

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y



VOL. 44, NO. 299
PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 05:51 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:35 AM

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ALCARAZ OUTSHINES RIVAL SINNER TO WIN SECOND US OPEN

INBRIEF

HM THANKED BY EMIR OF KUWAIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a cable of thanks from Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, in response to His Majesty's cable of condolences on the death of Shaikha Suad Abdullah Al Ahmad al Sabah. In his cable, Shaikh Mishal expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty's heartfelt sentiments. He also prayed to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty and to grant him continuous good health and well-being.

Royal Decrees ratify agreements with Iran, Philippines

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued three Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No 70/2025 on ratifying the Agreement on Legal and Judicial Cooperation in Civil and Criminal Matters, Extradition, and Transfer of Sentenced Persons between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran signed on May 27, 2025, in Muscat.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

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

Royal Decree No 71/2025 on ratifying the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran signed on May 27, 2025, in Muscat.

Islamic Republic of Iran signed on May 27, 2025, in Muscat.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

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

Royal Decree No 72/2025 on ratifying the agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines on mutual visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, special, service and official passports signed on July 14, 2025, in Manila.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

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

HIS MAJESTY GREETES TAJIKISTAN, NORTH KOREA LEADERS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Emomali. His Majesty also wished the people of Tajikistan further progress and prosperity, and the bilateral relations of cooperation and partnership further growth in all spheres. His Majesty the Sultan sent a cable of greetings to Kim Jong-un, General Secretary of the Workers' Party, First Chairman of the National Defence Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Kim and the people of his country.

FIRST LARGE LANGUAGE MODEL MU'EEN LAUNCHED

First phase to benefit 20,000 government employees



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presided over the opening ceremony of the 34th edition of the Global Technology Exhibition 'Comex 2025.'

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

THE Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, on Monday unveiled multiple national projects in the field of artificial intelligence (AI).

The unveilings took place during the Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Computing conference, held on the first day of the Comex 2025.

HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presided over the opening ceremony of the 34th edition of the Global Technology Exhibition 'Comex 2025'.

Speaking on the occasion, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said that the ministry supports this exhibition to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040 in digital economy, including supporting aspects of artificial intelligence, data analytics and expanding the scope of digital government work.

He noted that Comex will be among the exhibitions marketed outside Oman.

He added that the Omani language model 'Mu'een' was launched as the first national project in developing an AI language model, initially implemented within the government scope before expanding to the digital space.

TURN TO P5

CITIZENS CAN APPLY TO CONTEST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

The Ministry of Interior announced that, with effect from Monday, it is receiving applications from citizens wishing to contest Municipal Councils elections for the Fourth Term. The announcement was made on the sidelines of the ministry's participation in the 34th edition of the 'Comex 2025', which kicked off on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The Ministry said that legally eligible citizens aged 21 years and above who wish to register their names (in the Electoral Register) could submit their applications in three ways: Via the Election app, the elections website (elections.om) or the AI-enhanced virtual character at the ministry's booth at Comex.

The applicants' identity cards should be fitted beforehand with the PKI electronic authentication system. — ONA

Khoula Hospital launches plans for more surgeries, scans



Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, during the launch ceremony in Muscat, on Monday

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

The Directorate-General of Khoula Hospital on Monday launched three new healthcare initiatives for this year under the slogan "We Continue: Renewed Initiatives, Advanced Care." The initiatives include performing 1,000 endoscopic surgeries in the Orthopaedics Department (shoulder, knee, ankle), 600 spinal surgeries and 500 bariatric surgeries.

The launch was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

"What started as an idea has reached this far," said Dr Al Sabti while addressing the medical fraternity, many of whom were honoured for their work.

Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Alawi, Director-General of Khoula Hospital, said, "Today we have celebrated the outcome of the eight initiatives introduced last year directed towards reducing the waiting period of the patients.

"The outcome has been much better than what we had expected. Today, we are launching the second version of the initiatives. There are seven of them, such as spine surgeries, total knee replacements, sports injuries, and obesity surgeries, amongst others."

TURN TO P2

DUTCH RIDER CLAIMS YELLOW WITH SECOND STAGE WIN

Dutch rider Adne van Engelen bagged the laurels in the second stage to claim the overall lead of Salalah International Cycling Tour 2025 in Salalah on Monday. Van Engelen of Terengganu Cycling Team – Malaysia came first in the 132 km-long second stage from Taqah Castle to Hajif with a time of three hours 44 minutes and seven seconds. **DETAILS ON P10**



OMAN

SHORT TAKES



This edition of the festival is witnessing a large turnout with 845 entrants from 67 countries

Oman participates in Kazan International Film Festival

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Oman is taking part in the 21st Kazan International Film Festival “Golden Pulpit”, hosted by Kazan, the capital of the Russian Republic of Tatarstan, from September 5 to 9.

A delegation headed by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Oman Film Society, is representing the nation in the jury of the festival, as part of its initiative to make its presence in international forums.

This edition of the festival is witnessing a large turnout, with the festival’s administration receiving 845 entrants from 67 countries, confirming its position as one of the most prominent film festivals in the region.

Al Ajmi is participating in the jury for feature and short films, along with prominent film-makers from around the world, including Rasool Pookkuti from India, Oscar winner for Slumdog Millionaire; Egyptian director and writer Magdy Ahmed Ali; Chiomi Ude from Nigeria, founder and director of the Africa International Film Festival; and award-winning Russian director Natalia Gogoeva. Film-makers and technicians from Iran, China, Uzbekistan and the Philippines are participating in the five-day fest.

Al Ajmi expressed his pride in participating in the jury, stressing that representing the Sultanate of Oman at this global event provides an opportunity to strengthen cooperation with film-makers from around the world, contribute to developing the Omani cinematic experience and support national talent.

Al Ajmi said this participation is a continuation of the Oman Film Society’s efforts to build bridges of cultural and creative cooperation with international film festivals and institutions, and consolidate the presence of Omani cinema on the global scene.

Salalah hosts regional workshop on desert locust preparedness

SALALAH: A five-day interregional workshop on ‘Preparedness and Planning for Response to Desert Locust Outbreaks’ commenced in Salalah, organised by the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) with the FAO and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The workshop brings together experts from CRC, CLCPRO, SWAC and FAO headquarters to discuss transboundary pest management amid climate variability.

Dr Mamoun bin Khamis al Alawi stressed the need for coordinated regional action to protect agriculture and farmers’ livelihoods. Topics include national and regional planning for locust control, emergency action plans and field simulations. — ONA

SAYYID BADR RECEIVES COPIES OF CREDENTIALS OF THREE ENVOYS



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Monday received a copy of credentials of Hrachya Poladyan, Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Estonia to the



Sultanate of Oman; Maartje Peters, Ambassador-designate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Sultanate of Oman; and Olha Selykh, Ambassador-designate of the Republic of



Ukraine to the Sultanate of Oman. During the meetings with the ambassadors, Sayyid Badr wished them success in carrying out their duties. He also wished the bilateral relations between Oman and their respective countries further progress and prosperity. The meetings were attended by several officials from the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

Aquaculture output hits 5,500 tonnes at RO 12.5m

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

THE aquaculture production in Oman touched a whopping 5,500 tonnes worth over RO 12.5 million in 2024. This was revealed during the Fisheries Investment Opportunities Forum, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, which commenced on Monday to highlight the growing role of aquaculture in food security.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Eng Ali bin Mohammed al Abri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said that in 2023, this was 5,000 tonnes, valued at RO 11.5 million.

“In the Sultanate of Oman, we attribute greater importance to the aquaculture sector as one of the major contributors to the GDP and this sector receives exceptional attention and special care. In 2024, aquaculture production exceeded a production of 5,500 tonnes, with a market value exceeding RO 12.5 million, against 2023 figures of 5,000 tonnes valuing RO 11.5 million.

Globally, aquaculture has become one of the fastest-growing food sectors growing at an annual rate of approximately 9 per cent in response to the increasing global demand for seafood.

“Global aquaculture production reached more than 94 million



The Fisheries Investment Opportunities Forum, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, commenced on Monday to highlight the growing role of aquaculture in food security.

This year, 22 projects worth RO 1.17 billion, ranging from the farming of kofer, whiteleg shrimp and Omani abalone, in addition to integrated freshwater aquaculture projects, are in the pipeline

tonnes in 2022, exceeding half of the global fish supply for human consumption for the first time. Forecasts indicate that the world will need more than 130 million tonnes annually by 2030 to meet the growing demand,” said Dr Abdulaziz al Marzouqi, Director-General of the ministry’s General Directorate of Fisheries Resources Development.

He further said that the ministry has been working over the past few years to create an enabling environment for investment by enacting legislation, developing infrastructure and facilitating procedures for investors.

Oman has also set ambitious

goals to raise production efficiency and expand the scope of projects, achieving food security, providing job opportunities for citizens, and making aquaculture one of the pillars of economic diversification and a key focus in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The pace of investment projects is accelerating in Oman, with the number of pioneering aquaculture projects by 2024 reaching 19, with a value of RO 841 million. This year, 22 projects worth RO 1.17 billion, ranging from the farming of kofer, whiteleg shrimp and Omani abalone, in addition to integrated freshwater aquaculture projects, are in the pipeline.

Khoula Hospital launches plans for more surgeries, scans

FROM PAGE 1

“We are looking at what our capacity is and how to increase the outcome by better utilisation of our working space in the outpatient clinics and operating theatres as well,” said Dr Al Alawi.

He pointed out that MRI, for instance, used to take a year for an appointment, but currently it takes hardly a week or less than a week, and sometimes three days.

He added that positive feedback has been expressed through social media as well.

“We still have a long way to go, but what is important is that we are in the right direction,”

concluded Al Alawi while speaking to the Observer.

Last year’s initiative resulted in the successful implementation of 2,198 operations, which contributed to reducing waiting lists by 50%.

The initiative of “Implementing 12,000 MRI scans at Khoula Hospital” resulted in the successful completion of 13,566 MRI scans, with 45-50 scans being conducted daily. The initiative reduced the waiting period from 16 months to less than 3 to 5 days.

As part of the initiative to perform 1,000 tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy operations for children at Al Nahdha Hospital, a total of 1,551

operations were successfully completed, with 83 operations being carried out monthly at Khoula and Al Nahdha hospitals, resulting in a 50% reduction in waiting lists.

As part of the initiative to reduce waiting lists in the endoscopy department at Khoula and Al Nahdha hospitals, 2,321 endoscopies were performed at Khoula Hospital. The initiative reduced the waiting period from 14 months to one month. The initiative also included the implementation of more than 750 knee replacement surgeries at Khoula Hospital, reducing waiting lists from two years to less than two months over the past year.

Workshop on vocational, technical education programme held

SALALAH: An introductory workshop on the Vocational and Technical Education Programme for the Travel and Tourism track was held on Monday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

Organised by the Directorate-General of Education in Dhofar Governorate, the event brought together specialists, academics and students. The opening of the workshop was held under the

auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The programme featured two visual presentations: the first focused on the implementation of the Travel and Tourism track and Dhofar Education’s preparations to activate it, while the second highlighted inspiring Omani success stories in the sector, emphasising the role of determination and innovation in building a distinguished career path.



A dialogue session on ‘Vocational and Technical Education’ was also held

A dialogue session titled ‘Vocational and Technical Education: Travel and Tourism Specialisation’ was also held, with the participation of Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al Mahrooqi, Dean of Oman Tourism College, Dr Hassan Abdullah Eidid, an academic specialising in tourism and event management at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Salalah, Dr Atoom al Khatheri, Director of the Department of Guidance and

Student Services at the Directorate-General of Vocational and Technical Education, Ministry of Education, and Dr Abdulkarim bin Ahmed al Mashaikhi, Assistant Director of the Department of Vocational Guidance and Student Counselling in the Directorate-General of Education in Dhofar.

The workshop aimed to introduce tourism as a key driver for economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040. — ONA



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Falaj restored in Al Sharqiyah South

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

Amid the rugged mountains of Al Sharqiyah South, Falaj Al Jilah in the village of Al Jilah, Wilayat of Sur, stands as a remarkable symbol of Oman's centuries-old mastery of water management.

Recognised by Unesco as one of five aflaj on the World Heritage List, this eye falaj is more than an ancient watercourse - it remains a lifeline that sustains agriculture, community life and cultural identity.

Stretching 415 metres from the mouth of a rocky cave to its main collection basin, the falaj channels water year-round from the upper reaches of Wadi Shab. Along its course, three stone bridges - built with local stones and sarooj, a traditional lime-based mortar - carry the falaj across the valley, demonstrating the engineering precision and environmental awareness of Oman's ancestors.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of

The flaj remains an enduring source of life, linking past to present and securing water for future generations



Falaj Al Jilah demonstrates the engineering precision and environmental awareness of Oman's ancestors

Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources completed a comprehensive rehabilitation of the falaj. Works included restoring the collection basin, rehabilitating 150 metres of open channels, repairing bridges, building a stepped wall to minimise flood impact and constructing a parallel path to ease maintenance. An information board now introduces visitors to the falaj and its historic role.

“These aflaj are not merely water sources; they are a way of life that for centuries enabled agriculture and community stability,” said Eng Salah bin Salem al Mahajri, Head of Dams, Aflaj and Protection Walls at the Directorate-General of Water Resources in Al Sharqiyah South. “Safeguarding them requires both rehabilitation projects and sustainable policies.”

He also underlined the importance of community cooperation. “The success of preservation depends on public awareness and the contribution of local people and institutions. Together, we can ensure aflaj remain an enduring

source of life, linking past to present and securing water for future generations.” The recognition of Oman's aflaj by Unesco underscores their global value as sustainable water systems balancing human needs with the environment.

Yet, challenges like climate change, rainfall variability and increasing water demand place pressure on these fragile systems, while urban expansion demands careful management to preserve their authenticity.

Experts emphasise combining traditional practices with modern strategies — integrating aflaj into national water security and agricultural planning, while fostering local stewardship and private-sector support.

Falaj Al Jilah is therefore more than a heritage site; it is a bridge between past wisdom and future resilience. With restoration efforts, community involvement and international recognition, this ancient water system remains a living source of inspiration and a testament to Oman's enduring relationship with water.

QUANTUM MECHANICS-BASED SOLUTION SAVES ENERGY

MUSCAT: Haitham bin Mohammed al Kalbani, a mechanical engineering lecturer at the International College of Engineering and Management (ICEM), has introduced a pioneering project titled ‘Quantum Mechanics in Carbon Nanotube Transducers.’ The innovation aims to develop efficient, sustainable devices for electronics, healthcare and environmental monitoring.

The technology uses carbon



nanotubes (CNTs) as flexible, miniaturised alternatives to silicon, allowing integration

into wearable devices, flexible displays and medical nanosensors.

By optimising energy consumption in electronic devices, the project reduces carbon emissions while advancing healthcare diagnostics and environmental monitoring.

Al Kalbani highlighted that the approach leverages quantum properties of CNTs to create high-efficiency transducers, fostering scientific research and innovation in atomic technology.

— ONA

New norms on remote work

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

The Ministry of Labour has issued a new ministerial decision regulating remote work in accordance with the Labour Law under Royal Decree No 2023/53.

The regulation, announced in the interest of the public, sets out clear provisions for both employers and employees who engage in remote work arrangements within the Sultanate of Oman.

