

HM OPENS NEW INTERNAL SECURITY SERVICE 'S HEADQUARTERS IN DHOFAR



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, on Wednesday graced the inauguration of the New Headquarters of the Internal Security Service in Dhofar Governorate.

HIS MAJESTY
TOURS THE
SERVICE'S NEW
HEADQUARTERS

INSPECTS ITS
FACILITIES AND
REVIEWS THE
CAPABILITIES

HIS MAJESTY
BRIEFED ON
SERVICE'S NATIONAL
DUTIES

CONSOLIDATES
THE FOUNDATIONS
OF SECURITY,
STABILITY

HM COMMENDS
ONGOING
EFFORTS IN
MODERNISATION

KEEPING PACE
WITH EMERGING
SECURITY
CHALLENGES

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK, the Supreme Commander, on Wednesday graced the inauguration of the New Headquarters of the Internal Security Service in Dhofar Governorate.

Upon the arrival of His Majesty's motorcade, he was received by Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service, and a number of senior officers. His Majesty then graciously unveiled the commemorative plaque, marking the official inauguration of the Service's headquarters.

Thereafter, His Majesty toured the new headquarters, inspecting its facilities and capabilities, and was briefed on the most significant national duties and responsibilities entrusted to it in consolidating the foundations of security and stability. His Majesty commended the ongoing efforts in modernisation, development and keeping pace with emerging challenges across all areas of security work.

At the conclusion of the visit, His Majesty graciously posed for commemorative photographs with a number of the Service's personnel, in lasting memory of this noble occasion. — ONA

SEE ALSO P2

Oman, UN call for efforts to de-escalate regional tensions

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received a telephone call on Wednesday from António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

During the call, the two sides discussed regional developments and their humanitarian repercussions. They also highlighted the efforts being made to de-escalate tensions and create conducive conditions for the return of dialogue and diplomatic endeavours, contributing to addressing outstanding issues through political means.

The UN Secretary-General praised the constructive role undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman in supporting diplomatic endeavours and bridging views, emphasising the importance of continued coordination and consultation between the two sides to enhance de-escalation efforts and support the humanitarian response.

For his part, the foreign minister affirmed the importance of continuing to intensify diplomatic efforts, exercising wisdom and restraint, and giving scope to political and diplomatic endeavours to contain tension and address issues of concern, thereby consolidating security, stability, and peace in the region.

Meanwhile, Iran said on Wednesday it had attacked 10 ships near the Strait of Hormuz after the US sank five Iranian oil tankers, in the biggest declared wave of tit-for-tat attacks on shipping by both sides since the start of the six-month-old war.

The attacks in and around the vital waterway sent the price of oil surging, with the international Brent crude benchmark breaching \$100 a barrel for the first time since July. The politically sensitive average retail price of diesel fuel in the United States hit a fresh all-time high above \$5.94 a gallon.

Iran also said it had fired ballistic missiles at a base used by US forces in Jordan. Attacks by both sides since the end of August have shattered a month of relative calm, with the US and Iran hitting military, shipping and energy assets. — Agencies



Water is sprayed on the oil tanker New Andros, which was struck by a drone in Iraqi territorial waters, on Wednesday.

— Reuters

OMAN

HIS MAJESTY OPENS INTERNAL SECURITY SERVICE HQ



SALALAH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, on Wednesday graced the inauguration of the New Headquarters of the Internal Security Service in Dhofar Governorate. Upon the arrival of His Majesty's motorcade, he was received by Lt Gen Said bin Hilal al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service, and a number of senior officers. — **ONA**



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SHORT TAKES



Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi holds talks with Jonathan Burke.

OMAN, US REVIEW COOPERATION, REGIONAL ISSUES

MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, on Wednesday held a meeting with Jonathan Burke, Assistant Secretary of the US Department of the Treasury for Counter Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes.

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America. They discussed ways to enhance cooperation and coordination between the two countries on various issues of common interest. The meeting also touched on current regional developments.

The meeting was attended by the US Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman and officials from the two countries. — **ONA**

CALL FOR GREATER USE OF GEOGRAPHIC TECHNOLOGIES



The conference calls for establishing a specialised association for employing geographic technologies.

SALALAH: The 11th International Conference on Recent Advances in Geographic Information, organised by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the University of Technology Malaysia (UTM) and Dhofar University, recommended developing the second phase of the Sultanate of Oman's Digital Educational Atlas, promoting innovation in modern geographic technologies, and integrating efforts among entities concerned with geographic data, academic institutions, and the private sector.

The conference also recommended stimulating scientific research and innovation in the fields of modern geographic technologies, developing specialised competencies and skills through advanced training programmes, and benefiting from the conference's outcomes and ideas to develop geographic information applications and employ them in the educational field and across various sectors.

Furthermore, the conference called for studying the establishment of a specialised Omani association for employing geographic technologies for educational purposes, contributing to enhancing the exchange of expertise and knowledge, supporting initiatives and projects related to spatial technologies, and expanding the scope of utilising them in developing the educational process.

In a speech delivered at the event, Dr Badr bin Hamoud al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, affirmed that geography is no longer merely a taught map, but has evolved beyond that into applications, models, and modern technologies where multiple sciences and fields of knowledge intersect.

He pointed out the importance of employing these fields in honing students' skills, developing their capabilities, and making use of geographic data and technologies to foresee the future while rendering information more accessible and efficient for various sectors. — **ONA**

KING ABDULLAH RECEIVES MAJLIS ASH'SHURA CHIEF

AMMAN: King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, received Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, along with his accompanying delegation, in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

During the meeting, the Jordanian King affirmed the profundity of the deep-rooted fraternal relations binding the Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the shared resolve to further consolidate them and expand cooperation across a wide range of fields.

The meeting was attended by Crown Prince Al Hussein bin



King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein holds talks with Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali.

Abdullah II; Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates; Eng Alaa Al Batayneh, Director of the Office of the King of Jordan;

Mazen al Qadi, Speaker of the House of Representatives; and the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. — **ONA**

Unlicensed employment tops list of labour violations

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

THE Ministry of Labour has recorded 9,910 violations across six categories as part of its efforts to regulate the labour market and protect the business environment, with the employment of non-Omani workers in unauthorised professions accounting for the largest share of violations.

According to data issued by the ministry, 4,859 cases were recorded involving the employment of a non-Omani worker in a profession not authorised for the employer. The figure represents the highest number among the six categories monitored by the ministry.

The data highlight the ministry's continued efforts to strengthen compliance with labour regulations and ensure that workers are employed in accordance with the permits and professional classifications approved for establishments.

The second-highest category involved 1,952 cases of workers leaving their authorised employer, while 1,117 cases were recorded for employing non-Omani workers



The Ministry of Labour's monitoring efforts are intended to support a more organised and transparent labour market while ensuring that private sector establishments comply with the regulations governing employment.

The second-highest category involved 1,952 cases of workers leaving their authorised employer, while 1,117 cases were recorded for employing non-Omani workers

in professions designated for Omanisation. The figures also included 962 cases related to failure to return a worker to his or her country or allowing the worker to continue working after the expiry of the employment contract for more than 60 days.

In addition, the ministry recorded 786 cases involving the employment of non-Omani workers without a valid work permit, while 234 cases involved employing a non-Omani worker by an employer who was not authorised to employ the worker.

The 4,859 cases involving

employment in unauthorised professions account for the majority of cases.

