a simple yet powerful way to improve mental health. Writing letters, keeping a gratitude journal, or simply taking a moment each day to consider what one is thankful for are all effective practices. In a fast-paced world filled with pressures and challenges, such moments of reflection can help restore balance and promote well-being. This workshop exercise demonstrated how meaningful it can be to pause and acknowledge the people who have supported us. It served as a reminder that even small acts of kindness can leave a lasting mark, and that expressing gratitude benefits the recipient and the person giving thanks. In conclusion, this simple activity of writing and sharing gratitude letters offered profound insights into the participants' lives and left everyone feeling more connected and uplifted. It showed that gratitude is more than just a polite gesture - it is a powerful tool for emotional resilience and stress management.

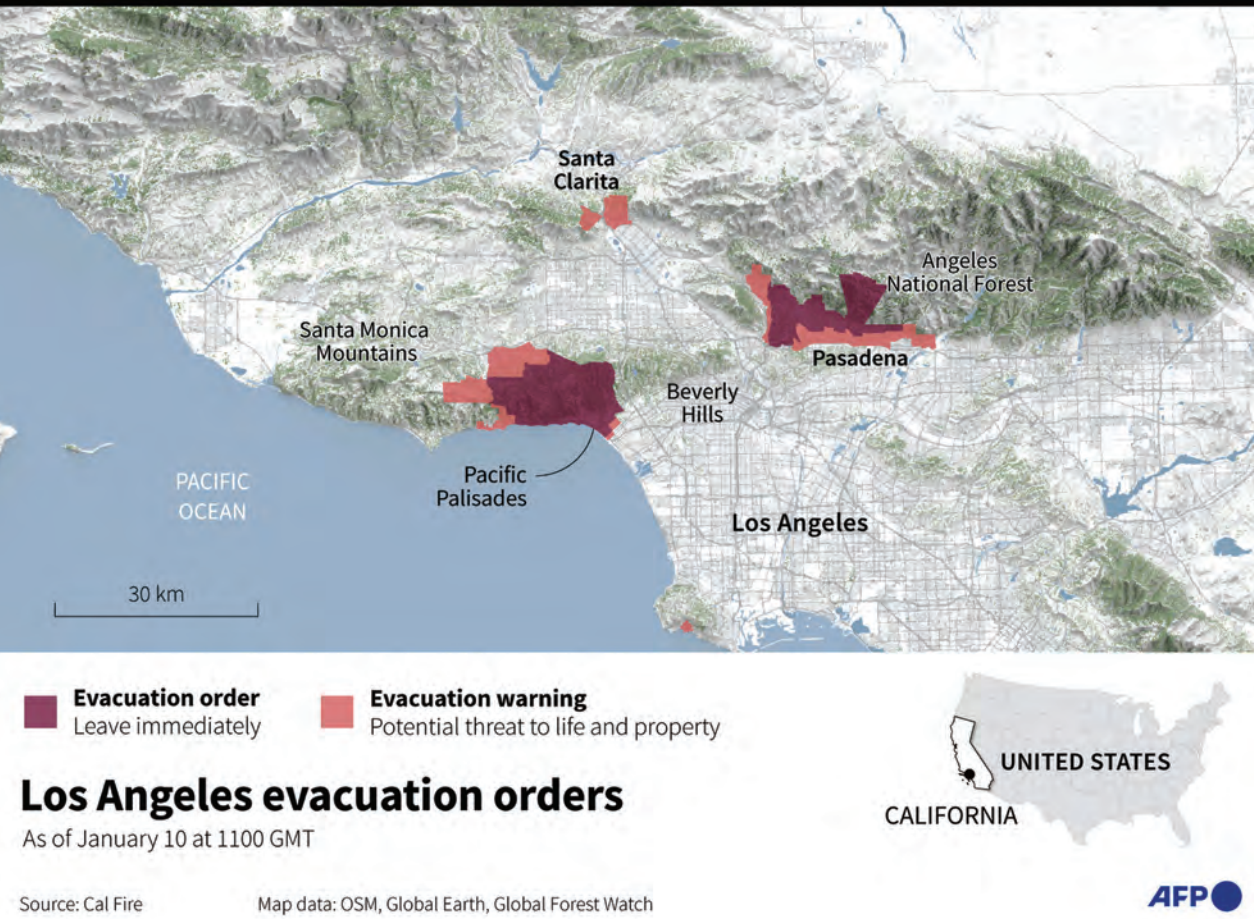
INDIA SET FOR WORLD'S LARGEST GATHERING OF HUMANITY

SAURABH SHARMA

A six-week Maha Kumbh Mela or Great Pitcher Festival begins in India on Monday, a sacred event that will be the world's largest gathering of humanity as it showcases religion, spirituality, tourism and crowd management. More than 400 million people are expected in the northern city of Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh state over the course of six weeks to take a holy dip at the confluence of three sacred rivers – the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mythical, invisible Saraswati. Devout Hindus believe taking a dip in the sacred waters absolves people of sins, and during the Kumbh Mela, it also brings salvation from the cycle of life and death. The festival has its roots in a tradition that says the god Vishnu wrested a golden pitcher containing the nectar of immortality from demons. In a 12-day celestial fight for possession, four drops fell to earth, in the cities of Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik, which host the festival every three years by rotation. The Kumbh held once every 12 years in this cycle has the prefix 'maha' (great) as it is considered more auspicious due to its timing and attracts the largest gathering. The Kumbhs are a big test for authorities to showcase India's ability to organise and manage the movement of millions of people and retain the ancient festival's sanctity. A sprawling 4,000 hectares of open land along the banks of the rivers has been converted into a temporary city to house the visitors in 150,000 tents and comes equipped with 3,000 kitchens, 145,000 restrooms and 99 parking lots. Authorities are also installing up to 450,000 new electricity connections, with the Kumbh expected to drain more power than what 100,000 urban apartments in the region consume in a month. Indian Railways has introduced 98 special trains that will make 3,300 trips during the festival to transport visitors besides regular trains that connect Prayagraj. Prashant Kumar, the police chief of Uttar Pradesh, said around 40,000 police personnel and cybercrime experts have created a web of surveillance powered by artificial intelligence (AI) to protect and help navigate the sea of humanity at the site. "Security and safety of pilgrims is our priority," said Kumar. Emergency response capabilities include 125 road ambulances, seven river ambulances and air ambulances for swift medical assistance. "I am fortunate to host one of the most auspicious Hindu festivals in my state," state Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath told the Aaj Tak TV channel. A successful Maha Kumbh is expected to burnish the BJP's record of reclaiming and glorifying India's religious and cultural symbols for its Hindu base, promised by Modi and Adityanath since their Hindu nationalist party swept to power nationally in 2014. The state government has allocated \$765 million for this year's event, officials said. It has also promoted the Kumbh Mela at several international tourism expositions and invited foreign representatives. — Reuters

How climate change is supercharging disasters

As Los Angeles burned for days on end, horrifying the nation, scientists made an announcement on Friday that could help explain the deadly conflagration: 2024 was the hottest year in recorded history. With temperatures rising around the world and the oceans unusually warm, scientists are warning that the planet has entered a dangerous new era of chaotic floods, storms and fires made worse by human-caused climate change. The firestorms ravaging the country's second-largest city are just the latest spasm of extreme weather that is growing more furious as well as more unpredictable. Wildfires are highly unusual in Southern California in January, which is supposed to be the rainy season. The same is true for cyclones in Appalachia, where Hurricanes Helene and Milton shocked the country when they tore through mountain communities in October. Wildfires are burning hotter and moving faster. Storms are getting bigger and carrying more moisture. And soaring temperatures worldwide are leading to heat waves and drought, which can be devastating on their own and leave communities vulnerable to dangers such as mudslides when heavy rains return. Around the world, extreme weather and searing heat killed thousands of people last year and displaced millions, with pilgrims dying as temperatures soared in Saudi Arabia. In Europe, extreme heat contributed to at least 47,000 deaths in 2023. In the United States, heat-related deaths have doubled in recent decades. "We're in a new era now," said former Vice President Al Gore, who has warned of the threats of global warming for decades. "These climate related extreme events are increasing, both in frequency and intensity, quite rapidly." The fires currently raging in greater Los Angeles are already among the most destructive in US history. By Friday, the blazes had consumed more than 36,000 acres and destroyed thousands of buildings. As of midday Friday, at least 10 people were dead, and losses could top \$100 billion, according to AccuWeather. Although it is not possible to say with certainty as any specific weather event unfolds whether it



DAVID GELLES

The writer is on the New York Times climate team



AUSTYN
GAFFNEY

The writer is a reporter covering climate and a member of the Times Fellowship class

was worsened or made more likely by global warming, the Los Angeles fires are being driven by a number of factors that scientists have linked to fire weather and that are becoming increasingly common on a hotter planet. Last winter, Southern California got huge amounts of rain that led to extensive vegetation growth. Now, months into what is typically the rainy season, Los Angeles is experiencing a drought. The last time it rained more than a tenth of an inch was on May 5. Since then, it has been the second-driest period in the city's recorded history. Temperatures in the region have also been higher than normal. As a result, many of the plants that grew last year are parched, turning trees, grasses and bushes into kindling that was ready to explode. That combination of heat and dryness, which scientists say is linked to climate change, created the ideal conditions for an urban firestorm. "Wintertime fires in Southern California require a lot of extreme climate and weather events to occur at once," said Park Williams, a climate scientist at UCLA. "And the warmer the temperatures, the more intense the fires."

