

O M A N
عمان
D A I L Y

Observer



10 UAE MAKE A COMEBACK TO DEFEAT OMAN

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INBRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS
TO EQUATORIAL
GUINEA AND SPAIN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Teodoro Obiang Nguema of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea on the occasion of his country’s Independence Day anniversary. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the president and to the friendly people of Equatorial Guinea for continued progress and prosperity. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of greetings to His Majesty King Felipe VI of the Kingdom of Spain on the occasion of his country’s National Day. His Majesty praised the good relations between the two friendly countries, wishing lasting stability and further progress for the Kingdom of Spain.

LOW-PRESSURE
SYSTEM BRINGS RAIN
IN GOVERNORATES



Heavy thunderstorms are expected in the governorates of Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah and Al Buraimi as the Sultanate of Oman will be affected by a low-pressure system. Heavy rain ranging between 20-60 mm can lead to flow of wadis and water streams, accompanied by active descending winds. It is also expected that Al Sharqiyah North Governorate and the southern parts of Musandam Governorate will experience rainfall ranging between 10-30 mm, and Al Sharqiyah South Governorate may see rainfall between 5-10 mm, leading to the flow of wadis and streams, accompanied by active downward winds.

‘We Are Oman’ to honour 40 innovators

MUSCAT: The second edition of the educational programme ‘We Are Oman’ concludes on Monday 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, at Al Bustan Palace Hotel. The closing ceremony will be attended by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and a

number of academics and students from various educational and professional institutions. The ceremony will honour 40 winners across 13 competitions categorised under five main fields, reflecting the diverse skills and competencies participants have developed during the programme. These fields include intellectual, literary, artistic, media creativity and electronic innovation, in addition to recognising the

top institution that excelled in implementing the programme. The ‘We Are Oman’ award is an annual competition supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. It targets higher education institutions and their students, reflecting the ministry’s commitment to supporting university student activities, nurturing talents, developing various skills and equipping students

with capabilities for success and advancement at national, professional and personal levels. The award also aims to encourage higher education institutions to compete in organising and preparing student events and activities, identify the most committed institutions in implementing programme recommendations, and contribute to the development and support of student councils and activity programmes.

500,000 RETURN TO GAZA



Palestinians ride on an animal-drawn cart among rubble, following Israeli forces’ withdrawal from the area, amid a ceasefire in Gaza. — AFP

GAZA’S CIVIL defence agency on Saturday said more than 500,000 people have returned to Gaza City since a ceasefire took effect the previous day. “More than half a million people have returned to Gaza (City) since yesterday,” said Mahmud Bassal, a spokesman for the civil defence. Meanwhile, the head of the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said he visited Gaza to discuss post-conflict stabilisation and insisted no US troops will be deployed to the Palestinian territory.

Admiral Brad Cooper wrote on X that he just returned from a trip to Gaza to discuss creation of a CENTCOM-led “civil-military coordination center” which will “support conflict stabilisation.” An initial deployment of 200 US troops is set to arrive in Israel to help monitor the ceasefire in Gaza between Hamas and Israel under President Donald Trump’s peace plan. The US military will coordinate a multinational taskforce which will deploy in Gaza and is likely to include troops from Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates.

“America’s sons and daughters in uniform are answering the call to deliver peace in the Middle East in support of the Commander in Chief’s direction in this historic moment,” Cooper wrote on X. “This great effort will be achieved with no US boots on the ground in Gaza,” Cooper wrote. Cooper was appointed in early August to lead CENTCOM, the US military command responsible for the Middle East. French President Emmanuel Macron plans to attend the international summit in Egypt to discuss the implementation of the Gaza peace plan, the

Élysée Palace said on Saturday. The meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh is set for Monday, according to Macron’s office. The summit is to be chaired by US President Donald Trump and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. Macron aims to address security, governance and reconstruction at the summit, the Élysée Palace said, adding that the talks aim to facilitate the stabilisation of the region based on a two-state solution. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has also been invited by Sisi, though his trip has not been officially confirmed. — Agencies

Plastic pollution treaty not dead in the water, says UN expert

GENEVA: The UN’s environment chief insists that a landmark global treaty tackling plastic pollution remains achievable, despite talks twice imploding without agreement, and the chair suddenly resigning last week. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) executive director Inger Andersen said in an exclusive interview that countries were not walking away, regardless of their sharp differences on combating the ever-growing problem, including

in the oceans. A large bloc wants bold action such as curbing plastic production, while a smaller clutch of oil-producing states wants to focus more narrowly on waste management. Supposedly final talks in South Korea in 2024 ended without a deal — and a resumed effort in Geneva in August likewise collapsed. Countries voiced anger and despair as the talks unravelled, but said they nonetheless wanted future negotiations. “We left with greater clarity. And no



Countries were unable to find common ground on tackling the scourge of plastic pollution. — AFP

one has left the table,” said Andersen. “No one has walked away and said, ‘This is just too hopeless, we’re giving up’. No one. And all of that, I take courage from.” The plastic pollution problem is so ubiquitous that microplastics have been found on the highest mountain peaks, in the deepest ocean trench and scattered throughout almost every part of the human body. More than 400 million tonnes of plastic are produced globally each year, half of which is for single-use

items. While 15 per cent of plastic waste is collected for recycling, only nine per cent is actually recycled. Nearly half, or 46 per cent, ends up in landfills, while 17 per cent is incinerated and 22 per cent is mismanaged and becomes litter. Annual production of fossil fuel-based plastics is set to triple by 2060. As things stand, there is no timetable for when further talks might be held, and no countries have made formal offers to host them. — AFP



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SHORT TAKES



Rainfall in governorates as low pressure impact begins

SUHAIL AL NAHDI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The governorates of North and South Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Buraimi, and Musandam witnessed thunder showers ranging between 20 mm and 60 mm, associated with active downdraft that led to the flow of waids as the country comes under the impact of a trough of low pressure, on Saturday.

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), predicts continued thunder showers in the governorates of North and South Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Buraimi, and parts of Musandam Governorate, with rainfall amounts reaching up to 60 mm associated with downdraft reaching speeds of 15 to 35 knots and reduced horizontal visibility during the rainfall.

The trough is expected to affect the governorates of North and South Al Sharqiyah with varying intensity of rain, accompanied by hail and active downdraft.



The activities provided a platform for innovators to transform entrepreneurial ideas into projects

Startup Weekend at Sohar University to foster innovation

SUHAR: Startup Weekend activities began at Sohar University in Al Batinah North Governorate, providing a platform for innovators to transform entrepreneurial ideas into real startup projects with guidance from mentors and experts.

Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah al Maqbali, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Financial Affairs, highlighted that the event focuses on five key areas: artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, financial technologies, renewable energy and sustainability, innovation in education and healthcare, and e-commerce and logistics. He stressed the importance of equipping participants with skills in thinking, planning, and implementation based on global startup methodologies.

The first day featured pitching and team-building sessions, followed by workshops on gap analysis, business model development, and presentations on the second day.

The final day involves intensive work on prototypes and concludes with presentations before a judging panel. — ONA



SHABAB OMAN II CALLS AT JEDDAH PORT

JEDDAH: The Royal Navy of Oman’s (RNO) vessel *Shabab Oman II* docked at Jeddah Islamic Port in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as part of the return leg of her seventh international voyage titled ‘Glories of the Seas 2025’.

During her international voyage, *Shabab Oman II* is conveying its noble mission of strengthening the bonds of friendship and brotherhood between the Sultanate of Oman and the world by promoting authentic Omani culture at its international stops, highlighting the Sultanate of Oman’s glorious maritime history and its rich heritage. — ONA

‘Family visa renewals now require attestation’

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 11

COMPANIES across Oman have advised employees to get their certificates attested by their respective embassies and the Foreign Ministry (FM) as part of new requirements for renewing family joining visas, effective from October 1.

Internal HR circulars highlight that attestation is now a mandatory step to prevent delays and ensure a smooth renewal process. “Please ensure all documents are valid and properly attested where required to avoid renewal delays. Compliance is mandatory from October 1,” a notice from a leading company stated.

The updated guidelines specify



Attestation agencies have reported a surge in clients seeking document verification in recent weeks

that for the renewal of a child’s ID card, the original passport, visa copy, and FM-attested birth certificate must be presented, with both parents encouraged to be present.

For family joining spouse visa renewals, the presence of both

spouses and submission of an FM-attested marriage certificate, along with original passports, are required.

Attestation agencies have reported a surge in clients seeking document verification in recent weeks. “We are witnessing an increasing number of requests for attesting birth and marriage certificates ahead of renewals,” said a source from SGIVS, an agency handling Indian documentation in Oman.

However, a senior Royal Oman Police (ROP) official clarified that a copy of the visa and the physical presence of parents are not required for a child’s visa renewal. “For employee ID renewals, a Worker Data Form from the Ministry of Labour must be submitted,” the source added.

Oman Film Society showcases Omani cinema at Isfahan International Youth Film Festival

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

A delegation from the Oman Film Society (OFS) participated in the 37th Isfahan International Festival for Children and Youth Films, held in Isfahan, Iran. The festival brought together leading film-makers and creatives from around the world to celebrate and promote global cinema for young audiences.

The Omani delegation included Dr Jinan al Eisa, who served as a jury member for the international film competition, and Dr Hamid al Amri and Dr Shabeer al Ajmi, who attended as guests of the festival.

Expressing her delight in serving on the international jury, Dr Jinan al Eisa said the festival was “an important platform for discovering young talent and encouraging film productions dedicated to children and youth.” She added



OFS took part in the Isfahan International Festival for Children and Youth Films

that OFS’s participation ‘reflects Oman’s commitment to cinema as a cultural and educational medium and enhances the presence of Omani film-makers on the global cinematic stage.’

Dr Hamid al Amri highlighted that the participation reflects

ongoing cultural and artistic cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

“The festival provided valuable opportunities to connect with directors and producers from various

countries and explore future avenues of collaboration in children’s and youth cinema,” he noted.

The festival featured a line-up of international and Iranian films competing across several categories, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Acting and Best Artistic Achievement.

Among the winners, the Canadian film *Miss Botts* took home the Best International Film Award, while the Iranian film *The Dedicated Orphanage* won Best Director. The Best Screenplay Award went to K-Poper (Iran), Honey (Denmark) earned Best Acting, and *The Storm* (China) received Best Artistic Achievement.

The OFS participation at the Isfahan Festival aligns with its mission to expand Omani cinema’s international presence and promote collaboration with global film institutions.

SHORTTAKES



CULTURAL EVENING, ‘LANTERNS OF THOUGHT’ IN DHOFAR

SALALAH: A cultural evening titled ‘Lanterns of Thought’ was held at Al Dahariz Beach in Salalah, aiming to revitalise the cultural movement in Dhofar Governorate through literary readings, discussions and folk storytelling.

The event featured discussions on two acclaimed novels — ‘The Bamboo Stalk’ by Kuwaiti author Saud al Sanousi and ‘Al Shahili’ by Tunisian writer Mufida Mohammed — alongside a presentation of folk tales that encouraged imagination, creativity and positive social values.

The evening also included audience-engaging cultural competitions and a visual arts exhibition, highlighting the importance of reading and its role in shaping thought and expression.

Writer Nour bint Ghafram al Shahriyah, Head of the Narrative Committee at the Omani Writers and Literati Association (Dhofar Branch), said the initiative reflects the association’s commitment to enhancing cultural awareness, inspiring writers and readers, and enriching the literary and artistic landscape in the governorate.

She emphasised that such events open new avenues for reading and expression, while contributing to the intellectual and creative growth of Dhofar’s vibrant cultural scene. — ONA



Artists, both young and old, part in the Al Assalah Towers art competition

125 ARTISTS SHOWCASE CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT

MUSCAT: The fourth Al Assalah Towers art competition transformed Al Ghubra into a lively canvas of colours, creativity and community spirit. Held at Al Assalah Towers in Muscat, the much-anticipated annual event brought together 125 talented artists — from children as young as four to adults — all belonging to the Al Assalah Towers community.

The competition served as an inspiring platform for budding and seasoned artists alike to showcase their imagination and artistic expression. The event was judged by renowned artists Khurshed Raja and Chanjeet Singh, whose expertise and constructive feedback added great value to the judging process. Both artists offered thoughtful insights and encouragement, inspiring participants to continue honing their creative skills.

Residents and attendees praised the initiative for its role in nurturing community bonds and promoting the arts. They emphasised that art is more than just beauty on canvases — it reflects emotion, imagination and the shared human experience. The day concluded with a vibrant prize distribution ceremony attended by over 200 residents. Winners received trophies, certificates of merit, and exciting prizes, while every participant was recognised for their enthusiasm and creative energy. The event reaffirmed Al Assalah Towers’ commitment to fostering community engagement and encouraging artistic pursuits among its residents.

The competition was supported by Prestige Properties, The Movers, Shah Nagardas, Maharaja, Kesar, 968, Neeti Design Studio, Nabeel Biscuits, Avon, Kaldi 850 Coffee and Al Mnarh.

IMAM AZZAN BIN QAIS MOSQUE OPENS IN AL RUSTAQ

AL RUSTAQ: The Imam Azzan bin Qais Mosque was opened in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq in Al Batinah South Governorate, under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, on Friday.

The mosque represents a distinguished religious and architectural addition to the Wilayat of Al Rustaq.

The built-up area occupies approximately 3,500 square metres, while the total land area, including parking, is



approximately 10,000 square metres. It can accommodate some 1,000 worshippers in the internal and external prayer halls, while the women’s prayer hall can

The Imam Azzan bin Qais Mosque accommodates 1,000 worshippers and the built-up area occupies approximately 3,500 square metres

accommodate 150 worshippers. With a total cost exceeding RO 400,000, the mosque boasts a library to serve mosque visitors and provide religious and scientific references, a general council on the upper floor to serve as a meeting and consultation centre, an administrative office, and rooms designated for the imam and the attendants, among other facilities. The mosque features a beautiful architectural design and is surrounded by a fully enclosed wall with ample parking spaces. — ONA

SQU highlights AI’s role in Arab libraries’ innovation

SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY has unveiled a groundbreaking study highlighting the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Arab academic libraries.

Modern libraries are evolving from traditional book repositories into dynamic knowledge hubs, leveraging advanced technologies to enhance education and research.

The study, conducted by Dr Ahmed Maher Shehata from the Department of Information Studies and presented at the 16th Asian Social Sciences Conference in Tokyo in May 2025, assesses the impact of AI technologies, particularly large language models such as OpenAI’s GPT-4o and Google’s Gemini, on academic information services.

Using a rigorous framework, the research evaluated 170 queries across five dimensions: accuracy, comprehensiveness, reliability, cultural sensitivity and timeliness. Findings revealed

A pioneering study by SQU reveals how AI, particularly models like Google Gemini and OpenAI’s GPT-4o, is reshaping academic libraries in the Arab world while emphasising the need for cultural specificity and human oversight



A key contribution of the study is its focus on cultural specificity in the Arab context

Gemini outperformed GPT-4o in social sciences, humanities, and education queries, while both models showed limitations with highly localised knowledge and current events, highlighting the continued need for human verification.

A key contribution of the study is its focus on cultural specificity in the Arab context, emphasising that AI integration must balance technological advancement with the preservation of academic and cultural identity.