A total of 1,117 violations were recorded in cases where non-Omani workers were employed in professions designated for Omanis.

The figure highlights the importance of compliance with Omanisation policies and the regulations governing the employment of national workers in targeted occupations.

Another category recorded by the ministry involved 962 cases where workers were not returned to their countries or continued working after the expiry of their employment contracts for more than 60 days.

The ministry also recorded 786 cases involving the employment of non-Omani workers without a work permit.

Work permits serve as one of the main mechanisms for regulating the entry and employment of non-Omani workers and ensuring that their employment corresponds with the approved occupation and employer.

A further 234 cases involved workers being employed by an employer who was not authorised to employ them.

100 jobs offered at Disability Employment Fair

SALALAH: The Ministry of Labour, represented by the Directorate-General of Labour in Dhofar Governorate, organised a job opportunities fair designated for persons with disabilities among the governorate's citizens at the World of Continents Exhibition in the Ittin area in the Wilayat of Salalah.

The opening of the fair was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Hamoud al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs.

The fair witnessed the offering of more than 100 job opportunities across a number of fields, with the participation of 50 private sector establishments and companies, reflecting the growing partnership between the Ministry of Labour and the private sector in providing practical career pathways, enabling persons with disabilities to benefit from their abilities and qualifications, and integrating into the labour market on the basis of competence and equal opportunity.

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



The fair provides job-seekers with the opportunity to meet with representatives of participating companies and establishments.

participation of 50 establishments in the fair represents an important indicator of the growing awareness within the private sector regarding the importance of employing persons with disabilities and capitalising on their potential. He noted that the fair is not limited to displaying job opportunities,

but aims to create direct engagement between job-seekers and employers, thereby contributing to transitioning from the stage of searching for opportunities to achieving actual employment.

He explained that offering more than 100 job opportunities underscores the Ministry of Labour's keenness to create diverse pathways for persons with disabilities that align with their qualifications, capabilities, and labour market needs, pointing out that partnership with the private sector represents a fundamental pillar in the success of these efforts and in transforming job opportunities into a tangible reality.

The fair provides job-seekers with the opportunity to meet directly with representatives of participating companies and establishments and conduct job interviews on-site, thereby streamlining the application and search stages, enhancing prospects for direct employment, and introducing employers to the talents of persons with disabilities and the qualifications and skills they possess that can be utilised across various sectors. — **ONA**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The third edition of the Forum was themed 'Empowerment and Sustainability'.

Finance forum highlights innovation, digital transformation

SUHAR: The Al Batinah North branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) organised the third edition of the Finance and Insurance Forum under the theme 'Empowerment and Sustainability'.

The forum was held under the auspices of Sulaiman bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Deputy Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, and attended by Their Excellencies, along with representatives of government and private institutions operating in Oman's financial, financing and insurance sectors.

Zaher bin Khasif al Harrasi, Chairman of the Finance and Insurance Committee at the OCCI Al Batinah North branch, said the third edition builds on the objectives of previous editions, with the first focusing on empowering private sector institutions and enhancing their sustainability, and the second on strengthening partnership and integration, while addressing the legislative environment, digital transformation and innovative financing.

He noted that the finance and insurance sector is undergoing rapid transformation driven by modern technologies, artificial intelligence and data analysis, creating opportunities to develop services, improve operational efficiency, accelerate procedures and enhance the customer experience.

Al Harasi stressed the importance of keeping pace with these developments within frameworks that promote stability, preparedness and sustainability. He said the forum seeks to strengthen the role of innovation and financial technology in developing the financial and insurance sector and improving its operational efficiency. It also aims to enhance the readiness of financial institutions and insurance companies to respond to crises and disasters through smart solutions, improved risk management and business continuity systems.

The forum also seeks to create a business environment conducive to investment and innovation and support the growth and sustainability of the private sector.

The programme featured dialogue sessions and specialised working papers, including a main session on the role of the financial sector in supporting the national economy.

Another session, titled 'The Financial Sector in the Era of Digital Transformation: Innovative Legislation, Smart Investment, and Sustainable Growth', examined key changes in the sector and the requirements for developing the regulatory and investment environment.

Dr Mughith Shawkat, Executive Adviser at the Islamic Research and Training Institute, presented a paper on the role of Islamic finance and investment in supporting economic transformation in Oman. He highlighted the importance of expanding the role of capital markets, funds and sukuk in financing projects and stimulating economic activity. — ONA

Unesco discusses the future of education amidst AI

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, is participating in Unesco Digital Learning Week 2026 which is held under the theme "Education in the Age of AI: Facts, Frictions, Frontiers". The event discusses the future of education amidst the rapid developments of artificial intelligence.

The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman was represented by Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs. Hosted by Unesco at its headquarters in Paris and running through 11 September, the week aims to promote



Oman delegation at the meeting was represented by Majid bin Said al Bahri.

a global dialogue on leveraging technology in education. The event addresses issues of privacy, information safety, equity, and inclusion, in addition to the role of the teacher and learner in digital environments, alongside reviewing international experiences in formulating educational policies that support digital transformation.

The Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs highlighted the Sultanate of Oman's experience in developing digital education infrastructure and enhancing the use of AI. — ONA

Farmer cultivates 100,000 wild thyme seedlings

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

FROM THE high mountain peaks where wild thyme grows naturally, an ambitious agricultural experiment has taken root in Wadi Al Sahtan, Wilayat of Al Rustaq, Al Batinah South Governorate.

Omani farmer Khalfan bin Hamoud al Khatri and his sons have successfully transferred the wild plant from its natural mountain habitat to a cultivated environment with similar conditions. What began four years ago with just three seedlings has grown into a promising project with around 100,000 seedlings, highlighting the potential of Oman's native plants as an agricultural resource.

The idea began during a visit to the mountains of Wadi Al Sahtan, where the family decided to bring three thyme seedlings back to their farm and experiment with cultivating them outside their natural habitat.

Hamoud bin Khalfan al Khatri, owner of the thyme cultivation project, said the initial effort was simply an experiment to see whether the mountain plant could adapt to a cultivated environment.

"We brought three seedlings from the mountains to the farm. It was initially just an idea and an experiment that we wanted to try," he said.

The experiment gradually developed as the family learned more about the plant's requirements and created conditions that closely resemble its natural habitat.



What began four years ago with just three seedlings has grown into a promising project with around 100,000 seedlings.

Propagation has been carried out through ground layering, allowing the plants to establish and produce new growth. The process required continuous care and effort, particularly in adapting the plant to its new environment.

The family initially tried growing the thyme at home, but the plants did not perform well. They later moved them to the

current farm location, where the conditions proved more suitable.

The project currently covers more than one and a half acres, with plans to expand the cultivated area as demand increases. The family is also working to increase production and develop additional marketing channels.

The cultivated plants, according to the project owners,

have retained the characteristics of the wild thyme, including its taste and aroma.

"It has the same quality, characteristics, taste and aroma. In fact, the plants here may benefit from greater care and attention than those growing in the mountains," Hamoud said.

Khalfan al Khatri said the family's experience had demonstrated the plant's ability to adapt when suitable conditions were provided.

Thyme also has a long tradition of use among local communities, forming part of the natural and cultural heritage associated with Oman's mountain areas. The family said the plant continues to be valued for its traditional uses.

Beyond cultivation, the project has developed into a small agricultural enterprise. The thyme is marketed through local markets, selected shops and social media, while direct sales to visitors provide another outlet.

