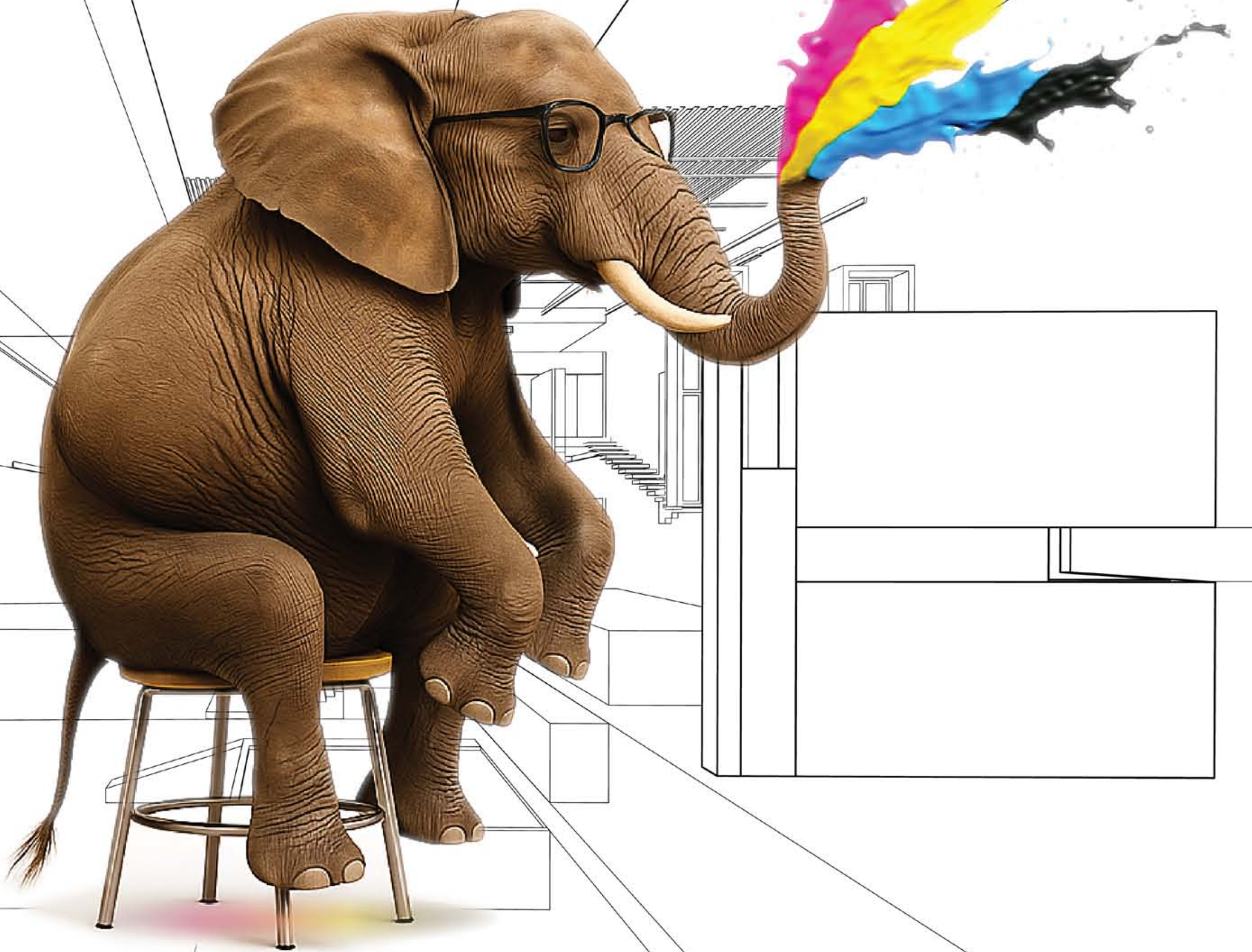




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Tributes pour in for former Indian Social Club chairman

Dr. Sathish Nambiar leaves behind a rich legacy of service, compassion, cultural leadership, and community unity



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The expatriate community in Oman is mourning the loss of Dr. Satish Nambiar, former chairman of the Indian Social Club (ISC), who passed away in India on Thursday morning.

Dr. Nambiar died after a brief illness at a hospital in Mangalore. Widely regarded as a father figure within the ISC fraternity, he served the Indian diaspora in Oman for many decades, earning deep respect for his leadership, compassion, and community spirit.

Eminent social worker P.M. Jabir described him as a “friend, philosopher and guide.” He added: “An extraordinary leader, an orator par excellence, an organiser nobody can match. I owe him immensely. He shaped who I am today. He encouraged and supported me greatly in reaching out to Indians in difficult situations. The Indian diaspora across the Gulf will miss him dearly. Adieu Doc, the world without you is unthinkable to me.”

Senior ISC member Suhail Khan said the former chairman was a remarkable human being whose leadership and kindness shaped the community for decades. “A respected physician, Dr. Nambiar practised medicine with

empathy and excellence, touching countless lives. Outside his profession, he was a sportsman and a quiz champion, a man whose sharp mind and warm camaraderie uplifted everyone around him.”

Dr. Nambiar was also considered the doyen of cultural activities in Oman. Through both the Indian Social Club and his dynamic platform “Doc LLC,” he championed the arts, nurtured talent, and brought communities together through vibrant cultural events. His work transformed the cultural landscape and established a legacy that will endure for years.

He stood at the frontline during crises, be it during Cyclone Goni or the COVID-19 pandemic. He was known for his calm, decisive leadership and commitment to ensuring help reached those in need. His humanitarian work extended to India, where he supported relief efforts during major calamities.

For Khan, Dr. Nambiar was “a champion forever.” He said: “He was an institution, someone from whom there was always something to learn. A leader, visionary, friend, father figure, and even a godfather to my daughter, he enriched our lives with his warmth, wisdom, and boundless generosity.”

Another ISC member, Shakeel Kommoth, said: “A respected physician, a cultural pioneer, a sportsman, and a steadfast humanitarian, Dr. Nambiar touched countless lives through his healing hands, visionary initiatives, and tireless commitment to people in need. To many he was a leader; to many more, a guardian.”

He added that Dr. Nambiar’s values - service, unity, empathy, and cultural excellence - will continue to inspire generations within the Indian community in Oman.

Expressing solidarity, Sirajul Haque, Chairman of the Bangladesh Social Club in Oman, said: “We offer our heartfelt condolences on the passing of the former chairman of the Indian Social Club. We are extremely saddened and pray to the Almighty to grant peace to the departed soul and strength to the family during this difficult time.”

Dr. Nambiar leaves behind a rich legacy of service, compassion, cultural leadership, and community unity, one that will be remembered and cherished across Oman and beyond.

The Indian Social Club will hold a condolence meeting at 7pm on Sunday, 7th December, at the ISC Multipurpose Hall.

COMMENTARY

Disciplinary penalties under Oman’s labour law: Mandatory procedures and time limits



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



Oman’s Labour Law sets clear legal boundaries on how and when an employer may impose disciplinary penalties on a worker, ensuring that any punitive action follows a fair and documented process.

Speaking to the Times of Oman, Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Founding Partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, explained that “an employer shall not impose any penalty unless the worker is first notified in writing of the alleged violation, given an opportunity to present their defence, and have their statements recorded in an investigation report. Disciplinary action cannot proceed without these steps.”

He added that, “the law also imposes strict timeframes to ensure timely and fair resolution. Under the provisions of the labour law, an employer cannot hold a worker accountable for a violation discovered more than 30 days earlier. Furthermore, a disciplinary penalty cannot be applied more than 60 days after the violation has been proven. These limits prevent employers from using old or stale incidents to penalize employees.”

Additionally, “the law places



clear caps on the severity of penalties. For any single violation, a fine may not exceed the wage of five days in one month, and a disciplinary suspension without pay may not exceed five days in one month. These limits ensure that disciplinary measures remain proportionate and are not applied in an unduly harsh manner, he said.”

Regarding investigative procedures, he stated that “the law sets clear requirements for conducting workplace investigations. The employer may conduct the investigation directly or delegate it to another employee, provided that the investigating employee’s job level is not lower than that of the worker being investigated. For serious violations, the

investigation may be entrusted to an external specialist. The worker under investigation has the right to review all documents and obtain copies, ensuring transparency and enabling the worker to prepare an adequate defence.”

He concluded by stating that “the Labour Law establishes a structured framework for workplace discipline, requiring proper notice, thorough investigation, timely action, and proportionate penalties, thereby safeguarding employees from arbitrary or unfair disciplinary measures.”

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



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Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards Achieved by PSM Students!

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Pakistan School Muscat has once again upheld its distinguished reputation for academic excellence by securing **nine prestigious positions** in the **Outstanding Cambridge Learner Awards, Oman**, for the June 2025 examination series. This remarkable achievement reinforces PSM’s long-standing tradition of securing top distinctions in IGCSE and Cambridge O Level examinations.

Our students demonstrated exceptional dedication and brilliance across multiple subjects. **Muhammad Abdul Rahman Qureshi** achieved **Top in World** in **IGCSE English as a Second Language (Speaking Endorsement)**. **Umer Hafeez** and **Asfia Nadeem** achieved **Top in Oman** in **AS and A Level Information Technology**.

In an extraordinary display of linguistic excellence, **Aliha Rashid**, **Fatima Muhammad Shoaib**, **Manal Muddasir**, and **Mujtaba Hassan** secured **Top in Oman** in **Urdu as a Second Language**, while **Abeerah Farhan** and **Muhammad Hamzah Iqbal** were awarded **High Achievement Awards** for their outstanding performance in **Islamiyat** and **Pakistan Studies** respectively.

The Chairman Board of Directors **Mr. Ameer Hamza**, Senior Principal **Mr. Abdul Raheem**, Principal **Mr. Gul Rahim**, and Head of Academics **Dr. Rifat Saba** congratulated the students, parents, and teachers, and deeply appreciated the tireless dedication of faculty members **Ms. Fouzia Rahim**, **Mr. John Tariq**, **Mr. Ali Haider**, **Mr. Hamid Raza**, **Ms. Shumaila Haseeb**, and Coordinator **Ms. Irum Ashfaq**, whose guidance played an instrumental role in this success.

As Pakistan School Muscat proudly celebrates its **Golden Jubilee**, these stellar results stand as a powerful testament to the institution’s enduring strength and academic vision. **This achievement is not only a celebration of the past 50 years of excellence— it is a bold statement that PSM enters its next 50 years even stronger, more determined, and more committed to shaping future leaders with distinction.**

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Umer Hafeez



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94,876 calls received by commerce ministry through its Call Centre

Listening to feedback of beneficiaries is a key pillar of Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion's development approach and its efforts to enhance government services and increase competitiveness

Times News Service

MUSCAT: From January to November of the year 2025, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) received 94,876 inbound calls through its Call Centre, conducted 14,269 outbound calls, and recorded 4,868 missed calls.

It also handled 75,556 inquiry tickets and 1,693 voicemail tickets. Arabic-language calls accounted for 96.10%, compared with 3.90% in English.

Based on these insights, the MoCIIP has adopted an integrated methodology to maximise the use of customer feedback, with the aim of enhancing service quality and providing an improved experience for all beneficiaries, including business owners, entrepreneurs,



innovators and authors. The methodology relies on monthly review and analysis of all interaction points, including calls and inquiries received via the Call Centre, Tajawob platform, customer vis-

its to the Service Centre as well as qualitative tools such as the 'mystery customer' (mystery shopper) approach.

This direction builds on the project launched by the MoCIIP

in 2022 to advance the service-improvement ecosystem, in alignment with national efforts in digital transformation and to raise overall customer satisfaction levels.