According to the decision, remote work can be done either partially or fully, as long as employees carry out their duties using information and communication technology (ICT) tools within Oman. The regulation strictly prohibits contracting remote work outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Establishments that implement the system must create official lists of remote workers, provide necessary ICT tools, and set up electronic systems for supervision and performance monitoring, all while ensuring that workers' privacy is respected.

The rules also mandate that establishments refrain from misusing personal data or monitoring systems for purposes other than work. In return, workers must personally carry out their duties during agreed working hours, maintain confidentiality of work-related data and return ICT tools when requested. They are also required to promptly report any technical difficulties that may impede their performance.

The decision also grants employees the right to disconnect from an employer's system if their privacy is compromised. Workers



The regulation sets out clear provisions for both employers and employees who engage in remote work arrangements within the Sultanate of Oman

can also request partial remote work, with employers having the authority to approve or reject such requests based on work needs.

For full remote work, contracts must be in writing and detail job conditions, remuneration, ICT responsibilities, working hours and performance monitoring methods. Employers have the right to require employees to return to on-site work if information security is at risk, company policies are violated, or agreed-upon working hours are not met.

The regulations affirm that employees working remotely are entitled to the same rights and obligations as outlined in the Labour Law and its implementing decisions.





Launch of the 4th Mutamad Program for Omani Graduates in Legal Affairs or Law

Program Objectives

01

Empowering participants and upskilling Omani graduates in legal fields

02

Bridge the employment gap in legal specializations through matching graduate skills with market requirements

03

Offering a professional certification and employment at Oman Investment Authority and its entities upon successful completion

Certificate Offered

Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) certificate, a qualification framework launched by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). SQE certification streamlines and standardizes the pathway to obtaining a license to practice law through two assessments that evaluate both legal knowledge and practical skills.

Eligibility Criteria

 Bachelor's degree in Legal Affairs

 Minimum GPA of 2.7

 Passing all assessments and personal interviews

 0 - 3 years of professional experience

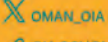
 Omani Nationality

 Graduated within the last 3 years (2023 / 2024 / 2025)



Application deadline:
29th September 2025

In collaboration with:



SPOTLIGHT



AI SET TO CHANGE OMAN'S CLASSROOMS

- *AI is already being used for lesson planning, resource creation, and performance tracking in Oman*
- *Students must be taught responsible AI use, from understanding bias to intellectual ownership*

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabiyousef](#)

ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE (AI) is no longer a distant concept; it is reshaping communication, creativity and work. Education experts say Oman's schools must move beyond bans and quick fixes, and instead build thoughtful frameworks that prepare students to thrive, equip teachers to lead, and align with Oman Vision 2040. "AI can revolutionise classrooms in Oman, helping children scale greater heights in academics and knowledge," says Waheeda Abdulaziz Said, certified STEM school evaluator, board member at Ahmed Bin Majid International School, and founder of Resilience Training and Consulting. Waheeda, who contributes to global thought leadership in AI in education, stresses that podcasts, keynotes, panels, and roundtables are shaping how educators worldwide respond to AI. "Schools that thrive will be those that move from reaction to intention with resilience, building clear approaches that empower both staff and students," she told the *Observer*.

She highlighted how AI is already being embedded into leadership and academic practices: tracking student data over eight years to guide decision-making, using AI for lesson design and resource creation, and investing in teacher training. "AI helps generate accurate projections for assessments, supports innovation programmes and enriches experiential learning," she added. Dr Abood al Sawafy, educational scholar, echoed that AI can enhance classroom quality by making learning more personalised, efficient, and inclusive. "AI-powered tools allow teachers to tailor lessons, identify gaps early, and automate routine tasks such as grading — freeing time for creativity, mentoring, and human connection," he said. Experts agree that the integration of AI must go beyond adding tools to old systems. Students should learn to analyse AI text in English, question bias in history, and explore AI-driven data modelling in science. Equally vital is preparing students to address ethical issues such as bias, intellectual ownership, and responsible use. "The pace of AI development is rapid. Students entering middle school today will graduate into a workforce where AI is as common as the Internet. Schools that delay risk widening divides — between students with access and those without," Waheeda warned.

Students entering middle school today will graduate into a workforce where AI is as common as the Internet

WAHEEDA ABDULAZIZ SAID
Certified STEM school evaluator

SHORT TAKE



OCCI delegation held meetings with representatives of Tanzanian companies and business owners

OCCI delegation meets representatives of Tanzanian companies

DAR ES SALAAM: An Omani trade delegation from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) on Monday held meetings with representatives of Tanzanian companies and business owners from various sectors.

The meeting, which was part of the delegation's visit to the United Republic of Tanzania, took place at the Tanzanian Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The Omani delegation is led by State Council Member Dr Salim al Junaibi, Member of the Board of Directors of the OCCI. Al Junaibi said, "This visit constitutes a step forward towards upgrading trade and investment cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania. Tanzania, with its promising opportunities in various sectors, represents an important gateway to Africa." In a welcome speech, Dr Hashil Twibo Abdallah, Permanent Secretary of the Tanzanian Ministry of Industry and Trade for Industry and Trade, said that Oman and Tanzania share deep-rooted economic and historical relations. He stressed the need to establish investment partnerships that serve the interests of the two friendly countries. — ONA

Oman's first large language model launched

FROM PAGE 1

In his address, Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, shared that the projects represent "a strategic step towards building an integrated digital ecosystem aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040."

He further emphasised their role in enhancing government services, fostering innovation and empowering national talent.

The first announcement centred on the launch of Oman's first large Language Model (Mu'een), which reflects the uniqueness of the Omani dialect and culture. According to the under-secretary, the model will be used to enhance operational efficiency within government institutions. The first phase is expected to benefit 20,000 government employees.

The second announcement focused on the launch of an AI Studio. Dr Al Shaithani

UTAS holds workshop on academic writing, publishing

IBRA: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Ibra branch, in collaboration with the ICESCO Chair for AI Ethics and with support from the US Embassy, launched a specialised workshop titled 'Academic Research Writing and Publishing.'

Led by Dr Ahmed Fahad, a US English Language Specialist, the programme targets faculty members across UTAS branches and researchers from diverse sectors.

The three-day workshop aims to equip participants with practical strategies for research writing and scholarly publishing.

It covers the full research process, from idea generation and literature review to revision, editing and manuscript preparation for peer-reviewed journals.

stated: "In this edition of Comex, we are launching the Artificial Intelligence Studio, which serves as a meeting point and an enabling environment that brings together AI specialists with institutions and companies seeking to develop solutions and leverage artificial intelligence technologies to overcome their operational challenges."

The studio, according to officials, will provide specialised consulting services, train and qualify students in fields of AI, and raise awareness of AI technologies. This is in addition to supporting institutions in adoption and creating new business opportunities.

In the third and final announcement of the session, a new National Open Data Portal was inaugurated. The portal makes government data "accessible to citizens, researchers and developers across multiple fields such as health, education, economy and environment".

All three initiatives are part of the National Programme for Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Digital Technologies, which is spearheaded by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Underpinning the national programme are three central foundations that seek to integrate artificial intelligence into economic sectors, localise artificial intelligence technologies, and establish governance frameworks to ensure that AI serves humanity first and foremost, the official added.

Participants will also gain guidance on selecting appropriate journals, navigating the peer review process and using AI tools ethically to support research development.

The sessions, scheduled at Ibri on September 9, Ibra on September 15, Al Musannah on September 17, and Muscat on September 21, include interactive activities such as analysing mentor texts, addressing challenges in literature reviews, applying revision strategies and drafting actionable publishing plans.

The workshop also fosters collaboration and exchange of ideas, enhancing the quality of research outputs while strengthening UTAS and its faculty members' presence in the international academic community.

Jordan-bound students get ministry's briefing

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

THE Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, through its Directorate-General of Scholarships, recently organised an orientation session for Omani students with hearing disabilities who have received government scholarships to study in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The session, part of a series of preparatory meetings, aimed to provide students with essential guidance for a smooth academic transition abroad.

Badr al Rashdi, Director of the External Scholarships Department, welcomed the students and congratulated them on their achievement.

He highlighted their role as ambassadors of Oman, urging them to pursue excellence, adhere to academic and social norms, and leverage the opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and cultural exposure.

"Your scholarship is not only an academic opportunity but also a responsibility. Through hard work, perseverance and active participation in cultural and scientific activities, you will



Badr al Rashdi highlighted the role of students as ambassadors of Oman

The orientation reflects the ministry's commitment to empowering students with disabilities

help shape a brighter future for yourselves and your nation," Al Rashdi said.

Yousuf al Shabibi, Scholarship Affairs Researcher, outlined travel procedures, online services and practical tips for adjusting to life abroad.

Sultan al Amri, CEO of the Omani Sign Language Translation App, and Said al Badaei, Sign Language Expert, encouraged students to link academic learning with real-world practice and make the most of

opportunities in Jordan.

The session concluded with a success story from a graduate with a hearing disability, offering motivation and practical insights to the new cohort.

The orientation reflects the ministry's commitment to empowering students with disabilities and underscores Oman's vision for inclusive education that prepares all students to contribute meaningfully to national development.

وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية

Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
439/2025	Annual contract works for the maintenance of the air conditioning system and the building management system for the Ministry's headquarters.	Specialized companies in the field of operation and maintenance of electrical works, registered with the Projects and Tenders Authority and the local content at an excellent or first degree.	Sunday 28-09-2025 02:00 PM	Sunday 19-10-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Tuesday 09-09-2025**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (**24402200**).

The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"

www.mosd.gov.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKE



Israeli police officers and emergency personnel work at the scene. — Reuters

GUNMEN KILL SIX ISRAELIS IN BUS STOP SHOOTING

TEL AVIV: Two Palestinian gunmen opened fire at a bus stop on the outskirts of Jerusalem on Monday, killing six people. Footage from a dashboard camera at the scene in Ramot Junction showed people fleeing from around a bus at the side of a road as shots rang out. Israel Police said the attackers were shot dead at the scene by a soldier and an armed civilian.

The ambulance service identified five of the victims as a 50-year-old man, a woman in her fifties and three men in their thirties. It said six others were in serious condition with gunshot wounds. Police said more than 20 people were injured. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said later a sixth person had died and that the gunmen were Palestinians from the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

In a later statement by the Israeli military on Monday, Eyal Zamir, Chief of the General Staff, was quoted as saying that he had ordered a full closure of the area from which the gunmen came. Spain's foreign ministry said a Spanish citizen was among those killed and condemned the attack. France, the EU and the United Arab Emirates also issued statements of condemnation.

The shooting took place against the backdrop of nearly two years of war in Gaza, where Israel's campaign against Hamas has left the territory in devastation. In the West Bank, Palestinians have faced tightened military restrictions and a surge in attacks by Jewish settlers. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issued a statement which condemned "any targeting of Palestinian and Israeli civilians".

Speaking at the scene of the attack, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israeli forces were pursuing suspects who aided them. Israeli police said the two attackers had arrived by car and opened fire at a bus stop at Ramot Junction, an area straddling a part of Jerusalem that Israel captured in the 1967 war and later annexed in a move unrecognised by the United Nations and most countries.

Several guns, ammunition and a knife used by the attackers were recovered at the scene and a suspect from East Jerusalem, whose alleged involvement in the shooting was being investigated, had been arrested, police said. Footage showed a heavy police presence in the Ramot area following the shooting. The ambulance service said a paramedic arriving at the scene reported that several victims were lying on the road and the sidewalk, some unconscious.

The Israeli military said it had deployed soldiers to the area who were aiding police in the search for suspects. Soldiers were also operating in areas of Ramallah in the West Bank to conduct interrogations and "thwart terrorism", it said. There have been several shootings and stabbings targeting Israeli civilians and soldiers in Israel and the West Bank carried out by Palestinians since the Gaza war started. — Reuters

THAI EX-PM THAKSIN LANDS IN BANGKOK AHEAD OF CRUCIAL COURT DATE

BANGKOK: Influential Thai ex-prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra landed back home ahead of a scheduled watershed ruling by the kingdom's top court which may see him jailed. Thaksin jetted away last week as his dynasty's party was ousted from office, fuelling speculation he had absconded from a Supreme Court inquiry probing whether he properly served a prison sentence.

The results of the investigation are due on Tuesday, and while

Thaksin's guilt is not its subject, analysts say the ruling may nonetheless see him jailed. But televised images on Thai media showed Thaksin, 76, landing back at Bangkok's Don Mueang Airport by private jet on Monday afternoon, and he has pledged to attend the court date in person.

Shinawatra's clan has for two decades been the key foe of Thailand's pro-military, pro-royalty elite who view their populist brand as a threat to traditional social

order. But the dynasty's momentum is flagging after a litany of legal and political setbacks, the Supreme Court ruling a potential further blow after their Pheu Thai Party were ousted from office last week.

The judicial probe centres on Thaksin's sentence for corruption and abuse of power after he returned to Thailand in August 2023 following years lived in exile. Initially sentenced to eight years behind bars, he never spent a night in a cell. — AFP

Spain unveils measures to stop 'Gaza genocide'

SPAIN'S Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced nine measures aimed at stopping "the genocide in Gaza", including an arms embargo on Israel and a ban on vessels carrying fuel for the Israeli military from using Spanish ports. The announcement marks the latest escalation of Spain's outspoken criticism of the Israeli offensive in Gaza, which was sparked by Hamas attack on Israel in 2023.

The measures aim to "stop the genocide in Gaza, pursue its perpetrators and support the Palestinian population", Sanchez said in a televised address. He said his left-wing government would approve a decree to "consolidate in law" a ban on military equipment sales or purchases with Israel, a measure it had applied since the start of the conflict.

Boats carrying fuel destined for the Israeli military will be barred from Spanish ports, and Spain will act to reduce the transport of military equipment to Israel by air, Sanchez said. "All those people participating directly in the genocide, the violation of human rights and war crimes in the Gaza Strip" will be banned from entering Spanish territory, he added.

Spain will also ban the importation of products from "illegal settlements" in the Palestinian territories with the aim of stopping "the forced displacement of the Palestinian population" and supporting the two-state solution, Sanchez said.



Palestinians cry as they walk outside Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. — AFP

All those people participating directly in the genocide, the violation of human rights and war crimes in the Gaza Strip will be banned from entering Spanish territory

PEDRO SANCHEZ

Consular services for Spanish citizens residing in illegal Israeli settlements will be limited "to the legally obligatory minimum assistance", he said.

Sanchez also announced new collaboration projects in agriculture, food security and medical aid to support the Palestinian Authority and additional humanitarian funds for Palestinians. Sanchez has been one of the most outspoken critics of Israel's war in Gaza, becoming the most senior European leader to refer to the conflict as a "genocide". His leftist government broke with European allies last year by recognising a Palestinian state, infuriating Israel. Meanwhile, the UN rights chief accused Israeli officials on Monday of using overt "genocidal rhetoric" about Gaza and called for decisive international action to "end the carnage". In a

speech to the UN Human Rights Council that was criticised by Israel, Volker Turk said the occupied Palestinian territory was already "a graveyard". He accused Israel of inflicting "indescribable suffering and wholesale destruction" and added: "I am horrified by the open use of genocidal rhetoric and the disgraceful dehumanisation of Palestinians by senior Israeli officials."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stressed that nearly two years after the war erupted following Hamas's deadly attack on Israel, "the region is crying out for peace". The Israeli army bombed a Gaza City residential tower block on Sunday and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the military was "deepening" its assault on the Gaza Strip's key urban centre. — AFP

INDIA, PAKISTAN FACE RISING PRICES AMID CROP LOSSES

KARACHI: Heavy rains and widespread flooding in regions of India and Pakistan have raised concerns over output of the premium staple, driving prices higher as supplies are expected to fall. Floods have severely affected the crops, but with waters now receding, losses are expected to remain limited provided there is no additional rainfall, said Nitin Gupta, senior vice-president at Olam Agri India.

