

INBRIEF

HM’S CONDOLENCES TO SRI LANKA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, on victims of Cyclone Ditwah which hit the city of Colombo. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to President Anura, families of the victims and the people of Sri Lanka. His Majesty also wished the injured a speedy recovery and to safeguard the country from calamities.

BEIJING-MUSCAT DIRECT FLIGHT



Oman Airports welcomed the first inaugural flight of China Eastern Airlines from Beijing Daxing International Airport to Muscat International Airport, announcing the launch of a direct air route between Muscat and Beijing with two flights per week. The launch of the inaugural flight of China Eastern Airlines comes in cooperation with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism and the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China. The new route will boost tourism and facilitate trade and investment between the two countries.



1,712 STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM SQU

The Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) held a graduation ceremony for the first cohort of the 36th batch under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, on Sunday. The number of graduates of the 36th batch totalled 3,106 from various colleges and academic levels. A total of 1,712 students graduated from science colleges undergraduate programmes including 520 students who graduated from postgraduate programmes at a graduation ceremony held at the open-air theatre of the SQU campus on Sunday. **DETAILS ON P2**

GCC Summit to promote unity and integration

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN on Sunday participated in the 166th Session of the Ministerial Council Preparatory Meeting for the 46th Session of the Supreme Council of the GCC countries. The meeting was held in the Bahraini capital, Manama, chaired by Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Omani delegation at the meeting was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister. The preparatory Ministerial Session addressed a number of cooperation files and joint Gulf action in the political, economic, security, and developmental fields, thus promoting pathways for integration among the Council states. The outcomes of this preparatory meeting are intended to enhance practical initiatives that serve the interests of the member states, achieve



The Omani delegation was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

greater prosperity and growth for their nations. Dr Al Zayani, Chairman of the current Ministerial Council Session, stated that the Kingdom of Bahrain’s hosting of the 46th Supreme Council Summit embodies the commitment of GCC states to continue fostering the journey of Gulf cooperation and achievements that have been overseen by the GCC leaders for over 40 years. He added that it also reflects their keenness to continue preserving the cohesion and solidarity of the GCC, and their determination to move forward towards greater cooperation and integration. He added that the GCC has proven its ability to face regional and international challenges over the past years, making it an effective and influential regional entity in enhancing security and stability. — ONA

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OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The sessions also discussed the psychological impact of obesity. — ONA

Obesity conference discusses prevention

AL BURAIMI: The Obesity 2025 Conference began on Sunday in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi. It is the most prominent event of the Al Buraimi Obesity Week, organised by the Directorate-General of Health Services in the governorate, with the aim of highlighting the challenges of obesity, prevention and treatment methods, in addition to promoting health awareness among various community segments.

The conference, which sees the participation of about 100 participants from medical and medical support staff from different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, reviews the latest trends and practices related to obesity management, with the involvement of lecturers from a number of hospitals.

The scientific sessions of the conference included lectures on understanding the burden of obesity from population trends to biological mechanisms, obesity in clinical practice in terms of patient assessment and health risk identification, and childhood obesity as a growing health challenge.

The sessions also discussed the psychological impact of obesity, medical nutrition therapy and its importance in modifying eating behaviour, in addition to pharmacological interventions, surgical treatment and associated post-surgery care.

The conference aims to review the prevalence of obesity and its associated risk factors, explore prevention and treatment strategies, discuss its impacts on quality of life, highlight the indications for initiating pharmacological and surgical treatment and their requirements, and integrate nutritional therapy with lifestyle improvement.

— ONA

Nizwa-Muscat road accident kills two

MUSCAT: Two Asian expatriates died, while several people were injured, following a collision between two trucks under the Bidbid-Al Sharqiyah Bridge on Sultan Thuwaini bin Said Road (travelling from Nizwa towards Muscat).

The accident saw a collision between two trucks and five other vehicles in the same lane.

Traffic was temporarily diverted until the accident was cleared.

MoL to interview 1,949 job-seekers



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Sunday began conducting personal interviews for job-seekers in different governorates of Oman. The programme will run until January 1, 2026.

Abdullah bin Sultan al Sunaidi, Director of the Department of Employment and Replacement in the Government Sector, said that a total of 1,949 job-seekers (who are holders of educational qualifications) will be interviewed to fill 379 job vacancies in government departments in their respective governorates.

Al Sunaidi pointed out that the interviews will be held at the Labour Ministry's headquarters in Muscat, as well as the ministry's directorates in the governorates of Oman.

Those who pass the personal interviews will be authorised to join the designated government departments with immediate effect. — ONA

1,712 graduate from SQU

YOUSUF AL HABSI
MUSCAT, NOV 30

THE Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) held a graduation ceremony for the first cohort of the 36th batch under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, on Sunday.

The number of graduates of the 36th batch totalled 3,106 from various colleges and academic levels. A total of 1,712 students graduated from science colleges undergraduate programmes including 520 students who graduated from postgraduate programmes at a graduation ceremony held at the open-air theatre of the SQU campus on Sunday. HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, delivered a speech in which he congratulated the graduates and their families. He added: “The years of study that our sons and daughters, the graduates of this batch, spent within the halls of the university were not merely an acquisition of knowledge, but a reshaping of their identities, a refinement of their visions, and a revelation of their energies and capabilities. Those who are here today to receive their degrees are celebrating the culmination of commendable effort which will be followed by a new phase full of contributions.” The chief guest presented certificates to the 62 students who graduated



The number of graduates of the 36th batch totalled 3,106 from various colleges and academic levels.

with doctoral degrees from the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Agricultural and Marine Sciences, Science, Engineering, Education, Arts and Social Sciences, and Economics and Political Science.

Then he presented certificates to 458 graduates who received their master's degrees from the Colleges of Medicine and Health Sciences, Nursing, Agricultural and Marine Sciences, Science, Engineering, Law, Education, Arts and Social Sciences, and Economics and

Political Science.

The chief guest then handed out certificates to the graduates with a bachelor's degree. The total number of graduates from the College of Medicine and Health Sciences was 157 graduates, the College of Nursing (141 graduates), College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences (177 graduates).

The chief guest handed out certificates to the graduates with a bachelor's degree from the College of Science (380 graduates).

SQU graduates 36th cohort of doctors, nurses



Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, led the solemn ceremony

The graduates described their study as a journey of exploration marked by challenges that inspire mastery and resilience

from an integrated framework aligned with SQU's mission to prepare distinguished, ethical and compassionate healthcare professionals.

The ceremony also featured two student speeches.

Ahmed bin Mohammed Bait Jaaboub, speaking on behalf of the graduates of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences,

expressed pride in the milestone and described the study of medicine as a journey of exploration marked by challenges that inspire mastery and resilience.

Basma bint Sulayyim al Mabsaliyah, representing the College of Nursing graduates, described nursing as a calling where compassion takes form, hope finds refuge, and those who carry its light never fail those seeking healing.

Following the addresses, the graduates of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences took the medical oath, led by Dr Nasser bin Khalfan al Sibani, Assistant Dean for Clinical Medical Affairs.

The College of Nursing graduates then took their nursing oath, led by Dr Maryam bint Mohammed al Harrasiyah, Assistant Dean for Clinical Medical Affairs at the College of Nursing.

South Africa opens new consulate in Muscat

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 30

The newly inaugurated Consulate of the Republic of South Africa in Muscat is set to strengthen diplomatic, economic and cultural cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and South Africa, according to officials from the Republic.

In a key milestone for relations between the two nations, the Honorary Consulate was officially opened in Shatti Qurum under the auspices of Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries, ambassadors and members of the diplomatic community.

The ribbon-cutting was jointly carried out by Khalid al Muselhi; Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, Honorary Consul of the Republic of South Africa in Oman; and Mogobo David Magabe, Ambassador of South Africa to Saudi Arabia and Non-resident Ambassador to Oman.

“The newly opened Consulate will play a pivotal role in



Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, led the solemn ceremony

strengthening bridges between our governments, supporting business communities, and creating meaningful opportunities in trade, tourism, education and culture. Its opening marks a significant milestone in the growing partnership between our two

nations,” said Lujaina Mohsin Darwish.

She noted that the consulate will further enhance bilateral cooperation, promote trade and investment, and deepen people-to-people connections. Darwish also expressed appreciation to the governments of both

countries for their continued support and reaffirmed the Consulate's commitment to fostering shared progress.

Khalid al Muselhi praised the expanding partnership between Oman and South Africa, highlighting the mutual commitment to advancing diplomatic and economic ties.

Ambassador Mogobo David Magabe said the launch of the Honorary Consulate in Muscat and the appointment of Darwish reinforce the growing strength of bilateral relations across diplomacy, commerce and culture.

As part of the ceremony, the official website and social media channels of the Honorary Consulate were unveiled, offering the public enhanced access to services and updates.

The consulate will serve as a key hub for visa and consular services, support South African citizens in Oman, and facilitate cooperation between institutions and businesses in both countries.

It will operate from Sunday to Thursday, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, at Way No 3017, Shatti Qurum, Muscat.



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SHORT TAKES



An international exhibition was inaugurated at the Al Marjani Mosque in Kazan.

OMAN, TATARSTAN
BOOST RELIGIOUS,
HUMANITARIAN TIES

KAZAN: Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, met on Sunday with Sheikh Kamil Samigullin, Mufti of the Republic of Tatarstan and Head of the Religious Board of Muslims of Tatarstan, as part of the minister’s official visit to the Republic of Tatarstan.

The meeting addressed the prospects for cooperation between Oman and the Republic of Tatarstan in the fields of the Holy Quran and its studies, endowment (Waqf) and Zakat affairs, and the exchange of institutional expertise. They also discussed opportunities for developing scientific and research programmes that contribute to establishing the discourse of moderation and promoting the values of understanding and respect for diversity.

Furthermore, the two sides reviewed the potential for partnership in humanitarian and civilisational initiatives, foremost among them the Human Convergence Project (Al Mutalif Al Insani) as an international platform for dedicating shared human values.

The Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, emphasised that the spiritual experience in the Republic of Tatarstan represents an inspiring model that combines the authenticity of Islamic heritage with the spirit of the age, pointing to the positive messages it carries in promoting balanced religious awareness.

The Mufti appreciated the Omani global role in establishing civil peace and spreading the culture of understanding and human communication.

This meeting embodies the two countries’ keenness to expand the horizons of religious and humanitarian cooperation and develop pathways for partnership.

Separately, the international exhibition ‘Al Mu’talif Al Insani: The Sultanate of Oman’s Model for Development and Peace’ was inaugurated at the Al Marjani Mosque in the city of Kazan, one of the city’s most ancient religious landmarks, in the presence of Sheikh Kamil Samigullin, Mufti of the Republic of Tatarstan, and officials and dignitaries. — ONA

OMAN,
ALGERIA
BOOST TIES IN
AGRICULTURE,
FISHERIES,
FOOD
SECURITY

MUSCAT: Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, received Eng Yacine El Mahdi Oualid, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, at the ministry’s headquarters on Sunday.

The meeting commenced with a welcoming address from Dr Al Habsi, in which he underscored the paramount importance of sustaining collaborative endeavours between the two nations across agricultural, fisheries and water resource domains. He commended



Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi and Eng Yacine El Mahdi Oualid engage in talks.

the profound depth of Omani-Algerian relations and the continuous positive evolution they

are witnessing.

For his part, Eng Yacine El Mahdi Oualid, Algeria’s Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, conveyed his profound appreciation for the Sultanate of Oman and the significant accomplishments it has achieved within its agricultural and fisheries wealth sectors. He affirmed his nation’s steadfast commitment to reinforcing the frameworks of cooperation and capitalising on the exchange of specialised expertise in the fields of agriculture, maritime fishing, and rural development.

— ONA

Al Mashash heritage festival showcases Dhofar’s culture

THE AL MASHASH district in the Wilayat of Maqshin hosted a vibrant lineup of cultural and tourism activities as part of the Al Mashash Heritage and Tourism Festival, an event aimed at showcasing Dhofar’s rich desert heritage and boosting the governorate’s growing tourism season.

The festival opened with a warm reception for a tourist caravan arriving from Salalah, followed by traditional performances, cultural showcases and the popular ‘Sand Challenge’ — a high-adrenaline competition attracting four-wheel-drive enthusiasts from across Oman.



The event highlights the unique arts, and natural beauty of the Empty Quarter’s vast landscapes.

Organised by the Directorate-General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, in cooperation with the Office of the Wali of Maqshin, the festival is part of broader efforts to promote domestic tourism and create new social and economic opportunities in desert areas.

The event highlights the unique arts, traditional crafts and natural beauty of the Empty Quarter’s vast landscapes.

Mohammed bin Amer Jadad, Deputy Wali of Maqshin, said the event coincides with Oman’s celebrations of its glorious National Day, adding that government efforts to develop sandy regions include the construction of 170 km of internal roads to better connect Maqshin’s villages. This, he noted, enhances

The festival is part of broader efforts to promote domestic tourism and create economic opportunities in desert areas

social stability, stimulates economic growth and strengthens the tourism sector.

He praised the support of the Governor of Dhofar’s Office, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Dhofar Municipality, and several public and private entities. He also stressed the importance of media and community participation in promoting desert tourism, noting that this year’s programme offers a rich blend of cultural, artistic and adventure-based experiences.

Marwan bin Abdulhakim al Ghassani, Director of Tourism Promotion in Dhofar, said the ministry’s support includes organising the tourist caravan, staging four-wheel-drive

competitions, and promoting Maqshin’s unique desert attractions as the winter tourism season begins.

He noted that Maqshin is now firmly positioned on the itineraries of international tour operators, with rising interest from European, Asian and American visitors.

The festival also saw the opening of the Al Mashash Center for Quran Memorisation, along with a handicrafts and student exhibition showcasing traditional craftsmanship and youth creativity.

Artistic evenings, poetry recitals and heritage-themed performances enriched the two-day programme.

The event concluded with the recognition of winners, participants, sponsors and supporters. — ONA

Exhibition highlighting Armenia’s frankincense trail opens

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, NOV 30

The National Museum opened the exhibition ‘On the Frankincense Trail: Armenia’ on Sunday, under the auspices of Abdullah bin Hamad al Riyami, Head of the Cultural Cooperation Department at the Foreign Ministry. The exhibition, organised in partnership with the History Museum of Armenia and the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in the Sultanate of Oman, is the first in a new series that highlights how frankincense helped shape cultural exchange between different peoples and regions across history. The exhibition will remain open to visitors until May 30, 2026. Al Riyami described the exhibition

as a continuing path of cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Armenia, noting that it reflects the shared interest of both sides in celebrating heritage and encouraging cultural understanding. He said, “the event stands as a result of the shared desire of both countries to strengthen cultural cooperation.”

The Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Oman, Hrachya Poladyan, said the exhibition shows a strong and genuine desire for cultural cooperation on both the Armenian and Omani sides. He said, “The exhibition is a bridge for dialogue between our cultures and a step toward spreading the values of peace.” He emphasised the deep cultural connections that link the



The exhibition is the first in a new series that highlights how frankincense helped shape cultural exchange.

two peoples and highlighted the importance of sharing heritage to build stronger understanding.

Dr Davit Poghosyan, Director of the History Museum of Armenia,

highlighted the cultural value of the objects, saying that they are “very beautiful, and also very spiritual, carrying a lot of values inside.” He noted that frankincense traditions

form an important link between Armenia and Oman, showing how ancient customs brought different civilisations closer together.

Dr Poghosyan expressed his hope that visitors would recognise the deeper meaning behind these objects, explaining that this exhibition reveals “the interesting connections and cultural dialogues between two traditions, two nations, and also the common things for humanity,” and helps people understand “how important cultural dialogue is for peace and for recognising what humanity shares.”

As the first exhibition in the “On the Frankincense Trail” series, the event aims to deepen cultural dialogue between Oman and different parts of the world.

SPOTLIGHT

WINTER WARMTH, HIDDEN DANGER

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 30



AS WINTER blankets Oman, households and offices are increasingly relying on geysers, braziers and room heaters to keep warm. With the cooler temperatures replacing the need for air conditioners, braziers in particular have become a popular choice. However, experts are urging caution, warning that improper use of these appliances can pose serious, even fatal, risks.

“Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless and tasteless poisonous gas that can be deadly if it accumulates in enclosed spaces,” said the Royal Oman Police (ROP). “It is produced when fuels such as charcoal, LPG, or natural gas burn incompletely. Exposure displaces oxygen in the body, which can quickly lead to poisoning and death.”

While natural geysers release mainly water vapour and a small amount of carbon dioxide, gas-powered water heaters rely on fuel combustion. Faulty equipment or

“
If someone suspects they have been exposed to CO, they should immediately move to fresh air, open doors and windows and turn off appliances only if it is safe.”

MOHAMMED BIN ALI AL AGHBARI
HSE expert

poor ventilation can allow carbon monoxide to build up, putting occupants at serious risk. Experts emphasise that even on the coldest nights, braziers and other fuel-burning appliances should never be used indoors without adequate ventilation.

TRAGIC EXAMPLE
Oman recently witnessed a tragic example of this danger, with a family of seven reportedly succumbing to carbon monoxide poisoning in their bedroom. The Royal Oman Police have not yet confirmed the exact cause, but the incident underscores the importance of awareness and safety precautions.

HSE expert Mohammed bin Ali al Aghbari, formerly with PDO, stressed the need for regular maintenance. “Appliances and heating systems should be checked annually by qualified technicians. Always ensure rooms are well-ventilated, vents are unblocked, and

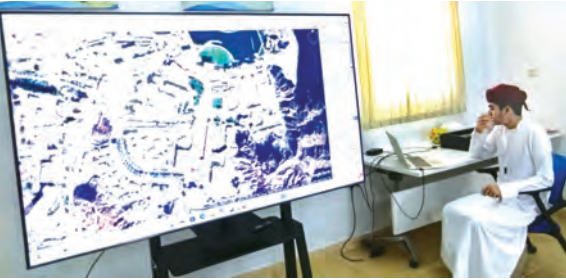
never leave fuel-burning devices unattended,” he said.

He further highlighted early warning signs of carbon monoxide exposure, which often mimic flu symptoms but without fever. Common indicators include dull headaches, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, blurred vision and shortness of breath.

“If someone suspects they have been exposed to CO, they should immediately move to fresh air, open doors and windows and turn off appliances only if it is safe,” Al Aghbari advised. “Emergency services must be contacted promptly, and CPR administered if a child or adult has stopped breathing.”

As Oman experiences its winter chill, residents are reminded that staying warm should not come at the cost of safety. Proper ventilation, careful monitoring of appliances and vigilance for symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are essential to protecting lives.

SHORT TAKES



The lab empowers teachers to deliver more interactive and real-world learning experiences.

GEOGRAPHY LAB FOR MODERN TECH OPENS IN AL RUSTAQ

AL RUSTAQ: The Geography Laboratory for Modern Technologies was inaugurated on Sunday in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq.

The facility aims to support the educational process by providing a practical environment that enables the application of geographical concepts in a realistic manner. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education.

The opening of the laboratory marks a significant step towards enhancing the use of modern geographic technologies within schools. This is achieved through the advanced equipment housed in the laboratory, which includes surveying tools, topographic mapping instruments, GPS devices, and cartographic drafting and spatial analysis software. — ONA

ARAB HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT MEET ON DECEMBER 10-11

MUSCAT: Oman will host the 24th Arab Conference on Hospital Management on December 10–11, under the theme: ‘Modern Methods in Hospital Management: The Role of the Private and Third Sectors in Strengthening Health Systems.’ The conference is organised by the Arab Organization for Administrative Development (ARADO).

This edition will see the launch of the ‘Mohammed Al Saleem Award for Excellence in the Health Sector’, a pioneering initiative aimed at honouring researchers in public health and health management.

The conference will bring together health ministers, administrative leaders, members of health authorities, medical associations, academic faculty, hospital administrators, investors and representatives of regional and international organisations, civil society, and insurance companies. — ONA

NEW RESEARCH GUIDE LAUNCHED AT NUST

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 30

A comprehensive new book exploring the fundamentals of research — its purpose, methodologies, and practical application — has been launched at the School of Foundation Studies (SoFS) at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST).

Titled ‘Igniting Research in General Foundation Programmes:



The book was officially unveiled by Dr Salim bin Khamis bin Ali al Arai.

Research as a Catalyst for Oman’s Educational Future’, the publication marks a significant academic milestone.

Authored by Dr Geethu Anne Mathew, the book was officially unveiled by Dr Salim bin Khamis bin Ali al Arai, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost for Academic Affairs & Research.

The book underscores the importance of strengthening research within General Foundation Programmes (GFPs).

1st Arab Women Researchers Forum opens in Al Buraimi

THE INAUGURAL Forum for Arab Women Researchers, titled ‘Arab Women Researchers Towards the Future: Inspiring Experiences and Profound Insights’, commenced on Sunday in Al Buraimi Governorate.

Held under the slogan ‘Sharing Expertise is Our Path to Excellence’, the two-day event was inaugurated by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The minister emphasised that Oman’s hosting of this forum embodies a steadfast Arab commitment to supporting and empowering women researchers as a fundamental pillar in the journey of science and sustainable development.

She noted that Omani and Arab women have demonstrated a significant and active presence in the fields of research, providing qualitative contributions that foster innovation. She clarified that the forum constitutes a platform for collaboration and the exchange of expertise among Arab women researchers, aiming to build knowledgeable societies capable of competition.

The forum is attended by Arab women researchers from various scientific and academic specialisations, alongside presidents and representatives of



Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah inaugurated the two-day Forum for Arab Women Researchers.

The forum constitutes a platform for collaboration and the exchange of expertise among Arab women researchers

Arab, regional, and international organisations, federations, and institutions.

The forum is organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, in cooperation with the Department of Science and Research at the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, and Al Buraimi University.

Dr Mohamed Ould Amar, Director-General of ALECSO, stated that women’s participation in development is a necessity for achieving a sustainable scientific

renaissance.

He pointed out that Arab women have demonstrated a leadership role in research and innovation fields, clarifying that the initiative for the Forum for Arab Women Researchers embodies ALECSO’s vision in supporting women’s presence in research and implementing the Arab Strategy for Research and Innovation.

For his part, Dr Mohammed Sand Abu Darwish, Director of the Department of Science and Research at ALECSO and Chairman of the Scientific Committee, affirmed that the organisation places great importance on supporting Arab women researchers due to their role as a fundamental knowledge force in developing scientific systems.

Meanwhile, Dr Said Eid Younis, Vice-Chancellor of Al Buraimi University, affirmed that the forum reflects the university’s commitment to supporting research, providing a stimulating environment for innovation, and enhancing Arab academic partnerships. He indicated that the university’s ongoing efforts align with the approaches of Oman Vision 2040 towards building a knowledge-based economy.

The programme for the first day of the forum included a series of specialised scientific sessions that reviewed the latest research experiences and future visions of Arab women researchers. — ONA

BOS hosts New Generation delegation to strengthen UK–Oman links

LONDON: The British Omani Society (BOS) successfully hosted a two-day New Generation Group (NGG) delegation in London, bringing together emerging leaders from Oman and the United Kingdom to explore key areas of bilateral cooperation, including diplomacy, trade, renewable energy, technology and sustainable development.

Held from November 26 to 28, the programme convened 24 young professionals and future leaders for a series of lectures, panel discussions and networking sessions at the Society’s headquarters.

In his opening remarks, Shaikh Maan bin Hamed al Rawahi, NGG Oman Chair, stressed the importance of equipping the next generation with the knowledge, skills and networks needed to strengthen the long-standing partnership between the two nations. He underlined the significance of energy, trade and innovation as pivotal pillars supporting Oman’s sustainable future.



24 professionals from Oman and the UK unite in London to explore cooperation in diplomacy, trade, energy and technology.

Participants benefited from insights shared by distinguished speakers such as Sir Alan Duncan KCMG, Mikey Clark, Professor Tim Evans, Jose Amorim, Andrew Roughan, Andrew Williamson and Dr Andreas Krieg, whose expertise enriched the dialogue and underscored the depth of bilateral engagement.

Oliver Blake, NGG UK Chair, expressed appreciation to all speakers, participants and longtime sponsor bp for their support, noting: “This delegation has been another huge success in bringing together the future guardians of our deep friendship with

a specific focus on energy, trade and technology.”

Reflecting on the programme’s impact, BOS Chairman Major General (Retd) Richard Stanford CB MBE said the event highlighted the responsibility of young leaders to preserve and strengthen the enduring bonds.

Ahmed al Mayahi, an Omani delegate and PhD student at the University of Reading, described the programme as an enriching experience, stating that the diversity of perspectives had deepened his understanding of the historic and strategic relationship between the two nations.

Similarly, UK participant Jonathon Anstee, an MPhil student in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford, said the delegation provided a valuable platform to engage with key opinion leaders and like-minded peers, emphasising the importance of strategic partnerships in shaping the future of the UK-Oman relations.

TENDER NOTICE

وزارة الزراعة والسمكية وموارد المياه
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
791/2025/MAFWR/HQ-89	Design and Build Services for Construction of Boat Berthing and Onshore Facilities at Musandam Governorate (Second Phase)	Wednesday 19/11/2025	Tuesday 9/12/2025	Monday 29/12/2025	Specialized companies registered with Second, Third grades	(50/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
798/2025/MAFWR/HQ-90	EPC for Detailed Design and Construction - Modification to the Existing Breakwater at Gamdah 'Marfa' in Musandam Governorate	Monday 24/11/2025	Sunday 14/12/2025	Sunday 4/1/2026	Specialized companies registered with Excellent,First grades	(60/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.

The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.

All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.

All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402244** or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Iran's FM Abbas Araghchi (R) shakes hands with Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan during a press conference in Tehran. — AFP

IRAN, TÜRKİYE AGREE TO BUILD KEY TRADE RAIL LINK

TEHRAN: Iran and Türkiye have agreed to begin constructing a new joint rail link to serve as a strategic gateway between Asia and Europe, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday. The planned route, known in Iran as the Marand-Cheshmeh Soraya railway transit line and running towards Türkiye's Aralik border region, will cover around 200 kilometres. It will cost roughly \$1.6 billion and is expected to take three to four years to complete, Iranian authorities have said.

Earlier this month, Iran's transport minister Farzaneh Sadegh said the rail line would transform the southern section of what was once the Silk Road into an "all-rail corridor ensuring the continuity of the network between China and Europe".

At a joint press conference with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan, Araghchi said "emphasis was placed on the need to remove barriers to trade and investment between the two countries". "The two countries also stressed the importance of the rail link... in the region and expressed hope that the construction of this line can start as soon as possible," he added. — AFP

POPE LEO TAKES PEACE MESSAGE TO LEBANON



Pope Leo XIV arrives at Beirut International Airport, in the Lebanese capital. — AFP

BEIRUT: Pope Leo arrived in Lebanon on Sunday, where he is expected to appeal for peace in a country that is a continued target of Israeli air strikes, on the second and final leg of his first overseas trip as leader of the Catholic Church. The first US pope flew from Türkiye and warned that humanity's future was at risk because of the world's unusual number of bloody conflicts and condemned violence in the name of religion.

Hours before Leo's arrival, crowds gathered along the roads from the airport to the presidential palace, waving Lebanese and Vatican flags. He will meet the president and prime minister and make an address, only his second to a foreign government.

Lebanon's diverse communities have also welcomed the papal trip. His convoy will pass through Beirut's southern suburbs, an area where Hezbollah holds sway and that was battered in last year's strikes. The group's Imam Mehdi Scouts are to hold a welcoming ceremony by the roadside as the convoy passes. — Reuters

FOREST ATTACKS

India deploys drones to track killer wolves



Forest rangers in India have deployed drones to track man-eater wolves after nine people, mostly children, were killed by the animals in recent weeks, officials said. The latest deaths raise the toll from suspected wolf attacks in Bahraich to at least nine in three months, according to police, forest officials and media reports. Forest Officer Ram Singh Yadav said that authorities have deployed drones, camera traps and shooters in the area. — AFP

PAKISTAN REJECTS UN WARNING OVER LIFETIME IMMUNITY FOR MILITARY CHIEF

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan dismissed on Sunday a warning by the UN rights chief of potential "far-reaching consequences" for the rule of law in granting the head of the all-powerful military legal immunity. The foreign ministry said Pakistan was "fully committed to protecting... basic freedoms and the rule of law as enshrined in the constitution", responding to criticism from UN rights chief Volker Turk.

A constitutional amendment

approved by parliament earlier this month, shielding Field Marshal Asim Munir and other top officials from prosecution for life, has raised alarm among rights groups. The change also created a new Federal Constitutional Court, stripping the Supreme Court of some of its powers and tightening oversight of judges. "These changes, taken together, risk subjugating the judiciary to political interference and executive control," Turk said in a statement on Friday. He warned of a risk of

"far-reaching consequences for the principles of democracy and rule of law which the Pakistani people hold dear".

In its Sunday statement, the foreign ministry in Islamabad called the remarks "baseless" and said "it is regrettable that Pakistan's views and ground realities were not reflected". Pakistan, a nuclear-armed nation of more than 250 million people, has long struggled to balance civilian authority with the military's role in politics. — AFP

Egypt trains Palestinians for future Gaza police force

EGYPT is training hundreds of Palestinian police officers with an eye towards integrating them into a post-war security force in Gaza, a Palestinian official said. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty announced the plan to train 5,000 officers for Gaza during talks with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa in August. More than 500 officers were trained in Cairo in March, and since September, the two-month courses have resumed to welcome hundreds more people, the Palestinian official said.

He said all members of the force will be from the Gaza Strip and paid by the Palestinian Authority, which is based in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. "I'm very happy with the training. We want a permanent end to war and aggression, and we're eager to serve our country and fellow citizens," said a 26-year-old Palestinian police officer. He said that he hoped the security force would be "independent, loyal only to Palestine and not subject to external alliances or objectives". "We received outstanding operational training, with modern equipment for border surveillance," said a Palestinian lieutenant who also requested anonymity for security reasons.

The lieutenant, who left Gaza with his family last year, said the training focused on the fallout of the October 2023 Hamas attack on Israel that triggered the war and the damage done to the Palestinian cause. Hamas's attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,221



A Palestinian boy cycles past a converted Israeli military vehicle abandoned in Gaza. — AFP

The training highlighted the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians and stressed the importance of "protecting the dream of creating" a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state

people. Israel's retaliatory assault on Gaza has killed at least 70,100 people, according to figures from the territory's health ministry that the UN considers reliable.

The training also highlighted the role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and stressed the importance of "protecting the dream of creating" a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state. A senior security official from the Palestinian Authority confirmed that its President Mahmud Abbas had instructed Interior Minister Ziad Hab al Reeh to coordinate with Egypt on the training. During talks sponsored by Egypt late last year, the Palestinian movements agreed

to a force of around 10,000 police officers.

Egypt would train half of them while the other 5,000 would come from the police force in Gaza, which has been under Hamas control since the militant group seized power there in 2007. Under the agreement, the security force would be supervised by a committee of technocrats approved by the Palestinian movements. A senior Hamas official confirmed that the movement supported "the details regarding security and management of the Gaza Strip" agreed during the talks. The subject was also addressed in US President Donald Trump's peace plan and was later endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution. — AFP

SRI LANKA STRUGGLES WITH DITWAH IMPACT

KELANIYA: Sri Lanka's death toll from Cyclone Ditwah climbed to 212 with 218 missing, officials said on Sunday, as flood waters breached a dam and rescue operations continued into a fourth day. Nearly a million people are impacted by heavy rains and floods that swept through large parts of the south Asian island nation, forcing nearly 200,000 people into 1,275 shelters.