Ahmed bin Salim bin Ali Al Rasbi, Director General of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre at the MoCIIP, and Supervisor of the Customer Service Improvement Programme,

stated that the methodology developed in 2025 focuses on analysing the feedback and challenges faced by customers, studying the frequency of recurring issues to determine priorities and accelerate response, while maintaining sustainable development plans for services and applying the latest global best practices in government service delivery.

This approach has contributed to higher operational efficiency and faster transaction processing, in addition to advancing several development projects.

He highlighted key outcomes achieved under this framework, notably the expansion of service-delivery channels and improvements in processing speed.

The MoCIIP has provided easier and more diverse access points for users, most notably the recently inaugurated service lounge of the Oman Business Platform at Al Arai Boulevard in Muscat Governorate, a modern model designed to streamline the business journey and accelerate procedures within an integrated digital environment. Enhancements to procedures, improvements to the working environment and extended service hours in some halls led to a 77% increase in processing speed for a number of services, reflecting the MoCIIP's effective response to customer feedback and the impact of the adopted methodology.

Al Rasbi emphasised that listening to feedback of beneficiaries is a key pillar of the Ministry's development approach and its efforts to improve government services and enhance competitiveness, in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

He further added that further initiatives based on partnership with investors and business owners are under development, ensuring that the customer experience remains a central priority.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT



Shura Council holds extensive meeting with CEPA project team

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Economic and Financial Committee of the Shura Council held an extensive meeting on Thursday with the project team for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India. The meeting comes as part of the committee's efforts to review and clarify the economic and investment aspects of the Draft agreement.

During the meeting, the CEPA team delivered a detailed visual presentation outlining the agreement's provisions, sections, and annexes, highlighting its role as a competitive advantage for the Sultanate of Oman that would strengthen its position as an attractive investment hub. Committee members raised a series of detailed inquiries regarding various elements of the agreement.

The Economic Committee expressed its sincere appreciation



to the CEPA project team for the technical insights and economic data they provided on the draft agreement. The committee discussed a proposal regarding the attraction of global low-cost airlines to operate at Sohar Airport, noting the added economic value such operations would bring both in stimulating tourism activity and expanding travel options for citizens and investors.

The committee also reviewed a proposal to establish a national credit guarantee centre for small and medium enterprises (SMEs),

with the aim of facilitating their access to financing and supporting their growth. The committee examined a proposal to enhance support for national factories and boost their competitiveness in both local and international markets.

The meeting was held as part of the committee's third regular session for the third annual sitting (2025-2026) of the 10th term (2023-2027), chaired by Ahmed Saeed Al-Sharqi, and in the presence of their Excellencies members of the committee.

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The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism aims to highlight Oman’s moderate winter climate, diverse tourism offerings, adventure sites, rich cultural heritage, and well-developed infrastructure, positioning the country as an ideal winter tourism destination

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has launched a comprehensive package of promotional initiatives to enhance Oman’s position as a premier tourism destination in the region during the 2025-2026 winter season, which continues to see a growing influx of visitors.

As part of its strategic plans, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism aims to highlight Oman’s moderate winter climate, diverse tourism offerings, adventure sites, rich cultural heritage, and well-developed infrastructure, positioning the country as an ideal winter tourism destination.

Promotion efforts include digital campaigns targeting key markets in the GCC, Asia, and Europe.

Activities highlighted include desert and mountain camping, cave exploration, wildlife and beach trips, as well as cultural and seasonal events across the governorates.

The Ministry has also participated in international tourism exhibitions in collaboration with government and private sector partners, alongside organising media and travel agency familiarization trips to showcase Oman’s integrated tourism offerings.

“These initiatives support the objectives of the National Strategy for Tourism 2040, aiming for sustainable sector growth, increased economic contribution to GDP, and greater global visibility for the Sultanate,” the Ministry stated.

The promotional campaigns are designed to boost tourist arrivals



from target markets and increase hotel occupancy rates, with local and GCC markets encouraged to “Try Our Winter.”

The campaign features short promotional videos, with SMEs participating in content production, and social media campaigns.

Haitham Mohammed Al Ghasani, Director General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry, noted that this year’s focus is on quality promotional programmes, digital marketing, and market expansion in collaboration with public and private partners.

Notably, the winter season will welcome the tourism vessel Islamic Cruise, anchoring at Salalah Port for the first time.

Varun Khimji Ramdas, of Khimji Ramdas Group, described the winter season (October to April) as a golden opportunity for tourism, contributing to the local economy through increased hotel occupancy, demand for transport and restaurant services, and activation of cultural and sports events across the governorates.

The Sultanate of Oman has witnessed significant growth in tour-

ist arrivals from key international markets up to October 2025. The Russian market saw a remarkable 140% increase, while arrivals from Switzerland and the Netherlands rose by 49% to 60%.

Spain recorded a 21% increase, Gulf countries between 6% and 17%, and some Asian markets saw a 5% growth. New markets, including the Nordic countries, Poland, and Austria, contributed an additional 11% to 25% rise in tourist numbers.

Charter flights played a key role, bringing 93,000 tourists—an in-

crease of 26% over last season—through 588 flights compared to 466 previously.

For the current season, over 640 charter flights are expected to bring 110,000 tourists from targeted markets, generating more than US\$100 million in economic returns.

Economic revenues of US\$80 million were achieved last season from accommodation, transportation, and tourist trips, excluding additional sources such as aircraft landing, stopping, and refueling fees.



Mohammed Kamal Makki, director of Barr Al Jissah Resort, highlighted the winter season as a “special period driven by strong regional and international demand,” particularly from Europe, the UK, and Russia.

He noted that Oman’s favorable climate, natural landscapes, marine adventures, and authentic Arabian hospitality continue to attract travelers.

The Barr Al Jissah Resort’s three hotels—Al Waha, Al Bandar, and Al Hosn—remain popular among international tourists, offering cultural experiences combined with relaxation. The winter season also boosts group and incentive travel, contributing to high occupancy across the resort’s 640 rooms.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism continues to strengthen Oman’s appeal through extensive promotional programmes, international partnerships, tourism content development, and initiatives that encourage the private sector to provide innovative visitor experiences. These efforts aim to elevate Oman’s position as a leading global tourism destination.— With inputs from OMA

Over 42,000 inactive and expired commercial registrations cancelled

Through this regulatory operation, MoCIIP sought to restructure commercial data, boost market transparency, improve the reliability of economic and administrative indicators used by various government entities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion has carried out the largest regulatory operation of its kind since the establishment of the commercial registry in the Sultanate of Oman. More than 42,000 inactive and expired commercial registrations were cancelled in

four consecutive phases, aiming to restructure commercial data, enhance market transparency, and improve the reliability of economic and administrative indicators used by various government entities. This measure was implemented in accordance with the provisions of the Commercial Registry Law and its executive regulations, and



in full coordination with relevant authorities to ensure compliance with legislation and safeguard stakeholder rights. Nasra bint Sultan Al Habsi, Director General of Commerce at the Ministry, stated that the cancellation process followed a thorough

review of the commercial records, ensuring they were free of obligations with the Tax Authority, Ministry of Labour, and Royal Oman Police. Lists of records slated for cancellation were published for 30 days in line with legal procedures. The first phase involved the cancellation of 3,410 records dating from 1970 to 1999. The second phase saw the removal of 35,000 records from 2000 to 2020. The third phase included 1,116 records, and the final phase concluded with 2,638 cancellations between March and November 2025. Al Habsi emphasized that this initiative helped resolve long-standing legal irregularities, as inactive records had distorted data across government platforms, affecting indicators related to private sector size, SME growth, and labor market statistics. The enforcement of Article 14 of the executive regulations restored

discipline to commercial activity regulations and prevented non-compliant or inactive records from remaining in official databases. She added that cleansing the commercial database directly improved the efficiency of digital systems linked to the registry and the “Invest Easy” platform by removing outdated and duplicate data that had burdened system updates and inter-agency integration. The move also supported the formal economy by reducing the risk of unauthorized use of inactive records, eased administrative burdens on inspection teams, and allowed greater focus on active market entities. The cancellation also enabled owners of expired records to settle dormant obligations, avoid accumulating fines or liabilities, and reopen new records without legal hindrance. It improved employer listings at the Ministry of Labour

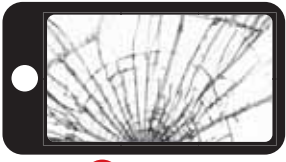
and removed non-operational establishments from systems, enhancing the accuracy of Omanization data and labour market indicators. Al Habsi concluded that cancelling inactive commercial records is a fundamental solution to decades-old accumulations and forms part of a broader regulatory reform of the commercial sector. It reflects the Ministry’s commitment to transparent enforcement of legislation, improving data quality, and empowering government bodies and investors with accurate and reliable indicators. She affirmed that the Ministry will continue periodic and systematic reviews and cancellations to ensure the commercial database remains up to date, strengthen governance, enhance digital system performance, and foster a more transparent and sustainable business environment in Oman.

ARAB LEAGUE HQ

Finance Minister honoured with excellence award

CAIRO: Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi, Minister of Finance, was honoured with the “Arab Government Excellence Award”. He merited the “Best Arab Minister” title in the Award’s 4th edition in 2025. This was unveiled during a ceremony held at the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo on Friday. In a statement on the occasion, Al Habsi said, “This honour reflects the status attained by the government work system in the Sultanate of Oman under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.”

Al Habsi pointed out that this achievement is not only a tribute to an individual, but rather the culmination of integrated institutional action that portrayed a spirit of teamwork focusing on efficiency, transparency and quality of services. He added that the accomplishment poses double responsibility to maintain this status and calls for more efforts to foster the culture of excellence and enhance cooperation with Arab countries in a manner that contributes to building a more innovative future of government action. — **ONA**



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OBITUARY

The Management Committee and the members of the



Indian Social Club Oman

express their heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of our former Chairman, Dr. Sathish Nambiar.



1952 - 2025

May the Almighty grant eternal peace to the departed soul and give strength to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

Parts of Oman see below 10°C temperature

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Musandam Governorate witnessed a notable drop in temperature on Saturday, with residents of the Sai area reporting a low of 8°C. This marks one of the coldest readings in the Sultanate in recent days, falling below the 10°C threshold.

According to satellite imagery,

Musandam and surrounding regions experienced scattered rainfall on Friday, contributing to the cooler conditions.

Lowest temperature
Meanwhile, official data from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) of Oman confirms that Saiq, located in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, recorded the lowest temperature

in the past 24 hours at 6.7°C.

Other areas
Other areas such as Haima, Al Qabil, and Ibra also saw temperatures ranging between 13.5°C and 14.6°C.

All readings were collected from meteorological stations operated by the Civil Aviation Authority.



Competitive atmosphere at the 2025 World Sailing Inclusion Championships

Outstanding organisational success reflects Oman's readiness to host global championships



MUSSANAH: The second day of the inaugural World Sailing Inclusion Championships 2025, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and organised by Oman Sail, continued on Friday with intense competition and participation from around the world. The races, held at the Mussanah Sailing School at Barceló Mussanah Resort, run until 8 December across four internationally recognised classes.

The championship showcases exceptional levels of skill and readiness, following a three-day specialist training programme delivered by World Sailing to develop the capabilities of sailors, coaches, and race officials, while reinforcing the core principles of inclusion and enabling athletes with different disabilities to compete from a unified starting line.

A distinguished lineup of world-class para sailing athletes is competing in Oman with strong ambitions for podium finishes. In the One Person Keelboat (Hansa 303) fleet, competitors include Chile's Zaida Pérez, France's Gauthier Brill, Britain's Rory McKinna, Germany's Jens Kroker, and Italy's Alessandra Franchi—all prominent names in the global para sailing arena.

In the Two Person Keelboat (RS Venture Connect), Poland's duo Piotr and Olga entered the competition with confidence, joined by Britain's team led by Adam and Jazz, Norway's Henriette and Sol, and Sweden's Veja and Kro.