The research recommends incorporating the Gemini model into Arab library infrastructures while implementing policies to ensure ethical and effective AI usage. It also sets the stage for future studies on AI’s long-term impact on cataloguing, collection development, and information literacy.

This study represents a significant step toward using AI to reinforce libraries as central hubs of knowledge, innovation, and culturally grounded research in the Arab world.

Oman marks World Mental Health Day, holds first GCC Mental Health Conference

MUSCAT: The First GCC Mental Health Conference was held under the theme ‘Access to Services: Mental Health During Disasters and Emergencies.’

The three-day conference was organised by the Ministry of Health, represented by Al Masarra Hospital.

The event coincides with World Mental Health Day. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sulaiman bin Nasser al Hiji, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and attended by government officials, specialists and researchers in the field of mental health from Oman and other GCC states.

The conference seeks to raise public awareness about mental health and enable researchers, decision-makers and health professionals to exchange expertise and knowledge. It also aims to showcase the latest research and innovative strategies that contribute to improving access to efficient mental health services.

The activities included sessions about addiction, artificial intelligence (AI) and the role of traditional media and social media in highlighting mental health.

During the sessions,



Ministry of Health, represented by Al Masarra Hospital, organised the three-day conference

Omani researchers presented specialised research papers titled ‘Early screening for autism spectrum disorder’, ‘Stigma about seeking psychological assistance’ and ‘Types of psychological stress among family caregivers’.

The sessions also included scientific debate about the role of smart technologies in supporting mental health services and the Ministry of Health’s approach to integrating AI into its services in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Earlier, Oman joined

Day, which falls on October 10 each year, reaffirming the importance of creating a supportive environment for mental well-being and reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness.

Mental health specialists told the ONA that raising awareness about psychological balance has become increasingly vital amid mounting professional and social pressures.

Dr Zakia bint Qahtan al Busaidiyah, Senior Consultant in Family Medicine and Psychotherapy at the Nine Center and the Oasis of Hope Consulting Center, emphasised

that mental health should not be seen as a luxury or secondary concern, but as a foundation for both physical well-being and personal effectiveness.

Dr Zakia added that maintaining mental stability begins with adhering to core personal values that empower individuals to face difficulties with inner peace.

Dr Firas bin Ali al Ajmi, a psychiatrist, noted that achieving psychological balance has become increasingly challenging in modern times. “The first step is self-awareness, which enables individuals to deal with stress before it escalates into a psychological crisis,” he explained. He pointed out that organising a daily routine — through adequate sleep, proper nutrition, regular physical activity, is essential for mental well-being.

Aisha bint Amer al Nadhiriyah, psychologist, marital relations consultant, said that young people today face constant mental pressure as they are the most connected to screens and most vulnerable to social comparison and loneliness. “Studies have shown that prolonged screen exposure contributes to depression in about 4 per cent of users,” she explained. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

IT'S A SIGN

Artificial intelligence's potential to enhance sign language is opening new horizons for millions with hearing disabilities around the world. But the Arabic language, which is rich in non-verbal expressions and heavily dependent on context, is challenging for AI.



SAUD AL ANSARI

AI'S POTENTIAL to enhance and expand the use of sign language is opening new horizons for millions of deaf and hard-to-hearing people around the world.

Hamad al Abri, an Arabic language teacher at Al Amal School for the Deaf, believes that AI cannot fully replace human sign language interpreters. “The Arabic language is rich in non-verbal expressions and heavily dependent on context, which AI has not yet mastered.”

Still, Al Abri acknowledges that AI can play a supportive role by offering visual representations and image-based tools that enhance sign language communication.

He points out that one of the main challenges is the depth of linguistic meaning in both Arabic and sign language, which makes accurate translation difficult. The limited availability of AI datasets in Arabic sign language and the writing challenges faced by some deaf individuals also hinder content creation using AI tools. “Facial expressions are a crucial part of sign language,” he adds, “and that’s something AI has yet to replicate convincingly.”

He further points out that sign language is not universal. It varies from one country to another, with each nation developing its own

“
Sign language is built on brevity and clarity. Deaf individuals often begin their sentences with the main idea rather than following grammatical rules.

MAJID AL HARTHY, Founder, Unlimited Sign initiative



sign language dictionary. Even among Arab countries, the signs and expressions differ noticeably. Yet, he finds it fascinating that despite these variations, deaf individuals can still understand one another with surprising ease, demonstrating the shared human instinct for connection and communication beyond words.

Al Abri says he is trying to employ AI in designing educational content for deaf students.

Majid al Harthy, founder of the “Unlimited Sign initiative”, says the real obstacle lies in the unique structure of sign language itself. “Sign language is built on brevity and clarity. Deaf individuals often begin their sentences with the main idea rather than following grammatical rules.”

Al Harthy also notes that deaf people process written text differently from hearing individuals. “When they read, they don't sound out letters; they perceive entire words as visual images.”

Mohammed al Araiimi, a member of the deaf community, affirmed that one of the main challenges faced by people with hearing disabilities is the lack of public awareness of sign language, which makes daily communication difficult in various situations.

Al Araiimi explains that this issue becomes particularly evident in service institutions. “When I visit a hospital, the doctor cannot

understand the nature of my illness, and in turn, I don't understand the prescribed treatment. The same happens in markets, where sellers often do not understand sign language.”

EDUCATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

He noted that in the past, the deaf community faced significant educational difficulties due to outdated curricula that did not meet their needs. However, the situation has improved with the introduction of a modern curriculum designed specifically for deaf students.

Al Araiimi emphasises that the integration of advanced technologies and AI in education could further improve the quality of learning materials, making them more interactive and accessible for the deaf.

He also praised the efforts of qualified teachers who possess the skills necessary to effectively teach deaf students, noting that their work plays a vital role in empowering this group and supporting their inclusion in society.

Al Araiimi stressed the importance of promoting sign language awareness among the general public, adding that empowering the deaf community goes beyond improving curriculum; it starts with fostering a culture of inclusive communication and recognising sign language as a fundamental means of human interaction.

SHORT TAKES



About 32 participants from Oman and other GCC countries are taking part in the event

‘VOICE OF THE SEASON 2025’ CONTEST SHOWCASES GULF VOCAL TALENT

SALALAH: The ‘Voice of the Season 2025’ competition commenced at Al Murooj Theatre in Salalah, as part of the Serbian Cultural Season Festival. The event is organised by the Dhofar Centre for Culture, Heritage and Creativity, in cooperation with the General-Directorate of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar Governorate, along with several governmental and private partners. The competition will run until November 27.

In his opening remarks, Kamil bin Hamed al Kathiri, Director of the Dhofar Centre for Culture, Heritage and Creativity, emphasised that the festival embodies the authentic spirit of Dhofar and reflects the richness of Omani cultural heritage. He noted that the centre’s vision is to make culture a bridge between generations and a space for creativity and innovation.

Al Kathiri explained that the launch of ‘Voice of the Season 2025’ represents an artistic and cultural initiative that unites Gulf talents in a vocal competition showcasing musical expression without instrumental accompaniment — preserving authenticity while remaining attuned to contemporary trends. He further underscored the centre’s belief in a unified Gulf culture that transcends borders and strengthens bonds of love, tradition and shared identity.

The opening ceremony featured a poetry recital and a musical operetta, followed by the announcement of the winners of the first and second places in the initial round, which included eight contestants.

A total of 32 participants from Oman and other GCC countries are competing in the event, presenting various forms of traditional and popular vocal performances before a panel of judges specialising in chanting and vocal arts.

Contestants are evaluated based on strict artistic criteria focused solely on the use of the human voice, without musical instruments.

— ONA

FORUM REVIEWS LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN DERMATOLOGY

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health organised the 3rd Muscat Dermatology Forum, with a wide participation of doctors, consultants, and dermatologists from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman, on Saturday.

The forum aimed to promote continuing medical education as well as exchange expertise among healthcare professionals working in the dermatology field.

The third edition of the forum was titled ‘Allergic Contact Dermatitis’ and its diagnostic methods in light of the increasing clinical challenges facing doctors in this field.

Dr Aisha al Ali, Head of the Al Khuwair Dermatology Centre and



The forum aims to enhance the exchange of knowledge between dermatologists in Oman and the region

President of Oman Dermatology Society (ODS), said that this scientific event constitutes a national platform for exchanging knowledge and reviewing the latest scientific developments in the diagnosis of allergic skin diseases.

The forum aimed to enhance the exchange of knowledge and expertise between dermatologists in Oman and the region, focusing on the latest methods for diagnosing contact allergies, with an emphasis on patch testing as an accurate

and effective diagnostic tool. It also aimed to enhance the competency of national medical personnel in modern diagnostic and treatment fields, and support scientific research and professional partnerships.

The forum witnessed specialised scientific sessions that discussed the latest developments in the field of contact dermatitis. Speakers presented scientific papers, the most prominent allergens for 2025 and patch testing.

The sessions addressed topics such as occupational dermatology, allergic drug reactions and saw presentation of real-life clinical cases and regional patterns of contact dermatitis. — ONA

Youth Centre discussion spotlights Omani values

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

AS part of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth’s ongoing efforts to strengthen authentic Omani identity among young people, the Cultural Identity Department at the Youth Centre organised a panel discussion titled ‘Omani Demeanour, Etiquette, and Traditions: Instilling Them in the Hearts of Youth.’

Held last week at the Centre’s Future Hall, the session focused on deepening national belonging, safeguarding cultural heritage, and reinforcing authentic Omani values in the daily lives of youth.

The discussion was moderated by Watfa al Farsi, a researcher in Sociology, and featured Younis al Maamari, also a Researcher in Sociology, as the main speaker.

Al Maamari highlighted that Omani demeanour reflects the deeply rooted moral and ethical fabric of the nation — encompassing humility, generosity, respect, honesty and integrity. “It is not merely a social appearance but a complete way of life that defines



The discussion featured Younis al Maamari, a researcher in Sociology, as the main speaker

The session brought together youth which including university and college students, members of youth and cultural clubs

the Omani identity,” he noted, emphasising that these values have long shaped the noble image of Oman and its people.

Addressing the theme ‘Etiquette and Traditions: Treasures to Be Passed On,’ Al Maamari underscored the importance of preserving social customs, family values and cultural traditions that serve as the connective fabric, strengthening community bonds.

He stressed the shared responsibility of families, schools and society in nurturing these values through education, respect

and pride in cultural identity.

In the final segment, ‘Contemporary Challenges and Future Solutions,’ Al Maamari discussed the influence of globalisation and social media on traditional values, urging for a balance between openness to the world and the preservation of Omani authenticity.

He highlighted the role of educational institutions and civil society organisations in promoting cultural awareness and reinforcing national identity among youth.

The session brought together youth aged 14–30, university and college students, members of youth and cultural clubs, parents, and educators, creating a platform for intergenerational dialogue on Omani values and identity.

In conclusion, Al Maamari stressed that preserving Omani demeanour, etiquette and traditions is a shared national duty, calling for more awareness programmes, youth-led initiatives and cultural activities such as workshops and discussion forums that instil authentic values in younger generations.

Tourists flock to Wadi Al Shab, Oman’s hidden turquoise oasis

TEXT & PHOTO BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

Travellers journeying along the coastal road connecting Qurayat to Sur may find it hard to believe that behind the rugged eastern mountains lie lush valleys where crystal waters wind through green oases. Hidden amid these towering cliffs is one of Oman’s most spectacular natural treasures — Wadi Al Shab, a turquoise haven just 140 km from Muscat.

Reaching this enchanting valley is simple. After turning off the main highway, visitors cross the wadi by a small boat before beginning their exploration on foot. The trail meanders between mountain slopes draped in palms, mangoes, bananas, lemon and Sidr trees.

The first 1.5 km of the Wadi Al Shab hike is flat and easy, followed by light boulder-hopping sections marked by painted arrows guiding trekkers through the terrain. As visitors venture deeper, a series of natural pools emerges — glistening



Visitors are urged to preserve the fragile ecosystem that sustains Wadi Al Shab’s balance and beauty

basins formed over centuries by geological activity, stretching about 3 km from the valley’s western side.

Flanking the wadi are two ancient irrigation channels, or ‘Aflaj’, that carry water to nearby farms and homes. Though these channels have suffered damage from severe weather in recent years, local residents have restored them through community effort, preserving a heritage of water management that dates back hundreds of years.

After about an hour’s walk, hikers reach the wadi’s most famous feature — a large natural pool leading to a hidden waterfall cave. A short swim through the turquoise waters reveals a stunning grotto adorned with stalactites and stalagmites shaped by centuries of mineral deposits. Inside, cascading water echoes softly, the cave glows in dazzling shades of blue and green — a sight that draws adventurers and photographers alike.

Despite its rugged landscape, life thrives here. Donkeys remain an essential means of transport for local farmers, reflecting a deep-rooted culture of harmony between humans and animals. The valley also teems with wildlife and residents urge visitors to preserve this fragile ecosystem that sustains Wadi Al Shab’s balance and beauty.

Open year-round, Wadi Al Shab attracts visitors from across Oman and around the world contributing to the growth of eco-tourism and local commerce.

TENDER
NOTICE

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

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

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
664/2025/ MAFWR/ HQ-75	Drilling and Aquifer Testing of (10) Exploration Wells in the Wilayat of Mahdah, Al Buraimi Governorate	Sunday 5/10/2025	Sunday 26/10/2025	Sunday 16/11/2025	Specialized companies registered with, Second, Third grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
667/2025/ MAFWR/ HQ-76	Supply of Dry Feed (hay) for Livestock Research Stations for a period of two and a half years	Monday 6/10/2025	Sunday 26/10/2025	Sunday 16/11/2025	SMEs companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
678/2025/ MAFWR/ HQ-77 International	Consultancy Services for Feasibility Study and Detailed Design of Recharge Dam, Artificial Reservoirs and Flood Protection Dams in Wilayat Mahdah, Al Buraimi Governorate	Tuesday 7/10/2025	Monday 27/10/2025	Sunday 16/11/2025	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First grades	(300/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

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

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

- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.

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

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

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



This combination shows US President Donald Trump (L) and Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky. — AFP

ZELENSKY URGES TRUMP TO BROKER UKRAINE PEACE

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged Donald Trump to broker peace in Ukraine like he did in the Middle East during a phone call on Saturday, the Ukrainian leader said. “If a war can be stopped in one region, then surely other wars can be stopped as well — including the Russian war,” Zelensky wrote in a post on Facebook.