Record rains lashed the country from last Thursday, causing multiple landslides in the hilly central region while overflowing rivers submerged entire towns nationwide. Over 24,000 police, army and air force personnel are still trying to reach families stranded by floods, authorities said. — Reuters



PEOPLE'S DEMANDS

Thousands protest in Philippines against fraud



Thousands marched in the Philippine capital, demanding jail time for scores of officials, lawmakers and construction firm owners accused of pocketing billions of taxpayer dollars in a sweeping corruption scandal. Rage over flood-control projects has been mounting for months in the archipelago country of 116 million. Fewer than 10,000 people took to the streets, while more than 17,000 police officers were deployed. — AFP

DEFENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Kim vows 'strategic assets' for air force



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un announced the country's air force will be equipped with "new strategic military assets". Kim made the announcement at an event marking the 80th anniversary of the North Korean air force. "The air force will be given new strategic military assets and entrusted with a new important duty," he said. "The air force should resolutely repulse and control all sorts of espionage acts and military provocations." — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Protesters take part in the Rising Tide People's Blockade in Newcastle, Australia. — Reuters

AUSTRALIA ARRESTS DOZENS IN COAL PORT PROTEST

SYDNEY: Australian police said that they had arrested dozens of people during climate protests that claim to have halted two cargo ships at one of the world's biggest coal export ports. A total 32 people were arrested and charged with "marine-related" offences on Saturday and early Sunday at the Port of Newcastle, a major deepwater gateway north of Sydney, police said.

Several activists engaged in "unsafe practices" on the water during the protests, New South Wales state police said, warning that they had a "zero-tolerance" approach to threats to public safety or the safe passage of vessels. Organisers Rising Tide said the weekend protests, in which flotillas of kayaks entered shipping channels, had forced two coal ships to turn around instead of entering the port. Nearly 100 people in 50 kayaks entered the shipping channel again on Sunday, it said.

Greenpeace said activists climbed the side of coal ship Yangze 16 on Sunday and displayed a banner reading: "Phase out coal and gas". Police landed in a helicopter on the ship's deck in the early afternoon and detained two activists after the seven-hour action, the environmental group said. — AFP

FOUR KILLED IN CALIFORNIA SHOOTING



Four people were killed and 10 wounded in a shooting at a gathering in California last night, US police said, calling it a "targeted incident". The shooting took place inside a banquet hall in Stockton, northeast of San Francisco, San Joaquin County Sheriff's office spokesperson Heather Brent told reporters in a news briefing. The victims, who range from "juveniles to adults", were taken to local hospitals, Brent said, adding that information on the shooting was limited. The sheriff's office said in a post on social media that detectives were "working to determine the circumstances leading up to this tragedy". — AFP

SWISS REJECT COMPULSORY CIVIC DUTY, CLIMATE TAX FOR SUPER-RICH

GENEVA: Swiss voters looked set to reject a proposal to replace the current men-only military conscription with a compulsory civic duty for all and another on taxing the super-rich to fund the climate fight. Early projections after polls closed at noon indicated that voters had overwhelmingly rejected the two initiatives, which had generated significant discussion in the wealthy Alpine nation.

The so-called Civic Duty initiative, which called for requiring

every Swiss citizen, regardless of gender, to do national service in the army or in a civilian capacity, was projected by public broadcaster SSR to be snubbed by a whopping 84 per cent of voters.

The 'no' vote on the second item on Sunday's ballot, the "initiative for a future" calling for a new climate tax on big inheritances, was meanwhile projected to tick in at 79 per cent, SSR said.

The projections were not surprising, with recent opinion

polls suggesting the proposals had little chance of passing. The Swiss government and parliament had also come out against both items, arguing that they would entail huge costs and could threaten the economy.

The committee behind the Civic Duty initiative had maintained that requiring men and women alike to serve the nation would strengthen social cohesion. The initiative aims for "true equality", committee head Noemie Roten said. — AFP

Trump ramps up Venezuela threats, closing airspace

US President Donald Trump sharply escalated his threats against Venezuela with an ominous warning that the country's airspace should be considered "closed", raising fears of imminent military action.

Caracas, which views a large US military buildup in the Caribbean as a pressure campaign to oust President Nicolas Maduro, slammed Trump's warning as a "colonialist threat". "To all Airlines, Pilots, Drug Dealers and Human Traffickers", Trump wrote on social media, "please consider THE AIRSPACE ABOVE AND SURROUNDING VENEZUELA TO BE CLOSED IN ITS ENTIRETY".

He did not elaborate, but after months of deadly US strikes on alleged drug-running boats, speculation is mounting that Washington may launch some sort of military operation on Venezuelan soil. Trump's warning comes days after US aviation regulators told airlines to use increased caution near Venezuela over the mounting tensions, prompting multiple major carriers to suspend flights.

Maduro's government then issued a ban on the airlines for "joining the actions of state terrorism promoted by the United States government". A statement by the Venezuelan foreign ministry called the US president's latest remarks a "new extravagant, illegal and unjustified aggression against the people of Venezuela". It warned that the airspace disruptions would also mean a halt to repatriation flights of Venezuelan migrants from the United States, a key Trump administration initiative.

Venezuela's military on Saturday also conducted exercises along coastal areas, with video broadcast on state TV showing anti-aircraft weapons and other artillery being maneuvered.

Though Trump has not publicly threatened to use force to remove Maduro, he said this week that efforts to halt Venezuelan drug trafficking "by land" would begin "very soon".

Maduro's re-election last year was widely rejected by the international community as fraudulent, while Washington also claims the leftist leader heads an alleged terrorist-designated drug cartel. A steady buildup of



A Venezuelan military member stands on the wing of a T-27 Tucano aircraft. — AFP

US naval and air assets in the region has seen the world's largest aircraft carrier move to the Caribbean, while American fighter jets and bombers have repeatedly flown off the Venezuelan coast in recent days.

US media reported that, despite the bellicose posturing, Trump and Maduro spoke last week.

The New York Times reported on Friday that Trump and Maduro had discussed a possible meeting, while the Wall Street Journal on Saturday said the conversation also included conditions of amnesty if Maduro were to step down. Amidst fears that Trump may launch a major operation in Venezuela, members of US Congress — both Democrats and the president's own Republican Party — have expressed anger that he has not sought legislative approval.

"President Trump's reckless actions towards Venezuela are pushing America closer and closer to another costly foreign war", top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said Sunday on X.

"Under our Constitution, Congress has the sole power to declare war", he added. Republican Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, until recently a close Trump ally, said similarly: "Reminder, Congress has the sole power to declare war".

However, Republican Senator Lindsey

Graham cheered on Trump, writing on X that the president's "strong commitment to end this madness in Venezuela will save countless American lives".

Suggesting Maduro should flee, he said: "I hear Türkiye and Iran are lovely this time of year..."

Trump is also facing congressional pressure over recent media reports that the US military launched a second missile at survivors of a strike on an alleged drug boat in September.

Leaders of both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have released separate statements saying they would be investigating the strike, which legal experts say could amount to a war crime.

With Republicans in control of both chambers of Congress, the Trump administration has so far largely escaped probing of its controversial anti-trafficking campaign.

Since the operation began in September, at least 83 people have been killed in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean. Washington has yet to release evidence that the vessels it targeted were used to smuggle drugs or posed a threat to the United States and experts say the strikes amount to extrajudicial killings even if they target known traffickers. — AFP

Vast Russian overnight attack on Ukraine kills six, wounds dozens

KYIV: A Russian attack on Ukraine killed six people and wounded dozens, officials said, while emergency crews restored power to more than 400,000 households in Kyiv after strikes on the grid as the US attempts to broker peace talks. "While everyone is discussing points of peace plans, Russia continues to pursue its 'war plan' of two points: to kill and destroy", Ukraine's foreign minister, Andrii Sybiha, wrote on Saturday morning as Kyiv residents surveyed the damage after a heavy night of explosions that mostly targeted the capital.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had launched around 36 missiles and nearly 600 drones in the attack. Ukraine's State Emergency Services said two people died in the overnight attack in Kyiv and 38 were injured. Regional officials and police said one person had died in the region surrounding the capital, two in southeastern Dnipropetrovsk

region and one in a midday attack in Kherson region in the south.

The deafening roar of generators and the stench of diesel fumes now fill the capital's avenues and people use torches at night as streetlights are often out. Ukraine's largest private power producer, DTEK, said 420,000 customers had had their electricity restored in Kyiv, with smaller numbers still to be reconnected. Five other regions were also affected. Russia's Defence Ministry said Moscow had launched a "massive" overnight strike on Ukrainian military-industrial and energy facilities in response to what it called "terrorist attacks".

Ukraine has been negotiating with the United States on the terms of a peace agreement that Washington is seeking to broker between Kyiv and Moscow to end Russia's nearly four-year-old war. Zelensky said on Saturday that a delegation headed by Security Council Secretary Rustem



A man clears debris inside his apartment amidst the conflict in Donetsk. — Reuters

Umerov was on its way to the United States to continue talks.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, special envoy Steve Witkoff and US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner will meet

the Ukrainian officials in Florida, a senior US official said. Kyiv and its European allies say they want peace but pushed back against some of the original terms pushed by the US, with Ukraine unwilling to withdraw

from land it currently holds and resisting any restriction on its future ability to join alliances.

Ukrainian naval drones hit two sanctioned tankers in the Black Sea as they headed to a Russian port to load up with oil destined for foreign markets, an official said on Saturday, as Kyiv tries to pile pressure on Russia's vast oil industry. Russia will notify all international platforms about the attack on the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) terminal on the Black Sea, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Sunday.

The CPC, which includes Russian, Kazakh and US shareholders, said that it had halted operations after a mooring at its Russian terminal on the Black Sea was significantly damaged by a Ukrainian naval drone attack. Commenting on the incident, Zakharova said that Ukraine's actions now pose a threat to global security. — Reuters

OPINION

Attention deficit is becoming common among young learners



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

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The National Day celebrations in Oman draw to a close, the sight of families and friends enjoying the cool outdoors was a heartening sight. Not so encouraging was the sight of young teenagers glued to their digital devices, even when outdoors.

Typically, youngsters can be seen scrolling furiously on their smartphones, impatient for the next reel to open. This is leading to a severe attention deficit crisis which is taking over young learners.

Researchers and educationists around the world have identified this as a prevalent and serious problem among all strata of society, especially youngsters.

Attention deficit can be easily identified as the inability to focus on any written piece of work, any conversation, or even any digital medium for longer than 30 seconds.

In schools, this is identified in a number of ways: students may fidget during lessons, fail to complete assignments, become easily distracted by the slightest external stimuli, and struggle to follow multi-step instructions.

There are many reasons why these challenges have appeared. The rapid access to technology has created an environment where children are accustomed to constant

stimulation and instant gratification. These stimuli come in the form of video games, social media, and streaming services that provide instant gratification that makes traditional learning seem slow and repetitive.

Modern lifestyles have only added to such situations.

Reduced physical activity and lack of adequate sleep because of constant interaction on social media means that children are not able to focus on other, seemingly more routine tasks. In fact, poor sleep patterns are known to compromise cognitive function and attention span.

Research also suggests that dietary habits also play a role. Excessive sugar consumption and nutritionally poor diets can affect energy levels, crashing energy levels by the end of the day.

There is much that all of us can do to reverse this trend. But it does require the cooperation and dedication of all concerned, starting with parents, teachers and the extended community.

Parents play the most important role in establishing rules around the house as well as becoming role models. Establishing healthy sleep schedules, limiting screen time, and ensuring nutritious meals is a big step

The rapid access to technology has created an environment where children are accustomed to constant stimulation and instant gratification

forward. Creating quiet, organised spaces for homework and maintaining regular communication with the children helps to identify any issues arising from their personality or performance.

In the classroom, teachers must implement strategies that encourage hands-on approaches to learning and build focus. Breaking lessons into smaller segments, incorporating movement breaks, and using varied teaching methods can help maintain engagement.

Of course, using visual aids, hands-on activities, and interactive learning makes content more accessible and engaging.

Physical activity is crucial. Schools can prioritise physical education, as exercise has been proven to improve concentration, memory, and overall cognitive function. Better connections between schools and parents will benefit the child.

Attention deficit is becoming a complex problem that requires sensitive but serious action.

It requires an understanding of the reasons for this phenomenon. It also requires the coordination of all those involved and interested in the development of a constructive young generation.

ROBOT FEST INSPIRES PALESTINIAN TEENS

MARTIN ABBUGAO

Palestinian student Razan Shawar has travelled for 24 hours to showcase her team’s AI-powered invention at the World Robot Olympiad in Singapore, telling innovation — not war —should be why people hear about her country.

The 15-year-old high school student from Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank said she dreams of making “something big, so the world can know that the one who did this is Palestinian”.

Together with the rest of the Palestinian delegation, she made the journey from the West Bank via Jordan and Dubai to attend the three-day global robotic tournament in Singapore that ended on Friday.

More than 1,500 competitors from over 90 countries and territories gathered in the Southeast Asian city for the event, aimed at harnessing the innovative spirit of the world’s youth to find solutions for pressing challenges.

Malaysia stamped its class in the tournament, winning a third of the contested medals in various categories, according to a tally.

Hong Kong, Costa Rica, Canada and the Philippines were also among the first-place awardees.

For the Palestinian students, who left without a medal, it was important to represent their nation on the global stage.

Palestinian delegations have attended World Robot Olympiads since 2014, but the war meant they did not send representatives at all to the 2023 edition in Panama, and since then, no participants from the Gaza Strip — only the West Bank.

Competing in the Future Innovators senior category, this year’s Palestinian delegation created a robot that can be used to boost agriculture production.

The ‘Agribot’, supported by artificial intelligence technology, works by measuring six key soil parameters like moisture, acidity and nutrients using sensors.

It takes precise readings with its mechanical arm, and the analysis can help farmers increase yield and reduce waste.

The students now aim to make it easily available to farmers who mostly rely on traditional methods, said Razan.

Jehad Abudayyeh, 16, said that agriculture “is so important in our country... because it’s a way of life. I’m very happy that my project will help them.”

Team member Mustafa Assi, who is also 16 and hopes to become an IT engineer, dreams of a more conducive environment for technology to thrive.

“I hope my country will be safer and the war ends,” he said. — AFP

Brazil’s climate minister faces home turmoil

MANUELA ANDREONI

BRAZILIAN Environment Minister Marina Silva fought back tears as global diplomats applauded her for several minutes on Saturday in the closing plenary of the COP30 global climate summit.

“We’ve made progress, albeit modestly,” she told delegates gathered in the Amazon rainforest city of Belem, before raising a fist over her head defiantly. “The courage to confront the climate crisis comes from persistence and collective effort.” It was a moment of catharsis for the Brazilian hosts in a tense hall where several nations vented frustration with a deal that failed to mention fossil fuels - even as they cheered more funds for developing nations adapting to climate change.

Despite the bittersweet outcome, COP30 capped years of work by the environment minister and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to restore Brazil’s leadership on global climate policy, dented by a far-right predecessor who denied climate science. Back in Brasilia, a harsher political reality looms. Congress has been pushing to dismantle much of the country’s environmental permitting system. Organized crime in the Amazon is also a problem, and people seeking to clear forest acres have found new ways to infiltrate and thwart groups touting sustainable development.

All this poses new threats to Brazil’s vast ecosystems, forcing Lula and his minister to wage a rearguard battle to defend the world’s largest rainforest.

Scientists and policy experts warn that action is needed to discourage deforestation before a changing climate turns the Amazon into a tinderbox. Tensions have been mounting between a conservative



Brazil’s Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Marina Silva speaks ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP30), in Belem, Brazil. — Reuters File

COP30 caps agenda for ‘ecological transformation’ of Brazil as conservative Congress threatens to undercut Lula’s vows

Congress and the leftist Lula ahead of next year’s general election. Forest land is often at heightened risk during election years.

Still, Silva insists Brazil can deliver on its promise to reduce deforestation to zero by 2030. “If I’m in the eye of the storm,” she said, “I have to survive.”

Silva, born in 1958 in the Amazonian state of Acre to an impoverished family of rubber tappers, was more rock star than policymaker for many at COP30. Like Lula, she overcame hunger and scant early schooling to achieve global recognition. As his environment minister from 2003 to 2008, she sharply slowed the destruction of her native rainforest. After more than a decade of estrangement from Lula’s Workers Party, Silva reunited with him in 2022.

Many environmentalists consider her return the most important move on climate policy in Lula’s current mandate, which he has cast his agenda as an “ecological transformation” of Brazil’s economy.