A third factor fuelling the fires, the fierce Santa Ana winds, which blow West from Utah and Nevada, cannot be directly linked to climate change, scientists say. But the winds this week have been particularly ferocious, gusting at more than 100 mph, as fierce as a Category 2 hurricane. Fires across the West have been getting worse in recent years. In 2017, thousands of homes in Santa Rosa, California, burned to the ground. The next year, the Camp fire levelled more than 13,000 homes in Paradise, California. In 2021, roughly 1,000 homes burned near Boulder, Colorado. And from the boreal forests of Canada to the redwood groves of Oregon, large fires have been incinerating vast areas of wilderness. "In the last couple years, we've seen an increase in extreme weather events and increasing amounts of billion-dollar disasters," said Kaitlyn Trudeau, a senior research associate focused on wildfires and the West Coast at Climate Central, a nonprofit research group. "It's very clear that something is off, and that something is that we're pumping an insane amount of carbon into the atmosphere and causing the climate systems to go out of whack." — The New York Times

Leading Oman’s transformation march



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

THE Accession Day (January 11) marks a unique day in the calendar of our country. On this day, people recall the passing of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and the accession of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the throne. While Omanis mourn the loss of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, they also celebrate the accession of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the visionary leader guiding Oman's transformation.

The Accession Day mirrors the moment when the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos first came to the throne on July 23, 1970. On both occasions, Omanis have seen the light at the end of the tunnel, bringing brighter futures for both individuals and the nation. History repeats, and Oman continues with its legacy of a long-standing empire. His Majesty's accession marked not only the beginning of a new chapter for Oman, but also a testament to the stability, progress, and prosperity the nation has experienced over the past five years.

Since His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik ascended to the throne, Oman has achieved significant milestones. His era of development has sparked a renewed renaissance in the country. His Majesty has succeeded in implementing remarkable reforms in political, economic and social fields, positioning Oman among the top ranks in numerous global indicators.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's leadership has been characterised by unity and harmony. While much of the world

is facing political conflicts, Oman has remained steadfast in its commitment to peaceful coexistence, both internally and externally. The country's emphasis on social development, attention to citizens' needs, economic stability and a balance between tradition and progress have all contributed to advancing His Majesty's transformation agenda throughout these years.

Being one of the key social developments made, the establishment of the Social Protection Fund is one example of far-reaching reforms that have set a new benchmark for social protection in the region. This fund reforms the social protection system in the Sultanate of Oman and represents the outcome of an ambitious improvement process. It embodies an ambitious and holistic vision that aligns economic changes with social justice.

On the economic front, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has prioritised diversifying Oman's economy beyond its reliance on oil and gas revenues. His Majesty's leadership has implemented wise measures to attract foreign investment and support key infrastructure projects. For instance, the expansion of Oman's ports, logistics hubs and tourism sector has also strengthened the country's position as an important regional hub.

Furthermore, His Majesty has placed a strong focus on renewable energy, particularly solar and wind power. This forward-thinking approach to sustainability has contributed to creating a greener, more

Since His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik ascended the throne, Oman has achieved significant milestones. Indeed, His Majesty's Accession Day is not just a national celebration; it is a reflection of Oman's ongoing progress

sustainable economy, well-prepared to thrive in a changing world. This also serves achieving the carbon net-zero neutrality target by 2050.

Despite all the reforms in various sectors, His Majesty has remained firmly committed to preserving Oman's cultural heritage and national identity. He has consistently emphasised the importance of Oman's rich history, traditions and values. His leadership has seen a renewed focus on expanding cultural institutions, such as museums and art galleries, while promoting Omani culture on the global stage.

Indeed, His Majesty's Accession Day is not just a national celebration; it is a reflection of Oman's ongoing progress.

As the country continues to evolve under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's far-sighted leadership, this day serves as a reminder of His Majesty's vision for the country and his commitment to the welfare of its people. With a strong focus on economic diversification, sustainable development and peaceful diplomacy, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik is ensuring that Oman is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

His Majesty's steady and wise leadership continues to inspire Omani citizens and strengthen the nation's standing as a beacon of peace and prosperity.

As Oman moves forward, the Accession Day will remain a moment of reflection, pride and hope for the future of Oman and its people.

ROBOTS TO MOVE BEYOND FACTORY AS AI ADVANCES

JOHN BIRS

Today's robots perform safety checks at industrial plants, conduct quality control in manufacturing and are even starting to keep hospital patients company.

But soon — perhaps very soon — these increasingly human-like machines will handle more sophisticated tasks, freeing up people while raising complex questions about the roles of artificial intelligence that are gaining attention.

At a panel hosted by the American Association of Retired Persons at this week's Consumer Electronics Show (CES), experts described the next five years as a period where robots transition primarily from industrial sites to service settings, helping to address a worsening healthcare labour crunch. Seeing robotics in places like theme parks or universities "will lead to the companion robot probably at the end of the decade," said Marc Theermann, chief strategy officer for robot company Boston Dynamics.

Cris Gardner, a vice president in futurecasting at AARP, predicted robots will provide emotional support as they enter homes and assist with daily tasks. People "will own a generalised humanoid robot the way they would own a car," she said.

Dystopian prophesies of a robot-centered future have long featured in the public imagination. However, recent breakthroughs in generative AI have given more credibility to predictions of billions of humanoid robots in everyday life. The centrality of robots in the coming years is "widely underappreciated," said a report from Abundance 360, a conference and education venture led by entrepreneur Peter Diamandis.

Robots could enable an "era of unprecedented abundance," lowering costs while freeing humans "to focus on creative and fulfilling pursuits," it said. However, the analysis also identified nine sectors facing potential job displacement, including manufacturing, elder care, agriculture, education and surgery.

"The speed at which multi-modal generative AI and humanoid robot development is progressing, paired with the lack of public discourse on this subject, indicates that there will be significant job disruption and societal upheaval," it said. Disputes over automation have been a recurring factor in labour negotiations, most recently involving US dockworkers, who reached a tentative agreement with a shippers group, averting a strike.

The International Longshoremen's Association permitted ports to add semiautonomous cranes only if more workers are hired, according to the Wall Street Journal. At CES, companies described robots as performing tasks that humans either shouldn't do because they are dangerous, or don't want to do because they are gruelling, tedious, or unpleasant. — AFP

Are high-skill immigrants a problem for the US?

FISSURES

within US President-elect Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" coalition have appeared sooner than expected. By the end of December, the tech-billionaire wing was in open warfare with MAGA's nativist wing over America's H-1B visa programme, which enables US businesses to employ some 600,000 skilled foreigners per year on a temporary basis.

Speaking for the billionaires, Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla (a top H-1B employer), argues that, "There is a permanent shortage of excellent engineering talent. It is the fundamental limiting factor in Silicon Valley." Likewise, Vivek Ramaswamy, another tech billionaire advising Trump, claims that US companies need H-1B workers because, "Our American culture has venerated mediocrity over excellence for way too long (at least since the 90s and likely longer)." In response, MAGA activists like Laura Loomer and Steve Bannon — but also democratic socialists like Bernie Sanders — countered that the programme helps large US corporations at the expense of American workers.

Who's right? While economic research makes clear that immigrants bring sought-after skills, creative dynamism and useful knowledge that also helps domestic innovators, that doesn't mean there is no downside to heavy reliance on H-1B visas. For example, the argument that the H-1B programme helps employers secure STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) skills ignores the fact that if there were no such programme, US educational institutions would feel greater pressure from business to address this need.

The idea of elites pushing the education system to produce workers with useful skills and attitudes goes back at least to Sam Bowles and Herb Gintis's influential 1976 book, Schooling in Capitalist America. Applying their argument



US businesses employ some 600,000 skilled foreigners per year on a temporary basis.



