

OMAN
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20
WHERE FAITH
MEETS MODERN
DESIGN

INBRIEF

MILITARY PARADE
ON NOVEMBER 20 TO
MARK NATIONAL DAY

The Sultanate of Oman will celebrate the glorious National Day on November 20, commemorating 281 years since the founding of the Al Busaid State. This day embodies the dawn of a new era of national unity and extending achievements, as Oman continues to stride towards comprehensive achievements as part of its renewed renaissance, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander. Preparations are ongoing for the military parade, which will embody the spirit of belonging to this beloved nation and loyalty to His Majesty, the Supreme Commander. The celebration will include a military parade to be staged by symbolic formations from the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), the Sultan's Special Force (SSF), the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the Royal Court Affairs (RCA). It will also include shows by the National Firqat Forces, the Royal Cavalry and musical performances by military bands.

OMAN’S SOLIDARITY
WITH TÜRKIYE,
INDIA, PAKISTAN



The Sultanate of Oman expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy to the government and people of the Republic of Türkiye over the victims of the crash of a military cargo aircraft.

The Sultanate of Oman expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy to the government and people of the Republic of Türkiye over the victims of the crash of a military cargo aircraft belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman affirmed its solidarity with the Republic of Türkiye and its friendly people in this affliction, and also expressed its condolences to the families of the victims. The Sultanate of Oman has followed with deep concern the incidents of explosions that occurred in both the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. A spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry expressed Oman’s sympathy and solidarity with the two countries. The spokesperson, in a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, conveyed sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the friendly governments and peoples of India and Pakistan, and to the families of the victims. — ONA

HM receives credentials
of several ambassadors

AMBASSADORS AFFIRM DETERMINATION TO WORK FOR STRENGTHENING RELATIONS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday received, at Al Barakah Palace, the credentials of a number of ambassadors of Arab and friendly countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty received the credentials of the following.

Hrachya Poladian, Ambassador of President Vahagn Khachaturyan of the Republic of Armenia to the Sultanate of Oman.

Maartje Peters, Ambassador of King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Sultanate of Oman.

Olha Selykh, Ambassador of President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine to the Sultanate of Oman. Yasser Mohammed Shaban, Ambassador of President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate of Oman.

The ambassadors conveyed the greetings of the leaders of their respective countries to His Majesty the Sultan. They expressed their great honour and pleasure in presenting their credentials to His Majesty the Sultan, hoping that their tours of duty would be successful in achieving mutual benefits between their countries and the Sultanate of Oman.

The ambassadors affirmed their determination to strive diligently to strengthen relations and boost investments



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik receiving the credentials of Hrachya Poladian, Ambassador of President Vahagn Khachaturyan of the Republic of Armenia to the Sultanate of Oman.

in various sectors to achieve the desired goals and future visions for their countries and the Sultanate of Oman.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors, expressing his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the leaders of their countries for their kind greetings and sincere

wishes. His Majesty prayed to the Almighty Allah to grant them success in carrying out their responsibilities, assuring them that they will receive full support from the government and the people to enable them to perform their practical duties with ease, serving the interests and aspirations of their countries

and the Sultanate of Oman. The ceremony for the presentation of credentials was attended by the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, the Foreign Minister, the Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman, and the Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA
SEE ALSO P2

Royal Decrees ratify agreements

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued three Royal Decrees reading as follows: Royal Decree No 97/2025 ratifies the agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan on mutual waiving of visas for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports, signed in Muscat on October 26, 2025.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article (2) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. Royal Decree No 98/2025 ratifies the agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus on mutual

waiving of visas, signed in Minsk on October 6, 2025. Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article (2) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. Royal Decree No 99/2025 ratifies the agreement between the Government of

the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus on international road transport of goods, signed in Minsk on October 6, 2025. Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article (2) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

Royal Hospital doctors perform artificial heart transplant

MUSCAT: An Omani medical team from the National Heart Centre, Royal Hospital, has successfully performed an artificial heart transplant on a patient (a woman) suffering from severe heart muscle failure. The operation sets a milestone in the development of heart failure treatments in the Sultanate of Oman. The surgical team was co-led by Dr Walid bin Amer al Badi and Dr Qasim bin Saleh al Abri. The operation took four hours, followed by intensive medical care that continued until the patient's condition

stabilised and she left the hospital. Dr Walid bin Amer al Badi, a Consultant Cardiac Surgeon at the Royal Hospital, said, “The medical team performed a left-side artificial heart implantation procedure that involved the use of a device that assisted the natural heart to continue to pump blood efficiently and helped the patient to regain vitality and normal activity.” Dr Qasim bin Saleh al Abri, a Consultant Cardiac Surgeon at the National Heart Centre, expressed delight at the



The operation sets a milestone in the development of heart failure treatments.

addition of this advanced type of operation to the surgical services offered by the centre. He pointed out that such operations are performed as a prelude to full heart transplants or as a permanent treatment option in some cases. The patient expressed her deep gratitude to the medical team at the National Heart Centre. She added that, prior to the operation, she had been suffering from severe fatigue and difficulty in carrying out normal daily tasks before the operation. She observed that

her health condition improved significantly after the surgery. The “artificial heart” in use represents an advanced treatment option for patients who suffer from severe heart failure. It bridges human heart transplants or serves as a permanent option in some cases. The introduction of the artificial heart technology adds momentum to the services of the National Heart Centre, following the centre's success in performing minimally invasive cardiac surgeries and human heart transplants. — ONA

HM RECEIVES CREDENTIALS OF AMBASSADORS



Maartje Peters, Ambassador of King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Oman. — ONA

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Yasser Mohammed Shaban, Ambassador of President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Oman.



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SHORT TAKES



The Omani delegation was headed by Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs. — ONA

OMAN AT COUNCIL OF ARAB MINISTERS OF JUSTICE MEETING

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, participated in the 41st Session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice, which was held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Arab League in Cairo, the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The Omani delegation was headed by Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs.

During the meeting, the Arab Ministers of Justice discussed a number of items on the agenda, including the report of the Technical Secretariat of the Council on the steps taken to implement the Council's resolutions, the resolutions and recommendations of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice from its 74th and 75th meetings, and the issue of combating terrorism in light of relevant Arab agreements and their implementation mechanism.

The Council also discussed issues related to unifying Arab legislation, the Arab Convention Against Corruption, the draft Arab Convention on the Status of Refugees in Arab States, the draft Arab Convention on the Protection of Personal Data, ways to enhance cooperation between the secretariats of the Councils of Arab Ministers of Justice and Interior and reviewing the special account of the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice.

— ONA

FUNDING PACT SIGNED FOR DAY CARE PROJECT



The project is designed to augment the capacity of Day Care facility at Khoula Hospital. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate-General of Khoula Hospital, has formalised a collaborative agreement with Al Yusr Charity Foundation to finance the third phase of procuring medical equipment and surgical instruments for the Day Care Unit at Khoula Hospital.

Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Alawi, Director-General of Khoula Hospital, conveyed his profound gratitude to Al Yusr Charity Foundation for their generous support and meaningful contribution to healthcare advancement, noting that this collaboration aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 to establish an integrated and sustainable healthcare framework.

Omar bin Mohammed al Farsi, Director-General of Al Yusr Charity Foundation, emphasised that this support forms part of the Foundation's ongoing commitment to strengthening day clinic operations, which have demonstrated notable progress in prior phases. — ONA

Gen Al Numani receives US, Jordanian Ambassadors

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received on Wednesday at his office Ana Escrogima, Ambassador of the United States of America to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, they discussed the course of the close bilateral relations and their continuous and tangible development at all levels, as well as ways to enhance them in service of



During the meeting, they discussed course of the close bilateral relations. — ONA

mutual interests and to meet the aspirations of the leaderships and friendly peoples of both countries.

The Minister of the Royal Office

also received Tharwah Neimat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of

duty. Gen Al Numani lauded the ambassador's efforts in enhancing areas of joint cooperation between Oman and Jordan, wishing her continued success in her future endeavours.

For her part, the ambassador expressed her deep appreciation for the cooperation and care she received from the government of the Sultanate of Oman, praising the strength of the bilateral relations that bind the two countries. — ONA

Meeting reviews joint Gulf security cooperation

THE Sultanate of Oman participated on Wednesday in the 42nd meeting of Ministers of Interior of GCC states in Kuwait. The meeting reviewed a number of topics that contribute to enhancing the process of joint Gulf security cooperation and coordinating efforts and goals to achieve security and stability in the region. The Omani delegation was headed by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior.

The meeting discussed the efforts made in developing the joint Gulf security work system and the completion rates of joint projects aimed at achieving integration between GCC states in the security field.

Consultations and exchanges of views were also held on establishing the practical foundations for applying unified security strategies to enhance the efficiency of security agencies and embody a unified Gulf stance in confronting current and future challenges.

Within the framework of the meeting, the GCC Ministers of Interior witnessed the honouring of the winners of the Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz Security



The Omani delegation was headed by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior. — ONA

Research Award for the GCC countries for the year 2024/2025 at Bayan Palace in Kuwait. In the Institutional Award Category, the Sultanate of Oman achieved first and second place: The Police College won 1st place; Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences won 2nd place and the Research and Development Centre in the

UAE came in 3rd place. In the Individual Award Category, the winners were: 1st place for Dr Ali al Sindi, Dr Khawla al Shamsi, and Ali Ahmed Amini from the Kingdom of Bahrain; 2nd place for Maj Gen Abdullah al Muftah from the State of Qatar and 3rd place for Lt Col Dr Mariam al Marri from the UAE. — ONA

‘Maak’ app boosts efficiency of hiring process

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

A unified digital platform from the Ministry of Labour, the ‘Maak’ application has streamlined and simplified procedures and services for individuals and employers, ensuring seamless access.

The application aims to support a promising segment of job-seekers by providing employment opportunities, enhancing the efficiency of services offered to individuals and employers, and facilitating the exchange of information and job applications between employers and job-seekers.

The Ministry of Labour clarified that the percentage of its total digital services reached 76 per cent by 2024. These services are available on the website, serving all segments of society, individuals, residents, employers, job-seekers, the workforce, and the government sector, in addition to the services offered through the ministry's ‘Maak’ mobile



The application aims to support a promising segment of job-seekers by providing employment opportunities,

application.

The ‘Maak’ smartphone application serves as the second channel for the Ministry of Labour's electronic services. This reflects the ministry's commitment to providing services that align with the evolving labour market and its challenges. The ministry has worked to establish appropriate legislation, provide the necessary tools, and

invest human and financial resources to ensure the delivery of services that meet the expectations of beneficiaries.

The application's services are divided into those for individuals and those for employers. Services for individuals include categories for job-seekers, the national workforce, individual employers, and complaints and reports.

According to the Ministry of Labour, 452,627 applications were submitted for government jobs, 1,670,383 for private sector jobs, 380,983 users activated their profiles, 8,568 employment contracts were accepted and 10,190 labour complaints were registered.

This national approach has brought about a qualitative shift in the employment sector and in meeting the demands of the labour market. The application provides access to the services of the ministry.

Where talent meets opportunity, and fairness and transparency are ensured in job postings and service delivery to individuals and employers, mobile applications are crucial for recruitment. They enhance the efficiency of the hiring process, expand the reach of candidates, facilitate direct communication between employers and candidates, and offer greater flexibility for all parties. They also reduce the costs and time required for recruitment.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

OMAN PARTICIPATES
IN ARAB FORUM
IN BEIRUT

BEIRUT: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the Arab Forum on Public Finance and Budgeting, held on Wednesday in the Lebanese capital, Beirut. The forum was organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in cooperation with Unicef and a number of international partners concerned with financial and social affairs.

The forum discussed ways to enhance the sustainability of public finance and guide public spending towards social and human development priorities. This is part of following up on the implementation of the “Seville Commitment”, which aims to protect investments directed towards human development, social protection and improving the quality of essential services. The Omani delegation to the forum was headed by Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy. The forum emphasised the importance of enhancing regional cooperation and exchanging expertise among Arab countries in preparing and implementing public budgets, and developing tools for transparency, governance, and financial innovation, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable social development. — ONA



The OAAAQA granted Oman Tourism College an “Accredited” status valid for five years.

OAAAQA GRANTS
ACCREDITATION
TO OTC

MUSCAT: The Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) has announced that Oman Tourism College (OTC) has been granted Institutional Accreditation following the successful completion of the Institutional Standards Reassessment (second attempt) conducted in accordance with OAAAQA’s established procedures. The college initiated the reassessment process by submitting the Institutional Standards Assessment Application, through which it evaluated all its practices and activities in line with OAAAQA’s institutional standards. A panel of external reviewers was appointed to review and analyse the application, verify the information provided, and conduct an on-site visit that included interviews with the college’s leadership, staff, students and other stakeholders, as well as a comprehensive review of supporting evidence. The Institutional Standards Reassessment (second attempt) focused on one core standard: Governance and Management. Based on the review findings, the panel concluded that the college met all institutional accreditation standards and requirements.

WINNERS OF
CULTURAL
CREATIVITY
COMPETITION
FETED

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Winners of the tenth edition of the Omani Clubs’ Cultural Creativity Competition were feted at a gala ceremony held under the auspices of Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture. “Youth hold immense value in our beloved country of Oman; they are the pillars of the nation and its bright future. Thus, the Clubs’ Cultural Creativity Competition emerged, charting a clear course for youth participation and

engagement,” said Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture. He added that in its tenth edition, the competition elevated the landscape of participation, contribution, brilliance and excellence, writing a new chapter of creativity with the ink of our young innovators. The number of participants in the competition reached more than 8,085, including 4,745 young men and 3,340 young women representing 48 clubs. The competition targeted Omani youth aged 10-29, both male and female, and was divided into two

categories. The categories included from 10 years old to 16 years, from 17 to 29 years old, and from 30 years old and above. “The continuation of this competition over the past years reflects its importance in activating diverse activities within clubs and showcasing numerous young talents,” a ministry spokesperson said. “The competition strives to achieve its vision of the youth who believe in their abilities and potential, and are aware of their roles and responsibilities in developing their community,” he added.

Strategic projects in
Al Buraimi augur boom

AL BURAIMI: A number of strategic projects aimed at promoting sustainable development and improving the quality of life for its citizens are currently under implementation in Al Buraimi Governorate. Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi, said that among the most important projects being implemented in the governorate is the development of the Al Buraimi Oasis (City Centre), which has reached an implementation rate of 98 per cent. This project will create a comprehensive urban oasis spanning commercial, service and recreational activities. The governor of Al Buraimi added that construction work is underway on the artificial lake project which covers over 91,000 square metres with an implementation rate of 80 per cent. The lake will form a new tourist and recreational destination boosting economic activity in the governorate. He noted that the implementation of road projects across the governorate, including the completion of approximately 20 per cent of the first phase, 20 per cent of the second phase, and 10 per cent of the third phase. Work continues on all three phases which, once complete, will boost economic activities.

Also under implementation are a number of strategic projects aimed at positioning the governorate as a permanent economic and investment hub. Among these is the economic zone project in the Al Rawdah in the Wilayat of Mahadha, which represents a significant step towards leveraging the governorate’s prime geographical location, enhancing investment opportunities in supply chains, and developing re-export centres between the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates and various markets. This project also aims to diversify economic activities and generate job opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The first phase of the project encompasses manufacturing, logistics, warehousing, pharmaceutical, medical, plastics, food and processing industries in addition to complementary service activities for these sectors, he said.