It is a stark contrast from surging deforestation under Lula’s right-

wing predecessor Jair Bolsonaro, who cheered on mining and ranching in the rainforest.

Still, Lula’s actual environmental record has been ambiguous, said Juliano Assuncao, executive director of the Climate Policy Institute think tank in Brazil.

“What we have at times is an Environment Ministry deeply committed to these issues, but at critical moments it hasn’t been able to count on the support of the federal government in the way it should,” he said.

Lula’s government has halved deforestation in the Amazon, making it easier to fine deforesters and choke their access to public credit. New policies have encouraged reforestation and sustainable farming practices, such as cattle tracing.

Still, critics say Lula’s government has not done enough to stop Congress as it undercut environmental protections and blocked recognition of Indigenous lands. Lawmakers have also attacked a private-sector agreement protecting the Amazon from the advance of soy farming.

Lula’s environmental critics concede he has limited leverage. When a government agency was slow to licence oil exploration off the Amazon coast, the Senate pushed legislation to overhaul environmental permitting. Lula vetoed much of the bill, but lawmakers vowed to restore at least part of it this week.

Similar tensions in Lula’s last mandate prompted Silva to quit over differences with other cabinet ministers. This time around, Lula has been quick to defend her and vice-versa. During a recent interview in her Brasilia office, Silva suggested that Lula had not changed, but rather that a warming planet has ratcheted up the urgency of climate policy. — Reuters

Cross the bridge that connects the world



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

THINK OF the world as a huge, colourful mosaic with each tile mirroring a culture, a belief, a way of life. The beauty of the mosaic comes not from consistency, but from the harmony of differences. And tolerance is the glue that holds it together.

In today’s rapidly shrinking world, where news travels across continents in seconds and cultures interconnect more than ever before, the importance of tolerance cannot be exaggerated. Tolerance is more than just accepting differences; it is a conscious choice to respect, understand and embrace the diversity that makes our world exciting. It is the bridge between misunderstanding and harmony, fear and friendship, conflict and cooperation.

Just imagine a world where every conversation began with curiosity instead of judgement. That is tolerance which transforms “them” into “us”, turning strangers into collaborators, rivals into partners and neighbours into friends.

International tolerance forms the foundation of peace. The ability to appreciate differences is what really allows communities to thrive.

It is not always easy, but choosing tolerance is always a step towards progress. Education, dialogue and cultural exchange are essential tools in cultivating this advantage, encouraging people to see beyond

their own experiences and appreciate the shared humanity of others.

Global institutions, including the United Nations, have long recognised the power of tolerance which has a good effect. Small gestures such as listening without judgement, celebrating another’s tradition and sharing in another culture’s festival may seem insignificant. However, they plant seeds of understanding that can blossom into lasting change.

When individuals choose empathy over indifference, cooperation over conflict, they contribute to a global culture of respect. This is particularly important in a world where confusion can escalate into larger fights, and where social cohesion is often tested by political, religious, or cultural tensions.

It is also essential to remember that tolerance is not synonymous with agreement. We may not adopt every belief or practice we encounter, but we can choose to respect it.

By honouring differences while seeking common ground, societies can foster dialogue, innovation and collaboration across borders. Tolerance encourages us to see the human story in every face, reminding us that despite our differences, our dreams, fears and aspirations are unusually similar.

Ultimately, international tolerance is the inspiration guiding us towards a more peaceful, inclusive and unified world.

It is a daily choice to extend understanding, kindness and patience to

International tolerance forms the foundation of peace. The ability to appreciate differences is what really allows communities to thrive. It is not always easy, but choosing tolerance is always a step towards progress

those who may seem different from us.

In embracing tolerance, we do not dilute our identities; we enrich them, and in doing so, we strengthen the global community. It is the foundation upon which lasting peace is built, the glue that binds diverse communities, and the spark that can ignite a future where every individual, regardless of background, is valued and respected.

By choosing tolerance, we choose a world of possibility, collaboration and hope. This world is where unity thrives not in sameness, but in the celebration of difference. Tolerance is more than a principle; it is a promise to listen, to understand and to act with compassion. It is the key to transforming conflict into connection, fear into friendship and division into dialogue.

In a world as diverse as ours, tolerance is not just desirable, it is essential for the survival, growth and flourishing of humanity. Tolerance is the invisible passport we all need. It allows us to cross borders of culture, religion and thought without fear or suspicion. Tolerance is the bridge connecting nations, the key unlocking mutual understanding and the spark that can light the path to a truly united world.

In fact, tolerance is the art of seeing humanity in every face, regardless of origin, language, or faith.

Choosing tolerance is choosing a world where peace, creativity and cooperation reign. It is a world we can all call home.

EV PROWESS HELPS CHINA’S FLYING CAR SECTOR TAKE OFF

LUNA LIN

A worker in white gloves inspects the propellers of a boxy two-seater aircraft fresh off the assembly line at a Chinese factory trialling the mass production of flying cars.

Globally, technical and regulatory challenges have prevented the much-hyped flying car sector from getting off the ground.

But Chinese companies are building on the rapid development of drones and electric vehicles (EVs) in the world’s second-largest economy, while harnessing government support for the futuristic inventions. “China has the potential to establish a competitive edge” for flying cars, said Zhang Yangjun, a professor at Tsinghua University’s School of Vehicle and Mobility.

“Future competition will increasingly hinge upon cost control and supply-chain efficiency, and these are areas where China holds clear advantages,” he said.

At the brightly lit factory in the southern industrial heartland of Guangzhou, logistics robots zip around ferrying unfinished parts.

The lightweight six-propeller aircraft under construction take off vertically and fit into a large car, to create the “Land Aircraft Carrier” - a modular flying vehicle made by Aridge, an arm of Chinese EV maker XPeng.

The flying part is stored and charged in a wheeled on-land vehicle dubbed “the mothership”.

At full capacity, the Aridge factory can churn out one every 30 minutes. It began its trial production phase in early November and the company plans to start deliveries next year, saying it has had more than 7,000 pre-orders.

But there is a long way to go before flying cars are whizzing through the air every day. “Regulations, the consumer’s comfort with this product, and also how you manage airspace, your supply chains, all need to catch up gradually,” Michael Du, Vice-President of Aridge, told reporters at a recent event. Competition is heating up among global tech giants over the future of aerial mobility, with Tesla CEO Elon Musk teasing the debut of a flying car prototype within weeks.

“If you took all the James Bond cars and combined them, it’s crazier than that,” Musk told the Joe Rogan Experience podcast.

American aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss debuted the first flying car prototype in 1917.

But successful designs have only become possible in recent years as electric motors and high-performance batteries have advanced.

Major players in the sector have conducted manned test flights, including California-based companies Joby and Archer, as well as Aridge, EHang and Volant in China. This year, EHang became the world’s first flying car company to be fully approved for commercial operation, something Aridge has yet to achieve. EHang plans to introduce an air taxi service, priced similarly to a premium road taxi, within three years. — AFP

Why Ukraine deserves to survive in this world

UKRAINE finds itself at a delicate and dangerous moment. It will soon be four years since Russia launched its full-scale war; the town of Pokrovsk is about to fall after a long, bloody siege; and the recent shelling of the capital, Kyiv, was one of the heaviest since 2022. And now US President Donald Trump has put forward a peace plan that is a sort of AI translation of the Kremlin’s demands for Ukraine: to surrender territory, cut the size of its army and abandon many modern weapons systems.

Against this backdrop, it might seem that a corruption investigation focused on President Volodymyr Zelensky’s inner circle could not come at a worse time. But this may turn out to be just the scandal Ukraine needs to show why it deserves to survive with its sovereignty intact.

Public anger about the embezzlement of at least \$100 million by a group led by a close friend and business partner of Zelensky is intense and widespread. But my Ukrainian friends – none of them a fan of the president – consider the investigation to be proof that anti-corruption measures are working even in the midst of war. Whatever the military balance on the frontline, the political balance is unambiguous.

Ukraine, at the insistence of its Western partners, established two anti-corruption organs in 2015. The National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office (SAPO) investigate allegations of official wrongdoings, no matter how close to the centres of power they must go.

NABU recently released a series of slick videos about the current investigation, code-named “Midas.” Intercepted conversations involving the main suspects (speaking in Russian) are punctuated by NABU’s explanations (in Ukrainian) of who is speaking and about what: mostly men – counting money, swearing and badmouthing others.



This summer, after Zelensky had Parliament pass a law curtailing NABU and SAPO, thousands of young people carrying placards took to the streets in protest.



ANNA HUSARSKA

The writer is a former senior policy adviser at the International Rescue Committee, is a journalist and political analyst

This summer, after Zelensky had Parliament pass a law curtailing NABU and SAPO, thousands of young people carrying placards took to the streets in protest. The slogans were spontaneous and direct. One MP carried a sign saying simply, “Ukraine is not Russia.” A veteran with both legs amputated above the knee carried one saying: “We fight for Ukraine, not for your impunity.” A young boy in Lviv changed the name of Zelensky’s party, “Servant of the People,” into “Servant of Lawlessness.” Nine days later, the law was repealed.

In Ukraine, the investigation of Zelensky’s circle is well documented because the country has these two state organs and a platter of watchdog agencies.

All tenaciously uncover dirt and expose it through their own media, as well as online news outlets that anyone can access. Several news organisations broadcast on YouTube, while reports, commentaries, talk shows, and vigorous discussions populate Telegram channels, Facebook, and X. Suggestions of who is involved, and how deeply, abound, sparing no one.

The most prominent among online newspapers is probably

Ukrainska Pravda. Its current editor is Sevgil Musayeva, a Crimean Tatar. Under her leadership, the paper’s coverage of the latest corruption scandal would make any Western outlet proud: daily reports (in Ukrainian, Russian and English), opinion pieces, plus Telegram, Instagram and TikTok channels.

A recent video investigation sought to uncover who may have tipped off the main defendant, who fled the country a few hours before his apartment was searched.

Ukrainska Pravda also prepared a 20-minute video report on corruption.

Viewed by almost 150,000 people in the first three days, it “collected all of Zelensky’s main statements about his attitude towards corruption (since 2019),” according to an accompanying text.

No matter where the corruption investigation leads, the fact that Ukraine is an example of a former Soviet republic that aspires to democracy and the rule of law is precisely why Russia is determined to obliterate it.

A state that exposes its scandals and scoundrels, and a public that demands accountability regardless of who the rogues may be, is his worst fear. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Oman now heads into the final tournament, scheduled to kick off in Doha on Monday and continue until December 18, with high ambitions.

OMAN SET FOR ARAB CUP CHALLENGE UNDER UPDATED FIFA RULES IN DOHA

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 29

Stand-in goalkeeper Ibrahim al Rajhi handed Oman's senior national football team a precious ticket to the group stage of the 11th edition of Arab Cup Qatar 2025, after guiding the Red Warriors to a 4-1 penalty shootout victory over Somalia on Friday.

Al Rajhi, who replaced goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini shortly before the shootout, emerged as the hero of the night after saving two penalties taken by Zakaria Hassan and Ali Moosa, securing Oman's progression to the next round.

Oman now heads into the final tournament, scheduled to kick off in Doha on Monday and continue until December 18, with high ambitions as they look to make a strong impression in their second-ever appearance in the competition.

The team's opening fixture will be a high-profile Gulf encounter against Saudi Arabia, a matchup that historically carries its own competitive flavour. Oman also rely on the momentum gained from their last meeting with Saudi Arabia during the Gulf Cup in Kuwait.

The group also includes Morocco and Comoros, adding to the significance of Oman's opening match as they set the tone for their journey in Group B. Following their qualification win, Oman national team resumed their daily training sessions in Doha with morning and evening drills in preparation for the group stage.

MAJOR REGULATION CHANGES

The 11th edition introduces significant regulatory changes aimed at elevating the tournament's competitive value.

For the first time, Arab Cup matches will be classified as official international fixtures, with results contributing to the Fifa Rankings using the same points system applied to international friendlies. A second notable modification concerns tie-breaker rules in the group stage. Instead of using overall goal difference as the initial criterion, priority will now be given to head-to-head goal difference among tied teams — a shift that has not been implemented by Fifa in any of its global competitions. If still tied, rankings will be decided by:

- 1- Head-to-head goals scored
- 2- Overall group goal difference
- 3- Overall goals scored
- 4- Fair play points
- 5- Latest Fifa Ranking

Should teams remain level, Fifa has removed the traditional drawing of lots, replacing it with the latest Fifa Ranking, with the higher-ranked team advancing. Fifa Referees Committee Chairman Pierluigi Collina announced a new regulation for this year's tournament: any player who requires medical attention on the pitch and is treated by the medical team must remain off the field for two minutes, leaving his team temporarily with 10 players. The rule excludes goalkeepers and cases where the injury was caused by a foul that resulted in a booking for the opponent.

The tournament has also seen a significant increase in financial rewards, with the total prize fund rising to \$36.5 million, underscoring the growing importance of the Arab Cup on the regional football calendar.

Bahrain win men's, Saudi take women's 3x3 titles



Bahrain defeated Qatar in the men's final and crowned champions.

— Photos: Ammar al Musafir

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 30

BAHRAIN CLINCHED the men's title at the Gulf 3x3 Basketball Championship after a deserved 21-16 victory over Qatar, while the Saudi women's team captured their title with a 20-17 win over Bahrain.

The tournament, hosted by the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) at Al Mouj Muscat, concluded with the finals and awarding ceremony held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Thuwaini bin Shihab al Said, in the presence of Gulf federation presidents, team representatives and a large attending crowd.

HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Thuwaini crowned the winning teams. Bahrain won the men's gold medal and the championship trophy, Qatar secured the silver medal, and Saudi Arabia earned the bronze. Bahrain's Bogdan Dragovic also received the Best Player Award.

In the women's category, Saudi Arabia took the gold medal, Bahrain secured silver, and Kuwait claimed bronze. Qatar's Mona Sulaiman was named Best Player of the women's competition.

BAHRAIN OVERCOME QATAR TO SNATCH THE MEN'S TITLE
The men's final delivered high drama as Bahrain opened the scoring through Bogdan Dragovic, before Qatar responded

quickly via Nedim Muslic. Both teams swapped leads early on, but Bahrain gained control as the match entered its final phase. Milos Supica widened the gap to 12-8, though Qatar managed to level the score at 15-15.

In the decisive moments, Bahrain pulled ahead through Bogdan and Mohammed Hassan, who added crucial points to reach 20-16, before sealing the victory 21-16.

SAUDI ARABIA DEFEAT KUWAIT FOR THIRD PLACE
Saudi Arabia secured the men's bronze medal after a 21-14 win over Kuwait. Rayed opened with a three-pointer, followed by scoring contributions from Hani Mohammed that extended the lead to 9-3.

Despite Kuwait's late push, Saudi Arabia sealed the match with a final basket from Hazem.

SAUDI ARABIA EDGE BAHRAIN IN THE WOMEN'S FINAL
The Saudi women dominated the early stages with scoring from Kawthar al Khayyat and precise shooting from Rand Khaled. Jana Salman and Al Jawhara Mohammed played key roles in creating scoring opportunities.

Bahrain attempted to stay in contention through Aya Kamal, Maryam al Owais, and Bayan Salman, but Saudi Arabia maintained composure in the closing moments and secured a well-earned 20-17 victory.

WOMEN'S THIRD PLACE KUWAIT BEAT QATAR
Kuwait's women's team earned an important 11-7 win over Qatar. Kuwait started strongly before Qatar equalised through Nazeeha Al Agha. As the match progressed, Kuwait's Sheikhha Abdullah and Munira al Rahaili proved decisive, gradually extending the lead and securing the victory despite Qatar's late attempts to respond.

Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, President of the OBA, expressed his delight with the high technical level of the championship and congratulated Bahrain and Saudi Arabia on their titles.

He praised the excellent organisation and noted the satisfaction expressed by all participating teams, highlighting the strong fan presence and the vibrant atmosphere at Al Mouj Muscat.

Al Naabi also pointed to the noticeable improvement in the performance of Oman's national teams, crediting the combined efforts of the technical staff, federation officials, and players. He emphasised the importance of continuing to host such events to promote sports tourism in Oman.