Relations between the two leaders have warmed dramatically since February, when they sparred during a now-infamous televised meeting at the White House. Trump has since called Zelensky a “nice guy” and maintained support for Ukraine, which has been fighting a Russian attack since 2022. The two leaders previously met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in September. Meanwhile, an overnight Russian attack left parts of Ukraine’s southern Odesa region without power early on Saturday, the latest strike to target Ukraine’s energy system ahead of winter, authorities said. Authorities did not say how many people the latest power cut affected, but Ukrainian energy firm DTEK reported outages in parts of the region’s capital. DTEK later said it had restored power to over 240,000 households in the region. — AFP

LEBANON SLAMS OVERNIGHT ISRAELI STRIKES ON CIVILIANS



Rescuers and first-responders stand outside a damaged building, in southern Lebanon. — AFP

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun condemned overnight Israeli strikes on civilian sites, which reportedly killed at least one person and which Israel said targeted Hezbollah infrastructure. “Once again, southern Lebanon has been the target of a heinous Israeli aggression against civilian installations —without justification or pretext,” Aoun said. “The seriousness of this latest attack lies in the fact that it comes after the ceasefire agreement in Gaza,” he added, questioning whether Israel now sought to expand its attacks on Lebanon. The health ministry said one person was killed and seven were wounded in the strike on the Al-Msayleh area. The official National News Agency reported that Israeli warplanes carried out 10 raids targeting bulldozer and excavator yards, destroying more than 300 vehicles. A photographer at the scene witnessed massive destruction to the showrooms, with dozens of heavy machinery vehicles burned and firefighters extinguishing the flames. In a statement, Hezbollah condemned the strikes, saying it was “part of the repeated and deliberate targeting of civilians and economic infrastructure, and is intended to prevent people from returning to normal life”. — AFP

ADVANCED WEAPONS

North Korea shows off missiles at parade



North Korea showed off its “most powerful” intercontinental ballistic missile at a military parade attended by top officials from Russia and China. The event marked 80 years under the ruling Workers’ Party. The spectacle featured some of the most advanced weapons, including its new Hwasong-20 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), described as its “most powerful nuclear strategic weapon system”. — AFP

JAPAN’S MAIN OPPN EYES UNIFIED PM CANDIDATE TO BLOCK TAKAICHI

TOKYO: Japan’s biggest opposition party will seek to support a unified candidate with other groups in a bid to block Sanae Takaichi’s election as prime minister, media reported after the ruling coalition collapsed. Junior partner Komeito quit its 26-year alliance with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on Friday, putting in peril Takaichi’s bid to become the country’s first woman premier. Conservative Takaichi was elected as the new LDP president a week ago but needs the approval of parliament to secure the top job.

“This is a once-in-a-decade chance for a change of government,” said Yoshihiko Noda, head of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), the business Nikkei daily reported. Komeito’s decision to quit the alliance that has governed Japan almost uninterrupted for 25 years sank Japan into a new political crisis. Speaking during the recording of a Nikkei podcast, which has yet to be released, Noda said he would urge the opposition to unite behind

a single candidate. He said that person could potentially be Yuichiro Tamaki, who heads the Democratic Party for the People (DPP) and said on Friday he was willing to stand. However, there are significant policy differences between the DDP and CDP, which could reportedly scupper cooperation. Komeito party chief Tetsuo Saito said his fellow members would nominate him instead of Takaichi. Saito explained that the main reason for quitting the coalition was the LDP’s failure to tighten rules on the funding. — AFP

Reappointed French PM scrambles to form govt

PRESSURE

MOUNTED on France’s newly reappointed premier, Sebastien Lecornu, to get an austerity budget approved, as more parties threatened to topple a man whose first term lasted a mere 27 days. President Emmanuel Macron reinstated Lecornu late Friday, just four days after Lecornu’s resignation and the collapse of his just-announced government. The reappointment provoked outrage across the political spectrum and pledges to vote it down at the first chance.

In order to create a longer-lasting government, Lecornu pledged on Saturday to work with all the mainstream political movements and that he would select cabinet members who are not “imprisoned by the parties.” His reappointment comes as France faces political deadlock and a parliamentary impasse over a cost-cutting budget against a backdrop of climbing public debt. Lecornu, 39, must form a cabinet to present a 2026 draft budget on Monday.

Outgoing Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau told members of his right-wing Republicans (LR) party that they should “not take part” in Lecornu’s next government, though he did not call to vote it out of office and other members of the party expressed willingness to participate.

Meanwhile, the leftist Socialists, a swing group in parliament, said they had “no deal” with Lecornu and would oust his government if he did not agree to suspend a 2023 pensions reform that increased retirement age from 62 to 64.



France’s PM Sebastien Lecornu (C), speaks to journalists, on the southern outskirts of Paris. — AFP

In order to create a longer-lasting government, Lecornu pledged on Saturday to work with all the mainstream political movements and that he would select cabinet members who are not “imprisoned by the parties.”

Lecornu said on Saturday during a visit to a police station near Paris that “all debates are possible” over the pension reforms, and that his “only ambition is to get out of this situation that is painful for everyone”. But far-right National Rally party leader Jordan Bardella — whose party has never been considered to play any role in a coalition government — called Lecornu’s reappointment a “bad joke” and said he would immediately seek to vote out the new cabinet.

France has been mired in political deadlock ever since Macron gambled last year on snap polls that he hoped would consolidate power — but ended instead in a hung parliament and more seats for the far right. The country faces EU pressure to curb its deficit and debt, and it was the fight over cost-cutting measures that toppled Lecornu’s two predecessors. Lecornu has pledged to do “everything possible” to give France a budget by the end of the year, saying restoring the

public finances was “a priority” for the future. Time is running out, however, to give parliament the constitutionally required 70 days to examine the budget before year’s end. Macron, facing the worst domestic crisis since the 2017 start of his presidency, has yet to address the public since Lecornu’s first government fell.

Lecornu, a Macron loyalist who previously served as defence minister, agreed to stay on for two extra days after he quit to talk to all political parties. He told French television late on Wednesday that he believed a revised draft budget for 2026 could be put forward on Monday, which would meet the deadline for its approval by the end of the year.

Lecornu warned on Friday that all those who wanted to join his government “must commit to setting aside presidential ambitions” for the 2027 elections. Lecornu’s suggested list of ministers a week ago sparked criticism that it was not enough of a break with the past, and he suggested on Wednesday that it should include technocrats.

In an unprecedented move, former premier Edouard Philippe, a contender in the next presidential polls, earlier this week said Macron himself should step down after a budget was passed. But Macron has always insisted he would stay until the end of his term. The far-right National Rally senses its best-ever chance of winning power in the 2027 presidential vote, with Macron having served the maximum two terms. — AFP



PHILIPPINES BEGINS CLEAN-UP AFTER QUAKES

MANAY: Dazed survivors of a pair of major earthquakes in the southern Philippines awoke on Saturday to scenes of devastation, after hundreds of aftershocks rocked the region overnight. Many coastal residents of Mindanao island had slept outdoors, fearful of being crushed to death by aftershocks of the 7.4 and 6.7-magnitude quakes that struck off the coast within hours of each other on Friday.

Philippine authorities said at least eight people were killed. Officials described damage to roads, bridges, schools and other public infrastructure as “minimal” but have yet to determine how many people lost their homes. In Manay, a Mindanao municipality of 40,000 residents, people were removing debris and sweeping up broken glass from homes and other buildings on Saturday. The destruction came less than two weeks after a 6.9-magnitude quake struck the central Philippine island of Cebu, killing 75 people and wrecking about 72,000 houses. — AFP

DISASTROUS SITUATION

RSF attack kills 60 in Sudan’s El Fasher



A drone and artillery attack killed at least 60 people at a displacement camp in Sudan’s El Fasher on Saturday, activists said, as the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces intensified its assault on the besieged western city. The resistance committee for El Fasher, said the RSF hit the Dar Al Arqam displacement centre on the grounds of a university. “Children, women and the elderly were killed in cold blood, and many were completely burned,” it said. — AFP

ABANDON VIOLENCE

Madagascar army calls to ‘refuse orders’



A Madagascar army contingent near the capital on Saturday called on soldiers and security units to “join forces” and “refuse orders to shoot” at protesters, while several thousand marched in the capital. “Let us join forces, military, gendarmes and police, and refuse to be paid to shoot our friends, our brothers and our sisters,” soldiers of a large military base in Soanierana district, on the outskirts of Antananarivo, said in a video. — AFP

Trump administration lays off dozens of CDC officials



SHERYL GAY STOLBERG

The author is a correspondent based in Washington covering health policy

DOZENS of employees at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — including “disease detectives,” high-ranking scientists and the entire Washington office — were notified late on Friday that they were losing their jobs as part of the Trump administration’s latest round of federal layoffs. It was unclear on Friday how many CDC workers were affected. But it was the latest blow to an agency that has been wracked by mass resignations, a shooting at its Atlanta headquarters in August and the firing of its director under pressure from Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr. Layoff notices landed in the email inboxes of CDC employees shortly before 9 pm Eastern time on Friday, notifying employees that their duties had been deemed unnecessary or “virtually identical” to those being performed elsewhere in the agency. Scientists, including leaders, in offices addressing respiratory diseases, chronic diseases, injury prevention and global health were among those affected. The staff of the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, the journal that reports on health trends and emerging infectious threats, was also laid off. The publication’s storied history includes a June 1981 report that five previously healthy gay men were treated for an unusual pneumonia — the first hint of the AIDS epidemic.

Roughly 70 Epidemic Intelligence Service officers — the so-called “disease detectives” who respond to outbreaks around the globe — received layoff notices, according to a person familiar with them. The service was spared during an earlier round of layoffs in February. An officer at an American Federation of Government Employees local union representing CDC employees said that the agency’s human resources staff, which had been furloughed as part of the government shutdown, had been called back to work to send out layoff notices to their colleagues. The CDC layoffs are part of a round of cuts across the government to fulfill President Donald Trump’s threats to use the shutdown to shrink the federal government. But for the nation’s public health agency, which has been a primary target of Kennedy, they were the latest crisis in a year of upheaval. In late August, just weeks after a gunman opened fire on the CDC’s headquarters in Atlanta, Kennedy orchestrated the ouster of Susan Monarez, the agency’s new director, who had been in her job for less than a month. Monarez later told Senate lawmakers that during a series of tense meetings with Kennedy, he called the CDC “the most corrupt federal agency” in the government, and accused its employees of “killing children.” Trump has said there would be “a lot” of layoffs during the shutdown, and promised that the cuts would be “Democrat oriented.”

The CDC layoffs are part of a round of cuts across the government to fulfill President Donald Trump’s threats to use the shutdown to shrink the federal government. But for the nation’s public health agency, which has been a primary target of Kennedy, they were the latest crisis in a year of upheaval

The CDC has been the subject of intense criticism on the political right since the COVID-19 pandemic, when many Republicans accused the agency and its leaders of promoting strict vaccination guidelines and lockdowns, to which they objected. Earlier on Friday, as part of a medical checkup at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Trump received a COVID booster shot and a flu vaccine, according to the White House. Several CDC employees, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid retaliation, described the mood on Friday night as grim. Some noticed a pattern: This latest round of layoffs came on the eve of the Indigenous Peoples Day holiday weekend, while previous cuts to federal health agencies were announced on Valentine’s Day and April Fools’ Day. The layoff notices, signed by Tom Nagy, the chief human capital officer at the Department of Health and Human Services, arrived with 10 attachments, including information about severance pay, how to file an appeal to overturn the layoffs and a “guide to career transition,” according to copies of the documents obtained by The New York Times. A memo informed recipients that the action “does not reflect directly on your service, performance or conduct,” and that they would be placed on administrative leave without access to their offices, as of Friday, “unless directed otherwise by your leadership.”

Blocking guard deployment, Judge questions govt’s veracity



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The writer is reporter for The New York Times

In a blistering opinion, a federal judge accused the Trump administration of misrepresenting the facts on the ground in Chicago in an attempt to legally justify the deployment of National Guard troops to the nation’s third-largest city. The 51-page opinion, issued late on Friday by Judge April M Perry, explained the basis for her decision on Thursday for her decision to temporarily bar the administration from deploying the National Guard anywhere in Illinois. She found that the legal threshold for such deployments is “very high” and that the “perceptions” held by Trump administration officials about potential threats to Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices from Chicago protesters “are not reliable.” Citing a “potential lack of candor” from government officials, the opinion notes that grand juries did not indict at least three protesters who officials had claimed were violent, which the government omitted from its filings. That, she wrote, “calls into question their ability to accurately assess the facts.” “Law enforcement officers who go into an event expecting ‘a shitshow’ are much more likely to experience one than those who go into the event prepared to de-escalate it,” wrote Perry, a former prosecutor who was nominated by President Joe Biden to the US District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Abigail Jackson, a White House spokesperson, said in a statement by email that President Donald Trump was acting lawfully. “President Trump will not turn a blind eye to the lawlessness plaguing American cities and we expect to be vindicated by a higher court,” she wrote. Perry’s written opinion was released hours after a second judge in Chicago ordered ICE

to remove a fence that agents had erected around a facility in suburban Chicago, saying the acting director of ICE indicated the agency’s “Operation Midway Blitz” would go on indefinitely, not the 45 days the administration first indicated. The Perry ruling is now the second finding from a district court judge that protests over Trump’s immigration policies are unlikely to provide a legal basis for National Guard troop deployments, in contrast to assertions by the administration that Chicago and other cities are “hell holes” plagued by “antifa militants” and are “burning to the ground.” The other ruling came last weekend from Judge Karin J Immergut of the District of Oregon. The judges appear to be rejecting an argument repeatedly made in court by the administration, that the judiciary needs to step aside and accept the White House’s factual claims about potential threats. “Case law is pretty clear that, by and large, courts should automatically defer to the president’s judgment on what constitutes an emergency,” said Rosa Brooks, a professor at Georgetown Law and an expert on the relationship between the military and civilian government. “The district court judges in both cases, in Chicago and Portland, are saying that there has to be some reality-based limit to that.” The government has appealed both rulings. A three-judge panel from the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals heard arguments regarding Immergut’s ruling on Thursday, and a decision about whether her order will stay in place could come at any time. In her opinion on Friday, Perry explained her view of the statutory limits on the president’s authority, the role of the courts in enforcing it and the broader risks that come



Demonstrators and members of the media near a “No Troops in Our Streets” sign outside an immigrant processing and detention center in Broadview.

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with sending soldiers into US streets. “The significance of the public’s interest in having only well-trained law enforcement officers deployed in their communities and avoiding unnecessary shows of military force in their neighborhoods cannot be overstated,” she wrote. Her ruling is the fourth over the past week against the Trump administration in Chicago. On Wednesday, a federal judge imposed new limits on ICE agents, restricting their ability to make arrests without warrants. On Thursday, another federal judge granted a temporary restraining order against the Department of Homeland Security, barring it from arresting and using force against journalists unless it believes someone has committed a crime. And on Friday, a judge ordered ICE to tear down a fence at its Broadview, Illinois, facility, after residents argued that it was illegally constructed and limited their access to fire department services.

In all of the rulings, the judges said ICE’s tactics were informing their decisions. On Friday morning, a few hundred protesters gathered at the facility in Broadview. Many carried signs, sang songs and prayed with religious groups. Some arrived during a curfew that the mayor had established and were given citations, and a handful were arrested because they refused to get off the street. Whenever ICE vehicles arrived, the crowd chanted “shame, shame.” By 10 am, many began to leave, and the crowd decreased to about 100 people. In the meantime, immigration operations continued to make waves in the city. On Friday morning, a creative services department employee at WGN-TV, one of Chicago’s largest television news outlets, was detained by two Border Patrol agents in the morning rush hour. The employee was released from federal custody and no charges were filed against her, according to a statement.

OPINION

Why do couples argue, and how do they heal



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

AFEW weeks ago, social media platforms shared the story of a man from northern Italy who decided to go out for a walk to calm his nerves after an argument with his wife, but the short walk turned into a journey on foot covering 450 km over an entire week. Without any plan or destination, he kept walking until he reached southern Italy, where the police found him exhausted and feeling cold. The police had to drive him a long distance back home. The man said that the long walk really helped him clear his mind.