The governor of Al Buraimi said that the Hafeet Railway project aims to establish a railway network linking the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, enhancing cooperation and contributing to sustainable transport and economic development. Along with the Al Rawdah Economic Zone, it represents a strategic direction to transform Al Buraimi Governorate into a hub for transport, trade and industry, Al Busaidy said. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is working on the Al Buraimi-Mahadha dual carriageway project, with a length of 11 km. This is in addition to agricultural projects in the Wilayat of Mahadha, including a water strategy, to enhance food security, generate job opportunities and ensure sustainability of natural resources, he said. The governor of Al Buraimi said that the Wilayat of Al Sinainah is witnessing the implementation of several agricultural and

livestock projects that support food security. These include a wheat cultivation project to support strategic crops and enhance local grain production and a project to plant 50,000 date palms in the Al Wajen area as part of the Million Palm Trees Plantation Project. He noted that the governorate has signed 23 investment contracts distributed across various wilayats, with a total investment volume exceeding RO 13 million. The value of these investments exceeds RO 2 million, reflecting a genuine commitment to developing the investment climate and attracting high-quality, value-added projects. A specialised company has been commissioned to explore investment opportunities in Al Buraimi Governorate and the first draft of the study has been completed pending the final approval. The aim is to support development and investment trends in the next phase, Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi. — ONA

OSHRM celebrates excellence in human resource leadership

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

The Omani Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM) celebrated outstanding achievements in the field of human resources during a ceremony held in Muscat. The event honoured institutions and individuals who won the Human Resource Excellence Award, under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. The awards seek to recognise institutions that have demonstrated exemplary practices and innovative strategies in human resource management, while promoting the exchange of best initiatives and nurturing a culture of continuous development in the workplace. It also reflects the growing importance of investing in human capital, fostering sustainable and innovative work environments

across both public and private sectors, and empowering small and medium enterprises. Dr Ghalib bin Saif al Hosni, Chairman of OSHRM’s Board of Directors, emphasised that the awards serve as a national platform to honour institutions and individuals contributing to the advancement of work environments and the strengthening of empowerment and innovation in HR management. He explained that the evaluation process was based on comprehensive criteria encompassing creativity, institutional impact, sustainability, leadership, employee engagement, digital adoption and workplace well-being. Dr Al Hosni noted that this initiative marks a significant step in positioning Oman as a nation that embraces best global HR practices and encourages organisations to view human capital as the foundation of sustainable development. Among the honourees, the Civil



The awards seek to recognise institutions that have demonstrated exemplary practices and innovative strategies in human resource management. — ONA

Aviation Authority received the Human Resource Innovation Award in the government sector, while Omantel and Saudi Telecom Company were recognised in the private sector category for their pioneering HR initiatives and advanced systems for talent management and performance enhancement. Occidental Oman was honoured

with the Digital Transformation Award for integrating technology to optimise HR operations, while the Health and Well-being in the Workplace Award was presented to Sohar Port and Freezone and Oman Data Park for their initiatives promoting employee wellness and a balanced work culture. In the small and medium enterprise category, the National Technology Group earned the Human Resource Excellence Award for SMEs for its effective HR strategies, performance management frameworks, employee engagement efforts and use of modern HR technologies. In the academic category, Dr Said bin Ali al Hasani received the OSHRM Research Grant for the Best Academic Paper in Human Resources. Leadership excellence was also recognised during the ceremony, with Ashraf bin Hamad al Maamari, CEO of OQ Group, and Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari, CEO of Ithca Group, receiving

the Best CEO Award for their visionary leadership and contribution to advancing HR practices within their organisations. The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) was named Best Government HR Team, while Omantel received the same recognition in the private sector for fostering a supportive and high-performing work culture. Faisal bin Ali al Maamari from OQ Gas Networks was recognised as Best Human Resource Manager for his strategic leadership and innovative contributions to organisational culture, while Rawan al Ajeeli received the Best Generation Z Employee Award for her creativity, commitment and potential within her organisation. The ceremony also featured the unveiling of OSHRM’s new corporate identity and the signing of a strategic partnership agreement with Tharwah Company from Saudi Arabia, signalling a new phase of regional collaboration in HR development.

SHORT TAKES



During the session, a number of files and issues of mutual concern were discussed. — ONA

OMAN AND RUSSIA HOLD STRATEGIC DIALOGUE SESSION

MUSCAT: *The Sultanate of Oman and the Russian Federation held the Second Omani-Russian Strategic Dialogue Session in Muscat.*

The session was co-chaired from the Omani side by Maj Gen Idris bin Abdulrahman al Kindi, Secretary-General of the National Security Council, with the participation of Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, and a number of representatives from the concerned military, security and civil units.

On the Russian side, the session was co-chaired by Sergey Shoigu, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, with the participation of a number of Russian officials.

During the session, both sides affirmed the sincere desire of the leaderships of the two countries to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation in a way that serves mutual interests and advances the existing relations towards further progress and growth in various fields. In addition, a number of files and issues of mutual concern were discussed. — ONA

'LIGHTS OF OMAN' CELEBRATES BEAUTY, CULTURE



MUSCAT: FSO Muscat (Friday Shootout Oman), Oman's most active and accomplished photography community, proudly presents its annual Photography Exhibition titled 'Lights of Oman' on November 14 and 15, at Oman Avenues Mall. The exhibition will be open to the public from 10.00 am to 11.00 pm.

'Lights of Oman' brings together a stunning collection of photographs that celebrate Oman's

*brehtaking landscapes,
heritage, architecture,
and people as seen
through the creative
lenses of FSO members.*

The exhibition offers visitors a visual journey through Oman's vibrant contrasts... from golden deserts and rugged mountains to tranquil shores and historic cities.

This two-day exhibition promises to be a treat for photography enthusiasts, art lovers and anyone captivated by the beauty of Oman.

Arabic book to be released to mark 225 years of Oman-UK ties

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 12

The Arabic version of the 'Unshook Till the End of Time', a book that covers many treaties between the Sultanate of Oman and the UK, including the one in 1800, will be launched on November 24, coinciding with the 225th anniversary of Oman-Britain bilateral relations. "The long overdue Arabic edition of this book charting Oman's long history with the UK has finally been published at an event enriched by the presence of various His Highnesses and other government and private officials at the Gala Black Tie dinner at the Diplomatic Club on November 24," said Maggie Jeans. "In 2025, we are celebrating the 225th anniversary of this historic agreement that culminated from the long, friendly bonds between the Sultanate



The many historic ties between Oman and Britain are explained in a book named 'Unshook Till the End of Time'.

of Oman and Britain," said Jeans.

The many historic ties between Oman and Britain are explained in a book named 'Unshook Till the End of Time', written by two former British ambassadors to Oman, Robert Alston (1986-1990) and Stuart Laing (2002-2005), and was first published in 2012.

The relations between Oman and the UK can be traced back over two centuries, with the two sides

always seeking to explore new ways of improving them on various fronts, including but not limited to diplomacy, education, trade and commerce, culture, and people-to-people relations.

The launch of the Arabic version will be held under the auspices of the British Omani Society to celebrate the 225th anniversary of the signing of the Unshook Agreement," said Haifa al Yarubi, the main organiser of the dinner for OBS members.

“The accession to the throne of King Charles III marks a new chapter in the Omani-British relations at a crucial time in the region. Oman and Britain are two free spirits held together by a shared history, mutual trust and shared values. Oman’s foreign policy is second to none. In real terms, this special relationship translates into investment and practical mutual support,” said Jeans.

Sultan Qaboos Award for arts winners announced

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

THE Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science announced the winners of the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts and Literature (12th Edition – 2025) during a press conference at the centre's headquarters in Airport Heights on Wednesday.

The award celebrates outstanding achievements in culture, arts and literature. It is presented every year, alternating between a national edition for Omanis and an Arab edition that welcomes participants from across the Arab world.

This year's cycle recognised excellence in Private Cultural Institutions, Sculpture and Biography.

The winner in the field of Private Cultural Institutions (Culture) was The Assilah Forum Foundation from the Kingdom of Morocco. In the field of Sculpture (Arts), the award went to Dr Essam Mohamed Sayed Darwish from the Arab Republic of Egypt.

In the field of Biography (Literature), the award was given to Lebanese writer and critic Hikmat al Majzoub al Sabbagh, known as Yumna al Eid.

Habeeb bin Mohammed al Riyami, Chairman of the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, said, “The award reflects Oman’s commitment to honouring creativity and encouraging cultural dialogue across the Arab world.”

He explained that the award embraces



The award celebrates outstanding achievements in culture, arts and literature.

a wide range of artistic and literary forms, showcasing the diversity and unity of Arab culture. He added that the judging process followed high standards of fairness and transparency, focusing on the creative depth and cultural impact of the participants' work.

He described the winners as symbols of dedication and excellence, whose achievements highlight the importance of culture and knowledge as the true wealth of nations. The Sultan Qaboos Award

for Culture, Arts and Literature is now recognised as one of the region's most respected cultural awards. It celebrates creative achievement and innovation, showing Oman's belief that culture is key to human growth and progress.

Al Riyami said, "The award stands as one of Oman's cultural bridges with the Arab world, presenting the nation's creative spirit to others while strengthening dialogue and shared knowledge across cultures."

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Government Development Bonds

On behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Oman announces the 78th issuance of Government Development Bonds (GDBs) to be auctioned. The 78th issuance of GDBs will be issued on Sunday, 23rd November 2025, carrying a coupon rate of 4.2% per annum for a maturity period of 7 years (maturing on 23rd November 2032). These Bonds will be auctioned and priced on Wednesday, 19th November 2025. Investors may apply for these Bonds through licensed commercial banks by completing the application form.

Security of Capital

The GDBs are direct and unconditional obligations of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman.

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78th

Issuance

Opens: Wen, 12th Nov 2025

Closes: Tue, 18th Nov 2025

Auction: Wen, 19th Nov 2025

The minimum subscription amount

RO 100

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto speaks as he stands next to Australian PM Anthony Albanese during a press conference, in Sydney. — Reuters

AUSTRALIA AND INDONESIA AGREE ON SECURITY TREATY

SYDNEY: Australia and Indonesia have agreed on a new security treaty that commits them to consult each other if either country is threatened, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in Sydney on Wednesday with Indonesia’s President Prabowo Subianto. Albanese, who accompanied Prabowo on a visit to an Australian naval base in the city, said the treaty was a major extension of previous security deals, and commits to regular security dialogue between leaders. “If either or both countries’ security is threatened, to consult and consider what measures may be taken either individually or jointly to deal with those threats,” he said. Indonesia and Australia recognised that acting together was the best way to secure peace and stability in the region, he added. “Our determination is to maintain the best of relationships in order to enhance and guarantee security for both of our countries,” Prabowo said. Australia’s Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in a statement the treaty was expected to be signed next year. — Reuters

THAI-CAMBODIA BORDER TENSIONS ESCALATE AGAIN



Thailand’s PM Anutin Charnvirakul (C) walks after chairing a National Security Council (NSC) meeting, in Bangkok. — AFP

BANGKOK: At least one person was killed in Cambodia amid a flare-up of conflict with Thailand as the neighbours accused each other of opening fire along a disputed part of their border, threatening a US-brokered truce. Earlier on Wednesday Thailand’s foreign ministry said it had demanded an apology from Cambodia after accusing it of laying fresh landmines that maimed a Thai soldier on Monday. On Tuesday, Thailand said it was suspending an enhanced ceasefire agreement that the two nations signed last month in the presence of President Donald Trump. Cambodia denies the charge that it has laid new mines and has urged Thailand to adhere to the October deal, which built on an initial ceasefire negotiated by Trump to end five days of fighting in July. Cambodia’s Defence Ministry said Thai troops opened fire near a disputed border village at around 3:50 pm local time on Wednesday. One person was killed and three wounded, the ministry said in a statement. Thai Army spokesman Major General Winthai Suvaree said Cambodian soldiers initially fired shots into Thailand. — Reuters

OVERBOARD TRAGEDY

42 feared dead in shipwreck off Libya



The United Nations said that 42 migrants were missing and presumed dead after a boat capsized off the Libyan coast last week. It was the latest in a series of similar disasters in a stretch of the Mediterranean Sea. Seven survivors were rescued after six days adrift, the International Organization for Migration said. “According to survivors, some individuals were wearing life jackets while others held onto the overturned boat”, — AFP

FRESH ROW ERUPTS BETWEEN SENEGAL PRESIDENT AND PM

DAKAR: Senegal’s president and prime minister quarrelled on Wednesday over the dismissal of a key ally of the latter, the latest public signs of fracture at the summit of Senegalese politics. The west African country is in the unusual position of having a president, Bassirou Dioumaye Faye, who owes his election in large part to his premier and firebrand former mentor, Ousmane Sonko. Both swept to power on a promise of radical change in March 2024, with Sonko naming Faye as his

movement’s presidential candidate after being barred from running himself by the courts. Late on Tuesday, Faye said he had dismissed a close Sonko ally, Aissatou Mbodj, as coordinator of their political coalition, citing “divisive elements”. Faye’s push to replace the coordinator comes just days after Sonko had publicly dismissed the idea of replacing Mbodj, offering his backing at a large rally in the capital Dakar on Saturday. But on Wednesday, Sonko’s Pastef party, the driving

force of the ruling coalition, put out a statement insisting the president “did not have the power to dismiss Mrs Mbodj” and rejecting her Faye-appointed replacement, ex-prime minister Aminata Toure. “Pastef and its allies do not recognise any initiative coordinated by Mrs Toure,” the party’s political bureau added. This latest public row between the pair comes just months after Sonko launched a broadside against Faye in July, accusing the president of lacking authority. — AFP

Pakistan tightens Islamabad security after deadly blast

RESIDENTS

In the Pakistani capital Islamabad were facing tightened security checks

on Wednesday in the wake of a deadly bombing that left top officials vowing to halt the rise in deadly attacks. The deadly blast outside district court buildings on Tuesday was claimed by a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, a militant group that has been behind a series of attacks in other parts of the country. The district court remained closed on Wednesday while security was stepped up at other court buildings across the city, and long queues of vehicles formed at checkpoints. “Our army, police, and all law enforcement agencies are alert and performing their duties. Unfortunately, the question remains: Where are these attacks coming from, and how are they happening?” said resident Fazal Satar, 58. At least 12 people were killed and 27 wounded in the suicide bombing, the first such incident to hit the capital in nearly three years. “It was a very powerful explosion,” said Muhammad Imran, a 42-year-old police official who was wounded in the attack. “It was a very sudden bang, and I felt like someone had thrown me to the ground,” he said. Sharjeel Ahmed, a 26-year-old student, worried about how the violence would affect foreign investment and Pakistan’s ability to host international sports matches, said, “In my opinion, this is a serious security lapse, and we must learn from it. If such attacks continue, how will the world trust us?” Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Zardari held security talks in the hours after the attack. “Both leaders reiterated their commitment that



A policeman frisks a man at court entrance in Lahore. — AFP

operations against foreign-backed terrorists and their facilitators will continue until terrorism is completely eradicated,” a statement from the president’s office said. Islamabad has long since accused the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan of sheltering the Pakistani Taliban, which the Kabul government denies. The Taliban government expressed its “deep sorrow & condemnation” over the suicide bombing and a separate attack on a military-run college in Wana, near the Afghan frontier. A Pakistani security source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly, said all recruits at the Cadet College Wana were rescued after a raid that killed five militants. The insurgency waged by the

Pakistani Taliban, known as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has focused mainly on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan. Pakistan has seen an uptick in violence since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021, and bilateral relations have plummeted in recent weeks. The worst cross-border fighting in years killed more than 70 people last month, including dozens of Afghan civilians, according to the United Nations. In Pakistan, the TTP threatened more attacks until demanded law is implemented in the country. Hafiz Mazhar Malik Javeed, a lawyer burying a colleague killed in the suicide bombing, feared for the future. “All the judges and lawyers were afraid,” the 45-year-old said at the cemetery. — AFP



KEY CROSSING TO NORTH GAZA OPENS FOR AID

GAZA: Israel said it had opened a key crossing into northern Gaza on Wednesday to allow the entry of humanitarian aid supplied by the United Nations and other international organisations. “Today, the Zikim crossing has been opened for the entry of humanitarian aid trucks into the Gaza Strip,” COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry body that oversees civilian affairs in the Palestinian territories, said. When contacted, a COGAT spokesman said the crossing would now remain open “permanently”, like the Kerem Shalom crossing into southern Gaza, through which the bulk of aid has been transferred since the war began in October 2023. COGAT said that humanitarian aid entering Gaza through Zikim, the main access point to Gaza’s hard-hit north, would be subject to the usual Israeli security checks prior to entering, before being dispatched via the UN. The WFP said that it had not been able to collect cargo in north Gaza. — AFP

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Nepal boosts anti-poaching patrols



Nepal has intensified anti-poaching operations to protect its prized tigers, elephants and rhinos after dozens of convicted poachers escaped prison during anti-government uprising in September. “This is a matter of concern for all conservationists,” spokesman Bed Kumar Dhakal said. “It is an added threat to our conservation efforts, so we have directed all the national parks to increase regular patrolling.” — AFP

WORST ROAD ACCIDENT

At least 37 dead in bus crash in Peru



At least 37 people were killed and 24 injured when a bus plunged into a ravine after colliding with a truck in Peru, a regional Health Department official said. The accident in Arequipa, in southern Peru, is one of the worst in recent years in the South American nation. “We have a figure of 37 fatalities,” in addition to 24 injured, said Walther Oporto, the regional health manager of Arequipa. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A group of women and their children wait for the Targeted Supplementary Feeding Programme (TSFP) activities, in Bentiu, South Sudan. — AFP

UN FOOD AGENCIES WARN OF 16 HUNGER HOTSPOTS

ROME: Two UN food agencies warned that millions more people around the globe could face famine, with funding shortfalls worsening already dire conditions. The joint report from the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme said conflict and violence were driving acute food insecurity in the majority of the countries identified at risk. The Rome-based agencies listed Haiti, Mali, Palestine, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen as the worst, “where populations face an imminent risk of catastrophic hunger”. Also classified as a “very high concern” were Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria, with Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya and the situation of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh also making the list. “We are on the brink of a completely preventable hunger catastrophe that threatens widespread starvation in multiple countries,” said WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain, warning that a failure to act “will only drive further instability, migration, and conflict.” Funding for humanitarian relief was falling “dangerously short”, the report said, pointing to only \$10.5 billion received out of a required \$29 billion to help those at risk. WFP said that due to funding cuts, it had reduced assistance for refugees and displaced people while suspending school feeding programmes in some countries. — AFP

