

OMAN
عمان
DAILY

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 61
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

SUNRISE 06:51 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:31 AM
DHUHR 12:20 PM
ASR 03:24 PM
MAGHRIB 05:45 PM
ISHA 06:59 PM

2010000387405

12

CLASS WINNER AHMAD CONFIRMS RETURN TO MICHELIN 24H DUBAI

HIS MAJESTY ISSUES 16 ROYAL DECREES

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS RESTRICTURED

OFFICE OF
DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER FOR
ECONOMIC
AFFAIRS

HH SAYYID
THEYAZIN
DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER FOR
ECONOMIC
AFFAIRS

HH SAYYID
BILARAB
MINISTER OF
STATE AND
GOVERNOR OF
MUSCAT

DECREE
ESTABLISHES
OMAN GLOBAL
FINANCIAL
CENTRE

HIGHER
COMMITTEE FOR
CONFERENCES
ABOLISHED

GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATION
CENTRE SHIFTED
TO SECRETARIAT
GENERAL OF
THE COUNCIL

RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION
AUTHORITY
ESTABLISHED

OMAN
AUTHORITY
FOR QUALITY
ASSURANCE OF
EDUCATION

ORGANISATIONAL
STRUCTURE OF
MINISTRY OF
ECONOMY
ISSUED

MERGED
MINISTRY
TO BE NAMED
MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK on Monday issued 16 Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree (No 7/2026) establishes the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, defines its specialisations and endorses its organisational structure.

Article (1) establishes the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs.

Article (2) defines the specialisations of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs in accordance

with Annex No (1) attached to this decree.

Article (3) endorses the organisational structure of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs in accordance with Annex No (2) attached to this decree.

Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 8/2026) establishes Oman Global Financial Centre and promulgates its bylaw.

Article (1) establishes ‘Oman Global Financial Centre’. The

DECREE APPOINTS MEMBER OF STATE COUNCIL

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued Royal Decree No 23/2026 on appointing a member in the State Council. Article (1) appoints Dr Mansour bin Saif bin Khamis al Manthri as a Member in the State Council. Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the date of issue.

Centre shall have legal personality, enjoy financial and administrative autonomy and report to the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs.

Article (2) stipulates that Oman Global Financial Centre's bylaw attached to this decree shall be enforced. Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 9/2026) abolishes the Higher Committee for Conferences. Article (1) states that the Higher Committee for Conferences shall be abolished.

Article (2) says that this decree

shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 10/2026) defines the specialisations of the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers and endorses its organisational structure.

Article (1) states that the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers shall have legal personality and enjoy financial and administrative autonomy. Its specialisations shall be defined in accordance with Annex No (1) attached to this decree.

TURN TO P2

Logistics sector attracts investments worth RO 3.4 billion

MUSCAT: Investment in the logistics sector in the Sultanate of Oman during the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) increased to approximately RO 3.4 billion.

During its annual media briefing held on Monday in Muscat, the Ministry of Transport, Communications

and Information Technology indicated that it succeeded in attracting investments in the communications and information technology sector worth RO 1.2 billion in 2025. This includes approximately RO 65 million invested in the field of artificial intelligence.



Total length of roads under implementation during 2026 stands at 1,120 km.

Revenue growth from the ports sector reached 17.4 per cent, from maritime affairs 9.4 per cent and from land transport 18 per cent.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, stated that the total length of

roads under implementation during 2026 amounts to about 1,120 km, with a total estimated cost of RO 1.2 billion.

In his speech, he added that Omani ports witnessed an increase in the volume of cargo handled during 2025.

SEE ALSO P13

His Majesty restructures

FROM PAGE 1

Article (2) stipulates that the organisational structure of the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers shall be endorsed in accordance with Annex No (2) attached to this decree.

Article (3) transfers to the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers all the allocations, origins, rights, obligations and assets of the Government Communication Centre at the Ministry of Information and the Directorate-General of Quality and Government Excellence Management at Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

Article (4) transfers to the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers the employees of the Government Communication Centre at the Ministry of Information and the Directorate-General of Quality and Government Excellence Management at Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, along with their financial grades.

Article (5) cancels Royal Decree No 31/2014 on endorsing the organisational structure of the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers. It also cancels clauses No (24, 25 and 27) from Annex No (1) attached to Royal Decree No 95/2020 on defining the specialisations of the Ministry of Information and endorsing its organisational structure, and cancels clauses No (5, 6, 7 and 8) from Annex No (1) of Royal Decree No 100/2020 on establishing Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, defining its specialisations and endorsing its organisational structure. It also cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (6) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 11/2026) establishes the Research and Innovation Authority, defines its specialisations and endorses its organisational structure.

Article (1) stipulates that a public authority named the 'Research and Innovation Authority' shall be established. It shall have legal personality, financial and administrative autonomy and report to the Council of Ministers.

Article (2) states that the headquarters of the Research and Innovation Authority shall be in the Governorate of Muscat. It may establish branches in other governorates as per a decision from the Authority's board of directors.

Article (3) stipulates that the specialisations of the Research and Innovation Authority shall be defined in accordance with Annex No (1) attached to this decree.

Article (4) endorses the organisational structure of the Research and Innovation Authority in accordance with Annex No (2) attached to this decree.

Article (5) stipulates that all allocations, origins, rights, obligations and assets of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation relevant to research and innovation shall be transferred to the Research and Innovation Authority. Employees of this ministry who are concerned with research and innovation shall be transferred to the Research and Innovation Authority, along with their financial grades.

Article (6) states that the phrases 'Ministry

of Higher Education, Research and Innovation' and 'Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation' – wherever quoted in laws and Royal Decrees relevant to research and innovation– shall be replaced with the phrases 'Research and Innovation Authority' and 'Chairman of the Research and Innovation Authority.'

Article (7) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (8) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 12/2026) amends the name of 'Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education' to 'Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education', defines its specialisations and endorses its organisational structure.

Article (1) amends the name of 'Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education' to 'Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education', defining its specialisations in accordance with Annex No (1) attached to this decree.

Article (2) endorses the organisational structure of Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education in accordance with Annex No (2) attached to this decree.

Article (3) stipulates that all allocations, origins, rights, obligations and assets relevant to professional licences, national studies and international studies from the Ministry of Education shall be transferred to Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education.

Article (4) stipulates that employees from divisions related to professional licenses, national studies and international studies at the Ministry of Education shall be transferred to Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education, along with their financial grades, in accordance with coordination between the heads of the two units.

Article (5) replaces the phrases 'Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education' and 'Chief Executive Officer' – wherever quoted in laws and Royal Decree – with the phrases 'Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education' and 'Chairman of the Authority.'

Article (6) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (7) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 13/2026) defines the specialisations of the Ministry of Economy and endorses its organisational structure.

Article (1) defines the specialisations of the Ministry of Economy in accordance with Annex No (1) attached to this decree.

Article (2) endorses the organisational structure of the Ministry of Economy in accordance with Annex No (2) attached to this decree.

Article (3) merges Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit in the Ministry of Economy. All allocations, origins, rights, obligations and assets of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit shall be transferred to the Ministry of Economy. Employees of the Unit shall be transferred to the Ministry of Economy, along with their financial grades.

Article (4) stipulates that subject to the provisions of Royal Decree No 10/2026 on defining the specialisations of the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers and endorsing its organisations structure, the phrases 'Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit' and 'Head of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit' – wherever quoted in laws and Royal Decrees – shall be replaced by the phrases 'Ministry of Economy' and 'Minister of Economy.'

Article (5) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (6) says that this decree shall be

published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 14/2026) merges the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in one ministry to be named 'Ministry of Education', defines its specialisations and endorses its organisational structure.

Article (1) merges the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in one ministry to be named 'Ministry of Education' and defines its specialisations in accordance with Annex No (1) attached to this decree.

Article (2) endorses the organisational structure of the Ministry of Education in accordance with Annex No (2) attached to this decree.

Article (3) states that the following shall come under the purview of the Ministry of Education: All allocations, origins, rights, obligations and assets of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. Employees of the two ministries shall be transferred to the Ministry of Education, along with their financial grades.

Article (4) stipulates that subject to the provisions of Royal Decree No 11/2026 on establishing the Research and Innovation Authority, defining its specialisations and endorsing its organisational structure and Royal Decree No 12/2026 on amending the name of Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education to Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education, defining its specialisations and endorsing its organisational structure, the phrases 'Ministry of Education', 'Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation', 'Minister of Education' and 'Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation' – wherever quoted in laws and Royal Decrees – shall be replaced by the phrases 'Ministry of Education' and 'Minister of Education'.

Article (5) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (6) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 15/2026) defines the specialisations of the Ministry of Social Development and endorses its organisational structure.

Article (1) defines the specialisations of the Ministry of Social Development in accordance with Annex No (1) attached to this decree.

Article (2) endorses the organisational structure of the Ministry of Social Development in accordance with Annex No. (2) attached to this decree.

Article (3) cancels Royal Decree No 14/2024 on defining the specialisations of the Ministry of Social Development and endorsing its organisational structure. It also cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 16/2026) amends the System of Oman Investment Authority.

Article (1) replaces the text of Article (12) of Royal Decree No 57/2021 on the System of Oman Investment Authority with the following text: "The Chairman shall have two deputies who shall be appointed by a Royal Decree. They shall enjoy all administrative and financial powers within the limits specified by the regulations of the Authority."

Article (2) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 17/2026) restructures the Council of Ministers.

Council of Ministers

Article (1) restructures the Council of Ministers under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan as follows: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers; HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs; HH Sayyid Bilalab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister; Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance; Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education; Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth; Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs; Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information; Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Minister of Economy; Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of Heritage and Tourism; Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning; Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development; Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour; Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs; Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health; and Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 18/2026) conducts placements in some posts.

Article (1) appoints Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa al Yousef as Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones with the same rank and financial allocations.

Article (2) appoints Sayyid Faisal bin Hamoud al Busaidy as Governor of Musandam with the rank of minister.

Article (3) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 19/2026) appoints two advisers.

Article (1) appoints Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy as Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court with the same rank and financial



allocations.

Article (2) appoints Dr Said bin Mohammed al Sagri as Economic Adviser at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs with the same rank and financial allocations.

Article (3) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 20/2026) grants the rank of minister.

Article (1) grants Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hina, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry, the rank of minister.

Article (2) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and

enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 21/2022) conducts placements in some positions.

Article (1) appoints the following as stated below: Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini al Said as Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court with the same grade and financial allocations.

Majid bin Said al Bahri as Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs with the same grade and financial allocations.

Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi as Chairman of the Research and Innovation Authority with the same grade and financial allocations.

Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi

as Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Family Affairs and Community Development with the same grade and financial allocations.

Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah as Chairperson of Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education with the same grade and financial allocations.

Sayyid Dr Munthir bin Hilal al Busaidy as Head of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow up Unit at the Ministry of Economy with the same grade and financial allocations.

Dr Badr bin Hamoud al Kharousi as Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Shibli as Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Higher Education.

Dr Intisar bint Abdullah Ambosaidiyah as Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Supporting Educational Programmes.

Ghalib bin Said al Maamari as Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry.

Said bin Abdullah al Balushi as Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development.

Dr Abdullah bin Hamoud Al Harthy as Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs.

Dr Yousef bin Salim al Hina as Head of Communications and Government Performance Development Unit at the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers with the special grade.

Tahir bin Mabkhout al Junaibi as Governor of Al Dhahirah with the special grade.

Eng Ahmed bin Said bin Mohammed al Amri as Chairman of Muscat Municipality with the special grade.

Zahir bin Sulaiman al Salmi as Deputy Chairman of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority for Oversight on Government Units with the special grade.

Sayyid Hamoud bin Sultan al Busaidy as Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court with the special grade.

Article (2) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree (No 22/2026) appoints two deputies for the Chairman of Oman Investment Authority.

Article (1) appoints Mulhim bin Bashir al Jaraf as Deputy Chairman of Oman Investment Authority for Investment.

Article (2) appoints Muneer bin Ali bin Nassir al Muneeri as Deputy Chairman of Oman Investment Authority for Operations. Article (2) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

AN ICONIC DESTINATION
FOR 20 YEARS
NOW PART OF HILTON

DOUBLETREE
by hilton
MUSCAT AL WAHA
هلالين مسقط البندر

HILTON
MUSCAT AL BANDAR
هلالين مسقط البندر

AL HUSN
MUSCAT

DoubleTree by Hilton
Muscat Al Waha

Hilton Muscat
Al Bandar

Al Husn
Hotel Muscat

Hilton.com
Al Jissah St, P.O BOX 644, Muscat, 100, Sultanate of Oman
T +968 2477 6666

ظفار الإسلامي
DHOFAR ISLAMIC

LEARNING HAS NO LIMITS
with profit rates starting at
3.49%
on education financing.

www.dhofarislamic.com

24775777

*Terms and Conditions Apply

Khasab Hospital enhances healthcare services in Musandam

KHASAB: The opening of Khasab Hospital represents a significant milestone in the healthcare system of Musandam Governorate as it will offer specialised medical services and modern equipment which would improve the quality of healthcare and bring services closer to citizens and residents.

Dr Abdulaziz bin Hamed al Balushi, Director of Khasab Hospital, said that the hospital would provide high-quality specialised healthcare services to the people of the governorate. He added that the hospital would improve healthcare quality by providing the latest diagnostic equipment, such as radiology and endoscopy equipment and surgical instruments, in addition to introducing the Visiting Physician programme to alleviate the burden on citizens who had to travel to other governorates for treatment.

He affirmed that the opening of Khasab Hospital is a true embodiment of the healthcare system within the framework of Oman Vision 2040, which aims

The hospital has 35 outpatient clinics and a number of specialised inpatient wards.

to provide comprehensive and integrated healthcare services characterised by equity and quality across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman as well as promote decentralisation in the provision of specialised medical services.

He noted that the hospital offers

services for the first time in the Musandam Governorate, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), mammography, a burns unit, a physiotherapy and hydrotherapy rehabilitation unit, a day care unit, gastrointestinal endoscopy and advanced surgical and endoscopic procedures.

Regarding critical cases, he explained that the hospital is equipped with five resuscitation beds in the Accident and Emergency Department as well as 14 intensive care beds equipped with the latest technologies in the adult, paediatric, and cardiac intensive care units. This is in addition to a specialised

unit for premature and newborn infants.

The hospital has 35 outpatient clinics and a number of specialised inpatient wards for men and women and employs 300 medical and technical staff, Al Balushi said, adding that the hospital will expand the visiting physician service to localise healthcare services in the governorate in line with the comprehensive health coverage policy.

Eng Yousef bin Yaqoub Ambu Ali, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Projects and Engineering Services at the Ministry of Health, said that the importance of Khasab Hospital stems from its strategic location in Musandam Governorate. It contributes to bringing specialised healthcare services closer to citizens and residents. He added that the hospital occupies an area of 106,297 square metres, with a build-up area of 49,463 square metres. It has 178 beds, distributed across a main building for treatment services in addition to supporting buildings and public facilities. — ONA

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS



HH SAYYID FAHD BIN
MAHMOOD AL SAID

Deputy Prime Minister for
the Council of Ministers



HH SAYYID SHIHAB BIN
TARIK AL SAID

Deputy Prime Minister for
Defence Affairs



HH SAYYID THEYAZIN BIN
HAITHAM AL SAID

Deputy Prime Minister for
Economic Affairs



HH SAYYID BILARAB BIN
HAITHAM AL SAID

Minister of State and
Governor of Muscat



SAYYID KHALID BIN
HILAL AL BUSAIDY

Minister of the Diwan
of Royal Court



GEN SULTAN
BIN MOHAMMED
AL NUMANI

Minister of the Royal Office



SAYYID HAMOUD
BIN FAISAL
AL BUSAIDY

Minister of Interior



SAYYID BADR
BIN HAMAD
AL BUSAIDY

Foreign Minister



SULTAN BIN SALIM
AL HABSI

Minister of Finance



DR MADEEHA
BINT AHMED
AL SHAIBANIYAH

Minister of Education



SAYYID SAUD BIN
HILAL AL BUSAIDY

Minister of Culture,
Sports and Youth



DR ABDULLAH
BIN MOHAMMED
AL SAEEDI

Minister of Justice and
Legal Affairs



DR ABDULLAH BIN
NASSER AL HARRASI

Minister of Information



DR KHAMIS BIN
SAIF AL JABRI

Minister of Economy



SAYYID IBRAHIM BIN
SAID AL BUSAIDY

Minister of Heritage and
Tourism



DR SAUD BIN
HAMOUD AL HABSI

Minister of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Water Resources



DR KHALFAN BIN
SAID AL SHUEILI

Minister of Housing and
Urban Planning



ENG SAID BIN
HAMOUD AL MAAWALI

Minister of Transport,
Communications and
Information Technology



DR LAILA BINT
AHMED AL NAJJAR

Minister of Social
Development



DR MAHAD BIN
SAID BAOWAIN

Minister of Labour



ENG SALIM BIN
NASSER AL AUFI

Minister of Energy
and Minerals



DR MOHAMMED BIN
SAID AL MAAMARI

Minister of Awqaf and
Religious Affairs



DR HILAL BIN
ALI AL SABTI

Minister of Health



ANWAR BIN
HILAL AL JABRI

Minister of Commerce, Industry
and Investment Promotion



RAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES HOLDS FIRST MEETING OF 2026

MUSCAT: The Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Management (RAM) held its first meeting of 2026, chaired by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court and Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

The Board reviewed institutional performance in 2025, approved the Annual Plan for 2026 and considered this year's priorities, including the Oman Global Economic Integration Initiative, Future Readiness Framework and the seamless integration of AI into

RAM's programmes and across the value chain.