"We market it in local markets, provide it to some shops and promote it through social media. We also receive visitors at the farm every day," Khalfan said.

The farm has gradually become an attraction for visitors from different parts of Oman and from abroad, adding an agricultural tourism dimension to the project.

"There has been strong interest in the farm, and it has become a tourist destination. We receive visitors from Oman and from outside the country," he said.

With plans for further expansion, the project represents a promising example of how Oman's plant heritage can be preserved and transformed into a sustainable agricultural venture.

Gaming industry opens new creative and career pathways for youth

MUSCAT: Electronic gaming is emerging as a growing creative and competitive field among young people, offering opportunities that extend beyond entertainment to programming, design, content creation and game development.

Electronic sports can help develop concentration, decision-making, teamwork and quick-response skills, while gaming also encourages creativity through digital characters, environments and visual content.

Al Muhanad bin Hamdan al Wahaibi, a programmer and electronic game developer, said teamwork and competition are among the main factors attracting young people to electronic sports. Many players begin by playing at home with friends before developing their skills and confidence and moving on to local and international tournaments.

He noted that tournaments allow players to demonstrate their abilities, interact with other players and improve through continuous competition, while prizes and incentives have also become important attractions.

Al Wahaibi said young people can pursue professional gaming or focus on content creation and live streaming. Professional gaming requires continuous training, discipline and the ability to handle competitive pressure, while content creation demands consistency and the ability to produce engaging material. Content creators can generate income through views, advertising, endorsements and sponsorships.

He added that gaming can also serve as a gateway to technical and creative careers. Players who



Oman's gaming industry is experiencing gradual growth, with growing interest in games and digital experiences reflecting Omani culture.

develop an understanding of game mechanisms can move into programming, game design, 3D modelling, animation, visual effects, storytelling, user-interface design and other fields.

The gaming industry also has

applications beyond entertainment, particularly through virtual reality, which is increasingly used in training, education, tourism and simulation. Such technologies can also support construction, architecture and real estate by creating interactive virtual representations of buildings, cities and future projects.

Al Wahaibi said the industry brings together several disciplines, including design, illustration, animation, programming, sound design, artificial intelligence and storytelling. This makes gaming an important platform for developing talent across technical and creative fields. He believes the sector has the potential to become one of Oman's creative industries and take Omani content to global audiences.

"The gaming industry is indeed capable of contributing to the export

of Omani content to global markets while preserving Omani identity and presenting it in a modern style that players around the world can understand," he said.

He noted that Oman's gaming industry is experiencing gradual growth, with growing interest in games and digital experiences reflecting Omani culture. However, the sector still needs greater investment and support. Challenges include limited budgets, unclear project requirements and tight implementation deadlines.

He said game development involves several stages, including planning, programming, 3D modelling, testing and continuous development. Greater investment in local studios, specialised funding programmes and incubators would therefore help strengthen the sector. — ONA

SHORTTAKES



The initiative sought to enhance language skills and scout talents in writing and literary expression.

WINNERS OF AL BATINAH SOUTH STUDENT LITERARY CONTEST FETED

AL RUSTAQ: The Al Batinah South branch of the Omani Society for Writers and Literati, in cooperation with the Directorate-General of Education in the governorate, held a ceremony to honour students who won the Literary Creativity Competition for schools in Al Batinah South.

The competition was organised to promote literary and cultural activities among school students, nurture emerging talents and encourage creativity in various forms of literary expression.

The ceremony marked the culmination of joint efforts by the Omani Society for Writers and Literati and the Directorate-General of Education to highlight student creativity in fields including short stories, classical poetry, literary essays and poetry recitation.

The initiative also sought to enhance students' language skills and identify promising talents in writing and literary expression.

The event featured a number of segments, including a visual presentation documenting the various stages of the competition, from the evaluation process to the participating literary works. An artistic and literary operetta was also presented, reflecting the students' passion for language, literature and creativity.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South, honoured the students who secured first place in the various competition categories. Members of the judging committee and institutions that contributed to the success of the initiative were also honoured. — **ONA**

Schools to introduce new streams this academic year

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

THE Ministry of Education will expand specialised study programmes in a number of schools across the Sultanate of Oman during the current academic year, introducing new pathways in engineering, industrial studies, travel and tourism, information technology and business administration.

The initiative is part of the ministry's efforts to align school education with changing labour market requirements and equip students with professional and technical skills to support their future academic and career choices.

The specialised pathways will give students greater opportunities to explore fields linked to Oman's economic and technological development, while strengthening the connection between school education, higher education and employment.

The ministry has increasingly focused on developing post-basic education pathways and aligning them with labour market needs. The specialised programmes are designed to provide students with practical knowledge and skills that can prepare them for further studies at higher education institutions or suitable employment opportunities.

Engineering and industrial specialisations will form an important part of the expanded programmes, giving students opportunities to develop practical and technical skills at an early stage of their education.

The programmes will place greater emphasis on applied learning, problem-solving and the practical application of scientific knowledge. These skills are becoming increasingly important as Oman develops its industrial and technological sectors and seeks to prepare national competencies for emerging areas of the economy.

The ministry has previously outlined plans to introduce engineering and industrial



The initiative is part of the ministry's efforts to align school education with changing labour market requirements.

Oman expands specialised study programmes in schools as new engineering, tourism and IT streams are introduced. New specialised pathways to broaden study options for students

pursuing digital transformation initiatives in school education, including the adoption of advanced educational systems and electronic services.

Business administration will also feature among the specialised pathways. The programme will introduce students to areas including management, planning, organisation, entrepreneurship and business operations.

Such knowledge can help students understand workplace requirements while encouraging them to consider entrepreneurship and private-sector careers. The ministry has previously indicated that business administration and information technology specialisations would continue to be offered in selected schools as part of efforts to broaden post-basic education options.

The expansion of specialised programmes comes as Oman continues to develop its school education system in line with future needs and national development priorities.

The ministry is placing increasing emphasis on equipping students with knowledge and skills that can support their transition to higher education and the labour market.

Recent curriculum reforms have also included updates to subjects such as information technology, visual arts, physical and health education and other areas, as part of efforts to keep school education aligned with future skills and sustainable development requirements.

The additional specialised pathways are expected to give students greater flexibility in choosing their educational direction while enabling schools to respond more effectively to the changing needs of the economy.

The effectiveness of the programmes will depend on their implementation, including the availability of qualified teaching staff, appropriate facilities and stronger links with higher education institutions and relevant economic sectors.

specialisations in selected schools, alongside programmes in business administration and information technology.

Travel and tourism is another area included in the specialised pathways. The sector is an important component of Oman's economic diversification efforts and requires qualified personnel with skills in customer service, communication, destination management and tourism operations.

Introducing tourism-related studies at school level will give students an early understanding of the sector and its career opportunities, while raising awareness of Oman's cultural, historical and natural attractions and the contribution of tourism to local economies and employment.

Information technology remains a key area in preparing students for a rapidly changing digital environment.

The expansion of IT-related programmes comes as digital transformation continues to reshape education, government services and the private sector. A strong foundation in information technology can equip students with skills relevant to areas such as digital services, data management and emerging technologies.

The ministry has also been

Govt services satisfaction survey begins

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) has begun implementing the seventh round of the public opinion survey on satisfaction with government services for the second half of this year, and it will continue until the end of next December.