CZECHS TO CULL OVER 70,000 BIRDS



The Czech veterinary watchdog said that it had started culling more than 70,000 farm birds after cases of bird flu were detected at two commercial farms. Several countries across Europe have been battling a surge in avian influenza outbreaks, with Spain, Britain, Germany and France imposing restrictions such as confining poultry inside or ordering culls. “The culling started this morning,” State Veterinary Administration (SVS) spokesman Petr Majer said, adding that firefighters and farm employees culled the birds in containers filled with carbon dioxide. — AFP

UK HEALTH MINISTER DENIES PLOTTING AGAINST PM STARMER

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer insisted he runs a “united team” after a senior minister was forced to repeatedly deny that he planned to oust the embattled premier. Starmer’s comments came after Downing Street sources said Britain’s leader would fight off any leadership challenge, as a briefing war exposed tensions at the heart of the beleaguered government. Rumours are swirling in the UK parliament that some ministers are plotting to challenge Starmer following a budget due later this month, in which Labour is expected

to break manifesto promises. “This is a united team,” he told parliament, adding that he was focused on “rebuilding the country”. Earlier, health minister Wes Streeting told Sky News that he was “not going” to demand Starmer’s resignation, adding: “I support the prime minister. I have done since he was elected leader of the Labour Party.” The 42-year-old is considered one of Labour’s better performers and has long been touted as a potential replacement for Starmer, among others including interior minister

Shabana Mahmood. Streeting’s denial, repeated to other broadcasters, followed anonymous briefings by Starmer allies who told journalists he would fight any bid to replace him, in what appeared to be an attempt to warn them off. Starmer told parliament that attacks on any of his cabinet members were “completely unacceptable” and said Streeting was doing a “great job”. “The government has descended into civil war,” said opposition Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch. — AFP

Türkiye probes plane crash killing 20 troops in Georgia

TÜRKIYE on Wednesday said 20 of its soldiers were killed when a military transport plane crashed in Georgia a day earlier, marking the Nato member’s deadliest military incident since 2020. The C-130 cargo aircraft left Azerbaijan for Türkiye and crashed in Georgia on Tuesday, leaving chunks of twisted metal strewn across a grassy knoll. Ankara has not provided a reason for the crash, but said Turkish and Georgian authorities started inspections at the site, located in the Signaghu municipality of Georgia’s Kakheti district, at 03:30 GMT on Wednesday. Footage from the site near the border with Azerbaijan showed ambulances, firetrucks and army vehicles in the area around the burned fuselage, with search-and-rescue teams scanning the grounds. Unverified social media videos on Tuesday showed the plane breaking apart in the air and then corkscrewing toward the earth in a blaze. On Wednesday, the Turkish Defence Ministry released a list of the 20 soldiers who were killed. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Nato’s Secretary General, Germany, the US, Russia and others sent condolences and expressed solidarity with Türkiye after the crash. Ankara said it was closely coordinating with Azerbaijan and Georgia on the probe. US defence firm Lockheed Martin, which makes the C-130 Hercules, said it was committed to helping the investigation. The C-130 Hercules, which is used widely by air forces around the world, is a four-engine turboprop military transport aircraft capable of operating from unprepared runways. Its versatile airframe allows for cargo, troop and equipment transport, airborne assault and reconnaissance missions, making it a mainstay tactical airlifter for many militaries. Some analysts have said footage and images indicate the plane broke apart mid-flight, adding that Türkiye’s fleet of C-130s is old and in need of renewal, despite the aircraft’s reliability. “The footage appears to show the tail section separating in-flight and fuel streaming from the wing-tip valves,



Members of emergency services work at the site near the Azerbaijani border, in Signaghi municipality, Georgia. — Reuters

suggesting the crew may have been dumping fuel for an emergency landing,” said Jarrod Phillips, a former US Air Force C-130 specialist. FlightRadar24 and two Turkish defence analysts said the plane that crashed was 57 years old and had entered the Turkish Air Force in 2010. Last month, the Turkish Defence Ministry unveiled an agreement with Britain to procure 12 C-130J aircraft. The planes will undergo maintenance and modernisation in Britain and later begin their service for Türkiye, it said. In an accident in 2017, a US KC-130T Hercules plane crashed in Mississippi, killing all 16 people on board. Witness accounts at the time said the aircraft fell while on fire in a flat spin; the incident report said the cause was improper repairs on a corroded propeller blade, leading to a

failure. Investigators have found the black box from the Turkish military plane that crashed in Georgia, killing all 20 onboard, but have yet to analyse it, officials said Wednesday, warning against hasty conclusions about what caused the incident. Türkiye said the military cargo plane crashed while returning home from Azerbaijan and investigators had so far recovered 19 bodies and were looking for the last one. Tuesday’s crash was Türkiye’s deadliest military incident since February 2020, when Russian-backed Syrian forces killed 33 Turkish troops in Idlib, northwest Syria, where Türkiye was supporting rebels looking to oust the Syrian government. Tuesday’s accident was the worst non-combat incident in over a decade. — Agencies

Ukraine suspends cabinet minister as scandal shakes wartime govt

KYIV: Ukraine suspended a cabinet minister on Wednesday pending an investigation into an alleged \$100 million energy procurement kickback scheme, as public anger over corruption shakes faith in the wartime government. Anti-corruption authorities said this week they had detained five people and identified two others still at large, suspected of involvement in the alleged scheme to control procurement at nuclear agency Energoatom and other state enterprises. Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said Justice Minister German Galushchenko, who had previously served as energy minister, would be suspended during the investigation. Galushchenko has not been identified as one of the seven suspects announced this week, but one of his advisors has been. Galushchenko said on Facebook he supported his suspension as “a

civilised and appropriate scenario” and vowed to defend himself, without sharing more details of the probe. Galushchenko’s voice was among those captured in a recorded conversation with some of the suspects in the case released by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, according to a source familiar with the matter. The minister did not respond to a Reuters request for additional comment. The probe by anti-corruption body NABU, details of which have been incrementally released in sleekly produced videos featuring the lead detective, is the latest revelation of alleged graft that has plagued Ukraine’s wartime leaders. Showing progress in fighting corruption is central to Kyiv’s bid for membership in the European Union, which officials consider as key to escaping Moscow’s influence. Accusations of kickbacks in



A firefighter works at the site of a Russian drone strike, in Kharkiv, Ukraine. — Reuters

the energy sector are particularly sensitive among Ukrainians, who are facing daily blackouts ahead of winter as a result of massive Russian attacks on infrastructure. Earlier this year, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy tried to limit the powers of NABU and another

anti-corruption body in a shakeup, but rowed back on those changes after rare street protests and an outcry from European countries. Political opponents accused Zelenskiy of trying to scuttle the activities of corruption-fighting bodies to protect his associates,

which Zelenskiy strongly denies. One of the seven suspects identified by prosecutors is Timur Mindich, a co-owner of the influential Kvartal-95 television studio, which produced the popular sitcom that brought Zelenskiy to fame as a comedian before he launched his political career with a successful campaign for president in 2019. Mindich did not immediately respond to a request for comment sent to Kvartal 95. In a statement on Wednesday, the company said it had legal ties to Mindich as a co-owner, but that he did not influence its content and the reported allegations involving him were unrelated to the company’s activities. Meanwhile, Russia said its forces had pushed deeper into the eastern Ukrainian cities of Pokrovsk and Kupiansk, with video showing Russian soldiers rolling into Pokrovsk on the roofs of battered cars and vans. — Reuters

OPINION

COP30: When the storm outpaces the summit



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is an environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

THIRTY years have passed since the start of climate talks. Ten years since the Paris Agreement. Now, as delegates gather in Belém for COP30, Hurricane Melissa has delivered a message louder than any communiqué could ever be. Jamaica had invested millions in coastal defences: mangroves planted, seawalls reinforced, and infrastructure hardened against the intensifying storms scientists had long predicted. It was not nearly enough. Melissa’s 185-mile-per-hour winds destroyed homes, washed away roads, and knocked out power grids across the island. In Black River, a seawall collapsed under the surge, flooding two-thirds of the historic town. Insured losses may reach \$4 billion. The brutal lesson is today’s Category 5 storms are outpacing what even recently-built defences were designed to handle. A decade after Paris, the promises made with such ceremony have collided with uncomfortable arithmetic. Rich nations provided \$26 billion for climate adaptation in 2023, falling short of even the modest \$40 billion goal set for 2025, and nowhere near the \$310 to \$365 billion the UN estimates will be needed annually by 2035. Spain and Germany’s \$100 million pledge to a new World Bank programme offers a glimmer of

progress, but each shortfall compounds the next, eroding not just budgets but trust in the multilateral system itself. Yet the Philippines demonstrates what preparedness can achieve. Typhoon Kalmaegi killed over 200 people last week, followed quickly by Fung-Wong. But early warning systems and coordinated evacuations moved 1.4 million people to safety. Some communities are adapting and surviving, while others are overwhelmed and counting their losses, all facing storms that intensify with each passing season. For nations watching from afar, particularly those balancing green transitions with development, it’s clear storms spare no one, but response determines survival. This year’s summit sits in a new power landscape. With no senior United States officials present, China, India and Brazil have stepped forward, pairing calls for equity with demands for faster cuts. Brazil’s President Lula opened by declaring a COP of truth and warning that those who attack science also weaken multilateralism. The irony was not lost on observers: Brazil champions climate ambition while simultaneously advancing new oil exploration in the Amazon. The summit’s integrity faces threats. Fossil fuel lobbyists crowd the halls. AI-driven

Brazil’s President Lula opened by declaring a COP of truth and warning that those who attack science also weaken multilateralism. The irony was not lost on observers: Brazil champions climate ambition while simultaneously advancing new oil exploration in the Amazon

disinformation spreads doubt, despite strong public support for climate action across the majority of countries. Over 10% of social media posts decry “hypocrisy,” from private jets to an Amazon highway to Belém. TikTok posts tie COP30 to açai bowls, noting climate pressures on Amazon berries. These critiques resonate with those who pledge green. In one sense, the excuses have run out. The science has been settled for years. The technology exists and is increasingly cost-competitive, and analysis shows inaction will cost more than action in virtually every scenario. What remains is political will, the hardest resource to summon and the easiest to defer. Yet there are reasons for persistence. The Paris Agreement was designed as a framework to be strengthened through successive rounds of ambition, each building on the last. This makes it possible for nations to persist in showing up, voicing their opinions, and advocating for advancement, even at the expense of political capital. But legitimacy without delivery wears thin. As Jamaica rebuilds and the Philippines mourns, the gap between Paris’s promises and Belém’s delivery has never been more visible. Next week, as talks end, the question looms: will the world close the gap between aspiration and action, or delay another decade?

Lebanese say Israel preventing post-war reconstruction

LAURE AL KHOURY

When engineer Tarek Mazraani started campaigning for the reconstruction of war-battered southern Lebanon, Israeli drones hovered ominously overhead — their loudspeakers sometimes calling him out by name. Despite a ceasefire struck last November aiming to put an end to more than a year of fighting with Hezbollah, Israel has kept up near-daily strikes on Lebanon. In addition to hitting alleged militants, it has recently also targeted bulldozers, excavators and prefabricated houses, often saying they were part of efforts to restore Hezbollah infrastructure. The bombing has prevented tens of thousands of people from returning to their homes, and has made rebuilding heavily-damaged border villages — like Mazraani’s Hula — almost impossible. In cash-strapped Lebanon, authorities have yet to begin reconstruction efforts, and have been hoping for international support, particularly from Gulf countries. They have also blamed Israeli strikes for preventing efforts to rebuild, which the World Bank estimates could cost \$11 billion. Eager to go back home, Mazraani established the “Association of the Residents of Border Villages” to call for the return of displaced people and the start of reconstruction. He even started making plans to rebuild homes he had previously designed. But in October, Israeli drones flew over southern villages, broadcasting a message through loudspeakers. They called out Mazraani by name and urged residents to expel him, implicitly accusing him of having ties with Hezbollah, which he denies. Asked by AFP, the Israeli army would not say on what basis they accuse Mazraani of working with Hezbollah. “They are bombing prefabricated houses, and not allowing anyone to get close to the border,” said Mazraani, who has moved to Beirut for fear of Israel’s threats. “They are saying: no reconstruction before handing over the weapons,” he added, referring to Israel’s demand that Hezbollah disarm. Amnesty International has estimated that “more than 10,000 structures were heavily damaged or destroyed” between October of last year — when Israel launched a ground offensive into southern Lebanon — and late January. It noted that much of the destruction followed the November 2024 truce that took effect after two months of open war. — AFP

Re-imagining governance in Oman’s NBF sector

WHEN

The first Omani traders weighed the Maria Theresa Thaler or dealt in annas and rupees in the markets of Muttrah and Sur, every transaction rested on a single principle: trust. The coin was more than a medium of exchange — it was a contract. Its weight assured value; its design declared legitimacy. Centuries later, the Sultanate of Oman stands at another turning point. Money now travels not through hands but through code; markets no longer gather only in souqs but on digital platforms. Yet the essence remains unchanged: financial systems exist to sustain trust. And that trust today is governed not by metal, but by regulation and algorithm. The non-banking financial (NBF) sector — including insurance, capital markets, and a new wave of fintech innovators—has become the backbone of this modern trust architecture. In Oman, the sector’s evolution mirrors the country’s broader transformation from a maritime trading hub to a diversified, knowledge-based economy envisioned in Oman Vision 2040. At the heart of this transformation lies the Financial Services Authority (FSA). Its unifying mandate — to oversee securities, insurance, and the accounting and audit profession — has done more than streamline supervision. It has provided Oman with a coherent framework to balance innovation with prudence and to embed global standards of governance within local institutions. The transition from coinage to algorithm is not simply technological; it is ethical and institutional. Where the ancient mint guaranteed value through the purity of metal, the modern regulator



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

The story of the non-banking financial sector is the story of Oman itself: adaptive, open to the world, yet anchored in principle. If governance was once stamped in metal, it is now written in code — but the imprint of accountability must remain just as visible.

guarantees it through the integrity of data and the fairness of rules. The FSA, much like the mint of old, must certify what counts as genuine — only now the verification occurs in bits and ledgers, not alloys. This shift demands a new concept of governance — one that combines digital frameworks with human oversight. As research on AI governance in the GCC notes, ‘soft regulation’ can spur innovation, but without firm legal grounding and institutional accountability, it risks devolving into ethics-washing. Oman must therefore lean into binding standards for algorithmic fairness, cybersecurity readiness, and data governance — not merely aspirational principles. Traditional corporate governance — focused on boards, audits, and disclosure — is being joined by digital governance, where regulators supervise data flows, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence. In Oman, the FSA’s collaboration with the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on fintech sandboxes and virtual asset frameworks illustrates this evolution in action: the rule-maker becomes an enabler, guiding innovation within transparent boundaries. Good regulation is not about control for its own sake; it is about ensuring fairness, stability, and accountability—the same values that once made coins credible. The FSA’s embrace of international benchmarks such as the IOSCO Principles, IAIS Insurance Core Principles, and the OECD/G20 Principles of Corporate Governance reflects a conscious effort to anchor Oman’s markets in globally recognised norms. Yet the more profound challenge lies in the intangible: how to preserve human judgement in an increasingly algorithmic system. Algorithms may execute trades or

assess risk in milliseconds, but they cannot embody the moral dimension of trust. Oman’s own financial ecosystem is already moving in this direction. The fintech sandbox launched by the FSA and the CBO in 2024 enables real-world testing of AI-driven lending, digital credit scoring, and risk monitoring. To stay ahead, the regulators must institute a dedicated AI governance unit, require algorithmic audit logs, ensure traceability in automated decision-making, and invest in continuous training for their own staff. The role of the regulators must evolve — from enforcer of rules to steward of integrity — ensuring that efficiency never eclipses ethics. As the non-banking financial sector expands, it faces urgent tests: digital literacy, data protection, financial inclusion, and market depth. The solutions will not come from technology alone. They will come from governance that sees technology as a tool — not a master. The work of financial regulators, such as the FSA, on AI-assisted supervision marks a crucial step toward this balance, fusing innovation with responsibility. Oman’s journey from Sultan Fayçal bin Turki’s copper anna of 1898 to the digital rial of today is not a leap from past to future but a continuum of trust. The anna linked Muscat’s merchants to those along the rim of the Indian Ocean; the algorithm links Muscat’s markets to global finance. Both depend on confidence that the value is real and oversight is fair. As the world debates the ethics of artificial intelligence and digital money, Oman offers a quietly compelling lesson: progress does not erase tradition—it digitises it. And in the realm of finance, as in life, the true currency is not coin or code, but trust well-governed.