Al Busaidy highlighted RAM's progress and measurable impact over the past year.

He praised RAM's performance, noting its demonstrated results and contributions to a strategic shift in Oman's leadership and administrative landscape. He emphasised that RAM's continued focus on developing national leadership capability and embedding modern knowledge, including through partnerships with leading local



Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy at the RAM board.

and international institutions, reflects the Royal Vision of His Majesty, which places investment in Oman's human capital development at the centre of national priorities and future readiness.

The Board Members reviewed RAM's overall institutional performance and achievements in the year 2025, which were guided by an integrated operating model focused on building effective leadership communities aligned with Oman's future priorities. The model was implemented

through a range of initiatives, including structured executive programmes, national initiatives, applied studies and curated dialogues, designed around a systematic learning philosophy informed by global best practices and grounded in local context.

The meeting of the Board of Trustees concluded with the approval of RAM's plan for 2026, which encompasses a coordinated portfolio of programmes, initiatives and studies that will be delivered through innovative approaches. — ONA

Central lab to enhance Oman's health security

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JAN 12

THE Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) officially opened its new premises, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. The laboratory, the nation's highest reference centre for advanced testing, epidemiological investigation, genetic analysis, and laboratory quality assurance, plays a pivotal role in supporting surveillance programmes for communicable and non-communicable diseases, food, water, and environmental safety, as well as monitoring antimicrobial resistance.

Designed according to international standards, the laboratory houses advanced molecular biology technologies, gene sequencing capabilities, and intelligent laboratory information systems, boosting Oman's capacity in preventive and precision medicine, early warning systems and rapid epidemic response.

Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation, described the opening as 'a significant national milestone reflecting Oman's commitment to strengthening health security and placing public health at the forefront of sustainable development under



The lab boosts Oman's capacity in preventive and precision medicine, early warning systems and rapid epidemic response

the renewed renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.' He emphasised that the facility represents a qualitative leap in monitoring, diagnosis, and rapid response, aligned with Oman Vision 2040's focus on quality of life and sustainable health.

During 2025, MoH laboratories, including CPHL, conducted approximately 22.9 million tests, highlighting the laboratory's critical role in rapid detection of health hazards, microbial strain identification, and monitoring mutations. The laboratory also opens avenues for scientific research, fosters local and international academic partnerships, and supports the training of specialised Omani cadres in laboratory sciences, aiming to serve as a regional hub for

innovation, knowledge transfer and international accreditation.

Dr Ali bin Abdulhussein al Lawati, Adviser to the Minister's Office for Engineering Affairs, noted that CPHL spans 53,000 square metres of land with 19,480 square metres of building space, at an estimated cost of RO 18.2 million. The facility includes three floors with high-security laboratories (BS 2-BS and BS 3-BS) and specialised labs for virology, bacteriology, chemistry, toxicology, newborn screening, genetic sequencing and bioinformatics. Dr Zakaria al Balushi, Director-General of the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, highlighted the laboratory's role in providing "highly efficient services that contribute to early disease detection and rapid public health response in accordance with national and international standards."

Salalah hosts Oman-Russia talks

SALALAH: Salalah recently hosted the Oman-Russia Meeting 2026, bringing together government officials and private sector representatives from Oman and the Russian Federation to explore deeper cooperation in tourism and investment, with hospitality and housing also on the agenda.

The discussions highlighted Dhofar's growing appeal as a destination with unique competitive advantages, driven by its natural diversity, expanding logistics links, and a pipeline of investable projects spanning tourism, urban planning, hotel services and supporting economic sectors.

A structured programme featured presentations and working papers detailing the governorate's development priorities and areas open to private-sector participation.

Key sessions included an overview of Dhofar's assets, investment opportunities, and enabling factors, alongside a presentation from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism highlighting tourism prospects. Specialised inputs covered tourism and housing, reflecting Dhofar's broader



Salalah hosted the Oman-Russia Meeting, bringing together government officials and private sector representatives.

development and quality-of-life initiatives.

Participants emphasised strengthening Dhofar's position as a competitive tourism and investment hub through closer coordination between government bodies and businesses, aiming to develop new tourism products, enhance visitor experiences and diversify international source markets.

Air connectivity with the Russian market featured prominently. The meeting reviewed recent promotional and market-development initiatives, including training programmes, familiarisation visits, and workshops with Russian travel agencies to support package development and sales channels. Direct

flights to Salalah through strategic partnerships with major Russian and CIS tour operators are expected to boost visitor flows and strengthen demand across hotels, resorts and tourism services, particularly during peak seasons.

On urban development, attendees discussed projects supporting city growth and quality of life in Dhofar, highlighting opportunities linked to housing, services and broader investment activity. The programme also included B2B meetings between Omani and Russian companies in travel, tour operations, hospitality and tourism services, fostering practical partnerships and joint programmes tailored to the Russian market. — ONA



الاستثمارات التعليمية والتدريبية
oman education & training investments

TENDER NOTICE No. 001 – 2026 - OETI

Oman Education & Training Investment Co. S.A.O.G is inviting a sealed tender for the **Landscape proposal and construction at Sohar University Campus** from contractors having sufficient experience in relevant field with excellent or first grade.

Tender	Description	Fees OMR	Submission Date
OETI 01- 2026	Landscape proposal and construction with total construction area of Approx. 22,000 M2 at Sohar University Campus	150/-	15/02/2026

Description	Deadline
Tender Release Date	14/01/2026
Last Date for collection of tenders after paying tender fee	21/01/2026
Site Visit	25/01/2026
Receiving clarifications, if any, from bidders	01/02/2026
Respond to bidder clarifications	08/02/2026
Receiving bids	15/02/2026

The tender document will be ready for collection by the company after paying non-refundable amount of **RO. 150,000/-** via depositing the money in bank or by cash on or before **21/01/2026**. Cash will be collected by **Mr. Saud Al Jarwani**, OETI, Building 20, Sohar University, Sohar.

Provide the email id to be sent along with the copy of the receipt. For Bank Transfers our account details as below:

Beneficiary : Oman Education & Training Investment Company SAOG
Account No : 002020004442
Bank : Bank Sohar
Branch : Sohar Branch, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman
Swift Code : BSHROMRU

Please send the transfer receipt to sjarwani@oeti.om to receive the tender documents in CD or USB.

Tenders offers must be submitted online (softcopy with password protected) or in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the OETI premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is **15/02/2026 @ 14:00 hours**.

Tender should be addressed to CEO, OETI Office submitted to **Mr. Saud Al Jarwani** as given below during office hours **08:00 to 15:30 Sunday to Thursday**.

CEO OETI Office
Building 20, Sohar University Campus
PO Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 450 / 612

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)
321/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 38 Recall - 2	PROVIDING TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF FISHERY HARBOURS	Monday 5/1/2026	Thursday 15/1/2026	Sunday 25/1/2026	Specialized companies registered with First, Second grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
659/2025/MAFWR/HQ- 74 Recall - 1	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR PROVISION OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR DRILLING AND AQUIFERS TESTING PROGRAMME FOR THE WADI SAFWAN AND WADI SUMAYNI CATCHMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF GROUNDWATER MODELING AT WADI SAFWAN	Monday 5/1/2026	Thursday 15/1/2026	Sunday 25/1/2026	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First grades	(25/-) 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

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

THREE OF FAMILY DIE AS THEIR CAR HITS CAMEL IN SALALAH

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, JAN 12

Three members of a family were killed and three others injured when their vehicle hit a camel on the Salalah-Muscat road.

The victims, identified as Bangladesh nationals, were residents of Fatik Chari in Chittagong. The deceased were identified as Balkis Akhtar, Muhammad Sakibul Hasan Sobuj and Muhammad Lirarul Alam. The accident occurred on Friday night. There were six people in the vehicle. The accident occurred when the family was returning to Muscat after visiting Salalah. The mother, son and the son-in-law were brought in dead by hospital authorities. The daughter and one child are being treated at the Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah. One child escaped unscathed and was sent with the relatives who reached the hospital. Relatives have reached Salalah after hearing the news of the accident. The bodies will be brought back to the country after legal formalities.

SAF CHIEF RECEIVES COMMANDER OF THE PENINSULA FORCE



Maj Gen Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Ruwais during his visit to the Military Technological College.

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Tuesday Maj Gen Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Ruwais, Commander of the Peninsula Shield Force, and his accompanying military delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed several military topics of common interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Ahmed bin Hamid al Yaqoubi, Commander of the 23rd Infantry Brigade and Brigadier Saif bin Hamad al Yousifi, Assistant Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces for Operations and Planning. — ONA

SULTAN FAISAL BIN TURKI ROAD 64 PER CENT COMPLETE



The project will cut down travel time between Khasab and Dibba to 55 minutes.

KHASAB: The Sultan Faisal bin Turki Road (Dibba-Lima-Khasab) in Musandam Governorate has reached an implementation rate of 64 per cent.

Overseen by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, it is one of the important strategic projects and aims to enhance connectivity between the governorate’s wilayats as well as facilitate transportation, and underpin economic and tourism development.

With a length of 72 kilometres, the road costs RO 151 million and is divided into several sections: the first section is 20 kilometres long, stretching from the Wilayat of Khasab to the Niyabat of Lima; the second section is 8 kilometres long, within the Niyabat of Lima, whereas the third section extends 44 kilometres from the Niyabat of Lima to the Wilayat of Dibba.

The road begins in Khasab, cuts through the Niyabat of Lima and ends in Dibba. The project is expected to significantly cut down travel time between Khasab and Dibba to 55 minutes, and between the Niyabat of Lima and Khasab to just 20 minutes. — ONA

Bayt Al Greiza opens at National Museum on trial

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

In celebration of the sixth anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s accession, the National Museum officially opened Bayt Al Greiza on a trial basis on Monday, marking a national occasion that reflects Oman’s renewed renaissance and enduring commitment to preserving its cultural identity and historical heritage.”

The opening forms part of a pilot operational phase, during which several areas of the house have been made accessible to the public, including the Grand Hall and the Banquet Hall in the western wing, restored by architect Mohammed Makiya.

The spaces allow visitors to explore the architectural features of Muscat’s traditional inner style, showcasing refined artistic and decorative elements that highlight the historical significance of the site. The inauguration is accompanied by a special art exhibition featuring selected Royal collections originally commissioned by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The exhibition presents a number of paintings and sculptures reflecting Arab, Bedouin and



Bayt Al Greiza welcomes visitors daily with affordable entry fees for the general public.

Bayt Al Greiza reflects Oman’s dedication to preserving its cultural legacy and presenting it to future generations

Eastern themes, adding cultural and artistic depth to the visitor experience and reinforcing Bayt Al Greiza’s role as a platform for arts and culture.

Under the directive of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Bayt Al Greiza has been designated as a museum open to the public under the supervision of the National Museum. The house dates back to 1597 and is distinguished by its Muscat inner architectural style, authentic interior layout, and its rich collection of Royal artefacts, Orientalist artworks, European and Asian furniture, clocks, carpets,

ceramics, and traditional crafts.

Hajer bint Ahmed Ambu Ali, Director of Bayt Al Greiza, said: “Bayt Al Greiza represents an important cultural and heritage landmark that reflects Oman’s dedication to preserving its cultural legacy and presenting it to future generations. It serves as a bridge connecting the past with the present.”

During the trial opening period, Bayt Al Greiza welcomes visitors daily from 10 am to 5 pm, with affordable entry fees suitable for students, researchers and the general public.

Forum on risk management organised

MUSCAT: Muscat Governorate is organising a two-day forum on risk management and business durability.

Themed ‘Towards a Sustainable Institutional System that Enhances Governance and Service Flow’, the forum aims to exchange experiences and enhance institutional integration.

It focuses on the management of key files related to governance and service sustainability.

The forum’s programme includes specialised dialogue sessions and workshops that explore national and international experiences



The forum aims to exchange experiences and enhance institutional integration.

and highlight the risks and challenges of the digital age.

The events seek to establish a more sustainable institutional system that is

capable of keeping pace with transformations and enhancing the comprehensive march of domestic development in Oman.

Two working papers were

Nama Dhofar Services holds exams for 467 jobs

SALALAH: Nama Dhofar Services, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), conducted recruitment examinations on Sunday for job-seekers under the training-for-employment track.

The initiative covers 467 new job opportunities within operational companies contracted by the utility provider, as part of the initiatives led by the Employment Governance and In-Country Value (ICV) Committee in the public services sector.

The announcement of these vacancies aligns with Nama Dhofar Services’ commitment to enhancing recruitment and training fields and supporting ongoing cooperation with the Ministry of Labour. These efforts aim to empower national cadres and raise their readiness to join the labour market.

Nasser bin Salim al Hadhrami, Director-General of Labour in Dhofar Governorate, stated that the implemented



The initiatives are led by by the Employment Governance and In-Country Value (ICV) Committee in the public services sector

initiatives represent a crucial element in bolstering local employment opportunities and equipping Omani youth with the necessary skills for market integration.

He emphasised the ministry’s endeavour to create an attractive work environment and provide qualitative training programmes that meet market requirements in partnership with Nama Group.

He further noted that the Directorate continues to

monitor the implementation of Omanisation and replacement policies while expanding cooperation with the private sector to provide sustainable and diverse career opportunities in vital sectors across Dhofar.

Jaber bin Salem al Rawahi, General Manager of Human Resources at Nama Dhofar Services, noted that recruitment initiatives are a fundamental pillar in providing work opportunities for job-seekers and preparing Omani youth for

the professional landscape.

He affirmed the company’s commitment to supporting Omanisation plans and strengthening the partnership with the Ministry of Labour.

He explained that the available opportunities span water, wastewater and electricity projects within supporting companies, following successive stages of the Omanisation initiative in permanent contracts. This contributes to supplying the sector with qualified national competencies and achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

He also pointed out that the recruitment process is conducted via the ‘Tawteen’ platform in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, stressing that these efforts meet the needs of the utility sectors and improve services through trained national personnel. The offered career opportunities include vacancies in operational companies contracted with Nama Dhofar Services across the electricity, water and sewage sectors. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



India's PM Modi (L) walks alongside German Chancellor Merz, in Ahmedabad. — AFP

INDIA, GERMANY
SEEK TO BOOST
DEFENCE INDUSTRY

AHMEDABAD: India and Germany are looking to boost defence industry cooperation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after hosting Chancellor Friedrich Merz in his home state of Gujarat. Both countries announced several agreements and joint declarations after the leaders' meeting with an aim to boost their \$50 billion trade. The announcements included strengthening defence industry cooperation and on semiconductors and critical minerals. The two countries "are working together on secure, trusted, and resilient supply chains and our MoUs on these issues will strengthen our partnership", Modi said.