The survey aims to measure the level of beneficiaries' satisfaction with government services, monitor their experiences in dealing with various government agencies, and provide indicators and statistical data that contribute to supporting efforts to develop services, improve their quality, and raise the efficiency of government performance.

The survey targets those who deal with government agencies during the first half of this year, including citizens, residents, private sector institutions, and government agencies.

The sample is selected according to specific statistical criteria to ensure representation of different categories of beneficiaries and to obtain results that reflect their level of satisfaction and their actual



The survey aims to measure the level of beneficiaries' satisfaction with government services.

experiences with the services provided.

The survey addresses a number of aspects related to the beneficiary experience, including ease of access to the service, clarity of information and procedures, speed of transaction completion, overall service efficiency, effectiveness of communication channels, and the level of digital transformation in service delivery.

The implementation of the survey comes within the framework of the efforts undertaken by the NCSI to provide statistical indicators on the level of beneficiaries' satisfaction with government services, which helps government

agencies to identify areas for improvement and monitor the level of service quality, in line with the objectives of the Oman Vision 2040 in developing the government sector and enhancing the efficiency of institutional performance.

Mahfouz bin Salem al Musharafi, Director of the Public Opinion Measurement Department at the NCSI, said that the survey represents an important statistical tool for understanding the experience of beneficiaries with government services and converting their opinions and experiences into measurable indicators that contribute to helping government agencies monitor the level of customer satisfaction and identify priorities and areas of improvement that can be focused on in developing services and improving their quality and efficiency.

He added that the participation of beneficiaries and expressing their opinions objectively is a key element in enhancing the accuracy and reliability of the results, stressing that the indicators resulting from the survey seek to reflect the reality of customer experience. — **ONA**

TENDERS NOTICE

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

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

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
593/2026/MAFWR/HQ-42	Provision of four (4) Omani workers to provide gardening services at the Ministry's headquarters buildings in Al Khuwair (Buildings 1 and 2), and one (4) Omani worker to manage the Najd Agricultural Area, for a period of three years.	Tuesday 1/9/2026	Sunday 20/9/2026	Sunday 11/10/2026	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First, Second, Third, and Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
597/2026/MAFWR/HQ-43	Rehabilitation and maintenance works of Central Laboratory for Animal Health at Saal	Wednesday 2/9/2026	Tuesday 22/9/2026	Monday 12/10/2026	Specialized companies registered with Fourth grade	(10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
600/2026/MAFWR/HQ-44	Construction and Maintenance of the proposed Najd- Agricultural Development Building at Plot No. 1 - Phase (A) - Thurmat - Saih al Khairat	Wednesday 2/9/2026	Tuesday 22/9/2026	Monday 12/10/2026	Specialized companies registered with First grade	(60/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

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

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

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

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

- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number; +968.24402244 or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Syrian White Helmets rescuers inspect the damage at the site of an explosion in the town of Samarda in Idlib province. — AFP

14 KILLED IN BLAST AT ARMS DEPOT IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

DAMASCUS: An explosion at an arms depot in Syria’s northwestern Idlib province killed 14 people on Wednesday, the local health department said, without specifying the cause of the blast. “The toll from the explosion in a temporary storage for collecting weapons and war remnants near the city of Sarmada... registered 14 killed and 11 injured in a preliminary count,” the Idlib health department said.

The Syrian defence ministry’s media department earlier told state television that several of the ministry’s personnel had been wounded in the incident. Syrian media broadcast images showing large columns of smoke rising from the site of the blast, while rescuers rushed to the area.

The incident marks the second deadly blast in Idlib this month, after a car carrying ammunition exploded, killing five in the city of Binnish. A government source said at the time that the car was owned by a weapons trader, while authorities did not announce the cause of the blast. There have been sporadic blasts in Idlib involving ammunition-laden cars or arms depots. — AFP

NEPAL TURNS TO DRONES TO DELIVER FLOOD RELIEF



A DJI FlyCart 100 drone prepares to take off for an aid delivery mission in Devighat, Nuwakot District, Nepal. — Reuters

DEVIGHAT: With roads and bridges destroyed and helicopters busy with search and rescue operations after last month’s devastating floods, Nepal’s army is turning to drones to deliver relief to displaced people. At least 1,367 people are confirmed dead and more than 5,000 are missing in Nepal.

“Most of our helicopters are busy with rescue operations. There is no other way to send food, essentials, medicine and fuel, except for drones, which are the best option to utilise, and we should prioritise them more,” said Santosh Budhathoki, a contract drone pilot for the Nepal army. Drones are used over distances of up to 3 to 4 kilometres and can haul up to 60 kilogrammes at a time and they are already making an impact for affected communities in dire need of aid, he said.

The army is now making around 10-16 aid deliveries a day with a fleet of four DJI FlyCart 100 drones, all donated from China as part of a recent aid package. In addition to aid delivery, drones have also been used to move the bodies of flood victims in some affected areas, while reconnaissance drones have also been heavily used in search and rescue operations. — Reuters

DEADLIEST OUTBREAK

Bangladesh measles crisis kills 1,000 children



The death toll from measles in Bangladesh has topped 1,000 children since March, health officials said, admitting that failures in a vaccination drive may have fuelled the outbreak. The South Asian nation of 170 million has recorded 1,002 deaths and 187,484 infections among children, making this year’s outbreak the country’s deadliest in decades. Measles is highly contagious, spreading through coughs and sneezes, and has no specific treatment once caught. — AFP

JAPAN’S MAIN OPPN PARTY COLLAPSES AFTER EIGHT MONTHS

TOKYO: Japan’s fragmented political opposition sank into deeper disarray on Wednesday as its main party announced that it would disband, following a failed effort to counter Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi’s highly popular administration. The Centrist Reform Alliance will terminate its activities, its chief Junya Ogawa told a press conference, ending an eight-month attempt to create an effective political counterweight to Takaichi’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). “Once we

settle outstanding payments, we will dissolve the party,” he said.

The Centrist party was formed hastily in January as an attempt to merge two major opposition groups and build a stronger, more unified movement against Takaichi. Those groups were the Komeito — the LDP’s former coalition partner — and the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan. But the new party suffered a crushing defeat in February’s general election, securing only 49 seats in the 465-seat lower house, and unseating

more than 100 of its own incumbents seeking re-elections. The LDP added more than 100 seats, winning 316 in total.

Despite the party’s collapse, its members are expected to form a lower-house caucus to continue pushing for a viable alternative to the LDP, Ogawa said. Pacifist Komeito ended its 26-year coalition with the LDP in October last year, saying its partner had refused to strengthen regulations on political donations. — AFP

UK PM defends WB trade ban after Israel’s retaliation

UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham defended on Wednesday his government’s ban on trade with illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank after Israel retaliated against London-led Western sanctions over settler violence. Israel ordered the closure of Britain’s consulate in Jerusalem among other measures in response to the sanctions move on Tuesday by 12 countries, which condemned violence against Palestinians in the territory.

“Where people are being bullied out of their homes, intimidated, we will always stand with the underdog and take what action we can to support them,” Burnham told parliament. Countries including Britain, Canada and France announced they would sanction trade with Israeli settlements in the West Bank, following a surge in settler attacks against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. Responding, Israel said it would also expel British representatives at a centre monitoring the US-brokered ceasefire plan in Gaza, bar British training for Palestinian Authority forces and ban 12 Britons, mostly members of parliament, from visiting the country.