Scientific data key to managing and protecting biodiversity



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is a journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

RESEARCHERS, administrators, and industry stakeholders sometimes need reminders. Now is a good time to revisit ‘Barr Al Hikman: Shorebird Paradise in Oman’, a book published in 2018 for the 48th National Day.

It is Oman’s top biodiversity hotspot and is globally significant for wintering migratory birds. The pristine coastal area was declared a Wetland Reserve by Royal Decree on December 22, 2013.

As development goals are set, Barr al Hikman is vulnerable to exploitation. Several camping sites are being built. These accommodations brand themselves as nature-focused, comfortable camping experiences, and luxury glamping places geared toward water sports enthusiasts. With newfound popularity because of social media, and sometimes referred to as the ‘Omani Maldives’, a few details are being overlooked. Environmental degradation is noticeable.

In reality, Barr al Hikman faces significant pollution issues, including improper solid waste disposal, marine debris, plastic pollution, sewage, ghost fishing nets, disturbance from tourists, shoreline rubbish, and climate change. The amount of dumping caused by visitors and the construction of stilt accommodations appears to be increasing faster than clean-up efforts. The lack of waste management is a

major concern because the peninsula is a vital and sensitive nature reserve, serving as a stopover for migratory birds, turtles, and corals, thus threatening its delicate ecosystem.

The vast saline desert is already marked with dirt tracks made by 4x4 cars. Even the dune belt around Barr al Hikman, with hills 2 to 3 metres above sea level covered by salt-adapted bush, has become a playground. A luxury resort connects the pristine beach to the popular ‘sugar dunes’ of the coastal dune belt, where dune bashing occurs on the bright white hills.

The peninsula comprises islands and estuaries, Avicennia, and provides nesting and feeding grounds for sea turtles. It is one of the densest nesting sites for nearly all species of sea turtles worldwide. It is also a place where marine mammals, like the endangered Arabian humpback whales, feed and mate. Unfortunately, the sight of turtle carcasses on the sand is becoming common as drivers zig-zag their vehicles along the shores.

This area features at least five distinct types of marine habitats, including coral communities, seagrass beds, algal communities, flat shallow water regions, and mangrove forests. Three reef area structures located west and east of Barr al Hikman and off Rounders Bay on Masirah Island are unique to Oman. The region has become a hub for research

The vast saline desert is already marked with dirt tracks made by 4x4 cars. Even the dune belt around Barr al Hikman, with hills 2 to 3 metres above sea level covered by salt-adapted bush, has become a playground

conducted by volunteers and specialists from global organisations since the middle of the 1980s. It is believed that the only comprehensive survey of the entire area took place in the 1990s. The book ‘Barr Al Hikman: Shorebird Paradise in Oman’ is the result of winter surveys conducted in 1990, 2008, and 2013, totalling 500,000 waterbirds across 42 species.

There is already a dramatic 60 per cent reduction in the surface area of the main coral reefs, a key natural barrier. The shrinking reef is speeding up the erosion of the coastline, and parts of the peninsula are losing ground at a rate exceeding one metre per year. Other key issues include habitat degradation, shoreline erosion, the impact of sea-level rise, and the need for updated scientific data to guide effective management strategies.

At the pace of ongoing habitat loss, Barr al Hikman is in danger of losing its critical function as a stopover and wintering site for the flyway’s shorebird population. Scientists advocate for the formal designation of Barr al Hikman as a Ramsar site (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance) to provide a framework for its preservation.

The pivotal challenge is environmental monitoring and conservation. Therefore, gathering up-to-date data will help inform and implement effective policies, before irreversible damage is done to this unique and vulnerable ecosystem.

JOHANNESBURG GETS RUSHED MAKEOVER FOR G20 CHIEFS

HILLARY ORINDE

When G20 leaders touch down in Johannesburg this month, they will be greeted by a city scrubbed, patched, and polished, all part of a last-minute summit gloss thrown over years of neglect.

The urban sprawl of almost six million people is home to Africa’s richest square mile. In recent years, however, it has sunk into disrepair, with open sewers, potholed roads and crowded shacks of corrugated iron lining its fraying edges.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, dismayed by the decay, called the city’s state “not pleasing” and ordered a clean-up to spare Africa’s industry powerhouse from global embarrassment.

Then the bulldozers rolled in. “It is such a huge shame it had to take other people coming to South Africa for action to be taken,” said Abigail Thando, 34, an insurance broker scouting for clients along the streets of Johannesburg’s student district. Nearby, municipal trucks hauled garbage as private contractors widened a junction overlooking the Nelson Mandela Bridge.

Yet for many locals, the transformation feels cosmetic and belies their suffering. Resources were being funnelled into high-visibility zones while poorer neighbourhoods remained untouched, said garbage recycler Ricco Tshesane.

“There is no improvement,” the 43-year-old said, citing the chronic lack of water and relentless power outages that plague his community. Several families share a single, outside toilet, he said.

In some areas, taps run dry for weeks at a time, sparking near-weekly protests that have sometimes erupted into clashes with police as residents demand urgent action. Under South Africa’s constitution, clean water, sanitation and electricity are basic human rights that municipalities must deliver to all, even in informal settlements. But for many, those promises remain unfulfilled. “People who are living on the streets are being taken out with force, without alternatives,” said Tshesane.

It was not always this bleak. Johannesburg, the country’s economic heartland, was born from a gold rush in the 1880s, earning it the nickname “City of gold”.

But decades of mismanagement and corruption hollowed out its core and most big firms fled to security-fenced suburbs like Sandton.

Disused buildings were hijacked, many in the city centre now packed with undocumented migrants and controlled by criminal syndicates who collect rent from squatters. In 2023, more than 70 people died when one such five-storey building - owned by the municipality and listed as a heritage site - went up in flames. “I wish all the money had first been channelled to fixing our housing crisis. Then we can worry about putting up cute signs for the president’s coming,” said nursing student Liz Makana. — AFP

What Bill Gates overlooks about climate change

AHEAD

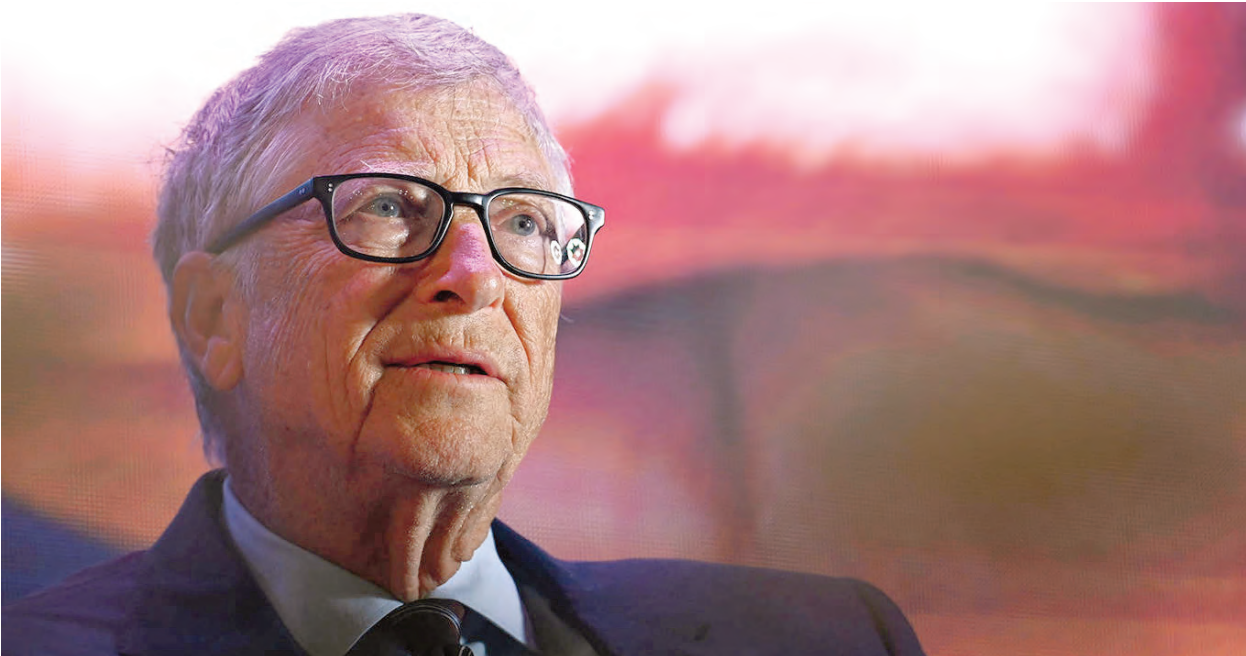
of this year’s United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30), now underway in Belém, Brazil, Bill Gates, who chairs and funds the foundation that bears his name, released an essay entitled “Three tough truths about climate.” The first of these truths is: “Climate change is a serious problem, but it will not be the end of civilisation.”

Gates recognises that climate change is “a very important problem,” that it “needs to be solved,” and that “(e)very tenth of a degree of heating that we prevent is hugely beneficial because a stable climate makes it easier to improve people’s lives.” Nevertheless, to say that climate change will not be the end of civilisation must lessen our sense of the urgency of acting to mitigate it. So, we should ask whether this “truth” really is true.

Gates defends his flat statement that climate change “will not be the end of civilisation” with a graph showing that even if countries do no more than continue what they are doing now, “Global warming will probably be less than 3°C by 2100.” More precisely, the graph suggests that by 2100, with countries continuing to do what they are doing now, the global average temperature will be 2.9°C above the pre-industrial level.

Suppose we agree that, although a global temperature rise of 2.9°C would make some parts of our planet uninhabitable because of extreme heat or rising sea levels, enough will still be suitable for human habitation to allow civilisation to continue. The question remains: Will the temperature rise stop at 2.9°C?

To make the case that it will, Gates gives a detailed account of technological innovations that, he believes, could enable us to move to zero emissions before the end of the century. But he misses something critically important. To see this, let’s take a step back. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which has been signed by 198 parties, including



Bill Gates defends his flat statement that climate change ‘will not be the end of civilisation.’



PETER SINGER

The writer is Emeritus Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University and V K Rajah Visiting Professor at the Centre for Biomedical Ethics at the National University of Singapore, is co-host of the podcast Lives Well Lived, co-founder of the charity The Life You Can Save

all United Nations member states, dates from the “Earth Summit” held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Article 2 of the convention states that its ultimate objective is to achieve “stabilisation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

The convention did not put any specific limit on how much global warming could be tolerated without dangerous anthropogenic interference with our climate. Countries had different views about that, and the science was still developing.

Eighteen years later, however, at the 16th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP16), in Cancún, the science was sufficiently advanced for it to be agreed that to avoid danger, global warming must be limited to 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Then, in 2015, with further evidence showing the threat of sea-level rise to low-lying island states, the agreement was further refined at COP21 in Paris to hold the increase to “well below” 2°C while “pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.”

All the criticism of the 2°C limit

has been on the side of saying that it is too high. For example, a two-year expert review reported to the UNFCCC in 2015 that “the ‘guardrail’ concept, in which up to 2°C of warming is considered safe, is inadequate, and would therefore be better seen as an upper limit, a defence line that needs to be stringently defended, while less warming would be preferable.”

No major country, nor any authoritative expert body, has suggested that we could safely raise the 2°C limit. The main reason for this is not that civilisation will be unable to survive in a world that is 2°C warmer than the pre-industrial world was, or that, as Gates points out, it is easier to improve people’s lives when the climate is stable.

Instead, the main reason is that once global warming exceeds 2°C, the risk of activating positive feedback loops increases significantly. These loops may further increase global temperatures even if we have, thanks to the technological innovations Gates mentions, reduced to zero the emissions for which humans are directly responsible.

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SPORTS

RIYADH GAMES



Oman karate athlete Idris al Batrani concluded his participation in the Islamic Solidarity Games after defeating Yemen's Walid al Najjar 9-0.

AL KHANJARI'S FEAT 'GOLDEN ACHIEVEMENT' FOR OMAN

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 12

Sayyid Najib bin Hilal al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, received the Omani sports delegation participating in the sixth Islamic Solidarity Games (Riyadh 2025), at the embassy headquarters in the capital, Riyadh.

Sayyid Najib congratulated the delegation and the Omani weightlifter Amer al Khanjari on winning two medals — silver and bronze — in the weightlifting competitions, expressing his pride in this achievement, which he described as “golden,” because of its great moral value for Oman in an Islamic forum that brings together the most prominent athletes in the world.

The meeting was attended by Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakhalif, Secretary General of the Oman Olympic Committee, Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, Deputy Head of Mission, Salem bin Mohammed al Busaidy, Director of Mission, Said bin Juma al Harrasi, Assistant Director of Mission, Said bin Darwish al Jarjashi, administrator, in addition to the administrator, coach, the weightlifting team and the media representatives of the mission.

Sayyid Najib expressed his pride in the achievement of weightlifter Amer al Khanjari, emphasising that this result is a significant accomplishment for Omani sports. He said, “I am very pleased to meet with the members of the Omani sports delegation today at the embassy, and even more delighted by the achievement of one of our athletes – Amer al Khanjari – who won a silver and a bronze medal. For us, these two medals are worth their weight in gold, given the strong competition he faced from internationally renowned athletes.”

He added: “I was honoured to visit the athletes’ village in Riyadh and meet the Omani delegation there. I was impressed by the high spirits and great enthusiasm of our athletes in the various sports. I wish them all the best in the remaining competitions, and I wish the same for the rest of our athletes participating in this tournament and the upcoming championships.”

The ambassador affirmed that the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Riyadh and all its staff are fully prepared to provide all aspects of support and facilities to the sports delegation.

ESPORTS TEAM ENDS FOURTH

On Tuesday, Oman karate athlete Idris al Batrani concluded his participation in the Games after defeating Yemen's Walid al Najjar 9-0, before losing to Saudi Arabia's Saud al Bashir 3-1.

Oman's esports team also finished their campaign after a commendable performance, playing four matches: a 3-2 loss to Jordan, a 3-0 victory over Tajikistan, a 3-0 win against Morocco, and a 3-1 defeat to Jordan, ultimately finishing fourth in the competition after a hard-fought battle.



Sayyid Najib expressed his pride in the achievement of weightlifter Amer al Khanjari.
— Photos by Marwan al Yaqubi

Oman in good shape to face Sudan in friendly

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

RED WARRIORS are all set to meet Sudan in their first friendly preparatory match scheduled on Friday as part of the underway domestic camp to gear up for Fifa Arab Cup Qatar 2025 pre-qualifier match against Somalia, scheduled to take place on November 26. The match against Sudan will kick off at 7 pm at Seeb Stadium.

Sudan, on other side, will meet Lebanon in a qualifier match for Arab Cup. Oman had met Sudan in a friendly match in last March and the match ended in a 1-1 draw.

Oman team players have shown strong readiness after completing four intensive training sessions in recent days under the direct supervision of head coach Carlos Queiroz. The sessions, held in both morning and evening periods, focused on tactical coordination, physical conditioning and enhancing the players’ match sharpness ahead of the upcoming friendlies.

Sudan’s delegation arrived in Muscat earlier this week and began their own training programme in preparation for the Friday’s match. Following this fixture, Oman will play their second friendly against Ivory Coast on November 18, which will serve as the final test before the decisive Arab Cup qualifier.

On the squad front, Abdullah Fawaz continued his individual training under the supervision of the medical and fitness staff, while Al Mundher al Alawi rejoined full training on Tuesday after returning to the national team setup following his absence in the recent Fifa World Cup playoff stage.

The new faces in the squad including: Yousef al Malki of Al Shabab, Khalid al Ghatrifi of Al Nasr and Said al Alawi from Al Nahda impressed during camp with their energy, tactical awareness and commitment.

Queiroz’s 25-man squad blends experienced internationals and emerging talents. Goalkeepers Ibrahim al Mukhaini,



As this camp does not fall within official Fifa international matchdays, several professional players based overseas were not included.

Fayez al Rushaidi and Bilal al Balushi are joined by Ibrahim al Rajhi from Al Nasr, who earned his first senior team call-up.

As this camp does not fall within official Fifa international match days, several professional players based overseas were not included, such as Mohsin al Ghassani (Bangkok United, Thailand) and Khalid al Buraiki and Abdulrahman al Mushaifri (SK Artis Brno, Czech Republic) due to their visa issues and could not join the team since the last presence with Red Warriors during Fifa decisive qualifier matches against Qatar and UAE last month.

The upcoming friendlies will be crucial for assessing the squad’s readiness as Oman aim to secure victory against Somalia and

book their spot in the group stage of the Fifa Arab Cup Qatar 2025, set to take place in Doha from December 1 to 18.

OMAN SQUAD:
Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Fayez al Rushaidi, Bilal al Balushi, Ibrahim al Rajhi, Musab al Shaqsi, Khalid al Gatreifi, Yousef al Malki, Ahmed al Khamisi, Mahmood al Mushaifri, Said al Alawi, Amjad al Harthy, Thani al Rushaidi, Ghanim al Habshi, Ali al Busaidy, Musab al Maamari, Ahed al Mashakheyi, Harib al Saadi, Jameel al Yahmadi, Abdullah Fawaz, Zaher al Ghabri, Al Mundher al Alawi, Nasser al Rawahi, Salah al Yahyai, Mohammed al Ghafri and Essam al Subhi.