In the Visually Impaired (Far-East 28R) event for, Britain's veteran Lucy Hodges leads, while Australia's Kylie Forth and Spain's Dani Pich are also expected to deliver some of the championship's most exciting races.

The participation of these accomplished athletes brings exceptional competitive momentum to the inaugural edition, promising thrilling and high-



stakes racing as they contend for places on the podium.

The second day of the 2025 World Sailing Inclusion Championships delivered strong performances and close competition across all four classes.

In RS Venture Connect, team Poland, featuring Piotr Cichocki and Olga Gornas-Grudzien moved to the top of the leaderboard after a consistent and powerful showing. Team Norway represented by Stian Kristiansen and Elliot Finnestrand held on to second place following a series of tightly contested races. Sweden's Fia Fjeldahl and Patrik Rosenberg climbed into third, while Norway's Henriette Smith and Solfrid Lindhjem Kvinnesland slipped to fourth despite a strong start on Day One.

In the Hansa 303 class, Great Britain's Rory McKinna extended his lead with another standout performance. Japan's Takumi Niwa remained close behind in second, and Portugal's João Pinto held third with steady, strategic sailing.

In the ILCA 6 class for athletes with intellectual impairments, Great Britain's Murray Macdonald continued to dominate, retaining first place. Hong Kong, China's Tsz Hin Cheung moved into sec-

ond, while the UAE's Marwan Sulloom impressed with results that pushed him into third.

In the FarEast 28RS fleet for visually impaired sailors, Great Britain's team led by Lucy Hodges maintained first place thanks to exceptional coordination and technical skill. Spain's Daniel Anglada Pich advanced to second, while the British team led by Karl Haines dropped to third. Another British crew, captained by Vicki Sheen, finished the day in fourth.

Justin Bridgemohan, from Trinidad & Tobago, said: "Everything is handled with great professionalism. The services provided to athletes are excellent. The atmosphere is motivating, and the organisation makes it easy for sailors to focus fully on their performance."

American sailor Dylan Young from Seattle, competing in Hansa 303, described the event as: "A world-class championship in every sense. The organisation is exceptional, and the facilities are impressively accessible. Everything is prepared to ensure a smooth and comfortable experience."

Nawaf Al-Ghadhani, Deputy Head of Sailing Schools at Oman Sail and Event Course Race Offi-

er, said: "The level of competition reflects the months of preparation undertaken by the organising committee. The races are running smoothly and in full compliance with international para sailing standards."

He added: "This first edition marks a milestone in the global journey of sailing for persons with disabilities. Bringing athletes of various disability categories together in one competitive environment promotes inclusion and supports the global development of this sport."

Oman is represented by seven sailors from the SailFree programme in the RS Venture Connect and Hansa 303, delivering promising performances.

The championship featured an exhibition for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to support local entrepreneurs and showcase their products during the event. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism participated with a booth highlighting Oman's rich heritage, giving participants and international delegations a chance to learn more about the country. Tourism trips were also organised, including visits to key landmarks in Muscat, the Dimaniyat Islands, Rustaq, and Nizwa, as well as traditional markets, forts, castles, springs. These activities offered a well-rounded experience combining sport, tourism, and culture in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Visit Oman.

As the largest ever event in the history of sailing for persons with disabilities, the 2025 edition reinforces Oman's commitment to Oman Vision 2040, particularly in human development, sports, and sustainable tourism.

The championship continues until 8 December, with final results to be announced during the closing ceremony.

Times OF OMAN

Printed and published by: Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zedjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

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ADVERTISING: Telephone: 22009004, E-mail: amcoman@choueirigroup.com
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HEALTH CAMP

Special event organised by Nepal Embassy Muscat



MUSCAT: The Embassy of Nepal in Muscat successfully organized a comprehensive program on Friday, 05 December 2025 at Nepal House, Muscat. The event featured presentations useful to Nepali workers regarding labour awareness and financial literacy, an interactive session with H.E. the Ambassador, Passport-Consular and Health check-up camp.

The official event commenced with H.E. Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal to the Sultanate of Oman, lighting the traditional Panas Lamp. A few presentations were made to provide insightful and useful information to the gathering.

The presentations covered important topics including Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in daily life, maintaining physical and mental well-being while abroad, Social Security Fund, "Do's and Don'ts" in Oman, as well as labour awareness and financial literacy. These sessions aimed at equipping workers with essential information for a safer, more productive life. The presentations were delivered by Mr. Bishesh Kumar Sah, First Secretary; Mr. Damodar Gnawali, Labour Attache; Dr. Kamal Aryal, a Nepali doctor; Mr. Shyam Bhattarai and Mr. Binod Kumar Das, members of the NRN

Social Club Oman. Recognizing the challenges workers face in accessing services during regular working days, the Embassy organized a Passport and Consular service Camp. This initiative specifically targeted individuals unable to take leave on weekdays or those traveling from distant areas. Concurrently, a Health Camp free of cost was conducted by a medical team of 6 members from Badr Al Sama Hospital to provide basic health check-up services. Participants expressed their happiness and appreciation for the special event being held on a weekend, facilitating both awareness and access to essential services.

Prior to the formal occasion, H.E. Dornath Aryal convened the 11th Development Diplomacy meeting in the presence of representatives of Oman based Nepali organizations. Discussions centered on the role of the Embassy, diaspora's contribution to policy reforms and worker's welfare, and coordination for organizing events for Nepal promotion in the field of tourism, investment, trade and employment. Mr. Suresh Khadka, President of NRN Social Club Oman handed over a letter inclusive of suggestions to review relevant policies.

TAX ENVIRONMENT

Oman's VAT rate of 5% is among the lowest worldwide

< FROM A1 Additionally, no income tax is levied on individuals to date.

While these rates are moderate, foreign companies may face slightly higher costs than in some GCC countries that exempt foreign corporate profits.

The low VAT rate of 5% is among the lowest worldwide, reducing operational costs compared to countries with higher VAT rates, such as 20% in Europe and 7% in Singapore.

Further incentives include tax

exemptions in special economic zones and free zones.

Advocate Dr. Khalifa bin Saif Al Hinai, founder of Khalifa Al Hinai Advocates and Legal Consultancy Office, noted that Oman's tax system, like those in other countries, had initial challenges which have since been reviewed and addressed.

He emphasised that facilities should consider the interests of merchants and individuals if income tax is introduced for individuals but stated that taxation does not hinder investment in Oman.

CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

< FROM A1 Normal operations to return soon

"While this will not get resolved overnight, we assure you that we will do everything in our capacity to help you in the meantime and to bring our operations back to normal at the earliest."

"We are known for our reliability but in these last few days we have a serious operational crisis. For many customers, their journeys were cancelled, and many of you were at the airports with long wait times and little information."

India's Civil Aviation Minister, Ram Mohan Naidu, announced on Friday that the new flight duty time limits had been placed in abeyance with immediate effect.

"Without compromising on air safety, this decision has been taken solely in the interest of passengers, especially senior citi-



zens, students, patients and others who rely on timely air travel for essential needs."

He further added that his ministry expected schedules to stabilise and operations to return to normal very soon.

STRATEGIC EXPANSION

OQ Gas Networks acquires Ghazir gas transmission pipeline for OMR39.9mn

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks announced the completion of acquisition of the gas pipeline with diameter of 36 inches at the concession block 61 (Ghazir) from the Government of Oman.

The deal of acquisition exceeded OMR39.9 million and included 65 kilometres of basic structure for transmission of gas, which represents a strategic expansion for the natural gas transmission network in the Sultanate of Oman.

The addition of Ghazir 61 gas pipeline to the base of assets is a vital achievement in the unification of the ownership, operation and maintenance of the assets of natural gas transmission in the Sultanate of Oman under the umbrella of OQ Gas Networks, which supports the company's long term



strategy for boosting the efficiency and resiliency of the basic structure of energy.

Mansour bin Ali Al Abdali, Chief Executive Officer of OQ Gas Net-

works said that this strategic expansion in the network boosts the integration of the energy systems in Oman.

This acquisition enhances the



company's vision in the field of basic structure of energy and is a key pillar in the support of economic and industrial growth in the Sultanate of Oman, he added. — OMA

India invokes regulatory powers to curb surge pricing by some airlines

In order to protect passengers from any form of opportunistic pricing, India's Ministry of Civil Aviation has invoked its regulatory powers to ensure fair and reasonable fares across all affected routes

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Civil Aviation has taken serious note of concerns regarding unusually high airfares being charged by certain airlines during the ongoing disruption, according to the Ministry of Civil Aviation release.

In order to protect passengers from any form of opportunistic pricing, the Ministry has invoked its regulatory powers to ensure fair and reasonable fares across all affected routes.

An official directive has been issued to all airlines mandating strict adherence to the fare caps that have now been prescribed. These caps will remain in force until the situation fully stabilises.



The objective of this directive is to maintain pricing discipline in the market, prevent any exploitation of passengers in distress, and ensure that citizens who urgently need to travel, including senior citizens, students, and patients, are not subjected to financial hardship during this period.

The release stated that the Ministry will continue to closely monitor fare levels through real-time data and active coordination with airlines and online travel platforms. Any deviation from the prescribed norms will attract immediate corrective action in the larger public interest.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has directed airlines, especially IndiGo, to implement measures immediately to resolve the severe disruption to flight

schedules and stabilise services without delay, an official statement said.

Two orders have been issued to address problems faced by the public and restore service stability, especially on IndiGo.

The order said, "It is expected: All flight schedules would stabilise and begin returning to normal midnight tonight; Full services and stability should return over the next couple of days; Passengers can track delays, if any, from home through information system installed by IndiGo and others; In the event of flight cancellation IndiGo will ensure automatic full refund for tickets."

"If passengers are stranded, they will be put up at hotels where accommodation has been booked by airlines. Special measures have

been taken to ensure senior citizens are not discomfited in any manner. They will be provided with lounge access; Passengers of delayed flights will be provided with refreshments and other necessities; A 24x7 control room at the Ministry of Civil Aviation is constantly monitoring the situation on a time basis," the order further read.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation said that the Central Government is fully alert to the woes of air passengers and is in constant consultation with all stakeholders. "Every possible measure, including rule exemptions as announced by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation on Friday, will be taken to restore schedules and ensure stability to mitigate the public's woes," the statement added. — ANI

'We are working to bring operations back on track'

NEW DELHI: Amid widespread flight disruptions that left thousands of passengers stranded across the country, IndiGo on Saturday said that it is working to stabilise its operations. The airline added that cancellations have dropped below 850 flights compared to previous days and urged travellers to check the latest flight status online and seek refunds if needed.

As per the statement from the airline, "IndiGo is working determinedly to bring its operations back on track across the network. Our teams are focused on stabilising schedules, reducing delays, and supporting customers through this period. Today the number of cancellations has dropped below 850 flights, much lower compared to yesterday. We're continuing to work towards reducing this number progressively over the next few days."

"We are addressing all customer refunds on priority. We are also working closely with all airports and partners to ensure timely updates are provided to customers at terminals, on our website, and via direct notifications. We

strongly urge our customers to check the latest flight status at <https://www.goindigo.in/check-flight-status.html> before proceeding to the airport as we are diligently working to add more resilience to our processes. For refund assistance, please visit <https://www.goindigo.in/refund.html> or contact our customer support," the statement reads.

IndiGo operations across India remained severely disrupted even on Saturday, with more than 100 flights cancelled, leaving thousands of passengers stranded at airports in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Guwahati, and other cities.

According to airport data accessed today, several major hubs reported significant cancellations by IndiGo. Hyderabad Airport recorded 69 planned cancellations, including 26 arrivals and 43 departures. At Delhi Airport, operated by GMR, 86 IndiGo flights were cancelled for the day, comprising 37 departures and 49 arrivals. Ahmedabad Airport also reported disruptions, with 35 departures and 24 arrivals listed under planned cancellations. — ANI

MERGER

Netflix to buy Warner Bros. for \$72 billion

NEW YORK: Netflix will acquire parts of Warner Bros. Discovery for \$72 billion (€84 billion), the streaming giant announced late on Friday.