DARON ACEMOGLU

The writer is a 2024 Nobel laureate in economics and Institute Professor of Economics at MIT, is a co-author (with James A Robinson) of Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty

to the present, one would expect corporate America's growing need for skilled STEM workers to translate into advocacy for, and investments in, STEM education. But an over reliance on the H-1B programme may have broken this link and made American elites indifferent to the widely recognised failures of the US education system. Put differently, the problem may not be a cultural veneration of mediocrity, as Ramaswamy argued, but rather neglect on the part of business leaders, intellectual elites and politicians.

This is just a possibility, of course. We cannot say for sure that the response from the education system would be adequate even if it did feel more pressure from the business community. But whatever the case, surely US policymakers should pay more attention to the programme's potential secondary effects.

A similar argument applies to choices about technology. Even as H-1B workers boost innovation, their presence may affect the direction innovation takes. My own work shows (theoretically and empirically) that when the supply of skilled labour increases,

technology choices start favouring such workers. Over the last several decades, businesses have increasingly adopted technologies that favour high-skill workers and automate tasks previously performed by lower-skill workers. While this trend may have been driven by other factors, too, the availability of affordable high-skill workers for the tech industry plausibly contributed to it.

Again, this effect reflects indifference on the part of business leaders and policymakers. It also suggests that if the US is going to rely on H-1B workers, policymakers should consider other adjustments to ensure that corporate strategies and the designs of new technologies seek to make use of workers without STEM skills or college degrees.

A final relevant question is whether programmes such as H-1B could harm source countries by creating a brain drain. This, too, is open to debate. Such programmes could be a win-win if destination economies have technologies, institutions, and other skilled workers that are especially complementary to high-skill immigrants.

©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS



by Burjeel Holdings

24399777



**Hope, Support, and Expertise:
Together Against Cancer**

Dr. Ashok Sebastian Komaranchath
Consultant Medical Oncologist
Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair



www.burjeelhospitaloman.com

SHORTTAKES



Top players shine in WTT Contender Muscat 2025 qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

Chinese Taipei paddler Kuo Guan-Hong, Germany's Cedric Meissner, Slovenia's Deni Kozul, and India's Manush Shah secured their spots in the qualifying round one ahead of the main draw of the ongoing WTT Contender Muscat 2025. Kuo Guan-Hong, ranked World No. 216, produced a magnificent display by defeating his teammate Chang Yu-An 3-1 (12-10, 11-9, 7-11, 11-8) and Dimitrije Levajac from Serbia 3-0 (12-10, 11-9, 11-3).

Cedric Meissner from Germany overcame two Romanian paddlers, including Martin Allegro with a 3-1 win and Rares Sipos with a 3-0 victory, to advance to the first qualifying round, where he will face another qualifier from a different group.

Slovenia's Deni Kozul confirmed his place in the next round after a solid performance in the group stage, defeating Deepash Bhagwani 3-0 and India's Mudit Dani 3-0.

India's Manush Shah progressed to the later stages of the event by overcoming Su Yu-Lun from Chinese Taipei 3-1 in a tough encounter and then outclassing Tomas Polansky from the Czech Republic 3-0 to secure his spot in the upcoming stage.

The women's singles qualifiers also witnessed fierce competition. India's Suhana Saini advanced to the next round after registering two crucial victories: a 3-2 win over Yashaswini Ghorpade and a 3-1 triumph against Hana Arapovic from Croatia.

The women's doubles and mixed doubles competitions will commence on Monday with the first-round matches, while the main draw events are set to begin on Tuesday.

The WTT Contender Muscat offers a total prize pool of \$85,000, alongside significant ranking points up for grabs. The 2025 edition of the WTT Contender Muscat features 200 participants. The seven-day event, organised by the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) in coordination with World Table Tennis (WTT), will conclude on Friday, January 17.

Al Manar racing seal victory at Michelin 24H

AL MANAR Racing by Team WRT's Al Faisal al Zubair, Dan Harper, Max Hesse, Ben Tuck, and Darren Leung sealed a memorable victory in the Michelin Dubai 24H race at the Dubai Autodrome on Sunday. After qualifying in fourth place, the team delivered superb individual stint performances to complete 589 laps of the demanding Dubai circuit in 24 hours and pass the chequered flag a lap ahead of second-placed Pure Rxcing and their crew of Thomas Preining, Harry King, Alexey Nesov, and Aliaksandr Malykhin.

The team led for 255 laps of the race. The Dinamic GT Porsche 911 came home in third, and the SMP Racing Mercedes finished fourth. For Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair, it was a career-defining moment and a fitting start to Al Manar Racing's new partnership with Team WRT with the BMW M4 GT3 Evo.

Al Zubair said: "What an amazing feeling! I've been trying to win this race for a couple of years now, and I started to think that it was not meant to be (laughs). First race with the BMW M4 GT3 Evo, first race with Team WRT—it couldn't have started better than to win the 24 Hours of Dubai. I'm extremely proud to do it under the Al Manar Racing banner, and hopefully, it's the start of a successful journey."

Vincent Vose, CEO of WRT, added: "What a way to start the 2025 season and our partnership with Al Manar Racing. It's a huge achievement to claim the win on the debut of the BMW M4 GT3 Evo. It was a race of determination and executing the perfect strategy. The crew made zero mistakes and performed flawless pitstops, and we know that makes all the difference in these races, so a monumental congratulations to them. I take my hat off to the drivers. It is the first time they have all raced together and in a new car, so I am very proud that we have been able to give them their first overall win at the Dubai 24H, marking our fourth victory here. This makes me very excited for the year ahead!" Hesse took the wheel for the start of the opening stint and managed to lift the BMW M4 into third place behind the early pace-setting Paradine Competition BMW and the Winward Racing Mercedes.



Al Manar Racing celebrate after the victory lap at the Dubai Autodrome.



Al Manar Racing during the race

With just over 40 minutes of the race gone, he moved into second place and led the race after the first hour and the opening 30 laps.

Leung took over after 33 laps and the first pit stop. He was able to maintain the GT3 class advantage but lost the outright lead during the changeover. He then slipped back to third in the GT3 category behind Dinamic GT and Pure Rxcing and into sixth overall.

Al Zubair was next to take over the hot seat with the BMW down in eighth and fourth of the GT3 runners. The Omani delivered an impressive performance to guide the Al Manar Racing by Team WRT car to the top of the standings before the handover to Harper.

He then became embroiled in a tussle with Loek Hartog of Dinamic GT for the race lead with a little over 18 hours to go. Leung then took over, and the team hit the front again with the Pure Rxcing Porsche running in second with over 16 hours on the clock.

Hesse then took the wheel for the evening stint, slipping back to third and second in GT3 after the changeover. However, the Al Manar Racing by Team WRT crew were not to be denied. Superb drives during the night stint and through the morning, after an intense three-way fight with Dinamic GT and Pure Rxcing, enabled Hesse to take the wheel for the final triumphant session to seal a memorable victory after 589 laps of demanding racing.

Leung, Harper, and Hesse carried out the three qualifying sessions on Friday morning and managed to put the Al Manar Racing by Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 Evo in fourth place on the 62-car start grid behind Pure Rxcing's Porsche 911 GT3 R, the Winward Racing Mercedes, and Dinamic GT's Porsche 911.

The first qualifying session was delayed by a red flag following an accident involving the Tresor Attempto Racing Audi R8 LMS GT3 and the Hofor Racing Mercedes-AMG, necessitating track barrier repairs. The Audi was not able to start the race as a result of the damage.

Al Zubair all set for Middle East Rally in Suhar on January 23

MUSCAT: Omani rally driver Abdullah al Zubair announced his return to his favourite sport, the world of rallies. Al Zubair stated that he will compete in the Middle East Rally Championship this season, starting with the first round of the championship hosted by the Sultanate of Oman through the Oman Automobile Association on January 23 to 24.

Al Zubair will drive a Subaru Impreza (N14), which he previously drove in the 2023 Oman International Rally.

Abdullah has participated in many local and regional



Abdullah al Zubair during the race

competitions, including the Middle East Rally Championship, the Jordan National Rally



Omani rally driver Abdullah al Zubair

Championship, the World Desert Rally Championship, and the Baja Championship in Poland, Spain,

Greece and other countries.

Al Zubair explained that he is happy to have the experience of participating in the Middle East Rally Championship this season and returning to the roads and stages again. He seeks, first and foremost, to complete all rounds and obtain good positions in the category (N) if possible. Al Zubair will be accompanied in the seat of the navigator by Taha al Zadjali, who has previously been an assistant to many Omani racers, such as champion Khalid Soomar and his brother Khalil, as well as a racer from Jordan.

Al Zubair stated that "The Oman International Rally is one of the most difficult rallies in the Middle East and requires a lot of effort, patience, and caution, as well as the element of experience to deal with the difficult roads and stages of this rally."