Oman fully prepared to host World Cup of Snookers

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

The Oman Billiards and Snooker Committee (OBSC) has announced that the Sultanate of Oman is fully prepared to host the World Snooker Championship (Men's and Teams), to be held from November 15 to 23 at the Active Oman Centre in the Oman Automobile Association, under the supervision of the International Billiards and Snooker Federation, and with support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), Sohar International Bank and Active Oman.

The announcement came during a press conference on Tuesday, attended by Khalid al Subhi, Chairman of Oman Billiards and Snooker Committee; Hamoud al Harthy, Secretary-General; Ahmed al Hadi, national team manager, and Qadeer Abbas, team coach.

Khalid al Subhi confirmed that the championship will officially kick off next Saturday under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, featuring a grand opening ceremony that will



The championship will be held from November 15 to 23 at the Active Oman Centre in the Oman Automobile Association.

bring together some of the world's top snooker players, alongside wide official and public attendance.

The tournament will last nine days, featuring 74 players from 23 countries competing for a total prize money of \$60,000.

Al Subhi noted that all preparations have been completed, including the installation of 10 certified snooker tables and full readiness of the national team. Eight Omani referees will also officiate as part of a 20-member international refereeing team. He praised the support of partner organisations, emphasising that hosting this championship represents an important sporting, economic and tourism milestone for Oman.

He said the committee has prepared a comprehensive media plan, including live streaming of all matches on YouTube from 10 am to 10 pm, with continuous score updates. Spectator stands have been arranged to accommodate 80-100 fans and Mwasalat will provide transportation services for the players.

Al Subhi revealed plans to expand and develop the sport, noting that 2026 will mark the establishment of a women's snooker division in Oman, with a female board member joining the committee to pave the way for forming a national women's team to represent Oman in international competitions.

During the press conference, the official tournament logo was unveiled. Hamoud al Harthy explained that the

design reflects the spirit of the championship, combining Omani identity with a global touch. The blue colour symbolises trust and stability inspired by the Omani sea, while red represents passion, energy, and the spirit of challenge. The bilingual Arabic-English logo underscores openness and professionalism.

For his part, national team coach Qadeer Abbas said the team enters the tournament in high spirits after a three-month training camp involving 15 players. “The squad includes several of Oman’s top players, led by captain Abdullah al Raisi, along with Ahmed al Khusaibi, Omar al Busaidy, Taha al Khusaibi, Hussain al Lawati, Sadiq al Farsi, Qasim al Balushi and Musalim al Mashali from Salalah. Three Omani teams will compete in the team category, and 10 players will participate in the singles category.”

National player Hussain al Lawati expressed his pride in Oman hosting this major global event, stressing that welcoming over 23 countries to Oman reflects the International Federation’s confidence in the Oman’s organisational capability.

CLOSEWIN



Pakistan's Salman Agha plays a shot during the first ODI against Sri Lanka in Rawalpindi. — AFP

PAKISTAN UPSTAGE LANKA IN FIRST ODI AS AGHA, RAUF SHINE

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan: Pakistan rode on a fighting century from Salman Agha and four wickets from Haris Rauf to beat Sri Lanka by six runs in the opening one-day international in Rawalpindi on Tuesday.

Agha scored an unbeaten 105 off 87 balls which guided Pakistan to an imposing 299-5 before Rauf grabbed 4-61 to keep Sri Lanka to 293-9 in 50 overs, giving the home team 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

The match went ahead despite a bomb attack just a few miles from the stadium in the twin city of Islamabad, which killed at least 12 people.

For Sri Lanka, debutant Kamil Mishara, who scored 38, and Pathum Nissanka, who made 29, set the platform with a solid 85-run opening stand before Rauf dismissed both the openers and Kusal Mendis (nought) in the space of just five runs.

Sadeera Samarawickrama (39) and skipper Charith Asalanka (32) fought their team back with a fourth wicket stand of 57 but Rauf broke the stand with Babar Azam taking a splendid slip catch to send Samarawickrama back.

Sri Lanka were down and out at 210-7 but Wanindu Hasaranga fought a lone battle with a fiery 52-ball 59 to bring the equation to 23 in the last two overs, before holing out with eight balls and 21 needed. Hasaranga hit seven boundaries while Janith Liyanage hit two sixes and as many boundaries in his 28.

Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi said his team put a good total.

“Agha and (Hussain) Talat batted very well to take us to 299,” said Shaheen. “A target of 300 was good and then Haris gave us crucial wickets.”

Asalanka admitted bowlers conceded extra runs. “The way Agha and Talat batted, it took the game away,” said Asalanka. “We gave away too many runs, it should have been under 270.”

Earlier, Agha hit his second ODI century while Talat made 62, lifting the home team from a precarious 95-4 after they were sent in to bat.

Sri Lanka spinner Hasaranga had jolted the home team with figures of 3-54, before Agha and Talat added 138 for the fifth wicket to revive the innings. — AFP

Alcaraz wins thriller with Fritz

CARLOS ALCARAZ came under extreme pressure before overcoming Taylor Fritz 6-7(2), 7-5, 6-3 in a thrilling match at the ATP Finals on Tuesday, before Italy's Lorenzo Musetti beat Alex de Minaur in a dramatic encounter.

Musetti's 7-5, 3-6, 7-5 win means that all four players can still make the semifinals, with the Italian facing Alcaraz, on two wins from two, and Fritz taking on De Minaur on Thursday to close out the Jimmy Connors Group, with the top two making the last four.

Last year's finalist Fritz played the tennis of his life, as both men served up the best encounter of the season-ending championships so far, but the American ran out of steam as Alcaraz turned on the style and took the deciding set with ease.

Alcaraz and Fritz had won their opening group matches, and the Spaniard looked in real trouble when the American took the opening set in a tiebreak. Alcaraz faced break points in the second set but rallied back to draw level.

Fritz began to tire, and Alcaraz broke to lead 4-2 in the final set before wrapping up the win in two hours and 48 minutes by serving out to love.

“It was pretty tight, I was struggling more than him in the first set,” Alcaraz said. “I wasn't serving well, and I think he was pretty comfortable from the baseline, from everywhere.”

Alcaraz needs one more victory to guarantee the year-ending world number one spot.

Tuesday's clash was a battle from the opening game, with Fritz taking nine minutes to hold after hitting three aces but also facing two break points. The American forced three break points in the next game before the pair traded breaks.

Fritz raced into a 5-2 lead in the tie-break and smashed two aces to take the set. At 2-2 in the second, Alcaraz was rattled, his drop shots which earlier beat Fritz began to fall short but, after losing advantage five times, the Spaniard held on.

Alcaraz got lucky with a shot that hit the net but crept over in the final game of the second set and broke to take the match to a third, where the Spaniard outclassed an exhausted Fritz. “I was really relieved after the win because of everything I went through during the match,” Alcaraz said.



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in action during his group stage match against Taylor Fritz of the US. — Reuters



Taylor Fritz of the US in action during his match against Spain's Carlos Alcaraz. — Reuters

“I wasn't feeling the ball as well as I was in the first round, but I'm really happy that I found a way to come back.”

MAGICAL MUSETTI

Musetti looked down and out with De Minaur serving for the match but those few who left early to beat the traffic missed out on a stunning comeback.

The Italian took the first set after breaking serve at 5-5, and De Minaur survived three break points in the second set opener before finding his first break points of the match at 4-4 and making them count.

De Minaur had control in the final set at 2-0 up, but when it came to the crunch Musetti found energy from somewhere to pull off a great escape, as defeat would have meant elimination. After two spectators died from cardiac arrests on Monday, play was held up again for a medical emergency in the crowd in the final set of Musetti's win. The match was suspended for several minutes before resuming. Local media reported a fan was transported to hospital in a serious but not life-threatening condition. — Reuters

Oman Handball League 2025-26 to begin tomorrow

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

The Oman Handball Association has announced the start of the 2025-26 First Division League, set to kick off on Friday, featuring eight clubs — defending champions Oman Club, Saham, Muscat, Seeb, Nizwa, Majees, Salalah and Al Shabab.

Both Salalah and Al Shabab will participate this season as replacements for Ahli Sidab and Sohar, who have officially withdrawn from all domestic competitions, including the Ministry's Shield, due to special circumstances.

The opening week will feature three matches, with Seeb facing Saham at the

Sohar Sports Complex, Al Shabab meeting Muscat at the Rustaq Sports Complex and Nizwa hosting Majees at the Nizwa Sports Complex.

The league will be played in three stages.

In the first stage, all eight teams will compete in a single round-robin format, earning points.

The top four teams will advance to the second stage, which will consist of two rounds to determine the finalists.

The top team from this stage will qualify directly for the final, while the second and third teams will play a single playoff match to decide the other finalist.

Teams finishing between



The upcoming season follows a remarkable 2024-25 campaign, which saw Oman Club secure both the league title.

5th and 8th will compete in a classification round, with the bottom two clubs being relegated to the Second Division.

The league champions will receive a trophy, 27 gold medals and a cash prize of RO 10,000 while the runner-

up will earn silver medals and RO 5,000 and the third place team will receive bronze medals and RO 3,000. Additionally, the Omani coach of the winning team will be awarded RO 250.

The Second Division League will begin on

December 12, featuring five clubs, Al Amerat, Mirbat, Al Suwaiq, Al Musannah and Masirah, while Al Ittihad Club has withdrawn from the competition.

Meanwhile, the Ministry's Shield Championship will commence on December 15, with 15 clubs.

Salalah, Mirbat, Al Shabab, Masirah, Al Talia, Al Amerat, Saham, Sohar, Majees, Al Suwaiq, Al Musannah, Oman, Seeb, Muscat and Nizwa have confirmed their participation. The tournament remains one of the country's most prestigious handball events, bringing together clubs from both divisions in high intensity matchups.

SUPER CUP SHOWDOWN

The Handball Super Cup 2025-26 will feature three clubs, defending champions Oman Club, Seeb and Muscat, following Ahli Sidab's withdrawal.

The semifinal between Seeb and Muscat will take place on December 8 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, with the winner advancing to face Oman Club in the final on December 10.

The upcoming season follows a remarkable 2024-25 campaign, which saw Oman Club secure both the league title and the HM Cup, while Ahli Sidab, Seeb and Muscat delivered strong performances.

SPORTS

NBA LEAGUE



Philadelphia 76ers guard Tyrese Maxey (0) drives for a shot against Boston Celtics guard Jordan Walsh (27) and guard Jaylen Brown (7). — AFP

SIXERS EDGE CELTICS WHILE THUNDER REACH NBA-BEST 11-1

NEW YORK: Tyrese Maxey and hometown hero Justin Edwards sparked the Philadelphia 76ers over Boston 102-100 on Tuesday while reigning champion Oklahoma City improved their NBA-best record to 11-1.

Maxey, the NBA's number two scorer this season, netted 21 points and Edwards came off the bench to score 22.

But it was Kelly Oubre's putback shot with 8.7 seconds remaining off the only miss of the night by Edwards that produced the winning points.

"Extremely tough. He fought in there," Maxey said of Oubre's final basket. "We got Justin the good look and KO got the rebound and put it back."

Boston's Derrick White missed a desperation half-court heave at the finish and the 76ers (7-4) improved to 2-1 over the Celtics this year, the games decided by a total of four points.

"That's how it goes," Maxey said. "We've played them 100 times it feels like since I've been in the NBA. They know what we're going to do and we know what they're going to do."

Maxey said winning tight games comes down to simple things.

"Resilient. We trust each other," he said. "Just try to make great plays and play great defence in the fourth quarter."

Edwards, a two-time state high school champion at Philadelphia's Imhotep High School, went 8-for-8 from the floor and 5-of-5 from three-point range in a sizzling display until his final miss that set up the winning basket.

Sixers reserve Quentin Grimes added 18 points while Boston's Jaylen Brown had a game-high 24 points. — AFP

Al Harthy named FIA WEC Sports Racer of the Year

AHMAD AL HARTHY PRESENTED WITH PRESTIGIOUS WEC AWARD AT SEASON FINALE

OMAN'S NUMBER ONE DRIVER 'VERY PROUD' TO BE SPORTS RACER OF THE YEAR

POSITIVE END TO STRONG AND COMPETITIVE SEASON FOR TEAM WRT COMPETITOR



MUSCAT: Ahmad al Harthy has capped off a strong third year in the FIA World Endurance Championship in style, having been named the category's 'Sports Racer of the Year' following the conclusion of the 2025 season this past weekend.

Absolutely delighted to receive the award, which was presented to the Omani following the eighth and final round of the campaign at Bahrain International Circuit, Al Harthy says he was surprised and thrilled in equal measure. Most pleasingly for Al Harthy – who has enjoyed vital support this season from prestigious partners OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Experience Oman – is being recognised by the FIA WEC from an LMGT3 class field which featured more than 30



drivers. The combined entry was well over 60 competitors this year.

Ending the 2025 season eighth in the FIA World Endurance Championship LMGT3 Driver Standings, Al Harthy and Team WRT team-mates Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde raced to a pair of podium finishes over the course of the eight rounds.

Extremely close to taking LMGT3 race victory at Imola in Italy, round two, and at the Circuit of the Americas in the USA, round six, the trio concluded the season just a couple of points shy of seventh place in the championship in the No 46 BMW M4 LMGT3.

Al Harthy also proved his pace and competitiveness in qualifying across the season, progressing to the Hyperpole 'shoot out' session six times. In round two at Imola, the Omani was actually fastest in regular

qualifying and Rossi went on to ensure pole position there during the subsequent Hyperpole.

AHMAD AL HARTHY:

"To be presented with the Sports Racer of the Year award was a big surprise, I'm very proud to have received the award from WEC themselves and obviously very happy. To have been recognised, from all of the many drivers on such a world-class grid, is very special for me personally and for everyone from Oman who has again supported me so strongly this season.

"It's wonderful to end the year this way, it was a very nice ceremony and the trophy will sit very proudly with the other FIA WEC trophies we've earned over the past three seasons racing in the World Championship."

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Jeet Shah to lead Oman in ACC U19 Men's Premier Cup 2025

MUSCAT: Jeet Shah will lead Oman's cricket team at the ACC U19 Men's Premier Cup 2025, which will be held in the UAE from November 19 to December 1.

Saumya Sampat has been named the vice-captain.

The squad, a carefully balanced mix of experienced youth and promising cricketers, is set to make a strong impression under head coach Damith Warusavithana as Oman compete against some of Asia's most talented emerging cricket nations in the 50-over format.

Oman's campaign in the 14-nation tournament kicks off against Qatar on November 21, followed by fixtures versus Japan on November 24 and Maldives on November 26. All the games are scheduled for 9 am start, Oman time. Besides Oman, Qatar, Japan and Maldives, who are pooled in Group C, the other competing teams are Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong (Group A), hosts UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain (Group B), Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Iran (Group D).

Coach Warusavithana said: "Over the past three months, the U19 squad has been training with great intensity and commitment. The players have shown exceptional dedication as we continue to develop and strengthen all aspects of our game – batting, bowling, fielding and overall team strategy."

He added: "The U19 boys have started competing in the



Oman's campaign in the 14-nation tournament kicks off against Qatar on November 21.

Intermediate Division of the domestic senior league, gaining valuable exposure and important learning experiences. Additionally, a few of our players are also playing in the Premier Division, earning more experience and confidence at a higher level of competition.

"We go into this tournament with high hopes, a clear plan and full confidence in our squad."

Organised by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), the tournament serves as a key pathway for emerging cricket nations in Asia – offering competitive exposure, developmental

opportunities and a chance to benchmark themselves against regional peers and a qualification to join the top teams in the U19 Asia Cup.

OMAN U19 SQUAD: Jeet Shah (captain), Saumya Sampat (vice-captain), Nitish Nadendla, Rishab Gupta, Ojjus Pachisia, Aryan Joshi, Varshieth Sai Dinesh, Prathiesh HR, Vihaan Chauhan, Kavish Shah, Mohammad Aseel, Mohammad Eisa, Mohammad Hamid, Jeyapranesh.

Support staff: Damith Warusavithana (head coach), Ajith D Costa (manager), Sultan Ahmed (asst coach).

BUSINESS

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Dhofar II to boost energy transition

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

OMAN took yet another important stride towards a sustainable energy future with the signing of the Dhofar II Wind Power Project Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), a significant initiative that underpins the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to clean energy and the nation's Oman Vision 2040 aims.

Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (Nama PWP), the sole procurer of new capacity, signed a 20-year PPA with Sembcorp and OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) to develop the Dhofar II Wind Power Project

Under the PPA, the joint venture to be established between Sembcorp and OQAE will build, own and operate the 125MW wind farm, with power output to be supplied to Nama PWP upon project completion. The project is expected to be ready for commercial operation in Q3 2027.