Heavy rainfall in late August and earlier this month caused the Ravi, Chenab, Sutlej and Beas rivers to overflow, flooding these regions. Initial assessments indicate that crops such as paddy, cotton and pulses on nearly one million hectares were affected in Punjab and Haryana, said an Indian government official. The floods have hit farmers hard, just as crops such as basmati rice and cotton were nearing harvest, said Ibrahim Shafiq, export manager at Latif Rice Mills Pvt Ltd. In India and Pakistan, paddy seedlings are usually transplanted in June-July, with harvesting starting in late September. — Reuters

BRUTAL AGGRESSION

Israel launches strikes on eastern Lebanon



A series of strikes hit eastern Lebanon on Monday with the Israeli army saying it targeted positions belonging to Hezbollah group. The state-run National News Agency reported seven strikes in the eastern Hermel region. Monday's attacks come after Lebanon's government said last week that its military would begin implementing a plan to disarm Hezbollah. The government has characterised the disarmament push as part of the implementation of the ceasefire deal. — AFP

FREING HOSTAGES

Colombia rescues 27 soldiers held captive



Colombian authorities rescued 27 of 72 soldiers held captive in the country's southwest, an area controlled by guerrillas and plagued by drug cultivation. Colombian soldiers and police officers are often detained in areas controlled by armed groups. The 72 soldiers had been detained in guerrilla-controlled Cauca region "in the afternoon". The army later reported the "extraction" of 27 soldiers but said 45 "remain deprived of their liberty under the guerrilla regime." — AFP

AGAINST REFORMS

Romanian teachers march against cuts



Thousands of Romanian teachers marched through Bucharest against austerity cuts by the country's new government to lower the deficit, the highest in the European Union. Blowing vuvuzelas and whistles, demonstrators marched through the capital on the first day of the new school year. Education unions say an increased workload for teachers, bigger class sizes and the merger of hundreds of schools will cause "an unprecedented crisis in education". — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A general view of the International Criminal Court, in The Hague. — Reuters

ICC postpones hearing on Duterte’s drug crackdown

THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court postponed “until further notice” a crimes against humanity hearing concerning former Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte, while judges weigh his fitness to take part. Duterte was scheduled to appear at the ICC on September 23 to hear the charges over his years-long campaign against drug users and dealers that rights groups say killed thousands.

But the court decided to adjourn the hearing until it could rule on a defence motion that the 80-year-old was “not fit to stand trial”. “Litigation regarding Mr Duterte’s fitness to participate in the pre-trial proceedings is ongoing in connection with the Defence’s Adjournment Request,” said the court in a statement. Hence the court decided that a “limited postponement of the hearing on the confirmation of charges is warranted to allow sufficient time to adjudicate” on the defence request.

The three-judge panel was split on the decision, with one dissenting. The postponement will be “limited to the time strictly necessary to determine whether Mr Duterte is fit to follow and participate in the pre-trial proceedings”, the ICC said. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA FM HEADS TO US



South Korea’s foreign minister departed for Washington on Monday for further negotiations following the detention of hundreds of South Koreans in an immigration raid. “The fact that more than 300 of our citizens are being detained is a grave situation,” said Foreign Minister Cho Hyun. “I will do my utmost during my visit to the United States to resolve this quickly so that they can return home in good health,” said Cho. “At the same time, we will also work with the US side on longer-term structural changes to ensure such problems do not arise again,” he added. — AFP

TRUMP ASKS US SUPREME COURT TO LET IT WITHHOLD FOREIGN AID

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump’s administration asked the US Supreme Court to intervene in its bid to withhold billions of dollars in foreign aid authorized by Congress, part of the Republican president’s effort to scale back US assistance abroad. The Justice Department asked the court to halt Washington-based US District Judge Amir Ali’s order requiring administration officials to take steps to spend around \$4 billion that they have sought to claw back, according

to a lawyer for the plaintiffs who challenged Trump’s action. The money at issue in the case was intended by Congress for foreign aid, United Nations peace-keeping operations and democracy-promotion efforts overseas. Congress budgeted billions in foreign aid last year, about \$11 billion of which must be spent or obligated ahead of a deadline of September 30 - the last day of the US government’s current fiscal year - lest it expire. After being sued by aid groups

that expected to compete for the funding, the administration said last month that it intended to spend \$6.5 billion of the disputed funds. Trump also sought to block some \$4 billion in the funding through an unusual step called a “pocket rescission” that bypasses Congress. Ali ruled on September 3 that the administration cannot simply choose to withhold the money, and that it must comply with appropriations laws unless Congress changes them. — Reuters

19 killed in Nepal protests over social media ban

UNREST killed at least 19 people in Nepal on Monday, authorities said, as police in the capital fired tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters trying to storm parliament in anger at a social media shutdown and corruption. Some of the mainly youth protesters forced their way into the parliament complex in Kathmandu by breaking through a barricade, a local official said, setting fire to an ambulance and hurling objects at lines of riot police guarding the legislature. “The police have been firing indiscriminately,” one protester told the ANI news agency. “(They) fired bullets which missed me but hit a friend who was standing behind me. He was hit in the hand.”

More than 100 people including 28 police personnel were receiving medical treatment for their injuries, police officer Shekhar Khanal said. Protesters were ferrying the injured to hospital on motorcycles. Another two people were killed when protests in the eastern city of Itahari turned violent, police said.

Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli called an emergency cabinet meeting to discuss the unrest, which erupted after thousands of young people, including many wearing their school or college uniforms, took to the streets earlier on Monday. Many carried flags and placards with slogans such as “Shut down corruption and not social media”, “Unban social media”, and “Youths against corruption”, as they marched through Kathmandu.

Organisers of the protests, which spread to other cities in the Himalayan country, have called them “demonstrations by Gen Z”. They say the protests reflect young people’s widespread frustration with government action to tackle corruption and boost economic opportunities. “This is the protest by the new generation in Nepal,” another protester said.

A government decision to block access to several social media platforms, including Facebook, last week has fuelled anger among the young. About 90 per cent of Nepal’s 30 million people use the internet. Officials said they imposed the ban because platforms



Demonstrators weild stones and sticks as they clash with riot police personnel, in Kathmandu. — AFP

had failed to register with authorities in a crackdown on misuse, including false social media accounts used to spread hate speech and fake news, and commit fraud.

Police had orders to use water cannons, batons and rubber bullets to control the crowd and the army was deployed in the parliament area to bolster law enforcement officers, Muktiram Rijal, a spokesperson for the Kathmandu district office, said. He said the curfew, which will remain in force until 10 pm local time, had been extended to Kathmandu’s Singha Durbar area, which includes the prime minister’s office and other government buildings. Violence abated later in the evening although protesters remained in the area outside parliament.

Police said similar protests were also held in Biratnagar and Bharatpur in the southern plains and in Pokhara in western Nepal. Many people in Nepal think corruption is rampant, and the Oli government has been

criticised by opponents for failing to deliver on its promises to tackle graft or make progress to address longstanding economic issues.

Thousands of young Nepalis go abroad every year for work and education. Rameshwore Khanal, a former finance secretary, said although job creation is not up to expectations, popular anger appears to stem more from unhappiness with government appointments and its inability to stamp out corruption.

Nepal’s social media shutdown comes as governments worldwide take steps to tighten oversight of social media and Big Tech due to growing concern about issues such as misinformation, data privacy, online harm and national security. Critics say many of these measures risk stifling free expression, but regulators say stricter controls are needed to protect users and preserve social order. — Reuters

Millions hit as London Underground train workers strike

LONDON: Rush-hour commuters faced chaos on Monday as staff on the London Underground train network staged a five-day strike, shutting stations and forcing people to work from home or use alternative modes of transport. Thousands queued to try and get on crammed buses while others reluctantly walked or cycled.

Transport for London (TfL), which manages the Underground, also known as the Tube, warned there would be little or no service between Monday and Thursday as a result of the first major strike in more than two years.

Lauren, 53, a construction sector admin worker, said she was having to walk a couple of kilometres to work in central London instead of catching her usual Tube train.

“It’s a real inconvenience. I’m not sympathetic (to train drivers). They should get back to work,” she said.

The RMT trade union called the

strike on the Tube — which carries up to five million passengers a day — as they battle to secure better pay and conditions. Drivers are striking along with signalling and maintenance workers after having rejected TfL’s proposal for a 3.4-percent pay rise.

Workers are also demanding a reduction in their hours. “We are not going on strike to disrupt small businesses or the public,” said an RMT spokesman.

“This strike is going ahead because of the intransigent approach of TfL management and their refusal to even consider a small reduction in the working week,” he added.

TfL said it was “bitterly disappointed” that the strikes were going ahead.

“We have been clear that their demand for a reduction in the working week is unaffordable and impractical,” said Claire Mann, TfL’s



Commuters cross London Bridge early in the morning. — AFP

Chief Operating Officer. Concert organisers were forced to postpone two shows by American singer Post Malone, scheduled for Sunday and Monday at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. “Without a Tube service, it’s impossible to get people to the

concert and home again safely,” Live Nation UK posted on X.

Trains on other networks were running on Monday, but often with disruption as overcrowding concerns meant services did not always stop at stations shared with

Underground lines.

Amita, a public sector worker in regulation, said she had taken her usual commuter train to the central London Bridge Station but faced a further 45-minute walk to get to her office. “We’ve all got a job to do. I have a public-sector job and I get very minimal pay rises,” she said.

Seventeen-year-old student Aida was trying to make her first day at college.

“I’m going to be late and I’m on a disciplinary, which is like if I miss or get a late I’m going to get kicked off my course,” she said. It is the first major Tube strike to take place under the Labour government of Keir Starmer, who became prime minister in July last year. His government is already languishing in the polls and suffered a serious blow last week when deputy prime minister Angela Rayner was forced to quit after underpaying tax on her new house. — AFP

OPINION

Comex catalyst for Oman’s digital transformation



COMEX 2025, Oman’s premier technology exhibition, is set to significantly boost AI knowledge and adoption within the Sultanate of Oman through a multifaceted approach encompassing strategic initiatives, dedicated forums, investment opportunities, and skill development programmes. The event will serve as a pivotal platform for advancing Oman’s National Digital Economy Programme and Oman Vision 2040 goals.

Oman continues to focus on accelerating digital transformation in line with the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. Artificial intelligence and advanced digital technologies are being harnessed to drive national economic growth in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

A key aspect of Comex 2025’s strategy to enhance AI knowledge is the AI and Quantum Computing Forum. This forum is specifically designed to raise awareness of advanced technologies and promote research and industrial partnerships, with discussions focusing on the applications of quantum AI across key sectors.

This dedicated space will bring together global tech experts, businesses, and government entities, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. Furthermore, a hackathon focused on cybersecurity solutions will also be held as part of the event, which often incorporates AI-driven approaches to problem-solving, thereby nurturing practical AI skills among

participants.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) will unveil several digital initiatives in the fields of cybersecurity and artificial intelligence during Comex. These initiatives, under the National Digital Economy Programme, aim to attract investment, promote public-private partnerships, support emerging technology firms, and foster international collaboration, all of which are crucial for the growth and dissemination of AI knowledge.

The event will also feature a dedicated pavilion for tech startups, offering specialised workshops that will likely include AI-focused training and mentorship.

Comex 2025 also emphasises skill development and community building to cultivate a tech-savvy workforce. The event will include workshops, talks, and live demonstrations led by industry experts, covering topics like emerging technologies, cybersecurity and digital transformation, which will undoubtedly include AI.

The success of previous Comex editions, such as Comex 2024, demonstrates the event’s capacity to drive significant investment and collaboration in the ICT sector, including AI. The presence of leading global companies further underscores the focus on AI. This direct engagement with cutting-edge AI solutions and thought leaders will provide invaluable learning opportunities for attendees.

Comex, reimagined as a global platform

Oman’s digital economy will account for around 10 per cent of Oman’s GDP by 2040. It is a testament to the Sultanate of Oman’s determination to embrace innovation, spur investment and build a sustainable, technology-led economy.

for digital progress, operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. It aims to showcase five future-defining ecosystems: eGovernment, enterprise arena, tech startup ecosystem, gaming as well as e-sports and fintech.

The Ministry of Transport, communications and Information Technology is leveraging Comex 2025 as a significant catalyst for digital transformation. The expo will feature over 300 local and international companies showcasing innovative solutions.

With over 140 start-ups, 200 companies and foreign delegations in attendance, Comex showcases the latest in AI, cybersecurity, cloud computing and digital transformation, signalling Oman’s ambition to be the regional innovation and technology leader.

The National Programme for the Digital Economy is a strategic plan to achieve a diversified and sustainable economy driven by technology, knowledge and innovation. The programme aligns a number of tracks including digital transformation, artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, digital infrastructure, e-commerce, cybersecurity and the digital industry space.

Oman’s digital economy will account for around 10 per cent of Oman’s GDP by 2040. Reflecting this ambition, deals worth around RO 200 million were signed during Comex 2024. It is a testament to the Sultanate of Oman’s determination to embrace innovation, spur investment and build a sustainable, technology-led economy.

‘Correcting The Map’: Reshaping perceptions of African continent

PERIS GACHAHI

The Mercator world map, long a fixture in classrooms globally, makes the European Union appear almost as large as Africa. In reality, Africa is more than seven times bigger.

It is a distortion that has prompted a new African initiative, “Correct the Map”, calling for depictions that show Africa’s true scale.

“For centuries, this map has minimised Africa, feeding into a narrative that the continent is smaller, peripheral and less important,” said Fara Ndiaye, co-founder of Speak Up Africa, which is leading the campaign alongside another advocacy group, Africa No Filter.

Accurately translating the Earth’s sphere into a flat map always calls for compromises, requiring parts to be stretched, cut or left out, experts said.

Historically, maps have reflected the worldview of their makers.

Babylonian clay tablets from the sixth century BC placed their empire at the centre of the world, while medieval European charts often focused on religious sites.

Choices must be made: a world map will look very different depending on whether Australia, Siberia or Europe is placed at its centre.

Today’s most-used map was designed for maritime navigation by Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator in 1569.

It focused on accurate depictions of the shapes and angles of land masses, but their relative sizes were often inaccurate.

Mercator’s projection inflated northern regions and compressed equatorial ones, making Europe and North America appear much larger, while shrinking Africa and South America.

The distortions are stark: a 100-square-kilometre patch around Oslo, Norway, looks four times larger than the same area around Nairobi, Kenya.

Greenland appears as large as Africa, even though it is 14 times smaller.

Alternatives to the Mercator emerged in the 20th century, including one from 1921 by Oswald Winkel and another in 1963 by Arthur Robinson that reduced distortions but sacrificed precision. The 1970s Gall-Peters projection restored proportional sizes but stretched shapes. — AFP

AI: Why Oman must have its own intelligent future

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant prospect; it has become the engine powering global transformation across economies, industries, and societies. Nations that actively invest in AI research and development are not only securing technological leadership but also ensuring their economic and strategic independence. For Oman, the question is no longer whether to embrace AI — it is how rapidly and decisively it can build its own capabilities rather than rely on imported solutions.