In psychology, arguments are considered a natural part of any relationship. Whether it's a marriage or a friendship, one can't always be right in other people's opinion. Some arguments are healthy and can help us mature and understand others, yet some can be damaging to the relationship. When it comes to married couples, psychologists suggest a few common factors that can trigger these arguments, such as personality clashes, differences in parenting styles, power struggles and financial stress.

While there are no studies on the most frequent cause of arguments, one can

assume personality differences to be at the top of the list. This is because such differences appear early in the marriage and may take longer to adapt to, especially when these personality features are so prominent. Imagine living with someone obsessive with everything, the way you hold the steering wheel when driving, where you place your mug after drinking coffee, or what meal to have when travelling. Such a person would make it difficult to relax, as they would always be on edge.

Money is one of the most common reasons for disputes. Couples often have different spending habits and attitudes towards saving. Similarly, parenting can reveal deep differences in values. One parent may be more permissive, while the other is strict, leading to disagreements on discipline and education. Even small things like how to spend holidays can become flashpoints if underlying resentments are not addressed.

Research shows that how couples communicate during conflicts predicts the health of their relationship. Using criticism, sarcasm, or dismissive language can make small issues feel much larger.

What matters is not the absence of arguments but the ability to repair after them. Like the Italian man who needed a long walk to reflect, sometimes stepping away and coming back with a calmer mind is the healthiest choice

On the other hand, couples who approach conflict with curiosity and respect, listening actively, expressing feelings calmly and focusing on solutions often grow closer after disagreements. Stress from work, family obligations, or health problems can affect the whole family. When stressed, partners may unintentionally use each other as "emotional punching bags".

Movies and social media can trigger arguments by creating unrealistic expectations of the "perfect" relationships.

So, how can couples deal with arguments? Psychologists suggest simple techniques like taking a short break to cool down, agreeing on using "I" statements instead of blaming ("I feel ignored when..." rather than "You always ignore me" can reduce tension during an argument. Counselling or workshops can also help couples develop conflict resolution skills.

In my opinion, what matters is not the absence of arguments but the ability to repair after them. Like the Italian man who needed a long walk to reflect, sometimes stepping away and coming back with a calmer mind is the healthiest choice.

SEALS, BIRDS ADDED TO NEW ENDANGERED 'RED LIST'

MUMEN KHATIB

Arctic seals and birds are coming under increasing threat, mainly due to climate change and human activity, according to an updated list of endangered species released by the world's top conservation body.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said habitat loss driven by logging and agricultural expansion was a threat to birds, while seals were at risk mostly due to global warming and human activities, including maritime traffic. The IUCN said it was changing the status of the hooded seal from vulnerable to endangered, while bearded and harp seals are now classified as near threatened.

"This timely global update highlights the ever-increasing impact human activity is having on nature and the climate and the devastating effects this has," its Director-General, Grethel Aguilar, told reporters at its World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.

The IUCN red list now includes "172,620 species of which 48,646 are threatened with extinction," it said in a statement.

Global warming is destroying the natural habitat of animals, including seals that live in the cold parts of the world.

Maritime traffic, mining and oil extraction, industrial fishing and hunting are among other risks to the species.

"Global warming is occurring four times faster in the Arctic than in other regions, which is drastically reducing the extent and duration of sea ice cover," the IUCN said. "Ice-dependent seals are a key food source for other animals," it added.

They "play a central role in the food web, consuming fish and invertebrates and recycling nutrients", and are one of the "keystone species" of their ecosystem. Kit Kovacs, a scientist at the Norwegian Polar Institute, raised the alarm about the Svalbard archipelago, halfway between Norway and the North Pole.

"When I lived in the archipelago, just a couple of decades ago, we had five months of sea ice cover in areas that are now winter ice-free. It is really hard to express just how rapidly the Arctic is changing," she said.

The IUCN said its red list of birds is the fruit of nine years of work by "thousands of experts".

"Overall, 61 per cent of bird species have declining populations -- an estimate that has increased from 44 per cent in 2016," the IUCN said.

It studied thousands of bird species worldwide and found that "1,256 of the 11,185 species assessed are globally threatened".

This year's update focused on regions where the destruction of tropical forests poses a growing threat to birds. — AFP

The Sderot Cinema

EACH DAY, in the hills overlooking the border between Israel and Gaza, residents of the Israeli town of Sderot gather at an observation point.

From this vantage, the land drops away towards Gaza, often veiled in a grey haze. Over time, this site has become known by Israelis as the Sderot Cinema. During periods of bombardment, Israeli families have assembled there. Parents with their children, sitting on folding chairs or makeshift benches, watching the distant flashes of explosions.

Some have brought popcorn and soft drinks, treating the spectacle as a form of grim entertainment. Witnesses said people clapped and cheered each time a strike hit Gaza.

Would this audience have felt differently if they could have heard the screams of pain and terror from children or the agonised cries of horror as parents carried their children, bloodied and dismembered, to hospitals that were no more than rubble, with doctors without the means to help.

Most Israelis, according to recent polls, have no empathy for such families. This phenomenon has come to symbolise a disturbing moral dissonance.

The act of watching destruction unfold, particularly when it claims the lives of civilians, including children, reflects a society desensitised to the suffering of others. In this setting, the boundaries between observer and participant, victim and perpetrator, appear blurred.

The dehumanisation of Palestinians, long embedded in the rhetoric of occupation and conflict, has not only stripped Palestinians of their humanity in the eyes of most Israelis, but has also eroded the moral sensibilities of those who watch. The Sderot Cinema stands as a stark metaphor for this moral collapse: a space where war becomes spectacle and empathy is replaced by indifference.

Historical parallels are inescapable. In the 1940s, many ordinary Germans lived near concentration camps, aware of the



The Sderot Cinema stands as a stark metaphor for this moral collapse: a space where war becomes spectacle and empathy is replaced by indifference.

atrocities yet unwilling to confront them as crimes against humanity. Today, similar patterns of denial and rationalisation appear in Israeli society, where reports of mass civilian suffering in Gaza are often dismissed as exaggerations or propaganda.

A recent poll by the Israel Democracy Institute underscored this detachment. When asked in July whether they were personally troubled by reports of famine and suffering among Palestinians in Gaza, 79 per cent of Israeli respondents said they were "not very troubled" or "not at all troubled." The comparison to past atrocities is not made lightly. It serves as a warning of what happens when nationalism and ideology override empathy and moral accountability.

The Sderot Cinema is not merely a physical place; it is a reflection

of a society that has normalised the viewing of human suffering as part of daily life. What must follow is not vengeance but justice: a reckoning with the systems, the fascist ideology of Zionism, and the extremist Israeli leadership of Netanyahu that have enabled such dehumanisation. Only through accountability can any society reclaim its humanity.

The world once said "never again" after the Nazi genocide, but an ideology as bad as if not worse than Nazism is now protected by western powers who once gave up the best of their brave young men to fight against a fascist ideology. I have visited the grave yards of these young men in Normandy which stretch as far as the eye can see. Their white gravestones bear witness to their ultimate sacrifice and the betrayal of what they died for is difficult to contemplate.



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

Quality teaching and authentic student experiences



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

LEARNING English appears to be a significant challenge for the teen generation. They are not convinced, unless artistically, of their need to do so, given the influence of word processors, the Internet, and most critically, AI.

Yet, to every example of profligacy within that generation, there is inevitably a shining light, a reminder that while they might not be perfect, they can be awesome. Certainly, my reminder came last week in a Yr10 English class at the UTC South Durham. The students were given a writing exercise as they worked through the many genres upon which they may be assessed during this year and next, their GCSE year, from romance to horror and so many in between, it's clear that from reading different genres the students are taking what they have enjoyed it in the lesson, and reading more diverse literature as a result.

The challenge was for them to write a structured beginning of the dystopian genre, with an emphasis on story and sentence structure, spelling, punctuation and grammar, all keys in their prior learning, they were to reflect on the oppression, the grim landscapes, the squalor and constant surveillance of the genre, following in the footsteps of Margaret Atwood's, 'The Handmaids Tale'; George Orwell's, brilliant '1984', and more recently Suzanne Collin's, 'The Hunger Games,' all inspirational, but

hard acts to follow!

Rebecca Archman, a teacher, said she loves to inspire the students through enthusiasm and excitement. She says, "English can be explored in many ways and at UTC we encourage the students to dig deep and use their imagination – especially when it comes to creative writing."

She reminded them of their need for structure, for variation in sentence types, and for them to 'show, not tell', within their writing, by using sensory language and techniques to draw their reader 'into' their world. This technique was presented initially by Anton Checkov, who wrote: "Don't tell me the moon is shining, show me the glint of light on a broken glass," and involves utilising the senses and feelings of the characters to suggest settings, to enhance actions and to create vivid 'pictures' in the mind of the reader.

The students worked quietly, occasionally seeking clarity or direction, but what impressed me was their focus on the task, and their diversity of dystopian environments, not being distracted by character descriptions, as usually occurs at this level, but letting the sensory perspectives, the 'show not tell', was a pedagogical master stroke. This impressive response was as good as that of degree students at the University of Nizwa, so clearly, the UTC model and their way of teaching English has significant merit.

I sought some of the students' feedback later, but there was little commonality

Rebecca Archman, a teacher, said she loves to inspire her students through enthusiasm and excitement. She is adamant being passionate about what they read in lessons it makes it more engaging and encourages them to explore it further

in their backgrounds, ranging from a home full of books or a nearby library to none. Madeleine and Olamide admitted to reading voraciously, and their imaginations inspirational as they write, while Millie-Anna admitted her "mind wanders a lot", while Mariana, Allegra, Rhiannon and Ellie modestly, didn't want a fuss, though clearly delighted with their achievements, while among the boys, Yu Xuan and Abdul were very staunch, or 'matter of fact', about their achievements.

The UTC is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) college in the North-East of England, where Tom Dower is Principal and Catherine Purvis-Mawson Deputy Principal. Their UTC is responding to education authorities, employers and parents in the key areas of OFSTED ratings; qualifications results; employer partnerships, work placement/employment ratios: and parent satisfaction; this latter at an amazing 94 per cent, as they prepare their students for both life and career. And here, writing, often a less popular part of the student experience, flies directly in the face of contemporary student attitudes to English learning.

Consequently, these students, and others of their ilk, under English imperatives such as those being implemented at UTC, should go on and do well in their exams, their GCSEs, careers and lives, will always be able to write well, to present their thoughts, opinions and conclusions, thanks to a progressive teaching and learning model at the UTC.

BRAIN DRAIN INDUSTRY BOOMS AS CAMEROON’S YOUNG LOOK ABROAD

LÉA NKAMLEUN FOSSO

With more than 40 per cent of Cameroonians living below the poverty line, over half the central African country’s young people dream of emigrating - and businesses helping them leave are thriving.

“We don’t promote immigration, but the demand exists and clients are easily won over,” said Stephane Bofia, the founder of Objectif Canada, a recently opened agency that offers to “assist with the Canadian immigration process”.

In President Paul Biya’s more than four decades in power, he has failed to provide secure prospects for the country’s young people, who have only ever known life under his rule.

Half the population of 30 million is under 20 and many of the younger generation are keen for better prospects than those offered under Biya, who is the world’s oldest head of state at 92, and expected to win an eighth term in office on Sunday.

Unemployment in major cities stands at 35 per cent, and graduates are looking elsewhere, fuelling a lucrative brain drain market.

Adverts abound for study visas, work visas and permanent residency papers abroad - though one professional warns that not all those offers are genuine.

A dozen red-and-white banners with maple-leaf borders flag the premises of Bodia’s Objectif Canada in the economic capital, Douala, with the North American nation a favoured destination.

On the day AFP visited, 38-year-old Michael was at the reception desk, making enquiries on behalf of his partner.

“She has a degree in IT security, but hasn’t been able to find work in her field,” he explained.

Some 51 per cent of young Cameroonians have thought about emigrating, according to a 2024 survey by the Afrobarometer institute.

“The search for work, economic difficulties and poverty are the main reasons” for wanting to emigrate, with North America the “preferred destination”, Afrobarometer said.

“That’s a loss” on several levels, said political scientist Stephane Akoa.

Those emigrating were “highly qualified individuals”, and the public money Cameroon had spent on training them was being lost to their destination countries, he said.

Last year, Cameroon was the top source of new permanent residents in Canada, both in French-speaking Quebec with 9,127 people and in the English-speaking rest of the country with 10,395, according to official Canadian statistics. Objectif Canada’s Bofia confirmed emigration to Canada was “booming”. — AFP

A paradigm shift on animal testing

EVEN IN an era of intense political polarisation, there are still moments when a bipartisan consensus can emerge around important ethical issues. One such moment is happening now. Last April, the United States Food and Drug Administration released its “Roadmap to Reducing Animal Testing in Preclinical Safety Studies.” The FDA said that it was taking “a groundbreaking step” that would advance public health and limit wasteful expenditure by replacing animal testing with “more effective, human-relevant methods.”

Such a step would, of course, reduce the suffering of millions of non-human animals used for tests. Echoing what opponents of the use of animals in drug testing have long been saying, the FDA referred to a “growing scientific recognition that animals do not provide adequate models of human health and disease. The roadmap also noted that more than 90 per cent of drugs that appear safe and effective in animals do not receive FDA approval for use in humans because they are not safe and effective in humans.

Two weeks after the FDA announcement, the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), the world’s largest funder of biomedical research, added its support for the shift away from animals, announcing a new commitment: to give higher priority to “human-based research technologies” and to reduce the use of animals in the research that it funds. NIH Director Jay Bhattacharya said that integrating data science and technology would “fundamentally reimagine the way research is conducted,” and by doing so, speed up innovation and improve the outcomes obtained from healthcare.

In July, the FDA and NIH jointly hosted a high-level workshop on reducing animal testing, where papers on new research methods



In July, the FDA and NIH jointly hosted a high-level workshop on reducing animal testing.



PETER SINGER

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SANKALPA GHOSE

The writer is the founder of OpenTel-emed.org, is currently a PhD student and President’s Graduate Fellow in the Centre for Biomedical Ethics at the National University of Singapore

were presented. The event’s breaking news was the NIH’s announcement to stop issuing new grants for research that relies solely on animal testing.

Senior FDA officials reported that their interactions with hundreds of pharmaceutical and biotech CEOs during a nationwide listening tour had revealed that the industry is already using the new, human-centred approach “because it works and because it’s highly predictive.” The pharmaceutical and biotech companies were nevertheless still using animals for testing.

Industry representatives reported that they found this troubling, owing to ethical concerns about conducting costly experiments that caused animals to suffer while providing data useful only to satisfy a bureaucratic requirement for bringing their products to market. The FDA commissioner noted that the new methods could accelerate the provision of beneficial treatments to the public, reduce research and development costs, and eventually lower drug prices, while being “more humane and ethical for animals.”

This shift is cause for celebration, but it is tragic that it has taken so long. Fifty years ago, one of us wrote in Animal Liberation that alternatives to the use of animals “exist already and others would develop more rapidly, if the energy and resources now

applied to experiment on animals were redirected into the search for alternatives.” That did not happen. Since the 1938 Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, the United States had required animal testing for predicting human outcomes for all drug, therapy, cosmetic, and food safety reviews and approvals.

For more than 80 years, industrial suppliers profited from breeding and selling billions of animals for research purposes. (The share price of the largest of these companies, Charles River Laboratories, fell 28 per cent after the FDA announced its intention to reduce animal use.) Public funds were wasted on tests that caused immense harm to animals while failing to predict how humans would respond. Patients suffered and died because they were given drugs that worked on non-human animals, but not on them.