The PPA signing ceremony was attended by Ahmed bin Salem al Abri, CEO of Nama PWP, Vipul Tuli, President & CEO, Renewables, West, Sembcorp and Eng Ghalib bin Saeed al Maamari, Acting CEO of OQAE. The signing was witnessed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufer, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

The project, which will be developed in the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands, Dhofar Governorate, will span an area of about 12 million m2 with a total investment of approximately RO 43 million. At completion, it will generate sufficient clean electricity for over 18,000 Omani households and cut carbon dioxide emissions by 158,000 tonnes every year.



Dignitaries and executives at the project signings on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Al Aufer said that the signing of the PPA marks “a key milestone in Oman's renewable energy journey”. He added, “This project reflects our commitment to Oman Vision 2040 and our goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Investing in renewable energy is a cornerstone of a more sustainable and prosperous future for Oman”.

According to Ahmed bin Salim al Abri, CEO of Nama PWP, the project would generate approximately 396,754 MWh of electricity annually, with the potential to save approximately 76 million cubic metres of natural gas every year. “This project is another milestone in our pursuit

Under the PPA, the joint venture to be established between Sembcorp and OQAE will build, own and operate the 125MW wind farm, with power output to be supplied to Nama PWP upon project completion. The project is expected to be ready for commercial operation in Q3 2027.

towards energy mix diversification and long-term sustainability of the electricity sector”.

Representing the project's international partner, Vipul Tuli, President & CEO of Renewables West at Sembcorp, expressed his company's pride in supporting Oman's clean energy vision. “Building on our experience with solar and gas-fired power projects in Manah, Salalah and across the region, this project further cements our position as a reliable partner in advancing energy transformation for the region”, he said. With more than 1.1 GW of energy assets in Oman, Sembcorp is set to work in close cooperation with Nama PWP and OQAE to provide a “cleaner, more resilient energy future for Oman”.

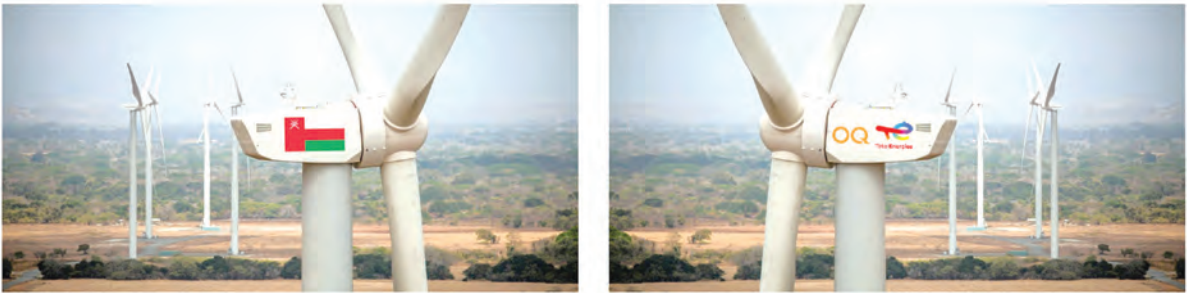
From Nama PWP's leadership team, Eng Abdullah bin Rashid al Sawafi, Chief Energy Transition Officer, reaffirmed that the Dhofar II project is a strategic initiative supportive of the company's clean energy agenda.

“The project will reduce natural gas consumption significantly and lower carbon emissions, while integrating renewable sources such as wind and solar into the main grid”, he said. “It aligns with Oman's national energy objectives and global efforts to advance sustainable energy solutions”.

Elaborating on the technical details, Eng Salim al Hadhrami, Project Engineer with Nama PWP, said the facility will have 20 WD200 wind turbines manufactured by Windey Energy Technology Group and will start commercial operations in the third quarter of 2027.

“This project will play a vital role in supporting Oman Vision 2040 and powering thousands of Omani households with clean renewable energy”, he said.

Wind turbines arrive for PDO's Riyah 1 and Riyah 2 projects



36 turbines with a total generation capacity of 200 MW will be installed as part of the two wind farm projects.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 12

OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) — a subsidiary of OQ and the designated national champion for renewables, has confirmed the arrival of the first batch of wind turbines for the Riyah 1 and Riyah 2 wind farms. Developed in partnership with TotalEnergies, the two projects will feature a combined total of 36 turbines with a total generation capacity of 200 MW of clean electricity produced from wind power.

The arrival of the turbines marks a pivotal step in Oman's transition towards clean energy and represents a major stride towards achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and the country's Net Zero by

2050 commitment.

Once operational, the projects are expected to save millions of cubic metres of natural gas annually and reduce carbon emissions by approximately 740,000 tonnes per year.

The delivery represents continued progress in realising Oman's renewable energy ambitions and reaffirms the nation's commitment to building a sustainable economy powered by clean energy.

Commenting on the achievement, Eng Ghalib al Maamari, Acting Chief Executive Officer of OQ Alternative Energy, said: “The arrival of the turbines for Riyah 1 and Riyah 2 marks a new chapter in Oman's renewable energy journey.

Riyah Wind Projects demonstrate OQ's

unwavering determination to harness renewable resources at scale and lead the region's energy transition.

Through this partnership, we combine our local expertise with TotalEnergies' global experience in renewable development, turning Oman's renewable potential into real progress”.

The projects are being developed under a long-term Power Purchase Agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to offtake the electricity generated from these wind farms.

They will play a key role in meeting the growing industrial demand for renewable energy and in powering the future of Oman's green hydrogen initiatives.



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION

Strategic PPP Project for the Development and Operation of Sewage Treatment Plants

As part of Sultanate of Oman's strategy to expand private sector participation in critical infrastructure and to advance Oman Vision 2040, Nama Water Services (NWS) invites qualified local and international developers, operators, and consortia to submit an Application for a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project for development and operation of two sewage treatment plants as detailed below:

Al Ansab STP (Phase III) & Al Amerat STP (Phase II)

- Al Ansab STP: Expand ~82,000 m³/day (from ~125,000 to ~207,000 m³/day) and operate and maintain long-term the existing and the new STPs.
- Al Amerat STP: Expand ~36,000 m³/day (from ~18,000 to ~54,000 m³/day) and operate and maintain long-term the existing and the new STPs.

The Project will be procured under a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) model, covering design, financing, construction, operation, and maintenance of new facilities alongside the long-term operation of existing assets.

Interested parties may register to receive the RFQ by emailing company name, contact person, position, and phone number to ppp.tenders@owwsc.nama.om ; Instructions to access the RFQ and subsequent updates will be provided upon registration.

Applications must be submitted by **Tuesday 16th December 2025 at 2:30pm Gulf Standard Time (GST)**.

For further information or clarification, please email to ppp.tenders@owwsc.nama.om

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SHORTTAKES



Through Al Riadah, Dhofar Islamic delivers a truly one-stop wealth management experience.

AL RIADAH: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SHARIA-COMPLIANT WEALTH MANAGEMENT

MUSCAT: Under the umbrella of Dhofar Islamic, Al Riadah represents the pinnacle of Sharia-compliant wealth management in Oman — a proposition built on trust, transparency and innovation. Designed exclusively for distinguished clients, Al Riadah brings together personalised banking, tailored investment advisory and advanced digital solutions within one comprehensive, faith-based framework.

Through Al Riadah, Dhofar Islamic delivers a truly one-stop wealth management experience. Clients benefit from dedicated relationship managers, structured advisory services and access to innovative Islamic investment opportunities — all reviewed and approved by Dhofar Islamic’s independent Sharia Supervisory Board to ensure full compliance.

Al Riadah also integrates digital enablement and customer-centric innovation, allowing clients to access and manage their portfolios securely via modern platforms. Its advisory teams work closely with clients to craft personalised strategies focused on long-term stability, diversification and legacy planning.

Wealth management in Islamic banking is one of the most vital pillars of Oman’s modern financial landscape. Rooted in the principles of Sharia, it offers a holistic approach that aligns financial prosperity with the ethical and spiritual values of Islam.

Beyond investment advice, Islamic wealth management under Al Riadah encompasses comprehensive financial planning, risk management and asset allocation — ensuring growth, protection and sustainability for both clients and the wider community.

Since the introduction of Islamic banking in Oman in 2012, the concept of wealth Al Riadah has evolved from mere accumulation to responsible stewardship — an Amanah. It builds on this foundation by offering solutions that generate lawful returns while supporting social and economic wellbeing.

Through Sharia-compliant instruments such as Mudarabah, Musharakah, Sukuk and Islamic mutual funds, clients are empowered to grow their wealth ethically and sustainably.

What sets Al Riadah apart is its dual commitment to performance and principle. Every financial solution is designed to achieve strong returns while maintaining moral integrity. The proposition upholds fairness, accountability and social responsibility — giving clients both the satisfaction of prudent investment and the reassurance that their wealth is managed in accordance with divine guidance.

NATIONAL FINANCE EARNS MSX TOP 15 COMPANIES RANKING IN OMAN

In a testament to its unwavering commitment to excellence and consistently remarkable financial performance, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, has been ranked among the Top 15 Best Performing Companies on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), as determined by the independent Moore Survey based on 2024 performance.

The honour was conferred at the OER Corporate Excellence 2025, held under the auspices of



This recognition reinforces the company’s sustained growth, financial resilience and its enduring contribution to the nation’s economic progress.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, who presented the recognition to HH Sayyidah Wisam bint Jaifar al Said, Chief Marketing, Corporate Communication and Sustainability Officer, receiving it on behalf of National Finance.

This recognition reinforces the company’s sustained growth, financial resilience and its enduring contribution to the nation’s economic progress.

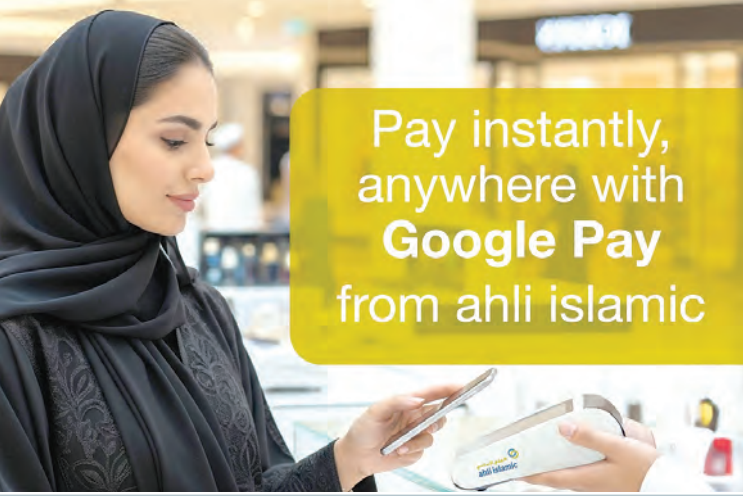
ahli islamic launches Google Pay initiative

AS part of its commitment to delivering advanced digital banking solutions that meet the needs of modern customers, ahli islamic has announced the launch of Google Pay for debit and credit cardholders. This initiative aligns with the bank’s strategy to provide easier and more secure banking experiences, enabling customers to make contactless digital payments worldwide.

The launch reflects ahli islamic’s continuous focus on innovation and digital transformation, reinforcing its position as a contemporary Islamic bank that combines Sharia-compliant values with modern services to meet customers’ expectations in the digital age.

Commenting on the launch, Noora Sultan, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Banking at ahli islamic, said: “Integrating innovative digital solutions, such as Google Pay, reflects our ambitious vision at ahli islamic to provide smart and secure banking services that align with global developments while remaining rooted in our Islamic and community values, creating a new model of financial innovation and empowerment.

Technological advancement



The launch reflects ahli islamic’s continuous focus on innovation and digital transformation.

ahli islamic customers can now add their debit and credit cards to Google Pay in just a few simple steps, providing a modern and secure way to carry out their daily transactions without the need for physical cards.

forms a cornerstone of the bank’s journey in building a service ecosystem that meets our customers’ expectations and provides them with complete flexibility in their banking transactions. We will continue leading the way in developing the best banking solutions to ensure that the ahli islamic experience remains at the forefront of Islamic banking services”.

ahli islamic customers can now add their debit and credit cards to Google Pay in just a few simple steps, providing a modern and

secure way to carry out their daily transactions without the need for physical cards. With this service, payments can be made easily via Android smartphones or Wear OS smartwatches at any point of sale that supports NFC technology.

The digital wallet offers advanced layers of security, ensuring customers enjoy a convenient and safe payment experience that reflects the bank’s commitment to adopting the latest banking technologies.

Google Pay has been designed to keep pace with modern life, offering customers a payment experience that combines speed, convenience and security.

This initiative reflects ahli islamic’s commitment to simplifying everyday banking by leveraging the latest digital payment technologies, enabling customers to carry out transactions seamlessly across channels that suit their needs and modern lifestyles.

This launch represents an extension of ahli islamic’s vision to provide an advanced banking experience rooted in established Islamic principles, while also aligning with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 for a thriving digital economy.

OMAN AMERICAN BUSINESS COUNCIL REBRANDS AS AMCHAM OMAN

MUSCAT: The Oman American Business Council (OABC), the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman, has officially rebranded as AmCham Oman.

The new name and identity mark a significant milestone in the organisation’s growth and continued mission to foster trade, investment and partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States.

The announcement was made during the Council’s annual Thanksgiving Dinner, attended by members, partners and senior representatives



The rebrand signifies OABC’s evolution into a modern, forward-looking business platform.

from the public and private sectors. The rebrand signifies OABC’s evolution into a modern, forward-looking business

platform aligned with the global AmCham (American Chamber of Commerce) network.

“As an affiliate of the United States Chamber of Commerce, AmCham Oman joins a network of over 3 million member companies worldwide”, said Ali Daud, Chairman of AmCham Oman.

“This transition reflects the core of this organisation — a stronger, globally recognised platform that connects the Omani and American business communities”.

Fouad Eid, VP of AmCham Oman, added: “Over the past two decades, AmCham Oman

has grown into one of the most active and respected business organisations in the country. This new chapter strengthens our visibility, our partnerships and our commitment to building bridges between Oman and the United States”.

“The name AmCham Oman immediately identifies us as part of a trusted international network of AmChams around the world, showcasing our established network and creating even more opportunities for our 300+ member companies”, said Rebecca Olson, CEO of AmCham Oman.

Sohar International honoured at the launch ceremony of AIM

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its leading presence and steadfast role in supporting the national financial markets ecosystem, Sohar International is proud to have been recognised among the issuing managers during the launch ceremony of the Alternative Investment Market (AIM).

The event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said and initiated by the Muscat Stock Exchange in partnership with the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and



This recognition reaffirms Sohar International’s continued journey of excellence and its unwavering commitment to advancing Oman Vision 2040.

Financial Sector Development ‘Etidamah’, along with several government entities.

The award was received by Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, CEO of Sohar International, in recognition of the bank’s tangible contributions to strengthening the foundations of financial development and enhancing the national investment landscape. This recognition reaffirms Sohar International’s continued journey of excellence and its unwavering commitment to advancing Oman Vision

2040, fostering a diversified and sustainable economy grounded in transparency, innovation and institutional strength.

Al Murshidi, stated: “At Sohar International, we take great pride in this recognition, which stands as a testament to the confidence that regulatory authorities and market stakeholders place in our institutional capabilities, financial strength and leadership in advancing Oman’s capital market landscape.

Our active participation

in the launch of the AIM represents more than a milestone — it reflects our continued commitment to supporting the national agenda for economic diversification and sustainable development.

Through this initiative, Sohar International aims to contribute to building a more dynamic and inclusive financial ecosystem that enables national enterprises to access growth capital, attract strategic investors and compete on both regional and international fronts.”

SHORTTAKES



Residential real estate remained the main driver of growth, with the residential index up 11.8 per cent year-on-year.

OMAN’S PROPERTY INDEX JUMPS 10.8 PER CENT IN Q2

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

OMAN’S real estate price index rose 10.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2025 compared with the same period last year, according to new data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The total value of real estate transactions reached about RO 259.6 million during the quarter, including RO 172.3 million in the residential sector and RO 87.3 million in commercial properties.

The report showed growth across both residential and commercial segments, supported by strong demand, active development projects and rising investor confidence linked to the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Residential real estate remained the main driver of growth, with the residential index up 11.8 per cent year-on-year. Residential land values increased 11.3 per cent, apartments 9.7 per cent and villas recorded the sharpest rise at 17.6 per cent, while other housing types rose 1.7 per cent.

Muscat recorded the highest growth among all governorates, with residential land prices up 38.1 per cent compared to the same period last year. Increases were also seen in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (6 per cent), Al Batinah South Governorate (3.5 per cent), Musandam Governorate (2.3 per cent) and Al Sharqiyah South Governorate (0.3 per cent). NCSI attributed Muscat’s performance to active urban development, population movement towards the capital and growing interest in mixed-use projects.