"This year's rally will be held in the Wilayat of Suhar and in new stages that we have never raced or experienced before, so we believe that the competition will be open and strong between the champions of this category, and we wish everyone success in advance," he concluded.



Under His Majesty's Leadership Towards a Brighter Future

We extend our heartfelt congratulations and
express our deepest gratitude to

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
– May Allah protect and bless him –

as we commemorate the anniversary of his
accession to the throne.



مؤسسة الزبير
The Zubair Corporation

www.zubaircorp.com



ACCESSION DAY ANNIVERSARY

Oxy is pleased to extend its sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the 5th anniversary of His Majesty's Accession to the Throne.

We reaffirm our commitment to supporting Oman under His Majesty's strong leadership as we celebrate the Sultanate's continued prosperity.





غرفة تجارة وصناعة عُمان
OMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

11TH January

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry extends its heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to His Majesty

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

– May Allah protect and preserve him –

On the occasion of the anniversary of His Majesty's accession to the throne. We pray to Allah Almighty to bless His Majesty with continued good health and well-being, and to guide his efforts towards achieving further progress and prosperity for the Sultanate of Oman. We reaffirm our loyalty and dedication to His Majesty's wise leadership, steadfastly committed to advancing the path of development and growth under his visionary guidance.



BUSINESS

Madayn secures RO 1bn in five years

THE Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has achieved remarkable growth over the past five years, with a cumulative investment increase of RO 1 billion.

This milestone aligns with Oman Vision 2040, emphasising economic diversification, job creation, and regional development.

Eng Dawood bin Salem al Hadabi, CEO of Madayn, stated that the total investment volume rose from RO 6.6 billion in early 2020 to RO 7.6 billion by mid-2024.

Speaking to the Oman News Agency, he highlighted Madayn's ongoing efforts to enhance Oman's position as a regional hub for manufacturing, ICT, innovation, and business excellence.

Over the past five years, Madayn has established and developed industrial cities across Oman to ensure equitable development.



Over the past five years, Madayn has established and developed industrial cities across Oman to ensure equitable development.

ENG DAWOOD BIN SALEM AL HADABI
CEO, Madayn

materials, alongside support services like vehicle maintenance and warehousing.

Madayn has invested in upgrading infrastructure across existing industrial cities to improve the business environment:

Sohar Industrial City: Phase 7 expansion, costing over RO 13 million.

Nizwa Industrial City: Phases 3 and 4 completed for RO 5.5 million.

Sur Industrial City: Infrastructure developed for over RO 10 million.

Suwaig Industrial City: Planned in North Al Batinah Governorate, it will cover over 10 million square meters and house industries ranging from food processing to pharmaceuticals.

Al Mudhaibi Industrial City: Located in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, this city will leverage its strategic position near major transportation routes to promote logistics, agriculture, and other industries.

Thumrait Industrial City: In Dhofar Governorate, this city will focus on mining and construction



This milestone aligns with Oman Vision 2040, emphasising economic diversification, job creation and regional development.

Al Buraimi Industrial City: Phases 1 and 2 upgraded for RO 5 million.

Additionally, notable projects include the development of Al Mazunah Free Zone (RO 6 million), Samail Industrial City (RO 40 million), and Raysut Industrial City expansion (RO 3 million).

Madayn has also launched initiatives to support investors and drive innovation:

Masar Service Centre: Introduced in 2020, this one-stop solution simplifies approvals, permits, and licenses for investors.

Industrial Innovation Academy: Focused on strategic programs to foster innovation

and sustainability.

Ladayn for Plastic Industries: A collaboration with OQ Group and other entities, this program has localized 16 plastic industry projects with investments exceeding \$150 million.

Looking ahead, Madayn is studying the establishment of an aluminum industrial complex to further diversify Oman's economy.

Madayn's developments reflect its commitment to creating a competitive and investor-friendly environment, supporting the Sultanate of Oman's aspirations under Oman Vision 2040. — ONA



Heartiest Congratulations to
His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the 5th Anniversary
of His Majesty's Accession



Since 1986



OMAN'S MOST TRUSTED BRAND



@shahifoodsandspices
www.shahispices.com



صنع في عُمان
Made in OMAN

Oman unveils blueprint for smart, sustainable cities

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

OMAN'S ambitious urban vision is taking shape, spearheaded by a dynamic blueprint unveiled by Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning. At the recent media briefing titled "Oman and the World," the minister outlined a transformative agenda aimed at positioning the country as a premier investment destination and a pioneer of sustainable urban living.

This strategic push aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, setting the stage for cutting-edge urban developments and thriving communities. Central to Oman's urban strategy is the empowerment of investors and real estate developers through streamlined regulations and collaborative frameworks.

Dr Al Shueili underscored the Ministry's commitment to fostering partnerships between government entities, private investors and stakeholders — a synergy seen as the backbone of Oman's urban renaissance. "Our role is to create an environment where investors can thrive," he stated, emphasising that these partnerships are crucial to driving innovation and sustainable progress in the real estate sector.

At the heart of the urban transformation is Sultan Haitham City, envisioned as Oman's first integrated smart city and a centrepiece of Oman Vision 2040. The city represents a modern urban model, blending advanced planning, technology and sustainability. An international tender for the development and management of its cutting-edge technologies is imminent, signaling Oman's intent to leverage global expertise.

"Sultan Haitham City encapsulates our vision for the future — a city designed for people and powered by innovation," he noted.

In line with global trends, Oman's future projects will integrate smart technologies to ensure efficiency, connectivity and environmental sustainability. From AI-driven infrastructure solutions to state-of-the-art digital services, the Ministry is laying the foundation for a comprehensive digital transformation.

Dr Al Shueili stressed that these initiatives would enhance not only project operations but also the daily lives of residents and visitors.

"Oman's commitment to digital transformation reflects our dedication to harnessing technology for a sustainable and inclusive future," he noted.

While embracing modernity, Oman remains steadfast in preserving its cultural and architec-



Oman's future projects will integrate smart technologies to ensure efficiency, connectivity, and environmental sustainability.

tural heritage.

Dr Al Shueili revealed that new urban planning strategies prioritise community-centric designs, with neighbourhoods featuring accessible markets, mosques and pedestrian-friendly streets.

Modern developments draw inspiration from traditional Omani architecture, creating a seamless blend of the past and the future.

"Our cities will remain a reflection of our rich heritage while embracing the best of modern urban innovation," he affirmed.

The Oman Green Mountain (Al Jabal Al Akhdhar) project has emerged as a standout opportunity for investment. Renowned for its moderate climate and stunning natural landscapes, the project offers a prime location for tourism, housing and real estate ventures. To attract Gulf and international investments, the Ministry has introduced new ownership opportunities, further bolstering Oman's appeal as an investment hub.

"Al Jabal Al Akhdhar represents a perfect harmony of nature and development — a destination poised to attract global attention," the Minister said.

Oman is also leveraging regional expertise to advance its urban agenda. Highlighting Egypt's notable urban development achievements, Dr Al Shueili praised the collaborative efforts between Oman and Egypt's Ministry of Housing. Egyptian companies have expressed significant interest in Oman's burgeoning real estate sector, drawn by the Sultanate of Oman's robust infrastructure and favourable investment climate.

To support a growing population projected to reach 5 to 8 million within the next decade, Oman is embarking on ambitious infrastructure projects.

Plans for the Muscat Metro and an expanded public transport network were unveiled, with a focus on public-private partnerships.

BUSINESS



Manufacturing industries led the way with a contribution of RO 2.19 billion, accounting for 10.5 per cent of GDP.

OMAN’S INDUSTRIAL GROWTH DRIVES ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

MUSCAT: The industrial sector in Oman continues to establish itself as a key pillar of economic growth, contributing RO 4.09 billion to the country’s GDP at current prices by the end of June 2024.

This marks 19.5% of Oman’s total GDP, which stood at RO 20.9 billion. Manufacturing industries led the way with a contribution of RO 2.19 billion, accounting for 10.5% of GDP, while other industrial activities added RO 1.9 billion, equivalent to 9.1%.

Mazen bin Humaid al Siyabi, Assistant Director General for Industry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), attributed this growth to government policies aimed at enhancing economic diversification. He noted that manufacturing’s contribution to GDP rose from 8% in 2020 to 10.5% in the first half of 2024, reflecting steady progress in the sector.

The Royal endorsement of the Industrial Strategy 2040 in May 2024 was a pivotal moment, following extensive stakeholder engagement. The ministry has implemented policies to strengthen the regulatory framework, including approving the Unified Industry Law and the National Product Identity Regulation, while simplifying licensing processes and accelerating customs exemptions.

These measures have sparked a surge in industrial activity. Industrial license applications rose by 62%, from 12,100 in 2020 to over 135,000 by November 2024. Customs exemption requests increased by 42%, and certificates of origin applications reached 77,300, reflecting growth in foreign trade and investor confidence.