TECHNOLOGICAL SOVEREIGNTY

AI drives critical systems in healthcare, energy, finance, and national security. Dependence on foreign-developed technologies can expose sensitive data, create licensing restrictions, and leave essential services vulnerable to geopolitical shifts. By fostering local expertise and innovation, Oman can ensure its AI infra remains secure, adaptable, and fully under national control.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Oman Vision 2040 sets a clear course toward a knowledge-driven economy, reducing reliance on oil and opening pathways to high-value industries. AI is a cornerstone of this transition — powering advances in logistics, smart manufacturing, fintech, and predictive analytics. Developing domestic AI capacity will not only spark innovation but also attract investment and position Oman as a regional leader.

CULTURAL RELEVANCE



MOHAMMAD MOTAGHIANFAR

the writer is AI researcher and lecturer, University of Nizwa

Now is the moment to establish dedicated AI centres, launch research programmes, and form strategic partnerships that will secure the nation’s sovereignty, create high-value employment, and position it as a leader in the region’s digital transformation.

Most global AI tools are designed in languages and cultural contexts far removed from Omani society. Without local research, solutions may fail to address the needs of Arabic speakers or reflect national values. Homegrown AI ensures that education platforms, public services, and digital tools are aligned with Oman’s culture, language and societal priorities.

CREATING JOBS

A lack of advanced AI infrastructure risks pushing talented graduates, engineers, and researchers abroad. By establishing a vibrant AI ecosystem, Oman can create high-skill employment opportunities, encourage entrepreneurship, and develop innovation clusters that keep its brightest minds at home — driving national progress rather than fuelling innovation elsewhere.

INNOVATION AND IP

Nations that develop their own AI technologies secure the intellectual property — algorithms, patents, and frameworks — that underpin future innovation. This ownership not only strengthens a country’s innovation portfolio but also creates export opportunities. Relying solely on imported technologies risks long-term dependency and lost potential revenues.

BUILDING STRATEGIC TIES

A dynamic AI research landscape attracts collaborations with leading universities, technology firms, and international funding bodies. By investing in AI hubs and research centres, Oman can open doors to joint ventures and grants that accelerate

both academic and commercial innovation.

ENSURING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

From healthcare diagnostics to energy management and smart urban planning, AI is integral to modern infrastructure. Cultivating domestic AI expertise ensures these essential services remain uninterrupted — even during global supply chain disruptions, licensing conflicts, or international tensions.

THE NEXT FRONTIERS

While building strong AI foundations is a national imperative, Oman must also look ahead to the next wave of scientific revolutions. Quantum computing will redefine computation and security. Biotechnology will transform healthcare through gene editing and synthetic biology. Robotics, sustainable technologies, and brain-computer interfaces will reshape industries and everyday life. AI will serve as the bridge to these frontiers, making early investment even more critical.

A STRATEGIC NECESSITY

For Oman, Alis not just a technological trend — it is a strategic necessity. Now is the moment to establish dedicated AI centres, launch research programmes and form strategic partnerships that will secure the nation’s sovereignty, create high-value employment, and position it as a leader in the region’s digital transformation. With decisive action, Oman can not only master today’s smart technologies but also prepare for the profound scientific revolutions of tomorrow.

She was 98 and has now said goodbye...



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

NINETY eight is a good age, don't you think? No blocks in the heart, no high or low in blood pressure, and probably no sugar going high either, or going low. My grandmother's sister led a simple life. Landline phones were not that important to her, probably, and she loved walking, and that meant going to the place of worship and visiting her sister. I just remember those parts that are in context related to me. And I have parts of memories that my aunts remember and narrate. I remember my grandmother, her sister, and cousins, much younger, when their hair was darker and when they talked more and thought less in silence. Is the silence an indication that they feel the current listeners cannot relate to their memories and have relevance? When my grandmother said goodbye, I looked forward to meeting the grand aunt. There were selfish motives, too. Her cheeks reminded me of my grandmother – the touch, the voice, the tone, and most importantly, the memories of conversations between the two sisters. Oh, the conversations were not based on news or TV shows; they were about yesteryear memories or happenings of the families. They were tight-knit. As a child, I loved just listening to them, visualising their childhood, and listening to the pride in their voice when they talked about their children.

Yes, their lives revolved around their children and grandchildren, gardens and pets, and that could include cows too. They might have looked fragile but were strong. She would have her quick walk to see her older sister just to have conversations and go back. I only have my selective memories, but they were so much more. Technology meant I could record my conversation with her because her details are mind-blowing, and they always took me to my comfort zone of childhood, where there were no deadlines and homework to submit. The days were endless, and I had no qualms about which month of the year it was. I didn't even know about the significance of festivals. They were just occasions where people worked harder and were chirpy and happy. This year, the meeting and dialogues were parallel conversations. All she had to say was about how she urgently wanted to go to her ancestral house to see her sister and her cousins. Suddenly, I felt homesick too. It was not just the places you ran around when you were a child, but it was the feelings, the senses, and the smells; most importantly, the sense of comfort and the people who made it all special. If you have ever been in a boarding school, you would be able to relate to the sentence, 'I want to go home.' A friend was narrating his experience as his father struggles with Alzheimer's. There comes a stage, the experts say, when

Is the silence an indication that they feel the current listeners cannot relate to their memories and have relevance? When my grandmother said goodbye, I looked forward to meeting the grand aunt

Alzheimer's patients stop speaking. And that was the stage my friend's father was at and when he had to be admitted to the hospital one day, the father, who had been silent, said three words that have become so precious for the son. The father said, "Take me home." It only reminds us how much must be left unsaid. So the son said he does not talk anymore, but we talk to him every day. Having lunch with a clinical psychologist, the conversation went to her job and how she spends talking to patients, and some of them are Alzheimer's patients. She said, "Keep talking to them. But if they cannot remember, don't ask them, 'Don't you remember?'" Just continue to have the conversation." Conversations, experts say, are vital because they build relationships and provide social support, enhance emotional intelligence, promote learning and collaboration, and foster personal growth through self-discovery and exposure to new ideas. They help people feel understood and connected, leading to greater life satisfaction and well-being by facilitating the exchange of ideas, information, and emotions in both personal and professional contexts. Most importantly, conversations are essential to combat loneliness. It is when we have a conversation with others that we understand what others are going through. We develop empathy, and we also learn in the process.

AFRICAN LEADERS SEEK TO OFFER CLIMATE MODEL

DAWIT ENDESHAW AND DUNCAN MIRIRI

African leaders aim to offer a global model for tackling the climate crisis through green investments, they said on Monday, after the United States' withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement deflated the fight against climate change. The continent, which has been buffeted by landslides, floods and droughts this year, is holding its second climate summit in Ethiopia, COP30, seeking a common voice ahead of global climate talks in Brazil. "We are not here to negotiate our survival. We are here to design the world's next climate economy," Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed told the opening ceremony. Leaders have been positioning the 54-nation continent as ripe for investments in carbon capture, renewable energy, critical minerals for green technology and food production to keep development on track amid the climate crisis. "If we make the right choices now, Africa can be the first continent to industrialise without destroying its ecosystems," said Abiy, who wants his country to host COP32 in 2027. He called for a new Africa climate innovation initiative, funded by the continent, bringing together African universities, research institutions, startups, rural communities and inventors to deliver 1,000 solutions to tackle climate challenges by 2030. Leaders sought more financing at the inaugural summit in Nairobi two years ago to help governments to tackle climate challenges amid fiscal constraints and heavy debt burdens, but the continent is still badly short of funding, receiving just 1 per cent of the annual global climate financing, officials say. African countries, which are among the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of manmade global warming despite being among those least responsible for it, have long demanded that COP meetings yield more funds to help them adapt and launch clean energy projects. "Climate finance must be fair, significant and predictable," said Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, chair of the African Union Commission. "The vulnerability of our member countries, caused by climate change, debt burden and the structural inequalities of the international financial architecture, must be redressed through climate justice." Leaders also expressed concerns about the potential damage from a fraying of the multilateral approach to tackling climate change. US President Donald Trump's administration pulled out of the landmark Paris agreement on climate change for the second time and has also withdrawn from clean energy partnerships with countries such as South Africa. — Reuters

How US could lead next era of digital innovation

TWO operating systems, Apple iOS and Google Android, dominate the mobile app ecosystem, and over the last decade, a worldwide consensus has emerged on two issues. First, these platforms have amassed significant, persistent market power with which to extract monopoly rents from consumers and business users, and they frequently act anti-competitively and abusively to protect it. Second, traditional enforcement under existing abuse-of-dominance and monopolisation statutes has been too slow and too uncertain to deter these mega firms, which command resources and power exceeding those of many countries and governments. While traditional enforcement of existing competition laws has produced some significant cases in the United States, Europe, Brazil, and elsewhere, there have also been new legislative efforts. Laws have been passed, or are being considered, in various jurisdictions around the world, each with the goal of reining in the power and abuses of Big Tech. Even in the US, there was bipartisan support for the Open App Markets Act in 2022. That year, the bill made significant progress in Congress, passing the Senate Judiciary Committee with a 20-2 favourable vote. But, owing to the Senate leadership's priorities, it was never given a floor vote, and now the need for such legislation is even more apparent. American consumers and businesses continue to suffer from the exploitative conduct of the digital gatekeepers, which extract excessive rents and fees, crush competing businesses and business models, and wield undue influence (sometimes through outright denial of access) over new apps and technologies. Ensuring open competition is crucial if existing and aspiring independent developers and innovators are to build their businesses, create jobs, and benefit consumers. The countries that get this right – and that do so



Even in the US, there was bipartisan support for the Open App Markets Act in 2022.



GENE BURRUS

The writer is a competition law attorney

quickly – will become the next big destinations for investments. The opportunities available to those who restore meaningful competition will be immense. This is not just speculation. Decades ago, it was Silicon Valley that championed antitrust enforcement against Microsoft, which effectively controlled access to the Internet at the time. The US Department of Justice took the lead, and thanks to its effective enforcement, the tech companies that we now know as household names were able to flourish. Would companies like Apple and Google have thrived, or even survived, if Microsoft had been allowed to extract 30 per cent of their revenues or unfairly compete with their products on PCs? Or would they have gone the way of Netscape? We face a similar situation today, only now it is Apple and Google who control the platforms – mobile devices – where consumers increasingly (and in many cases, exclusively) access Internet services and information. Whether we can unleash a new wave of independent innovation, investment, and business growth to rival that of the

last 20 years will depend on whether we can address the problem of market power. The opportunity for American developers, businesses, and consumers cannot be understated. Just as Silicon Valley saw massive growth in the early 2000s thanks to US antitrust leadership against Microsoft, the countries that lead in this decade will be where innovative businesses are drawn to invest and grow. The alternative is indefinite control of our digital lives by two of the largest and most powerful companies in human history, not for the sake of innovation and entrepreneurship, but simply to protect their financial interests. As the rest of the world acts, it is important that the US take a leadership role, rather than deferring to others and awaiting the uncertain vagaries of piecemeal litigation that might take a decade to work itself out. That means passing new legislation to ensure that all businesses can compete and succeed or fail on the merits of their offerings, rather than because they happen to be aligned with the current gatekeepers' financial interests. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

CAFA CUP



Despite a spirited performance, the Red Warriors were edged out in the decisive shootout as they ended their promising tournament run.

INDIA BEAT OMAN IN PENALTIES TO SECURE BRONZE

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

The Oman national football team concluded their campaign at the Cafa Nations Cup 2025 with a narrow defeat to India in the third-place playoff, losing 3-2 on penalties after a tightly contested 1-1 draw in regulation time at the Central Stadium in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Despite a spirited performance and several attacking moments, the Red Warriors were edged out in the decisive shoot-out as they ended their promising tournament run.

Oman took control of the game in the second half and broke the deadlock in the 56th minute. Veteran defender Ali al Busaidy delivered a precise pass into the penalty area, which found midfielder Abdullah Fawaz. His touch redirected the ball to Jameel al Yahmadi, who showed composure to slot the ball past the Indian goalkeeper, handing Oman a deserved 1-0 lead.

India, however, refused to surrender and continued to push forward in search of an equaliser. Their persistence paid off in the 80th minute when winger Udanta Singh rose above the defence to meet a well-placed cross, sending a powerful header into the back of the net to level the score at 1-1. Both teams fought hard in the closing stages, but neither side was able to find a winner in both the halves. In the first additional half, Oman's Ali al Busaidy received a red card as Red Warriors played with less than one man until the second additional time. The result remained same at 1-1 draw as both teams went to the penalties.

In the penalty shoot-out, India scored three of their spot-kicks, while Oman saw two of their efforts saved by the Indian goalkeeper. The shoot-out ended 3-2 in favour of India.

WEST ASIA CHAMPIONSHIP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

Oman's national fencing teams delivered an outstanding performance at the West Asia Championship for cadets, juniors, and youth, hosted by Bahrain from August 30 to September 4. The teams secured a remarkable total of 36 medals – 13 gold, 11 silver and 12 bronze, firmly asserting their presence in the overall standings against strong regional competition.

Representing Oman were 31 male and female fencers, who impressed with their high-level performances and repeatedly stood on the winners' podium.

Oman's female fencers shone in the individual events. Jana al Sharji led the gold haul with five gold and two silver, while Salma Al Dughayshi matched her with five gold and one bronze. Jude bint Abdulkarim added a valuable gold, as did Zainab al Ajmi. Durrar al Harthiya captured one gold and one bronze, while Taleen al Balushi earned one gold and two

Van Engelen claims yellow with second stage win

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
@anuroop_ath

DUTCH rider Adne van Engelen bagged the laurels in the second stage to claim the overall lead of Salalah International Cycling Tour 2025 in Salalah on Monday.

Van Engelen of Terengganu Cycling Team – Malaysia came first in the 132 km-long second stage from Taqah Castle to Hajif with a time of three hours 44 minutes and seven seconds.

Ethiopian cyclist Tekle Alemayo of Team Amani – Slovenia (+01.12) took second spot and Brazil's Nicolas Sessler of Victoria Sports Pro Cycling – Philippines (+01.19) finished third.

With the result, Van Engelen took the overall leader's yellow jersey sponsored by Dhofar Municipality and the green jersey (sponsored by Mohsin Haider Darwish Company) for the points leader after the first two stages.

Terengganu Cycling Team – Malaysia (19:13:16) emerged the best team ahead of Roojai Insurance (+1.28) and UAE National Team (+6).

Algerian Yacine Hamza of Madar Pro Cycling Team – Algeria (+14.00) won the grey jersey for the aggressive rider, sponsored by Badr Al Samaa Hospital.

Stage 1 winner Abdullah Jassim of UAE National Team bagged the white jersey (Under-23 leader), sponsored by Oasis Oman.

Youngster Abdullah was the holder of yellow, green and white jerseys after the first stage.

The picturesque stage two started from Taqah Castle, passing through Taqah and Mirbat, then Mirbat Waterfalls, Mirbat Beach, Mirbat Castle, Mirbat Sand Dunes, back to Taqah Roundabout, then to Nasheeb Roundabout, Hamran, Al-Ma'moura Roundabout, Sahnoot Road, Hashir Roundabout, Hajif Park, Jalut Mosque, before finishing at Hajif.



Cyclists compete in the second stage of Tour of Salalah on Monday.

With the result, Van Engelen took the overall leader's yellow jersey sponsored by Dhofar Municipality and the green jersey (sponsored by Mohsin Haider Darwish Company) for the points leader after the first two stages.