Some governorates saw lower residential land prices. Al Buraimi Governorate recorded the largest drop at 37.7 per cent, followed by Al Wusta Governorate (24.7 per cent), Al Dhahirah Governorate (24.2 per cent), Dhofar Governorate (6.3 per cent), Al Batinah North Governorate (3.1 per cent) and Al Sharqiyah North Governorate (0.6 per cent).

UN platform opens doors for Omani suppliers

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, NOV 12

THE Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), organised yesterday a workshop titled “From Local Market to Global Market: Empowering Suppliers in the Sultanate of Oman via the United Nations Platform” at the Chamber’s headquarters in Muscat.

The event was attended by Zakaria bin Abdullah al Saadi, CEO of OCCI, Dr Thaer Yaseen, FAO Representative in Oman, a number of business owners, representatives from government and private institutions and international experts from FAO. Several Omani companies and suppliers also participated to explore opportunities for expanding their presence in international markets and engaging in global procurement systems.

Zakaria al Saadi, CEO of OCCI, said the initiative reflects the Chamber’s ongoing efforts to empower the Omani private sector and enhance its participation in international markets through partnerships with global organisations.

He noted that cooperation with FAO contributes to transferring expertise and building the capacity of local companies to compete globally, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and the Chamber’s strategic goal of improving the business environment and fostering economic diversification.

For his part, Dr Thaer Yaseen, FAO Representative



The session introduced Omani companies to the UN Global Marketplace (UNGM) — the central procurement portal connecting over 30 UN organisations with suppliers worldwide.

in Oman, described the workshop as a milestone in FAO–OCCI collaboration.

He noted that the UN procurement system exceeds \$25 billion annually across more than 220 countries and territories, offering vast opportunities for suppliers worldwide.

Despite the competitiveness of Omani companies, he said their participation in UN procurement remains limited at around 0.06 per cent of total registered suppliers.

The session, he added, provided a platform to enhance the readiness of Omani suppliers to register and compete effectively in international tenders.

The session also introduced Omani companies to the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM) — the central procurement portal connecting over 30 UN organisations with suppliers worldwide. The platform hosts more than 490,000 registered vendors from over 190 countries, including 313 suppliers from Oman.

It provides access to a transparent, competitive and sustainable global market where over 95% of vendors are micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and around 86% are based in developing countries.

Oman, ranked 50th globally on the Human Development Index, is recognised among the highly developed nations contributing to this growing global supplier network.

The workshop featured technical presentations outlining practical steps for Omani companies to become registered suppliers within the UNGM.

Experts from FAO explained the organisation’s procurement mechanisms — including RFQ, ITB, RFP and REOI processes — and detailed the technical (70%) and financial (30%) evaluation criteria used in tender assessments.

Presenters also highlighted the importance of preparing transparent proposals and adopting sustainable sourcing practices aligned with UN standards.

During the session, Saeed Ibrahim, Procurement and Supply Chain Officer at FAO Oman, presented FAO’s key initiatives in Oman, including the camel cheese value-chain project in Dhofar Governorate, which supports women’s entrepreneurship, as well as programmes to enhance apiculture, improve poultry production and develop vegetable seed systems and fruit tree nurseries.

He also highlighted FAO’s efforts in fisheries co-management and World Food Day activities, which address global challenges such as climate change and food security.

Port of Salalah container volumes jump 26 per cent

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 12

PORT of Salalah, a key transshipment and logistics hub on Oman’s southern coast, posted a 26 per cent rise in container throughput, while cautioning that further growth would hinge on the full restoration of maritime traffic through the Red Sea and other global developments.

The Container Terminal handled 3.2 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) during the nine-month period ended September 30, 2025, compared with 2.5 million TEUs for the same period last year — an increase of 26 per cent. The rise in volume was mainly attributed to additional vessel calls following



A return to Red Sea and Suez routes would benefit the Port of Salalah in terms of vessel calls and transshipment volumes.

the completion of the Container Terminal upgrade, the company said in its consolidated financial results for the period.

The upgrade—undertaken by international terminal operator APM Terminals, a strategic partner

in the port, in collaboration with Salalah Port Services Company — involved a \$300 million expansion and modernisation of the Container Terminal.

The project included the installation of 10 new ship-to-shore cranes capable of handling ultra-large container vessels, expansion of yard and storage areas, the addition of 2,000 new reefer plug-ins and upgrades to all six existing berths, along with new access infrastructure and enhanced electrical systems.

Braik bin Musallam al Amri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Salalah Port Services Company SAOG, noted however that the container shipping industry continues to face uncertainty and headwinds stemming from

geopolitical tensions, global tariffs and inflation.

“The main global shipping lines, including Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, continue to avoid Red Sea passage. It remains to be seen whether recent peace efforts will enable a return to Red Sea and Suez routes, which would likely benefit the Port of Salalah in terms of vessel calls and transshipment volumes”, he said.

“At this point, the Red Sea situation is expected to persist well into 2026 and as a result, SPS volumes are likely to remain flat at current levels. However, Maersk will continue to support SPS with its volume commitments, which include a penalty scheme for any expected shortfall”, Al Amri added.

Meanwhile, the General Cargo

Terminal (GCT) handled 19.8 million metric tonnes of general cargo during the period, up from 17.0 million metric tonnes a year earlier — an increase of 17 per cent.

Al Amri further said: “Growth in the General Cargo Terminal segment remains strong, with the dry bulk categories — particularly gypsum and limestone — serving as key drivers. This growth trajectory is expected to continue despite recent challenges related to intermittent shore crane availability. The liquid bulk outlook also remains positive, with significant interest from international operators and investors seeking to capitalise on the state-of-the-art facilities and available capacity”.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Chinese firms report tougher EU conditions



Chinese companies in the European Union say business conditions have worsened for the sixth straight year, citing rising labour costs and political hurdles, according to a survey by the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU.

Of 200 firms, many flagged challenges in research, talent acquisition, digitalisation and market access, signalling growing strain on Chinese investments in the bloc. — Reuters

ENERGY FORECAST

IEA predicts longer fossil fuel demand



The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts global oil demand will reach 113 million barrels per day by 2050 — up 13 per cent from 2024 levels. The IEA also expects global energy demand to rise 15 per cent by 2035.

The revised outlook contrasts earlier projections for a swift shift to cleaner fuels, with the US Energy Secretary calling its peak demand estimate “unreasonable.” — ONA

CURRENCY MOVEMENT

Dollar weakens on rate cut expectations



The US dollar fell after data showed slower private-sector job growth, fuelling speculation of a Federal Reserve rate cut in December. Traders now see a 68 per cent chance of a 25-basis-point cut.

The euro held at \$1.1586, while the pound traded at \$1.3149. The dollar index stayed near a one-week low of 99.46 as investors awaited a vote to end the US government shutdown. — ONA

OPINION

How the work environment shapes the investment climate



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI.

THE world recognises the importance of aligning work environment policies with the investment procedures in any country. This alignment helps boost productivity, stabilises the workforce in institutions and reduces annual employee turnover.

This, in turn, leads to increased GDP for national economies, enhanced job opportunities for citizens, access to technology and the adoption of artificial intelligence in the work performed by institutions and their employees.

From this perspective, the Sultanate of Oman is working to strengthen the relationship between labour laws and the investment environment to attract more domestic and foreign investments and provide more job opportunities for its citizens.

These two elements are, in fact, closely intertwined in economic development and are achieved through a set of policies and procedures, including improving the work environment and workers' conditions, enacting legislation that protects workers' rights such as wages, working hours and occupational safety.

Thus, the government is keen to establishing institutions for the swift and fair resolution of labour disputes, and continuing to support training and development programmes to enhance worker productivity. It is also achieved by strengthening the social and professional stability system, so that

workers feel job security and fairness, leading to increased productivity and stability. This, in turn, reduces labour turnover costs and improves production quality, especially with having clear laws and swift, transparent transactions in government institutions that foster investor confidence in the economic environment.

Over the past decades, Oman has made significant efforts to build an integrated work and investment environment by developing labour and investment legislation. The new Labour Law, issued in 2023, balances the rights of both workers and employers. The Foreign Capital Investment Law, issued in 2020, grants significant incentives to foreign investors, allowing full foreign ownership in several economic sectors.

This is in addition to ongoing efforts to establish special economic zones, such as those in Al Duqm, Suhar and Salalah, as well as other governorates. These zones offer a regulated business environment, advanced infrastructure and adherence to international labour standards.

Furthermore, the government is committed to digital transformation of its services to reduce bureaucracy and expedite licensing and company registration procedures to increase confidence in the economic environment. It also fosters partnerships between the government and the private sector for continuous training and workforce development, while simultaneously improving the work and

The Sultanate of Oman is working to strengthen the relationship between labour laws and the investment environment to attract more domestic and foreign investments and provide more job opportunities for its citizens.

living environment, occupational safety, social security and health insurance.

Improving the business environment and attracting investment is becoming increasingly evident in Oman, especially as investors prefer countries with legislative and social stability; and those with a qualified, trained and stable workforce. Furthermore, the existence of flexible and clear laws gives investors' confidence in the sustainability of their businesses.

Reports from international organisations indicate that Oman enjoys ease of doing business and global competitiveness, which has led to an improved ranking in indicators related to the business and investment environment.

As we know, the relationship between the business and investment environment is complementary; the better the former, the more attractive the latter becomes. Thus, the Omani government's efforts effectively contribute to attracting investments and strengthening confidence in the Omani economy.

The relationship between the business and investment environment in Oman is a fundamental pillar in building a balanced and sustainable economy.

This is due to the ongoing efforts of relevant authorities to develop labour legislation and enhance the investment environment, which strengthens confidence in the national economy and attracts both foreign and domestic capital.

BIG PHARMA TRUMP TOADYING STORES UP BIGGER BATTLES

AIMEE DONNELLAN

Big Pharma's bid to neutralise Donald Trump's war on drug prices is storing up a painful headache elsewhere. Large drugmakers like Novo Nordisk, Eli Lilly, Novartis, Roche and AstraZeneca have been scrambling to announce new factories stateside and pledging to cut US treatment prices in a bid to avert tariffs. One side effect of the strategy is that they may launch fewer drugs in Europe, in turn prompting a backlash from continental lawmakers.

Pharmaceutical bosses have little choice but to kowtow to Trump. The US is the number one drug market in terms of sales thanks to a dysfunctional healthcare model that sets prices far above those in other countries. With the threat of tariffs, Trump is rapidly inking deals which will see drugmakers lower prices for Medicaid, the government-backed healthcare programme, to match the cheapest level in other countries.

Pharma bosses fear this so-called "most favoured nation" commitment more than anything.

If they were to charge Americans the same rate as Brits or Germans, they could end up shaving up to 90% off the value of their US drug prices. But there is a partial fix: they can simply withdraw drugs from the European market to avoid any like-for-like comparisons and thus keep US prices elevated, especially for new, more expensive treatments. Over the last five years, 40% of new US medications have not yet been launched on the continent, according to data from IQVIA.

The deals negotiated with Trump may see that trend accelerate. This means that breakthroughs in cancers and other ailments may not be immediately available to European patients. One CEO of a European pharmaceutical company said that he expects the continent's politicians to see the error of their ways and desperately pay up for drugs once citizens are unable to access lifesaving treatments.

This thinking, however, assumes European governments can afford higher drug prices. But the reality is politicians struggling to balance their books, such as in France and Britain, may not be willing to pay up for treatments that are only marginally better than the current offering. They may also be picky over which firms they support, prioritising those with domestic factories or research labs. — Reuters

Britain faces 'crisis' on workplace sickness

THE UK is facing a "quiet but urgent crisis" on workplace sickness that costs the country around seven per cent of GDP each year, a review by former John Lewis boss Sir Charles Mayfield has found.

The Keep Britain Working Review, an independent report by Mayfield for the Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), has uncovered the costs of ill health for the UK economy. The report found that poor workplace health trends cost firms around £85 million a year as Mayfield warned that the country was "sliding into an avoidable crisis", holding growth back and leading people to be more dependent on the state.

More than half of the costs of ill health on the UK economy, calculated at £47 billion, are from lost output when employees cannot work. Lost productivity and administrative costs from litigation or recruitment also add to the costs on the UK economy.

In response to the report, over 60 employers including British Airways, Jaguar and Rover and Rio Tinto confirmed they would work with the government to change workplace health and approaches over the next three years.

"Work can be demanding. Setbacks are part of life. Health and work are not always easy partners, but they are morally reinforcing", Mayfield said. He also said workers often had to take "personal responsibility" for leaving jobs due to ill health, with 800,000 more people now out of work than in 2019, due to health problems.

The Mayfield report also threw a spotlight on the rising numbers of economic inactivity among young people due to long-term sickness, with the number of 16 to 34-year-olds out of work due to a mental health condition rising by 76 per cent between 2019 and 2024.

The review, which was conducted over 10 months, underlined how 93 per cent of sick notes in



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

A key recommendation in the report calls on employers to take on greater responsibility for individuals' health in addition to the NHS and workers themselves. Work and pensions secretary, Pat McFadden said more employers could help staff swiftly return to work after sickness.



Workers walk through the Canary Wharf financial district in London, Britain. — Reuters

England deemed patients "not fit for work" and could be extended without consultation. Mayfield said that sick notes could sometimes be "problematic" and become a "barrier to contact, further embedding distance between employer and employee."

A key recommendation in the report calls on employers to take on greater responsibility for individuals' health in addition to the NHS and workers themselves. Work and pensions secretary, Pat McFadden said more employers could help staff swiftly return to work after sickness.

He said: "Employers are uniquely placed to make a difference, preventing health issues where possible, supporting people when issues arise, and helping them return to work", McFadden said.

Deputy director of public policy, Jane Gratton, at the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) said: "This report is a hugely important contribution to tackling the issue and helping businesses access and retain a skilled workforce".

Meanwhile, firms across the private sector are braced for a "difficult winter ahead as activity is forecast to downturn across UK services due to mounting tax fears, new research has indicated.

Bosses' eyes are firmly set on the Chancellor Rachel Reeves' next Budget later this month, with business leaders urging the government to fix the HMRC's complex systems and provide greater stability over the next year.

A leading survey by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), considered to be one of the UK's most influential business groups, has suggested that private sector activity would fall in the next three months.

Its weighted balance for expectations in the next three months remained at -20 in October, while its output volume figure for the previous three months was also left at a low not recorded at any time over the last two years.

The CBI's deputy chief economist Alpesh Paleja said firms across the private sector faced a brutal few months ahead amidst mounting speculation of tax hikes coming at the Budget. "Firms are facing a difficult winter, with private sector momentum weak and confidence fragile", he said.

Muscat hosts experts at FDI forum

MUSCAT: Oman will host a high-level executive forum aimed at enhancing capacities to attract and promote foreign direct investment (FDI) in Muscat. The two-day event, scheduled for November 12-13, 2025, is organised by Smart Investment & Consultancy Gateway (SIG) in partnership with NxtZones and will take place at the Crowne Plaza, Al Qurum, Muscat. The programme will bring together international experts in economics, investment and special economic zones (SEZs).