“The ministry’s efforts to enhance production capabilities, attract investments, and stimulate innovation have transformed Oman’s industrial landscape,” Al Siyabi said, highlighting the role of modern technology and automation in driving efficiency.

The ministry is also prioritising sustainability by supporting recycling-based industries and implementing initiatives to reduce environmental impacts. Partnerships with industrial establishments have fostered collaboration, while measures to prevent waste exports are enhancing resource efficiency.

Al Siyabi emphasised Oman’s commitment to developing local supply chains, reducing reliance on imports, and fostering self-sufficiency. — ONA

Five new industrial cities prepped for investment across Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 12

THE Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) is preparing to add five new industrial cities to its expanding portfolio of manufacturing hubs that are at the heart of the Omani government’s drive to boost the country’s non-oil economy.

Strategically located in key governorates around the country, these new hubs open up millions of square metres of new acreage for industrial investment. Madayn is currently overseeing the initial infrastructure development of these clusters, designed to ensure that the requisite road, drainage, electricity and water services networks, as well as other support facilities, are in place to attract all manner of local and international investment.

While a number of proposed industrial cities are now in the embryonic stages of conceptualization, at least five others are



More than RO 40 million has been invested in the development of Samail Industrial City’s infrastructure.

preparing to open their doors to investors. The list includes Ibri Industrial City – a 10 million m2 park in Al Dhahirah Governorate targeted at primarily oilfield, mining and quarrying related investments.

Around RO 9 million has been earmarked for the hub’s infrastructure development.

In Musandam Governorate,

infrastructure works at the new Mahas Industrial City are nearly complete. The facility is suited for investments related to light and medium manufacturing, and the food sector.

Al Suwaiq Industrial City in North Al Batinah, covering an area of 10 million m2, is also gearing up for investors eyeing opportunities in the food and pharmaceutical

industries and logistics services sectors.

North Al Sharqiyah Governorate will host its first manufacturing hub when Al Mudhaibi Industrial City launches sometime this year. An initial area of around 2.5 million m2 is being readied for investment in the first phase.

Finally, Thamrait Industrial City is taking shape in Dhofar Governorate with a focus on mining and light manufacturing related activities.

According to a report in the latest edition of Duqm Economist, the newsletter of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the geographical size of Madayn’s industrial cities grew by around 20 per cent to a total of 140.3 million m2 at the end of H1 2024, up from 114.3 million m2 in H1 2020.

Total investment inflows into Madayn’s portfolio climbed to RO 7.4 billion during this period, up from RO 6.8 billion in H1 2020.

Significantly, existing industrial

cities are also undergoing a wave of expansions to cater to growing investor demand.

Suhar Industrial City added Phase 7 to its already sizable acreage following infrastructure improvements worth around RO 13 million.

Likewise, Nizwa Industrial City saw the expansion of Phases 3 and 4 at a cost of RO 5.5 million, while Sur Industrial City witnessed over RO 10 million worth of infrastructure development.

Samayil Industrial City’s infrastructure is presently being developed at a cost of more than RO 40 million.

Other hubs benefitting from expansion and modernization programmes are: Al Mazunhah Free Zone (with RO 6 million in investments), Raysut Industrial City (RO 3 million), and Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM), where Madayn has earmarked RO 7 million towards the construction of the ring road and associated services, including storm water drainage solutions.

CEO TALK

Innovating biodiesel with solar power in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 12

OMAN is making strides in sustainable energy with its first biodiesel biorefinery at Khazaen Economic City, powered entirely by solar energy. In an interview with the Observer, Maher bin Mohammed al Habsi, CEO of Wakud, highlighted how the facility transforms used cooking oil (UCO) into biodiesel, positioning Oman as a regional leader in green industries.

“Our factory is not only a first for Oman but also unique globally for being powered entirely by solar energy,” Al Habsi revealed.

“This innovation has enabled us to export our Omani-made biodiesel to countries in Europe and Asia, proving that Oman can be a leader in green industries.”

A VISION ROOTED IN SUSTAINABILITY

Al Habsi’s journey to leading this groundbreaking project reflects his deep commitment to sustainability and innovation. Starting his entrepreneurial career as a student at Sultan Qaboos University 24 years ago, he ventured into the waste management industry in 2005 by collecting used cooking oil.

This initiative laid the foundation for Wakud’s success and Oman’s emergence as a player in the global biofuel market.

“My path to becoming CEO was built on perseverance and learning from failure. I began collecting used cooking oils in 2005, and today, we convert this waste into high-quality biodiesel,” he said. “The journey was never easy; it was full of sacrifices and hard lessons. But these experiences shaped my vision and commitment to sustainability.”

Wakud’s state-of-the-art facility not only reflects Al Habsi’s vision but also stands as a testament to Oman’s potential to lead in green industries, creating opportunities for economic growth while addressing pressing environmental concerns.

BREAKING BARRIERS IN GREEN INDUSTRY

Wakud’s facility is the first of its kind in Oman and the first in the



“The journey was not at all strewn with roses. It took a lot of sacrifice — of time, relationships, and resources. But success requires patience, the ability to adapt and the strength to rise after every failure.

MAHER BIN MOHAMMED AL HABSII
CEO, Wakud

world to operate entirely on solar energy. Under Al Habsi’s leadership, the company has achieved several milestones that showcase its commitment to sustainability and innovation.

“We are proud to be the first biodiesel factory in Oman and the first in Khazaen Economic City,” Al Habsi noted. “More importantly, our operations run entirely on solar energy, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability. This positions us to lead the biofuel production industry in the region and contribute to Oman’s net-zero ambitions.”

Wakud’s biodiesel is produced by recycling waste cooking oil, a process that not only reduces waste but also minimises the carbon footprint associated with traditional fuel production. The biodiesel is already being exported to countries in Europe and Asia and used locally by energy companies and public sector organisations, further boosting Oman’s reputation as a hub for sustainable innovation.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Establishing and scaling the biodiesel facility came with significant challenges, which Al Habsi navigated with resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to learn.

“The journey was not at all strewn with roses. It took a lot of sacrifice— of time, relationships, and resources. But success requires patience, the ability to adapt, and the strength to rise after every failure,” he explained. “I also learned that trust must always be based on written agreements that protect all parties.”

These challenges shaped Al Habsi’s leadership philosophy, emphasising perseverance and adaptability as key qualities for any aspiring entrepreneur. “I’ve faced countless obstacles, but each one taught me valuable lessons that helped me and my team build a resilient and successful operation,” he added.

LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

Al Habsi stressed the critical role of leadership in building a strong company culture and inspiring teams to work toward shared goals.

“A CEO is the captain of the ship.

My role is to ensure that our ship is ready to sail in any conditions and that the crew is motivated and capable,” he said.

“I believe in fostering a sense of family within our team. When challenges arise, we stand together, united by our shared vision and goals.” This approach has been instrumental in Wakud’s ability to innovate and maintain a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving global biofuel market. By empowering his team and fostering a culture of collaboration, Al Habsi has ensured that Wakud continues to grow and thrive in the green energy sector.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Looking ahead, Al Habsi envisions Wakud playing a pivotal role in Oman’s green energy landscape and contributing significantly to its sustainability goals.

“There are no limits to what we can achieve. We are working on exciting projects that will enhance Oman’s position as a hub for biofuel production,” he said.

“Our efforts align with Oman Vision 2040 and the Sultanate of Oman’s plans to reduce carbon emissions. We aim to make Oman a destination for green industries and contribute meaningfully to global sustainability goals.”

In addition to expanding production capacity and exploring new markets, Wakud is also exploring partnerships and initiatives that support Oman’s broader sustainability objectives, including its commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

Al Habsi shared his optimism for the future: “Indeed, I used to think that building this small factory was a great achievement, but over the years, I’ve realised there are no limits to what is possible. The challenges we’ve faced only strengthened our resolve to innovate and lead.”

Wakud’s journey from a small startup to a globally recognised producer of solar-powered biodiesel illustrates the potential for Oman to lead in sustainable innovation. By aligning with national goals and leveraging local resources, the company is setting a benchmark for environmental stewardship and industrial excellence in Oman.

OPINION

Local development visionary step towards sustainable growth



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of Oman Observer’s Business section

OMAN’S commitment to enhancing the economic and social landscape of its governorates, as highlighted in the recent allocation of RO 44 million for development in 2025, reflects a visionary stride towards inclusive and sustainable progress.

This initiative not only aligns with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 but also underscores the importance of equitable regional development as a cornerstone for national prosperity. Governorate-level development is crucial for addressing disparities in economic opportunities and infrastructure across the Sultanate of Oman.