The meeting between the Indian and German leaders comes at a time when both are facing economic and security challenges from the world's two biggest economies, China and the United States. Merz said Berlin was "committed to an international order in which we can live freely and securely, because the world is currently undergoing a process of realignment". "It is increasingly characterised by great power politics and thinking in terms of spheres of influence, which is why we must join forces to weather these rough winds," he added. — AFP

POPE RECEIVES
VENEZUELA OPPN'S
LEADER MACHADO



Pope Leo XIV meets with Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Machado at the Vatican. — Reuters

VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo received Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado at the Vatican on Monday. There were no details about the audience, with the Vatican publishing Machado's name in a list of people received by the US pope on Monday morning. Machado, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in December, has been sidelined by Washington in the wake of the US intervention in Venezuela that toppled President Nicolas Maduro.

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he would meet Machado this week after previously saying she did not have the respect or support within Venezuela to lead. Leo, 70, called for Venezuela's sovereignty to be protected in a speech to diplomats. The pope issued an appeal "to respect the will of the Venezuelan people, and to safeguard the human and civil rights of all" following the suggestion by US President Donald Trump that the US could control the South American country for years. The Vatican's chief diplomat Pietro Parolin spoke with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The two discussed "efforts to improve the humanitarian situation, particularly in Venezuela." — AFP

FORMER UK
GOVERNMENT
MINISTER
ZAHAWI
DEFECTS TO
FARAGE'S
REFORM

LONDON: Former British finance minister Nadhim Zahawi defected to Nigel Farage's right-wing Reform UK party from the Conservative Party on Monday, saying the country was broken and needed Farage as prime minister to fix it. Zahawi, who had a short spell in charge of the nation's finances under former prime minister Boris Johnson in 2022, becomes the latest in a long line of former Conservatives to switch to Farage's populist Reform UK.

Reform is currently leading the polls in Britain, far ahead of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour Party, which has struggled to translate its landslide 2024 election win into popular change, against a backdrop of constrained finances and global instability. "Britain needs Nigel Farage as prime minister," Zahawi told a press conference announcing his defection. "Even if you don't yet realise that Britain needs Reform, you know in your heart of hearts

that our wonderful country is sick." Zahawi is not currently a member of parliament after deciding not stand at the 2024 national election. Britain's next election is not due until 2029. Farage's party has five of 650 seats in parliament, but Reform's surging popularity has come from tapping into public frustration over issues like immigration, crime and a perceived fall in the standard of public services. — Reuters

US to take Greenland one
way or the other: Trump

PRESIDENT

Donald Trump said that the United States would take Greenland "one way or the other," warning that Russia and China would "take over" if Washington didn't act. Trump says controlling the mineral-rich Danish territory is crucial for US national security given increased Russian and Chinese military activity in the Arctic. "If we don't take Greenland, Russia or China will, and I'm not letting that happen," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One, despite neither country laying claim to the vast island.

Trump said he would be open to making a deal with the Danish self-governing territory "but one way or the other, we're going to have Greenland." Denmark and other European allies have voiced shock at Trump's threats over the island, which plays a strategic role between North America and the Arctic, and where the United States has had a military base since World War II. A Danish colony until 1953, Greenland gained home rule 26 years later and is contemplating eventually loosening its ties with Denmark.

The vast majority of its population and political parties have said they do not want to be under US control and insist Greenlanders must decide their own future — a viewpoint continuously challenged by Trump. "Greenland should make the deal, because Greenland does not want to see Russia or China take over," Trump warned, as he mocked its defences. "You know what their defence is, two dog sleds," he said, while Russia and China have



A woman walks past Greenland's parliament Inatsisartut in Nuuk, Greenland. — Reuters

Denmark and other European allies have voiced shock at Trump's threats over the island, which plays a strategic role between North America and the Arctic, and where the United States has had a military base since World War II

"destroyers and submarines all over the place."

Denmark's prime minister on Sunday said her country faces a "decisive moment" in its diplomatic battle with the United States over Greenland, after President Donald Trump again suggested using force to seize the Arctic territory. Ahead of meetings in Washington on the global scramble for key raw materials, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said that "there is a conflict over Greenland". "This is a decisive moment" with stakes that go beyond the immediate issue of Greenland's future, she added in a debate with other Danish political leaders.

Frederiksen posted on Facebook that "we are ready to defend our values — wherever it is necessary — also in the Arctic. We believe in international law and in peoples' right to self-determination." Germany and Sweden backed

Denmark against Trump's latest claims to the self-governing Danish territory. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson condemned US "threatening rhetoric" after Trump repeated that Washington was "going to do something on Greenland, whether they like it or not".

"Sweden, the Nordic countries, the Baltic states, and several major European countries stand together with our Danish friends," he told a defence conference in Salen where the US general in charge of Nato took part. Kristersson said a US takeover of mineral-rich Greenland would be "a violation of international law and risks encouraging other countries to act in exactly the same way".

It would be the end of Nato if the US took Greenland by force and European Union member states are under obligation to come to Denmark's assistance if it was faced with military aggression, the European Commissioner for Defence and Space said on Monday. Both Greenland and Denmark have said that Greenland is not for sale but Trump has not ruled out taking it by force.

"I agree with the Danish Prime Minister that it will be the end of Nato, but also among people it will be also very, very negative," Commissioner Andrius Kubilius said at a security conference in Sweden.

Kubilius also said that the European Union Treaty article 42.7 obliged member states to come to Denmark's assistance if faced with military aggression. — Agencies



ISRAELI-BACKED GROUP THREATENS ATTACKS IN GAZA

GAZA: An Israeli-backed Palestinian group said on Monday it had killed a senior Hamas police officer in the southern Gaza Strip, an incident which Hamas blamed on "Israeli collaborators". A statement from the Gaza interior ministry said gunmen opened fire from a passing car, killing Mahmoud Al-Astal, head of the criminal police unit in Khan Younis, in the south of the enclave. It described the attackers as "collaborators with the occupation".

Hussam Al Astal, leader of an anti-Hamas group based in an area under Israeli control east of Khan Younis, claimed responsibility for the killing. "To those who work with Hamas, your destiny is to be killed. Death is coming to you," he said, dressed in a black military-style uniform and clutching an assault rifle. Nearly all of the territory's two million people now live in Hamas-held areas, mostly in makeshift tents or damaged buildings. — Reuters

ASSISTANCE REQUEST

Sri Lanka seeks aid to rebuild after cyclone



Sri Lanka asked China to help rebuild key infrastructure damaged by Cyclone Ditwah, which killed at least 641 people and caused extensive damage, the foreign minister said. Vijitha Herath said he made the request during talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. "I particularly requested the assistance of the Chinese government in infrastructure development, including the reconstruction of roads, railways, and bridges," Herath said. — AFP

CREW ABDUCTION

Armed pirates abduct 9 sailors off Gabon



Armed assailants boarded a fishing trawler off Gabon's coast over the weekend and abducted nine sailors, the defence ministry said. The incident was the latest act of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, which spans more than 5,700 kilometres from Senegal to Angola off Africa's west coast. "This attack, perpetrated by three armed individuals, led to the abduction of nine members, including five Chinese nationals and four Indonesians." — AFP

CONTINUOUS OFFENSIVE

RSF drones strike Sudan's city of Sinja



Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces launched a drone strike on an army base in the southeastern city of Sinja, a military source said. The source said that RSF drones "targeted the headquarters of the army's 17th Infantry Division in Sinja, the capital of Sennar state". Sennar state has seen relative calm since the army recaptured key Sudanese cities in late 2024 in an offensive that later saw it regain the capital Khartoum. — AFP

OPINION

Without systems, intentions do not accomplish goals



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

ONE of the most important lessons I encountered in 2025 is deceptively simple: feelings are temporary, but systems endure. Motivation rises and falls, enthusiasm fades, and willpower is unreliable. Yet systems — when carefully designed and consistently followed — remain steady. This insight has fundamentally reshaped how I think about achievement, and it is a principle I intend to carry forward into the years ahead.

For a long time, I believed that success depended on how motivated or inspired one felt. I assumed that discipline followed passion, and that productivity was a natural consequence of feeling “ready.” Experience, however, has taught me the opposite. Feelings are unpredictable; they fluctuate with mood, health, stress and circumstance. If goals are tied to how one feels on a given day, progress becomes fragile. Systems, on the other hand, provide structure when motivation fails.

Creating a system means planning in advance — carefully and deliberately — rather than relying on daily decision-making. Time blocks, weekly schedules and monthly plans are not restrictive; they are liberating. When tasks are pre-decided and time is allocated ahead of time, the mind is relieved of constant negotiation. There is no need to

decide whether today is the “right day” to work, write, exercise, or rest. The decision has already been made. One simply follows the plan, rain or shine.

This approach explains why so many accomplished individuals emphasise (boring) routines over inspiration. Their success is not the result of extraordinary motivation but of ordinary actions repeated consistently. By adhering to a system even when they do not feel like it, they conserve mental energy and avoid decision fatigue. The brain, no longer overwhelmed by endless choices, can focus on execution rather than deliberation.

A practical example of this principle can be found in discussions around health and dietary discipline. One social media influencer on YouTube noted that people who succeed in maintaining dietary systems do not wait until they are hungry and surrounded by options to make decisions. Instead, they check restaurant menus in advance, plan their meals ahead of time and remove temptation from the moment itself. When they arrive at a restaurant, the choice has already been made. This foresight prevents impulsive decisions that often lead to regret or self-sabotage.

The lesson here extends far beyond food. Whether the goal is improved health,

Dreams without systems remain wishes. Effort without structure leads to burnout. But when we commit to a system and follow it faithfully, even on days when motivation is absent, progress becomes inevitable.

professional productivity, creative output, or personal growth, the same rule applies: Do the hard thinking upfront. Planning requires effort, discipline, realism and honesty. It demands that one anticipate challenges and account for fatigue, distractions and emotional dips. Yet once the system is in place, following it becomes far easier than constantly starting over.

Importantly, effective systems also include rest. Scheduling breaks is not a sign of weakness but of sustainability. Honest, when planned, becomes restorative rather than guilt-ridden. Just as work must be honoured regardless of mood, so too must rest be respected — even when one feels tempted to ignore it. Balance is not achieved through spontaneity but through intentional design.

Ultimately, this lesson has taught me a sobering but empowering truth: We become not only who we are but also what we consistently do, not what we merely hope for. Dreams without systems remain wishes. Effort without structure leads to burnout. But when we commit to a system and follow it faithfully, even on days when motivation is absent, progress becomes inevitable. In the end, intentions do not accomplish goals, implementing and following systems do.

Denmark’s Greenland dilemma: Defending a fading territory

JACOB GRONHOLT-PEDERSEN & STINE JACOBSEN

When US Secretary of State Marco Rubio meets his Danish and Greenlandic counterparts next week, Denmark will be defending a territory that has been moving steadily away from it and towards independence since 1979.

President Donald Trump’s threats to seize Greenland have triggered a wave of European solidarity with Denmark. But the crisis has exposed an uncomfortable reality — Denmark is rallying support to protect a territory whose population wants independence and whose largest opposition party now wants to bypass Copenhagen and negotiate directly with Washington.

“Denmark risks exhausting its foreign policy capital to secure Greenland, only to watch it walk away afterwards,” said Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, a political science professor at the University of Copenhagen.

Denmark cannot let Greenland go without losing its geopolitical relevance in the Arctic territory, strategically located between Europe and North America and a critical site for the US ballistic missile defence system.

Yet it may ultimately have nothing to show for its efforts if Greenlanders choose independence — or strike their own deal with Washington.

The stakes extend beyond Denmark’s national interests. European allies have rallied behind Denmark not just out of solidarity, but because giving up Greenland would set a dangerous precedent that could embolden other powers to pursue territorial claims against smaller nations, upending the post-1945 world order.

Denmark’s foreign ministry declined to comment, but referred to joint remarks by Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen on December 22. “National borders and the sovereignty of states are rooted in international law,” the two leaders said. “They are fundamental principles. You cannot annex another country... Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders”.

This week, Frederiksen said: “If the US chooses to attack another Nato country, everything stops, including Nato and the security the alliance has provided since World War Two”.

For now, the Trump administration says all options are on the table, including buying the territory or taking it by force.

Copenhagen professor Rasmussen said any discussion of whether holding on to Greenland is worth the cost has been drowned out by outrage at Trump’s threats. — AFP

This is how the cartels win

SINCE President Trump returned to office, Washington has been steadily recasting organised crime in the Americas as a paramount national security threat, culminating in the capture of Nicolás Maduro. By framing the raid in Venezuela’s capital, Caracas, as a law-enforcement operation against a “narco-terrorist network,” the administration has asserted an aggressive new justification for unilateral force — one that Trump has already threatened to extend to targets in places like Mexico and Colombia.

Should the president pursue this strategy, it could transform Latin America into a testing ground for a new, violent American doctrine of intervention. It also wouldn’t work. Trying to crush cartels through blunt force rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of how modern criminal organisations actually operate. Organised crime is now one of the most consequential transnational political forces in the region. The world’s most powerful gangs aren’t anchored to a single territory or port. They are embedded in global illicit supply chains that combine trade, finance and technology, span continents and can outlast any single government.

In Latin America, groups like Brazil’s Primeiro Comando da Capital, Venezuela’s Tren de Aragua and Mexico’s Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación increasingly decide who controls neighbourhoods, prisons and local economies in their countries of origin. But they are no longer confined within those borders. Today, Latin American criminal organisations operate on a global scale, with investigations by US and European authorities suggesting coordination with Balkan syndicates in Antwerp; and the sourcing of precursor chemicals for synthetic drugs from manufacturers in China.

On the right, leaders promise iron-fist crackdowns that fill



MATIAS SPEKTOR



OTO MONTAGNER

The authors are Brazilian political scientists and experts on international relations

Turning Latin America into a theatre of war will not weaken transnational crime; it will entrench it. Force may scatter criminal networks in the short term, but it will ultimately make them harder to see, harder to track and harder to stop.

cemeteries but that often barely touch cartel bank accounts. On the left, leaders are less inclined to force, offering social programmes that can be easily outspent by criminal recruiters. Neither side has an answer for foes that are wealthier than some small nations and more agile than many government bureaucracies.

At its heart, the rise of transnational crime is actually a story about governance, not lawlessness. In the legal economy, cross-border trade depends on courts, contracts and law enforcement to guarantee payment, resolve disputes and punish cheating. None of that applies to illicit commerce. When criminal groups operate across borders, profitability depends on building shadow arrangements that substitute for legal enforcement. Whether they run operations themselves or work with local partners, the risks are constant: operatives can double-cross, defect or steal, and allies have incentives to renege when no court can enforce a deal. Governing an illicit transnational network, in short, is extraordinarily difficult — and inherently fragile.

Global gangs adapt their style to the local terrain. Where they have no reliable allies, they use brute force to seize control. Where they can find established partners, they quietly share power. Either way, these networks rely on a hidden set of rules that allow criminals to cooperate across borders.

This is why Washington’s current approach misses the mark. Treating organised crime as a battlefield enemy assumes that you can dismantle networks by destroying geographic hubs and killing leaders. You cannot bomb a drug supply chain that stretches from California to Guangdong. As long as global demand for drugs remains high, military strikes mainly raise the risk premium, making criminal markets more profitable and their operators more adaptable. They often also

simply redirect supply rather than eliminate it; when the US intensified pressure on Colombian cocaine production in the early 2000s, for instance, cultivation merely migrated to Bolivia and Peru. Today, as enforcement evolves, production patterns are shifting again — not disappearing, but adapting to new pressure points.

But organised crime’s global reach also makes it vulnerable. No single group can govern a transnational supply chain alone. Cooperation across borders depends on thin trust, incomplete information and constant fear of betrayal. Exploiting those weaknesses requires something no country possesses on its own: collective, integrated intelligence that connects financial data, shipping records, investigations and surveillance across jurisdictions. If authorities were to discreetly disrupt a shipment, it could trigger a cycle of internal purges and mutual suspicion that would destroy the network from within.