The forum is designed for professionals from both the public and private sectors, including representatives of investment promotion agencies, policymakers, consultants and executives engaged in national development initiatives. Participants will gain intensive training on attracting FDI clients, generating and qualifying investment leads using modern tools, aligning investment projects with Oman Vision 2040 and implementing effective investor aftercare programmes. The two-

day schedule will open with an overview of global FDI trends and GCC investment environments, highlighting how clear policy frameworks, targeted incentives and a conducive business culture can drive investment growth in Oman. The second day will focus on strategic investment promotion, investor targeting, engagement methodologies, lead generation; and the use of AI and digital tools to optimise investment facilitation and aftercare. Participants will also

explore what makes SEZs successful and attractive to investors. The programme features contributions from renowned international experts. Dr Douglas van den Berghe, CEO of NxtZones and Deputy Chairman of FEMOZA, brings more than 25 years of experience advising governments, multinational corporations, SEZs and investment promotion agencies worldwide. Dr Yousuf bin Hamed al Balushi, founder of SIG and former FDI advisor to the IMF, IFC and Oman Vision 2040, will share his

insights on connecting investment strategies with private sector efficiency and regional economic visions. Dr Adarsh Verma, senior economist with 18 years of experience across Europe and the MENA region, will provide guidance on designing SEZ business models, integrating sustainable strategies and ensuring compliance with UN SDG and ESG standards. The forum will be conducted in both Arabic and English, with simultaneous interpretation provided to ensure effective participation. The

methodology draws upon international best practices developed in collaboration with organisations such as UNCTAD, UNDP and the World Bank, offering participants direct access to tools and strategies used globally for attracting and facilitating investment. Organisers emphasised that the initiative highlights Oman's commitment to strengthening its position as a competitive destination for FDI, in alignment with the national diversification agenda and the long-term objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

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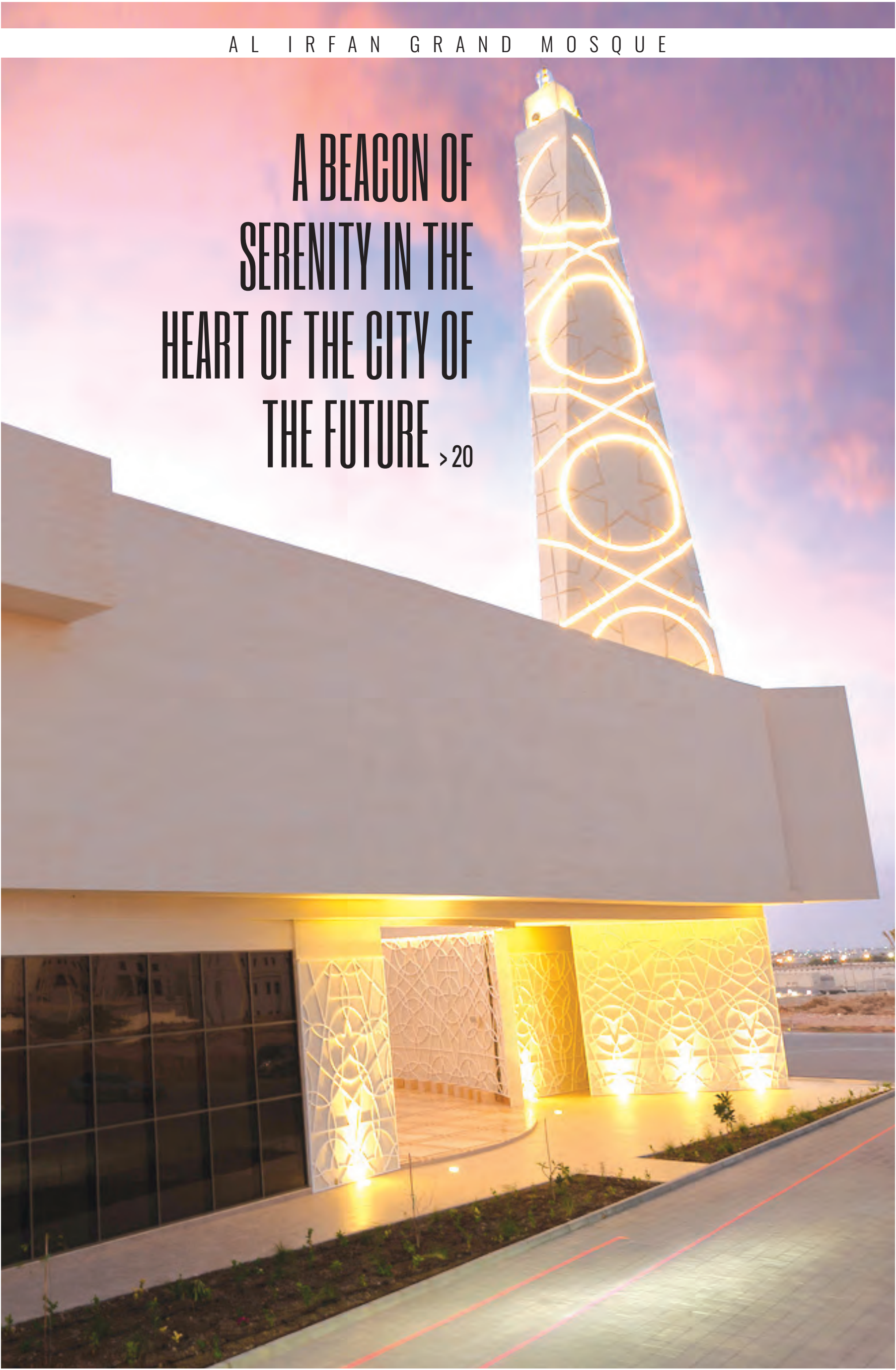
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ART/LIFE



A L I R F A N G R A N D M O S Q U E

A BEACON OF SERENITY IN THE HEART OF THE CITY OF THE FUTURE > 20

CHANGING WORLD

Instilling self-confidence in school-going children crucial



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
The writer is a Senior Editor at the Oman Daily Observer.

Instilling self confidence in school-going children is a multifaceted endeavour, crucial for their academic success, social development and overall wellbeing.

Earlier this week, my Grade 4 son’s teacher called in to say that my ward was selected among all students to give the opening speech at school for the planned National Day event. However, his teacher needed me to convince him to accept the role because even though his teachers saw him capable, he initially declined the offer. I believe this was a lack of self-confidence.

Confidence, defined as a belief in one’s own abilities or judgment, is foundational for children to engage actively in learning, persevere through challenges and form healthy relationships.

One primary approach involves fostering a growth mindset, where children understand that intelligence and abilities can be developed through effort and dedication.

Educators and parents can promote this by praising effort and strategy over innate talent, emphasising the process of learning rather than solely the outcome.

Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment is also paramount. When children feel safe, valued and respected, they are more likely to take risks, ask questions and express their ideas without fear of judgment.

This includes providing opportunities for children to experience success, which builds a positive self-perception and reinforces their capabilities. Differentiated instruction, which caters to individual learning styles and paces, can ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve mastery and feel competent.

Furthermore, encouraging autonomy and decision-making empowers children, fostering a sense of control and self-efficacy.

Allowing children to make choices within appropriate boundaries, whether in academic tasks or extracurricular activities, helps them develop problem-solving skills and trust in their own judgment.

Providing constructive feedback, which focuses on specific behaviours and offers actionable suggestions for improvement, is more effective than general praise or criticism in building genuine confidence.

Finally, promoting social competence and positive peer relationships contributes significantly to a child’s self-assurance. Opportunities for collaborative learning, teamwork and conflict resolution help children develop essential social skills and a sense of belonging.

When children feel accepted and capable of navigating social interactions, their overall confidence is enhanced.

Q U I C K F E A T U R E S



TECHNOLOGY

Visitors take pictures with their mobile phones during a performance of the Unitree robot at the Web Summit at Parque das Nacoes in Lisbon. — **AFP**



NATURE

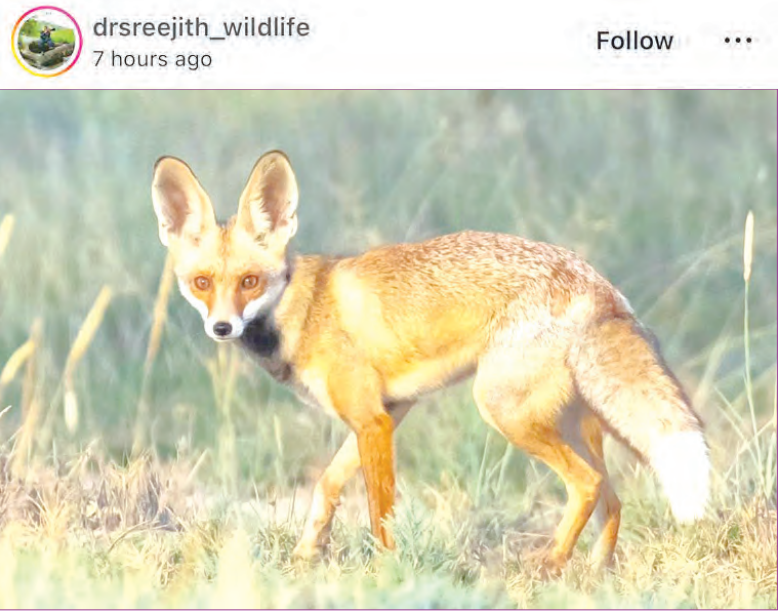
Northern Lights, also called aurora borealis, illuminate the night sky in Johnston, Iowa, US. — **Reuters**



LITERATURE

Judges of this year’s Booker Prize competition including Sarah Jessica Parker chat at a reception to celebrate the Booker Prize 2025 and the newly announced Children Booker Prize at Clarence House in London. — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Arabian Red Fox in Salalah



Omani Beekeeping in Talha village, Al Rustaq

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‘Mimmo’ the dolphin delights Venice tourists, worries experts



A dolphin nicknamed 'Mimmo' swims in Venice. — Reuters

A wild dolphin, nicknamed “Mimmo” by the local press, has become a regular visitor in the waters off Venice’s St Mark’s Square, captivating tourists but raising concerns about its safety amidst heavy marine traffic.

Dolphins are rare visitors to the Unesco World Heritage city’s lagoon, though two were spotted in March 2021 during Covid-19 restrictions that had reduced boat activity.

Mimmo, believed to have entered the lagoon in late June, has been dodging the water buses, taxis and gondolas in the busy St Mark’s Basin area since last month, according to marine biologist Luca Mizzan, head of Venice’s Natural History Museum.

Unusually, the dolphin remains near St Mark’s even when it has fed and appears unfazed by the noise of the boats and crowds, Mizzan said.

Experts are concerned that Mimmo could get injured by a boat propeller and are



monitoring its movements, but are uncertain how to encourage the dolphin to leave the area, he said.

The approach of winter, which normally drives away fish, may make the lagoon less attractive for Mimmo and encourage it to return to the open sea, Mizzan said, adding there was no way to force it away.

“This animal seems really sure of what it wants to do... It is perfectly capable of going out to sea, but even if we were to escort it, it could come back within a couple of hours”. — Reuters



GEORGINA BENISON

The performance at the Royal Opera, House of Musical Arts on Monday evening presented by the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra (ROSO), was billed as a “Special Concert” — and so it was in many ways.

An Egyptian engineer, business founder and developer, Samih Sawiris, decided at age 61 to perform a Piano Concerto. He gave himself 6 years to study the piano — from scratch — to achieve a competent standard to perform the solo role with an orchestra. He succeeded together with German composer-pianist, Joja Wendt and 42-year old Swiss conductor, Lena-Lisa Wüstendörfer in bringing this ambitious project to fruition and has already performed in venues around Europe and Egypt.

Here in Muscat he was supported by ROSO with the especially composed concerto forming the third part of the hour-long concert. The programme started with the early 20th century Egyptian Architect-Composer, Abu Bakr Khairat. His, “Suite Folklorique”, re-discovered by Wüstendörfer, is a delightful blend of Arabic folk tunes and Western Romanticism in an engaging, accessible style.

The first movement opened with light pizzicato strings under gentle melodies in the woodwind, supported by some interesting rhythms from the percussion. The piece is not too complex nor demanding with its themes composed on Arabic scales, yet brought out the best of ROSO playing.

The fifth movement featured Egyptian folksongs in the woodwind over Hispanic rhythms, while the 6th used western scales and themes from the brass and percussion in a military style, ending in a patriotic, Nationalistic flurry. The audience enjoyed this work so much that they clapped after each movement!

After stage rearrangement, the second piece of the evening featured the 35-year-old wunderkind harpist-composer, Alexander Boldachev.

Entitled, “Harmony of Sand and Sea” his solo composition used innovative techniques for amplified harp such as harmonics, beating or plucking strings with reverb and melodies above tremolo patterns. There

SPECIAL CONCERT: EMERGING TALENTS WITH ROSO



All Photos by Khalid Al Busaidi

If Mahler were alive today he would be gratified to see the direction in which his orchestral writing has led. He — along with the public — would also be very impressed with Samih Sawiris’ perseverance, diligence and commitment to becoming a successful concert pianist in six years under the expert guidance of Wendt and Wüstendörfer.

were Spanish infections in the language and even echoes of Albeniz towards the end. The rippling glissandos familiar in harp technique suggested the sea washing upon the sand and Boldachev even sang vocalise at one point. Syncopated rhythms drove the composition to an exciting finale. Alexander returned to the stage for his prepared encore, his virtuosic transcription of Vivaldi’s “Winter”. His interpretation of this iconic Baroque favourite was subtle and sensitive and well received by the adoring audience.

Boldachev took his place within the orchestra and then conductor and Mahler expert, Lena-Lisa Wüstendörfer returned with the Man of the Night, Samih Sawiris. His solo piano introduction to the Concerto was with confident, strident chords until the orchestra joined in. The harp became part of the orchestral texture in a cinematic, romantic style, yet the solo piano was clearly audible above a

pianissimo tutti. Sawiris is clearly competent, though he has a tendency to hold down the sustain pedal — perhaps a subconscious mannerism. His first arpeggiated solo cadenza was not too challenging, yet accurately and sympathetically performed. There was some tricky writing for the brass in the full orchestral sections, while the piano part was doubled in the bright glockenspiel. This may have been a reference to Sawiris’ early school experience as a relegated xylophone player! The theme was easy to follow as it passed between woodwind and strings, swelling in a romantic vein at times, with a very classical ending to the movement.

The final Mahleresque movement featured warm cello sonorities, excellent horn playing, some brilliant brass passages, chromatic falling motifs towards the climax and many timpani rolls, worthy of any Mahler performance. Well done, ROSO! The piano contribution is interesting (Mahler himself was a fine pianist but did not compose for the instrument) adding to the orchestral texture, rather than as soloist. The final movement was just the right length to keep the audience’s attention.

As a great innovator of the Symphonic form, if Mahler were alive today he would be gratified to see the direction in which his orchestral writing has led. He — along with the public — would also be very impressed with Samih Sawiris’ perseverance, diligence and commitment to becoming a successful concert pianist in six years under the expert guidance of Wendt and Wüstendörfer.

FEATURES



AL IRFAN GRAND MOSQUE

A BEACON OF SERENITY IN THE HEART OF THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

STAFF REPORTER

In the ever-evolving heart of Al Irfan City, Muscat’s vision for the future finds its quiet soul in stone, the Al Irfan Grand Mosque, a masterpiece where faith meets modern design and where the rhythm of prayer blends with the hum of a city in motion. From afar, the mosque appears to rise out of the urban fabric like a whisper of calm, its elegant minaret reaching skyward as if calling not only to worshippers, but to the spirit of reflection itself.

Since the dawn of Islam, the mosque has stood as both sanctuary and statement, an embodiment of spiritual identity and architectural artistry. Al Irfan Grand Mosque renews that legacy with a contemporary eye. Its design reimagines the traditional liwan, the shaded vestibule that once defined ancient mosques, transforming it into a striking circular form that rests at the heart of the courtyard. Here, geometry becomes grace, the circular liwan invites worshippers inward, guiding them gently towards tranquility. As day fades into night, the lighting design deepens this experience, leading visitors from the calm glow of the exterior to the sacred hush of the main prayer hall.

Every curve and contour of the mosque is born of inspiration from Omani, Arab and Islamic architectural traditions, reinterpreted with a modern sensibility befitting a city defined by innovation. The sixty-metre-high minaret, while visually fluid, is engineered with precision to balance light, shadow and sound, its elegant proportions giving the

The design reimagines the traditional liwan, the shaded vestibule that once defined ancient mosques, transforming it into a striking circular form that rests at the heart of the courtyard. Here, geometry becomes grace, the circular liwan invites worshippers inward, guiding them gently towards tranquility.



call to prayer a sculptural resonance. The result is an architectural landmark visible from all directions, a compass point for the city and a symbol of its spiritual and cultural aspiration.

From the first glance, Al Irfan Mosque captures the eye with its harmony, a dialogue between simplicity and grandeur. The sleek verticality of its minaret rises above a structure adorned with refined Islamic motifs, a meeting of heritage and modernity, earth and sky. The exterior, luminous yet grounded, evokes reverence without extravagance. In moments of stillness,



the mosque transforms into a silent artwork, a sculpture of devotion that radiates dignity, grace and quiet majesty. The minaret seems to lift the spirit upward while the building’s firm foundation anchors it to the earth, creating a balance of faith and intellect, of heaven’s reach and humanity’s embrace.

Yet Al Irfan Mosque is far more than a conventional place of worship. It is a living centre of culture and learning, a house where prayer meets purpose. Within its walls, a modern digital library, soon to open, will welcome researchers, students and avid readers from across the

city. Designed as a space for both contemplation and connection, the library features reading areas bathed in natural light, a café for discussion and a view that opens onto serene green landscapes. Complementing it is Sablat Al Irfan, a social hall for community gatherings, lectures and celebrations, a space where joy and remembrance coexist. Workshops, educational sessions and faith-based talks will also find their home in the mosque’s multipurpose hall, ensuring that knowledge flows as freely as prayer.

This spirit of inclusivity extends through every part of the complex, a dedicated women’s prayer area, a learning centre that empowers women’s participation in religious and educational life, an imam’s residence providing stability and continuity, and even a modern facility for funeral rites, all reflecting the mosque’s commitment to serving the full spectrum of community needs.

The story of its creation mirrors the collaborative spirit of the city itself. The vision took shape in August 2022 and, over two years of careful planning and craftsmanship, evolved into a reality inaugurated on November 7 in a ceremony attended by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs along with citizens and officials. The design was developed by an acclaimed Portuguese architectural firm, whose approach gracefully fuses global artistry with the calm elegance of Omani tradition. Inside, every detail tells a story, a custom-woven carpet designed by an Iranian artisan in hues of quiet earth and sea, a chandelier of pure Czech crystal descending like a shower of light, both tributes to a dialogue between cultures united in beauty.