The top three riders pose on the podium.

The top winners were crowned by Saif bin Saba' al Rashidi, Chairman of the Oman Cycling Association.

Mazin al Riyami (+11.05) of Oman National Team, who ended 39th was the best finishing local cyclist in Stage 2 among the 81

riders who attended the race. Other Omani riders, Munder al Hasani (+11.17) came in 43rd position while Said al Rahbi (+14) finished in the 53rd spot.

The penultimate third stage will run for 154 km from Souq Al Hafa to Ayn Ishat on Tuesday.

Oman fencers shine with 36 medals in Bahrain



The Oman fencing team given a reception at the Muscat International Airport.

bronzes. Noor al Kindi added one gold and one silver.

The medal streak continued with Rateel al Rahbi (silver), Ameera al Amri (bronze), Rateem al Wahaibi (bronze) and Jumana al Mahrouqi (bronze). Ghazal al Falaiti secured a gold, while Israa al Siyabi took two gold and a silver. Kawthar al Zakwani rounded off the women's tally with a gold medal.

On the men's side, Ali al Busaidi stood out with three gold, four silver and one bronze. Rashid al

Jahwari earned a gold and a silver, while Marwan al Hajri clinched a gold and a bronze. Ali al Nabhani added a gold and a silver, with Mohab al Harthy also contributing a gold and a silver. Rashid al Ghaithi and Hood al Harthy both secured bronze medals.

Muadh bin Suleiman al Maamari collected a gold, while Salim al Harthy earned a silver. Ammar al Azizi achieved a full set of medals – gold, silver and bronze and Ahmed bin Kaskas closed the tally with one gold and two silver.

Commenting on the achievement, national fencing team coach Hisham Karshoud emphasised that this success is the result of the continuous efforts by the Oman Fencing Committee since its establishment six years ago. He highlighted that the large medal count resulted from the collective dedication of the coaching and administrative staff, alongside the athletes, despite the presence of well-established and experienced regional teams.

Karshoud explained that the

keys to success were commitment to annual training programmes, discipline in practice sessions, and the determination of the players to overcome technical and infrastructural gaps that favoured some rival teams. He acknowledged the challenges, including the lack of experience among younger athletes and the absence of specialised clubs under the committee, which limits player development compared to other countries.

Looking ahead, Karshoud stated that the technical staff aims to further raise standards through regular training programmes, expanding the pool of male and female practitioners, and implementing a strategic plan to secure budgets for both domestic and overseas training camps. Establishing a permanent, well-equipped training base for the national teams is also a priority. He stressed that cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Oman Olympic Committee will be vital in achieving these goals.

NAWAZHAT-TRICK



Pakistan players pose with the trophy after winning the T20 international tri-series final against Afghanistan in Sharjah. — AFP

PAKISTAN DOWN
AFGHANISTAN IN
TRI-SERIES FINAL
AHEAD OF ASIA CUP

SHARJAH, United Arab Emirates: Pakistan laid down a marker ahead of the Asia Cup as Mohammad Nawaz took a hat-trick in a 75-run win over Afghanistan in their tri-series final in Sharjah on Sunday.

Nawaz picked up 5-19 in total — his best figures in T20 internationals — as Pakistan skittled Afghanistan out for 66 in 15.5 overs while defending a modest 142-run target on a tricky pitch.

Afghan captain Rashid Khan took three wickets to help restrict Pakistan to 141-8, with Fakhar Zaman top-scoring with 27.

Nawaz dismissed Darwish Rasooli and Azmatullah Omarzai off successive deliveries for ducks and then removed Ibrahim Zadran for nine off the first ball of his next over to complete a hat-trick.

Nawaz became the third Pakistani bowler after Faheem Ashraf and Mohammd Hasnain to achieve the feat in T20Is.

Rashid (17) and Sediqullah Atal (13) were the only batters to reach double figures as Afghanistan recorded their second lowest total in T20Is, behind their 56 all out against South Africa in last year's World Cup semifinals. “We wanted to prepare in a way that helps us for the Asia Cup and we’ve done that,” said Pakistan skipper Salman Agha. “We’ve been doing really well since the Bangladesh home series. Finally, we’re in very good shape and fully prepared for the Asia Cup.”

Earlier, Pakistan, who won the toss and batted, also struggled against spin.

Nawaz made a 21-ball 25 with two sixes while Agha laboured to a 27-ball 24.

Zaman added 49 for the second wicket with Saim Ayub (17) after opener Sahibzada Farhan fell off the third ball of the match for a duck.

Rashid dismissed Zaman in his first over and then accounted for Hasan Nawaz (15) and Agha, but only after his opposite number struck him for two sixes.

Afghanistan next open their Asia Cup campaign on Tuesday against Hong Kong in a Group B clash in Abu Dhabi. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are the other two teams in their group.

Pakistan will face arch-rivals India, Oman and the United Arab Emirates in Group A. — AFP



Remarkable FIA WEC
podium for Al Harthy

INCREDIBLE teamwork, patience and spirit helped Ahmad al Harthy and Team WRT team-mates Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde make a richly deserved return to the FIA World Endurance Championship podium in America on Sunday, in a rain-hit sixth round of the season.

Having qualified a highly creditable fourth on the grid for the ‘Lone Star Le Mans’ at the Circuit of the Americas, hopes were high of a strong challenge in LMGT3. Nobody, though, could’ve predicted the excitement of the grandstand finish which delivered second place – and almost a dream win.

Heavy rain arrived at COTA for raceday and so the field circulated behind the Safety Car at the beginning. before worsening conditions resulted in race officials choosing to implement a red flag stoppage around the one hour mark.

When race action finally got underway, with just over four hours to run and strategies turned on their head, the No 46 BMW team-mates performed impressively. During the final half hour van der Linde starred, charging from 10th place to a fantastic second position after switching to slick Goodyear tyres on a now drying track.

Oman’s Al Harthy took the opening double stint of the race but his renowned wet-weather prowess couldn’t be showcased initially, due to the Safety Car staying out due to the level of rainfall and the treacherousness of the track. After taking a pit-stop at the 35-minute mark, Al Harthy was ninth and as the clock ticked past one hour red flags appeared due to worsening rain.

Although the track was still

Sensational P2 finish for No 46 Team WRT squad in ‘Lone Star Le Mans’

Ahmad al Harthy elated with podium return in FIA WEC Rd6

Crazy rain-lashed race features hour one red flag and multiple Safety Cars

Grandstand finish sees inspired run to the flag by Kelvin van der Linde



Ahmad al Harthy and his teammates celebrate their second place.

very wet around 40 minutes later, officials released the field again behind the Safety Car and green flags were finally shown for racing to begin with roughly four hours remaining. Wasting no time, showcasing his skills in the very challenging conditions, Al Harthy took eighth place midway through the first racing lap and then rapidly moved up to seventh.

Soon enough the Safety Car reappeared, action then resuming with three hours and 45 minutes to go, when Al Harthy – who is supported by OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Experience Oman – pitted.

Rossi got behind the wheel at that point and climbed from 10th to sixth ahead of another cautionary period. As the order shuffled under a Virtual Safety Car period, with more pit-stops served, Rossi moved into the top three. Following an

unfortunate drive-through penalty for an infringement during the VSC the Italian was 16th, but he moved to 12th before handing over to van der Linde.

Ahmad Al Harthy: “What a race, unbelievable! I haven’t really been part of a race that has been so dramatic in the last 25 minutes, going from the tail of the top 10 all the way up to the podium. With the drying conditions we knew that would be the best time for our car to perform and now we have my first ever podium in America, it was just amazing to have all of the support from back home in Oman. I want to thank everyone, especially His Excellency Talal bin Sulaiman al Rahbi, our Ambassador to the United States, his support meant so much. We had so much support from home and to be on the podium again in the World Endurance Championship, our second podium of the season, is amazing.

Oman U20 hopes over in Gulf Cup after 2-0 defeat against Yemen

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

The Oman Under-20 football team’s hopes to qualify for the final of the U20 Gulf Cup ended after the semifinal defeat against Yemen 2-0 late on Sunday night at Prince Sultan Sports City Stadium in Abha, Saudi Arabia.

Oman played with 10 players from 19th minute after Mohammed al Mashaykhi received his second yellow card and was sent off with a red card.

In the other semifinal, Saudi Arabia claimed a spot in the final as they managed to earn a 2-1 victory over Iraq to set up a clash against Yemen in the final. The tournament, which is held

Oman played with 10 players from 19th minute after Mohammed al Mashaykhi received his second yellow card and was sent off with a red card.



Oman and Yemen players in action.

under the umbrella of the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF), will conclude on Wednesday.

Oman’s campaign in the Gulf event began with a 2-0 win over Egypt 2-0. Then, the team suffered a 4-2 loss against Bahrain while they ended their group matches with a 1-0 triumph against Iraq to lead Group A.

Against Yemen, Oman players began with a spirited opening effort but they could not overcome Yemen’s tight defence and beat the opponent goalkeeper. However, disciplinary setbacks affected the flow of the game.

Oman’s Mohammed al Mashaykhi received an early yellow card for a hard tackle, followed by another yellow in

the 19th minute reducing the squad’s composure. Tensions escalated for Oman while Yemen cashed on the player advantage.

Oman’s goalie Momen al Souli saved a penalty taken by Yemen’s Adil Abbas in the 23rd minute.

A precise strike from Mohammed al Burwani in the 44th minute put Yemen ahead. A penalty was awarded in the injury time for Oman but Ahmed al Omrani’s kick was brilliantly saved by Yemen’s goalkeeper Yaman al Nuaibi.

In the following half, Oman pressed hard but could not find a goal while Yemen doubled their lead in the dying minute by Zaid al Jarash to seal a crucial 2-0 win and secure slot in the final.

SPORTS

FASTEST RACE



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates with the trophy after winning the Italian GP. — Reuters

VERSTAPPEN AT ITALIAN DOUBLE IN MONZA

MONZA, Italy: Red Bull's Max Verstappen won Formula One's fastest ever race on Sunday to complete an Italian double in Ferrari's backyard while McLaren's Oscar Piastri obeyed team orders and had his overall lead trimmed to 31 points.

Australian Piastri finished third and behind teammate Lando Norris after the Briton suffered a slow, late pitstop and came out behind his title rival despite being assured by the team that he would stay ahead.

Piastri was asked to give the place back and obliged, finishing third, while Verstappen cruised to the chequered flag to win by a hefty 19.2 seconds and take his first win since Imola last May. The race duration was officially timed at one hour 13 minutes and 24.325 seconds, and an average speed of 250.706kph around the 'Temple of Speed'.

"The whole weekend, we were on it. It's super enjoyable to win here," said Verstappen of his third success of the season and career 66th.

"I could see the pace was good, I just needed to settle in," the reigning world champion added after ceding the lead to Norris at a chaotic start and then taking it back.

"I could see the pace was there and quite quickly we were back in the lead. This was an unbelievable weekend."

The title battle between Piastri and Norris, effectively a two-horse race, was always the centre of attention and controversy erupted after Norris's pitstop and the team's decision to reverse positions. Verstappen chipped in over the car radio when told about the swap by race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase: "Ha! Just because he had a slow stop?," said the Dutch driver with affected incredulity. McLaren apologised to Norris over the radio for the delay. Charles Leclerc finished fourth for Ferrari, giving the massed tifosi something to cheer after both cars crashed out in the Netherlands last weekend, and George Russell was fifth for Mercedes. Seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton was sixth on his first appearance at the 'Pista Magica' in the red Ferrari overalls after starting 10th.

Alex Albon gave Williams a tidy fistful of points in seventh with Sauber's Brazilian rookie Gabriel Bortoleto eighth, Mercedes' Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli ninth and Racing Bulls' Isack Hadjar collecting the final point. — Reuters



Red Bull's Max Verstappen during the national anthems on the podium after winning the Italian Grand Prix alongside second place McLaren's Lando Norris and third place McLaren's Oscar Piastri. — Reuters



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz poses with his trophy after winning the men's singles final match against Italy's Jannik Sinner on day 15 of the US Open tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. — AFP

CARLOS

ALCARAZ beat Jannik Sinner in four sets on Sunday to win the US Open and reassert his dominance of an era-defining rivalry in a final delayed by the visit of President Donald Trump.

The 22-year-old Alcaraz won 6-2, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 to capture his second US Open crown and sixth Grand Slam title, avenging his lone defeat in a major final by Sinner at Wimbledon in June.

"It's a great feeling. I'm working really hard just to lift this trophy. It's my second one but it's still a dream come true," said Alcaraz.

Alcaraz will reclaim the world number one ranking from Sinner, returning to top spot on Monday for the first time since September 2023 after ending the Italian's 27-match winning run at hard-court Grand Slams. "It was one of the first goals that I had, to recover the number one (ranking)," said Alcaraz, who also defeated Sinner in an epic French Open final in June. Alcaraz has now won seven of the past eight meetings and is 10-5 overall against Sinner.

"I tried my best today. I couldn't do more," said Sinner. "I felt like he was doing everything slightly better today.

"He raised his level when he had to... He played better than me today."

Alcaraz and Sinner have shared the last eight Grand Slams on offer, winning four apiece to assert their superiority over the rest of the sport including Novak Djokovic. But while Sinner is 109-4 against the rest of the tour over the past two seasons, Alcaraz has had his number. "It's going to be on me if I want to make changes or not," said Sinner. "That's what I have to do, trying to become a better tennis player."

Sinner's defeat at Flushing Meadows extends the longest drought without a successful men's title defence of any Grand Slam in the Open era. No man has retained the US Open crown since Roger Federer won five in a row from 2004 to 2008.

Alcaraz and Sinner have shared the last eight Grand Slams on offer, winning four apiece to assert their superiority over the rest of the sport including Novak Djokovic.

Anticipation for the third straight Grand Slam final between the game's top two players assumed an even greater dimension with the presence of Trump. It was the latest in a series of visits to major sporting events for the US leader after his trip to the NFL's Super Bowl in February and the FIFA Club World Cup final in July. He appeared before the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner, waving to the crowd, which greeted him with a mix of cheers and boos. He was given a frostier reception later in the match though when shown again on the stadium's big screens.

A constellation of showbiz and sports icons turned out as well Sunday, with rock star Bruce Springsteen, fashion icon Tommy Hilfiger, actor Michael Douglas and basketball superstar Stephen Curry all on hand.

START DELAYED BY TRUMP VISIT

The start of the final was pushed back 30 minutes to allow fans additional time to enter Arthur Ashe Stadium as a result of tighter security measures in effect due to Trump's attendance.

Even then the 23,000-capacity venue was no more than three-quarters full when Alcaraz broke Sinner in the opening game of the match.

As he did in the Wimbledon final, Alcaraz pinned Sinner on the back foot early and broke a second time for a 5-2 lead before serving out to love. With hundreds of spectators still waiting to get in at the start of the second set, Alcaraz sought to hammer home his advantage against Sinner. He created a break point but Sinner hung on and stalled Alcaraz's momentum, belatedly ramping up his game and surging 3-1 ahead as the Spaniard suffered a brief dip on serve.

Sinner levelled the contest at a set apiece but Alcaraz stormed back with another break early in the third, wriggling out of a tight spot on serve with the help of a sensational baseline smash that sliced away from his rival for a 3-0 edge. — AFP

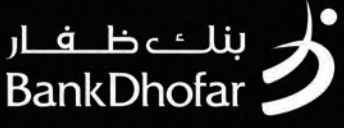


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Representatives of Karwa Motors and Empl Fahrzeugwerk GmbH at the agreement signing.