The solution is clear — even if US policy is pointing in the opposite direction. If Washington is as serious about drug cartels as it says it is, it should use its diplomatic weight to help build an intelligence coalition capable of exploiting the links that hold transnational crime together. Institutions like the European Union’s Financial Intelligence Unit network and joint investigation teams have shown what’s possible, but they need significant expansion: dedicated task forces with real-time access to shipping data and bank records, harmonised laws that allow authorities to seize assets and close fallback routes, and treaties that allow the prosecution of intermediaries across borders.

Turning Latin America into a theatre of war will not weaken transnational crime; it will entrench it. Force may scatter criminal networks in the short term, but it will ultimately make them harder to see, harder to track and harder to stop. — The New York Times

Your sibling is your first friend...



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

CHILDHOOD memories are always enriching, and even more so when they are of your time with your siblings. Life was so simple then with no plans for the future. The dream profession changes now and then, and most of us want to grow up and be like our favourite teachers.

Growing up means moving to different geographical locations, pursuing careers and dreams. Until then, it is fine and manageable. But when one has to say goodbye to his/her sibling, it is a pain that is so unbearable that it can leave a scar and take forever to heal. One continues to live with that permanent silence, in the absence of their punchline, reactions and comments.

One feels incomplete. Sibling love is an enduring bond, and what makes it so special later in life is the shared history. The places you visited together, the things that made you laugh, the troubles you escaped from, and the laughter and tears that were shared are all important parts of what makes us who we are.

Your sibling is your first friend. This is the person you learn to share with before we step out to the world. This is when we learn that actually sharing is caring.

While parents might indulge in pampering us, a sibling can put us in our place. Yet, when

we are out in school or in a public place, they are our cheerleaders with unconditional support. Although at home it could be a mix of affection and rivalry. One can rest assured knowing that siblings are our best critics.

If you take a few minutes to reflect, you will remember how much your siblings have contributed to your personal development. It could be that moment when you just did not believe in yourself, but your brother or sister did not give you an option but to move forward until one day you just became a confident person.

That is right; older or younger, they know how to push you out of your comfort zone. That is why they form a core part of personal development and lifelong connections, even through conflict, say the experts.

If you have had an awkward habit, they will make sure they nag you enough to change for the better.

Why is it such an unconditional friendship? Because it is a bond that has been there since birth, and it is meant to last.

Siblings are the keepers of inside jokes and family secrets. They are the support system no matter how many disagreements appear on the surface.

There could be a spirit of competition, especially when it comes to parents’ love and praise.

Your sibling is your first friend. This is the person you learn to share with before we step out to the world. This is when we learn that actually sharing is caring

Your first playmates can be quite difficult at times, but there is a deep understanding. Some might think it ceased to be, but in reality, it is always present.

It is an essential part of life. So much so that in Japan there is a facility where actors come in to play the role of family members.

Of course, it may not be the same because your own siblings are the ones who know you as you always were. The reason this is so special is that you do not have to explain yourself.

There is a sense of security in knowing that someone knows you at the core level and they will be with you in your tough situations and moments of joy.

In a world where more and more people require counselling, sibling love was the best system for emotional support. A sibling relationship, if one is lucky, can be the longest relationship one could have in life.

It is not necessary that a sibling relationship should be a comfortable one, and that is why they say not to take anyone for granted. Only mutual respect can make any relationship survive.

Some of the best elder siblings lay the red carpet to the world for the younger siblings. But we have to make sure we do not take them for granted. Siblings — they are some of the best gifts in the world.

NICOLAS MADURO’S FALL HOPES FOR ECONOMIC BOUNTY

AHIANA FIGUEROA

After the US raid that deposed Nicolas Maduro as Venezuela’s leader, citizens hope the ensuing talks on selling its oil to the United States may improve their dire economic fortunes.

US forces shocked many when they bombed Caracas in the night and seized Maduro - but analysts agree that the raid has radically changed the country’s outlook and economic expectations.

Maduro’s successor, interim leader Delcy Rodriguez, has insisted Venezuela is not “subordinate” to Washington after it seized him, but she has pledged to cooperate with it on oil.

Maduro’s government had resorted to cryptocurrencies to boost foreign exchange flows amid a lack of investment, while runaway inflation wiped out people’s already meager wages.

“I don’t really understand those agreements signed by Trump and Delcy, but I hope they help improve the economy,” said Marieta Ochoa, a 47-year-old teacher. “Hopefully salaries go up - this inflation is unbearable.”

Until Friday, January 2, relations between the two countries were at their lowest: US sanctions and seizures of tankers were squeezing Venezuela’s shaky oil industry.

The country had been selling oil to allies such as China and Russia at discounts of up to 50 per cent, with low production and export levels.

“Now, rapprochement between Washington and Caracas could mean easing sanctions, restoring oil exports and reviving cash flows,” said Alejandro Grisanti, director of consultancy Ecoanalitica.

State oil company PDVSA has said it is negotiating crude sales with Washington under schemes similar to those applying to firms such as Chevron - the only US company currently exempted from sanctions on dealing in Venezuelan crude.

Trump signed an order to safeguard Venezuelan oil revenue held in US Treasury accounts from the courts and debtors, and has urged US oil firms to invest in Venezuela and restore its creaky oil infrastructure.

Analysts say interim president Rodriguez could attract investment if she signals openness and flexibility. “The country urgently needs a growing and stable cash flow, and oil can provide it immediately,” said independent economist Carlos Torrealba Rangel.

Growth prospects are strong since oil accounts for 87 per cent of Venezuela’s foreign currency earnings. Asdrubal Oliveros, an independent economist, forecast “a 30-per cent expansion - double the rate of the past two years.”

“Increased oil income from higher output and reduced discounts will boost cash flows and help a currency market that is practically dry,” he said.

Traders said economic activity was timidly looking up after the US air strikes on Saturday, January 3, that led to the capture of Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores.

“Little by little, the economy is reactivating,” said Carmen Alvarez, who represents informal traders in western Caracas. — AFP

The global economic transformation is local

WE are at the dawn of a new age: the climate transition is upon us, the era of hyper-globalisation is receding, middle classes worldwide are under strain, and poverty reduction in developing countries faces new headwinds. Even without the destabilising shifts brought about by US President Donald Trump’s international trade and foreign aid policies, the world would be desperate for new solutions.

To devise them, governments need to reconsider the fundamental question of who our economies and markets are meant to serve, and they must re-examine the policies and institutions that have brought us to our current economic and political reckoning. While global cooperation and national resource mobilisation will be necessary to address the challenges we now face, it is local action that offers the most promising path forward.

In the United States and other advanced economies, the political backlash against globalisation and multilateral institutions is rooted in the adverse effects that globalisation and technological change have had on former industrial regions and middle-skill workers. Support for protectionism, hostility to immigration, and openness to ideological extremism have emerged in an environment of economic distress and increasingly unequal access to opportunity. National governments’ inadequate policy responses underscore the need to address economic constraints locally through a portfolio of measures, including workforce development, support for small businesses, community reinvestment, and promotion of research and development.

Stagnating opportunity for middle- and lower-wage workers is far from a rich-country problem. In fact, the types of challenges that developed and developing economies face are converging, which implies that reconsidering our approach to regional economic development requires us to broaden how we think about industrial policy. Conventional industrial policies need to be adapted to current technological and



DANI RODRIK

The writer is Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School, is Past President of the International Economic Association



GORDON HANSON

The writer is Professor in Urban Policy, Academic Dean for Strategy and Engagement, and Co-Director of the Reimagining the Economy initiative at Harvard Kennedy School



ROHAN SANDHU

The writer is Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Reimagining the Economy initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School



Conventional industrial policies need to be adapted to current technological and geopolitical realities.

geopolitical realities, including premature de-industrialisation, the challenge of productivity growth in service sectors, the uncertain impact of emerging technologies and AI, and more volatile global economic and geopolitical conditions.

This adaptation will require expanding what we regard as industrial strategies to encompass a broader range of public inputs and private interventions. To address challenges such as the green energy transition, we will need to find new ways to develop and commercialise emerging technologies, upgrade worker skills and help those who may lose jobs in traditional energy sectors.

Similarly, we cannot expect job creation in services, where most employment growth will occur, to follow naturally from standard manufacturing-first approaches.

It will require interventions on both the demand and supply sides of the labour market, through supporting incumbent firms, enhancing supplier networks, targeting small enterprises with high growth potential, leveraging technology that raises workers’ earnings and updating workforce training.

Equally important, the new economic strategies will have to be context-specific. Much of the responsibility for their enactment will fall on local actors, including subnational governments, social enterprises and NGOs. Examples of such interventions (and

organisations) abound globally, including the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator in South Africa, Kuza (a micro-learning platform targeted at rural areas) in Kenya, and Generation India, a foundation that aims to improve the country’s human capital.

While the locus of action will be decentralised, national governments and regulatory authorities still have crucial roles to play. They will need to articulate a vision for structural transformation and provide needed fiscal resources. They will also need to create an enabling environment for “good jobs” – such as banking, access to training and a baseline level of social insurance.

Moreover, governments will need to shepherd the direction and deployment of AI, lest a handful of large tech firms control emerging technology. And they will need to strengthen coordination and goal-setting in a manner that accommodates the multitude of public and private players involved at various levels of governance.

National capacity for industrial policy does face fiscal constraints, particularly in developing economies (where government spending is dwarfed by that of China and the United States). Philanthropic and firm-led approaches will therefore have to be iterative and dynamic, and their funding will need to be more flexible to enable experimentation. Successful transformation policies need not require large subsidies.

©Project Syndicate, 2026

SPORTS

SMOOTH RUNNING



Salma al Ghailani, one of the organisers, said the mix of local and international players has added strong competitiveness to the event.

— Abdulwahid al Hamadani

TOP-RANKED PLAYERS IGNITE MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL BOWLING

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

The second edition of the Muscat International Bowling Championship continues on Tuesday in a highly competitive atmosphere, as a group of the world's top-ranked players make their entry into the tournament. Their participation is expected to raise the technical and spectator excitement and intensify the battle for the top positions. Tuesday's action will take place at the Seeb Bowling Centre from 1:30 pm to 9 pm, featuring a packed schedule of high-level matchups.

The first four rounds witnessed fierce competition between local players and their international counterparts, with all participants delivering impressive performances that reflected the growing standard of bowling in the Sultanate of Oman. The event has also underlined Muscat's rising profile as a sporting destination capable of hosting international tournaments, while strengthening technical exchange and expanding the game's fan base.

BATTLE FOR TOP HEATS UP

After four rounds, the overall standings show just how close and intense the race for the top spots has become. Khalid Bait Issa leads the standings with 2,054 points, sharing first place with Musab al Adawi, who has the same total — a clear sign of

how fierce the title fight is.

After four rounds, Khalid Bait Issa leads the overall standings with 2,054 points, sharing first place with Musab al Adawi, who has the same total.

Hassan al Kharousi sits third with 1,934 points, confirming his strong presence among the leading contenders. Saudi Arabia's Mohammed al Saud is fourth with 1,918 points, followed by UAE's Ali al Rashdi in fifth with 1,910 points.

In sixth place is Mohammed al Jabri with 1,869 points, followed by

Haitham al Harthy in seventh (1,855), Ghalib al Busaidy eighth (1,824), Mubarak al Kharousi ninth (1,840) and Mohammed al Hashmi tenth (1,833), completing a top-ten that highlights the extremely tight margins and high technical standards.

Ammar al Balushi is 11th with 1,809 points, followed by Egypt's Ahmed Shoukry in 12th (1,774), Sultan al Jabri 13th (1,757), Hassan al Zarei 14th (1,740) and Marwan al Zadjali 15th (1,737). Badr al Mehrami is 16th with 1,723 points, followed by Moath al Ameri 17th (1,708), Ahmed al Mafraji 18th (1,705), Korea's Dayo Kurn 19th (1,701) and Abdullah al Balushi 20th (1,691).

The remaining positions are occupied by Ali al Mjiyabi (21st – 1,659), Mishaal al Balushi (22nd – 1,648), Mukhlid al Balushi (23rd – 1,634), Saif al Far'i (24th – 1,622), Qais al Shanfari (25th – 1,615), Saud al Dari (26th – 1,614), Mashool al Shuwaili (27th – 1,611), American Ray Dante (28th – 1,597), Sara al Maskari (29th – 1,569), Ziyad al Raisi (30th – 1,558), Nooh al Zadjali (31st – 1,554) and Al Jardaneya (32nd – 1,550).

Salma al Ghailani, one of the organisers, said the tournament is running smoothly according to plan and schedule, ensuring comfort for the players. She noted that player reception and registration were well organised, allowing participants to focus fully on the competition.

The teamwork among the organising committee has helped overcome challenges and ensure the championship runs successfully, she added.

Al Nasr, Al Nahda book HM Cup last-four spots

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

AL NASR booked their place in the semifinals of His Majesty's Cup football

competition after securing a hard fought 1-0 victory over Sohar in the second leg of the quarterfinal, played at the Sohar Sports Complex. The result sealed qualification for Al Nasr following a goalless draw in the first leg.

Al Nasr made a strong start to the match, asserting their attacking intent from the opening minutes and applying sustained pressure on Sohar's goal, the visitors created several clear cut chances, but an outstanding performance from Sohar's goalkeeper denied Al Nasr an early breakthrough with a series of crucial saves.

Sohar, meanwhile, adopted a cautious approach, focusing on defensive organisation and limiting Al Nasr's attacking threat, while producing only sporadic forward moves, their performance improved slightly towards the end of the first half as they managed to push forward, yet neither side was able to break the deadlock and the half ended scoreless.

After the restart, Sohar retreated deeper into their own half and relied heavily on physical challenges to disrupt Al Nasr's rhythm. Al Nasr continued to dominate possession and press for the decisive goal, maintaining their composure and attacking momentum.

The breakthrough finally came in the 64th minute when Khalid al Ghadhrifi rose highest to meet a corner kick and headed home the only goal of the match, giving Al Nasr a deserved lead.



Al Nasr secured a hard fought 1-0 victory over Sohar.

Al Nahda continued their impressive run by defeating Sur 4-2, completing a dominant aggregate victory of 6-2 over the two legs.

Sohar attempted to mount a late response in the closing stages, but Al Nasr's disciplined defensive display and tactical awareness ensured the advantage was preserved until the final whistle, confirming their progression to the semifinals of the competition.

In another quarterfinal second-leg encounter, Al Nahda continued

their impressive run by defeating Sur 4-2, completing a dominant aggregate victory of 6-2 over the two legs.

The result underlined Al Nahda's strong form and signalled their readiness to challenge for the His Majesty's Cup as the tournament moves into its decisive stages.

Salalah to host 2026 West Asian Club Athletics

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

The Sultanate of Oman represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Al Nasr club will host the West Asian Club Athletics Championship 2026 in Salalah city during April 2-5, 2026. The prestigious West Asian event will take place at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah and Salalah Sports Complex.

Faisal bin Hafidh al Shanfari, Treasurer of Al Nasr Club and Chairman of the Organising Committee for the Championship, confirmed that Al Nasr's bid was officially approved following the federation's confidence in the club's organisational capabilities. "We are deeply grateful for the trust placed in Al Nasr Club by the West Asian Athletics Association and the Oman Athletics Association," Al Shanfari told Oman Observer.

"Hosting this championship aligns perfectly with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth's vision of attracting regional and international sporting events and strengthening Oman's presence on the global sports map," he said.

The championship is expected to attract more than 400 athletes



This championship represents a valuable opportunity for Omani athletes to compete at the highest regional level, gain experience and enhance their chances of achieving podium finish

FAISAL BIN HAFIDH AL SHANFARI
Treasurer of Al Nasr Club and Chairman of the Organising Committee for the Championship



The West Asian event will take place at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah and Salalah Sports Complex.

representing elite athletics clubs from across West Asia. A total of 45 track and field events will be contested including 22 men's events, 22 women's events and a mixed relay ensuring a high-level and inclusive competition.