By dedicating substantial resources to these regions, the government is ensuring that no area is left behind. This strategy fosters balanced growth, promotes entrepreneurship and creates employment opportunities, thereby reducing rural-to-urban migration and its associated socio-economic pressures.

Such initiatives also enable governorates to capitalise on their unique strengths. Whether it’s leveraging the natural beauty of Dhofar for tourism, the industrial potential of Suhar, or the cultural heritage of Nizwa, targeted investments empower local economies to thrive while contributing to the national GDP.

The projects earmarked for 2025 focus on infrastructure, a key enabler of economic

and social progress. Roads, ports and other transport networks enhance connectivity, reduce logistics costs and attract investment.

Similarly, improved social infrastructure, such as schools and healthcare facilities, uplifts communities and contributes to the well-being of residents.

For example, new road networks connecting remote areas not only bring goods and services to underserved populations but also allow local producers to access broader markets. This creates a virtuous cycle of economic activity that benefits both individuals and the nation at large.

A remarkable feature of this development agenda is its emphasis on sustainability. The projects align with global best practices by integrating renewable energy, environmental preservation and community involvement. By fostering sustainable practices, Oman positions itself as a forward-thinking nation, ready to tackle the challenges of climate change and resource depletion.

Investments in renewable energy infrastructure, for instance, not only reduce dependence on fossil fuels but also open new avenues for innovation and job creation. This aligns with the global push towards green economies and strengthens Oman’s international standing as a responsible and progressive nation.

The success of this ambitious initiative hinges on active community participation.

This initiative not only aligns with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 but also underscores the importance of equitable regional development as a cornerstone for national prosperity.

Local governments, private sector players and civil society must work hand-in-hand to ensure that these projects address the real needs of the population. Engaging local communities in planning and implementation fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, which is vital for long-term sustainability.

Moreover, enhancing education and skill development in governorates prepares the workforce for emerging industries, creating a pipeline of talent that can drive Oman’s economic transformation.

Oman’s allocation of RO 44 million for governorate development in 2025 is more than a financial commitment – it’s a testament to the nation’s dedication to building a prosperous and equitable future. By addressing regional disparities, prioritising infrastructure and embracing sustainability, Oman is paving the way for a resilient economy and cohesive society.

As we move closer to realising Oman Vision 2040, it is essential to maintain this momentum and continually assess the impact of these investments.

By doing so, Oman can ensure that every rial spent contributes to a brighter future for all its citizens, irrespective of where they reside. This initiative stands as a model for nations aiming to achieve inclusive growth while preserving their cultural and environmental heritage.

OUTLIER UK’S LEAST-BAD FIX IS VIA A WEAK CURRENCY

BY FRANCESCO GUERRERA

BRITAIN’S latest debt turmoil contains the seeds of its own solution. The recent surge in bond yields exposed the UK’s reliance on foreign capital. A lack of overseas buying of gilt creates fiscal and monetary issues. But this week’s unusual fall in sterling points to a way out of the vicious cycle.

The UK has long relied on the financial kindness of strangers. Its “twin deficits” – in its budget and current account – are the second largest in the G7 group of developed countries behind the United States. That means Britain needs foreigners to fund it. Not surprisingly, international investors owned, 635 billion pounds, or more than 30%, of all UK government bonds as of the second quarter of 2024. That’s way above the 18% average for advanced economies.

This setup works fine in normal times. But when markets get jittery about domestic fiscal problems, as with the 2022 “mini-budget”, or global imbalances, like this week’s fears of rising US debt, UK bonds are in the firing line. Yields on 30-year gilts touched the highest level since 1998 on Tuesday, largely because foreign buyers stayed on the sidelines.

This vulnerability, in turn, puts pressure on the government to take fiscal action by either cutting spending or raising taxes – two measures that are deeply unpopular and curb economic growth. And it calls into question the Bank of England’s bond-selling programme.

But there is a solution hiding in plain sight: a weaker pound. Despite the rise in yields, which increases the attractiveness of sterling-denominated assets, the UK currency has fallen sharply. It is now trading around \$1.23, not far from a 14-month low. On a trade-weighted basis, the pound is the worst-performing major currency this year, according to Deutsche Bank.

That’s good news. A falling sterling has the double benefit of lowering the price of gilts for foreign investors, while making their UK bond holdings more valuable in domestic currencies. In time, a depreciating currency also reduces the current account deficit by making exports cheaper and imports more expensive.

There are side-effects. Costlier imports drive up inflation, which in the UK has proven more stubborn than in other countries. And the Labour government of Prime Minister Keir Starmer will still have to pare public spending to keep the deficit in check. Meanwhile, both politicians and populations tend to focus on the negatives of a weak currency.

If the UK resembled Italy, where most government debt is bought domestically, it might have more options. But since it cannot easily wean itself off its dependence on foreign capital, a falling sterling is the least-bad route out of the current economic bind. It’s also the most likely one. — Reuters

Creating an advanced manufacturing ecosystem

AS global manufacturing undergoes unprecedented transformation through Industry 4.0 technologies, sustainability imperatives, and shifting geopolitical dynamics, Oman emerges as a regional leader in advanced manufacturing and intelligent supply chains.

The country’s strategic location bridging East-West trade routes, combined with robust infrastructure and political stability, creates a compelling foundation for manufacturing and logistics excellence.

Oman Vision 2040’s economic diversification strategy has demonstrated remarkable progress, with manufacturing’s GDP contribution expanding from 0.8 per cent in 1970 to 9 per cent in 2021. This momentum continues to accelerate, as evidenced by the sector’s impressive 8.5 per cent growth rate at the end of the third quarter of 2024 – the highest among all economic activities under diversification initiatives.

The manufacturing landscape is rapidly evolving through strategic government initiatives and private sector investments. In 2024, Oman secured agreements for 100 new industrial projects worth over RO 1.5 billion (approximately \$4 billion). These investments span renewable energy, food industries, air conditioning, construction and plastics across various industrial areas and economic zones. The government has facilitated this growth by simplifying administrative procedures, offering tax incentives and improving access to credit.

Several notable success stories highlight Oman’s growing industrial capabilities. In the renewable energy sector, major investments include a \$1.3 billion polysilicon plant and a \$68 million metal silicon facility by Green Iron Alloys Company in the SOHAR Port and Freezone.

The medical sector has seen significant development with Avenzo Pharma establishing a \$50 million factory in the Khazaen



Oman Vision 2040’s economic diversification strategy has demonstrated remarkable progress, with manufacturing’s GDP contribution expanding from 0.8 per cent in 1970 to 9 per cent in 2021.



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI
yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

The author is founder and CEO - Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor.

Economic Zone, while the Menagen Pharmaceutical Industries Factory opened with investments exceeding \$50 million.

Foreign direct investment has played a crucial role in expanding existing industries. The Prysmian Group, the world’s largest cable production company, acquired a 51% stake in Oman Cables Company, bringing advanced technologies and sustainability commitments.

Similarly, Huaxin Cement Company Limited, one of the global top 10 cement manufacturers, acquired a majority stake in Oman Cement Company, introducing cutting-edge manufacturing processes and diverse business operations.

The future manufacturing landscape centres on smart factories powered by artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT) and advanced robotics. Oman has made significant progress in this direction, with 20 factories already transformed to operate using Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies.

Success stories include Oman Flour Mill Company’s investment in advanced systems for quality improvement and productivity enhancement and AREEE Vegetable Oils & Derivatives Company’s adoption of modern technology

to improve operational efficiency while creating specialized jobs aligned with educational outcomes.

The government’s commitment to green energy is exemplified by its ambitious target of producing 1.38 million tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030. The chemicals sector’s 44 per cent contribution to manufacturing output demonstrates Oman’s ability to build and sustain competitive advantages in strategic industries.

For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), digital transformation offers unprecedented opportunities for global value chain integration. The Future Fund Oman’s substantial \$5.2 billion investment capacity, complemented by targeted programmes like the SME Development Fund and In-Country Value initiative, provides crucial support for business growth and innovation.

Key growth sectors identified for Oman’s manufacturing future leverage the country’s natural advantages. Renewable energy and green hydrogen production capitalise on abundant solar and wind resources. Advanced petrochemicals and materials processing build on existing industrial strengths.

CLASSIFIEDS

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC
The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalar, Massage Dhara etc.... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care
Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com



FOR SALE

FIND your dream home in Muscat's finest residential neighbourhoods near a children's park and sports promenade, a 6 room villa in Al Ghubra South opposite Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

For more details, contact: 91377029.