The first step towards changing the paradigm was taken in 2022, when overwhelming, bipartisan majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate approved the FDA Modernisation Act 2.0, making it legal for the FDA to certify substances as safe based on testing without animals. Some of these methods have existed for a long time, while others are novel.

In 2024, the NIH established a nearly \$400 million innovation programme to develop, over the next ten years, new methodologies that promise to transform the way we understand biological processes and disease states. Charles River Laboratories, after seeing its stock price plummet, decided that it didn’t want to risk going the way of Kodak. The company announced its support for the FDA’s focus on alternatives and stated that it intended to be a leader in the transition.

Animal testing will not stop overnight. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that over the next ten years, we will see a profound change in protecting human safety and developing cures for the diseases that afflict us, without inflicting suffering on animals.

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SHORT TAKES



The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Ahmed al Balushi, Member of the Qurayat Municipal Council and attended by Dr Ahmed al Alawi, Chairman of the Oman Committee for Air Sports.

CROSS-COUNTRY PARAGLIDING EXERCISE CONCLUDES

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Oman Committee for Air Sports successfully concluded its Cross-Country Paragliding Exercise, featuring 85 Omani pilots from various governorates. The event, designed to enhance technical flying skills and safety awareness, took place along one of the most scenic routes on Oman's eastern coast. Pilots took off from Dhabab in the Wilayat of Qurayat and glided across striking coastal and mountainous landscapes including Wadi Al Shab and Tiwi, before landing in Qalhat, Wilayat of Sur, a Unesco World Heritage site, the flight covered nearly 120 kilometers and lasted around four and a half hours, highlighting both the skill of the participants and the country's breathtaking natural beauty.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Ahmed al Balushi, Member of the Qurayat Municipal Council and attended by Dr Ahmed al Alawi, Chairman of the Oman Committee for Air Sports, alongside committee members and aviation enthusiasts.

Dr Al Alawi explained that the exercise forms part of the committee's strategy to develop pilot proficiency and promote aerial sports across Oman, "the Dhabab-Qalhat route was carefully selected for its diverse terrain, moderate weather and cultural value, by combining technical flying with tourism, we aim to position Oman as a leading destination for aerial sports in the region."

Al Balushi praised the initiative for boosting domestic tourism in Qurayat and Sur, noting that it showcased the potential of Oman's coastline as a destination for adventure and eco tourism, also revealed plans for 'Muscat Nights 2026', to be held in January, featuring aerial demonstrations in collaboration with the committee.

RECOGNITION AND FUTURE PLANS

The event concluded with a recognition ceremony honoring participants and supporting organisations, the competition was also announced for the top three video clips documenting the flight, with prizes sponsored by the Middle East Air Sports Center and Sky Safari.

Dr Al Alawi reaffirmed the committee's commitment to expanding aerial sports through strategic partnerships with public and private institutions, committee member Hussain al Fairouz added that this was the first national exercise uniting all affiliated paragliding teams, praising the success of the organisation and the enthusiasm of Omani pilots.

"This event reflects Oman's growing presence in aerial sports and underscores how our skies, landscapes and spirit of adventure make the Sultanate of Oman a natural arena for flight." Al Fairouz concluded.



The event, designed to enhance technical flying skills and safety awareness.

UAE make a comeback to defeat Oman in decisive Asian qualifiers clash

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

UAE MADE a strong comeback in the second half to register a 2-1 victory Over Oman late on Saturday at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha in their second and concluding match of Red Warriors at the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 2026 Playoffs of Group A encounter. The victory for UAE meant, they reached into three points while Oman freezed in one point from the goalless draw against Qatar in the opening match. The upcoming match for UAE against the hosts Qatar on Tuesday will decide the winner from the group.

Both teams began the match strongly as they were looking for an early goal. In the 7th minute, Essam al Subhi managed to benefit from a defending mistake but his ball went outside to corner. Five minutes later, Oman's Amjad al Harthy send a ground ball inside the box touched the UAE's defender Kouame Kouadio who scored an own goal as Oman lead 1-0. After the goal, Oman strengthen more the defending side as the opponent faced difficulty to go towards the goalie Ibrahim al Mukhaini. UAE pressed hard in Oman's area as in the 31st minute, Nicolas Gimenez was very close to score the equaliser as he entered inside the box but his right shot missed the net to the right after a perfect assist by Yahya al Ghassani following a fast break. UAE's Yahya al Ghassani replaced by Ali Saleh due to injury in 38th minute. The first hald ended with Red Warriors leading by 1-0.

In the second half, UAE head coach Cosmin Olaroiu made many substitutions including entrance of Harib Abdullah, Yahya Nadir and Caio Canedo. Harib Abdullah did a lot of movements towards Oman's goalie Ibrahim al Mukhaini as tried to send long distance but saved successfully by Ibrahim al Mukaini. Essam al Subhi received yellow card in the 59th minute after tight interface with Lucas Caio.

In the 69th minute, referee announced for penalty to UAE but it was cancelled after VAR review.



Oman and UAE players in action.

In the 76th minute, UAE scored the equaliser through a strong header scored by Marcus Melon after a cross by Abdullah Saleh. Abdulrahman al Mushaifri missed a golden opportunity to bring Oman leading but his ball saved by Khalid Essa in the 79th minute. In the

83rd minute, UAE's Caio Lucas netted the second goal for UAE from long range to go through Ibrahim al Mukhaini to the net. Nine minutes added as additional time for the second half but no change in the result as UAE ended the match on a 2-1 winning note.

Strong start marks Sultan's Cup hockey opener

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

In an exciting kickoff to the 55th edition of His Majesty the Sultan's Cup Hockey Championship, the preliminary round began on Friday with several strong matches that revealed early signs of the participating teams' ambitions to claim the prestigious title.

MIRBAT DEFEAT FANJA 3-0

The Mirbat Hockey Team started their campaign in Group Three with a well-deserved 3-0 win over Fanja, in the match held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth, Culture and Entertainment Complex in Salalah.

Mirbat dominated the game from the opening minutes, pressing high in search of an early goal. In the 15th minute of the first quarter, Fouad al Baraka opened the scoring with a powerful strike after a well-coordinated attack, ending the first quarter with Mirbat leading 1-0.

In the second quarter, Mirbat continued their field dominance, while Fanja tried to get back into the game, but Mirbat's goalkeeper, Rayen bin Mubarak Said, made several crucial saves. In the 18th minute, Raed al Baraka doubled the lead, while Fanja missed a chance to reduce the



Mirbat and Fanja players fight for the ball.

deficit after failing to convert a penalty corner in the final minute of the quarter.

The third quarter saw chances for both sides but no goals, before Mohammed bin Salim al Nubi sealed the win for Mirbat in the fourth quarter with the team's third goal, ending the match 3-0 and placing Mirbat on top of their group with three valuable points.

QURAYAT CRUSH NIZWA 8-0

In another match from Group Two, Qurayat earned a sweeping 8-0 victory over Nizwa at the Oman Hockey Stadium in Al Amerat. Qurayat delivered a

dominant attacking display from the start, completely controlling the match to claim their first three points of the tournament, sending an early warning to the rest of the group.

MASIRAH BEAT IBRI 2-0

In Group Four, Masirah overcame Ibri with a 2-0 win at the Sohar Sports Complex. Despite a goalless first half, Masirah broke through Ibri's defence in the third quarter when Khalid al Balushi scored the opener, then added a second goal in the 50th minute of the final quarter, confirming his team's deserved victory.

AL RUSTAQ AND AL NAHDA 2-2 DRAW

In the second match of the same group, Al Rustaq and Al Nahda played out a thrilling 2-2 draw at the Sohar Sports Complex. The first quarter ended goalless, before Ayham al Araiimi gave Al Nahda the lead in the 24th minute. Just two minutes later, Salim al Busaidy equalised for Al Rustaq, ending the quarter 1-1.

In the third quarter, Al Rustaq took the lead again through Ayham al Busaidy in the 36th minute, but Al Nahda quickly responded with an equaliser from Yaseen al Alawi, and the score remained level until the final whistle.

SHORTTAKES



Salalah player controls the ball.

YOUTH BASKETBALL LEAGUE WITNESSES EXCITING MATCHES

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The 2025–2026 Youth Basketball League kicked off with two exciting matches that saw Masirah and Qurayat shine on opening day. Masirah cruised to a dominant 87–7 victory over Saham in a one-sided encounter at the Sohar Sports Complex, while Qurayat staged an impressive comeback to defeat Salalah 44–38 at the Seeb Club Sports Hall.

MASIRAH OVERWHELM SAHAM IN STYLE

The game between Masirah and Saham was completely one-sided, as Masirah controlled all aspects of play thanks to its strong organisation and excellent team chemistry, sealing the match with a massive 80-point margin.

Masirah’s top performers included Rashid al Isai, Mohammed al Shibli, and Khuzaymah al Shibli, who all excelled in scoring, while Suhail al Jabri managed Saham’s few points.

Masirah started strongly, scoring 17 points in the first quarter compared to 7 for Saham. They continued their dominance in the second quarter, adding 28 unanswered points while Saham could only manage a single point, ending the first half 45–6 in favour of Masirah.

The third quarter followed the same pattern, with Masirah adding 22 more points to Saham’s single point, before closing the match with another 20 points in the fourth quarter to seal a commanding 87–7 victory.

The game was officiated by referees Ali al Salmani (first referee) and Thabit al Hinai (second referee).

QURAYAT RALLY PAST SALALAH IN A THRILLING CONTEST

In the second match, Qurayat overturned an early deficit to claim a hard-fought 44–38 victory over Salalah in an intense and evenly matched encounter at the Seeb Club Hall.

Qurayat’s comeback was fuelled by the focus and efficiency of their players, with Khamis al Sinani and Saeed Hussein leading the scoring, while Fahd Bait Sanjour and Murshid Bait Sanasil stood out for Salalah.

The game began evenly, with Salalah taking a slight offensive edge to lead the first quarter 10–8. The second quarter saw balanced play from both sides, each scoring 6 points, as Salalah maintained a narrow 16–14 halftime lead.

In the third quarter, Qurayat took control offensively, scoring 13 points to Salalah’s 8, ending the quarter ahead 27–24. The fourth quarter remained competitive, but Qurayat managed to widen the gap by adding 17 points, while Salalah scored 14, securing the win 44–38.

The match was refereed by Mazin al Hilali (first referee) and Hussain al Owaimri (second referee).



Oman head into the Super Six full of confidence and momentum — as they continue their pursuit of qualification for the 2026 T20 World Cup, which would mark their fourth appearance and second in succession.

Oman beat PNG in ICC men’s T20 WC qualifier

A blistering innings from Vinayak Shukla and a ruthless bowling display powered Oman to a commanding 52-run victory over Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup Asia and East Asia Pacific (EAP) Qualifier at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat on Friday night — a win that sealed their place in the Super Six stage starting on Sunday.

Duleep Mendis-coached Team Oman’s triumph over PNG — their second successive victory — ensured they advanced as pool toppers with four points from Group 3, alongside Samoa, who finished second. They now join UAE (pool toppers) and Qatar from Group 1, and Nepal (pool toppers) and Japan from Group 2 in the Super Six stage, where the top three teams will earn coveted berths at the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2026, to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

On Friday, coming in when Oman were struggling at 57/5 after 13 overs — having earlier slipped to 25/3 in the powerplay — Shukla turned the tide with a blistering display of counter-attacking strokeplay. His fearless 48 off just 24 balls, studded with five boundaries and three towering sixes, lifted Oman from a position of vulnerability to a competitive total of 138/7 on a challenging surface.

Shukla found solid support from veteran Mohammad Nadeem (28 off 26), as the pair



Shukla found solid support from veteran Mohammad Nadeem (28 off 26), as the pair stitched together a crucial 40-run stand for the sixth wicket.

stitched together a crucial 40-run stand for the sixth wicket. Their partnership not only steadied the innings but also laid the foundation for Shukla’s late assault, which swung the momentum firmly in Oman’s favour.

In reply, PNG never looked settled against Oman’s disciplined bowling attack. Spinner Shakeel Ahmed (3/15) led from the front with a spell of precision and control, including a double strike off successive deliveries to

dismiss skipper Assad Vala and Boio Ray in the 15th over. He was well supported by fellow spinner Nadeem Khan (2/8) and medium pacer Jitenkumar Ramanandi (3/22), as the trio combined to rip through PNG’s batting lineup.

From 71/3 in the 12th over, PNG’s innings unraveled spectacularly, losing seven wickets for just 15 runs in a five-over collapse to be bowled out for 86 in 16.4 overs. Opener Sese Bau (35 off 34) and Patrick Nou (19 off 20) briefly resisted with a 35-run stand for the third wicket, but once that partnership was broken, Oman’s bowlers ensured there was no way back for the Pacific side.

With this emphatic win, Oman head into the Super Six full of confidence and momentum — a team in sync, with both bat and ball clicking at the right time — as they continue their pursuit of qualification for the 2026 T20 World Cup, which would mark their fourth appearance and second in succession.

BRIEF SCORES: Oman 138/7 in 20 overs (Vinayak Shukla 48 off 24, Mohammad Nadeem 28 off 26, Jatinder Singh 19 off 19; Kabua Morea 2/33, Alei Nao 1/15, Gaudi Toka 1/20) beat Papua New Guinea 86 in 16.4 overs (Sese Bau 35 off 34, Patrick Nou 19 off 20, Assad Vala 10 off 15; Shakeel Ahmed 3/15, Jitenkumar Ramanandi 3/22, Nadeem Khan 2/8).

Al Nasr and Al Nahda lead their groups in Jetour Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The fifth round of the 2025–2026 Jetour Cup Football Championship featured a series of thrilling and competitive matches that reshaped the standings in both groups, as clubs continued their fierce race for qualification to the knockout stages.

GROUP ONE HIGHLIGHTS

Al Nasr continued their strong run with a commanding 3–0 victory over Bahla at the Salalah Sports Complex. Beninese professional Abdoul Fadil Saonina opened the scoring, while substitute Abdullah al Mashrafi added two goals in the second half to secure a well-deserved win. This result lifted Al Nasr to eight points at the top of the group, remaining

unbeaten with two wins and two draws. Bahla, on the other hand, stayed on four points in sixth place despite creating several scoring chances.

In another exciting clash, Sur edged past Seeb with a 2–1 victory at the Sur Sports Complex. Sami al Hasni gave Sur the lead in the 17th minute before Seeb’s Mohammed al Musallami accidentally scored an own goal. Seeb’s only goal came when Sur defender Abdulrahman al Buraiki mistakenly turned the ball into his own net in the 55th minute. The win took Sur to six points, strengthening their mid-table position, while Seeb remained second with seven points.

Meanwhile, Oman Club maintained their positive momentum with an emphatic 4–1



Al Nasr players celebrate scoring a goal.

win over Samayil at the Nizwa Sports Complex. Husni al Hinai opened the scoring in the 27th minute, followed by Waleed al Musallami just before halftime. Al Harith al Mukhaini made it 3–0 in the 61st minute before Al Hinai struck again in the 74th. Saeed al Jabri scored a late consolation for Samayil. Oman Club’s victory took them to seven points, level with Seeb, while Samayil stayed on five points. After this round, the Group One standings were as follows Al Nasr topped Group One with eight points, followed by Seeb and Oman Club with seven points each. Sur climbed to fourth place with six points, while Samayil remained fifth with five. Bahla ranked sixth with four points and Dhofar stayed at the bottom with three.