To ensure smooth delivery, Al Shanfari revealed that Al Nasr Club's Board of Directors has established a central organising committee, supported by specialised sub-committees overseeing logistics, operations,

visas, accommodation, transportation, media and team relations.

The 2026 edition follows the successful 2025 championship in Qatar which featured athletes from 13 West Asian countries and underlined the tournament's strong technical reputation and competitive depth.

"This championship represents a valuable opportunity for Omani athletes to compete at the highest regional level, gain experience and enhance their chances of achieving podium finish," he said. "It will contribute significantly to athlete development and to increasing Oman's medal record at the West Asian level," Al Shanfari said.

"The preparations have been underway since an early stage to ensure the championship is delivered to an international standards, reflecting Oman's proven ability to host major sporting events," he added.

"Hosting this event is a major technical gain for athletics in Oman. It will provide a high-level competitive environment for athletes, referees and administrators, contributing directly to the development of the sport both technically and organisationally," he concluded.

15TEAMS



Oman will open their campaign against Qatar on January 16, before facing South Korea on January 18.

OMAN HANDBALL TEAM HEADS TO KUWAIT FOR ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

The Oman national handball team will depart on Tuesday evening for Kuwait to take part in the 22nd Asian Men’s Handball Championship, which serves as a qualifier for the 2027 IHF World Championship in Germany, the continental tournament will be hosted by Kuwait from January 15 to 29.

Oman have been drawn into Group A, widely described as a ‘group of death’, alongside defending champions Qatar and South Korea, one of Asia’s most decorated teams. South Korea leads the competition’s honours list with nine Asian titles, followed by Qatar with six, while Kuwait have won the title four times and Japan twice.

The Omani delegation is headed by Mousa bin Khamis al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Handball Association. The technical and administrative staff includes Anwar al Balushi (team manager), Ahmed al Jassasi (administrator), national head coach Nabil al Balushi, assistant coach Ahmed Ambusaidi and physiotherapist Ibrahim al Fouri.

The squad features 16 players: Bashar al Hinaï, Abdulaziz al Majrafi, Mohammed al Dughhaishi, Hamad al Dughhaishi, Mahmoud al Wahaibi, Saeed al Hasni, Taher al Hadeedi, Abdullah al Balushi, Khalid al Jabri, Muhannad al Zafari, Al Azhar al Hadeedi, Nawaf al Hasni, Mohammed al Hasni, Asaad al Hasni, Azzan al Maashari and Hassan al Balushi.

The national team has undergone an intensive preparation programme since early October, which included regular training sessions, domestic camps and four friendly matches against the UAE and Iraq.

CRUNCH OPENER
Oman will open their campaign against Qatar on January 16, before facing South Korea on January 18, in two high profile encounters that will provide a true test of

the team’s ambitions and readiness in one of the tournament’s toughest groups.

Despite the challenging draw, Oman enter the championship with strong determination to deliver competitive performances that reflect the steady progress of Omani handball in recent years. The coaching staff is relying on a balanced mix of experienced players and young talents, supported by the fighting spirit shown during the preparation phase.

The national team has undergone an intensive preparation programme since early October, which included regular training sessions, domestic camps and four friendly matches against the UAE and Iraq. These fixtures proved vital in assessing physical and technical readiness, addressing weaknesses and finalising the optimal squad for the championship.

The tournament features 15 national teams, divided into four groups. Group A includes Oman, Qatar, and South Korea; Group B consists of Bahrain, Iraq, China and Jordan; Group C includes host nation Kuwait, the UAE, Hong Kong and India; while Group D features Japan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Australia.

According to the competition format, the top two teams from each group will advance to the final stage, forming a pool of eight teams. These will be divided into two groups, with final standings determining the teams that secure qualification spots for the 2027 Handball World Championship.

Kohli hits 93 as India edge New Zealand in ODI opener

VIRAT KOHLI hit 93 to help India chase down 301 in a tense four-wicket win over New Zealand in the first one-day international on Sunday.

The in-form Kohli struck his 77th ODI half-century as he became the second leading run-scorer in international cricket with a total of 28,068 runs.

With his dismissal, India slipped from 234-2 to 242-5 before they reached their target with six balls to spare in Vadodara.

Skipper Shubman Gill made 56 in a 118-run second wicket stand with Kohli, who shared another strong partnership with Shreyas Iyer, who made 49.

Late cameos by Harshit Rana (29) and wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul, who made an unbeaten 29 including the winning six, secured an Indian lead in the three-match series 1-0.

New Zealand pace spearhead Kyle Jamieson stood out with figures of 4-41.

Kohli led the chase as he went past Sri Lanka’s Kumar Sangakkara (28,016 runs) to move second in the list of leading run-scorers in the international game, behind fellow Indian Sachin Tendulkar (34,357).

“My journey has been nothing short of a dream-come-true for me,” Kohli said after being named man of the match.

“I look at my journey with grace and gratitude. With the way I am playing at the moment, I am not looking at milestones. Only thing in my mind was to help the team win.” The 37-year-old Kohli only plays the ODI format after he and fellow stalwart Rohit Sharma, 38, retired from T20 and Test cricket.

Rohit started strongly in his brisk 26 before he fell to New Zealand’s Jamieson.

The packed crowd welcomed Kohli with a huge roar as the star batter joined Gill at the crease to take the attack to the opposition.

He was ably supported by Gill, who has returned from an injury and a snub by the selectors from the T20 World Cup squad.

Gill started slowly before he gained pace to raise his 16th ODI fifty but soon fell to rookie leg-spinner Adithya Ashok.

DROPPED CATCHES

Kohli was denied a ton by Jamieson, who got the batter caught out at mid-off. The former captain walked back to a standing ovation.

Jamieson dismissed Ravindra Jadeja, for four, in the same over and in the next bowled Iyer to raise New Zealand’s hopes of a turnaround. India’s troubles increased with injury to Washington Sundar, who suffered a side strain while bowling his off-spin and came out to bat at number eight.



Virat Kohli in action against New Zealand during the first ODI in Vadodara, Gujarat.

“I look at my journey with grace and gratitude. With the way I am playing at the moment, I am not looking at milestones. Only thing in my mind was to help the team win.”

VIRAT KOHLI

India were helped by a couple of dropped catches by an otherwise brilliant New Zealand fielding team.

Rana survived a reprieve on 12 by Daryl Mitchell.

“We can be proud of our effort,” said skipper Michael Bracewell.

“Taking the number one team in the world to the last over was a pretty good effort. If we could have got 320-330 then it would have been the difference.

“We talk about match-changing moments in the field, if we had taken those then it would have been different,” Bracewell said.

Earlier, New Zealand posted 300-

8 after Mitchell hit 84 to defy the Indian bowlers following the hosts’ decision to field first.

Openers Devon Conway, who made 56, and Henry Nicholls (62) put on 117 but New Zealand suffered from a lack of major partnerships after their big opening stand.

Pace bowlers Mohammed Siraj, Rana and Prasidh Krishna took two wickets each.

The second match is on Wednesday in Rajkot. The series will be followed by five T20s ahead of the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka between February 7 and March 8. — AFP

Sri Lanka seal gritty T20 win over Pakistan

DAMBULLA, Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka eked out a hard fought 14-run victory over Pakistan in the third T20 at rain-hit Dambulla on Sunday, easing their batting jitters and squaring the three-match series 1-1.

The series, a warm-up for the T20 World Cup with Pakistan set to play all their matches in Sri Lanka due to political tensions with nuclear-armed neighbours India, saw the visitors clinch the opener by six wickets before rain washed out the second game. “We were a bit worried



Sri Lanka’s Wanindu Hasaranga celebrates after taking the wicket of Pakistan’s Usman Khan. — AFP

about our batting and I’m glad we addressed that today,” said Wanindu Hasaranga, who walked away with both Player of the Match and Player of the Series honours. “The bowlers did a good job too. The ball was wet and it wasn’t easy. We tried to bowl wide and slow and asked them to take risks.”

Hasaranga took four wickets in the game and in the process completed 150 wickets in T20Is.

In a contest trimmed to 12 overs a side, Sri Lanka muscled their way to a competitive 160 before choking Pakistan to 146

for 8 wickets.

Wicket-keeper Kusal Mendis made hay under the Power Play, blasting 30 off 16 balls while Dhananjaya de Silva (22 off 15) and Charith Asalanka (21 off 13) kept the scoreboard ticking.

Skipper Dasun Shanaka then swung the momentum decisively, clubbing 34 off just nine deliveries, peppered with five towering sixes.

The sixth-wicket stand between Shanaka and Janith Liyanage produced 52 runs in just 15 balls and proved the turning point. — AFP

SPORTS

PARADINECOMPETITION



CLASS WINNER
AHMAD CONFIRMS
RETURN TO
MICHELIN 24H DUBAI

DUBAI: Oman’s number one racing driver Ahmad al Harthy is delighted to confirm his return to the Middle East’s biggest motorsport event this coming weekend, after reuniting with the Paradine Competition team for the annual Michelin 24H Dubai.

Al Harthy, of course, raced to a sensational GT3 AM class victory with Paradine’s BMW M4 GT3 EVO at last January’s 24-hour race at Dubai Autodrome and he will once again join team owner Darren Leung for the 21st staging of the region’s iconic endurance event.

The duo will be joined this time around by GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup BMW

■ Oman’s Ahmad al Harthy joins Paradine Competition for 24H DUBAI

■ Successful racer aiming to defend last January’s GT3 AM victory

■ Twice-round-the-clock spectacular this weekend at Dubai Autodrome

M4 racer James Kellett and Anthony McIntosh, who finished second overall in this past weekend’s Michelin 6H Abu Dhabi with Team WRT’s BMW M4.

Those watching last year’s event in Dubai witnessed a real masterclass of strategy and speed from the Paradine entry, then including Toby Sowery and Simon Traves in the line-up alongside Leung and Al Harthy.

Qualifying on GT3 AM pole position, a lofty eighth overall in GT3, the team led

the class for the bulk of the 24 hours and at one stage Al Harthy headed the race outright. Such was the performance, the team was in the fight for the overall podium and ultimately ended the race fifth to win GT3 AM.

Excited to return to Dubai this week, the race takes place on January 17/18 and Al Harthy says he is determined to get his 2026 motor racing year off to the best possible start at the wheel of the No 991 Paradine BMW M4 GT3 EVO.

Al Harthy competes this coming weekend with the steadfast support of prestigious partners OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman and the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Ahmad al Harthy:

“I’m excited to start the motorsport season in the biggest race of the region, the Michelin 24H Dubai, and I’m looking forward to partnering with Paradine Competition again. We had a highly successful race last year in Dubai and the aim is to try and defend our GT3 AM class victory in the BMW M4 this year.

“Dubai is always a fantastic race and I am grateful for the support of my amazing partners. I’m really looking forward to teaming once again with Darren [Leung] and also joining-up with James [Kellett] and Anthony [McIntosh]. It’s going to be a huge grid, something like 65 cars in total, so it should be a spectacular race again and a very action-packed 24 hours!”

Two days of practice will take place on January 14 and 15 at Dubai Autodrome with an additional free practice session on January 16, before qualifying begins at 13.45 local time. Three sessions for the GT3 cars will be held, with the 10 fastest entries then progressing into a new ‘Top 10 Shoot-Out’ at 17.20. Night practice then follows at 19.00. On January 17, the 2026 Michelin 24H Dubai will begin at 13.00 local time and will run through to 13.00 on January 18. All of the qualifying and race action can be viewed at Creventic Motorsports TV on YouTube – with links also available at [www.24hseries.com](#)



Barcelona players raise the trophy as they celebrate after winning the Spanish Super Cup final against Real Madrid at the King Abdullah Stadium in Jeddah. — AFP

Barca retain Super Cup after Clasico thriller

BARCELONA retained the Spanish Super Cup with an entertaining 3-2 Clasico win over Real Madrid in Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

Raphinha struck twice for the Catalans with Robert Lewandowski also on target as they beat Xabi Alonso’s team for a record-extending 16th triumph, despite Frenkie de Jong’s late red card for a foul on Kylian Mbappe.

The French forward could only feature in the final stages as a substitute after a knee sprain, with the defeat likely to bring back recent doubts around Madrid coach Xabi Alonso’s future.

After Raphinha sent Barcelona ahead Vinicius Junior pulled Madrid level with a fine individual goal to kick-start a frenetic end to the first half in Jeddah.

Lewandowski chipped Barca back in front but Gonzalo Garcia struck deep in stoppage time to send the teams in level at the break.

The battle was decided by a deflected Raphinha effort after 73 minutes, as Barca claimed the fourth trophy of coach Hansi Flick’s reign.

Alonso is still looking for his first after arriving in June, and Madrid’s run of five consecutive wins across all competitions was brought to an end by their arch-rivals.

“Whatever way you lose it hurts, but it’s clear that this was a very even game, hotly competed, with a bit of everything,” Alonso told Movistar.

“We were very close to equalising, we fought it out until the end and I have to congratulate Barca.”

Barca thrashed Madrid 5-2 in last season’s final, also at the King Abdullah Sports City stadium, but this was a far closer affair.

“We’re very happy, another trophy, it’s always a big game against Madrid,” Lewandowski told Movistar.

“We played well in the first half, the second too, we were looking for more goals but we won and that’s the most important thing.”

Flick, who led Barca to four Clasico wins over Madrid last season in four clashes, opted for Lewandowski up front over Ferran Torres and brought teenage star Lamine Yamal back in on the right wing.

It was a scrappy start in the Saudi evening heat, with Barcelona keeping the ball and Madrid sitting deep to resist them, while looking to find Vinicius Junior on the



FC Barcelona’s Raphinha celebrates scoring their third goal. — Reuters



Barcelona’s Raphinha celebrates with teammates after winning the Spanish Super Cup final. — AFP

counter. The Brazilian had not scored in his previous 16 matches but offered a potent threat, flying down the left and forcing Joan Garcia into the first save.

Barca began to turn up the heat and Raphinha found a breakthrough after 36 minutes.

Moments after the winger fired a fine chance badly wide, he made up for it with a low, early strike from just inside the area, across Thibaut Courtois and into the bottom corner. Madrid pulled level with a superb Vinicius strike, floating in from the left, nutmegging Jules Kounde and slotting home.

Barcelona went back ahead four minutes into first-half stoppage time, with Lewandowski dinking past Courtois after being played in by Pedri.

However Madrid rapidly hit back just before the interval through Gonzalo Garcia, who finished well while falling after Dean Huijsen’s header bounced back to him off the crossbar.

‘ALWAYS THERE’

The second half was a calmer affair, with fewer chances as the teams slowed down.

Mbappe was warming up on the

sideline when Barcelona nosed ahead, with Raphinha’s shot from outside the box deflecting in off Raul Asencio to leave Courtois with no chance.

The Brazilian is in superb form and it was his seventh goal in his last five matches across all competitions.

“He’s always there at the right moment,” said Lewandowski.

Alonso sent on Mbappe for the last 15 minutes, trying to find a third goal and force a penalty shoot-out.

The French forward could not get a sight of goal but Barca midfielder De Jong was sent off for a high lunge on him.

Despite Madrid’s numerical advantage Barca had the best chance in stoppage time with Marcus Rashford firing wide when through on goal.

Asencio might have grabbed an equaliser at the death but headed straight at Garcia.

The last four winners of the Spanish Super Cup have gone on to claim La Liga and Barcelona will be hoping it proves a platform for success once again.

Barcelona have won 10 consecutive games across all competitions and lead La Liga, despite an inconsistent start to the season. — AFP

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$61.74
BRENT \$62.87
LIGHT \$58.59

LEARNING HAS NO LIMITS
with profit rates starting at
3.49%
on education financing.

[www.dhofarislamic.com](#)

24775777

*Terms and Conditions Apply.

SHORTTAKES

MAJOR INITIATIVES
TO TRANSFORM
OMAN’S INDUSTRIAL
CITIES



ENG DAWOOD
BIN SALIM
AL HADDABI
CEO, Madayn

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 12

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has outlined 98 initiatives for implementation during the 11th Five-Year Development Plan (2026–2030), aimed at expanding Oman’s network of industrial cities while transforming

the first two clusters into internationally recognised smart cities.