Driving School
Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)
Contact No: 99074072



SIT. VACANT

LOOKING for a Local Sponsor cum Investor to start a new profitable industrial business in Oman. Email — pradeepdivakar69@gmail.com

FOR RENT

16,000 sqm (2 portions of 8,000 sqm each). Open yard/ storage area with compound wall, 24 hours CCTV surveillance & other amenities, for rent in Al Jifnain close to Muscat Nizwa Highway. Contact: 99105784.

IN Ruwi, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, hall, kitchen, with car parking. RO 150 monthly only. Tel: 94402003.

**PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.**
Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]
Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

FOUR STAR TECHNICAL SUPPLIES LLC
(FORMERLY OMER NASSER AL FALAHY & PARTNERS TRAD. CO. LLC)
"Quality products defined by exceptional service"
Our Products:
ELECTRICAL, BUILDING MATERIAL, HARDWARE, OILFIELD INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT & TOOLS

KNIPEX, DEWALT, Schneider, Honeywell, DELTA, HITACHI, DORMER, Makita, BOSCH, Beta, Milwaukee, STANLEY, MOLYSLIP, IRWIN, MK, OLFA, ALUMITE, shindaiwa, Clarke, Brill, USAG, STEINEL, KLINGSPOR, PCE, SENCOR, DURACELL, KING TONY, OSRAM, Milano, ELORA, VICTOR, RIDGID, METZ CONNECT, CRC, Wera, DEVCON, BLACK & DECKER
P.O. BOX 3897, P.C. 112, RUWI, MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: +96824837874, Fax: +96824831341
Mobile: +96899354944
Email: onasser@omantel.net.om / nelson@onasser.com

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male 14 years experience light/ heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman. Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkadrou@gmail.com

SALES & Marketing Expert, Indian, Have DL@NOC, looking for a job in any sector. Contact: 78501743

SENIOR accountant - Indian male above 11 years' experience (9years in Oman) NOC & D/L available. Contact: 78109909. Email: shinsjohn@gmail.com

A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, BSc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

29 years old Indian female, MBA holder with 2 years experience. Seeking a suitable position. Currently in Muscat on visit visa. Contact: 78641071, shazashakeel@gmail.com

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

RETAIL Store Manager with 15 years of experience in Retail Fashion, Home, Decor, Perfume and Beauty. Currently working in Oman. Actively seeking new opportunities. Tel: 94126212 ehteshamzaidi@yahoo.in

B. COM. 35 years of experience in accounts, sales coordinator, admin, HR, personal assistant, document controller with Oman D/L, looking for a job. Contact: 92558734

DRAFTSMAN with 10 years Oman experience with D/L is looking for suitable opportunities. Contact: 94408342

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

SRI LANKAN Male — (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking. Contact: 78773250. Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with overs 6 years of experience Detail-Oriented Financial Professional: Expert in Accounting, Audit Prep and Expense Management. Contact: +968 78320801, Ready to join immediately.

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence. Contact: 78002582 Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

Indian Male /CPA, CMA, CA Finalist & BCOM/ 10+ years of Experience/ Currently Working as Finance Manager, Looking for Senior Management Roles in Finance. Contact: 78611653. Email: jobcpacma@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with 5 years expertise in Accounts Payable, Receivables, Financial Reporting, VAT, Payroll, and Bank & Cash Reconciliation. Actively looking for new opportunities. Contact: 79791746 Email: Ibrahimsaw52@gmail.com

4 years experience as Sales Manager at automobile showroom in Kerala. Skilled in sales, customer relations & team coordination. Seeking roles in sales, operations ect. Willing to consider entry-level position with potential for career growth. Contact: 76986562, Age 27

Sales Consultant with 2+ Years of Experience in Luxury Retail Looking for job, A better Opportunity. Mobile: 00968 78753577 E-mail: ummerayazmj@gmail.com

INDIAN Female, M-Tech in Environmental Engineering, B-Tech in Civil Engineering. 7 years of Teaching experience as Asst. Professor, 2 years of professional experience in civil construction and soil investigation. Seeking suitable job, now in Muscat. Contact: 95136664, 79620397 Email: mayakrish.1804@gmail.com

BUSINESS

LOOKING for an Investor to start a local business. Contact: 78501743

HOTEL FOR RENT/SALE
PRIME LOCATION IN QURUM HEIGHTS LUXURY HOTEL

CONTACT NOS: 99643760 / 92192020
7 STORIED BUILDING WITH 44 SUITES, BREAKFAST AREA RESTAURANT & OTHER FACILITIES.

**PTC Rent A Car**
Travel & Tours
9345 3444

**Quality car rentals at competitive prices.**
Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com
Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
Choose from a wide range of brands & models
PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease
اوربیت ORBIT Car Rental & Lease

FOR RENT

HOUSE for rent Barka / Al Haram Number of rooms: 2 bathrooms: 3 Kitchen Hall Council Spacious courtyard For inquiries and communication via WhatsApp: 92921907/ 92190016

Ajib Trading LLC
Opal Spec Portacabin Rental 20 to 150 Man Camp Setup. Contact: 99036395 - 99411263

ANNOUNCEMENT

A Reputed MEP Company in Muscat is Hiring Urgently

1- Mechanical Engineers (HVAC/ Plumbing)

2- MEP Engineers.

3- Estimator (HVAC).

Exp-Level: 4-6 years (Oman Exp: Preferable)

Send CV to meemcollchr@gmail.com

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

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



ART/LIFE



HERE'S WHY NIZWA IS THE BEST DESTINATION FOR A DAY TOUR

BY YERU EBUEN

NIZWA stands as one of Oman's oldest and most historically rich cities. Esteemed as a centre of culture and heritage, Nizwa was once the capital of Oman and remains pivotal in the country's historical narrative. Its evolution over centuries is evident in the blend of modern amenities and traditional architecture that characterises the city today. For travellers venturing into Oman, Nizwa offers an unforgettable day tour that captures the essence of its heritage, stunning landscapes and

vibrant local life.

As you embark on your adventure in Nizwa, begin your day by indulging in a cup of coffee at one of the many charming rooftop cafes. Athar Cafe is particularly recommended, where patrons are treated to a special view of Nizwa Fort, setting the perfect backdrop for your explorations ahead.

Once energised, the first stop should undoubtedly be the illustrious Nizwa Fort. This architectural marvel is not only picturesque but also steeped in history. Built initially in the 9th century to serve the Imam and his guests, the fort has become an emblem of Omani her-

itage. The late afternoon light casts a glorious golden hue over the fort's robust walls, enhancing its beauty and providing an ideal photograph opportunity. Unlike historical sites in many other countries, visitors to Nizwa Fort are free to roam, allowing for a truly immersive experience. You can hop from terrace to terrace, relishing breathtaking panoramic views that stretch far into the distance.

The fortified complex comprises both a fort and a castle, though it is commonly referred to simply as Nizwa Fort. Exploring its many rooms reveals the intricacies of Omani architecture, but the outdoor terraces remain the highlight for many. For those keen to experience a magical sunset, timing your visit just before dusk will reward you with an enchanting spectacle as the light changes and the landscape transforms.

To avoid the crowds, it is advisable to visit in the afternoon, as the fort tends to be less busy than during the morning rush. Alternatively, for a unique experience, consider visiting at night. If you choose this option, arriving a little before sunset allows you to witness the fort's beauty in both light and darkness.

After your explorations, meander to the nearby Nizwa Souk, the city's second most popular attraction. What sets Nizwa Souk apart from other markets is its authentic atmosphere, making it an essential part of your visit. As evening falls, the souk comes alive, offering a great respite from the harsh sun and an opportunity to wander until 10 pm.

The eclectic mix of goods on offer is astonishing, from traditional swords and suits of armour to exquisite Omani handicrafts such as oil lamps and handmade pottery. Be sure to start your souk adventure in the outdoor market area, where colourful souvenirs await. Venturing indoors, you'll find a delightful selection of local delicacies, including sweets like Halwa and refreshing fruit juices. This section of the souk is tailored more towards locals, featuring produce, homewares and antiques, providing an authentic glimpse into daily Omani life.

ENTERTAINMENT

Imelda Staunton and Bridgerton actress daughter star in West End play



DAME IMELDA Staunton and her daughter Bessie Carter are to star opposite one another in a West End play.

Bridgerton actor Bessie, 31, the only child of the Olivier award-winning star and Downton Abbey's Jim Carter, will play Cambridge graduate Vivie in the revival of George Bernard Shaw's "Mrs Warren's Profession."

The comical drama, written in the 1890s, was banned in Britain and had its first performance in 1902.

Veteran theatre star Staunton, who played Queen Elizabeth II in series five and six of "The Crown" and Dolores Umbridge in the "Harry Potter" films, said doing the play is a "treat."

"The new year felt like the perfect time to return to the stage in 'Mrs Warren's Profession,' a play which asks ever-pertinent questions about the role of women in society and the choices they make for survival," she said.