“In this difficult and dangerous world, Britain has to stand for something,” added Burnham, saying the UK was standing for “fairness against injustice”. Burnham also defended the timing of the move after



Protesters hold placards and a Palestinian flag outside the Houses of Parliament in central London. — AFP

Where people are being bullied out of their homes, intimidated, we will always stand with the underdog and take what action we can to support them. In this difficult and dangerous world, Britain has to stand for something.

ANDY BURNHAM
UK PRIME MINISTER

critics suggested it could embolden the Israeli far right ahead of elections next month. He said it was necessary because the tender for 1,200 homes due to be built as part of Israel’s new E1 settlement “concludes” before the polls on October 27.

Earlier on Wednesday, UK foreign minister Ed Miliband condemned as “regrettable and damaging” Israel’s decision to order the closure of the consulate. “We anticipated this might happen because we saw other countries, the Dutch, for example, who had announced sanctions, who had seen these reprisals from Israel. I think they’re regrettable and damaging,” Miliband said.

Miliband rejected suggestions that the sanctions would impact intelligence cooperation with Israel. “I was very clear yesterday that we do believe in working with our Israeli partners when it comes to

the threats they face from Iran,” he added. Miliband also dismissed the criticism of the sanctions by Britain’s chief rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis. On Tuesday, Mirvis called the measures “little more than political flag-bearing”. He said it was “truly a dark day for British Jews”, predicting that the measures “will succeed only in bolstering the very extremism they seek to target”. Wednesday’s announcement is evidence of a toughening of Britain’s approach towards Israel under Burnham, who succeeded the more centrist Keir Starmer as UK premier in July.

Separately, Israel’s Foreign Minister Gideon Saar on Wednesday said his country was “not planning to expel or to deport anyone from Gaza Strip” during a visit to Slovenia for the opening of an Israeli embassy. If someone wants to leave Gaza “from his own will, and there is a country which is ready to accept him, as it happens from any conflict area in the world, we will not oppose that,” he added.

Several Israeli cabinet members have spoken of plans to remove all two million people from war-ravaged Gaza, although they largely cast the initiative as voluntary, saying that Palestinians want to leave and are prevented by the group Hamas. Saar was speaking at a press conference in Ljubljana ahead of the opening of an Israeli embassy there as Slovenia looks to reset diplomatic ties with Israel. — AFP

INDONESIAN WILDFIRE EMISSIONS SURGE TO WORLD’S HIGHEST

JAKARTA: Indonesia is facing a surge in emissions from wildfires burning through parched stretches of forest and peatland on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra, with carbon dioxide readings currently the highest in the world, data showed. Fire emissions from Indonesia from September 1 to 7 reached 19.7 million metric tonnes, overtaking Russia this week and making up more than a third of the global total, according to Fire Emissions Watch, a portal developed by the European Union’s Copernicus climate monitoring service.

Indonesia is one of the world’s most fire-prone countries, but as “super-El Nino” weather conditions drive up temperatures and cause punishing droughts, the country is battling what authorities say is its most intense wildfire season in 11 years. “We do expect to see some fires across the region at this time of year, but with El Nino, it clearly just gives a big enhancement to them,” said Mark Parrington, senior scientist at the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service in Bonn. “It’s much drier, it’s hotter, and when there’s ignition, these fires burn in a far more extreme way.”

From September 1 to 7, fire emission intensity exceeded 1,500 kg/sq km, more than 10 times the Russian level, with the highest concentrations in Kalimantan in Indonesia’s part of Borneo and eastern parts of Sumatra, Copernicus data showed on Wednesday. — Reuters



MASSIVE ATTACK

Russia downs 596 drones overnight



Russian forces shot down 596 Ukrainian drones during the night, the defence ministry said, a day after President Vladimir Putin held talks with his US counterpart on ways to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. The attacks left four people dead, including a child, in Novorossiysk in the southern Krasnodar region, governor Veniamin Kondratyev said. “Our military repelled a massive overnight enemy drone attack against the region, with Novorossiysk hit the hardest,” he said. — AFP

CONTINUOUS ESCALATION

Lebanon reports fresh Israeli strikes



An Israeli strike killed one person in Lebanon’s south, the state agency said, in a region where Israel has intensified attacks despite a ceasefire. An Israeli drone targeted a motorcyclist in Zebdine in the Nabatieh region, killing a man. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concern about the Israeli “escalation” in southern Lebanon, according to his spokesperson. Nearly 400 Lebanese figures called for army to be deployed in Nabatieh. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Passengers sit with their luggage outside Terminal 3 of London Heathrow airport, west of London. — AFP

CYBERATTACK RULED OUT IN UK AIR TRAFFIC GLITCH

LONDON: UK air travellers faced more misery on Wednesday with nearly 300 flights scrapped across the country, as Britain's air traffic control service scrambled to recover from a technical glitch which it ruled out as a cyberattack. After 1,746 flights were cancelled on the first day of the outage on Tuesday another 291 were axed on Wednesday — the majority to and from London Heathrow, the UK's biggest and one of Europe's busiest airports — according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

The head of the National Air Traffic Services (NATS), Martin Rolfe, said "we have at this point ruled out cyber" activity as a cause. "We don't believe it was a cyberattack," he told BBC Radio. Rolfe said NATS will be doing a "very, very thorough" investigation into what exactly caused the incident. National carrier British Airways said it had to cancel more than 190 flights during the incident, which it said affected "tens of thousands of our customers". — AFP

SPAIN ENDURED HOTTEST SUMMER



Mainland Spain endured its hottest summer since records began in 1961, with an unprecedented 61 heatwave days across June, July and August, national weather agency AEMET said. The average temperature for those three months was 24.5°C, 0.3°C above the previous record from 2025 and 2.4°C higher than the 1991-2020 reference period, AEMET said in a statement. A string of exceptional summer heatwaves have smashed temperature records across Europe this year, which scientists say human-driven climate change has intensified and lengthened. AEMET said the 10 hottest summers on record in Spain have all come in the 21st century. — AFP

SERBIA DISSOLVES PARLIAMENT, CALLS OCTOBER 25 SNAP VOTE

BELGRADE: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic on Wednesday dissolved parliament and called snap parliamentary elections for October 25, a key demand of the country's long-running protest movement. Parliamentary elections were not due until December 2027, but Vucic called the early vote after nearly two years of anti-government demonstrations. "I am calling parliamentary elections for October 25," Vucic said in a nationally televised address.

An anti-graft protest movement

has gripped the country since the November 2024 collapse of a railway station canopy in Novi Sad, which killed 16 people. The tragedy was widely blamed on entrenched corruption and fuelled demonstrators' anger, drawing some of the largest crowds since the fall of strongman Slobodan Milosevic in 2000.

Initial calls for a transparent investigation evolved into demands for snap elections, which Vucic had repeatedly promised, but without setting a date. "We have seen major

turbulence on the domestic political scene over the past year and a half," Vucic said. "We need election results that will clearly reflect the will of the people," he added.