According to Eng Dawood bin Salim al Haddabi, Chief Executive Officer of Madayn, the initiatives are anchored in three core objectives: enhancing the development and operation of industrial cities, promoting institutional excellence and ensuring environmental sustainability.

In an interview with Duqm Economist, the newsletter of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), Al Haddabi said the programme includes wide-ranging strategies to expand and upgrade industrial infrastructure across the country.

Key projects include Phase 1 infrastructure and utilities development at Al Mudhaibi Industrial City (around 2.5 million m²) and Al Suwaiq Industrial City (5 million m²), as well as infrastructure works at Madha Industrial City covering more than 348,000 m² — all greenfield clusters.

Other priorities encompass the rehabilitation and detailed master planning of Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City, multi-phase service and infrastructure upgrades at Suhar Industrial City, construction of a marine berth and preparation of a master plan for Sur Industrial City and expansion of water networks at Raysut Industrial City.

A central pillar of the programme is the Digital Transformation Execution Plan (2026–2030), which represents a strategic shift towards unifying Madayn’s initiatives under a comprehensive institutional transformation framework.

Oman’s digital economy
investments top RO 1.2 bn

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology revealed that investments in Oman’s Information Technology sector reached RO 1.2 billion over the past five years. The announcement was made during a press gathering held in Muscat on January 12.

According to Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, around 70 per cent of these investments were driven by direct foreign investment, reflecting growing international confidence in Oman’s digital economy.

Government digital transformation recorded a significant leap in 2025, with overall programme performance rising from 73 per cent at the end of 2024 to 94 per cent by the end of 2025, the Minister said.

Average digital transformation performance across government entities reached 85 per cent in 2025, compared to 77 per cent in 2024. By the end of 2025, 2,869 priority government services were simplified, while 2,277 core services and automated permits were digitised, compared to 1,700 services by the end of 2024.

“Digital services reduced in-person visits to government entities by approximately 25 per cent”, he added.

The Ministry launched the Unified National Portal for Government Services, which currently offers around 36 digital services, bringing government services under a single digital umbrella. The ‘Thiqah’ digital



Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, with the officials and guests during the press gathering.

Government digital transformation recorded a significant leap in 2025, with overall programme performance rising from 73 per cent at the end of 2024 to 94 per cent by the end of 2025.

ENG SAID BIN HAMOUD AL MAAWALI
Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

identity application was also introduced, enabling secure access to e-services and electronic document signing, while the ‘Tajaob’ platform was launched to receive suggestions, complaints and reports, strengthening participatory digital governance.

To support digital skills development, the Ministry launched the Irtiqaa Programme, providing specialised training in digital project management, change management and data analysis.

Employment indicators in the ICT sector also improved, with Omanisation reaching 45.5 per cent in 2025, compared to 38 per cent in 2024, while Omanisation in technical, specialised and leadership roles rose to 69 per cent, up from 63 per cent.

Through the Makeen initiative, more than 11,000 graduates and jobseekers have been trained since launch, including 2,032 beneficiaries in 2025, alongside the approval of 21 freelance ICT activities. The Ministry continues to support technology startups

through initiatives such as the Oman Startup Hub, established as a national digital interface connecting startups with investors, incubators, accelerators and support entities. To date, more than 200 technology startups, 48 incubators and accelerators; and over RO 127 million in funding have been registered.

The National Open Data Portal was also launched to enable access to official government data in open formats, supporting innovation, research and private-sector participation.

In parallel, work is underway to establish a Fourth Industrial Revolution Centre, focused on advanced technologies including artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, robotics and big data analytics. In 2025, Oman recorded progress across several global digital economy indicators, ranking 41st globally in the E-Government Development Index, 50th in the Network Readiness Index and achieving Tier One status in the Global Cybersecurity Index.

Oman also advanced by 6 per cent in the 2024 E-Government Services Maturity Index issued by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, rose 25 places to rank first in the Arab world and 50th globally in the 2025 Postal Development Index issued by the Universal Postal Union, and ranked first in West Asia and ninth globally in open data for 2024.

As part of efforts to establish a semiconductor and electronic chips industry, the Ministry supported the second Global Semiconductor and Electronic Chips Executive Summit, hosted for the second time in Oman.

OPAZ inks MoU to advance smart cities and digital innovative apps

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 12

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed on January 12, 2026 a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of smart cities and digital innovation applications with the Ibn Firnas Drone Centre, as part of the OPAZ’s efforts to build a prosperous, technology driven economy. The MoU was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, with Mohammed bin Abdullah al Harthy, CEO of the Ibn Firnas Drone Centre.

The MoU aims to establish a strategic partnership supporting the OPAZ’s efforts to adopt modern technologies to enhance operational and administrative efficiency across the areas under



The MoU aims to establish a long term strategic partnership supporting the OPAZ’s efforts to adopt modern technologies.

its supervision and to develop a smart city model through the establishment of a regulatory and technical framework.

The MoU provides for the implementation of a package of foundational projects during the first year following its signing, serving as a cornerstone for future cooperation. These include the implementation of an integrated pilot project in the many projects

at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), considered an ideal environment for testing smart city solutions in the fields of security and safety, environmental monitoring and the improvement of logistics services.

The foundational projects also include support for the innovation ecosystem through contributing to the sponsorship and organisation of at least one hackathon focused

on developing innovative solutions to challenges facing SEZAD, alongside providing technical and advisory support to participants, with the aim of positioning the zone as a leading model for smart and sustainable cities.

In addition, the partnership seeks to stimulate innovation through contributing to the development of an integrated innovation ecosystem that supports start ups, attracts global digital investments; and enhances governmental and regulatory innovation through governance frameworks and the development of flexible policies to regulate and adopt smart city solutions, while guiding investors towards standards and principles aligned with this strategic direction.

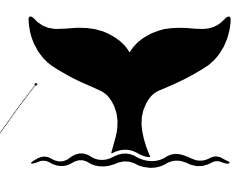
The partnership is expected to expand to include commercial activities serving the objectives of both parties.

This includes the provision by the Ibn Firnas Drone Centre of commercial services to companies operating in SEZAD, such as smart city solutions for managing and monitoring infrastructure, security and logistics using drones and AI, as well as specialised advisory services to investors and companies to support compliance with smart city requirements.

The partnership will also encompass big data projects, including contributing to the establishment of a platform for analysing data generated by smart city operations, providing insights to support decision making and improve service efficiency.

In addition, a training academy possible to be established through which commercial training and qualification programmes will be launched to upskill the workforce in SEZAD in the latest digital technologies.

BUSINESS FEATURE



One of the expedition’s most sensitive areas of focus is the endangered **ARABIAN HUMPBAC****K WHALE**, a rare non-migratory population believed to number fewer than 100 individuals. Biological and acoustic evidence gathered during the journey is strengthening the case for formal protective measures in Omani waters.

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 12

FROM the fjord-like inlets of Musandam to the remote shores of Dhalkout, the Oman 3165 Expedition is steadily evolving into far more than an endurance journey along the Sultanate of Oman’s 3,165-kilometre coastline.

Now entering Phase 2 of its southward push, the carbon-free expedition is emerging as a business-aligned sustainability platform — one that connects scientific evidence, corporate strategy and national maritime policy at a time when Oman is sharpening its focus on the blue economy under Oman Vision 2040.

Led by veteran explorer Mark Evans and officially sponsored by Asyad Shipping, Oman 3165 has been conceived as a slow, deliberate coastal journey rather than a competitive race.

Its purpose, Evans stresses, is long-term national value rather than personal achievement. “

This is not a race; it’s a slow journey telling stories to a global audience, while gathering science that can genuinely help protect Oman’s seas”, he said in an exclusive interview with the *Observer*.

After more than a month on the water, the expedition’s digital outreach — from podcasts to live satellite updates



Oman 3165 unveiling in London.



Veteran explorer Mark Evans.

— has reached audiences on every continent.

Crucially, Oman 3165 is also a zero-emissions maritime expedition. Using a traditional Greenland-style solo kayak powered solely by paddling, ocean currents and waves, the project demonstrates that long-distance maritime exploration can be conducted with minimal environmental impact.

Phase 1 validated key benchmarks in endurance, safety planning and environmental discipline, while Phase 2 — stretching from Masirah to Dhalkout — introduces longer, more complex coastal segments and new

environmental dynamics along Oman’s southern shoreline.

At the heart of the expedition is its role as a “floating laboratory”, pioneering the use of environmental DNA (eDNA) technology along Oman’s coastline. Using compact sampling kits, Evans and his team systematically collect seawater samples that allow marine biologists to identify species present without direct observation.

“Marine biologists are now using eDNA to tell what species are in that water, from microscopic organisms to huge whales”, Evans explained. “It’s never been done in Oman before. We’ve already collected multiple samples and what we’re detecting goes far beyond what the human eye can see”.

These samples are being analysed by international laboratories and shared with Oman’s Environment Authority, Sultan Qaboos University and global research institutions.

The resulting data is expected to establish a genetic baseline of Oman’s marine biodiversity — providing policymakers with clearer insights into ecosystem health, migration patterns and conservation priorities. For sectors such as fisheries, ports, shipping and coastal development, this data-driven approach offers a foundation for smarter, more sustainable decision-

making.

One of the expedition’s most sensitive areas of focus is the endangered Arabian humpback whale, a rare non-migratory population believed to number fewer than 100 individuals. Biological and acoustic evidence gathered during the journey is strengthening the case for formal protective measures in Omani waters.

Captain Khalil al Hooti, Vice President Marine at Asyad Shipping, confirmed that the findings are feeding directly into international policy engagement.

“Oman’s government will put a paper to the International Maritime Organisation to assign a sensitive area along the eastern coast to protect the whales”, he said. “We should not develop without thinking about the importance of whales and the wider marine ecosystem”.

For Asyad Shipping, Oman 3165 represents a strategic investment rather than a branding exercise. With around 70 per cent of Oman’s trade moving by sea, maritime sustainability is increasingly viewed as an economic necessity.

Captain Khalil underlined that environmental stewardship and commercial activity must progress together. “The sea is not just the border of the country”, he noted. “It is the road of connectivity with the world. Protecting it is essential for economic resilience, not a barrier to growth”.

This perspective aligns with Asyad Shipping’s broader sustainability road map, which includes investments in cleaner fuels, smarter fleet management and next-generation maritime solutions.

As global shipping faces mounting regulatory and investor pressure to decarbonise, Oman 3165 helps position the Sultanate of Oman as an active contributor to global maritime sustainability efforts, rather than a reactive participant.

Technology and connectivity amplify this message. Supported by Vodafone, the expedition has transformed a solitary kayak journey into a global educational platform. Through live satellite links, podcasts and immersive virtual reality content developed with universities in the UK and institutions in Muscat, more than 14,000 students worldwide are engaging with Oman’s marine environment in real time.

“Last night, our podcasts were downloaded on every continent”, Evans said. “Someone in Antarctica even downloaded it. That’s how far Oman’s story is travelling”.

Equally powerful are the human stories unfolding along the coast. Evans has consistently highlighted the knowledge and hospitality of local fishing communities, while documenting the pressures they face from declining fish stocks and environmental stress.

“A fisherman in Suhar told me, ‘Fishing is no longer a job; it’s a hobby’”, Evans recalled. “You can’t survive on fishing because the fish are gone. That’s a powerful warning, not just for fishermen but for policymakers and businesses alike”.

As Phase 2 progresses towards the Yemeni border, Oman 3165 is increasingly being viewed as a catalyst for dialogue rather than a standalone expedition. By combining endurance exploration, advanced marine science, corporate sponsorship and policy engagement, it offers a practical model for how Oman can unlock the economic value of its blue economy while safeguarding the natural capital on which it depends.

For Evans, the measure of success remains simple. “If all this does is spark a conversation, then it’s been worthwhile”, he said. “Because that conversation can lead to a sustainable future for Oman’s seas”.



SHORTTAKES



The private sector emerged as the largest contributor to R&D spending, accounting for 46% of the total.

R&D SPEND IN OMAN HITS RO 160 MILLION

MUSCAT: Oman’s investment in research and development (R&D) recorded a notable rise in 2024, underlining the Sultanate of Oman’s steady push towards a knowledge-based economy anchored on innovation and scientific capability.

According to the 2025 Oman Research and Development Survey, total spending on experimental R&D reached approximately RO 160.3 million in 2024, marking an increase from previous years. This level of expenditure accounted for 0.42 per cent of GDP at constant prices and 0.39 per cent at current prices, signalling growing national commitment to strengthening research capacity across multiple sectors.

The survey results show that the private sector emerged as the largest contributor to R&D spending, accounting for 46 per cent of the total. This was followed by the government sector at 33 per cent and the higher education sector at 21 per cent. The figures highlight the expanding role of private enterprises as strategic partners in advancing innovation, complementing public sector and academic efforts.

Human capital also posted solid gains. The total number of individuals employed in experimental R&D activities reached 28,768 in 2024. Of these, researchers made up around 47 per cent, with the remainder comprising technicians and support staff. In terms of full-time equivalents, the workforce stood at 9,516, reflecting a continued increase in the participation of Omani nationals in research-related roles.

A key indicator of progress was the growth in the number of full-time researchers per million inhabitants, which rose by 18 per cent compared to 2023. — ONA

AI emerges as key growth segment in Oman

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

OMAN’S Artificial Intelligence (AI) industry has attracted more than RO 65 million in investment, positioning it as one of the fastest-growing segments of the digital economy, according to Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Addressing the media on Monday, January 12, 2026, Al Maawali outlined several flagship initiatives shaping Oman’s artificial intelligence ecosystem, led by the Oman Digital Triangle Initiative, which aims to develop three geographically distributed but digitally connected zones serving as a regional gateway for cloud computing, artificial intelligence and advanced digital services.

“The Oman Digital Triangle Initiative is designed to position the Sultanate of Oman as a regional hub for cloud computing and artificial intelligence, supported by green data centres, global connectivity through submarine cables and fibre optics and a regulatory environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship”, he said.

He also highlighted the Green AI Alliance, describing it as the first initiative of its kind in the region. “The Green AI Alliance brings together government entities, the private sector and academic institutions specialising in data



A dedicated artificial intelligence zone to attract institutions and startups from Oman, the Middle East and Africa.

“The Oman Digital Triangle Initiative is designed to position the Sultanate of Oman as a regional hub for cloud computing and artificial intelligence, supported by green data centres, global connectivity through submarine cables and fibre optics and a regulatory environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship.”

ENG SAID BIN HAMOUD
AL MAAWALI
Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

centres, artificial intelligence and energy, with the goal of supporting environmentally sustainable AI development”, he explained.

In addition, the Ministry announced the establishment of a dedicated artificial intelligence zone to attract AI-focused institutions and startups from Oman, the Middle East and Africa.

“The dedicated AI zone will support investment, localisation of advanced technologies and the creation of high-quality, specialised jobs for Omanis”, the Minister added.

The briefing also included the launch of the AI Studio, an innovation platform connecting experts with government

entities, the private sector and academia. “AI Studio serves as a collaborative platform to develop practical AI solutions, provide advisory services, training programmes and awareness workshops”, he said.

The Minister further revealed the launch of the Omani Language Model ‘Mueen’, an AI-powered model developed to reflect Omani linguistic and cultural characteristics. The model has been initially deployed for government use, with plans to expand its applications across multiple sectors. As of 2025, the number of AI-specialised companies reached 46, with AI startup growth of 38 per cent between 2024 and May 2025.

Luma Residences unveiled with RO 20 million investment

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 12

Leading destination Muscat Bay unveiled its latest residential project, Luma Residences, under the auspices of Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, at a ceremony held on Monday, January 12, 2026. The project, entailing an investment of RO 20 million, represents a significant addition to the development of integrated communities in the Sultanate of Oman, within one of the country’s most prominent residential and tourism destinations.

The project comprises approximately 240 freehold residential units within an integrated community that embodies the goals of Oman Vision 2040. The development includes apartments, townhouses and villas, spread across a built-up area of approximately 37,000 square metres, in an urban environment designed



The Luma Residences project is an extension of the development trajectory underway in Muscat Bay.

to enhance quality of life and harmonise with the surrounding nature, while adhering to the highest standards of sustainability and urban planning.