GROUP TWO HIGHLIGHTS

In Group Two, Sohar and Ibri shared the spoils in a 1–1 draw at the Sohar Sports Complex. Mohammed al Buraiki put Sohar ahead in the 51st minute, but Abdulrahman al Yaquobi equalised for Ibri from the penalty spot in the 71st minute, after Sohar’s Saif al Dhabari was sent off. Despite being a man down, Sohar held firm to earn a point, leaving both teams satisfied.

Another match saw Al Nahda and Al Khabourah play out an exciting 2–2 draw at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex. Zakariya al Qartoubi and Colin Anthony scored for Al Khabourah, while Perry Jean Marie and Chardak Lokomi netted for Al Nahda in a game full of intensity until the final whistle.

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Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar celebrates as he cycles to the finish line to win the 119th edition of the Giro di Lombardia. — AFP

POGACAR WINS CYCLING’S IL LOMBARDIA FOR 5TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

BERGAMO, ITALY: Tadej Pogacar won the Monument Il Lombardia for a fifth time in as many years on Saturday, equalling Fausto Coppi’s record of victories in the season-ending race. Slovenian superstar Pogacar crossed the line first in Bergamo after a trademark attack on the key Passo di Ganda climb to blitz the rest of the field and become the first man since Eddy Merckx in 1975 to win three Monuments in a single season.

From the moment Pogacar was left to attack by his powerful UAE team-mates with around 38 kilometres remaining of the 241 km race there was no doubt of the final result, with only early breakaway artist Quinn Simmons out on his own one minute and 10 seconds up the road.

Pogacar finished nearly two minutes ahead of Remco Evenepoel, who again ended up second behind cycling’s dominant force as he did at the recent world and European championships.

“To win five times in a row... every time I start it feels like this race is suited to me, but also at the same time that with such a good team around me we can pull it off,” said Pogacar.

“I always say, seven years in a row this is my best season, and again I can say this is the best season so far.”

At 27 years old Pogacar has now won 10 of the sport’s Monuments — the five toughest and longest one-day races of the year — nine shy of a career tally set by Merckx, who won three in 1969, 1971, 1972 and 1975.

His fifth straight victory in the “Race of the Falling Leaves” is another record to add to a growing list as Italian great Coppi strung four consecutive wins between 1946 and 1949, with his fifth coming in 1954.

HISTORY MAKER

Pogacar is used to making history as this year he became the first man to win both the Tour de France and world championship two seasons in a row.

And he is now also the first to finish on the podium of all five Monuments in the same season.

In April, Pogacar won both the Tour of Flanders and Liege-Bastogne-Liege, victories which go alongside third place in Milan-San Remo and second in Paris-Roubaix which were both won by Mathieu van der Poel.

Backed by a star-studded team which included the likes of Isaac del Toro and Adam Yates, Pogacar plugged away in the peloton for much of the race as a breakaway containing Simmons pushed ahead early on. — AFP



Monaco's Valentin Vacherot in action during his semifinal match against Serbia's Novak Djokovic. — Reuters

Vacherot ousts Djokovic, sets up Shanghai final

ANAILING Novak Djokovic was knocked out of the Shanghai Masters semifinals on Saturday by world number 204 Valentin Vacherot, who will face his cousin Arthur Rinderknech in a surprise all-family final.

Vacherot, a 26-year old qualifier from Monaco, beat Djokovic 6-3, 6-4 to deny him a record-extending fifth title in Shanghai.

He will next face his cousin Rinderknech, the unseeded Frenchman, who came from a set down to oust Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.

“I’m trying to pinch myself, is this real,” said Vacherot after the biggest win of his career.

“I have a hundred feelings right now.” Vacherot is the lowest-ranked player to reach an ATP Masters 1000 final since the format’s introduction in 1990.

Djokovic, 38, struggled physically throughout the match, throwing up courtside and receiving medical treatment multiple times.

The former world number one said Vacherot’s unlikely run in the tournament was “an amazing story”.

“I told him at the net that he’s had an amazing tournament, but more so his attitude is very good... so it’s all about him,” said Djokovic.

“The better player won today.”

HEALTH ISSUES

Djokovic declined to answer questions about his physical state.

He had said after his last match that he was concerned after battling vomiting bouts, leg injury scares and fatigue throughout the tournament. However, he looked alert and seemed to be having a dream start when he broke in the first game.

But the satisfaction was short-lived as Vacherot broke back instantly.

The Serb began having issues in his left leg at the start of the seventh game, stopping to stretch multiple times and dropping to the ground at one point.

He had to take an extended medical break, lying on his stomach shirtless as a physio attended to his back.

With Djokovic clearly unable to move normally, Vacherot had an easy time breaking again in the eighth game, then fired two aces to hold the ninth and claim the set.

Djokovic received treatment again at the break, but was clearly still struggling in the second set.

In temperatures of 31 C and humidity levels of 62 per cent, Djokovic managed to hold the first game despite facing breakpoint twice and falling to the ground again.

Serving in the ninth game he hit two double-faults in quick succession before recovering, only to ultimately be broken upon committing another. Despite a last-gasp effort from Djokovic, Vacherot held serve and his nerve to seal victory.

MEDVEDEV OUT

Rinderknech had a tougher path to the final, battling past Medvedev, another former

world number one.

The Russian broke in the third game, and saved a breakpoint in the eighth to take the first set.

The 54th-ranked Rinderknech came out fighting in the second, breaking in the second game and then saving five breakpoints in the almost 17-minute third game.

Medvedev kept pushing, forcing the Frenchman to save another in an 11-minute fifth game.

But Rinderknech broke again in the eighth game to confirm the match would go to a decider.

The Frenchman had another close call in the seventh game of the third set, coming back from the brink twice, both times with an ace.

And in the end Medvedev, facing matchpoint, hit a double-fault to hand over victory.

Rinderknech dropped to the ground in disbelief and performed a somersault as his cousin rushed onto the court to hug him.

“I guess we must be good people to deserve something like this,” he said.

“Deep down in our heart, in our family, we’re probably nice people and doing good things, so we probably deserve this... because it’s unbelievable, I can’t really believe it.”

Asked who the crowd should root for on Sunday, he said: “It doesn’t matter anymore... You root for him, you root for me... We already won here today.” — AFP

Pegula ends Sabalenka’s Wuhan record to set up Gauff final

WUHAN, CHINA: Jessica Pegula fought back to end Aryna Sabalenka’s perfect record in Wuhan with a dramatic 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) victory in the semifinals on Saturday and will face Coco Gauff for the title.

Contesting an eighth consecutive three-setter, Pegula clawed her way back from 2-5 down in the decider to shock the world number one and set up a final against fellow American Gauff, who squeezed past Jasmine Paolini 6-4, 6-3.

“That was crazy, I can’t believe I came back and won that,” said Pegula, who has won seven of the eight consecutive three-set matches she played in the last 17 days.

“I’m just really proud of myself. I’ve played so much tennis the last few weeks, so many three-set

matches but I feel like I’m very tough right now and I’m just using that as best I can.”

The sixth-seeded Pegula is through to her sixth final of the season having dethroned the reigning Wuhan champion Sabalenka, who came into the match with a perfect 20-0 record at the tournament.

Played in significantly cooler temperatures compared to the rest of the week, both semifinals of the day featured a whopping number of service breaks due to the slower conditions.

There were five breaks of serve in the first six games of the contest before Sabalenka managed to consolidate her advantage and create a 5-2 gap.



Jessica Pegula of the US in action during her semifinal match against Belarus’ Aryna Sabalenka. — Reuters

Pegula, 31, threw her racquet in frustration when Sabalenka fired a return winner to get to set point the following game and the Belarusian scooped the opening set as the match clock hit 40 minutes.

Despite her struggles on serve Pegula was playing great off the ground, which helped her course-correct in the second set.

The American squandered a 2-0 lead early on but recovered to wrestle the second set away from Sabalenka’s hands and force a decider.

The final set was another see-saw affair but it looked almost over when Sabalenka served for the win at 5-3. Pegula had other ideas and flipped the script to lead 6-5.

Serving for the victory, Pegula

double-faulted four times and let two match points slip away, allowing Sabalenka to force a deciding tiebreak.

Pegula upped her level when she needed it the most to claim just the third victory from 11 meetings with Sabalenka.

GAUFF OUTS PAOLINI Gauff survived a battle of wills and some serving wobbles against Paolini in their semifinal.

The two-time Grand Slam champion had lost all three meetings she had with Paolini in 2025 but turned things around with a clutch effort on Saturday.

“It was 3-0 this year but I think our head-to-head is even now,” said Gauff of her record against the Italian. — AFP

ADVERTORIALS

COMMUNITYDEVELOPMENT



These agreements reflect the partnership between the public and private sectors in meeting community needs across various fields.

SIX SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PACTS FOR AL BURAIMI GOVERNORATE

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi, the Eshraqa Foundation, the community development arm of Khimji Ramdas, signed six agreements with various entities from the governorate.

The signing ceremony took place in the presence of members of the Majlis Ash'shura, walis, shaikhs, dignitaries, members from the Board of directors of Khimji Ramdas (KR) Group alongside heads of government service sectors in the Al Buraimi governorate.

These agreements reflect the partnership between the public and private sectors in meeting community needs across various fields. The initiative covers several areas including health, education, social development, sports and religious affairs, particularly through support for Quran schools in the governorate; in addition to assisting low-income households, in collaboration with the walis and registered charitable teams in the governorate.

The first agreement was signed with the Ministry of Health to support the healthcare sector by providing specialised medical equipment to enhance an ophthalmology clinic. Another agreement was signed with the Ministry of Education to supply government schools and innovation centres in the governorate with interactive smart screens.

The agreements also included support to initiatives of the Ministry of Social Development, such as establishing a sensory room for children with special needs at the Al Wafa Rehabilitation Centre in Al Buraimi; providing the Omani Women's Association in Al Buraimi with a 14-seater bus and equipment to empower its members to continue developing their skills and generating income through their creative crafts.

Additionally, the agreement with the Ministry of Social Development supports charitable teams with various types of household electronic appliances to be distributed to low-income households.

Another agreement was signed with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to support the Al Buraimi Sports Complex with modern physical therapy and rehabilitation equipment for sports injuries.

In coordination with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, an agreement was signed to supply all Quran schools in the governorate with computers, interactive smart screens and a variety of electronic devices and equipment to enhance and facilitate the educational environment in these schools.

NBO and Premium Motors sign MoU to offer exclusive benefits for customers and employees

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Premium Motors, the official distributor of Audi in Oman, to offer exclusive benefits to NBO customers and employees.

The agreement marks the beginning of a strategic partnership that enhances lifestyle offerings through premium automotive experiences and joint marketing initiatives.

The MoU, valid for 24 months, reflects NBO's commitment to providing added value beyond



conventional banking. Through this collaboration, NBO account holders and employees will enjoy exclusive offers on Audi vehicles, along with special promotions and co-branded

digital campaigns.

Commenting on the signing, Faisal al Wahaibi, Chief Retail & Digital Banking Officer at NBO, said, "At NBO, our focus extends beyond providing financial solutions. We aim to enrich our customers' lifestyles through meaningful partnerships that deliver convenience, value and distinction. This collaboration with Premium Motors, Audi Oman, highlights our shared vision of quality and innovation while offering exclusive privileges to our customers and staff".

EDO issues debut sukuk to support capital market

ENERGY

Development Oman (EDO) has successfully issued its debut domestic Sukuk, raising RO 50 million in a strategic transaction designed to support the development of Oman's domestic capital market. The issuance marks the first local Sukuk by an Omani government-related entity (GRE), broadening the range of financing instruments available and establishing a benchmark for future issuances by other GREs.



These agreements reflect the partnership between the public and private sectors in meeting community needs across various fields.

The Sukuk attracted over RO 80 million and was allocated to 29 investors, spanning conventional and Islamic banks, insurance companies, money market funds, official institutions and high-net-worth individuals. This broad participation reflects EDO's success in establishing a diversified domestic investor base.

The three-year Sukuk was issued via private placement

at a profit rate of 4.40% and an average yield of 4.41%, achieved through an auction process. In comparison, the Oman's three-year Government Development Bond issued in July 2025 yielded 4.28%.

The issuance was documented under EDO's RO 1

billion Sukuk programme and marks the first step in EDO's initiative to develop Oman's fixed income investor base. Both the programme and inaugural Sukuk issuance are listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), with documentation approved by the

Financial Services Authority (FSA) in line with international disclosure standards.

EDO employed a hybrid Ijara-Wakala Islamic structure tailored to the Omani market. MCD is the Registrar, Certificate Holders Agent and Paying Agent.

National Bank of Oman (NBO) acted as Issue Manager, with Muzn Islamic Banking serving as Sharia Advisor. Trowers & Hamlins acted as legal counsel, providing detailed advice on the Islamic structure and disclosure.

Sultan al Maamari, CFO of EDO, commented: "EDO is delighted with the success of this inaugural issuance, which sets a strong foundation for future transactions. Through our debut RO Sukuk, we reaffirm our commitment to deepening and developing the local capital market. We extend our sincere appreciation to our investors, NBO and all stakeholders whose support was instrumental in the success of this landmark transaction".

SOHAR PORT LAUNCHES VOLUNTEER PASSPORT PROJECT

SUHAR: SOHAR Port and Freezone, in partnership with the Oman Volunteers Network Taawon, has launched the Volunteer Passport Project.

This flagship initiative equips 100 young men and women from the wilayats of Suhar, Al Suwaiq, Shinas, Liwa, Saham and Al Khabourah with practical training, leadership development and the opportunity to lead sustainable volunteer initiatives.

The project will run from September 2025 to March 2026 and aims to strengthen youth engagement across Al Batinah North Governorate.



The Volunteer Passport Project focuses on boosting youth participation.

The Volunteer Passport Project focuses on boosting youth participation, building diverse volunteer teams and establishing 10 to 15 new partnerships with public and private sector stakeholders.

It also emphasises leveraging digital platforms and social media to drive innovation and entrepreneurial ideas among young volunteers.

"This initiative reinforces SOHAR Port and Freezone's long-standing commitment to nurturing Oman's future leaders", said Rashad al Wahaibi, Communication Advisor of SOHAR Port and Freezone.

"By equipping youth with

the skills and opportunities needed to take ownership of their communities, we are helping shape a stronger, more sustainable future for Al Batinah North Governorate and beyond.

Together with Taawon, we support a generation that will contribute meaningfully to Oman's growth and development".

By championing volunteerism and social responsibility, SOHAR Port and Freezone continues to drive its vision of creating a thriving, inclusive and resilient community, aligned with Oman's growth and diversification objectives.

Bank Muscat supports the success of Musandam Winter Season 2025

MUSCAT: Affirming its commitment to active participation in supporting various initiatives that contribute to enhancing the local economy, Bank Muscat has announced a partnership with the Office of the Governor of Musandam to support the upcoming Musandam Winter Season 2025/2026, scheduled to begin in November and run for six months.