The protest movement, emerging from student-led university blockades, has demanded early elections since May 2025 and is preparing its own electoral list. It poses the biggest challenge yet to nationalist Vucic, 56, who has dominated Serbian politics for more than a decade as prime minister or president. — AFP

With large crowds attending, Norway lays King Harald

NORWAY'S King Harald V was laid to rest on Wednesday, in a series of ceremonies marking the culmination of 13 days of national mourning following his death at the age of 89. Harald, a reformer who spent more than three decades on the throne after gradually emerging from the shadow of his popular and charismatic father, died at a time of multiple crises for the Norwegian royal family. A procession on foot from the royal palace to Oslo Cathedral started at 1200 local time, punctuated by the sound of cannons being fired from Oslo's Akershus fortress.

Tens of thousands of people lined the capital's Karl Johan Avenue, police said, with crowds falling completely silent as the coffin passed. The procession was followed by a church ceremony starting at 13:00 local time (11:00 GMT). It began with a nationwide minute of silence. Among the guests were Britain's Prince William and Princess Anne; Japan's Crown Prince Akishino and Crown Princess Kiko; Spain's King Felipe, Queen Letizia and Queen Sofia; Sweden's royal family; and Denmark's King Frederik and Queen Mary.

Heads of state from around the world were invited. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky arrived in Oslo late on Tuesday, meeting with Norway's prime minister to discuss the war with Russia, officials from both sides said. He also marched in the procession. When he left the cathedral, the crowds clapped and cheered for him. Representing the United States was Allison Hooker, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Norwegian government said.



The funeral procession with Norway's King Harald's coffin proceeds from Oslo Cathedral towards Akershus Fortress, in Oslo. — Reuters

Tens of thousands of people lined the capital's Karl Johan Avenue, police said, with crowds falling completely silent as the coffin passed. The procession was followed by a church ceremony starting at 13:00 local time. It began with a nationwide minute of silence

Queen Mette-Marit, 53, the commoner wife of Norway's new King Haakon VIII, attended the funeral but travelled by car with Harald's widow, Queen Sonja, 89. Mette-Marit is recovering from a lung transplant she underwent in June. Last week, she had to cancel plans to attend her husband's oath ceremony in parliament due to complications following her operation. Her son, Marius Borg Hoiby, from a relationship before her marriage to Haakon, was at the funeral despite being under house arrest and wearing an ankle monitor after his conviction for rape and domestic violence. He is appealing the sentence.

After Wednesday's service, four F-35 fighter jets flew over the cathedral, with one of them breaking out to symbolically

mark the king's passing. A smaller procession, walking to the rhythm of Frederic Chopin's Funeral March, accompanied the coffin to the royal crypt at Akershus Fortress overlooking Oslo harbour. There, Harald's coffin will be placed in a sarcophagus, alongside those of his parents. When Haakon emerges from the crypt, the national mourning period will formally end and flags that have flown at half-mast since Harald's death will be raised. Church bells across Norway will ring for an hour.

Norwegian police said securing the funeral has been the largest planned operation in the force's history, with large crowds gathering in central Oslo. School children have been allowed to skip classes to attend the funeral. — Reuters

Germany's Merz exchanges heated parliamentary talks with AfD

BERLIN: German Chancellor Friedrich Merz labelled the far-right AfD's demand for mass "remigration" a form of "ethnic cleansing by skin colour and origin" in a parliamentary exchange on Wednesday. Three days after the AfD scored a crushing election victory over his centre-right CDU in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt, Merz and AfD co-leader Alice Weidel sharply attacked each other in the assembly.

Merz took aim at the Alternative for Germany party's demand for mass deportations of rejected asylum seekers and people arriving via irregular channels. "The word 'remigration' is nothing other than a synonym for ethnic cleansing," Merz said about the AfD's flagship policy. "Remigration is nothing other than ethnic cleansing by skin colour and origin," he added to howls of protest from AfD deputies in the Bundestag.

The AfD took almost 44 per cent of the vote in Sunday's election, against 17 per cent for the CDU. The AfD, which fell three seats short of an absolute majority, said it was now in talks with other

“The word ‘remigration’ is nothing other than a synonym for ethnic cleansing. Remigration is nothing other than ethnic cleansing by skin colour and origin.”

FRIEDRICH MERZ



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (C) delivers his speech at the Bundestag in Berlin. — AFP

groups and MPs in an effort to form a state government.

Weidel took to the lectern first, declaring that the days of Merz's coalition "are over". People wanted

"a change of course in politics at last, and they don't want 'business as usual,'" she said. She also denounced the government's immigration policy, saying it had made Germany unsafe.

"German citizens have to live with the daily consequences of mass migration," she said. "With knife violence everyday, attacks on trains and in stations, with run-down and threatening cityscapes."

Hitting back, Merz said the AfD's immigration policy would massively impact the labour market. "Not a single care home could work operate, not a single hospital, not a single restaurant," he said. Merz also accused the Moscow-friendly AfD of contributing to what he said were Russian efforts to "destabilise" Germany, following a foiled drone attack at Leipzig airport last month Berlin blamed on Russia. "There has been nothing from you, Mrs Weidel, on what happened on August 4 at Leipzig airport," he said. "You are part of the problem we have here in Germany."

Noisy AfD lawmakers who often heckled Merz drew the ire of parliamentary speaker Julia Klöckner. "We aren't on a football pitch here; save that for the weekend," she said. "If this kind of behaviour happens again, I will have you thrown out." — AFP

OPINION

Fatalism wearing the clothes of realism



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

SOME years ago I stood on a TEDx stage and asked a room to close their eyes and picture Oman in 2100. Then I gave them the projections. A rise of around 4°C for this country, against 1.3°C the world had definitely warmed by then. Cyclones every five years, with Shaheen already on record as the first to cross the Sea of Oman from the northeast. A meter of sea level rise, which I measured against my own body on the stage, because a meter is deceptively simple to nod at until it is standing beside someone. Last week my social media feed was filled with variations of a single sentence: the world is going to cross 1.5°C. It held for a few days. Then a new outrage arrived, another crisis took its place, and the report underneath it disappeared within the week. The report is the United Nations Environment Programme's Limiting Overshoot. Exceeding 1.5°C is now widely assessed as unavoidable, and what remains open is the height of the peak and the length of the stay. Even the most optimistic case, in which every national plan is delivered alongside additional net zero targets, centres on around 1.8°C. Under

current policies, the median is closer to 2.6°C by the end of the century. For years we spoke about 1.5°C as though it were a finish line. Stay below it and there is still something to save; cross it and the language becomes far less certain. The framing was useful while the goal was to mobilise action around a single figure, but it turns against us the moment people accept that the figure will be passed. A global average is a number the whole planet shares and almost nowhere experiences. It is an accounting device, assembled from readings taken in places that have nothing in common. This country has never been given the world's number. Our projections have always run ahead of it, which puts the distance now being contested internationally well inside a gap we have already been quoted. Corals endure heat until they cannot. A reef does not receive a fraction of a degree. It holds through a summer, or it bleaches, and bleaching is not a slower version of surviving; the animal expels the algae it lives on and stands there white for weeks, and whether it comes back depends on how soon the next

The finish line was useful because it gave us somewhere to run toward. Crossing it settles nothing about the ground beyond, where choices still determine how high the peak climbs, how long we sit at it, and how much of the damage people and reefs are asked to absorb

summer arrives. Warm water is not a rising line to a reef. It is a series of separate verdicts, delivered every year, in a place where the margin was always thin. The careful gradations we argue over globally reach that shore as a single outcome, and the shore does not get to see the graph. Fatalism can sound remarkably similar to realism once a target begins to slip out of reach. It sounds like clarity, because hope has become unfashionable. The target is gone, the politics failed, the damage is underway, and the fractions left over are academic. Once 1.5°C becomes shorthand for failure, we start treating the distance between 1.8°C and 2.6°C as though it carried no consequences, at exactly the point where it carries almost everything. The finish line was useful because it gave us somewhere to run toward. Crossing it settles nothing about the ground beyond, where choices still determine how high the peak climbs, how long we sit at it, and how much of the damage people and reefs are asked to absorb. Off this coast, a good deal of it was decided by emissions we finished releasing years ago.