Dr Khalfan al Shueili emphasised that the project reflects the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 in developing integrated and sustainable urban communities and strengthening partnerships between the public and private sectors, contributing to balanced development and raising the quality of life.

The Luma Residences project is an extension of the development trajectory underway in Muscat Bay,

following the remarkable success of previous residential projects within the resort village, most recently the “Zain” project, launched in 2024, which has achieved sales of approximately 90% and will begin handing over its units this year.

The launch ceremony witnessed the signing of an agreement with ahlilbank to finance the Luma Residences project, along with another agreement to finance buyers of various nationalities wishing to own residential units, a move that enhances the project’s appeal and expands its beneficiary base.

Saif bin Sulaiman al Yaarubi, Acting CEO of Omran Group, noted that the Luma Residences project is part of efforts to develop integrated tourism and residential destinations that contribute to enhancing the Sultanate of Oman’s appeal, supporting the national tourism strategy and achieving long-term sustainable economic value.

Hamoud bin Sultan al Hosni,

CEO of Muscat Bay, said the launch of Luma Residences represents a new phase in the destination’s development journey, revealing that confirmed initial bookings have exceeded 50% since the early stages, reflecting market confidence and the quality of the planning and execution.

Luma Residences is also in line with the national trend towards sustainability and zero carbon neutrality by 2050, through design solutions that take into account energy efficiency, integrated water and waste management; and the promotion of green spaces, thus establishing a modern concept of sustainable residential communities.

The project derives its name from the concept of light and radiance, an architectural philosophy inspired by the convergence of sunlight with the steadfastness of the mountain and the flow of the sea, where light forms a pivotal element in the design and the residential experience.

CRITICAL MINERALS

Japan dives for rare earths



Japan has launched a deep-sea mission to harvest rare-earth-rich mud, aiming to reduce reliance on China as supplies tighten. The research vessel Chikyu will test lifting of seabed material from 6,000 metres near Minamitori Island.

The month-long expedition reflects Tokyo’s strategic push to secure minerals vital for technology, transport and defence industries worldwide supply chains. — Reuters

ENERGY MARKETS

Oil slips on supply assessments



Oil prices edged lower as investors weighed Iran’s claims of restored control after major protests and prospects of Venezuelan export resumption. Brent slipped below \$63 a barrel, while US crude eased to about \$59.

Analysts cited weaker European equities and limited new disruptions, after last week’s sharp rally driven by Middle East supply risks concerns persist globally. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold, silver smash record highs



Gold and silver surged to record highs as geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty and expectations of US rate cuts boosted demand. Spot gold briefly topped \$4,600 an ounce, with futures close behind, while silver hit an all-time peak.

Investors sought safe havens amidst volatile markets and shifting monetary policy outlooks globally as risk appetite softened further today. — Reuters

OPINION

Will self-driving cars become a reality?



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker.

TWO days ago, I was driving back from Dubai. It was late in the evening. There was less traffic and the road was clear to some extent. The car I was driving was virtually doing most of the work – from maintaining the speed, keeping in lane and slowing down smoothly as traffic built up in some areas. While my hands were still on the wheel, of course, my role was a bit different at times.

I was acting more as a supervisor and less of a driver per se. I used the cruise control for maintaining the speed and slowing down during traffic.

I used the Lane Keep (Centring) Assist (LKA or LCA) technology to help me keep the car within the lane (if it drifted outside the markings on the road) and finally, the speed limit reader kept notifying me of the speed limit (to ensure I stayed safe and within the allowed driving speed limit set on the road).

At the same time, I also recalled getting one of me reviewing a car that parked itself (without human intervention).

This made my mind wonder whether self (autonomous) driving will ever become a reality soon and hence I decided to focus this week’s article on the reality of the matter. There has been a lot of promise of

self-driving cars. Almost every technology-related conference and exhibition attended, be it locally or regionally, had some sort of self-driving car (as a concept) demonstrated. Virtually every tech giant’s announcement makes it sound like humans will soon be optional behind the wheel.

Nevertheless, most of those promises pass deadlines and automakers still cannot manage to release, let alone launch, fully autonomous (self-driving) cars that you can readily see on the road (at least not here in Muscat or any of the neighbouring countries; I have seen none as of date).

Yes, I have seen it in the science fiction movies. Yes, I hear from few friends and colleagues who saw some self-driving cars in a controlled environment.

Yet, all that is not to be confused with official ones that are ready to be deployed in the market, where you can go in a store and get yourself one, like how you would today with an electric vehicle (EV). EV was once a concept yet is a reality today (maybe not too successful).

However, self-driving cars are not and remain toys we may see but not have/play with, at least not in the near future, I reckon. Today, almost every new car you buy comes with adaptive cruise control, lane-keeping

There has been a lot of promise of self-driving cars. Almost every technology-related conference and exhibition attended, be it locally or regionally, had some sort of self-driving car (as a concept) demonstrated. Virtually every tech giant’s announcement makes it sound like humans will soon be optional behind the wheel.

assist, automatic emergency braking, blind-spot monitoring and a self-parking feature. None of these looked or sounded normal or could have been real decades ago. I see the same happening with self-driving ambitions, yet not very soon.

There is a lot that needs to be done – starting from regulators all the way to predictable situations/scenarios, eg, busy streets, pedestrian crossings, construction zones, complicated roads, different cities/streets/rules, etc. We as humans can adapt fast, yet machines need data, training and indeed predefined logic.

That today, even with the advancement and progress of AI, is not literally easy and catastrophic results will happen if introduced abruptly. Think of it: if a self-driving car makes a mistake, who will be responsible? This and more questions need to be answered before we see self-driving cars as a reality.

To conclude my article this week, I would like to note that I by no means negate having self-driving cars, nor am I not supporting the bold vision, yet I do not see this happening anytime soon nor in the near future.

Humans continue to control and at least supervise today whatever is digitised. Until we catch up again next week, keep staying in control.

JAPAN ELECTION WOULD STOKES FISCAL, CHINA RISK

HUDSON LOCKETT

Is Sanae Takaichi’s popularity enough to revive her ageing party’s electoral prospects? Currency markets suggest it might be, with the yen dropping on Friday in response to reports the Japanese prime minister is mulling a snap election in February to widen her ruling coalition’s razor-thin majority in the powerful lower house. That reaction hints at how giving Japan’s leader the fiscal and geopolitical mandate she’s after would court greater danger for the \$4 trillion Asian economy.

The latest leg lower for Japan’s currency came after Hirofumi Yoshimura, head of ruling party coalition partner Ishin, said that he had met with Takaichi on Friday and “wouldn’t be surprised” if the prime minister called a snap election on February 8 or 15, in line with an earlier Yomiuri

newspaper story citing unnamed government sources. The yen has softened 5% since Takaichi became leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party on October 6, securing the premiership shortly thereafter on vows to tackle inflation by increasing government spending.

If her honeymoon-period approval ratings of roughly 70% do permit an electoral

comeback for the LDP, she will have freer rein to add to Japan’s already towering government debt load. That would probably push up borrowing costs and further weaken the yen as a result.

Takaichi’s finance minister has warned of potential intervention to prop up the currency but to little effect, underscoring the risk that a falling yen will juice inflation more via higher import costs.

That would make for a painful combination when taken together with continuing fallout from Takaichi’s diplomatic dispute with China over the status of Taiwan.

The prime minister’s off-the-cuff comments in November have prompted Beijing to restrict flows of Chinese tourists to Japan, triggering cancellations of at least a dozen flight routes and, more recently, to cut off exports of vital rare earths to Japanese companies, according to a Wall Street Journal report citing unnamed sources. Such punitive measures could increase if the electorate backs Takaichi at the polls.

Yet that is far from certain. The LDP’s loss of almost 70 seats in late 2024 stemmed from a slush-fund scandal which Takaichi shrugged off after taking power, triggering the collapse in October of a long-time coalition partnership with the urban-focused Komeito Party. The newspaper Nikkei has estimated the loss of Komeito’s political machine could cost the rural-backed LDP another 25 seats. — Reuters

OGFC: The strategic move to anchor quality jobs

THE Cabinet’s approval to establish the Oman Global Financial Centre (OGFC) should be read as an economic decision, not a ceremonial one. Oman is signalling that the next stage of diversification will not depend only on building factories, ports and hotels. It will also depend on exporting services – especially financial and professional services – and on attracting global firms that choose Oman as a base for regional and cross-border activity.

According to Reuters (January 6, 2026), the OGFC will enjoy legislative, administrative and regulatory independence and will be built on a financial, judicial and legislative system aligned with global standards.

That sentence is what separates a true international financial centre from a typical free zone. Finance is a trust business. Investors and institutions ask one basic question before they move: “If something goes wrong, will the rules be clear and fairly enforced?”

A global financial centre is, in effect, a trusted operating environment for activities that cannot function without certainty – asset management, insurance and reinsurance, structured finance, fintech, compliance services and high-value advisory work.

Why now? Because Oman’s growth strategy is shifting from stabilisation to higher velocity. The Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030) targets roughly 300,000 job opportunities over the plan period. The quantity is welcome. The tougher challenge is quality: Oman must create more high-productivity jobs with globally portable skills and clear career ladders.

When a country struggles to produce enough “high-end” private-sector roles, its best talent either becomes underutilised or looks abroad. A well-designed financial centre addresses that challenge directly, because financial services concentrate skill-intensive, high-value employment in one ecosystem.

To make OGFC simple to understand, think of it as “Oman’s export hub for finance”. A free zone usually offers broad licensing advantages and incentives to a wide range of businesses.

A global financial centre is narrower and deeper: it builds specialist regulation, modern commercial law, credible dispute resolution and an ecosystem of firms that serve each



The OGFC will enjoy legislative, administrative, and regulatory independence and will be built on a financial, judicial, and legislative system aligned with global standards.



DR YOUSUF
HAMED AL
BALUSHI

yousefuh@omaninvestgateway.com

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

A global financial centre is, in effect, a trusted operating environment for activities that cannot function without certainty – asset management, insurance and reinsurance, structured finance, fintech, compliance services and high-value advisory work.

other. It is not only banks. It is fund managers, family offices, insurers, brokers, fintechs, legal and arbitration practices, accounting and audit, risk and compliance specialists, ratings and research; and a growing layer of technology providers.

When that cluster forms, it becomes a magnet for capital – and a factory for advanced skills and institutional capability.

The region already offers proof of what disciplined execution can deliver. In Dubai, the DIFC has matured into a dense cluster of global financial and professional-services firms, with a workforce that now runs into the tens of thousands.

Abu Dhabi’s ADGM has followed a similar trajectory, scaling quickly as international firms establish regulated operations and deepen their on-the-ground presence. In Doha, the Qatar Financial Centre has likewise grown into a sizeable onshore platform spanning financial services and asset management.

These are not symbolic milestones. They reflect living ecosystems that generate direct jobs inside financial firms and indirect jobs across the value chain – legal services, audit, consulting, technology, training, events, hospitality and specialised real estate.

And the prize is significant: The World Federation of Exchanges estimates global listed equity market capitalisation at roughly \$124 trillion, while Arab stock markets together exceeded about \$4.3 trillion in market value in recent reporting – more than enough scale to justify world-class hubs and enough competition to reward those who get execution

right. Oman is well-positioned to build its own version – if it stays disciplined.

The country’s reputation for stability and constructive diplomacy is a competitive advantage that cannot be manufactured overnight. Oman’s legal and regulatory modernisation is also moving in the right direction: the Banking Law was updated by Royal Decree 2/2025 and the Financial Services Authority regulates key sectors such as insurance and capital markets.

These foundations matter because a financial centre is only as strong as the rules beneath it – and the institutions that enforce them consistently.

What will OGFC affect when it is fully operational? Several sectors stand out. Wealth and asset management can grow through fund domiciliation, family office services and Sharia-compliant structuring. Insurance and reinsurance can deepen, supporting large industrial and infrastructure projects.

Fintech and regtech can accelerate, modernising payments, onboarding and compliance. Project and trade finance can expand the financing toolkit for logistics, manufacturing and the energy transition. And a stronger professional services base – law, arbitration, audit and compliance – raises the overall sophistication of the business environment.

This is where the “jobs story” becomes concrete. A financial centre does not create employment only through the firms inside its gates. It creates demand for lawyers, accountants, analysts, developers, risk managers, investigators, trainers and service providers.

It creates internships and entry-level pathways that matter for graduates. It creates mid-career progression that retains Omanis who might otherwise leave. And it creates senior roles that bring global experience into local teams.

In other words, it turns the private sector from a collection of isolated employers into a connected, skills-driven talent market.

In my view, OGFC will succeed only if credibility is protected from day one. That means world-class dispute resolution, clear and stable regulation and strong enforcement of standards such as anti-money laundering and governance.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

SALES
professional
with 5 yrs
Experience in
Medical sector.
Graduate,
Available in
Muscat.
akhilmanu777@
gmail.com
Contact:
76323324

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

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

Operations
Support /
Tendering
/ Contract
Management /
Procurement
professional with
18+ years' Oil &
Gas experience.
NOC & driving
license available.
96227272,
jjjilmathew@
gmail.com

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

LOOKING for
SUPPLY CHAIN /
SALES jobs
Indian male 24
years. Commerce
graduate,
Experience
in logistics,
procurement and
sales in reputed
company in
Oman.Valid Oman
D/L.
Contact
+96891121694,
issacantony2002@
gmail.com

15+ experience
in building
material, project
sales & Trade
market, deal
with corporate
project
customers,
looking for a
suitable job.
Contact
78384283

INDIAN male civil
engineer with
more than 30 years
experience in
different ministers,
seek immediate
suitable position.
CONTACT: 94158080

FOR RENT

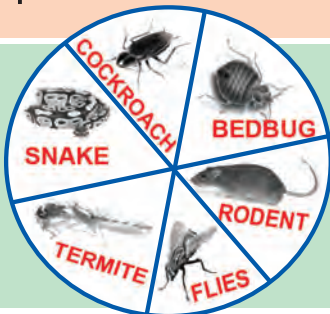
10000 sqm
plus area of
open yard fully
blacktop with
compound
wall, wide
gate & CCTV
for immediate
rent in Jifnain.
Contact
99853040



PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches),
Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture
Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits
and other insect repellent from
UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in
Pest Control Service,
Bedbug Treatment,
Rodent Treatment,
Snake Treatment
and Termite
Treatment [Pre
& Post Construction]



Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

Driving School

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



Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



SIT. VACANT

Sales Executive required

For working in oil and gas / building materials industry
Vehicle Driving license preferred
Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com
Mobile: 95544641

URGENTLY REQUIRED FOR CONTRACTING COMPANY

- 1- Electrical Foreman.
- 2- Civil foreman (Experience in Piping work).
- 3- Civil Supervisor.

Contact @Mr.Mohmmaed GSM : 92563101
send CV to mohammed92563101@gmail.com

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8
Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR
Phone : +96896965333
Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

FOR RENT

4 Ready made office space for rent in
Bank Melli Iran building MBD area
Ruwi, opposite Centre point.

Contact: 99011352.

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

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



SITUATION VACANT

A well reputed Freight Forwarding and Logistics Company under a big
group in Oman is looking to recruit the staff in the following positions

1. Commercial and Sales Manager:

- Candidate should have relevant experience of minimum 15 years in a similar position.
- Applicants with local experience will be preferred.

2. Finance Manager:

- Candidate should have minimum experience of 15 years in the relevant field with suitable qualifications.

3. Senior Sales Executive:

- Candidate should have relevant experience of minimum 5 years in a similar position.
- Applicants with local experience will be preferred.

Interested candidates may forward their CV to the mail ID:
mctjobsoman@gmail.com within 7 days.