Bahrain's Mohammed Hassan expressed his joy at winning the title, saying the team corrected its earlier mistakes and entered the final with determination. He thanked Oman for hosting the first official men's 3x3 basketball championship and added that winning the title would motivate the team in upcoming competitions, noting that being the first champion increases their responsibility to defend the crown.



Saudi Arabia edge Bahrain in the women's final and crowned champions.



Bahrain's Bogdan Dragovic received the Best Player Award.



Qatar's Mona Suleiman Best Player of the women's competition.

SHORT TAKES



67 climbers from 13 different countries, along with representatives from tourism companies took part in the 'Oman Cliffs' event

CLIFF CHALLENGE HIGHLIGHTS OMAN’S ADVENTURE TOURISM

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 30

As many as 67 climbers from 13 different countries, along with representatives from several tourism companies from Saudi Arabia and Lebanon took part in the ‘Oman Cliffs’ event in Hadash village at Wadi Mistal in the Wilayat of Nakhal in Al Batinah South Governorate, which showcased the beauty of adventure tourism in Oman’s mountains.

Held under the auspices of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), Hadash Guest House and Coffee in collaboration with the Oman Climbers Team, Wadi Adventures, Rahal Adventures, and Compass Adventures, the event has, by now, been one of the highly sought-after cliff events in the region.

The challenge was open to all and there was an overwhelming response to the call that introduced the scenic beauty of the country to the outside world, according to the organisers. Mountaineers from, besides Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Britain, Austria, Algeria, Scotland and France made it to the top of the 1,500 metres high range of mountains braving the colder climate and the rough terrain and piercing rocks. The only resort on the Wakan mountain range, the Hadash Guesthouse played host to the guests making them feel at home and comfortable.

Participants expressed their great admiration for the experience of climbing Oman’s mountains and exploring its unique natural beauty, most of them, for the first time. They affirmed that Oman’s mountains are promising destinations for adventure and mountain tourism enthusiasts, thanks to their diverse geography and captivating landscapes, thus enhancing the Sultanate of Oman’s position on the global tourism map.



Flamengo’s Giorgian de Arrascaeta and Bruno Henrique celebrate with the trophy and team-mates after winning the Copa Libertadores. — Reuters

Flamengo beat Palmeiras to win Copa Libertadores

FLAMENGO defeated Palmeiras 1-0 to win the Copa Libertadores on Saturday, becoming the most successful Brazilian team in the history of South America’s top club competition by lifting the title for a fourth time.

A second half headed goal from Flamengo centre-back Danilo settled a scrappy encounter at the Estadio Monumental in Lima - the fifth Libertadores final in the past six seasons to feature two clubs from Brazil.

Flamengo’s win avenged their 2-1 defeat to Palmeiras in the 2021 Libertadores final and leaves the famous Rio de Janeiro club firmly on course for a hat-trick of trophies in 2025.

Flamengo began the year with victory in the Brazilian Super Cup and need only two points from their remaining two

league fixtures to clinch Brazil’s domestic championship.

Flamengo’s third win in the tournament since 2019 and fourth overall put them level with Argentina’s Estudiantes, three behind another Argentinian club, Independiente, with seven titles.

Palmeiras meanwhile were left ruing a golden chance to equalise in the 89th minute, when Vitor Roque blasted over the bar from point blank range.

That was to be arguably the best Palmeiras chance of a mostly fractious final littered with 33 fouls and seven yellow cards shared between the two teams.

A scrappy first half saw Flamengo enjoy the better chances, with Bruno Henrique the first to trigger alarm in the Palmeiras ranks with a 15th-minute strike that flew high and wide. Flamengo continued to find space down the flanks, and moments later Samuel

Lino threatened to break the deadlock, cutting in from the left and flashing a shot wide. That though was as good as it got for Flamengo in the first half, and the men in red and black were fortunate not to be reduced to 10 men after 30 minutes following a melee that erupted when Palmeiras defender Bruno Fuchs brought down Flamengo star Giorgian de Arrascaeta.

As tempers flared, Flamengo’s Chilean international Erick Pulgar flew in and kicked out at Fuchs, yet somehow escaped only with a yellow. Flamengo again looked the more threatening team after halftime while struggling to create clear-cut chances.

The breakthrough finally came on 67 minutes, when Arrascaeta swung in an inviting corner from the right.

Danilo — inexplicably left unmarked — rose unchallenged to head home for what would be the winning goal. — AFP

Messi, Miami into first MLS Cup final after New York rout

FORT LAUDERDALE, United States: Inter Miami coach Javier Mascherano hailed Lionel Messi as “extraordinary” after the Argentine superstar steered the club into their first MLS Cup final with a 5-1 thrashing of New York City FC on Saturday.

A Tadeo Allende hat-trick and goals from Mateo Silveti and Telasco Segovia sent a revitalised Miami roaring into Major League Soccer’s championship game next Saturday at their home field in Fort Lauderdale.

While Messi did not get on the scoresheet, the 38-year-old provided a crucial, classy assist for Miami’s third goal scored by Silveti that effectively killed off the game as New York chased an equaliser.

“Leo has accustomed us to the extraordinary,” Mascherano said of his former Barcelona and Argentina team-mate.

“He’s someone extraordinary, someone we’ll never see again. Today, perhaps we’re surprised that he didn’t score, but he gave us peace of mind with the third goal, an assist that only he can see. He practically sealed the game.”

Miami will host the Vancouver Whitecaps in next Saturday’s MLS showpiece.

Vancouver, spearheaded by former Germany and Bayern Munich star Thomas Muller, advanced to the final with a superb

3-1 victory over San Diego in California on Saturday to claim the Western Conference crown.

Messi and his team-mates will head into the final bristling with confidence after another ruthless, high-scoring demolition job that followed on from their 4-0 drubbing of FC Cincinnati in the previous round.

Allende — who scored twice in the victory over Cincinnati — was once again the focal point of the Miami attack.

The 26-year-old Argentine forward opened the scoring in the 14th minute after cleverly springing the New York offside trap and then headed in a superb second to make it 2-0. New York rallied back with a headed Justin Haak goal in the 37th minute, and came within a whisker of an equaliser when Julian Fernandez forced a fine one-handed save from Miami goalkeeper Rocco Rios Novo in the 66th minute. That near miss was to prove crucial. Miami immediately swept upfield and a flowing move saw Rodrigo De Paul and Jordi Alba combine before Messi slipped a pass to Silveti who rifled home to make it 3-1.

UNBREAKABLE Segovia then eliminated any doubt with Miami’s fourth in the 83rd minute before Allende completed his hat-trick a minute from time to spark wild celebrations.



Inter Miami CF celebrates after beating New York City FC in the Eastern Conference Finals at Chase Stadium. — Reuters

The victory leaves Miami just one win away from completing a remarkable transformation after a season that appeared to be unraveling in disarray earlier in the campaign following after a string of defeats. “We strengthened as a group and reached the end of the season with a brotherhood within the team, where everyone pulls together, and it doesn’t matter who starts,” Mascherano said. “We are a group, and the power of a group is unbreakable.”

Meanwhile Vancouver — who thumped Miami 5-1 on aggregate when they met in the CONCACAF Champions Cup semifinals in April — signalled that they will be ready to take on the star-studded Florida outfit with a masterful display to beat San Diego.

The Canadian club got off to a dream start with Brian White firing them into the lead after only eight minutes.

More relentless Vancouver pressure forced an own goal from

San Diego goalkeeper Pablo Sisniega three minutes later and a second White goal on the stroke of half-time made it 3-0.

San Diego raised hopes of an unlikely fightback when Mexico striker Hirving Lozano lashed in a long-range effort in the 60th minute.

But Vancouver continued to look the likelier team to score and Sisniega was shown a red card for bringing down Ryan Gauld when the Whitecaps player rounded him to go in on goal. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Spain's Puig wins Australian PGA for first DP World Tour title

SPAIN’S PUIG WINS AUSTRALIAN PGA FOR FIRST DP WORLD TOUR TITLE

BRISBANE, Australia: Nerveless young Spaniard David Puig on Sunday became the first European to win the Australian PGA Championship since 1998, holding off a chasing pack led by China’s Ding Wenyi to claim a maiden DP World Tour title. LIV Golf’s Puig went into the final day at Royal Queensland Golf Club in Brisbane as joint leader, but asserted himself early and proved unflappable at the European-based circuit’s 2026 season-opening event.

The 23-year-old nailed five birdies in an unblemished 66 to finish at 18-under par and become the first Spaniard to win the Australian PGA since the great Severiano Ballesteros in 1981.

The impressive 21-year old Ding also had a 66 to finish at 16-under and another LIV player, Australian Marc Leishman (67), tied for third a shot further back with New Zealander Nick Voke (66).

The 2023 champion Min Woo Lee and New Zealand’s Daniel Hillier were tied fifth on 14-under par, one ahead of Australian veteran Adam Scott.

“It feels amazing,” said Puig, a good friend of tennis world number one and fellow Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz. “I’ve really had a lot of close calls in a few events throughout this year and last year and I wasn’t able to pull it through.

“So it feels unbelievable, especially winning here in Australia. So I’m really, really excited and happy.”

The last European to win the Kirkwood Cup was England’s David Howell.

Puig is a player on the rise, finishing 10th on the 2025 LIV Golf rankings, having cut short his college career at Arizona State University to join the breakaway tour in 2022.

The victory was his third as a professional after two on the Asian Tour, most recently at the 2024 Malaysian Open. His previous best on the DP World Tour was third at the Ras Al Khaimah Championship in January.

“I was pretty nervous to be fair,” he said. “Especially thinking about the past a little bit, you know, what I could have done a little better. But I kept my composure really well.”

Puig made a sensational start with birdies at two, three and four to move three clear of Leishman, Lee and fellow overnight leader Ricardo Gouveia of Portugal.

Birdies on the ninth by Leishman and playing partner Ding narrowed the gap to two.

But Puig responded by sinking a monster putt for his fourth birdie of the day at the par-three eighth to reclaim a three-shot buffer.

He made the turn with the same advantage and despite it slipping to two as Leishman, Lee and Ding made moves, he was resolute and kept his focus. — AFP



Virat Kohli hit a record-extending 52nd one-day century scoring 135 in 120 balls against South Africa

Kohli stars as India beat South Africa in first ODI

STAR BATSMAN Virat Kohli hit a record-extending 52nd one-day century to set up India’s 17-run win over a spirited South Africa in the first match on Sunday.

Kohli’s 135 came off 120 balls and he shared a second-wicket partnership of 136 with fellow stalwart Rohit Sharma to set India on course for 349-8 in the eastern city of Ranchi.

Corbin Bosch made a valiant 67 off 51 balls as South Africa fought until almost the end. Entering the 50th over, the visitors needed 18 for victory with one wicket left. Bosch fell on the second ball and the South Africa were 332 all out.

Matthew Breetzke, who made 72, and Marco Jansen, with 70, put on a fighting stand of 97 for the sixth wicket to revived the chase after South Africa slipped to 11-3 and then 77-4.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav stood out with figures of 4-68 in the high-scoring contest. His double strike to remove Jansen and Breetzke in the space of three balls was the turning point for India who took 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

The 37-year-old Kohli remained the hero with his 83rd ton across the three international formats after he raised his hundred with a boundary off Jansen and lifted his bat to a raucous home crowd.

An Indian fan breached security and raced to the pitch to touch Kohli’s feet before he was dragged away. Kohli has the most



ODI hundreds, with Indian great Sachin Tendulkar second with 49.

The Indian cricket star tops the list of hundreds in a single format with Tendulkar’s count in Tests being 51.

Kohli and 38-year-old Rohit, who made 57, only play the 50-over format after they retired from T20 and Test cricket.

Their presence boosted India, led by KL Rahul in the absence of the injured Shubman Gill, after a 2-0 Test whitewash against South Africa.

Rohit lost fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal early for 18 but Kohli walked in to a huge roar from a 38,000-strong capacity crowd.

The pair steadied the innings and then

took on the bowlers before Rohit was trapped lbw by Jansen.

Rohit hit three sixes in his 51-ball knock. That took him to 352 sixes in this format, overtaking Pakistan batter Shahid Afridi’s recird of 351.

Kohli switched gears soon after reaching his first hundred since February. He hit off-spinner Prenelan Subrayen for two fours and two sixes in a 21-run 39th over.

He finally fell to Nandre Burger, caught by Ryan Rickelton, after hitting 11 fours and seven sixes. Rahul kept up the attack with 60 off 56 balls, while Ravindra Jadeja made 32 off 20. The next match is on Wednesday in Raipur. — AFP

Hornets end Raptors’ NBA win streak, Pistons top Heat

The Charlotte Hornets snapped Toronto’s nine-game winning streak on Saturday, stunning the Raptors 118-111 in an NBA overtime thriller to bag just their sixth win of the season. Miles Bridges scored 16 of his 35 points in the fourth quarter and overtime as the Hornets rallied against a Raptors team that appeared to be cruising when they led by 17 in the first quarter.

Rookie Kon Knueppel added 20 points for Charlotte and drained a three-pointer with 10.1 seconds left in regulation to force overtime.

After Toronto’s Scottie Barnes drove for a layup to open the extra session Bridges tied it again with a floater then gave Charlotte their first lead of the game with a three-pointer. The Hornets wouldn’t trail

again, out-scoring the Raptors 14-7 in overtime.

“The whole team set the tone,” Bridges said of a Hornets squad that won their second straight after snapping a seven-game skid on Friday. “As a team, we’re bringing a different type of energy.”

Hornets coach Charles Lee said the key for the Hornets was “a belief in each other, a belief in what we could do. “The guys just brought it,” he said. “And it was good to see us just execute and be able to come away (with a win) after we played a ton of really close games.”

The Detroit Pistons ended the Heat’s six-game winning streak with a 138-135 victory in Miami.

Cade Cunningham scored 29 points with four rebounds and eight



Charlotte Hornets guard Collin Sexton (8) goes to the basket defended by Toronto Raptors forward Scottie Barnes (4).

— Reuters

assists to lead the Pistons, who had dropped two in a row on the heels of their 13-game winning streak.

Andrew Wiggins scored 31 points, Norman Powell added 28 and Tyler Herro chipped in 24 for Miami, but the Heat came up short in their bid to rally from a double-digit fourth-quarter deficit.

ANTETOKOUNMPO MILESTONE

The Milwaukee Bucks, fuelled by 29 points from Giannis Antetokounmpo, halted their seven-game losing streak with a 116-99 victory over the Brooklyn Nets.

Antetokounmpo, in his second game back after missing four with a groin strain, surpassed 21,000 points for his career, becoming the 42nd player — and sixth-youngest — to

reach the milestone with a three-pointer in the third quarter.

In 19 minutes on court the Greek star connected on an efficient 12 of 15 shots, adding eight rebounds, two assists and two steals.

In Indianapolis, Pascal Siakam drilled the game-winning jump shot at the buzzer to give the Pacers a 103-101 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

The Pacers, who have been beset by injuries since falling to Oklahoma City in the NBA Finals last season, have put together back-to-back wins for the first time this season.

At Minnesota, guard Anthony Edwards scored 14 of his 39 points in the fourth quarter as the Timberwolves won a roller coaster of a contest against the Boston Celtics 119-115. — AFP

BUSINESS



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SHORTTAKES

EU SEES OMAN AS KEY PARTNER IN ENERGY TRANSITION

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, NOV 30



CHRISTOPHE FARNAUD

Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman hosted on Sunday, November 30, 2025, a summit organised as part of the 'EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Project.

The event, held on the sidelines of the 2025 Oman Green Hydrogen Summit (GHSO), brought together policymakers, industry leaders and experts from both Oman and the European Union.

In his keynote address, Christophe Farnaud, Ambassador

of the European Union Delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman, highlighted the significance of the event.

"This summit comes at a pivotal moment. Despite some headwinds, the global energy transition continues with great pace, with hydrogen as an essential element connecting renewable energy generation, industrial innovation, climate ambition and new growth opportunities", he shared.

Applauding Oman's commitment to green hydrogen, Farnaud stated, "Oman has positioned itself as one of the most committed and forward-looking actors in this field.