If regulators approve, the merger would unite two of the biggest names in entertainment, Netflix and Warner Bros., the studio behind "Harry Potter", "Game of Thrones" and the DC films.

The combined company would control a vast library of movies and shows, from Stranger Things and Squid Game to Warner's century-old catalogue. Netflix will acquire Warner Bros.' film and television studios, HBO Max and HBO.

"Our mission has always been to entertain the world," Ted Sarandos, co-chief executive of Netflix, said in a joint statement with Warner Bros. Discovery.

Sarandos said the deal would combine Warner Bros.' "incredible library" of films and TV shows with Netflix's signature productions. — DW

US SECURITY PLAN

EU's Kallas downplays fear of rift in ties

BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas on Saturday sought to downplay tensions with the US after the Trump administration released a national security paper that sharply criticized European allies.

Kallas's remarks come as many European leaders fear that the US government is increasingly turning its back on the continent, particularly with regard to support for Ukraine as it defends itself against an unprovoked invasion by Russian forces.

"There's a lot of criticism [in the paper], but I think some of it is also true; if you look at Europe, it has been underestimating its own power towards Russia," Kallas said on a panel at the Doha Forum in Qatar.

"We should be more self-confident," she said, adding that the "US is still our biggest ally."

"I think we haven't always seen eye to eye on different topics, but I think the overall principle is still there. We are the biggest allies and we should stick together," Kallas said.



What did the US national security paper say?

The US National Security Strategy document, which was posted on the White House website overnight to Friday, echoes criticisms of Europe already presented in a blistering speech by Vice President JD Vance at the Munich Security Conference in February.

The strategy also appeared to espouse the white supremacist Great Replacement conspiracy

theory, according to which white European populations are being deliberately replaced by non-white peoples.

The paper said several countries risk becoming "majority non-European" and Europe faces "the real and stark prospect of civilisational erasure." It added, "Should present trends continue, the continent will be unrecognisable in 20 years or less."

The strategy plan said Eu-

rope was faced by issues such as "censorship of free speech and suppression of political opposition, cratering birthrates, and loss of national identities and self-confidence."

"Our goal should be to help Europe correct its current trajectory. We will need a strong Europe to help us successfully compete, and to work in concert with us to prevent any adversary from dominating Europe," it said. — DW

FROM DECEMBER 10

India and US to hold trade talks in New Delhi

NEW DELHI: India and the United States are scheduled to hold trade talks in New Delhi starting December 10, government sources said on Saturday.

The discussions aim to take forward negotiations on the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) between the two countries.

On November 28, the chief negotiator of the deal from India, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal had said that India is hopeful of signing the first tranche of the India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement within the current calendar year.

Addressing the FICCI Annual General Meeting, he indicated that talks have progressed substantially despite recent shifts in global trade conditions.

Reflecting on the negotiations done so far, the Secretary said, "I think our expectations...we are very optimistic and very hopeful that we should find a solution within this calendar year." — ANI

MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

How Donald Trump brings MAGA ideals into global politics

WASHINGTON DC: Days after the presidential election in Honduras, the two leading candidates are still neck and neck. At one point, only about 500 votes were separating the centrist Salvador Nasralla and the conservative Nasry Asfura.

This was reason enough for US President Donald Trump to pipe up for his favourite, Asfura. "Looks like Honduras is trying to change the results of their Presidential Election. If they do, there will be hell to pay!" he posted on his own social media platform Truth Social.

There have been allegations of election fraud on both sides. This is not uncommon in Honduras, where serious allegations of the like overshadowed the elections of 2013 and 2017. But since Honduras is a small country with little influence over global politics, why has Trump reacted so strongly?

For Cathryn Clüver-Ashbrook, a trans-Atlantic expert at the independent German Bertelsmann Foundation, the US president has clearly taken a liking to the idea of political spheres of influence.

"He sees himself almost as imperial in his role in the White



House, and he likes it when the world dances to his tune — especially in the Western Hemisphere. And it must be emphasized that these are his interests, not those of traditional US foreign policy."

One of his "spheres of interest" seems to be Latin America. "The military operations off the coast of Venezuela, the well over \$20 billion that went to Argentinian President (Javier) Milei to save his election, the intimidation of the Colombian head of state, the election recommendation in Honduras, with threatening postures," Clüver-Ashbrook lists.

"A new policy is emerging here that the US has not pursued so actively toward its neighbors in Latin and South America for a long time."

Interference in Europe

But Europe is also a target.

In Poland, Trump openly supported the nationalist-conservative EU skeptic Karol Nawrocki.

In Hungary, he stands behind Viktor Orban.

In Germany, the US government and the far-right AfD party are currently intensifying their contacts.

Just a few days ago, the US instructed its diplomats to promote anti-immigration policies in Europe.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank that is closely aligned to Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement, has actively lobbied against the EU's climate targets. In April, it published "Project 2025," which is



considered a blueprint for restructuring the US government.

In the first year of his second presidential term, Trump has radically changed the US's foreign policy. More radically than almost any of his predecessors, he is breaking with the unwritten principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of allied states.

Trump sees Europe as a 'parasite' exploiting the US

In this context, domestic and foreign policy are essentially one and the same for the US president, concluded Celia Belin, the author of a study by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) in May 2025. She argued that the US president saw his foreign policy

primarily as an international continuation of the cultural struggle raging within the US.

"Liberals and Democrats are the enemy within; Europeans are their extension outside," she wrote. She went on to say that Trump perceived Europe as a "parasite" exploiting the US, just as he accuses Democrats in the US of weakening the country.

"An ideologization of US foreign policy can already be found in the core documents of Project 2025," agreed Clüver-Ashbrook, explaining that these argued that US foreign policy should be more closely aligned with strict conservative values.

This, she continued, fits in with the attitude of Trump's former

campaign advisor Steve Bannon, who recently described Russia in an interview as a "devoutly Christian nation" and a "true ally during World War II."

She explained that the Trump administration was breaking with previous foundations of US foreign policy and pursuing a "major ideological shift" driven by "very strategic ambitions regarding foreign policy."

Clüver-Ashbrook pointed out that Europeans were not only on ending the war in Ukraine but there had been several occasions, on which left-wing liberal Europeans in particular had been treated with contempt by representatives of the US government.

She cited a Signal chat about a potential US attack on Yemen that was leaked by The Atlantic, a US magazine, earlier this year, in which US Vice President JD Vance said that it would benefit Europe more than the US. "I just hate bailing Europe out again," he wrote. And in response, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who now calls himself Secretary of War, wrote: "I fully share your loathing of European free-loading. It's PATHETIC." — DW

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) continues its efforts towards developing the bond and sukuk market in Oman by strengthening policies and regulatory frameworks for this type of financing product and creating long-term lending financing instruments related to green and sustainable finance.



The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded its second best trading value this year in November, at OMR649 million, after record trading in October, with trading volume rising to more than OMR1.074 billion.

MUSCAT: Total refinery production in the Sultanate of Oman recorded a growth of 10.9 percent until the end of October 2025 according to the preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI)

However, the production of car fuel decreased by 5.8 percent by the end of October 2025 compared to September 2025.

The production of regular car fuel increased by 16.8 percent to



reach 14.25 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 12.20 million barrels during the same period in 2024. Domestic sales also recorded an increase of 1.4 percent to reach 11.91 million barrels compared to 11.74 million barrels by the end of October 2024. However, exports decreased by 15.8 percent to reach 216 million barrels compared to 2.56 million barrels by the end of October 2024.

While the production of premium car fuel recorded an increase of 21.1 percent to reach 11.71 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 9.67 million barrels during the same period of 2024.

Sales also increased by 1.9 percent to reach 11.27 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 11.65 million barrels until the end of October 2024. Meanwhile, exports achieved a growth of 117 percent to reach 1.24 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 572,800 barrels in the same period of last year.

Gas oil production (diesel) witnessed an increase of 10.3 percent recording 28.47 million 900 barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 25.82 million barrels until the end of October 2024. Its sales also increased by 6.9 percent to reach 12.59 million barrels

by the end of October 2025 compared to 11.77 million barrels during the same period last year. Exports increased by 10 percent to reach 15.40 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 14.80 million barrels at the end of October 2024.

While jet fuel production decreased by 7.4 percent to 8.71 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 9.41 million barrels during the same period in 2024, its sales decreased by 4.1 percent to 3.20 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 3.33 million barrels during the same period last year. Exports

decreased by 10.2 percent to 5.27 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 5.87 million barrels at the end of October 2024. LPG production witnessed a 14 percent increase to reach 6.38 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 5.60 million barrels by the end of October 2024. Sales also increased by 22.7 percent to reach 3.20 million barrels by the end of October 2025 compared to 2.61 million 800 barrels in the same period in 2024. Exports also increased by 62.9 percent to reach 499,600 barrels compared to 306,800 barrels at the end of October 2024.

Regarding petrochemicals, NCSC statistics showed that benzene production increased by 2.9 percent to 149,100 metric tonnes by the end of October 2025 compared to 144,900 metric tonnes during the same period in 2024. Paraxylene production also achieved growth of 6 percent to 497,200 metric tonnes by the end of October 2025 compared to 469,000 metric tonnes by the end of October 2024. Polypropylene production also grew by a massive 94.4 percent to 299,400 metric tonnes by the end of October 2025 compared to 154,000 metric tonnes during the same period last year. Despite this significant growth in production, its sales declined by 3.8 percent to reach 25,300 metric tonnes by the end of October 2025 compared to 26,300 metric tonnes in the same period in 2024.

On the export side, benzene exports increased by 0.9 percent by the end of October 2025 to reach 146,600 metric tonnes compared to 145,300 metric tonnes by the end of October 2024. Paraxylene recorded a growth of 10 percent to reach 525,500 metric tonnes by the end of October 2025 compared to 477,600 metric tonnes in the same period last year. Polypropylene exports also recorded a remarkable growth of 85.8 percent to reach 214,200 metric tonnes by the end of October 2025 compared to 115,300 metric tonnes in the same period of 2024. - ONA

ROME: World food commodity prices declined in November, led by lower international quotations for all major staple foods except cereals, according to the benchmark measure released by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of a basket of globally-traded food commodities, averaged 125.1 points in November, down 1.2% from its revised October level. The index has now declined for three consecutive months, standing 2.1% below its November 2024 level and 21.9%

The FAO Cereal Price Index increased by 1.3% during the month. Despite a generally comfortable global supply outlook and reports of good harvests in Argentina and Australia, global wheat prices rose by 2.5% in November, supported by potential Chinese interest in

supplies from the United States of America, and expectations of reduced plantings for the 2026 harvest in the Russian Federation.

International maize prices also rose, underpinned by firm demand for Brazilian supplies, while the All Rice Price Index declined amid subdued import demand for India

The FAO Vegetable Oil Price Index fell by 2.6% from October, as declines in palm, rapeseed and sunflower oil quotations more than offset a modest increase in soyoil prices, which were supported by strong demand from the biodiesel sector, particularly in Brazil.

Dairy Price Index declined by 3.1% in November, led by lower quotations for butter and whole milk powder. The decrease reflected rising milk production and abundant export supplies in major producing regions.