SIT. WANTED

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

SIT. WANTED

LOGISTICS
Documentation
Executive. Indian
male, 25 years,
BBA, PG Diploma
in Logistics & SCM
and have 2 years
of experience in
this field.
Seeking a position
in Logistics field
Mob: +968 7506
9882
Mail:
shafazhussain18@
gmail.com

SIT. VACANT

A consumer
goods distribution
company FMCG
headquartered
in Muscat with
several branches
across the
Sultanate of Oman
is seeking qualified
candidates for
the following
positions:

- National Sales Manger
- Marketing Manager
- Sales Representative
- Product Display Specialist (Merchandiser).

Please send your
CV to the email
address below.
ssagriculture25@
gmail.com

OMAN DAILY

Observer

**FREE*
CLASSIFIEDS**

SITUATION WANTED

* NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER
ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no
photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

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

ازديهار
izdihar



ART/LIFE



BOCELLI RETURNS

ITALIAN TENOR RETURNS TO OLYMPIC STAGE AFTER 20 YEARS



Bocelli's appearance is expected to be one of the ceremony's emotional highlights, drawing on Italy's rich musical heritage to set the tone for the Games.

Italian star tenor Andrea Bocelli is set to take centre stage at next month's opening ceremony of the Milan/Cortina d'Ampezzo Winter Olympics, marking a poignant return to the Olympic stage exactly 20 years after he sang at the closing ceremony of the Turin 2006 Games. The announcement was made on Sunday by Olympic organisers, who praised Bocelli as "one of the most recognisable voices on the international artistic scene and a symbol of Italian excellence around the world".

The opening ceremony will be held on February 6 at Milan's iconic San Siro Stadium, transforming the legendary football venue into a global showcase of sport, culture and performance. Bocelli's appearance is expected to be one of the ceremony's emotional highlights, drawing on Italy's rich musical heritage to set the tone for the Games. Organisers said that his performance will once again "express the spirit of the Games", blending artistic expression with the core Olympic values of unity, excellence and inspiration.

Also confirmed to perform at the ceremony are American pop icon Mariah Carey and renowned Italian singer Laura Pausini, creating a diverse international lineup that reflects the global nature of the Olympics. Together, the artists are expected to deliver a memorable opening night watched by millions around the world.

Now 67, Bocelli has a long history of performing at major global sporting events. In addition to the Turin 2006 closing ceremony, he has sung at the opening of the Euro 2020 football tournament, a Uefa Champions League final and more recently at last month's World Cup draw in Washington.

The Milan/Cortina Winter Olympics will run from February 6 to 22 and will be followed in March by the Paralympic Games, further extending Italy's moment in the international sporting spotlight. — dpa

QUICK FEATURES



CULTURE

Women dressed in kimonos pose as they arrive to attend a ceremony at Todoroki Arena to mark "Coming of Age Day" to honour those who turn 20 this year.

— AFP



FESTIVAL

Women fly kites during celebrations ahead of the harvest festivals Makar Sankranti and Lohri, in Amritsar, India.

— AFP



LIFESTYLE

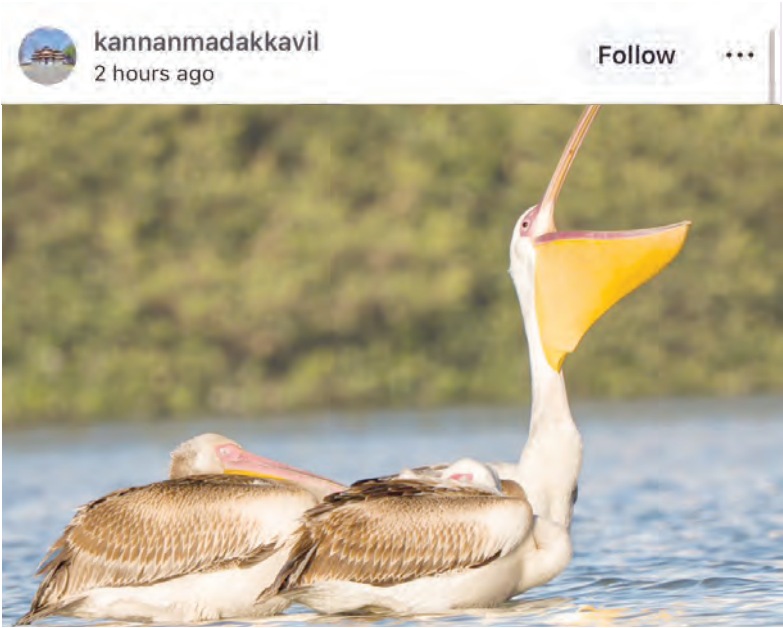
Skaters ride on the Oosterbeek Ice Skating Club's artificial ice rink in Oosterbeek, an enchanting little village in the eastern part of the Netherlands.

— AFP

INSTA PICKS



Dab of heritage



Feast and frolick

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE
We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

HUMANOID ROBOTS GO FOR KNOCKOUT IN HIGH-TECH VEGAS FIGHT NIGHT



Two robots the size of schoolchildren stepped into the ring at BattleBots Arena. The human-like combatants stumbled a bit as they swung and kicked at each other in the Ultimate Fighting Robot (UFB) match, curiosity mixing with cheers from spectators at the event on the edge of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. The contenders were a departure from the usual lineup at the event, known for wheeled machines equipped with wrecking tools. UFB backers are betting humanoid robots will win fans by transforming bouts from demolition derbies to mixed martial arts matches. A human referee addressed the robotic rivals as though they were flesh-and-blood fighters. “This is the sport of the future”, said Vitaly Bulatov, who co-founded UFB with his wife, Xenia. The couple from Russia envisions fans being won over by the “human stories” of the real people piloting the robot combatants. As the robots exchanged blows, commands to kick and punch came from human pilots ringside using a combination of cameras and motion-sensing Nintendo video game controllers. Cameras captured the pilots’ movements in real time, which were then repeated, more or less accurately, by the robots. The contenders looked at times like blindfolded boxers, triggering laughter with wild misses and cheers when blows landed. BANG-UP RESEARCH “With some more advancements, it could definitely become more entertaining, as you see in movies like ‘Real Steel’”, said Esteban Perez, a 25-year-old IT worker from Denver watching from the audience. While today’s bouts are less spectacular than those depicted in the 2011 science fiction film about robot boxing starring Hugh Jackman, UFB events have sold out in San Francisco, attracting young tech professionals. — AFP



Timothée Chalamet bags the Best Performance by a male Actor in musical or comedy award for ‘Marty Supreme’. — Reuters



Wagner Moura poses with the Best Performance by a male actor in a motion picture in drama award for ‘The Secret Agent’. — Reuters



Teyana Taylor wins best actor in a supporting Role in any Motion picture award for ‘One Battle After Another’. — Reuters



Owen Cooper poses with the best performance by a male actor in a supporting role on TV award for ‘Adolescence’. — Reuters

One Battle After Another, Hamnet scoop Globes

“ONE Battle After Another” dominated the Golden Globes on Sunday, winning best comedy, while literary adaptation “Hamnet” delivered the night’s biggest surprise by claiming best drama film at the high-profile Hollywood ceremony. Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, the screwball thriller “One Battle After Another” centres on an ageing revolutionary played by Leonardo DiCaprio and led the evening with four wins from nine nominations. Alongside best comedy, the film earned awards for best director, best screenplay and best supporting actress for Teyana Taylor. The Golden Globes gala is considered a major precursor to the Oscars in March. “You guys are being so generous with this affection for me and this film — and I’ll take it”, Anderson said in his acceptance speech. The film’s mix of political extremism, immigration raids and social tension has resonated with audiences and critics amidst a deeply polarised United States. Despite the film’s success, DiCaprio missed out on best lead actor, losing to Timothée Chalamet for his role as an ambitious 1950s table tennis player in “Marty Supreme”. Chalamet thanked his fellow nominees, including George Clooney and Ethan Hawke and said his previous Globe losses made the win “that much sweeter”, before thanking his girlfriend Kylie Jenner. The final award of the night brought a major upset when “Hamnet”, which imagines William Shakespeare and his wife coping with the death of their son, won best drama. The film beat favourite “Sinners”, Ryan Coogler’s period horror set in the segregated American South. Producer Steven Spielberg praised director Chloe Zhao, who dedicated the award to cast and crew members who lost loved ones during production. Jessie Buckley won best drama actress for her role as Shakespeare’s wife Agnes.



Paul Thomas Anderson poses with the Best Director award for “One Battle After Another” at the 83rd Annual Golden Globes in Beverly Hills, California, on Monday. — Reuters

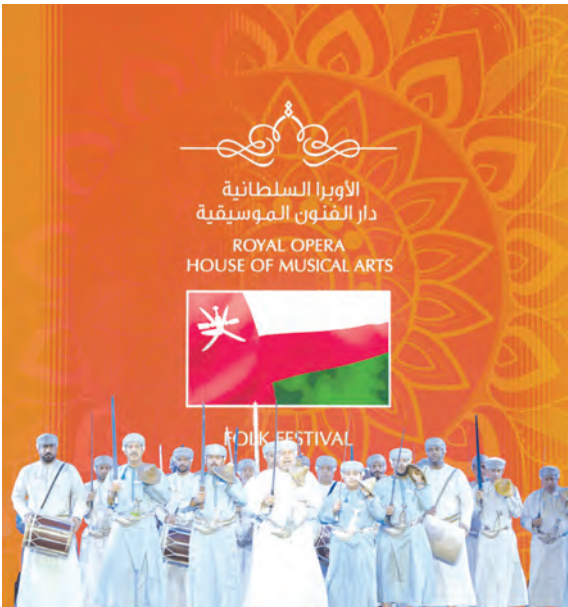
Elsewhere, “Sinners” collected best score and best cinematic and box office achievement. Brazilian thriller “The Secret Agent” won best non-English language film, while television honours went to “Adolescence”, “The Pitt” and “The Studio”. Here are the winners in key categories: FILM Best film, drama: Hamnet Best film, musical or comedy: One Battle After Another Best male actor, drama: Wagner Moura, The Secret Agent Best female actor, drama: Jessie Buckley, Hamnet Best male actor, musical or comedy: Timothée Chalamet, Marty Supreme Best female actor, musical or comedy: Rose Byrne, If I Had Legs I’d Kick You Best supporting actor: Stellan Skarsgard, Sentimental Value Best supporting actress: Teyana Taylor, One Battle After Another Best director: Paul Thomas

Anderson, One Battle After Another” Best screenplay: Paul Thomas Anderson, One Battle After Another Best non-English language film: The Secret Agent (Brazil) Best cinematic and box office achievement: Sinners Best animated feature: KPop Demon Hunters TELEVISION Best drama series: The Pitt Best male actor, drama: Noah Wyle, The Pitt Best female actor, drama: Rhea Seehorn, Pluribus Best musical or comedy series: The Studio Best male actor, musical or comedy: Seth Rogen, The Studio Best female actor, musical or comedy: Jean Smart, Hacks Best limited series or TV movie: Adolescence Best male actor, limited series or TV movie : Stephen Graham, Adolescence Best female actor, limited series or TV movie : Michelle Williams

FEATURES



FOLK
MUSIC FESTIVAL
2026



GEORGINA BENISON

THE 5th Folk Music Festival, outdoors in the ‘Maidan Al Bahri’ of the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts, was celebrated last weekend for two stellar performances. Before each of the five cultural presentations, a short film depicting the natural beauty and development of each country was projected onto a huge screen behind.

The ‘Al Shahbaa Folk Ensemble, Nizwa’ were heard in an amplified Call-and-Response as they appeared from backstage in a ‘Welcoming Razha’. The men sang a repetitive four-bar refrain with just traditional drum accompaniment as they threw ceremonial swords high in the air, impressively catching them all! A storytelling poet stepped forward to sing, ‘Al Aazi’ in tuneful commanding voice, with staccato interjections from the chorus and a simple repeated theme. ‘Al Razha Al Hamasiyya’ was a return to enthusiastic mock-fighting and sword-throwing with ritual celebratory chanting. They left the stage to proud patriotic applause.

‘Kecskemet Folk Dance Ensemble’ presented Hungary’s most celebrated national folkdance, the Csárdás. Pairs of dancers displayed infectious exuberance as they circled, accompanied by four live musicians — violins, clarinet and bass. Ladies in assorted bright skirts and blue aprons turned and wheeled, shrieking as the men performed their iconic boot-and-thigh-slapping moves in rustic costumes and alpine hats. The men sang an ethnic ‘Legényes’ from Transylvania then danced with fast, fancy footwork and high leaps. ‘Girls’ Bottle Dance’ from Somogy region was performed in assorted skirts with frilly petticoats. Ladies danced and sang, jumping gregariously with bright red bottles balanced precariously on their heads. They weaved under each others’ arched arms to a Klezmer-like clarinet solo. Four well-dressed ‘shepherds’ from Hortobágy region in blue jackets with beautifully embroidered coats across their backs, sang and twirled sticks with gymnastic ability. The girls returned with another fast Csárdás to lively gypsy fiddle tunes, the men falling into a final boot-slap on the floor.

Eighteen men from the ‘Qalali Folk Arts Band, Bahrain’ appeared in the traditional slim fitting white thobe to present their musical heritage of the sea, ‘Al Fajri’. A simple, repeated chant of four beats was led by a deep solo voice and Dhol drum. The clapping in rhythm suggested a work-song to keep in time. The men imitated hauling the heavy anchor from the sea with rhythmic singing, like a sea shanty.

Sitting in a circle chanting a minor-modal song to clay pot and drum rhythms, ‘Al Bahri’ was an evocative folk-art song for the winter pearl diving season. In contrast, five daffs and cross-rhythm clapping accompanied deep-throat drones in a lively traditional form. An



Oud soloist joined the ensemble as two young men stood to add slow stylised movement in an hypnotic duo. The last piece was a return to Call and Response with all the percussion, including maraweeks (small hand drums) in characteristic Shami rhythmic patterns in a familiar song, allowing everyone to enjoy the singalong finish!

Twelve ladies of the ‘Kazakhstan K Baizhanov Concert Association’ were stunning in dazzling white dresses and headdress (Takiya). They swayed gracefully like swans across the stage, perfectly synchronised, flowing and supple. Sixteen musicians from the Central Asian state — including lead accordion, various bowed and plucked stringed instruments and the long-necked ‘dombra’ — stood decoratively behind in gold sparkly costumes and hats. They performed an instrumental number featuring irregular, syncopated rhythms. The ladies returned in yellow and burgundy with white takiya and knelt down to play a teasing, coy mime with two sticks. A syncopated pentatonic melody reflected their oriental influences and they left the stage carrying green embroidered banners.

Dombra soloist, Serbian Musayin sang a lament using his wide vocal range while playing fast tremolo accompaniment in Seidimbekov’s “Daurenai”. Soloist Gulmira Zhukupbaeva sang a folksong dedicated to Kazak beauty while four agile, willowy ladies swirled about her like dolls in shimmering green and pink silk. A fast celebration dance to a simple diatonic folk tune featured the whole balletic ensemble creating patterns and shapes in a lively conclusion, ‘Zhezkiik Dance’.

The highlight and climax in every sense came with the ‘Vallarta Azteca Folkloric Dance Group’ from Jalisco, Mexico. Six musicians exuding energy and vitality appeared behind two solo singers — José Curiel, with a voice both powerful and romantic and Diana Encarnacion with Zarzuela-like passion — in a compelling waltz. Eleven ladies sped in whirling rainbow skirts as they turned and spun, followed by men in handsome braided Charro costumes, thrashing their huge sombreros on the floor. Two dancers performed dazzling fast footwork while a young rope artist from ‘Rancho Don Tato’ thrilled the audience with his lasso bravado. The perpetual rhythms of guitar strumming and acoustic bass from the deep-bodied, ‘Guitarròn’ provided an exciting, non-stop backing, with superb trumpet solos throughout. Ladies returned, spinning different coloured skirts while the men in Mariachi costumes, hands behind their backs, stomped out rhythms in absolute unison to an accompaniment of shouts, yelps and screams from the musicians! In sparkly skirts with flowers in their hair, the ladies joined in a patriotic song for the Grand Finale, ‘Viva Mexico’, to tumultuous applause from the audience — hoping they’d return to Muscat very soon!



PHOTOS BY KHALID AL BUSAIDI