KARWA MOTORS
INKS STRATEGIC
PACT WITH
AUSTRIA’S EMPL

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

Karwa Motors, Oman’s leading vehicle manufacturer, has announced the signing of a strategic partnership agreement with Empl Fahrzeugwerk GmbH of Austria.

As part of the pact, Karwa Motors will manufacture a range of specialised vehicles, including firefighting and civil rescue trucks, as well as military vehicles designed for security and defence applications.

This partnership will focus on enhancing in-country added value by combining cutting-edge global technologies with local expertise. This approach will enable Karwa Motors to deliver innovative solutions across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and African markets.

Dr Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors, said: “This partnership marks an important step towards expanding our industrial capabilities and strengthening our presence in regional markets. We are proud to partner with Empl and will work together to provide reliable vehicles that meet the highest standards in firefighting, rescue and security”.

The partnership is expected to reinforce Karwa Motors’ position as a leading manufacturing company while opening new horizons for industrial development in Oman.

Oman unveils ambitious
digital vision at Comex 2025

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

HIS Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, officially inaugurated the 34th edition of Comex, Oman’s prestigious international technology show, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, in Muscat Governorate.

The four-day event has been organised by Al Dar Al Arabiya for Data Analysis with the support of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT).

The ceremony began with the launch of several major initiatives designed to further Oman’s position as a digital hub.

These included the Digital Triangle Project, development of a specialised artificial intelligence zone and the Green AI Alliance, which focuses on partnerships between government agencies, private sector companies and international academic partners.

Agreements totalling RO 42 million in value were also signed, reflecting growing investor confidence in Oman’s digital economy.

Among the fresh initiatives unveiled at Comex 2025 are 30 services on the Unified Digital Services Portal, a mobile app, a smart assistant and the National Open Data Portal.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, also unveiled Oman’s first AI language model, “Maeen”,



COMEX 2025 emphasises Oman’s vision to harness the potential of AI, digital innovation and space technology in pursuit of Oman Vision 2040 goals

The ceremony saw the launch of several major initiatives designed to further Oman’s position as a digital hub

aimed at enhancing digital sovereignty and maximising efficiency in government services.

With over 140 start-ups, 200 companies and foreign delegations in attendance, Comex 2025 showcases the latest in AI, cybersecurity, cloud computing and digital transformation, signalling Oman’s ambition to be the regional innovation and technology leader.

Speaking at the event, Dr Al Shaithani said the Sultanate of Oman continues to be focused on accelerating digital transformation in line with the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Artificial intelligence and advanced digital technologies are being harnessed to drive national economy growth in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Al Shaithani pointed out

that the National Programme for the Digital Economy is a strategic plan to achieve a diversified and sustainable economy driven by technology, knowledge and innovation. The programme aligns a number of tracks including digital transformation, artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, digital infrastructure, e-commerce, cybersecurity and the digital industry space.

He added that the country’s digital economy will account for around 10 per cent of Oman’s GDP by 2040. Reflecting this ambition, deals worth around RO 200 million were signed during Comex 2024, with agreements worth a further RO 40 million were finalised at LEAP 2025 in Saudi Arabia.

He also stated that Oman is witnessing strong investment dynamism in the semiconductor, data centre, AI and space industry sectors, as well as the growth of small and medium enterprises.

The Sultanate of Oman also successfully executed the Middle East’s first-ever space rocket launch experiment, the ‘Duqm-1’ mission, with 80 per cent Omani manpower participation, a first in the nation’s technology growth.

Comex 2025 is a testament to the Sultanate of Oman’s determination to embrace innovation, spur investment and build a sustainable, technology-led economy.

By aligning national efforts with Oman Vision 2040, Oman is not only developing its digital infrastructure but also becoming a regional hub for artificial intelligence, emerging technologies and space innovation.

Oman, IDCA sign agreement to launch world’s first Oman Digital Triangle

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

The Sultanate of Oman has signed an agreement with the International Data Center Authority (IDCA) on developing and expanding its Digital Economy and helping the country build the Oman Digital Triangle.

The agreement comes after months of multilateral and bilateral talks between IDCA and the relevant key government entities including the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Ministry of Economy.

Under this national agreement, IDCA’s scope is to devise and launch the National Digital Infrastructure Road Map, establish the National Digital Infrastructure Standards, the National Digital Infrastructure Education and the Oman Digital Triangle (ODT), the first of its kind anywhere in the world for a highly interconnected



IDCA’s scope is to devise and launch the National Digital Infrastructure Road Map, establish the National Digital Infrastructure Standards, the National Digital Infrastructure Education and the Oman Digital Triangle (ODT)

three digital hubs and AI super-clusters. ODT will provide the GW-scale capacities for data centre builds, the connectivity and the human capital necessary

to operate mainly AI data centres and super-clusters through the geographical diversity and resilience that can be provided across the nation for AI Cloud providers.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, MoTCIT, stated “Through this partnership with IDCA, Oman is prepared to meet the ever-growing global demand for AI and data centre solutions in the most robust and dynamic way. We warmly invite leading AI, data centre and cloud providers from around the world to participate in the largest AI digital hub globally”.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of MoTCIT, commented, “Oman’s collaboration with IDCA reflects our confidence in their expertise. By launching the Oman Digital Triangle, Oman will become the first nation not only in the region but globally to systematically align strategy, policy and knowledge

while building a cutting-edge digital ecosystem. We are excited to welcome all builders and operators to contribute to this pioneering project”.

IDCA Chairman & CEO stated, “Data thrives in an environment of trust and peace. Oman is uniquely positioned to leverage decades of national stability to accelerate its digital economy. Coupled with a diverse terrain and talented workforce, this collaboration allows us to bring IDCA’s expertise to ensure Oman’s digital ecosystem sets a benchmark for the world”.

Buddy Rizer, Chief Digital Hub Development Officer at IDCA, added, “Having spent 18 years building the world’s largest digital hub in Loudoun County, Virginia, I understand the value of IDCA’s engagement with nations. Bringing this experience to Oman to establish three national digital hubs and foster AI super-clusters is an exciting opportunity to help

shape the future of global data centre cities”.

The signing between Oman and the International Data Centre Authority (IDCA), making IDCA responsible for the expansion of the digital economy and specification of everything digital across the nation, is predicted to spark a viral development of AI data centres and expansion of the nation’s electrical and connectivity’s grids to meet the anticipated demand.

This strategic partnership between MoTCIT and IDCA is expected to introduce the world’s most advanced AI, digital economy, data centre and cloud practices nationwide, offering unparalleled opportunities for investors, builders and operators. The partnership is projected to catalyse AI data centre development and expand Oman’s electricity and connectivity networks to meet future demands.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



OBG’S 2025 REPORT SHOWCASES ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Oxford Business Group (OBG) has unveiled its highly anticipated 2025 Report on the Sultanate of Oman, a comprehensive 250-page publication that highlights the country’s progress in economic diversification, sustainability and digital transformation. The annual report — widely regarded as a benchmark for investors and policymakers — features in-depth analysis, sectoral reviews and exclusive interviews with senior figures across the government, regulatory and business spectrum.

At the heart of the Report: Oman 2025 is an emphasis on how the Sultanate of Oman is translating the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040 into tangible results. The report tracks reforms in energy, logistics, manufacturing, tourism and financial services, while also assessing emerging opportunities in green energy, agritech and digital innovation.

One of the report’s key takeaways is Oman’s continued success in reducing reliance on hydrocarbons. While oil and gas remain central to government revenues, the study notes a strong policy push towards renewables and industrial diversification. The expansion of green hydrogen projects, solar energy parks and strategic foreign partnerships positions Oman as a serious contender in the global energy transition.

The publication also details the government’s efforts to scale up downstream industries, attract foreign direct investment into special economic zones and encourage SMEs to participate in the national growth story.

The report features exclusive interviews with some of Oman’s most influential decision-makers. Cabinet ministers, regulators and corporate leaders share their insights on policy, investment climate and strategic priorities. Topics covered include banking digitalisation, new public-private partnership frameworks, food security initiatives and infrastructure modernisation.

“Through strong governance, proactive reforms and forward-looking investments, Oman is building an economy that is both resilient and globally competitive”, one senior official is quoted as saying in the publication.

Sustainability emerges as a recurring theme throughout the report. Articles highlight Oman’s ambitious goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, supported by investments in clean energy, sustainable transport and circular economy practices.

The role of public and private sector players in large-scale reforestation, carbon credit generation and sustainable agriculture is explored in detail.

Another highlight of the report is Oman’s fast-evolving digital landscape. From fintech solutions in banking to the roll-out of 5G-enabled services, the Sultanate of Oman is positioning itself as a regional hub for digital business.

OBG points to a rising number of tech start-ups, a surge in e-commerce adoption and regulatory support for digital assets as clear signs of a maturing ecosystem.

OMAN, ESTONIA EXPLORE PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION

MUSCAT: Margus Tsahkna, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia and his accompanying business delegation, visited the Invest Oman lounge on Monday.

The visit aimed to gain direct insight into the investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman and the wide range of opportunities available across various strategic sectors. This visit comes within the framework of both countries’ keenness to strengthen



Priority sectors including trade, innovation, modern technologies were in focus

bilateral relations and support mutual cooperation.

During the visit, attention was drawn to a number of priority sectors that open vistas for future partnerships, including trade, innovation, modern technologies, as well as sustainable investments. This joint visit reflects the commitment of both countries to working together towards building long-term partnerships that generate mutual benefits.

— ONA

National Finance unveils digital solutions at Comex

NATIONAL Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, is proud to announce its return to Comex 2025 — the Global Technology Show, taking place from September 8 to 11, at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

At the National Finance booth, guests will enjoy an interactive experience that allows them to explore the latest digital solutions, a comprehensive range of financing offerings, as well as interactive activities that help promote financial awareness in an engaging way.

At the heart of National Finance’s presence at Comex 2025 will be the unveiling of its newly launched digital finance application process, making it easier for customers to apply for financing anytime, anywhere.

The service will be available through the company’s newly redesigned website which also offers improved navigation, responsive design and personalised user experiences.

Complementing this launch is the

At the heart of National Finance’s presence at Comex 2025 will be the unveiling of its newly launched digital finance application process, making it easier for customers to apply for financing anytime, anywhere



debut of the company’s AI assistant, an intelligent digital companion designed to guide customers through financing options, answer queries in real time and provide seamless support across smart devices.

Comex 2025 presents National Finance with a valuable opportunity to showcase its dynamic digital transformation and unveil the latest digital solutions.

Through its participation in this premier event, the company reaffirms its commitment to elevating customer experiences by adopting digital solutions that promote financial inclusion

and support the achievement of sustainability goals, reflecting National Finance’s steadfast focus on excellence in customer service and technology-driven leadership.

Tariq Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, stated, “Digital transformation has become the foundation for all organisational units. With ongoing digital innovations reshaping sector landscapes to provide services that are immediate, flexible and fast National Finance continues to invest in technologies that simplify financing solutions and enhance the experience for valued customers. Our revamped website and AI-powered instant chat assistant are more than just tools; they represent an extension of our commitment to easy-to-use services, financial inclusion and sustainable progress”.

Visitors will have the opportunity to explore the company’s range of financing solutions, which include financing for new and used vehicles, Consumer Durables Financing (CDF) for kitchens, furniture, electronics and electrical appliances; and a variety of Corporate Financing solutions.

Regional workshop on wellness tourism from today

THE first workshop on wellness tourism in the Middle East, aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and developing innovative, wellness-focused tourism products organised by UN Tourism begins today in Riyadh.

The two-day event will be held at the UN Tourism Regional Office for the Middle East.

The event brings together representatives from National Tourism Administrations and Organisations (NTAs/NTOs) from 11 Middle East member states, with more than 30 participants, alongside industry experts and key stakeholders from across the region.

The workshop will explore the

growing potential of wellness tourism as a driver of economic growth, tourism diversification and sustainability.

Fahad al Abdulkarim, General Director of Bilateral Affairs at the Ministry of Tourism of Saudi Arabia, said: “Hosting the regional workshop underscores Saudi Arabia’s commitment, to position tourism as a key driver of economic diversification and well-being. We believe it will become a defining pillar of the region’s tourism identity, contributing to a sustainable, inclusive and healthy future”.

Zoritsa Urošević, Executive Director UN Tourism, said: “The workshop equips member states

with practical tools, market insights and product development strategies that respond to the evolving needs of today’s travellers while creating opportunities for regional cooperation and coordination”.

The workshop features interactive sessions by Dr László Puczkó, a wellbeing and experience strategist and co-author of UN Tourism’s Exploring Health Tourism report. The event responds to priorities outlined by member states during the 50th and 51st meetings of the UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Middle East.

Samer al Kharashi, Director of the UN Tourism Regional

Office, Middle East, added: “By embracing wellness, destinations in the Middle East can tap into a global trend while promoting healthier lifestyles, cultural authenticity and environmental stewardship. This workshop has been an important step in turning that vision into actionable strategies.

Hosting this workshop through the UN Tourism Regional Office reflects our strong commitment to delivering initiatives that are tailored to the region’s unique context and priorities. It also reaffirms the Office’s role as a platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange in support of regional development”.

Kia Sonet the smart urban compact SUV with an attractive offer

MAKE memories and celebrate life in a brand-new Kia Sonet, a smart urban compact SUV perfect for young ones who need to drive to their college & schools.

Now take advantage of the Ahlan Kia offer and drive home your dream Kia with an incredible bonus of up to RO 300, service benefits of up to 50,000 km/5 years, one-year insurance and first-year registration. To avoid sun warming, scratch & win coupons of 3M Film Tinting for Rear Wind Screen & Side Windows.

The Sonet is the perfect choice for young families, depicting modern design and functionality at its core. With a sleek exterior, bold styling



and advanced technological features, it is inspired by young-at-heart consumers. The Sonet comes with a versatile Smartstream 1.5-litre four-cylinder engine producing 114 hp at 6300 rpm, paired with Kia’s Intelligent Variable Transmission (IVT). The drivetrain offers fuel efficiency of 17.5 km/litre as per G8MO standards.

Displaying a dynamic stance in a

confident, compact body, the 5-seater dons Kia’s signature ‘tiger-nose’ grille, ‘heartbeat’ LED daytime running lights and a stylish front skid plate. It reflects Kia’s focus on consumer-driven innovation, targeting a tech-savvy, aspirational and socially connected generation.

Inside, the Sonet provides a comfortable and intelligent design, with ample legroom, headroom and shoulder room for all passengers, along with a luggage capacity of 392 litres. A redesigned centre panel and TFT cluster enhance its high-tech appeal, while the 8-inch audio touchscreen supports Android Auto and Apple CarPlay for seamless

connectivity.

To create the perfect in-cabin atmosphere, the Sonet offers high-end features like front and second-row USB chargers, AC vents, Auto Cruise Control (ACC), a Smart Key system and push-button start for added convenience.

In line with Kia’s trendy, bold and youthful brand persona, the Sonet’s driving experience is designed to be both pleasurable and safe. It comes equipped with state-of-the-art safety features including an anti-lock braking system, Electronic Stability Programme, Brake Assist System, rear parking sensors and ISOFIX child-seat anchoring points.