Sugar Price Index declined by 5.9% from October. -WAM

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LINCOLN

MARKET

Oman’s bond and sukuk market rises by 15.6% to OMR4.98 billion

Bonds and sukuk also represent safe investment instruments for a large segment of investors in the Omani capital market, as the trading volume of bonds reached OMR36.814 million by the end of the third quarter of 2025 on the Muscat Stock Exchange, the volume of sukuk reached OMR15.423 million

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) continues its efforts towards developing the bond and sukuk market in the Sultanate of Oman by strengthening policies and regulatory frameworks for this type of financing product and creating long-term lending financing instruments related to green and sustainable finance. The total value of the bond and sukuk market in the Sultanate of



Oman reached OMR4.98 billion at the end of the third quarter of 2025 compared to OMR4.308 billion at the end of 2024, recording an increase of approximately 15.6%. Bonds and sukuk also represent safe investment instruments for a large segment of investors in the Omani capital market, as the trading volume of bonds reached OMR36.814 million by the end of the third quarter of 2025 on the Muscat Stock Exchange, the volume of sukuk reached OMR15.423 million. Within the regulatory framework, the development of this sector was enhanced by the regulatory framework for the issuance of bonds and sukuk, which established a comprehensive framework that regulates public and private issuances, and ensures transparency, investor protection,

and market confidence. The regulations for bonds and sukuk were issued to reinforce this trend, and provided an updated framework that facilitates issuance processes and keeps pace with the development of debt instruments. The regulations are also considered a flexible legislative framework that stimulates innovation due to the diversity of financing products it introduced, whether in terms of the types or purposes they serve, most notably green and sustainable bonds and sukuk, and endowment sukuk. The regulations also allow for the creation of special types of bonds or sukuk that take into account the nature of the financing need, and are suitable for the investor and the entity issuing this security. Data issued by Muscat Clearing



and Depository Company showed a clear trend in trading activity, with institutions recording higher levels of transactions compared to individuals, with purchases amounting to about OMR39.9 million by the end of the third quarter of 2025 compared to OMR12.3 million for individuals. Institutional sales reached OMR46.6 million compared to OMR5.6 million for individuals. These figures reflect the influential role of institutions in stimulating trading and increasing liquidity. At the investor level, data shows that Omani investors continued to lead the transactions, as the value of Omani purchases of securities amounted to OMR43.6 million compared to OMR8.7 million for foreign investors. Omani investors recorded sales worth OMR43.9

million compared to OMR8.3 million for foreigners. Statistics regarding the value of debt instruments up to the end of the third quarter of 2025 showed a clear concentration of ownership among Omani investors, whose market value reached approximately OMR4.75 billion, representing 97.20 percent of total ownership. In contrast, foreign investors' ownership amounted to approximately OMR137 million, or 2.80 percent. Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, Chairman and CEO of United Securities, attributed the rise in the bond and sukuk market in the Muscat Stock Exchange and global markets to increased demand for them, as a result of the interest rate cuts approved by the US Federal Reserve during the year, and expectations

that this approach will continue. This led to an increase in total trading on the stock exchange, especially in the bond and sukuk sector. He explained in a statement to the Oman News Agency that the increased demand from investors to buy bonds and sukuk also comes in light of the instability witnessed in global financial markets. He pointed out that the rise in bond and sukuk prices on the Muscat Stock Exchange gives a strong boost to the rise in the shares of listed companies, which differ from their counterparts in global markets in that they provide rewarding returns even with their high prices, and he considered this factor an additional incentive that contributed to attracting more investors to the Muscat Stock Exchange. - OMA

OMAN BOURSE

Muscat Stock Exchange records its second-best trading value in November



MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded its second best trading value this year in November, at OMR649 million, after record trading in October, with trading volume rising to more than OMR1.074 billion. The MSX benefited last month from the buying interest of local investment funds and institutions and individual Omani investors, coinciding with rising share prices, increased market value, and the rise of the main index for the fifth consecutive month. Last month, investors sought to increase their investment portfolios by focusing on the shares of banks and companies of the OQ Group listed on the stock exchange. Bank Muscat topped the list of most traded companies in terms of trading value with trades of about OMR135 million, representing 20.8 percent of the total trading value. OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) came in second place with trading value of OMR104.2 million, followed by Bank Sohar International, which witnessed trades worth OMR102.6 million. OQ Basic Industries came in fourth place with trades worth OMR72.2 million, while Asyad Shipping came in fifth with trades amounting to OMR58.1 million, representing 8.9 percent of the total trading value. Stocks strengthened their gains during the past month, with the prices of 47 securities rising, compared to 37 securities whose prices declined and 20 securities that remained unchanged at their previous levels. The gains recorded by leading stocks pushed the main stock exchange index up by 95 points, ending November trading

at 5,705 points, after rising by 428 points in October and 151 points in September. The industrial sector index rose 39 points, the services sector index recorded an increase of 89 points, and the Sharia index rose 26 points, while the financial sector index declined 16 points, affected by the pressures faced by some stocks such as Bank Muscat and Bank Sohar International, which closed with a slight decline. The financial sector index ended last month's trading at 9212 points. The total market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange rose to OMR31.62 billion at the close of trading in November, recording gains of OMR289.8 million compared to its level in October. OQ Exploration and Production topped the list of public shareholding companies in market capitalisation, which reached OMR3.48 billion at the end of last month. Bank Muscat came in second with market capitalisation of OMR2.5 billion and Bank Sohar International came in third with a market capitalisation of OMR1.45 billion. Asyad Shipping came in fourth with market capitalisation of OMR901.1 million and OQ Gas Networks came in fifth with market capitalisation of OMR805.4 million. The number of transactions executed in November reached 109,523, the second highest number of monthly transactions executed this year, after transactions exceeding 133,000 in October. Ooredoo's stock recorded the best rise, increasing by 26.5 percent and closing at 296 baisa. The Financial Centre's stock rose by 16.6 percent and closed at 42 baisa.

MSX advances in weekly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market delivered another strong performance the week with a 3.99% increase, rebounding from last week's correction to extend its multi-month rally, according to an analyst. "This momentum has cemented its position as one of the top-performing markets in the region, supported by a significant surge in liquidity; the volume and value of traded shares jumped by an average of 150% in the week," said Daniel Takieddine Co-founder and CEO, Sky Links Capital Group. "The market is currently trading at historical levels not seen in over eight years, demonstrating strength and a potential to advance further if the prevailing positive sentiment continues," he further added. This improved sentiment was evident across most regional markets, largely driven by expectations surrounding the Federal Reserve meeting next week. Markets have priced in a 25-basis-point rate cut, which is expected to support economic conditions and corporate earnings. Additionally, oil prices staged a small rebound for the second consecutive week, supported by a geopolitical risk premium. Renewed supply risks in Eastern Europe, the lack of a breakthrough in peace talks in the region, and ongoing



Majan College's stock rose to 130 baisa, increasing by 14 percent. Oman and Emirates Investment Holding Company's stock rose by 13.4 percent and closed at 93 baisa. International Financial Investments Holding Company's stock rose by 12 percent and closed at 196 baisa. The Financial Services stock led the losing stocks, declining

by 33.1 percent and closing at 105 baisa. Oman Finance Free Bonds 2023 fell by 31.5 percent and closed at 50 baisa. Oman Finance Services Bonds issued in 2025 declined by 13.6 percent and closed at 76 baisa. Al Anwar Investments stock fell by 11.8 percent and closed at 97 baisa, and Oman Fisheries stock fell by 6.9 percent and closed at 27 baisa. - OMA

ENHANCING TIES



OCCI trade delegation explores investment opportunities in Indonesia

JAKARTA: A trade delegation from Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) visited Indonesia to explore investment opportunities and discuss areas of cooperation with representatives of the business community. The delegation took note of successful experiences in various economic vital sectors in Indonesia. Zahir bin Mohammed Al Kaabi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chamber's branch in Al Buraimi Governorate, said that the visit offered an opportunity to enhance ties with industrial institutions and en-

trepreneurs at an international level. The team studied the latest experiences and practices that could be utilized to develop local industrial sectors, he added. Al Kaabi pointed out that such visits open vistas for building strategic partnerships that support business growth and enhance the private sector's ability to compete in global markets. The OCCI delegation also visited Expo Indonesia, held in Jakarta, where the members of the delegation explored the latest technologies in the fields of production, logistics and industrial automation. - OMA

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

RBI cuts key rate by 25 bps to 5.25% amid robust GDP growth, record low inflation

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India announced a 25 basis points reduction in the policy repo rate, bringing it down to 5.25 per cent. The decision was communicated by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra after the conclusion of the three-day Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting held from December 3 to 5. The governor stated that the MPC undertook a detailed assessment of evolving macroeconomic conditions and future outlook before arriving at the unanimous decision to implement the rate cut with immediate effect. Announcing the decision, the Governor said, "The MPC met on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of December to deliberate and decide on the policy repo rate. After a de-

tailed assessment of the evolving macroeconomic conditions and outlook, the MPC voted unanimously to reduce the policy repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25 per cent, with immediate effect." With the announcement today, the latest MPC meeting stands concluded. The rate cut follows a phase of strong macroeconomic performance supported by robust GDP growth of 8.2 per cent in the second quarter of the current financial year and low levels of inflation. India's retail inflation fell sharply to 0.25 per cent in October 2025, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), marking a record low. - ANI


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MEDIA OFFENDERS

How White House attack on journalists affects press freedom

WASHINGTON DC: It's no secret that the current US administration doesn't have too high an opinion of journalists. President Donald Trump recently called a female reporter asking him about his involvement in the Jeffrey Epstein scandal "piggy."

And in a press briefing on Monday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt talked about how much of her job is taken up by dealing with what she labeled inaccurate characterisations published by White House correspondents.

"The fake news that we see pumped out of this building on a day-to-day basis — it's honestly overwhelming to keep up with it all," she said.

New White House website a media 'Hall of Shame'

In response to what Leavitt said were "fake news and ... attacks" being spread by reporters, the White House has created a website that lists media outlets and reporters who, according to the government, publish false, biased or misleading stories. The new "Media Offenders" website includes featured "Offenders of the Week" as well as a "Hall of Shame" that consists of four pages (at time of publication) of media reports the White House has sorted into the categories bias, lie, false claim, malpractice, omission of context, mischaracterization, circular reporting, failure to report and left-wing lunacy. In a statement released on December 1, the White House said by creating the website, it "dropped a flamethrower on the Fake News Media."

Katherine Jacobsen, the US, Canada and Caribbean program coordinator at the non-profit Committee to Protect Journalists sees it differently.

"When the language that is being used on the website ... looks like a smear campaign [and] smells like a smear campaign, it probably is a smear campaign," Jacobsen told DW. "And I can't overstate how concerning that is."

White House rhetoric puts journalists at risk

Jacobsen said a website like this,



created by the US government, "creates a permission structure not only for potential verbal attacks against the press, but real-world attacks."

In addition to the criticised outlets, the website also lists the names of the reporters who wrote or produced the offending report in question.

"These journalists are trying to expose factual information, create a more transparent environment," Jacobsen said. "We do know this kind of rhetoric ratchets up the atmosphere, and that in turn makes it less safe for journalists out there doing their job."

The website set up by the Trump White House amounts to threatening media outlets, Jonathan Katz, a fellow in governance studies at the think tank Brookings Institution, says, too.

"It can have a chilling effect on free speech, on independent media," Katz told DW. "We're watching carefully to see how this affects press freedom in the United States."

Press freedom one of the foundational principles of the US

Anything but a fully free press goes against the very DNA of the country. The first amendment to the US Constitution reads, in part, "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press ..."

In 1776, lawmakers in colonial Virginia passed a declaration of rights that noted the importance of a free press: "The freedom of the press is one of the greatest bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic governments." — DW

Full story at timesofoman.com/world

Cyclone Ditwah kills over 600 in Sri Lanka

Some 214 people remained missing, the Disaster Management Centre said. Many of those previously unaccounted for were now presumed dead



COLOMBO: Landslide warnings were still being issued in Sri Lanka in the wake of last week's Cyclone Ditwah, with the death toll from the floods jumping to 607.

Some 214 people remained missing, the Disaster Management Centre said. Many of those previously unaccounted for were now presumed dead.

The floods damaged over 5,000 houses, destroying thousands of acres of land.

The National Building Research Organization (NBRO), which monitors the stability of mountain slopes, continued to issue warnings on Friday.