THE ALGORITHMS POWERING SOCIAL FEEDS? AMUSING OR ADDICTIVE?

OLIVER HOTHAM

Social media algorithms are a powerful feature of online life, serving up content to users based on their browsing habits or personal data. Australia could soon give citizens the choice to opt out of them under new legislation that also threatens big tech companies with fines if they fail to protect young users from harmful content. Open TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or other platforms and you'll see a scrolling feed or recommendations bar showing content targeted to your interests. These posts are selected for users based on programming rules called algorithms that predict what you will engage with — whether it's something you like, or that riles you. Broadly speaking, the recommendations are based on what the machine knows about you: what you've interacted with or posted about online, or information such as your age, job, location and marital status. Social media giants usually keep the coding behind these algorithms — the so-called "secret sauce" that drives traffic to their platforms — closely guarded. It's a familiar pattern for many — open your phone on a break and before you know it an hour has passed and you're still scrolling. That's by design, researchers and activists say. "These platforms have engineered addictive features that keep children and adults online longer than they intend, often at the expense of sleep, wellbeing and real-world connection," Mark Williams, honorary professor of cognitive neuroscience at Macquarie University, said. In a landmark trial in Los Angeles this year, tech giants were accused of creating "addiction machines". Experts point to strategies companies use to encourage scrolling, like never-ending feeds, intermittent rewards and time-sensitive notifications. "This unpredictability triggers the dopamine system, creating a compulsive cycle of seeking and anticipation," University of Leicester lecturer Quynh Hoang wrote. This can create dependence similar to substance addiction, research published in online medical journal Cureus last year found. By pushing people to content they respond to emotionally, many say social media can drive us into "rabbit holes" that are difficult to escape. The recommendations "are designed to hold our attention, and too often that means privileging provocative and extreme content because outrage drives engagement and engagement drives profit", Steven Roberts at Monash University said. — AFP

The BRICS at 20

TWENTY years ago this month, the foreign ministers of Brazil, Russia, India, and China held the first meeting of the BRICS. Since then, the grouping has been formalised—the first BRIC summit took place in June 2009—and expanded, with South Africa joining in 2011 and several more countries later coming on board, either as full members or official partners. Today, the BRICS represents a highly consequential experiment in international cooperation, which epitomises the gradual rebalancing of global power away from the West and the emergence of a multipolar order.

Few acronyms have undergone as dramatic an evolution as the BRICS. Coined by Jim O'Neill, then of Goldman Sachs, in 2001 to encapsulate four fast-growing emerging markets, the "BRICS" grouping has developed into the BRICS, an 11-country political and economic coalition and an increasingly influential voice for the Global South. Since adding Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates to its ranks in 2024-25, the BRICS accounts for nearly half of the world's population and about 40% of global GDP (in purchasing-power-parity terms). By contrast, the G7 accounts for less than 10% of the global population and less than 30% of world GDP. Whereas the BRICS' share of the global economy continues to grow, the pace of productivity and economic growth in advanced economies has been declining steadily since the 1990s. This economic reversal is increasingly matched in the geopolitical domain, with Western global dominance giving way to a more diffuse distribution of power and influence. Amid this transformation—the likes of which occur only once every 50–100 years—the BRICS has challenged the assumption that global governance should remain centred on the Western-led institutions established after World War II.



BRAHMA CHELLANEY

The author is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research

The BRICS has normalised an idea that once seemed impossible: that emerging economies can cooperate with one another, build their own institutions, and change how the international order is organised.

For non-Western countries, the BRICS represents a hedge against rising economic and geopolitical uncertainty—generated, not least, by a United States seemingly bent on withdrawing from global leadership—and an institutional platform for advancing strategic autonomy and broadening economic cooperation. Small wonder there has been such enthusiasm for joining: more than three dozen countries have formally applied or expressed interest in becoming members, including Türkiye, a NATO member, and Bahrain, the primary operational hub for US naval forces in the Middle East. The BRICS also has ten "partner countries"—Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam—which can participate in summits. This framework helps to expand the BRICS' network for cooperation and strengthen its ability to represent the Global South, without jeopardising cohesion. The BRICS is much more than a symbolic grouping—merely a message to the world that the era of Western dominance is coming to an end. The grouping has made tangible progress on institution-building. The New Development Bank (NDB) is the first multilateral development bank with global scope conceived and led solely by emerging economies, with the founding BRICS members holding equal shares and voting rights. By contrast, the US is the largest shareholder at both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, where it holds effective veto power. Unlike these US-led institutions, the NDB does not attach political conditions to its infrastructure financing, allowing borrowers to retain greater policy autonomy. The BRICS has also been working to reduce vulnerabilities within the international financial system. Contrary to speculation, a single BRICS currency akin to the euro is not on the agenda. Instead, the upcoming summit will focus on expanding trade settlement in national currencies, improving interoperability among members'

digital-payment systems, linking central-bank digital currencies, and developing alternative cross-border payment infrastructure. The goal is not to upend the global financial system and supplant the US dollar, which still accounts for about 57 per cent of foreign-exchange reserves held by central banks worldwide, but rather to strengthen resilience against external financial shocks. As much progress as the BRICS has made over the last 20 years, however, the grouping also faces significant headwinds, rooted not least in its exceptional internal diversity. The BRICS includes liberal democracies and authoritarian states, leading energy exporters and major energy importers, manufacturing powers and commodity economies. The grouping also includes geopolitical rivals: China and India, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Egypt and Ethiopia. Divisions exist even among its founding members, with Brazil and India generally advocating reform of existing international institutions, while China and Russia seek to challenge the US-led world order. Diversity brings different ideas and advantages to the table, and ideological uniformity and close strategic alignment are not necessarily prerequisites to cooperation. As the group convenes in New Delhi for its 18th summit, one might ask whether it has lived up to its original promise. If that promise was to establish a monetary union, a single market, or a tightly integrated political alliance, the answer is plainly no. But if it was to reshape international relations, broaden the space available to emerging economies on the world stage, strengthen South-South cooperation, and increase pressure for reform of existing international institutions, the BRICS has exceeded expectations. More fundamentally, the BRICS has normalised an idea that once seemed impossible: that emerging economies can cooperate with one another, build their own institutions, and change how the international order is organised. That is no small feat. © Project Syndicate, 2026

Witnessing the waste of human potential



SONIA AMBROSIO

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

THE playbook of integrity, honour and consciousness is getting outdated. Some individuals are fiercely challenging these principles. Humanity is under the sway of wicked interests.

Powerful entities and influential figures prioritise their own interests, often ignoring or minimising others’ struggles. This mindset is characterised by malice, selfishness, and a deliberate intention to exploit vulnerabilities. These individuals have social and psychological motivations that conflict with the common good, as they seek to maximise their profits.