Through its National Hydrogen Strategy, the establishment of Hydrom and its ambition to produce over 1 million tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030 — backed by tens of billions of dollars of planned investment — Oman is sending a clear message to the world: it is ready to lead".

He further added, "Combining Oman's vast renewable potential with Europe's technological expertise and growing demand for clean molecules opens the window for a real partnership — one that can connect our strengths, build long-term resilience and shape the emerging global hydrogen economy together.

Oman and EU advance green hydrogen alliance

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 30

THE Sultanate of Oman has stepped up cooperation with the European Union (EU) on clean energy and green hydrogen, positioning itself as a strategic partner for Europe's low-carbon transition, during the introductory programme for the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 2025.

Organised by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the programme featured the Oman-EU Green Hydrogen Forum, held in partnership with the EU-GCC Green Transition Cooperation Project funded by the European Union. The forum underscored Oman's ambition to anchor long-term hydrogen supply chains linking the Gulf with European markets.

Speaking at the forum, Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, NOV 30

ENG Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, outlined progress in the development of Oman's green hydrogen sector, while also offering his perspective on evolving market dynamics surrounding the domestic and global low carbon industry.

Delivering the keynote address at the Energy Executive Circle — held as part of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) 2025 — Eng Al Aufi noted that the Sultanate of Oman is making steady progress on key renewable and hydrogen initiatives. He singled out four entities for praise for their decisive roles in advancing green energy development in Oman and internationally.

The list includes OQ Alternative Energy, which had recently received its first shipments of wind turbines for its wind farm projects in Oman — shipments that also provided valuable logistical experience for future large-scale mobilisations, he said.

Kawasaki Heavy Industries was cited for starting development of a major liquid hydrogen terminal in Japan, while India's ACME Group was lauding for advancing the first green ammonia project in the Sultanate of Oman, the output of which will be lifted by a European offtaker on ammonia-powered vessels.

Additionally, Al Aufi acknowledged the European Union's strong role in accelerating partnerships and hydrogen framework development with Oman.

The Minister added that Oman's



Oman's hydrogen strategy is intentionally flexible to reflect changing market conditions. The next land auction round focuses on smaller parcels aligned with current market readiness, while developers are allowed to phase projects, adjust final product molecules and choose between export and domestic pathways.

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFII
Minister of Energy and Minerals



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, addressing the Energy Executive Circle on Sunday.

hydrogen strategy is intentionally flexible to reflect changing market conditions. The next land auction round focuses on smaller parcels aligned with current market readiness, while developers are allowed to phase projects, adjust final product molecules and choose between export and domestic pathways.

Pricing remains the main challenge, though green hydrogen costs have improved to around \$3 per kilogramme and are expected to decline further, he noted. With strong solar and wind resources; and land and frameworks already prepared, Oman is positioned to scale quickly as global demand increases — particularly as the sector is expected to undergo significant shifts in the next five to ten years.

Earlier, Dr Abdullah al Abri, Vice President of Sustainability at SOHAR Port and Freezone, opened the session with a presentation on the global hydrogen sector. Dr Al Abri said: "The global

hydrogen economy is entering a decisive chapter. Today, demand is approaching 100 million tonnes, yet projections show it may multiply several times by 2050.

This creates a historic opportunity for countries like Oman, where abundant low-cost renewables provide a strong foundation for competitive green hydrogen production.

While electrification continues to expand, clean molecules such as hydrogen will remain essential for hard-to-abate sectors including steel, chemicals, shipping and aviation".

He added that the industry is shifting from ambition to disciplined execution, focusing on bankable projects, credible offtake structures and stable investment frameworks.

"Oman is moving from a resource-based economy to an integrated industrial platform", he affirmed, pointing to major infrastructure developments in Suhar, Al Duqm, Salalah and Sur.



Organised by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the programme featured the Oman-EU Green Hydrogen Forum, held in partnership with the EU-GCC Green Transition Cooperation Project funded by the European Union.

Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said Oman is moving rapidly to build a competitive and sustainable future energy system, with green hydrogen at its core.

He highlighted that Royal Decree 10/2023, which earmarked large tracts of land for renewable

energy and hydrogen projects, marked a turning point in improving the investment climate and accelerating project development.

He explained that Oman's energy transition strategy rests on five pillars: renewable energy, green hydrogen, energy efficiency,

electric mobility and carbon capture; and storage. Together, these pillars form the backbone of a national push towards a low-carbon economy aligned with global climate goals.

Al Hadhrami pointed to concrete progress on the ground, notably the establishment of Hydrom to lead sector development, alongside streamlined regulations, simplified licensing, and readiness laboratories developed with public- and private-sector partners. Agreements with local and international universities are also strengthening research, innovation and skills development.

Oman's abundant solar and wind resources were highlighted as a key competitive advantage, supporting its ambition to become a large-scale producer and exporter of green hydrogen. The country has already signed nine

development agreements targeting production exceeding one million tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030.

According to the Ministry, recent auction rounds have been strengthened through incentives including fee reductions, tax benefits and early-stage facilities, as well as plans for shared hydrogen, water and power infrastructure.

A single-window licensing system and a national digital platform to monitor project implementation are further aimed at reducing investor risk.

Al Hadhrami noted that Oman is working closely with European and Asian partners to develop international hydrogen trade corridors and align certification standards. "The global energy transition requires genuine partnerships and Oman is ready to play a pivotal role", he said.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The initiative aims to equip young people with essential financial skills.

BANKDHOFAR LAUNCHES “KHUTWA” PROGRAMME TO PROMOTE FINANCIAL AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to strengthening financial literacy across the Sultanate of Oman, BankDhofar has launched “Khutwa”, a new digital learning programme designed for students in grades 11 and 12. The initiative aims to equip young people with essential financial skills, empowering them to manage their personal finances responsibly and build resilience against future economic challenges.

Developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance — represented by the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development (Estidamah) — the programme is part of the national financial literacy enhancement framework.

Several government entities are also participating, including the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation; the SMEs Development Authority (Riyada); and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Youth Centre.

Khutwa provides students with access to a rich suite of training modules and interactive courses that span key aspects of the financial sector. Topics range from the fundamentals of money management, online payments, loans and insurance products, to investment principles, future financial planning and an introduction to digital currencies.

Dr Khalid bin Salem al Hadhami, Head of Human Resources Group at BankDhofar, emphasised that the programme underscores the bank’s long-standing commitment to promoting financial literacy among youth.

He noted that Khutwa leverages digital self-learning tools to deliver knowledge and skills that enable students to make informed and confident financial decisions.

“We believe that investing in young people is vital to preparing an aware and capable generation — one that can contribute to sustainable economic development. This initiative is a key step towards building a more stable and prosperous society”, he stated.

The launch of Khutwa builds on BankDhofar’s broader efforts to raise financial awareness across all segments of the community. Last year, the bank introduced the Financial Literacy Podcast in partnership with Hala FM, covering essential topics such as fraud prevention, investment basics, saving and personal financial planning. The podcast will continue in the coming months with new episodes offering educational content on a variety of financial issues.

Bank Muscat launches the national payment card “Maal”

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its commitment to promoting innovation, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the soft launch of the national payment card “Maal”, marking a significant step towards supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s vision of establishing a secure and efficient digital payments ecosystem operating within an integrated national framework.

“Maal” is a national payment card developed under the supervision of the Central Bank of Oman and issued by Omani banks. It is accepted by all licensed payment service providers across the Sultanate of Oman, enabling customers to carry out transactions easily and securely through a unified national system for card issuance, processing and



Maal is a national payment card developed under the supervision of the CBO and issued by Omani banks.

settlement. The debit card provides customers with 24/7 access to their accounts, allowing

OCCI’s new state-of-the-art HQ in Madinat Al Irfan

THE Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has selected Madinat Al Irfan as the destination for its new headquarters, reinforcing the urban development’s role as an incubator for organisations shaping Oman’s economic future.

The decision aligns with national efforts to bring major economic and administrative institutions within well-connected, purpose-planned districts developed to support long term operations.

Designed as Oman’s largest connected urban development, Madinat Al Irfan has been masterplanned by OMRAN Group to enable this transition, providing entities with proximity to key facilities, modern infrastructure and an integrated environment established for long-term institutional operations.

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism and Chairman of OMRAN Group, said: “Madinat Al Irfan is the urban centre for the sectors that underpin Oman’s diversification, from tourism and convention activities to business services and knowledge-based industries that generate skilled employment and attract investment.

The Chamber’s decision to base its new headquarters here reflects this direction and strengthens Madinat Al Irfan’s role as a strategic base for institutions looking towards Oman. OMRAN Group



The new 10,000 sqm headquarters will be developed by Madinat Al Irfan on a site overlooking the upcoming Sayyid Tarik bin Taimur Cultural Complex.

is committed to guiding the city’s growth in a way that brings forward projects and institutions which deliver long-term economic value and support the priorities of Oman Vision 2040”.

Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said: “This move represents an important step in strengthening the services and representation we provide to Oman’s growing business community.

Operating from Madinat Al Irfan will allow us to engage more effectively with enterprises across sectors, respond more closely to their needs and contribute to building a business environment that supports competitiveness and sustainable growth.

From this new HQ, we will continue advancing private-sector participation and supporting the national economic priorities”.

The new 10,000 sqm headquarters will be developed by Madinat Al Irfan on a site overlooking the upcoming Sayyid Tarik bin Taimur Cultural Complex and within close proximity to the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, the JW Marriott and Crowne Plaza OCEC.

Surrounded by integrated hospitality and service infrastructure, the strategic location will enable more direct engagement with the private sector while supporting the Chamber’s national mandate.

Designed to house the Chamber’s core functions, including administrative operations, member services and business support programmes, the project will now move forward with the appointment of a detailed design consultant, followed by the selection of a construction contractor in accordance with established development procedures.

Eng Mohammed bin Abdullah al Salmi, General Manager, Madinat Al Irfan, added: “As Madinat Al Irfan continues its planned development, our focus remains on delivering projects that align with national priorities and accommodate the needs of the entities establishing their presence in the city.

With several projects now moving ahead, the timing of the Chamber’s headquarters aligns with a period of ongoing progress across the city.

Their presence brings an institution with an important role in advancing economic activity and we look forward to working with them as Madinat Al Irfan continues to enable effective public-private collaboration”.

He went on to add, “The OCCI headquarters will be developed to international sustainability standards, with WELL and LEED certifications targeted and incorporated into the project’s technical plan, construction oversight and commissioning to ensure occupant wellbeing, robust energy performance and long-term operational efficiency”.

The new OCCI headquarters will join a number of national projects currently taking shape across Madinat Al Irfan, contributing to the city’s development as Muscat’s new urban centre. As work progresses across its various phases, Madinat Al Irfan continues to evolve through coordinated partnerships that bring forward facilities, services and institutions that support the city’s role in Oman’s wider economic landscape.

Lulu wins best ‘Retailer of the Year’ award

MUSCAT: Lulu Hypermarket has been honoured with the prestigious ‘Retailer of the Year’ award from The Arabian Stories at the TAS Business Awards 2025 for setting a new benchmark in the retail industry.

The high-profile award was presented by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in the presence of distinguished personalities from government, business, education, banking, technology and investment sectors.

Expressing his gratitude, Shabeer K A, Director of Lulu Hypermarkets — Oman, said, “We are truly honoured to be recognised at such a prestigious event. This award is a recognition of Lulu’s unwavering commitment to setting new benchmarks in customer service and excellence in the retail category.



This award is a recognition of Lulu’s unwavering commitment to setting new benchmarks in customer service and excellence in retail category.

Lulu has always stayed ahead in bringing innovative retail concepts and experiences equipped with emerging technologies and data that the world needs today”.

“This recognition is a motivation for us to further strengthen our core values as well as uphold the highest standards of service and trust to make Lulu the perfect destination for customers to have a truly satisfactory shopping experience. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our valued customers, whose trust and support inspire us every day”, he added.

The award ceremony, which was held at Intercity Hotel Muscat under the theme “Progressing Beyond Barriers”, recognised outstanding individuals, brands and institutions that have demonstrated exceptional performance and contributed to the nation’s economic and social progress.

SHORTTAKES



Westwell, a global pioneer in new energy autonomous driving, will deliver the e-truck fleet under an agreement signed with Hutchison Ports Sohar.

HUTCHISON PORTS SOHAR INKS PACT TO DEPLOY FIRST-EVER E-TRUCKS

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 30

HUTCHISON Ports Sohar, the gateway port of Oman, has signed an agreement with Westwell, a global pioneer in scenario-based new energy autonomous driving. Under this agreement, 15 state-of-the-art Electric Container Trucks (E-Trucks) will be deployed at SOHAR Port and Freezone, marking a significant step towards smarter and greener port operations.

The E-Truck project is part of the company’s broader sustainability road map, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and the Sultanate of Oman’s Net-Zero 2050 Target. As the first project of its kind deployed across all terminals in Oman, these E-Trucks highlight Hutchison Ports Sohar’s unwavering commitment to advancing the Sultanate of Oman’s development and investing in a greener, more sustainable future.

To enhance operational efficiency and support green port development, Hutchison Ports Sohar will introduce 15 E-Trucks from Westwell. Each E-Truck is powered by a high-capacity 282kWh battery, offering a range of up to 150 kilometres. The E-Trucks support fast charging and fully unmanned 5-minute battery swaps, enabling seamless 24/7 operations.

Compared to conventional diesel trucks, the E-Trucks deliver zero emissions and low noise levels, while significantly improving safety and comfort through intelligent driving assistance systems and ergonomic cabin design. They also support progressive upgrades from L2 to L4 autonomous driving.

CEOTALK

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, NOV 30

THE luxury perfumery born in the Sultanate of Oman, Amouage, is carving a distinct global niche by marrying deep cultural authenticity with a product-first commercial strategy, CEO Marco Parsiegla told delegates at the Oman Luxury Summit, by Miss Tweed, in Muscat.

Speaking at the Mandarin Oriental during the three-day summit, Parsiegla outlined the brand’s transformation since 2019 and the strategic choices that have underpinned Amouage’s emergence as a leading high-perfumery house.

With annual sales exceeding \$300 million, Amouage has repositioned itself away from broad lifestyle luxury towards concentrated, artisanal fragrances rooted in Omani raw materials and craft traditions.

“Our focus is high perfumery from the Sultanate of Oman”, Parsiegla said, emphasising deliberate moves to strengthen authenticity.

That included a full relocation of production to Oman, consolidating manufacturing under one roof roughly 20 minutes from Muscat. The vertically integrated model, he argued, enables tighter quality control and faster iteration — key advantages in a category where ingredient provenance and concentration matter to discerning buyers.

Parsiegla described a product-first philosophy that elevates ingredient mastery and time-intensive processes. He pinpointed



With annual sales exceeding \$300 million, Amouage has repositioned itself away from broad lifestyle luxury towards concentrated, artisanal fragrances rooted in Omani raw materials and craft traditions.

MARCO PARSEIGLA
Amouage CEO

frankincense, rock rose and amber wood as Amouage’s core DNA and said the house deliberately uses higher concentrations of fragrance oil — averaging about 25% in many eau de parfums and reaching 40–55% in select statements — to deliver perceived value and longevity.

Those choices, he added, have driven significant growth in the brand’s premium segment and allowed Amouage to “own” a high-concentration category.

Investment in craftsmanship extends beyond formulation. Parsiegla showcased Amouage’s creative ecosystem — a “collective” that brings master perfumers, artists, musicians and artisans together for bespoke collaborations.

The group’s approach rejects mass briefs in favour of one-to-one creative partnerships, producing curated packaging, original music and artistic visuals tailored to each fragrance. This holistic brand architecture bolsters differentiation in an increasingly crowded luxury market.

Sustainability and supply-chain transparency also featured prominently. Parsiegla described Amouage’s Wadi Dawkah initiative, which tags and geotags each frankincense tree, creating what he called the region’s first “smart forest”.

The digital traceability platform logs harvesting activities and tree data; and will be integrated with a visitor centre and distillery aimed at both education and tourism.

The initiative blends conservation with community-driven practices, positioning Oman’s frankincense heritage as both a cultural asset and a commercial differentiator.