MARKETSTABILITY

LATEST OPEC+
MOVE MODEST, BUT
PSYCHOLOGICALLY
SIGNIFICANT

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

Sunday's decision by OPEC+ members, including the Sultanate of Oman, to increase output by 137,000 barrels per day starting in October "underscores a collective commitment to market stability", said Ali al Riyami, a prominent Omani energy analyst.

In a post, Al Riyami — formerly a senior official at Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals — said the announcement by the eight-member OPEC+



Collective commitment to market stability

ALI AL RIYAMI
formerly a senior official at Ministry of Energy and Minerals

alliance represents a phased strategy to roll back 1.69 million bpd in voluntary cuts previously announced, a volume that had originally been scheduled for restoration by the end of next year. "While the volume may appear modest in quantitative terms, its psychological and symbolic impact on market sentiment could be more pronounced — particularly as traders and analysts look for signals on the coalition's evolving stance", Al Riyami noted. Following the announcement, Oman's production quota for October is set at 804k bpd, slightly higher than

its September level by 3k bpd.

The corresponding quotas of the other seven OPEC+ members are: Algeria (963k bpd), Iraq (4,237k bpd), Kuwait (2,559k bpd), Saudi Arabia (10,020k bpd), UAE (3,387k bpd), Kazakhstan (1,556k bpd) and Russia (9,491k bpd).

Al Riyami further stated that the accelerated pace of production adjustments "reflects a shared assessment that current market fundamentals — ranging from low inventory levels to resilient global economic indicators — allow for a cautious recalibration without jeopardising balance".

According to OPEC, the eight countries will continue to monitor and assess market conditions closely.

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

In an effort to strengthen the exhibition industry's role in fuelling Oman's economic growth, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion held a national workshop on September 8, at JW Marriott Hotel on the theme, 'Developing the Exhibition Industry: A Partnership Towards 2040'.

The workshop, held under the chairmanship of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, was also attended by HH Sayyid Fares bin Turki al Said, member of the technical team for the Unified National Promotional Identity Project; Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry; Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Said bin Salim al Shanfari, CEO of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

The meeting brought together major stakeholders from the private sector, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and OCEC to explore how to further enhance Oman's role as the regional and international exhibitions and conferences hub.

During discussions on expanding the exhibitions and events sector, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, reiterated the need to view the industry as an integrated economic sector rather than a series of unconnected events organised by licensed entities.

"We must move beyond simply managing permits and procedures.



The workshop brought together major stakeholders in a collective bid to enhance Oman's role as regional and international hub for exhibitions and conferences

Our goal is to be true enablers of this sector, shaping an environment that supports its growth and aligns with broader national objectives", Al Yousef stated.

Speakers also underlined the need for a consolidated, professional body to oversee initiatives and policy implementation across exhibitions, entertainment and conferences.

Towards this end, it was proposed that the Unified Promotional Identity Office be tasked with this watchdog function — securing standardisation, country consistency and effective sector-wide coordination.

Nusra bint Sultan al Habsiyah, Director General of Commerce at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, stressed the Ministry's commitment to developing the exhibition industry as a prime driver of economic diversification.

She stated that the sector holds strategic importance in attracting investments, boosting tourism; and creating local and foreign partnerships.

Al Habsi also stated that efforts are being made to update laws, apply international best practices and position Oman as an international arena for high-profile events.

She also emphasised the important role played by the Unified Promotional Identity Office in streamlining event branding to be in line with national values and to reflect a robust image for Oman on the global stage.

Akram bin Saif al Maawali, Acting Director General of Institutional Affairs and Procurement at OCEC, provided an overview of the Centre's strategic position in the market.

Badr bin Abdullah al Mahrrouqi, CEO of Sama Al Opera Projects and OCCI committee member, gave an overview of sector challenges and solutions from the private sector's perspective.

International advisor Michael Maikel also shared Qatar's experience in hosting large-scale international events, international best practices and lessons learned.

Unified Promotional Identity Office's Ruqayya bint Salim al Shahoumiyah also presented a working paper on the need to ensure that the country's exhibition branding reflects national values in order to project a better international image and competitiveness.

The workshop concluded in an open debate and practical set of recommendations to serve as a guiding road map for the growth of the industry.

We must move beyond simply managing permits and procedures. Our goal is to be true enablers of this sector, shaping an environment that supports its growth and aligns with broader national objectives

QAIS BIN MOHAMMED AL YOUSEF
Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

Fisheries Investment Forum in Oman discusses future opportunities

MUSCAT: The Fisheries Investment Opportunities Forum, organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, commenced on Monday to highlight the growing role of aquaculture globally and locally.

The two-day event focuses on three main themes: the global perspective of the sector and its challenges, Oman's experience and success stories; and available investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng Ali bin Mohammed al Abri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Water Resources.

The forum features participation from representatives of commercial aquaculture companies operating in



The dialogue will also address promising opportunities in Oman within the framework of Oman Vision 2040.

Oman, potential investors, financing institutions, as well as experts from international organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Aquaculture

Society (WAS). Renowned academic institutions and a group of international specialists in the field are also contributing as speakers.

On the first day, the forum includes two discussion sessions.

The first, titled 'Global Context,' addresses the reality of aquaculture in Oman, along with an overview of global markets, existing challenges and the future vision for the sector.

The second discussion session, titled 'Global Opportunities for Aquaculture Species', focuses on methods and techniques for farming salmon, shrimp, marine fish, mollusks and other species.

On the second day, the forum continues with discussions on topics related to governance, fundamental rules and regulations, industry patterns, leadership and stimulating investment in aquaculture by reviewing the experience of the Republic of Chile as a successful global model.

The dialogue will also address promising opportunities in Oman within the framework of Oman

Vision 2040, alongside showcasing financial services provided by Sohar International Bank and the success story of Musandam Aquaculture Company.

Additionally, the latest equipment and technologies used in this field, including artificial intelligence systems, will be highlighted.

It is worth noting that Oman's rich marine environment supports the farming of over 15 aquatic species, including white leg shrimp, giant tiger prawn, Omani abalone, European sea bass, Asian sea bass, Atlantic salmon, tuna, rock oyster, sand sea cucumber, as well as freshwater fish such as tilapia and carp. This diversity enhances investment opportunities and positions Oman as a promising regional hub for aquaculture.

— ONA

EXPORTS THREATENED

Tariffs may trim India's growth by 0.5%



US President Donald Trump's move to double tariffs on Indian imports to 50% could shave 0.5–0.6% off India's GDP this year, Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said. The tariffs, aimed at curbing India's Russian oil purchases, threaten nearly 55% of India's \$87 billion merchandise exports to the US, exporters warn. Washington recorded a \$45.8 billion trade deficit with India in 2024. — Reuters

TRADE WAR TRUCE

China exports up 4.4 per cent in August



China's exports expanded 4.4 per cent year-on-year in August, official data showed, as the world's second-largest economy navigated an uneasy trade war truce with the US. The increase in overseas shipments last month fell below a Bloomberg forecast of 5.5 per cent growth and imports similarly did not meet expectations, growing 1.3 per cent year-on-year in August, lower than the forecast 3.4 per cent. — AFP

BOOST TO NETWORK OPS

SpaceX acquires spectrum licences



Elon Musk's SpaceX has bought \$17 billion worth of spectrum licences from US operator EchoStar, as part of its plan to strengthen Starlink network operations, the two companies announced in a statement. The deal will enable EchoStar's Boost Mobile subscribers to access SpaceX's Starlink direct-to-cell service, the statement said, without the need for an additional dedicated terminal. — AFP

OPINION

How to prepare for the AI bubble bust



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is
the founder of
Knowledge Oman

LAST week, my article revolved around how the AI boom (today) resembles the dot-com boom (over 2 decades ago) that ended up busting at end of the 1990's.

Many jobs were lost, enormous amount of money was lost and trust to the technology (to some extent) was the aftermath. I shared some practical examples and linked them to our present situation (ie AI vs Dot-com). Some readers agreed with the thoughts and related examples, while others debated and argued that AI is entirely different.

Those that disagreed literally provided no realistic reasons to their feedback yet I can confidently state that most of them have not actually lived the experience that I personally had. In fact, I was among those who have benefitted and sold internet business at the time. The proof is in the pudding. Irrespective of whether AI bubble will bust or not, my article today will focus on how one, from the perspective of whether he/she is a student, employee, employer or a business man/investor, can be prepared in whatever direction the AI bubble will end up heading to. First, as a student, choosing the right AI skills is the key. Students need to ensure that

whatever they are learning remains relevant after the bubble fades. They need to build a strong foundation in problem-solving, digital literacy and domain expertise alongside AI knowledge. Students who invest in adaptable, future-proof skills will be the professionals leading tomorrow. Students need to avoid only exploring AI consumer apps, but also learning about anything that relates to how AI works and how it can transform industries in the future.

Secondly, as an employee, the need to protect themselves by future-proofing their careers is paramount. Developing transferable skills that includes but is not limited to adaptability, critical thinking and communication while also learning how to integrate AI into their work is vital for their success.

Employees need to position themselves as resources within their respective organisation who can apply AI into their work in order to remain valuable no matter how the market shifts.

Thirdly, as employers, it is important to invest and deploy AI into areas that clearly improves efficiency, productivity and/or customer experience. Employers must avoid

Students need to avoid only exploring AI consumer apps, but also learning about anything that relates to how AI works and how it can transform industries in the future

locking their companies into unproven AI technologies that not only wastes enormous amount of money, but productivity and their competitiveness as well.

Lastly, for businessmen and investors, avoiding the temptation of chasing the hottest AI stocks and putting/investing money into startups with big, bold and beautiful promises is important. Because history has shown already that hype driven investing can end badly.

I am not only referring to dot-com era but in almost every other fashion and trends. Instead, investors and businessmen alike should focus on companies and AI stocks with proven revenue models, practical use cases and a clear path to profitability.

Let me emphasise that one cannot avoid the pain that can result (especially if invested on the same) if the bust would ultimately occur. Following the notes that I have shared above and being prepared would lessen the impact (if any) and keep one ahead of the pain.

You lose nothing to be prepared, but almost everything to riding the AI wave without a life jacket. Until we catch up again next week, stay safe and vigilant.

CHINESE AGENCY
ASSIGNS AAA RATING
TO RUSSIAN ENERGY
GIANT GAZPROM

Chinese rating agency CSCI Pengyuan assigned its highest AAA rating to US-blacklisted Russian oil and gas giant Gazprom on Friday, paving the way for any debt issuance in China's domestic bond market.

Western rating agencies including Moody's, Fitch and S&P Global Ratings have withdrawn credit ratings for Gazprom and many other Russian companies due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Accessing China's bond market, the world's second-biggest, would be a boon for Russian companies cut off from Western financing due to sanctions.

"The high rating from an independent foreign rating agency confirms Gazprom's financial stability and indicates the company's strong creditworthiness", Gazprom Deputy CEO Famil Sadygov said in a statement.

The long-term issuer rating on Gazprom will not necessarily lead to an imminent issuance of yuan-denominated bonds by the Russian company, said a source with direct knowledge of the situation.

But the rating paves the way for potential yuan bond issuance in the future, though that requires approval from Chinese regulators who will take geopolitical risks into consideration, said the source, who was not authorised to speak publicly.

The "AAA" rating for Gazprom with a stable outlook came just days after Russia and China gave their blessings to the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline, a massive gas project linking the two countries as they seek to reduce economic reliance on the West. Gazprom made the announcement about the project during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to China last week.

"Gazprom's rating reflects its strategic importance and legal ties to the Russian government", CSCI Pengyuan said.

The firm's credit profile "is underpinned by its strong business profile as one of the market leaders in the global oil and gas industry and its important position in Russia's energy market", it added. Late last month, senior Chinese financial regulators told top Russian energy executives that they would support their companies' plans to sell y uan "panda bonds", the Financial Times reported.

Companies typically obtain credit ratings before selling bonds in China. Such issuer ratings can also be used in transactions with Chinese banks and in deals with Chinese counterparties, said the source with knowledge of the situation.

In an analysis of Gazprom's outlook alongside its rating decision, CSCI Pengyuan cited "high geopolitical risks" associated with the energy company, which was sanctioned by the US following Russia's war in Ukraine in 2022.

"Sanctions and geopolitical disruptions have adversely affected the company's operations, leading to a decline in gas export revenue and volume in 2023", the rating agency said.

"As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, operational uncertainties persist".

Last month, CSCI Pengyuan also assigned a "AAA" credit rating to Zarubezhneft, a mid-scale upstream oil company fully owned by the Russian Federation. — Reuters

A new confidence anchor
for investment, growth

THERE are moments when policy, confidence and purpose align to change an economy's trajectory. Oman is experiencing such a moment.

On August 31, in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) launched the Golden Residency programme for investors, alongside initiatives to recognise high-performing companies and digitise key services. These are catalysts: they cut friction and give the private sector a clearer runway.

The timing is propitious. Over the last eight months, Oman's macro signals have improved. Preliminary statistics show real GDP expanded by 2.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, with non-oil activities up 4.4 per cent — the kind of broad-based growth that spreads opportunity through supply chains, services and skills. This is the profile envisaged by Oman Vision 2040: steady, diversified and resilient.

External confidence has strengthened. In April, S&P affirmed Oman's investment-grade rating at BBB- with a stable outlook. In July, Moody's upgraded the Sultanate of Oman to Baa3.

And late last year, Fitch revised its outlook to Positive while affirming BB+. Ratings are not an end in themselves, but they narrow risk premiums and reduce the cost of capital for companies that plan to invest, expand and hire.

Capital is already responding. Foreign direct investment stock surpassed RO 30.6 billion by the end of the first quarter of 2025, up from roughly RO 26.7 billion by the third quarter of 2024. Inflows in Q1 alone reached about RO 5.2 billion.

This signals confidence in our regulatory regime, project pipeline and execution credibility — conditions under which private initiative thrives and jobs are created.

The Golden Residency provides a practical platform for the next leg of growth. By offering five- and ten-year residency options linked to



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clearly defined investment pathways — company formation, job creation, eligible real estate, government bonds or bank deposits — the programme gives investors the continuity they value. Family inclusion strengthens our proposition: serious founders make long-term decisions about place and schooling, not just spreadsheets.

The programme's broader value is strategic clarity. It says Oman intends to be a base where talent and capital can build, not merely a venue for transactions. It complements capital-market reforms, industrial policy and trade facilitation; and aligns with our geography: logistics corridors connecting Asia, Africa and the Middle East; a tourism offer grounded in safety and authenticity; and an energy system transitioning towards lower-carbon competitiveness.

What does this mean for jobs and productivity? Long-tenor

residency anchors management teams in Oman, shortening the distance between decision and deployment.

Factories are commissioned faster, hotel concepts move from design to opening, digital platforms scale regionally from a Muscat base and procurement localises.

By encouraging company formation and partnerships, the programme should raise the share of value-added retained in the economy and lift productivity.

We should also recognise the dynamism across our enterprise landscape. The non-oil upswing is coming from services and industry — manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, education and creative sectors. Omani entrepreneurs — men and women — are building firms with export potential.

The priority now is to turn today's density of small and medium enterprises into tomorrow's mid-cap champions. As investors settle in and scale, they will demand local content, design, maintenance and digital solutions — the bridge to higher-quality jobs for young Omanis.

To unlock the full dividend of the new residency framework, execution must be fast and predictable. Investors should experience an end-to-end journey — from eligibility to approvals to aftercare — on an integrated platform, with service-level standards that match leading FDI destinations.