"Since rainfall within the past 24 hours has exceeded 150 millimetres, if the rains continue, evacuate to a safe location to avoid the risk of landslides," the NBRO said.

President Anura Kumara Disanayake described the cyclone

and its aftermath as the island nation's most challenging national disaster.

How has Sri Lanka addressed the disaster?

Sri Lanka's military deployed thousands of troops to assist with clearing the aftermath of the floods. Reconstruction costs were estimated to stand between \$6 billion (roughly €5.15 billion) and \$7 billion.

The government has sought donations to repair the damage, but President Disanayake still

pledged generous compensation to help the victims rebuild their homes and livelihoods.

The floods also devastated other countries in the region, killing over 1,500 people.

Nearly 900 people were confirmed dead in Indonesia and 185 more were believed to have died in Thailand, whereas in Malaysia, three deaths were confirmed.

Sri Lanka seeks IMF support

Dissanayake said he has asked the International Monetary Fund to delay the release of the sixth in-

stallment of a \$2.9 billion bailout loan, to be able to negotiate a bigger payout.

"The IMF board was to sign off on releasing \$347 million on December 15, but we have now asked them to put it off because we want time to negotiate a bigger instalment," the French AFP news agency quoted the president as saying.

The IMF confirmed that Sri Lanka had requested some \$200 in financial assistance to address the damage and destruction caused by the cyclone. It added that the request was "currently under consideration and subject to approval" by the board.

"The IMF remains closely engaged with Sri Lankan authorities during this challenging period; and is committed to supporting the country as it undertakes urgent efforts to recover, rebuild and promote resilience for the future," Evan Papageorgiou, IMF Mission Chief for Sri Lanka, said in a statement. — DW

MODERNISE GOVERNMENT SERVICES

German leaders plan to cut red tape in just 200 steps

BERLIN: The leaders of Germany's 16 states on Thursday agreed on a 200-point plan to modernise government services

The country is notorious for its bureaucracy, which limits much official communication to mail and, sometimes, fax. Chancellor Friedrich Merz has made addressing it a priority for the coalition

government.

Now, Germany's 16 state premiers have agreed on a "federal modernization agenda" aimed at cutting red tape and making life easier for citizens and businesses, according to Alexander Schweitzer, state premier of Rhineland-Palatinate.

"By consolidating structures, we

make it easier for citizens to access services and at the same time relieve the burden on administrations," he said.

The premiers discussed the plan with Merz during a meeting at the Chancellery in Berlin.

Some measures include:

Allowing emails to replace paper

documents that are still required for official use.

One-time data collection: Citizens and companies submit information only once, with agencies sharing data centrally.

Faster approvals: Many types of applications are automatically approved if authorities do not respond within three months. — DW

COUNTRY'S BUDGET DEFICIT

Finland: The money woes of the world's happiest country

HELSINKI: Finland, ranked the world's happiest nation for eight years and traditionally one of the European Union's most fiscally disciplined countries, has just received a wake-up call from Brussels.

The European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, last week ordered Helsinki to devise a credible plan to resolve the country's budget deficit, which has crossed the EU's limit of 3% of gross domestic product (GDP).

The Commission said Finland's deficit was projected to reach 4.5% of GDP in 2025, while the country's debt burden was set to hit 90% of GDP next year, up by nearly half since 2019.

The Nordic nation, whose annual economy is worth €300 billion (\$349 billion), has now been formally placed under the EU's Excessive Deficit Procedure. This could lead to financial sanctions, including large fines, suspension of EU funds and stricter fiscal oversight by Brussels.

Low growth, high spending, then Ukraine war

Since the 2008/09 global financial crisis, Finland has struggled with fiscal discipline. The collapse of mobile phone maker Nokia, once the engine of growth, left the economy without a clear driver.

That challenge was deepened in recent years by high welfare costs, a huge increase in defense spending and the economic shock of severing energy and trade ties with neighbor Russia over the war in Ukraine.

In 2021, before Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, bilateral trade between Moscow and Helsinki reached €12.71 billion and made up 4.3% of the Finnish economy. By the first three quarters of this year, trade had fallen by nearly 93%.

The collapse was compounded by Finland's decision to close its eastern border in late 2023, citing



security concerns and Moscow's weaponised migration tactics. The move halted cross-border shopping and tourism almost overnight, hitting Finnish border regions especially hard.

According to the Bank of Finland, the country's central bank, more than 2,000 Finnish firms exported to Russia in 2019. By the end of 2023, that number had dropped to around 100.

Jarkko Kivisto, adviser to the Bank of Finland's forecasting division, told DW that it's hard to measure the direct impact of the collapse in Finnish-Russian trade on the deficit.

"We don't have an estimate for this effect," Kivisto told DW, adding that the impact had been "indirect through weaker economic activity and lower value added, as well as missing tax revenues from Russian tourism."

Defence budget hiked over Russian aggression

Faced with its own threats from

the Kremlin, from disinformation campaigns to airspace violations, Finland has sharply raised defence spending from €5.1 billion in 2022 to over €6.2 billion in 2024, now exceeding 2.3% of GDP.

The NATO member has pledged to push military spending toward 3% by 2029, which would make it one of the highest spenders in Europe.

Asked whether the fallout from the Ukraine war would have tipped Finland's deficit over the edge, forcing additional EU scrutiny, Lauri Holappa, Executive Director of the Finnish Centre for New Economic Analysis (UTAK), told DW: "Maybe. It's possible."

"Without the invasion, you can argue that we could have used those inputs [defence spending] on more productive things," added Holappa.

The combination of military spending, collapse of bilateral trade and near-total loss of Russian tourism would have forced the Finnish government to take

on additional debt — at a time when the debt burden was already climbing sharply.

Before the war, about a third of Finland's energy supply came from Russia, leaving the country highly exposed when supplies were cut.

"The largest effect came from the higher energy prices as Finland was quite dependent on energy inputs from Russia," Heil Simola, senior economist at the Bank of Finland's Institute for Emerging Economies (BOFIT), told DW.

Energy crisis hiked Finland's oil costs

Simola said the Nordic country was able to diversify from Russian energy sources relatively quickly — albeit at much higher prices. The switch jacked up Finland's oil import costs by 109% to over €6 billion in 2022 alone, according to state agency Statistics Finland. Finnish exporters were able to adjust to the wiping of nonenergy trade with Russia without cutting output or jobs,



Simola added.

Moscow has, meanwhile, sought to weaponize the deficit debate by spreading disinformation that exaggerates the economic fallout of cutting trade with Moscow, framing Helsinki as unstable, when the deficit issue had been growing for years.

Domestic pressures have mainly pushed Finland's deficit over EU-acceptable limits. An ageing population has swelled pension and health care costs, while the country's extensive welfare state — employing nearly a third of the workforce — makes fiscal consolidation politically fraught.

Finland faces years of austerity

Despite the challenges, Finland's government has passed one of the EU's strictest budgets for 2025, combining steep spending cuts with tax hikes. A new so-called debt-brake mechanism commits all political parties to long-term deficit reduction. However, some policymakers warn that additional austerity measures and tax hikes will be needed in the next parliamentary term.

"Economic growth alone will not be sufficient to restore fiscal

balance," the Bank of Finland's Kivisto told DW. "Rough estimates suggest adjustments [tax rises and public sector cuts] of approximately 3% of GDP, or €9–10 billion, are needed over the next 5–10 years."

But with 80% of Finland's GDP coming from domestic sectors like household consumption, public services, construction, retail and state-sector employment, economists caution that strict fiscal rules risk choking off the very growth the country needs.

"Around a third of our workforce is dependent on government funding, and constant fiscal consolidation leaves them fearful of cuts," UTAK's Holappa told DW.

That uncertainty has weighed heavily on consumer confidence, preventing domestic consumption from recovering despite wage growth and lower interest rates, he added.

"If we now impose strict austerity, along with strict fiscal rules, there's the risk that we cannot get back on the growth path," Holappa said.

The warnings carry extra weight for a nation that, despite its fiscal troubles, is consistently ranked the happiest in the world. — DW



FEATURE

In Belem, the UN climate conference is underway. Here are key facts that explain how rising temperatures are disrupting our planet today

As world leaders gather in Brazil for the UN's annual climate conference, the heat is on to find solutions to the rising global temperatures wreaking havoc across the world. Thirty years since the first COP event in Berlin sounded the climate alarm, emissions are reaching new highs. Here's the breakdown of how much global warming has already changed the planet.

#1

Which regions emit the most CO2?

Governments are increasingly pledging to move toward net-zero or carbon neutral economies by 2050, meaning they aim to balance the greenhouse gases they produce with the ones they remove from the atmosphere. With emissions stabilizing in Europe and the Americas, and rising in Asia and Africa, this chart shows there's still a long way to go to decarbonize economies.

But absolute emissions only tell half of the story. Populations in Asian countries have soared over the last decades. More people means greater consumption of resources.

The picture transforms when seen from a CO2 per capita perspective. Factoring in population size puts a greater spotlight on both Western countries like the US and Australia, as well as nations in other parts of the world, including Saudi Arabia, Oman, United Arab Emirates, the US and Canada.

Experts argue wealthy countries — particularly those who have historically contributed the most to global CO2 levels — have a greater responsibility to cut emissions.

Global top-emitter Qatar spews out much more CO2 per capita than countries like Germany and France, although they are in the same income group. This suggests that wealth can be decoupled from emissions.

And although countries like India and China rank low on per capita emissions, their decisions still have a big impact, given their huge population numbers (bubble size).

#2

#2 What are the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions?

At 29%, the power sector, which generates and delivers energy that drives our lives and economies, accounts for the greatest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Next up is the industrial sector, which produces the goods we use every day. It is responsible for (22%) of overall greenhouse gases — including CO2, methane and nitrous oxide — released into the atmosphere.

Forests are vital for climate stability. They are known as “carbon sinks” for their ability to absorb huge amounts of CO2 from our atmosphere, which is stored in their trees and soil. This is then released into the atmosphere when they are cut, burned, or degraded.

Over the last two decades, the annual amount of tree cover lost has gradually increased. Russia, Brazil and Canada were the world's biggest drivers of deforestation in 2024.



#3

How have CO2 emissions developed over the last centuries?

CO2 emissions from burning fossil fuels have been rising steadily since the early days of the Industrial Revolution. At first, as humans produced higher levels of carbon dioxide, Earth absorbed it in natural “carbon sinks,” such as forests and oceans.

But as humanity began to produce more CO2 and other greenhouse gases than the planet's ecosystems could naturally soak up, more of those emissions became trapped in the atmosphere. This is shown in the red area below.

#4

How much has the world warmed already?

As CO2 concentrations increase, they trap heat from the sun in the atmosphere, causing the planet to warm like in a greenhouse.

Compared to the 20th century average, the global temperature had increased by almost 1.3 degree Celsius (2.3 degrees Fahrenheit) in 2024.

This change is measured by calculating the difference between temperatures observed at a specific time and place and the historical average for that same spot.

The 1.3-degree Celsius increase in temperature is the global average of those variations. The difference can be much greater on a local level or for individual months. For example, September 2025 was almost 2 degrees Celsius warmer than September 1956.

These rising temperatures are already making events, such as deadly heat waves, dangerous storms, and droughts that devastate harvests more intense and frequent. And conditions will only worsen if temperatures continue to rise.

A rise in sea levels is among the most noticeable impacts of global warming. Higher temperatures melt ice caps and glaciers, increasing the total volume of water in the oceans.

#5

How much sea level rise do we already have?

Sea levels have risen nearly 25 centimetres (9.8 inches) in the last 140 years, according to data compiled by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Australian government scientific research agency. Around a third of that increase occurred in the last quarter of a century.

At the same time, the world's oceans are heating up. Water expands as it warms, contributing to rising sea levels.