The announcement took place during the promotional ceremony announcing the fourth edition of Musandam Winter Season 2025/2026 held at W Muscat hotel under the theme "Partnership". The event witnessed the announcement of several partnerships with various institutions, reflecting the importance of concerted efforts



Musandam Winter Season 2025/2026 is a promising tourism initiative that will feature more than 60 diverse events.

among all stakeholders to deliver a sustainable tourism product that highlights Musandam's uniqueness and adds value to the national economy.

Musandam Winter Season is a promising tourism initiative that will feature more than 60 diverse events across the governorate's four wilayats, in addition to Lima and Kumzar villages, with the aim of strengthening Musandam's position on the regional and global tourism map.

Shaikha bint Yousuf al Farsiyyah, Deputy CEO — Operations, Bank Muscat, expressed her delight with this collaboration with the Office of the Governor of Musandam, noting that it reflects the Bank's strategy to serve the nation — whether by

delivering banking services to all parts of Oman, implementing annual social responsibility programmes, or entering into strategic partnerships that embody the importance of cooperation to achieve common goals.

She added: "We are pleased with the invitation from the Office of the Governor of Musandam to be part of making this year's Winter Season a success through the planned activities and events that showcase the governorate's rich history. This partnership also provides an opportunity for institutional collaboration and to reinforce the efforts led by the Governor's Office and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in supporting Musandam's tourism sector.

SHORT TAKES



Credit to the private sector accounted for RO 28 billion, up 6.5 per cent year-on-year.

BANK CREDIT IN OMAN SURPASSES RO 34 BILLION

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) will host the 17th Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) Summit in Muscat from February 2-4, 2026, under the theme “Islamic Finance for the Future: Unlocking New Horizons with Global Impact”.

The summit will bring together central banks, regulators, international organisations and industry leaders to explore the growing role of Islamic finance in fostering a stable, ethical and sustainable global financial system.

Panel discussions will cover key issues such as developing the sukuk market, strengthening non-banking financial sectors, financial inclusion, social impact and climate change. Dialogue sessions will also involve private-sector leaders, government agencies, NGOs and youth representatives. An accompanying exhibition will feature contributions from leading players in the Islamic finance industry.

Ahmed bin Ja'afar al Musallami, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman, described the summit as a “strategic turning point” that will help deepen understanding of global economic changes and promote dialogue on innovation-driven cooperation.

He said it would also strengthen the Islamic finance sector's resilience and chart a path for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Dr Ghiath Shabsieh, Secretary-General of the Islamic Financial Services Board, highlighted the summit's importance as a global platform for exchanging views on emerging developments in Islamic finance. He said Oman's hosting of the event underscores its growing role in shaping the industry's future and promoting its global adoption. — ONA

OMAN OIL EXPORTS EXCEED 205 MILLION BARRELS

MUSCAT: Oman's oil exports reached approximately 205,042,200 barrels by the end of August 2025, a slight decrease of 0.2 per cent compared to the same period in 2024, which amounted to 205,483,000 barrels.

Preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicate that the average price of oil decreased by 12.6 per cent to reach \$72.1 per barrel by the end of August 2025, compared to \$82.5 per barrel during the same period in 2024.

Statistics showed that average daily oil production decreased by 0.1 per cent, reaching 993,200 barrels per day by the end of August 2025, compared to 994,500 barrels per day during the same period in 2024.

Oman's total oil production also decreased by 0.5 per cent, reaching 241,370,700 barrels by the end of August 2025, compared to 242,667,600 barrels during the same period in 2024. — ONA

ENDING TRUCE

Trump ratchets up US-China trade war



US President Donald Trump revived the trade war against Beijing on Friday, ending an uneasy truce between the two economies with promises to sharply hike tariffs in a reprisal against China curbing its critical mineral exports.

The president unveiled additional levies of 100% on China's US-bound exports, along with new export controls on “any and all critical software” by November 1. — Reuters

MARKET VALUE

Bitcoin extends decline to \$104,782



Bitcoin, the world's largest cryptocurrency by market value, extended declines on Friday after the United States President Donald Trump escalated his trade conflict with China.

The spat shook global financial markets, sending the benchmark S&P 500 Index sliding by more than 2 per cent.

Bitcoin was last down 8.4% at \$104,782 as of 17:20. — Reuters

POCKETBOOK ISSUES

US consumer sentiment steady in October



US consumer sentiment was steady in October, with households appearing to shrug off a partial shutdown of the government, though worries about the labour market and inflation lingered.

The University of Michigan's Surveys of Consumers noted that “pocketbook issues like high prices and weakening job prospects remain at the forefront of consumers' minds,” this according to their respondents. — Reuters

Study offers hope against heavy metal pollution

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 11

IN a significant breakthrough for environmental safety in the Sultanate of Oman, a young researcher at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has embarked on a pioneering study on the use of locally produced microbial mats to treat wastewater contaminated with heavy metals — specifically hexavalent chromium [Cr(VI)], a toxic byproduct of industrial and mining activities in Oman.

Dr Mohammad Tariq Ali Khan, a PhD candidate specialising in geomicrobiology, says his work — once suitably scaled and commercialised — has the potential to provide a cost-competitive, environmentally safe local solution for decontaminating groundwater polluted with Cr(VI) in Oman.

“Cr(VI) is one of the most hazardous metal ions used in various industries and often released into the environment”, said Dr Khan.

“Mining activities have contributed to increased groundwater contamination with Cr(VI) in Oman.

This form of water pollution poses a serious environmental threat with direct impacts on living organisms. Microbial mats collected from chromium-polluted aquatic bodies (Wilayat of Nakhal, Al Batinah South Governorate) can remove Cr(VI) from wastewater through biosorption and bioreduction processes. The biosorption method, in particular, can be scaled up for industrial applications”.



Dr Mohammad Tariq Ali Khan.

Speaking to the Observer, Dr Khan explained that his research focuses on two main areas: understanding how microbial communities can detoxify Cr(VI) under both aerobic and anaerobic conditions; and exploring the role of dead mats as biosorbents for Cr(VI) removal.

The research is supervised by Prof Raeid Abed, Head of the Department of Biology at SQU.

Microbial mats, he explained, are layered communities of microbes — such as bacteria and algae — that thrive in extreme environments.

“They act as natural bioreactors, reducing toxic Cr(VI) to the less harmful trivalent chromium (Cr(III)) through metabolic processes.

Their resilience makes them ideal for treating heavy metal-contaminated wastewater, a pressing issue in industrial areas.

This eco-friendly approach supports sustainable pollution control, which is crucial for environmental health”.

Dead mats, particularly those made up of algae, offer a low-cost, effective method to capture chromium from wastewater. Their cell walls naturally bind Cr(VI) without the need for nutrients or maintenance, unlike living mats.

“This simple, passive method is both sustainable and scalable, making it suitable for industrial wastewater treatment and the reduction of heavy metal pollution. It

can also complement active cleanup methods, offering a dual approach to managing contamination”, he added.

Significantly, Dr Khan's research aligns with Oman Vision 2040 objectives of advancing environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation through innovative local solutions.

“My research addresses wastewater contamination — a key environmental challenge — using microbial mats for eco-friendly, sustainable bioremediation. By reducing heavy metal pollution, it supports Oman's goals of protecting natural resources and mitigating climate change impacts, as clean water systems are vital for resilient ecosystems”.

Dr Khan presented his findings at the International Society of Microbial Ecology (ISME-19) conference in Cape Town, where global experts in microbial ecology praised the study's potential in scaling bioremediation for industrial use.

He noted that the recognition reinforced both the scientific and strategic relevance of his research to Oman's environmental agenda.

As for next steps, Dr Khan said: “I'm now working on optimising these techniques for field applications in Oman, where industrial wastewater management is a growing concern.

My goal is to develop scalable, eco-friendly solutions for heavy metal pollution that contribute to both global and local efforts in sustainable wastewater treatment”.

Oman to host 17th IFSB Summit

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Investment as a cornerstone of Oman’s national value



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert.

OMAN is establishing an economic identity in the areas of sustainable investments. Oman is the centre of the economies of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Gulf. Economic stability was dependent on oil for decades, yet, market dynamics and globalisation have brought about changes.

Oman is pivoting with a focus on investments, be them local or foreign and is adopting an approach on the resilience and diversification of the economy and positioning in the world.

OMAN VALUE DIVERSIFICATION

Investment is the primary driver for diversification set down in the Oman Vision 2040 document. Although the oil and gas industries will still be important for the economy, Oman is focusing on investments in the industries of tourism, logistics, fishing, renewable energy and manufacturing. The Duqm Special Economic Zone is a great example of this investment diversification.

It is becoming a centre to the region for petrochemical, shipping and industrial activities, while attracting foreign direct investments. This will enable the first time oil-independent investments and stabilise the economy.

INFRASTRUCTURE AS A VALUE MULTIPLIER

Oman has integrated development of infrastructure into its investment narrative. Modern highways and airports have improved domestic connectivity and transformed

Oman into a logistics hub. Oman has also expanded the SOHAR Port and Freezone and is developing Port of Duqm to become a critical node in global trade.

With access to world trade infrastructure and efficient services, investors see Oman as reliable. Oman adds to its international profile as a competitive place to do business.

HUMAN CAPITAL AND KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Oman’s investment potential is also linked to the development of human capital. Policies aimed at incentivising investment in worker training have been introduced, especially in technology, renewable energy and other high-value sectors.

This enables Oman to equip its citizens with the specialised skills to build a knowledge economy. This transformative approach to investment will embed value into society and empower Omanis to become the innovators of the future.

GREEN ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT

Oman recognises sustainability as the top investment allure for the country. With the abundance of solar and wind energy, the Sultanate of Oman is targeting leadership in renewable energy and green hydrogen. Key projects in Al Duqm and Dhofar are gaining substantial interest for the growing need for low-carbon energy.

These projects will facilitate a domestic energy transition and acknowledge Oman as a reliable exporter of clean energy.

Oman is pivoting with a focus on investments, be them local or foreign and is adopting an approach on the resilience and diversification of the economy and positioning in the world.

Oman’s relentless pursuit of an ambitious sustainability agenda focuses interest from global investors driven by ESG factors. Considering Oman’s agenda, the country will soon gain access to low-cost capital and other global investors.

INVESTOR CONFIDENCE AND GLOBAL INTEGRATION

Confidence in Oman’s investor friendly ecosystem is demonstrated by the flows of FDI from Asia, the Gulf, Europe and across the Globe. Confidence is built through transparent, predictable regulatory environments, tax holidays and free economic zones. These relations are comprehensive, underpinning trade, relations technology and capital. Innovative Oman is positioned as an enhanced geo-political trustworthy and stable country.

CONCLUSION

For Oman, capital is not just investment but also something that allows for transformation. The Sultanate of Oman is investing and re-engineering its economy and its narrative through diversification and the development of infrastructure, human capital and sustainability. With Oman Vision 2040, Oman is becoming a place where returns on investments translate to societal value and positively impact the economy on a global scale. Oman is a testament to resilience and value. For business leaders and investors looking for a growing, limitless and strategically productive environment, Oman is a compelling opportunity.

TURNING CORROSION INTO COMPETITIVENESS



NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate.

CORROSION rarely makes headlines. It doesn’t spark the kind of debate reserved for oil prices or global trade negotiations, yet its impact is both silent and staggering. Every year, the global economy loses an estimated \$2.5 trillion to corrosion-related failures — more than the GDP of entire nations. For Oman, the issue is not an abstract statistic. It is a tangible challenge that plays out across

oil pipelines in the desert, desalination plants supplying fresh water to towns and cities, port infrastructure connecting the Sultanate of Oman to global trade and the industrial hubs forming the backbone of economic diversification. When corrosion weakens these assets, the costs ripple outward. It leads to unplanned shutdowns, expensive repairs, lost productivity and, in some cases, safety risks. For a country positioning itself at the crossroads of global energy and commerce, this is not just an engineering problem — it is a matter of national competitiveness and resilience. As Oman advances Oman Vision 2040, infrastructure is central to achieving diversification, sustainability and energy security. Protecting these assets is therefore as important as building new ones. Every failure prevented and every additional year of service life preserved is more than a technical win — it is an economic one. Addressing corrosion effectively reduces economic leakage, frees capital for reinvestment and safeguards the reliability on which industries and communities depend. What was once viewed as a background maintenance cost is now seen as a strategic field of innovation. The economic case is straightforward: extending the life of a desalination plant by ten years may save millions of rials, while keeping a pipeline intact avoids costly downtime and potential environmental harm. The national case is even stronger: resilience in infrastructure underpins confidence in investment, trade and future growth. Solutions for corrosion are advancing rapidly and Oman is uniquely positioned to benefit from — and contribute to — this innovation. Protective coatings tailored for Gulf conditions, cathodic protection systems and corrosion-resistant alloys are extending asset life by decades.

Two investment gateways, one simple promise

OMAN has opened two new investment gateways on its map: the Special Economic Zone in Al Dhahirah Governorate (Wilayat of Ibri) and the Special Economic Zone in Al Rawdah (Wilayat of Mahadha, Al Buraimi Governorate), created by Royal Decrees on October 8, 2025.

One faces Saudi Arabia, roughly twenty kilometres from the Rub Al Khali crossing and about 105 kilometres from Ibri Industrial City. The other leans into the UAE corridor, around eighty-five kilometres from Al Buraimi and 125 kilometres from Suhar, on the route that links SOHAR Port and Freezone to Jebel Ali. Geography is not decoration; it is policy you can drive on.

We already have a backbone. Three free zones — Suhar, Salalah and Al Mazunah — and ten industrial cities run by Madayn. The two new SEZs are inland platforms where goods are made, packed, cleared and dispatched with fewer detours and lower costs.

If we do this well, zones will lift non-oil GDP, widen national income and create dignified jobs for young Omanis. The law now matches the ambition. Royal Decree 38/2025 put special economic and free zones under one modern framework and one regulator, OPAZ.

Investors do not fall in love with slogans; they marry certainty. One rulebook means one interpretation, one timeline and one accountable authority when a file needs a nudge. Boards and lenders can underwrite that.

The front door to each gateway is clear too. Invest Oman acts as the country’s concierge for serious capital. It gives an investor a name, a number and a map — sites, utilities, ports and roads — in one place.

A month saved at the start is often a year saved at the end.

Behind that door sits Nazdaher, the quiet fixer that moves across



The Al Rawdah Special Economic Zone leans into the UAE corridor



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics department at Oman Observer.

ministries to clear the snags that used to slow projects — a permit that lingers, a connection that slips, a rule that clashes with reality. Interest arrives at the front desk; Nazdaher pushes it room by room until machines are humming.

What should each zone do? Al Dhahirah should lean into its border logic: manufacturing and food industries for overland trade, logistics yards stitched to Saudi distribution and mining services that turn rock into value.

Al Rawdah should speak the language of the UAE artery: light and medium industry, pharmaceuticals and plastics, food processing and fast re-exports. Specialisation is not a slogan. It is how technology sticks, suppliers grow and wages rise.

Speed is the other half of the promise. The one-stop shop must be exactly that — digital, accountable and timed. Visas, licences, land, power and water connections; and customs should run on published service levels with a single case officer who owns the file from first call to first shipment.

Investors finance timelines, not adjectives.

When government measures

itself in public, private capital moves faster — and commissioning dates hold.

Anchors before acres. Release land in tranches around a handful of anchor tenants that define each zone’s supply chain, then pull suppliers close — packaging, maintenance, bonded warehousing, testing and certification, targeted finance.