"I couldn't be happier to be stepping into the rehearsal room with my very great friend and colleague Dominic; and my brilliant daughter Bessie. What a treat for 2025."

Director Dominic Cooke commented: "Although 'Mrs Warren's Profession' is over 120 years old, it still has the power to shock with its frank and provocative examination of the exploitative nature of society and the double standards applied to women.

Staunton's first Olivier award came in 1985 for her supporting roles in "A Chorus Of Disapproval" and "The Corn Is Green," and was followed by an award for "Into The Woods" in 1991.

In 2013, she won the best actress in a musical gong for her role in "Sweeney Todd" and in 2016 she won in the same category for her role as Mama Rose in "Gypsy."

In 2024, Staunton received a damehood in the King's Birthday Honours for her services to drama and charity.

Her daughter Bessie has starred in plays including "Dear Octopus" at the National Theatre and "King Lear" at The Old Vic, but is most known for playing Prudence Featherington in the hit Netflix Regency-inspired drama "Bridgerton."

The production will open at the Garrick Theatre on May 22, with previews from May 10 and will run until August 16.

— PA Media/dpa

QUICK FEATURES



LIFESTYLE

Artists perform with traditional floats during the "Blacks and Whites" carnival parade in Pasto, Colombia. — AFP



FILM

Japanese actress Anna Sawai poses with her award for Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Television Series — Drama Award for "Shogun" in the press room during the 82nd annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills. — AFP



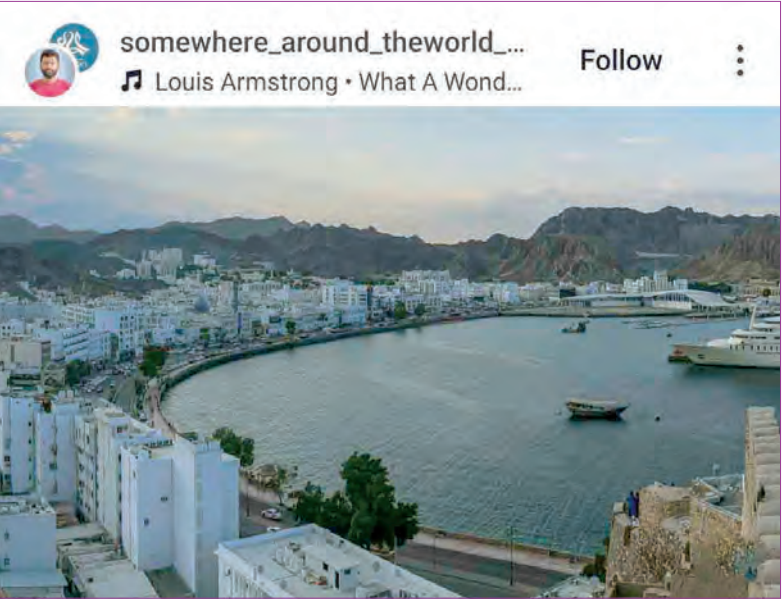
TRAVEL

A man rides a horsecart past the Luxor Temple in Luxor, an ancient Egyptian temple complex located on the east bank of the Nile River. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Proud Heritage



View from the Top

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

When They Hear Plants Crying, Moths Make a Decision



THE DISCOMFORT of sitting next to a crying baby on an airplane may parallel how moths perceive stressed plants. When certain plants experience stress, they emit a series of ultrasonic clicks, resembling a sombre melody. Remarkably, some moths can detect these sounds, and recent research indicates that these insects may use the clicks as a signal to determine suitable locations for laying their eggs. This intriguing finding was detailed in a paper published online and submitted to the journal eLife.

According to Rya Seltzer, an entomologist at Tel Aviv University and a study co-author, this discovery sheds light on the communication between plants and insects. “Plants emit sounds, and insects are really listening to that,” Seltzer noted. The research focused on the Egyptian cotton leafworm, which can hear these ultrasonic clicks, aiming to

uncover whether the female leafworms rely on such sounds when deciding where to lay their eggs—a critical decision for their offspring’s survival.

Initially, the team demonstrated that the female leafworms favoured laying eggs on healthy plants over stressed, dehydrated ones. Following this, they conducted further experiments to investigate if the ultrasonic clicks played a role in their decision-making process. Crucial findings were revealed when moths were presented with two tomato plants—one healthy and silent, the other also healthy but emitting recorded distress sounds. The moths showed a clear preference for the quieter plant for egg-laying.

Seltzer emphasises the need for additional research to understand how moths might integrate acoustic signals with other cues, such as scent.

— GENNARO TOMMA / NYT



Raspy-voiced hit machine Rod Stewart turns 80

SINGER ROD Stewart, who helped British rock conquer the world with a string of megahits, turns 80 on Friday -- with no plans to slow down.

Stewart, with his distinctive spiky blond hair and raspy voice, dominated pop charts during the 1970s and 1980s with hits like “Young Turks”, notching up more than 250 million record sales worldwide.

He also made headlines for a prolific love life that included relationships with a string of models and actresses including Britt Ekland.

Despite his landmark birthday, Stewart says he has no plans to retire.

“I love what I do, and I do what I love. I’m fit, have a full head of hair and can run 100 metres (330 feet) in 18 seconds at the jolly old age of 79,” he wrote last year.

The star will play the legends slot at the famed Glastonbury music festival this summer.

Although his forthcoming European and North American tour dates will be his last large-scale project, he has said he plans to concentrate on more intimate venues in the future.

He will headline a new residency in Las Vegas from March to June.

A tour is also slated for 2026 for Swing Fever, the album he released last year with pianist and ex-Squeeze band member Jools Holland.

As he has approached his ninth decade, Stewart has also made headlines for quirkier reasons such as his passion for model railways and his battle with potholes that have prevented him from driving his Ferrari near his home in eastern England.

The singer, who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 2016, has been married three times and has fathered eight children. His third wife is model and television personality Penny Lancaster.

- FROM LONDON TO GLOBAL STAR -

Stewart’s story began in north London on 10 January 1945, when Roderick Stewart was born into a middle-class family.

After a “fantastically happy childhood”, he developed a love of



music when his father bought him a guitar in 1959, and he formed a skiffle band with school friends a year later.

He joined the band Dimensions in 1963 as a harmonica player, exploring his love of folk, blues and soul music while learning from other artists such as Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger in London’s blossoming rhythm and blues scene.

Stewart’s career took off in 1967 when he joined the renowned guitarist Jeff Beck’s eponymous new band, which also included future Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood, allowing him to develop his raw and soulful vocal style and stagecraft while exposing him to a US audience.

He and Wood took up the offer to join mod pioneers Small Faces following the departure of their singer Steve Marriott in 1969 -- the band soon changing its name to The Faces -- shortly before Stewart

released his debut solo album.

It was his 1971 third solo release, “Every Picture Tells a Story”, that confirmed him as one of the world’s most successful artists, reaching number one in Britain, Australia and the United States, where it went platinum.

The album helped define Stewart’s rock/folk sound, featuring heartfelt lyrics and heavy use of unusual instruments such as the mandolin, particularly prominent on the album’s standout hit “Maggie May”.

“I just love stories with a beginning, middle and end,” he once said.

- ‘I HAD THE LAST LAUGH’ -

Focusing on his solo career after 1975, Stewart’s song released in 1978 was not to everyone’s taste.

“Once the most compassionate presence in music, he has become a bilious self-parody -- and sells more records than ever,” Rolling Stone magazine said in 1980.

Never one to be cowed by the critics, Stewart defended this phase, telling an interviewer that audiences “absolutely love it, so I had the last laugh”.

Richard Houghton, author of the book “Tell Everyone -- A People’s History of the Faces” said that Stewart had “possibly the most distinctive voice in rock music”.

The singer had successfully combined writing classic songs of his own such as “Maggie May” or “You Wear It Well” with taking other people’s songs -- from Bob Dylan to Tom Waits -- and making them his own .

More recently, there had been four albums of the “classic songs of the 1930s from his Great American Songbook catalogue”.

Houghton said audiences could expect to see plenty more of Stewart.

“He’s like any entertainer. He loves the spotlight. He’s not going to sit at home watching the television when somewhere around the world there’s a crowd wanting to hear him sing ‘Mandolin Wind’ or ‘First Cut Is The Deepest’ one more time.

“Rod will keep singing until the day he drops,” he added. —AFP



We extend our sincere congratulations and warmest greetings to

His Majesty Sultan
Haitham bin Tarik

- May the Almighty protect and bless him –
on the auspicious occasion of his Accession Day.
His vision and guidance continue to be a source of strength and unity for Oman, and we take this opportunity to pledge our loyalty and honour his steadfast commitment to the nation's progress.

ominvest
أومينفست