While sea levels are rising in most parts of the world and are higher than at other times in history, the changes aren't the same everywhere. This is due to Earth's uneven gravity field as well as ocean dynamics such as wind, heat, and evaporation.

In some places, such as western Canada and northern Chile, tide gauges show steady or even receding seas. But in other regions, like islands in the southern Pacific and Indian Oceans, sea levels are climbing at an alarming rate. For these low-lying islands, the risk is so severe that some could disappear beneath the waves. -nw

SPORTS

Oman coach laments missed chances after Morocco draw

The Red Warriors held their much fancied rivals, who were reduced to ten men in the second half, to pick up their first point in the FIFA Arab Cup in Doha on Friday night

MUSCAT: Oman head coach Carlos Queiroz could not hide his frustration after his side were held to a 0-0 draw by 10-man Morocco in their FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 Group B clash on Friday – a result that leaves their hopes of progressing hanging by a thread.

Oman produced one of their most disciplined performances of the tournament, created spells of promising pressure, and played nearly the entire second half with an extra man. But for Queiroz, the biggest disappointment was how his team failed to turn dominance into victory against the World Cup-bound side and fancied rivals.

“This was a match within our grasp, but we didn’t capitalise on our opportunities,” said the veteran Portuguese coach.

“In the second half, we controlled the game, but in the last ten minutes we didn’t deliver what we should have.”

The game began with early chances at both ends - Jameel Al Yahmadi drilling wide for Oman, and Morocco’s Walid El Karti threatening soon after.

Oman goalkeeper Ibrahim Al Mukhaini, who went on to win the Man of the Match, kept his team level with a string of saves, including a reflex stop from Abderrazzaq Hamed Allah’s volley.

The contest swung in Oman’s favour in the 53rd minute when Hamed Allah was shown a red card for a high boot on Musab Al Shaqsi.



But Queiroz was quick to emphasise that despite the severity of the sanction, the challenge lacked intent. “I don’t think the foul was intentional or meant to injure our player – it was just part of the



game,” he said. “The referee managed the match well.”

With Morocco reduced to ten,

Oman pushed higher, forced Morocco keeper El Mehdi Benabid into action, and saw several cross-

es and half-chances go begging. Yet the final touch, the one moment of precision, remained elusive.

Still, Queiroz praised his players’ effort.

“I’m proud of how the players fought. I think the fans are happy with what they showed on the field,” he said, even as the weight of missed points lingered.

Al Mukhaini echoed his coach. He said: “We played a good match but didn’t take our chances. The opportunity is still there.”

Saudi Arabia seal knockout spot

Later in the night, Saudi Arabia strengthened their grip on Group B by defeating Comoros 3-1, confirming their place in the quarter-finals with six points from two matches.

Goals from Mohamed Kanno, either side of half-time, and a clinical finish from captain Salem Al Dawsari sealed the win.

Comoros briefly pulled one back through Ibrohim Djoudja, but the Saudis’ control was never in doubt as they became the first team from the group to advance.

It was a first half of limited clear-cut chances with Saudi Arabia having the chance to go ahead in the 12th minute when Feras Albrikan timed his run into the box to perfection but put too much power into his strike, sending the ball over the bar. Comoros’ only opportunity was through Affane Said Djambae’s glancing header which went just wide of Nawaf Alaqidi’s post.

The Saudi victory has reshaped Group B and left Oman with a very narrow, but still possible, route to the knockout stage.

To progress, Oman must defeat Comoros on Monday, and hope Saudi Arabia beat Morocco in the final round of group matches.

Anything other than an Omani win will end their campaign.

For Queiroz, the mission is now simple: regroup quickly, learn from the missed opportunities, and seize what could be their final chance.

“We tried to score but weren’t successful. Now everything depends on our focus and determination in the next game,” he said. “The opportunity is small, but it still exists,” said Oman coach.

TRUMP STEALS THE SHOW AT DRAW

Contenders plot path to 2026 World Cup glory

WASHINGTON: The path to glory at the 2026 World Cup has now been laid out after the contenders discovered their tournament fate at Friday’s draw ceremony in Washington which was dominated by Donald Trump.

The US President received FIFA’s new peace prize on stage at the Kennedy Center prior to the draw for the first 48-team World Cup, which offered kind starts to the tournament for holders Argentina and much-fancied Spain in particular.

While the make-up of the groups was revealed along with the potential path through the knockout rounds for all the potential winners, the precise schedule for the competition will only be confirmed later.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino will unveil the venues and kick-off times for all games, after which the teams will be able to focus on fine-tuning their preparations with barely six months left until the World Cup kicks off on June 11.

Lionel Messi’s Argentina begin their defence of the trophy they won in Qatar in 2022 by facing Algeria, and will also play Austria and debutants Jordan in Group J. Reigning European champions Spain will kick off their campaign against first-time qualifiers Cape Verde before also taking on Uruguay and Saudi Arabia in Group H.

“We want to do something big at this World Cup and that means making sure we do well in the group stage, then carrying on from there,” said Spain coach Luis de la Fuente. Thomas Tuchel’s England, seeking to win a first World Cup since 1966, will be expected to top Group L ahead of 2018 finalists Croatia, Ghana and Panama.

Two-time winners France face awkward tests against Senegal and Erling Haaland’s Norway in Group I, which will be completed by a play-off winner from either Iraq,



Bolivia or Suriname.

For the first time, the draw was done in such a way as to ensure the four highest-ranked nations were kept apart -- Spain, Argentina, France and England cannot meet before the semi-finals, if all top their groups.

‘Can’t get carried away’

However, the path to that stage -- with an extra knockout round now following the group phase -- looks perilous. If the top seeds all win their groups, England could find themselves playing co-hosts Mexico in Mexico City in the last 16 and

then Brazil in the quarter-finals, before a semi against Argentina. Other possible match-ups include France and Germany being on a last-16 collision course and a potential meeting between Messi’s Argentina and Cristiano Ronaldo’s Portugal in the quarter-finals.

“You cannot get carried away with building your way with who you are going to meet if you win the group, if you are second or whatever,” insisted Tuchel. “You just focus on the group, this is what you do.” The tournament will be held across the USA, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19, with 16 more teams added to the global showpiece, up from the 32 nations involved in 2022.

While the US will host most matches, including the final at the MetLife Stadium outside New York, three of the 16 venues will be in Mexico and two in Canada. The opening game sees Mexico play South Africa in Mexico City.

Carlo Ancelotti’s Brazil and surprise 2022 semi-finalists Morocco will meet in Group C, which also features Scotland and Haiti - Scot-



2026 FIFA World Cup draw	
Group A: Mexico, South Korea, South Africa, European playoff winner D (Denmark/North Macedonia/Czech Republic/Ireland);	
Group B: Canada, Switzerland, Qatar, European playoff winner A (Italy/Northern Ireland/Wales/Bosnia and Herzegovina);	
Group C: Brazil, Morocco, Scotland, Haiti;	
Group D: United States, Australia, Paraguay, European playoff winner C (Türkiye/Romania/Slovakia/Kosovo);	
Group E: Germany, Curacao, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador;	
Group F: Netherlands, Japan, Tunisia, European playoff winner B (Ukraine/Sweden/Poland/Albania);	
Group G: Belgium, Iran, Egypt, New Zealand;	
Group H: Spain, Uruguay, Saudi Arabia, Cape Verde;	
Group I: France, Senegal, Norway, FIFA playoff Winner (Bolivia/Suriname/Iraq);	
Group J: Argentina, Austria, Algeria, Jordan;	
Group K: Portugal, Colombia, Uzbekistan, FIFA playoff Winner (New Caledonia/Jamaica/Democratic Republic of the Congo);	
Group L: England, Croatia, Panama, Ghana.	

land and Brazil will meet for the fifth time at a World Cup. Germany’s opponents in Group E will be Ivory Coast, Ecuador and Caribbean minnows Curacao, while Portugal face Uzbekistan, Colombia and a play-off winner. The United States got a manageable draw, with Paraguay, Australia and a Europe-

an play-off winner in Group D.

The top two teams in each group advance to the last 32, joined by the eight best third-placed teams. “It will be the greatest World Cup ever,” Infantino claimed. “This is like 104 Super Bowls in one month - this is the magnitude of what we are organising.” - Agencies

England in shambles after dismal day in Brisbane Test

Australia are on the brink of victory after taking six wickets in the final session on the third day of the second Test, with the visitors still trailing by 43 at Gabba

BRISBANE: England's hopes in the second Test and the Ashes are in tatters after a dismal and depressing third day at Gabba in Brisbane on Saturday.

On a day that will sit alongside England's long history of misery at a ground where they have not won since 1986, Australia tortured the visitors with the bat then applied overwhelming pressure with the ball.

To the delight of a baying Gabba crowd and in the intense atmosphere of the Queensland night, England were left in disarray at 134-6 - still 43 behind. Defeat inside three days was only narrowly avoided.

Faced with a first-innings deficit of 177, England started their second innings in the twilight against the pink ball with promise - the visitors were 45-0 from six overs at the dinner break.

As ever, England are incapable of batting well enough for long enough, and mistakes were inevitable.

Ben Duckett can feel unlucky to be bowled by a scuttler from Scott Boland, yet Ollie Pope and Zak Crawley both played feckless drives to be caught and bowled



by Michael Nesar.

Even Joe Root was culpable of edging Mitchell Starc, Harry Brook nicked Boland and Jamie Smith became the umpteenth England player to fall trying to drive Starc.

Ben Stokes has engineered unimaginable Ashes escapes in the past. This will not be one of them and his team is crumbling around him. The captain remains unbeaten, with him and Will Jacks both on four.

Australia were earlier led by 77 from Starc - the pace bowler adding runs to his stellar series with the ball - to keep England in the

field for almost two sessions and rack up 511.

It was a slow roast in the Brisbane sunshine and the England collapse that followed was utterly predictable.

Only five days into this series, England are at a point of no return. There would surely be no way back from 2-0 down, especially for a team without a win in this country for almost 15 years.

The intense frustration at England's predicament is largely self-inflicted. They have been wasteful with the bat, wayward with the ball and have dropped catches.

This is not a great Australia team and the hosts are missing a number of key players.

Still, the hosts are giving England a lesson in how to win Test matches. Their batting was ruthless, their bowling relentless and they have caught everything.

No team has made as many as England's 334 in the first innings of a day-night Test and lost, yet Australia put England's effort into context.

The pitch is showing signs of uneven bounce and there are showers forecast for Sunday night. England will not make the Test last long enough to use either to their advantage.

Sunday will be a case of when, rather than if, Australia will win this match. The same can be said for the series and the Ashes.

Duckett was genuinely unfortunate, bowled off the bottom of his bat for 15. Pope and Crawley were anything but unlucky, gifting return catches to Nesar for 26 and 44 respectively.

Both tried to drive balls that were not there for the shot. Nesar gleefully clung on in his follow-through. England were on the way to losing five wickets for 38 runs.

The usually dependable Root was sucked into driving Starc. Brook overturned being given caught behind off Boland, then edged the next ball anyway.

Smith looks increasingly rattled and his rabbit-in-the-headlights drive gave Starc his 18th wicket of the series.

When Australia were convinced they had Jacks caught by a flying Alex Carey, the three-day finish was on. Jacks survived the review, extending the Australian victory parade.

Brief scores: England 334 & 134/6 (Crawley 44; Nesar 2-27, Boland 2-33, Starc 2-48) trail Australia 511 (Starc 77, Weatherald 72, Labuschagne 65; Carse 4-152) by 43 runs. - Agencies

AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN



Cummins 'good to go' for third Ashes Test

BRISBANE: Australia captain Pat Cummins said on Saturday that he will be "good to go" for the third Ashes Test against England after missing the first two with injury.

Fast bowler Cummins missed his side's victory in Perth and the ongoing day-night match in Brisbane as he recovered from a back injury.