People are the engine, not the footnote. Apprenticeships, micro-credentials and on-the-job training must be written into investor agreements, with safe worker housing and reliable transport; these are productivity tools, not perks.

Inputs and the gate decide whether factories run or wait. Offer eligible projects multi-year utility tariff options, issue capacity letters that mean what they say and keep the next substation and the next water-reuse unit ahead of demand.

At the fence, keep Bayan’s single-window customs tight and predictable. A container that clears on the first try is free finance — and a vote of confidence for the next expansion.

Cost now has a colour. Boardrooms price carbon alongside kilowatts. As Hydrom builds Oman’s green-energy backbone, zones should make it easy to tap lower-carbon power—on-site or wheeled — reuse industrial water and verify ESG performance. That protects exporter margins as border rules tighten.

Keep the system simple. One rulebook under OPAZ. One front door at Invest Oman. One fixer in Nazdaher when something jams. One digital counter in every zone that owns the file and the timeline.

Publish a national scorecard — time to operate, export value, Omani employment and local-supplier spend — so success is measured, not assumed. Do this and the two new gateways will not just welcome companies. They will export the future.

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

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PICKUP BUS ISUZU TRUCK

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*Images are representative
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INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

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

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ART/LIFE



FASHION

‘Return to elegance’: highlights from Paris Fashion Week

A HISTORIC Paris Fashion Week has wrapped up after 10 days of Spring-Summer 2026 womenswear shows, featuring many new faces and hailed by critics as marking a “return to elegance”. AFP looks back on the key moments:

— GLOBAL MAKEOVER —

After a momentous Milan Fashion Week, marked by the absence of the late Giorgio Armani and new creative directors at Gucci and Bottega Veneta, Paris saw a procession of new designers take their first bows at their new houses. Matthieu Blazy’s first collection for Chanel, Jonathan Anderson’s womenswear debut at Dior or Pierpaolo Piccioli’s first steps at Balenciaga: around 10 labels in Paris were under new direction following a major shake-up. “The questions of succession and creative renewal arise and it just so happens that it’s happening everywhere all at once”, Chanel fashion boss Bruno Pavlovsky said in an interview.

— BUT NO RADICAL CHANGE —

While Chanel’s new collection was widely praised, critics were more divided over the offerings from Dior and Balenciaga. “There was no creative shock”, Marc Beauge, editor of French fashion magazine L’Etiquette, said. “These were collections designed primarily to be commercial and reassuring”, he added, describing them as exercises in “creativity under constraint”. “The priority is to reassure and avoid losing existing clients, rather than taking risks”, the specialist added. “We’re not yet in a new era of fashion, but there’s definitely a fresh breeze on the catwalks”, said Pierre Groppo, fashion editor at Vanity Fair France.

— FEMININE, DELICATE LOOKS —

“In general, everything has softened. We’ve definitely moved away from streetwear”, Marie Ottavi, fashion journalist at French newspaper Liberation, said. “We’re craving more elegance, with delicacy and at times a touch of flamboyance”, she added. Chief fashion buyer at London store Harrods, Simon Longland, said that “the overarching trend this season was a return to elegance, often referencing the refined silhouettes of the 1920s and 1950s”. Skirts were long, with ruffles, fringed with feathers, or pleated. Dresses were light and airy, often with floral motifs. But there was still plenty of skin on display. Skirts were slit and tops had exaggerated cutaways. Sheer materials and dresses featured on many runways, including Vivienne Westwood or Schiaparelli where chief designer Daniel Roseberry sent out model Kendall Jenner in an eye-catching black version. — AFP

LIFESTYLE

HOW ONE OMANI WOMAN IS CULTIVATING CALM AND CONNECTION THROUGH GARDENING > 20



QUICK FEATURES



TRAVEL

Luke Evans and Tom Pennicott paddle a canoe beneath Baseley’s Bridge spanning the Basingstoke Canal, near Odiham, west of London. —AFP



LIFESTYLE

Former Miss Lebanon Nada Koussa, right, crowns the new Miss Lebanon Perla Harb during the Miss Lebanon 2025 contest in Zouk Mosbeh, north of Beirut. —AFP



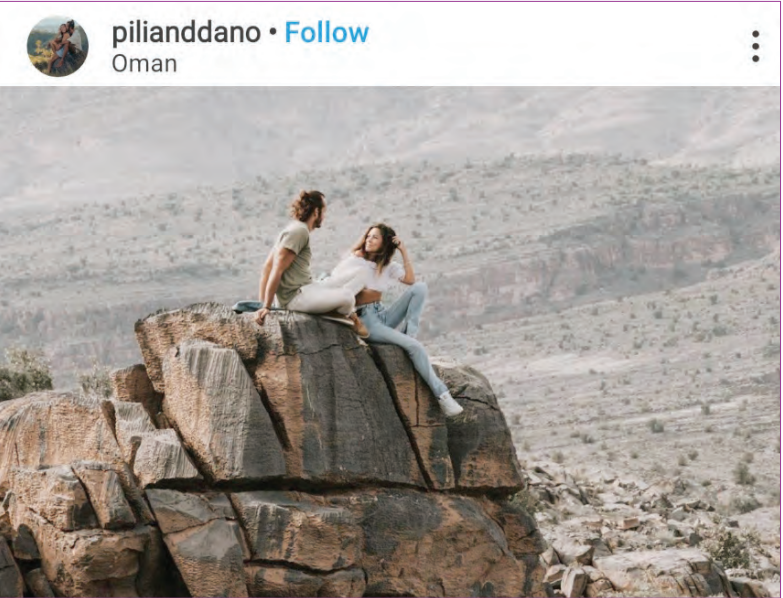
FASHION

A model presents sunglasses by Pierre Cardin for the Women Ready-to-wear Spring-Summer 2026 collection as part of the Paris Fashion Week. —AFP

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Iraq recovers over 40,000 artefacts since 2003



IRAQ HAS recovered more than 40,000 stolen ancient artefacts since 2003, many of which had been smuggled abroad, including to the United States and the United Kingdom, a representative of the Ministry of Culture said on Tuesday.

The ministry’s spokesperson, Ahmed al Alyawi, said Iraqi embassies are actively pursuing smuggled artefacts, particularly those stolen from archaeological sites by organised looting networks.

“Our ministry has a dedicated department that monitors these networks and traces the locations of smuggled items through effective international cooperation”, he added.

Among the recovered treasures, the recent return of a more than 4,500-year-old

ibex statue drew particular attention. Other notable artefacts include the Tablet of Gilgamesh and the Sumerian Ram in a Thicket.

“This success highlights the organised work of our teams and we continue our efforts to restore the country’s cultural heritage”, Al Alyawi said.

The looting of Iraq’s cultural heritage intensified after the US-led war in 2003, when thousands of artefacts disappeared from the National Museum in Baghdad and other heritage sites. Many pieces were later destroyed during the rise of the so-called Islamic State from 2014 onwards.

Despite these challenges, Iraqi authorities continue their recovery efforts, seeking to protect and preserve the nation’s rich historical legacy. — dpa



A person views a painting by French artist Claude Monet on display at the “Monet and Venice” exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in Brooklyn, New York, on Saturday. — AFP

EXHIBIT ON MONET’S PROLIFIC VENICE VISIT DEBUTS AT BROOKLYN MUSEUM

CLAUDE MONET did not want to travel to Venice in 1908 — at the time, he was 68 and working on his famed water lilies paintings, and only reluctantly agreed to accompany his wife Alice Hoschede.

But his time spent there became one of his most prolific, resulting in 37 paintings, many of which are being put on display at an exhibit opened on Saturday at the Brooklyn Museum in New York.

“He fell in love with the city, and he had a wonderful time there with Alice,” the exhibit’s co-curator Lisa Small said.

“They wanted to come back, but Alice became ill and died sadly” in 1911, Small explained. “So he finished these paintings at Giverny in a state of sadness and mourning.”

The exhibit, which runs until February 2026, retraces the couple’s journey to Venice through masterpieces the French painter created in the city and their archives, including postcards and photos.

Nineteen paintings have been compiled for the exhibit, including “The Palazzo Ducale” and “The Grand Canal, Venice.”

Many showcase — in the Impressionist master’s iconic style — architecturally stunning buildings from various distances at different times of days, always highlighting water and their reflections.

Venice itself is the second protagonist of the exhibit, which also features works on the city by Canaletto (1697-1768), J M W Turner (1775-1851), and John Singer Sargent (1856-1925).



People view a painting by French artist Claude Monet on display at the “Monet and Venice” exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in Brooklyn, New York, on Saturday. — AFP

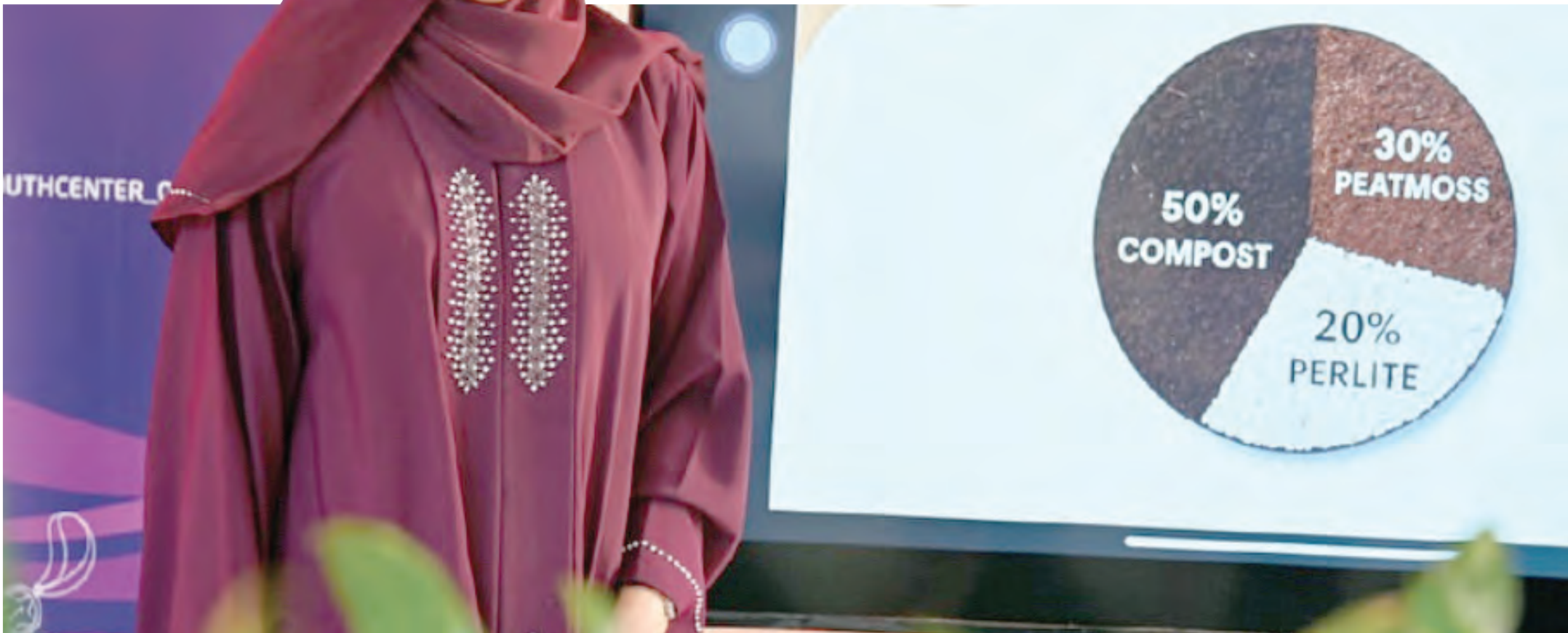
The highlight of “Monet and Venice” is a room showcasing the French master’s paintings accompanied by music, with a symphony created for the occasion by the museum’s composer-in-residence, Niles Luther.

The piece is a nod to art critics who, “especially toward the end of his career, would talk about his work in musical terms, through a musical

lens,” said Small.

“They would talk about the symphony of colors, the harmony of the brushstrokes, the brushstrokes being like an orchestra,” she said.

“So we felt that there was a really meaningful connection between having music, a contemporary classical composer give his interpretation of that, in with the paintings.” — AFP



HOW ONE OMANI WOMAN IS CULTIVATING CALM AND CONNECTION THROUGH GARDENING

SIHAM AL SAIDI

IN AN AGE where screens dominate our days and stress often feels impossible to escape, the search for simple ways to reconnect with ourselves has never been more urgent. Around the world, experts are increasingly reminding us that mental health is as vital as physical wellbeing — a pillar of balance and happiness. While some turn to meditation, art, or exercise, others are rediscovering a quieter, more grounded form of therapy — quite literally — through plants.

In Oman, one young woman has turned this truth into an inspiring movement of healing and learning. Ghaidaa bint Mohammed al Harthiyah, among the first in the country to pioneer educational and recreational gardening workshops, is showing that soil holds more than seeds — it holds lessons in patience, responsibility and peace of mind.

What distinguishes Al Harthy’s work is her playful and creative approach. Rather than rely on formal instruction, her workshops invite both children and adults to dig, touch and nurture the earth with curiosity and joy. “Most people love plants but struggle to keep them alive”, she explained with a smile. “Through the workshops, they learn to see plants differently — and, in the process, to see themselves differently too”.

The response has been nothing short of remarkable. Over the past two years, Al Harthy has led a series of successful initiatives that merge mindfulness with hands-on learning. For MB Petroleum’s annual family day, she created a “green corner” where employees and their children bonded over soil and seedlings. At Sultan Qaboos University, she guided 50 catering staff through a gardening programme that reconnected



What distinguishes Al Harthy’s work is her playful and creative approach. Rather than rely on formal instruction, her workshops invite both children and adults to dig, touch and nurture the earth with curiosity and joy.



them with nature’s rhythm. Shell employees, too, found joy in her sessions within the historic walls of Al Mirani Fort, while 150 members of OQ took part in her latest workshops — leaving with dirt-streaked hands, lightened hearts and newfound appreciation for the healing power of greenery. Yet it is the children’s reactions that touch her the most. Workshops often end with tiny voices exclaiming, “This is the



best day of my life!” or “Teacher, you’re the best!” — innocent words that, for Al Harthy, mean more than any corporate testimonial. They are proof that nurturing a plant can spark joy, curiosity and mindfulness in young hearts navigating a fast-paced world. One participant, Amal al Hosni, shared a story that captures the essence of Al Harthy’s teaching: “Once, I was given a small bottle with a plant and told that those who bring it back alive after

one year would receive a gift. I thought it was easy — but in the next meeting, only four out of 32 participants managed to return with their plants still thriving! It taught me that caring for a living thing requires patience, commitment and a clear mind”. Mental health advocates agree that such small, consistent acts of care — like watering a plant — mirror the larger rituals of self-care essential to emotional balance. Gardening, they say, cultivates calm through its rhythm of waiting, observing and growing. It does not just beautify homes; it nurtures minds and shapes character. Through her workshops, Ghaidaa is planting far more than seeds. She is cultivating a culture of mindfulness, resilience and connection — one pot, one person at a time. And in every child’s smile, every sprouting leaf and every newfound love for green life, lies a gentle reminder: sometimes, healing begins simply — with placing a tiny seed into the earth and watching it grow.