Transparent criteria, published processing times and dedicated account managers will convert interest into investment. Equally, timely data on jobs, exports and local content will allow policy to iterate in real time.

With that in mind — and in the spirit of Oman Vision 2040's pillars of a competitive economy, human capital and responsible institutions — I offer six practical recommendations to take Oman's business ecosystem to the next level:

1) **One-stop investor journey:** Consolidate Golden Residency applications, company set-up, licensing and utilities

onboarding into a single digital workflow with guaranteed timelines and a dedicated case manager for qualifying projects.

2) **Scale-up finance:** Use improved sovereign credit standing to catalyse collateral-light growth finance through local banks — backed by export credit and guarantee schemes — for firms expanding capacity, adopting technology or entering new markets.

3) **Local-content accelerators:** Embed procurement incentives for consortia that include Omani SMEs in manufacturing, tourism and logistics. Publish annual targets for local content and supplier development by sector and reward firms that exceed them.

4) **Skills for the pipeline:** With industry and universities, roll out short, stackable programmes in project controls, smart-construction tech, advanced maintenance, HSE and data — areas with immediate absorption in active projects.

5) **Investor aftercare:** Establish an Investor Success Office to troubleshoot barriers, monitor milestones and facilitate reinvestment. Retained and expanded FDI is often the fastest job creator.

6) **Evidence, openly shared:** Publish quarterly dashboards on residency approvals, investment committed, jobs created and export growth, with governorate and sector breakdowns. Open data helps private firms build services and sharpens competition among support providers.

Oman's advantage has always been a blend of pragmatism and trust, anchored in our traditions and open to the world. The last eight months have shown what disciplined policy and partnership can deliver: firmer growth dynamics, revived investment-grade standing and rising investor interest.

If we execute with the clarity and consistency that define Oman Vision 2040, we will widen opportunity for our people, deepen our export base and write the next chapter of sustainable growth — built in Oman, for Oman.

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A close-up of a hand on a black steering wheel, with a white car visible in the background. The car has a red and white striped pattern on its front. The background is a solid green color.

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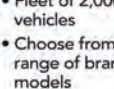
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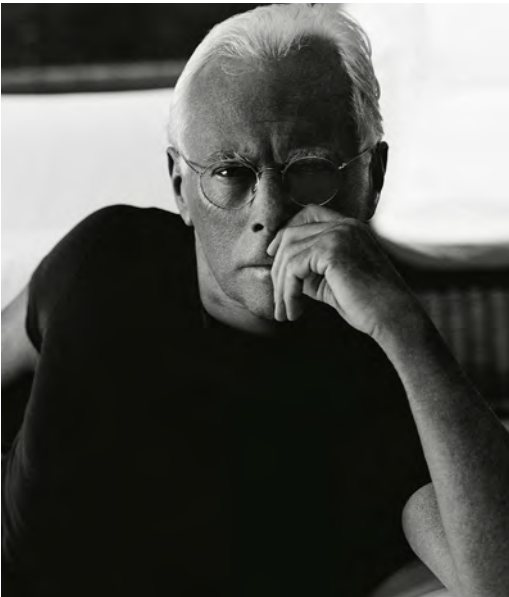
LIFESTYLE

CHASING GIANTS: THE ANNUAL MIGRATION OF WHALE SHARKS IN OMAN

> 20

FASHION

Giorgio Armani to be laid to rest in private funeral



THE NEWS of Armani's death at the age of 91 ignited an outpouring of international grief, with tributes pouring in from Hollywood celebrities and ordinary people alike. Armani passed away on Thursday after a remarkable five-decade career in which he crafted a business empire that ranged from haute couture to home furnishings, with his name becoming synonymous with elegant simplicity.

His wooden casket, adorned with white roses, was displayed at a vast exhibition space within his company's Milan headquarters, traditionally the venue for catwalk shows, surrounded by dozens of small lanterns that created a serene atmosphere.

On Sunday, family and close friends also gathered to pay homage in anticipation of Monday's private funeral, where Armani was laid to rest next to his parents and older brother in a family chapel in Rivalta, approximately 100 km (62 miles) southeast of Milan and near his birthplace, Piacenza.

In a mark of respect, Armani stores were closed in the afternoon as a gesture of mourning. "We will say goodbye to him as a family and then move forward as he would have wanted. Everything is ready to remember him with his fashion", his partner Pantaleo Dell'Orco was quoted as saying by Corriere della Sera.

In the days leading up to his passing, Armani was actively engaged in preparing a retrospective exhibition and a fashion show to commemorate 50 years in business during Milan Fashion Week later in September.

At the time of his death, no changes to the programme had been announced by his company. The announcement of his passing on Thursday reverberated around the world, inciting heartfelt tributes from celebrities, sports icons, business leaders and the general public. Over the weekend, thousands visited to pay their respects to the man affectionately known as "Re Giorgio" (King Giorgio), as his casket lay in repose at the Milan headquarters. "I feel very saddened, because he was a man of great style who has undoubtedly left an indelible mark... We are definitely losing a great, truly great talent", remarked Milan resident Alessandra Torchio on Monday, encapsulating the profound impact Armani had on the fashion world and beyond. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A model displays a creation from the Chuxiong Yi Embroidery collection during China Fashion week in Beijing. — AFP



ROYAL WATCH

Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales smiles upon arrival to visit the Natural History Museum's newly transformed gardens, in London. — AFP



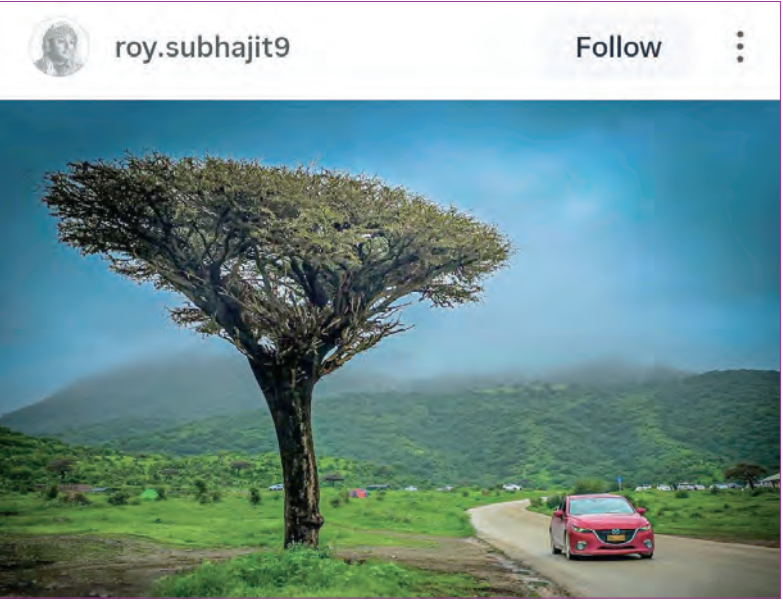
ENTERTAINMENT

US singer-songwriter Ariana Grande accepts the award for "Brighter Days Ahead" on stage during the MTV Video Music Awards at UBS Arena in Elmont, New York. — AFP

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‘Strangest’ dinosaur covered in spiked armoury: scientists



A DINOSAUR dubbed one of the “strangest” ever boasted an elaborate armoury of long bony spikes and a tail weapon, according to findings published in the science journal Nature.

Spicomellus, which roamed the earth 165 million years ago, is the world’s oldest ankylosaur, a herbivorous group of dinosaurs known for their tank-like bodies.

Palaeontologists’ image of Spicomellus was based on a single rib bone found in Morocco in 2019.

But newly discovered remains have helped scientists form a clearer picture of the unusual dinosaur.

The fossils showed it had bony spikes fused onto all of its ribs — something never seen before in any other vertebrate species living or extinct, according to the research published on Wednesday.

Richard Butler, a

professor at the University of Birmingham and the project co-lead, called the fossils an “incredibly significant discovery”.

“Spicomellus is one of the strangest dinosaurs that we’ve ever discovered”, he said.

Professor Susannah Maidment of London’s Natural History Museum said the armour evolved initially for defence purposes but was probably used later to attract mates and show off to rivals.

“Spicomellus had a diversity of plates and spikes extending from all over its body, including metre-long neck spikes, huge upwards-projecting spikes over the hips and a whole range of long, blade-like spikes, pieces of armour made up of two long spikes and plates down the shoulder”, she said.

“We’ve never seen anything like this in any animal before”. — AFP



Vienna State Opera opens season with free, all-star gala concert

NO DRESS code, no stiff atmosphere and no entry fees: Thousands flocked to a Viennese park on Sunday as the Vienna State Opera opened its 2025-26 season with a star-studded open-air gala concert for the first time.

The free, open-air concert was the state opera’s latest effort to “open the house to all — especially new

tonight, but we’re eager to learn — and I like classical music, I played when I was a kid”, Jeremy Gregoire, a Canadian ice hockey player who recently moved to Vienna, said ahead of the concert.

Embassy employee Thanthida Helbardt, 43, who originally hails from Thailand, said she learned about the concert online and decided to give it a try.

Even before the concert began,

its illustrious history and extraordinary performances. Established in 1869, this magnificent opera house has been the stage for numerous landmark premieres, including Richard Strauss’s groundbreaking “Salome” and Gustav Mahler’s poignant “Das Lied von der Erde.” Renowned for its opulent architecture, intricate decorations and extraordinary acoustics, the venue draws opera



listeners”, it said in a statement.

Among the world-class singers performing were Latvian mezzo-soprano Elina Garanca, German tenor Jonas Kaufmann, Finnish soprano Camilla Nylund and French tenor Benjamin Bernheim.

“I’m very happy that I can be a part of such an event because our goal is to communicate with people, regardless their race, nationality, the political situation and the cultural differences”, Garanca said.

“I find it really great that the house makes a step towards the audience instead of all the time waiting for them”, said the world-renowned mezzo. She hoped the gala concert would become a “yearly tradition”, she said.

Many visitors sat on picnic blankets or chairs as they enjoyed the concert with friends and family.

‘EAGER TO LEARN’
“We have no clue who is performing

the packed park was closed to more visitors meaning many would be concert-goers were turned away for security reasons.

The concert included audience favourites from famous operas such as Puccini’s “Tosca”, Wagner and Mozart’s “Le Nozze di Figaro” as well as Strauss pieces.

Austrian broadcaster ORF aired the concert with a one-hour delay on Sunday evening.

The gala also marks the Vienna State Opera’s 70th anniversary.

In recent years, opera houses across the globe have tried different measures to draw in new opera-goers to a world that is often considered high-brow and old-fashioned.

A CORNERSTONE OF AUSTRIA
The Vienna State Opera, a cornerstone of Austria’s cultural heritage, continues to enchant and engage audiences with

enthusiasts from around the world.

This season, the Vienna State Opera presents a dynamic repertoire that spans the operatic canon, featuring beloved classics like Verdi’s emotionally charged “La Traviata” and Puccini’s heart-wrenching “La Bohème,” while also embracing contemporary works that push artistic boundaries.

The opera house is also home to the esteemed Vienna Philharmonic, which performs regularly, enhancing its stature as a leading cultural institution.

Beyond the performances, the Vienna State Opera offers guided tours, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in its breathtaking interiors and delve into its rich history. As it celebrates over 150 years of artistic excellence, the Vienna State Opera stands proudly as a symbol of both operatic tradition and ongoing innovation in the performing arts. — AFP

FEATURES



PHOTOS BY MOHAMMED AL RANDI

phenomenon of upwelling, when nutrient-rich waters rise to the surface. This dynamic process creates an ideal environment for plankton blooms, forming the main diet of whale sharks.

As filter feeders, these colossal fish swim with their mouths wide open, passing thousands of litres of water through their gills each day to capture the tiny organisms and small fish that sustain their impressive size — whale sharks can grow up to 18 metres in length and weigh over 15 tonnes.

Despite their enormous size, whale sharks are renowned for their peaceful nature, posing no threat to humans. Instead, they are inquisitive and gentle, often

to any photographer’s portfolio. Local photographer Mohammed al Randi beautifully expressed this sentiment, saying, “I documented these shots from the depths of the Omani sea during a journey that lasted for hours and what a beautiful encounter it was, for this visitor returns to us every year”. Globally, whale sharks are classified as an endangered species on the IUCN Red List, making their presence in Omani waters of great scientific and environmental importance. Both local and international organisations are now tracking them via satellite to study their migration patterns and protect them from threats such as accidental fishing and ship collisions. Their seasonal return not



described by Omani divers and visitors as approaching calmly, as if sharing the underwater journey without fear or aggression.

This inviting disposition adds to the allure of these leviathans, making swimming alongside them an unforgettable experience.

Every year, the Daymaniyat Islands become a favourite destination for divers from Oman and around the globe. Local dive centres offer specialised trips, ensuring visitors have the chance to swim with these magnificent creatures.

Omani divers routinely recount their experiences as life-changing, praising the awe-inspiring moments spent next to such majestic beings. “It felt as if time stood still”, shared one enthusiast.

“Being in the presence of a whale shark fills you with a profound sense of connection to the ocean”. However, swimming with whale sharks is not entirely unregulated.

Strict rules ensure the safety and well-being of these creatures: divers must maintain a respectful distance, avoid any physical contact and refrain from sudden movements that might disturb the animals.

These guidelines foster a harmonious environment enabling both humans and whale sharks to coexist in peace.

The presence of whale sharks has also cemented Oman’s status as a prime destination for international photographers seeking to capture rare glimpses of these remarkable animals.

Their unique patterns of white spots and stripes create a natural mosaic, providing stunning visuals

only boosts eco-tourism but also attracts travellers specifically eager to immerse themselves in the oceanic wonders that Oman has to offer.

Social media is abuzz with testimonials from those who have embarked on these aquatic adventures. Comments on travel forums and review sites echo the sentiment that swimming with these gentle giants is not only exhilarating but also deeply moving. One traveller shared, “The experience of swimming alongside a whale shark is surreal — it puts everything into perspective. You realise you’re just a small part of this incredible ecosystem”. Another added, “This is an absolute must-do when visiting Oman. The beauty of these creatures and the thrill of the sea are unmatched”. As the yearly migration unfolds, the narrative surrounding the whale sharks of Oman becomes clearer: it is an annual marine festival that seamlessly blends science, tourism and human experience. This journey opens a window into the mysteries of the deep sea and reaffirms Oman’s status as a global ecological destination for adventure seekers and wildlife photographers alike.

If you’re searching for a unique travel experience that encapsulates the wonders of marine life, Oman’s whale shark migration should be at the top of your list. The combination of serene waters, breathtaking encounters and a sense of interconnectedness with nature makes this an adventure you won’t want to miss. As you embark on this remarkable journey, you’ll find yourself transformed by the experience, instilled with a deeper appreciation for the ocean and its majestic inhabitants. Don’t let this incredible opportunity pass you by — the gentle giants of the sea await your discovery.

CHASING GIANTS: THE ANNUAL MIGRATION OF WHALE SHARKS IN OMAN

ARWA AL HASHIMI

WITH THE ARRIVAL of summer and the warming waters of the Arabian Sea, Oman’s coasts witness a fascinating natural event eagerly awaited by ocean enthusiasts every year: the migration of the whale shark, the largest fish in the world and one of the friendliest to humans.

This incredible journey, which typically extends from June to September or October, sees these gentle giants flock to the coastal waters, turning the Daymaniyat Islands and the Musandam coast into a stunning natural stage teeming with marine life.

The secret behind this seasonal migration lies in the