The 32-year-old had an outside chance of playing in the second Test but is confident of a return in Adelaide on 16 December.

"I'll have one more bowl tomorrow in the nets and then we'll go to Adelaide and have a bowl there," Cummins told host broadcaster Fox Sports.

"Barring any hiccups, I'll be good to go. The body feels great."

Cummins has taken 309 wickets in 71 Tests and has a career average of 21.19 with the ball at the Adelaide Oval.

Australia are also without fast bowler Josh Hazlewood, while Steve Smith has captained the side in Cummins' absence.

Cummins said the selectors considered bringing him in for Brisbane but decided it was too risky.

"It felt a bit too acute and didn't really feel fair on the other bowlers," he added.

"We thought it didn't feel like the right Test match to take that risk, so kick it down the road for a week." - Agencies

FIRST TEST VS NEW ZEALAND

Greaves double ton earns Windies epic draw



CHRISTCHURCH: An epic 202 not out by Justin Greaves and a stubborn support role by Kemar Roach saw the West Indies salvage a valiant draw in the first Test against New Zealand in Christchurch on Saturday.

Set a colossal target of 531, 113 more than the current record for a successful fourth-innings chase, the West Indies were 457-6 at the end, the second-highest Test fourth innings.

Greaves battled for almost 10 hours and faced 388 deliveries, bringing up his maiden double century in the penultimate over.

Roach was unbeaten on his Test best of 58 which included facing 72 dot balls when he was on 53.

The pair put on a gutsy 180 for the seventh wicket.

"Kemar, the senior pro, guided me all the way," said man-of-the-match Greaves.

"Coach told me once you get in, stay in. To be a part of history is exciting, but for me, it's one day at a time. For us, it was just about getting into the last session."

Given the magnitude of the chase, the West Indies saw the draw as a win while New Zealand felt they had lost.



"I'd say it feels like a win. The guys are proud," West Indies captain Roston Chase said, adding they felt they the game was theirs going into the final session.

"But it didn't quite work out that way that they (Greaves and Roach)

wanted so when it came to the last hour we had a discussion and they said they would just play it out."

However, the mood was not buoyant in the New Zealand camp.

"When you have a draw in that fashion where you know you're

so close to winning it does have that (losing) feeling," captain Tom Latham said.

A draw seemed a distant prospect for the tourists when the top order failed to fire yet again and they slumped to 72-4.

But New Zealand were down on fire power as injuries to Matt Henry and Nathan Smith reduced their pace attack in the second innings to just Jacob Duffy and Zak Foulkes. Both were playing only their second Test. The placid pitch was also of little assistance to the spinners, allowing Shai Hope and Greaves to cash in for the fifth wicket amassing 196 runs in a 64-over stand.

The West Indies resumed the final day at 212-4 with a confident Hope and Greaves adding 23 in six overs of spin before blunting the new-ball attack for more than 12 overs, before Hope was dismissed for 140.

A short ball from Duffy outside the leg stump tempted Hope to hook but the ball climbed, grazed the glove and a diving Tom Latham took a stunning one-handed catch to complete the dismissal.

Tevin Imlach came and went quickly, lbw to Foulkes for four,

and New Zealand felt the initiative had swung their way again with the West Indies 277-6.

But when Roach joined Greaves the pendulum swung back the other way as West Indies reached 399-6 at tea, needing a further 132 with four wickets remaining if they were to achieve a historic victory in the final session.

Luck was with Roach, who received five lives.

He was dropped on 30 and 47 and survived a run-out when the throw went wide of the stumps.

He was given not out to an lbw appeal and again for a caught behind, both off Michael Bracewell, when television replays showed he was out both times. Duffy was New Zealand's most successful bowler with 3-122 to go with his five wickets in the first Test.

The second Test starts in Wellington on Wednesday.

Brief scores: West Indies 167 (Hope 56, Chanderpaul 52, Duffy 5-34) and 457/6 (Greaves 202*, Hope 140, Roach 58*, Duffy 3-122) drew with New Zealand 231 (Williamson 52, Bracewell 47, Seales 2-44, Roach 2-47) and 466/8 decl. (Ravindra 176, Latham 145, Roach 5-78). - Agencies

ROUND-UP

Lexus Oman announces exclusive year-end offers for customers

With exceptional benefits across popular Lexus models, the campaign highlights the brand’s pioneering hybrid technology and its dedication to creating extraordinary experiences

MUSCAT: Saud Bahwan Automotive has unveiled an exciting range of year-end offers for Lexus customers in Oman, reinforcing the brand’s commitment to delivering unmatched luxury, innovation and value. With exceptional benefits across popular Lexus models, the campaign highlights the brand’s pioneering hybrid technology and its dedication to creating extraordinary experiences. Customers can now enjoy flexible service packages designed to ensure long-term confidence and convenience. 3 years or 30,000 Kms of service (whichever is earlier) for LC, LS, IS, ES, ES HEV, RX AND NX ; 5 years or 50,000 kms of service for UX HEV, NX HEV, RX HEV and LX ; and an extensive 10 years or 100,000 kms service package for LX700 HEV models and variants – each designed around 10,000 kms interval.(Prospective



buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details.)In addition free one year registration is offered across all Lexus models adding even more value to the ownership experience. As part of these exciting offers Lexus is providing comprehensive one year insurance on select models including Lexus IS, UX HEV, NX, RX AND RX HEV. This added benefit not only reduces initial ownership costs but also gives customers greater confidence as they step into world of Lexus luxury. A senior spokesperson from Saud Bahwan Automotive said

“Our priority is to ensure that every customer enjoys exceptional value and a truly premium ownership experience. These offers have been thoughtfully designed to make owning a Lexus even more rewarding, while giving customers the confidence of quality, innovation and long-term support”. These exceptional benefits not only add remarkable value to Lexus

ownership journey but also provide customers with enhanced confidence and convenience. By combining comprehensive insurance, complimentary registration and long-term service coverage, Lexus ensures that customers enjoy a worry-free experience from the moment they take delivery. The offers are designed to reduce upfront costs, support long-term vehicle

care and allow customers to fully enjoy luxury, comfort and advanced technology that define every Lexus. Saud Bahwan Automotive invites customers to experience the craftsmanship, hybrid leadership and premium ownership benefits that define Lexus. For more information, customers may visit your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive Showroom.

CONFERENCE



Sohar International further strengthens Oman’s position as a regional arbitration hub as main sponsor

MUSCAT: Sohar International is served as the main sponsor of the inaugural Muscat Arbitration Days 2025, organised by the Oman Commercial Arbitration Centre (OCAC). The three-day conference, to be held from 2 to 4 December 2025 at St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat, convenes local and international experts to discuss arbitration, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and emerging trends shaping the legal and commercial landscape. The opening session was held under the patronage of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, President of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA). As part of its strategic engagement, Elsamawal Abdulhadi Idris Mohammed, Chief Legal and Governance Officer at Sohar International, will participate as a keynote speaker, offering insights on arbitration challenges and opportunities across key sectors—including oil and gas, maritime, finance, and insurance—alongside perspectives on AI-driven innovations in dispute resolution. As main sponsors of the event, Abdulwahid Mohamed Al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, commented: “Muscat Arbitration Days serves as a strategic platform to advance knowledge, shape thought leadership, and elevate Oman’s stature as a leading regional hub for arbitration. Sohar International’s involvement reflects our commitment to driving initiatives that strengthen the national commercial ecosystem, foster innovation, and uphold the highest standards of professionalism. By supporting landmark platforms such as this, we reinforce our role in national development and contribute meaningfully to Oman’s strategic priorities for economic diversification, sustainable growth, and global competitiveness.”

The conference will feature a series of expert-led discussion sessions covering critical and emerging areas in arbitration and dispute resolution. Sessions include: “Muscat: A New Hub for Arbitration; Opportunities and Challenges”, “Stronger Together: Building a Unified Regional Arbitration Ecosystem”, “Arbitration in Oil and Gas Disputes”, “Arbitration in Financial and Construction Disputes”, and “Arbitration Disputes in Government Contracts with Foreign Investors”. Additional sessions explore “Technology in Arbitration and Mediation: Opportunities, Innovation, and Ethical Challenges”, “Institutional vs Ad Hoc Arbitration; Between Evolving Preference and Regional Reality”, “Enforcement of Arbitral Awards – Challenges in the GCC”, “Arbitration in Maritime Disputes”, “Arbitration in Insurance and Reinsurance Disputes”, and a

Moot Court simulation. These sessions are designed to provide participants with actionable insights, strategic guidance, and best practices to navigate complex arbitration landscapes effectively. Through this sponsorship, Sohar International underscores its commitment to driving Oman’s economic diversification and further positioning the Sultanate as a preferred destination for international dispute resolution. The conference website, muscatarbitrationdays.com, provides detailed information on the agenda, sessions, and registration for participants. Muscat Arbitration Days convenes arbitrators, practitioners, policymakers, and international experts to discuss developments in international arbitration, positioning Muscat as a premier regional hub for dispute resolution. The conference also provides Sohar International with an opportunity to strengthen stakeholder relationships, engage with key decision-makers, and showcase its commitment to national development initiatives that extend beyond traditional banking services. This engagement reflects the Bank’s ongoing strategy to integrate financial leadership with societal impact, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and its focus on sustainable growth, innovation, and global competitiveness.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Bank Muscat launches waiver on credit card annual fee for customers with disabilities

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is celebrating the International Day for Persons with Disabilities by offering a first-year annual fee waiver for customers with disabilities on select credit cards, including Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum Credit Card, Bank Muscat Visa Gold Credit Card, the LuLu Bank Muscat Titanium Mastercard Credit Card and Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card. The offer is available to all eligible customers registered with a disability until January 31, 2026 for both new primary and supplementary credit card applications. This initiative is part of Bank Muscat’s commitment to enhancing financial inclusion. Cardholders can enjoy various benefits and secure payment options both within Oman and abroad, providing a seamless experience. Customers can apply for credit cards through Mobile Banking, Internet Banking or Bank Muscat branches with the option to have the card delivered to them directly via complimentary courier service. Bank Muscat Visa Gold Credit Cardholders can make the most of free travel insurance, and the financial flexibility of the Bank’s Easy Payment Plan for their purchases. The Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum Credit Card helps customers make the most of their travels with the exclusive reward of earning 2 Sindbad Miles for every RO 1 spent with the card, as well as welcome bonus Sindbad miles with the first usage of the card. The credit card also facilitates complimentary visits to airport lounges worldwide as well as complimentary chauffeur service to and from Muscat and Salalah Airports. Cardholders also have the unique benefit of being able to fast track to Sindbad Silver tier upon completion of 2 return trips through Oman Air within 6 months of getting the card. Similarly, the LuLu Bank Muscat Titanium Mastercard Credit Card offers its own unique range of benefits that enhance cardholders’ everyday life, including the exclusive ability to earn 2% LuLu reward points every time



This initiative is part of Bank Muscat’s commitment to enhancing financial inclusion

the card is used at LuLu Hypermarket in Oman and the ability to earn 0.5% reward points when shopping with the card at other local and international merchants. Cardholders can also enjoy free travel insurance as well as exclusive offers. The Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card offers customers several benefits, including complimentary travel insurance services and

access to a wide network of airport lounges worldwide, including lounges at Muscat, Salalah, and Duqum airports. Cardholders can also enjoy a variety of discounted offers on services such as health, beauty, entertainment, travel, and hotel bookings. This offer underscores the Bank’s strong commitment to empowering all individuals by fostering an inclusive environment that places accessibility and equal opportunity at the forefront. The Bank provides a wide range of disability-friendly services, and its branches across Oman are equipped with features thoughtfully designed to meet diverse needs. Whether through Oman’s first ATM tailored for visually impaired customers, the presence of sign-language-trained staff, or inclusive branch facilities, the Bank remains dedicated to ensuring that banking is simple, convenient, and accessible for every customer.

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