Parsiegla framed these

investments as value creation rather than cost, arguing that higher input costs — including a more than 60% rise in fragrance oil expenses for certain materials — are validated by consumer willingness to pay for authentic, high-performing products.

He also highlighted production practices such as multi-stage ageing and a nine-step maturation process that, he claimed, materially improve scent complexity and longevity.

For Oman, Amouage’s strategy has broader sectoral implications. The company’s decision to repatriate production and amplify cultural assets demonstrates how domestic luxury manufacturing can boost value retention and spur tourism-linked experiences.

Collaborations with institutions like the Royal Opera House in Muscat underscore opportunities to integrate cultural sponsorships into brand narratives, elevating national soft power while expanding commercial reach.

Parsiegla closed with a pointed admonition for brands: be “true to who you are”. His message to Omani and global luxury participants was clear — superficial motifs will not substitute for authentic cultural expression.

For Amouage, the bet is that investing in provenance, craft and transparent storytelling will convert heritage into sustainable commercial advantage and position Oman not merely as a source of ingredients, but as a home for genuine luxury.

If executed well, Amouage’s model could become a blueprint for other Omani brands seeking international premiumisation and cultural resonance globally.

White hydrogen discovery buoys SOHAR’s decarbonisation hopes

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 30

THE recent discovery of naturally occurring hydrogen — also known as native or white hydrogen — in the Wilayat of Suhar has strengthened expectations around its potential development and use in advancing the decarbonisation goals of SOHAR Port and Freezone, according to a senior official of the maritime hub.

Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of SOHAR, highlighted the port’s ongoing collaboration with Swiss natural hydrogen specialist HYNAT SA in exploring subsurface hydrogen in the region. Natural or white hydrogen is geologically generated and found naturally in the Earth’s crust, offering the prospect of direct production from underground reservoirs as a clean, low-carbon energy source.

“Reserves in the area are confirmed and the next stage is extraction testing to assess feasibility and energy potential” Hoogsteden said. “If viable, it would provide



SOHAR Port and Freezone already hosts strong hydrogen demand from its refinery, petrochemical and DRI-based steel industries.

a direct, low-carbon fuel source for Sohar’s industries”, he added in an interview with The Energy Year, a UK-based business intelligence platform.

In July, SOHAR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with HYNAT SA to advance the development of a full natural hydrogen value chain in Oman. The collaboration focuses on identifying

and assessing natural hydrogen production zones, developing logistics corridors and creating dedicated storage and processing infrastructure. Earlier in February, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals had also signed an MoU granting HYNAT rights to carry out feasibility studies.

This interest in white hydrogen does not diminish SOHAR’s commitment to green hydrogen. “We are also looking to develop green hydrogen in SOHAR and further strengthen SOHAR’s position as a green manufacturing hub”, Hoogsteden noted.

According to Dr Abdullah al Abri, Vice President — Sustainability, SOHAR already hosts strong hydrogen demand from its refinery, petrochemical and DRI-based steel industries, positioning the port as a natural national hub for green hydrogen production. He said the strategy is to begin with small pilot projects to build experience and confidence, including an investment case now being finalised to install 80–100 MW of grid-connected electrolyzers that can supply continuous hydrogen to port industries and

avoid the intermittency associated with standalone renewables.

Speaking on The Energy Talks platform, Dr Al Abri explained that this approach de-risks investment, noting that renewables are capital-intensive and often require storage. Connecting electrolyzers to a grid that is already about 11% renewable — and expected to reach 30% by 2030 — provides flexibility, enables the use of renewable energy certificates and ensures reliable, uninterrupted hydrogen supply to end users.

He added that SOHAR has also established a partnership with a Swiss consortium to explore a green corridor between Oman and Switzerland, with both countries sharing carbon-neutrality goals and building on a 2023 intergovernmental framework agreement to develop an implementation road map and associated projects.

According to Dr Al Abri, hydrogen is a strategic commodity for SOHAR. The port already supports a range of industries and LNG bunkering, with methanation identified as the next step.

OIL MARKETS

OPEC+ keeps output steady



OPEC+ is expected to keep oil production policies unchanged at meetings on Sunday, four sources said, as the group slows efforts to regain market share amidst concerns of a potential supply glut.

The move comes as the United States pursues a Russia-Ukraine peace deal that could affect Russian oil supply. Brent crude ended on Friday near \$63 a barrel, down 15% this year. — Reuters

ESG VOTING

Norway fund presses Microsoft



Norway’s \$2 trillion wealth fund said it will support a shareholder proposal at Microsoft’s annual general meeting on December 5, seeking a report on human rights risks in high-risk markets. Microsoft’s board has advised investors to reject the motion.

The fund owns 1.35% of Microsoft, valued at around \$50 billion, making it one of the company’s largest shareholders. — Reuters

INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

China factory activity weak



China’s industrial activity contracted for an eighth consecutive month in November. The National Bureau of Statistics said the manufacturing Purchasing Managers’ Index improved slightly to 49.2 from 49 in October.

A PMI reading below 50 indicates contraction, highlighting continued weakness in factory output despite limited improvement from recent policy support measures. — ONA

OPINION

Massive global layoffs in the age of AI



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies.

THE global dashboard for 2025 indicates that 4286 organisations have announced massive layoffs across technology, retail, finance, automotive, warehousing, government, healthcare administration, logistics and education, underscoring how widespread layoffs are beyond Silicon Valley. Despite major tech layoffs making headlines, reports show that organisational transformation is occurring globally. Layoffs in the technology industry are still frequent, with worker reductions exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Microsoft has cut more than 15,000 positions across cloud, gaming, sales and support teams; Intel continues to reduce its global workforce by 20 to 21%, around 25,000 jobs. Amazon is announcing its most significant corporate layoffs to date, affecting AWS, operations, HR and corporate activities, totalling about 14,000. As part of its AI restructuring programme, Accenture is making 12,000 job cuts. IBM and Salesforce have also announced significant reductions in customer care and support functions. In other sectors, Burberry plans to cut 20% of its global staff, Nissan is set to eliminate over 10,000 jobs worldwide and HSBC intends to downsize across Asia and beyond. Chegg is slashing its workforce by 45% in response to AI disruptions, and UPS has already cut 48,000 jobs this year. Indian tech companies are also restructuring workforces amidst automation

pressures and talent mismatches. Infosys intends to cut 12,000 positions worldwide, with further cuts planned. Many Indian startup firms are slashing their workforce by 20% to 60%. Workforce restructuring and workforce shrinkage are frequent announcements by businesses in Europe, North America and Asia. Most people believe that AI is primarily to blame for these layoffs. AI and automation are evidently essential drivers of the 2025 layoff wave; however, company-specific dynamics are just as important, especially in areas such as over-hiring, weak strategic planning and chronic under-investment in workforce development. Many companies also adopt silent layoffs, such as low hiring, non-renewals and low performance. So, the real impact is much more profound than public figures. Though AI is being made the scapegoat, macroeconomic factors, leadership choices regarding AI deployment and post-pandemic excessive hiring are also contributing to these massive layoffs. Low margins are the result of a higher cost of capital driven by high interest rates, inflation and tariffs. Reducing personnel is the only obvious way to safeguard profitability and leaders are under pressure to do so. Layoffs are becoming a common risk-management strategy as supply chain disruptions and persistent geopolitical tensions increase unpredictability. The “Covid-19 Bubble” affirms that many technology companies hired excessively but could not sustain in a

Microsoft has cut more than 15,000 positions across cloud, gaming, sales and support teams; Intel continues to reduce its global workforce by 20 to 21%, around 25,000 jobs. Amazon is announcing its most significant corporate layoffs to date, affecting AWS, operations, HR and corporate activities, totalling about 14,000.

post-pandemic economy and in normalised consumption patterns. Many of the cuts we are witnessing in 2025 are a delayed rectification of decisions made in 2020-2022. Instead of riding out volatility in such an environment, leader boards frequently choose “preemptive slimming” of personnel, which fundamentally normalises layoffs as a regular risk-management tool rather than only a crisis response. Additionally, there is evidence of AI washing, since many executives attribute all job cutbacks to AI. AI has automated routine jobs across organisations; it has also changed the definition of core jobs, bringing more jobs into the automation radar and making them more vulnerable. The future is not distant; it unfolds daily and requires close observation. 2025 will be remembered as a year of massive global layoffs, with 2026 bringing nuanced restructuring driven by ongoing organisational changes. While the enormous layoffs of 2025 will continue, they will evolve into a more subdued, ongoing restructuring as politicians, workers and leaders argue over who will pay for the benefits and costs of AI-driven workplace reform. 2026 won’t be an employment bonanza or a catastrophic situation. It will provide some stability for the labour markets. It will gravitate towards new priorities such as flexibility, agility and micro-skills and specialised skills that cannot be automated.

HOW AI IS CHANGING THE FUTURE OF TOURISM MARKETING IN OMAN

DR WAFSA SALEH AL BURAIKI

The tourism industry is undergoing a transformative shift with the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is redefining how businesses across the globe, including Oman, attract, engage and retain travellers. AI is highlighted as a key driver in reshaping marketing strategies, improving customer experience and optimising operational efficiency across the tourism sector in Oman. “AI enables businesses to more accurately forecast traveller behaviour and demand, thereby enhancing customer booking experience”, sources reported. Additionally, the report also highlights that AI powered tools such as chatbots, dynamic pricing algorithms and predictive analytics now enable travel agencies, hotels and airlines to provide 24/7 personalised services in multiple languages. This technological leap not only enhances customer satisfaction but also drives engagement by offering real-time assistance and tailored promotional offers to travellers. Furthermore, AI is also changing the way businesses manage social media. For example, AI is helping with scheduling posts, picking the best hashtags and tracking the progress of the posts. This milestone has enabled businesses to stay consistent with their brands while reaching more people. Moreover, AI is also helping tourism websites appear higher in search results, making it easier for people to find them online. Platforms like Google are using AI to help businesses create eye-catching and personalised adverts from smarter booking systems to tools that help travellers find places making the experience enjoyable for both business owners and travellers. In addition, AI tools are enhancing Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), enabling tourism websites to rank higher and capture broader audiences. Platforms like Google are integrating AI in their advertising systems, empowering marketers to deliver highly customised, visually compelling promotions. The implementation of AI across tourism operations — from smart booking systems to visual search for attractions — has led to cost savings, increased productivity and higher tourist satisfaction. Artificial intelligence will transform the tourism industry, in providing advances in automation, which will enable companies to provide hyper personalised experiences. The performance of AI will enable predictive analytics; this will be useful in forecasting travels for travellers’ behaviours.

London ranks ahead of Paris as top European city

LONDON has held on to its spot at the top of a closely watched index of European cities as other UK destinations move up the ranks. The capital has once again ranked number one on the 25th edition of the European Cities Growth Index (ECGI), an annual review of demand for property put together by global real estate investment manager La-Salle Investment management. While London stood out — ranking first again — thanks to its outsized expected total employment growth, Paris was close behind and has the highest ‘human capital’ score of any European city. In the UK, the Manchester-Liverpool conurbation and Bristol rose by 14 and 4 places respectively to positions 19 and 27, as a result of the projected impact of defence spending. Elsewhere in Europe, Warsaw moved into the top 10 for the first time since 2010 due to a strong growth outlook, Germany had the most city regions categorised as ‘strong’ and ‘very strong’, at 15, eclipsing the UK’s 12. Europe head of research and strategy at La Salle, Dan Mahoney, said: “With growing geopolitical tensions, European governments are allocating greater spending for defence, which is expected to create winners in those city regions that have traditionally been the home of military production sites”. Climate change continued to influence the outlook for European real estate markets, La Salle said. Incorporating climate risk and energy security in its metrics, the index found that the increase in extreme heat days and wild fire is expected to acutely impact southern parts of Europe. Madrid, however, remained in eighth place in this year’s ECGI ranking, helped by the major economic tailwind of some of Europe’s lowest electricity prices due to solar power, as well as a strong Gross Domestic Product and job growth path.



The Big Ben and The London Eye are seen on a summer evening in London, Britain. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

Mahoney said: “Defence spending and climate adaptation are poised to shape Europe’s urban hierarchy as never before and it’s crucial to incorporate these factors alongside traditional drivers of real estate demand in any city economic league table”. Apart from Europe, looking at it globally, New York and London retained their positions as first and second place for the global ranking of financial centres, according to the Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI) published this month. New York has been in pole position since the 24th edition of the index, which was published in September 2018. London has since closed the gap in the ratings, with a single rating point between the two. This year’s edition said the four leading international financial centres, which included Hong Kong and Singapore as third and fourth, are locked in intense competition. Each was separated by only one point on the 1,000-point scale. The index also showed no change

in the top ten centres, with shifts confined to score adjustments rather than ranking positions — San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Seoul are unchanged in fifth to tenth positions, it said. In the top 20 centres, Dubai is up one place to 11th position and Frankfurt down one place to 12th. Tokyo and Zurich entered the top 20, replacing Beijing and Amsterdam. The rating for almost all centres improved very slightly, with the average rating across all centres up 0.6 per cent. The largest increase in average ratings was in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, at 1.36 per cent and the lowest was in the Middle East & Africa, where average ratings rose by 0.22 per cent. The 38th edition of the index was jointly published by two leading think-tanks: Z/Yen in the UK and the China Development Institute in Shenzhen. It evaluates the competitiveness of 120 financial centres across the globe in different dimensions.

Omani firm plans mega e-auction of used oilfield materials

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 30

ONE of the largest auctions of used oilfield materials ever held in the Sultanate of Oman is set to take place from December 7–18, 2025, according to Mzadcom, the Omani smart-auction platform operator. The auction will feature a substantial stockpile of casing pipes, used pipes and sucker rods with a combined volume of 104,500 tonnes, all of which will be offered through a fully transparent process conducted exclusively via



Around 104,500 tonnes of oilfield goods will be auctioned off in the mega sell-off.

the company’s electronic bidding system at www.mzadcom.om.

“This initiative reflects Mzadcom’s commitment to advancing innovative digital solutions and optimising industrial material management by providing a transparent, reliable and highly efficient digital auction ecosystem aligned with global best practices”, the company said in a statement.

The auction is also designed to promote sustainability and reinforce circular-economy principles in line with Oman Vision 2040, the Omani start-up added.

Launched in 2022, Mzadcom

has quickly established itself as the nation’s leading online auction platform, offering a digital venue for timed auctions covering a wide range of items – including scrap materials, used equipment, vehicles, surplus assets and even specialised lots such as rare mobile-phone numbers and corporate asset disposals.

By facilitating the auction of used oilfield materials, Mzadcom expects to deliver several key outcomes. These include extending the lifecycle of industrial assets through reuse and repurposing to maximise value, as

well as identifying and unlocking new international markets for used oilfield materials – thereby enhancing Oman’s industrial competitiveness and contributing to economic diversification.

“This milestone auction underscores the ability of national digital platforms to compete globally and highlights the growing role of the private sector in supporting sustainable economic practices, improving asset utilisation and advancing innovative, tech-enabled solutions across the Sultanate of Oman”, the company noted.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTS/
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INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in “MEP” construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

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Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

INDIAN male MBA, 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/Assistant Manager. Contact: 00968 78099493

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

CHIEF accountant, MBA finance, 9+ years experience in financial statements, auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full-time or part-time position in a senior role. Contact: akramhaniffa@yahoo.com / 93988825.

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ART/LIFE



THE LITTLE CART WITH BIG DREAMS > 20

BEDBUGS FORCE CLOSURE OF PRESTIGIOUS PARIS CINEMA



The prestigious Cinematheque Francaise said it would temporarily close over a bedbug infestation after sightings of the blood-sucking creatures, including during a master class with Hollywood star Sigourney Weaver.

The Cinematheque, an internationally renowned film archive and cinema, said in a statement it would close its four screening halls for a month from Friday.

The temporary closure, which comes after a series of reported bedbug sightings, should guarantee viewers “a perfectly safe and comfortable environment”, it said.

In early November, several audience members complained to French reporters about being bitten by bedbugs following a master class with Oscar-nominated star Weaver, known for roles in films such as “Alien”.

One person said that bedbugs had been seen crawling around “the seats and clothes”.

At the Cinematheque, located in eastern Paris, three screening halls are open to the public while the fourth is used for educational activities.

“All the seats will be dismantled and then individually treated with dry steam at 180°C several times, before being systematically checked by dogs”, the institution said. Carpets will receive the “same level” of treatment.

Other areas of the building will remain open, including a current exhibition about US actor and filmmaker Orson Welles.

In 2023, the government said it was launching a concerted effort to fight bedbugs, which appeared in numbers on public transport, in cinemas and in hospitals as France prepared to host the 2024 Paris Olympics.

In 2024, the government said that disinformation spread by Russia-linked social media accounts had amplified the public’s panic in autumn 2023.

Bedbugs get their name from their habit of nesting in mattresses, although they can also hide in clothes and in luggage.

Bedbug bites leave red areas, blisters or large rashes on the skin and can cause intense itching or allergic reactions.

They also often cause psychological distress, sleeping issues, anxiety and depression. — **AFP**



S H O T T A K E S



AI CHEF

A waitress holds a serving tray while standing inside Wooohoo, a newly opened, AI-powered restaurant in Dubai that prides itself on having the world’s ‘first AI chef’. — **AFP**



TRIBUTE

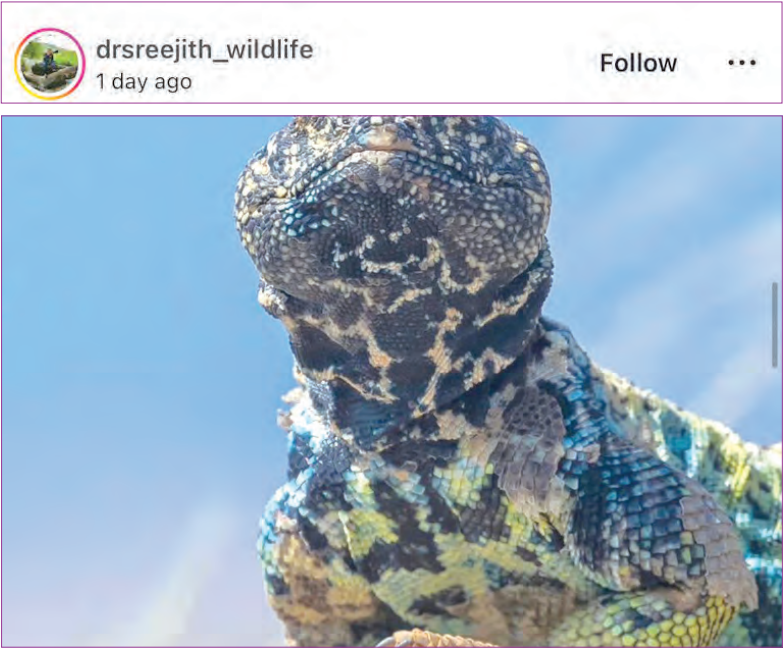
Tom Stoppard, Oscar-winning UK playwright who dazzled the masses with verbal gymnastics, dies aged 88. — **Reuters**



HONOUR

US actress and director Jodie Foster after receiving the Tribute Award during the 22nd Marrakech International Film Festival (FIFM) in Marrakech. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



Mesmerising reptile



Flag-meets-nature

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‘STAR WARS’, ‘ELF’
MEMORABILIA ON SALE IN
PROPSTORE MOVIE AUCTION



From Will Ferrell’s “Elf” costume to “Star Wars” props, an array of movie memorabilia spanning cinematic history heads to auction next month.

More than 1,350 lots, valued at a combined estimate of \$10.54 million, are on offer in Propstore’s Winter Entertainment Memorabilia Live Auction taking place December 5-7.

Leading the sale is Boba Fett’s EE-3 carbine rifle from “Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back”, with an estimate of £350,000 — 700,000.

“It only came in to us about a year ago and we spent a number of weeks going through it, almost to a forensic level and managed to screen match the wood grain on the stock — there’s some damage and distress on it — and realise that this was and is the one and only Boba Fett blaster that was used in ‘Empire Strikes Back’”, Propstore founder and CEO Stephen Lane said at a press preview on Tuesday.

Other lots from the franchise include a rebel pilot helmet from the same film and a Stormtrooper E-11 imperial

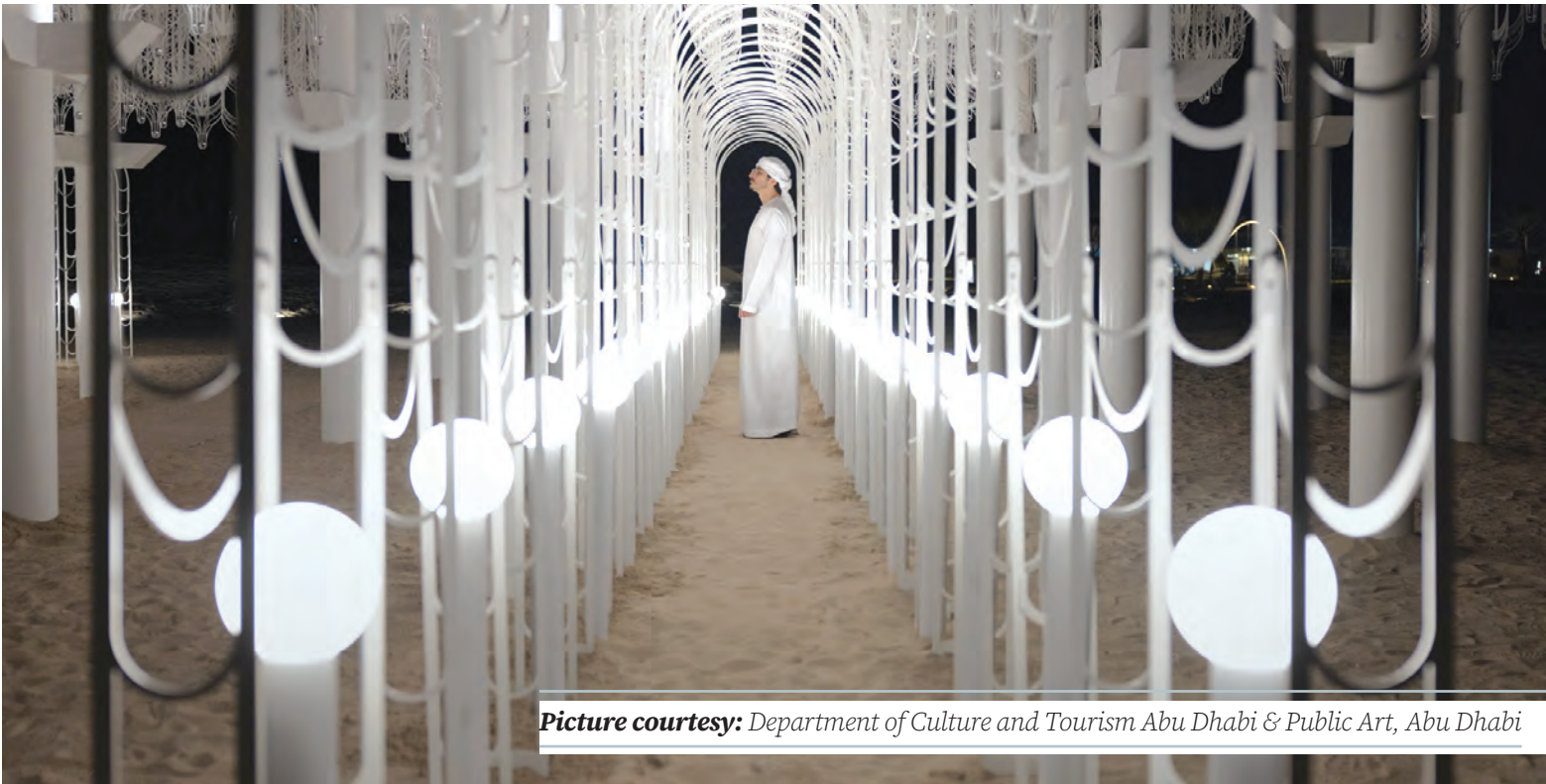


blaster from “Return of the Jedi”.

“Indiana Jones” is also represented in the sale with a brown fedora made for the titular character, played by Harrison Ford, in “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom” on offer.

Costumes include Ferrell’s green tunic from Christmas movie “Elf” and Spider-Man’s black symbiote suit from “Spider-Man 3” in which Tobey Maguire played the superhero. Other lots include Marty McFly’s hoverboard from the second and third “Back to the Future” films and ballet slippers from “The Red Shoes”.

— Reuters



Picture courtesy: Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi & Public Art, Abu Dhabi

Pamela Tan, Eden, 2025

‘The Light Compass’
Illuminates heritage

HIBBA AL KINDI

STAR Suhail, known internationally as Canopus, is the second-brightest star in the night sky — an ageing supergiant nearly 65 times the size of our sun and around 25 million years old.

But across the Arabian Peninsula, Suhail’s meaning has always gone far beyond astronomy.

For generations, the star marked the end of the summer heat and the beginning of a gentler season. Sailors and travellers relied on it as a celestial compass through shifting land and sea routes.

Farmers awaited its rise as a sign to begin planting winter crops. Poets drew from its symbolism of hope, while Wadi dwellers understood it as a silent warning of possible floods. Suhail, in essence, was a guide — cultural, agricultural, spiritual.

In its second edition, the Manar Abu Dhabi public art exhibition turns to this ancestral relationship with Suhail and with light itself. “This year’s exhibition, titled ‘The Light Compass: Suhail Is Your Guide’, is inspired by age-old navigation and astronomy; and how these systems shaped nomadic travel, sea journeys and even prayer times”, explained curator Khairuddin Hori.

“People observed the sun, moon and shadows, creating songs, cultural practices and simple instruments from this knowledge. We wanted to place this traditional wisdom side by side with contemporary art — how we create, shape and interact with light today”.

Launched in mid-November by the UAE’s Department of Culture and Tourism, the exhibition brings together 22 artworks by 15 local and international artists, spread across three distinct sites in Abu Dhabi. Each artwork interprets the central theme in its own way.

Some pieces lean into literal interpretations — such as Abdalla Almulla’s ‘Guiding Drapes’, an architectural installation set within a restored traditional courtyard in Al Jimi, drawing from the wedding lights once hung on Emirati homes.

Others explore the idea more conceptually — like Kristen Breg’s mirrored sculpture ‘Compound Eyes’ on Al Jubail Island, inspired by the multi-faceted vision of insects and the interplay of reflection.

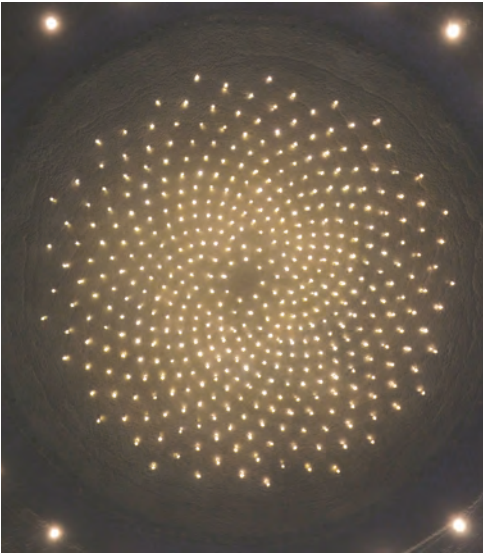
One of the most striking examples of art meeting technology is ‘Pulse Canopy’ by Rafael Lozano Hemmer. Inside a canopy of light beams in Al Ain, visitors place their hands on three sensors that read their heartbeats. Instantly, beams converge overhead, creating star-like



Ammar al Attar, Cycle of Circles, 2025



Kirsten Berg, Compound Eye, 2012



DRIFT, Whispers, 2025. Manar Abu Dhabi 2025. — Photo by Lance Gerber

formations paired with the rhythm of their pulse — turning each person into a constellation.

Across the exhibition, the blend of still, immersive, analogue and dynamic works creates a multi-sensory exploration of light’s power.

The choice of locations — Souq Al Mina, Al Jubail Island and Al Ain — amplifies the narrative as the curators explained to Observer why each site was chosen. Souq Al Mina, home to a single monumental installation, reflects its legacy as Abu Dhabi’s earliest port and gateway of movement. Al Jubail Island, hosting 15 artworks, offers a nature-rich landscape shaped by mangroves and archaeological traces.

In Al Ain, seven installations sit within Unesco-listed heritage sites across Al Jimi and Al Qattara Oases, bringing contemporary art into dialogue with deep history.

Open until January 4, 2026, Manar Abu Dhabi is free to the public and includes guided tours, talks, artist workshops, live performances, wellness activities and curated food pop-ups across its locations — inviting visitors to follow Suhail once more, not across deserts or seas, but through art, memory and light.



Khalid Shafar, Sadu Red — Photo by Lance Gerber

FEATURES

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

ON a sunlit corner of her neighbourhood, where the scent of vanilla drifts gently across the open air, a young Omani girl stands behind a small ice cream cart, turning simple ingredients and a family machine into the beginning of a dream.

Her name is Dhay al Siyabi and her dream began with a single machine her family had owned for years. It was once pulled out only for Eid, rented for small gatherings and used to serve relatives during celebrations. But Dhay saw more than a holiday treat, she saw a chance to build something of her own.

When she launched her small ice cream stand, reality struck fast. The Omani heat and the challenge of keeping electricity stable in an open space tested her persistence. “The heat and electricity were my biggest challenges”, she says, “but I never felt these things could stop me”. And she meant it. Day after day, Dhay returned to her stand with quiet strength, letting her determination melt away every obstacle.

What makes her stand special is its simplicity, an open location where families gather, the soft hum of the machine and the rich quality of her ice cream mixture. She takes pride in crafting flavours rooted in Omani tradition, date, coffee and blends made with care and cultural warmth. “I choose the flavours based on customer opinions”, she explains. “Together, we discover what to make next”.

As her project grew, something unexpected happened, the internet discovered her.

A few content creators and social media influencers visited her stand, filmed her pouring creamy swirls into cones, and shared her story online. Their videos captured not just her product, but her effort, her smile, and her spirit. The posts quickly spread, garnering likes, comments and messages of admiration from people across the country. Overnight, Dhay found herself becoming a familiar face on local social media feeds.

Suddenly, her small corner stand wasn’t just a neighbourhood treat, it was a local sensation.

People began visiting because they saw her online, wanting to support her, celebrate her and witness a young Omani entrepreneur thriving. Influencers, many of whom prioritise highlighting local talent and small businesses, continued stopping by to showcase her work. Their encouragement amplified her reach, helping her business grow far beyond the physical space around her cart.

But her rise wasn’t built on popularity alone. Dhay’s journey has never been a solitary one. “My family supported me financially and emotionally from the start”, she says. Her friends do too, buying ice cream regularly, cheering her on and sharing her posts. And as more people saw her story online, more customers began arriving with genuine excitement to meet and support her.

Running her business taught Dhay far more than making ice cream. She learned time management, how to market simply yet effectively and how to respond thoughtfully to customer feedback. Her confidence grew, slowly at first, then noticeably, as she became more comfortable engaging with new faces. Her participation in school entrepreneurship programmes, charity events, women’s associations, colleges, companies and even the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre broadened her exposure and sharpened her skills.

There are moments of negativity, but they barely outweigh the waves of encouragement. “Yes, there are some negative comments, but they are very few compared to the support”, she says calmly.

One day, Dhay hopes to open her own shop and eventually expand with branches inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman. “No one should underestimate a small idea”, she advises. “Small projects grow with effort and success”.

Children light up when they see her, often singing little ice cream songs as they rush towards her stand. With every scoop, she becomes a small but powerful symbol of what young Omanis can achieve with a spark of inspiration and a strong community behind them.

“I feel very proud of myself”, she says softly, “and at the same time, I feel a sense of responsibility”.

Her story is still being written, one swirl, one smile and one shared post at a time.

THE
LITTLE
CART
WITH
BIG
DREAMS



On a sunny corner in Oman, young entrepreneur Dhay al Siyabi has turned a family ice cream machine into a thriving business, delighting locals with traditional flavours and winning hearts online