It seems that evil has been unleashed across the globe. The absence of humility, shame, and moral principles increasingly overshadows our entire existence. In addition, global challenges such as natural disasters, genocide, poverty, horrific crimes, and blatant lies overwhelm people.

Falsehoods in plain sight are used to assert dominance and can exhaust critical thinking abilities. We have seen historical examples such as Nazi propaganda, the ‘Big Lie,’ and major falsehoods used to build support for military actions.

The voices of those affected are barely heard. Their cries are muffled by propaganda that suggests suffering purifies the human soul. The entire situation is framed as a hardship mechanism that ultimately leads to benefit and growth.

The banality of evil infiltrates communication, fostering deep distrust. We

rely on automated phrases and clichés that carry no moral weight or accountability. We live in a world where the real seems unreal and vice versa. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly challenging to differentiate the corn from the chaff.

Modern media disseminate every crisis in real time, accompanied by analyses, fabrication, and disinformation. This barrage of content makes the destruction of both human lives and the environment feel more immediate and difficult to escape, while algorithms profit from outrage.

As greed devastates our natural world and threatens humanity’s connections, are we confronting karma’s cycle on our evolutionary and awakening journey?

It feels as though our lives are part of a simulation hypothesis, almost like we are characters in a video game. From a philosophical perspective, I perceive that we are in the process of creating a computer-generated world reminiscent of science fiction. As our reality becomes increasingly intertwined with computer simulations, statistics are generating new realities that overshadow the original base.

Our modern life resembles a safe cocoon where people play the same repetitive roles and willingly submit to metric manipulation. Simultaneously, in our isolation, we perceive ourselves as self-expressive, yet in truth, we are complicit in corporate systems.

Some people can see how malevolence has been normalised, yet they choose to maintain the pretence because alternative solutions

Modern media disseminate every crisis in real time, accompanied by analyses, fabrication, and disinformation. This barrage of content makes the destruction of both human lives and the environment feel more immediate and difficult to escape, while algorithms profit from outrage

seem unattainable; the source code dictates our choices and our fate.

We may be drifting away from reality, becoming trapped in a predictable system. We are growing into clusters of human neurons in laboratories that aim to develop biological computers.

We are on a path towards losing our integrity, which could potentially lead to societal collapse. This situation arises when the core institutions, shared values, and social contracts that bind a society together begin to fracture. The erosion of trust and failures in the rule of law contribute to a growing sense of disconnection from moral standards among individuals.

Trust takes time to build but can disappear in seconds. In a world increasingly driven by automation and artificial intelligence, human attributes such as genuine honour and conscious empathy are emerging as vital differentiators. Honour is the invisible framework that once helped people know how to act when temptation appeared. It enabled trust to develop before laws or personal ethics; it provided individuals with a sense of worth that was not reliant on digital applause.

Interestingly, the word honour now sounds somewhat theatrical, as if suggesting a Shakespearean tragedy.

Despite short-term successes and prominent voices making headlines, the playbook for integrity is not obsolete; rather, it is undergoing a massive rewrite.

EU HELPS CITIES TIGHTEN SCREWS ON AIRBNB AND HOLIDAY RENTALS

European cities will gain more leeway to curb short-term rentals such as Airbnb under new EU plans that aim to bring down housing costs in tourism hotspots. The European Commission laid out conditions on Wednesday under which local authorities can limit short lets, under a proposal seeking to address Europe’s “housing crisis”.

“Short-term rentals are a part of the problem in many cities,” Dan Jorgensen, the 27-nation bloc’s housing commissioner, told a press conference in Brussels.

Though hugely popular with visitors, short-term lodgings are blamed by residents in many popular travel destinations for depriving locals of apartments for long-term rent and pushing up prices — something holiday let providers dispute.

Cities from New York to Tokyo and Barcelona have imposed or considered restrictions on tourist flats in recent years. But curbs have often been met with court challenges, resulting in legal uncertainty.

The commission’s Affordable Housing Act - which still has to be negotiated with lawmakers and EU countries - aims to provide cities with legal cover, clarifying when authorities can take action without falling foul of the bloc’s single market rules.

“They shouldn’t fear that they can be dragged into court,” Jorgensen said.

Tech lobby group CCIA, whose members include Airbnb, said the rules marked a “clear improvement over the restrict-first-ask-later approach taken by cities to date”. But it complained about the lack of enforcement mechanisms.

“With little provision for independent scrutiny or effective redress, disproportionate restrictions could still be imposed unchallenged and remain in place for years,” it said.

Cities and other relevant authorities would be allowed under the plans to limit holiday rentals as well as the purchase of property for short-term letting purposes in areas deemed “under housing stress”.

The definition applies to districts where the price of an average size home is at least eight times that of locals’ disposable per-capita income.

Before introducing restrictions, authorities must show short-term rentals have had a significant adverse effect on housing affordability or availability for at least three years.

Measures must be non-discriminatory, proportionate and limited to five years.

The legislation will not affect landlords who rent out their own primary residence for short periods, nor rules cities had previously brought in.

More than half of EU city dwellers told a 2025 survey housing affordability was “an immediate and urgent problem”. — AFP

The law that power forgets...

THE glacier gave way, and a wall of ice, rock, and mud descended through valleys along the Tibet-Nepal border. Settlements were engulfed, bridges destroyed, and lives swept away. Scientists have long warned that warming is destabilising Himalayan glaciers and slopes, and have called for better monitoring, early-warning systems, and cross-border sharing of hydrological data.

The tragedy should not be treated as proof of any single negligence. It is, rather, an image of our age: immense human capability expanding within natural systems whose warnings we acknowledge intellectually but resist politically, economically, and psychologically. It is a consequence of arrogance and ignorance.

Human behaviour moves in cycles. Hardship teaches restraint; restraint creates stability; stability enables prosperity; prosperity produces power. Power then encourages the belief that the limits which made it possible have been conquered. Caution begins to look timid; warnings become impediments.

The problem is not an absence of warnings. It is that warnings compete poorly with immediate advantage. The rewards of acceleration are concentrated and visible; the costs are delayed, dispersed, and often transferred to others. Each participant has a rational reason to continue while the system proceeds irrationally towards danger.

The same cycle is visible in political power, even where it is surrounded by a supposedly preventative constitutional architecture.

The American system was founded upon distrust of concentration. James Madison’s answer was structural: “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.” Congress, the presidency, the courts, the states, and the electorate would prevent authority from gathering in one place. The design was ingenious, but its safeguards were never automatic. Executive action is immediate and concentrated; legislative resistance is slow and collective.



A man carries personal belongings on his back as he walks past flood-damaged houses, following deadly flash floods and a mudslide, in Devighat, Nuwakot district, Nepal. — Reuters



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

Elections are therefore indispensable but insufficient. They can remove a ruler without repairing the structure that enabled overreach. Each party condemns executive excess in opposition and discovers its convenience in office. Power accumulates through a constitutional ratchet

The Supreme Court widened this vulnerability in Trump vs United States in 2024, recognising absolute criminal immunity for exercises of a president’s core constitutional powers and presumptive immunity for other official acts. The judgement enlarged the distance between presidential power and personal accountability.

President Donald Trump did not create the systemic weaknesses observed today in the American system. He revealed how they can combine. The more troubling conclusion is that another president could inherit the same enlarged office.

Elections are therefore indispensable but insufficient. They can remove a ruler without repairing the structure that enabled overreach. Each party condemns executive excess in opposition and discovers its convenience in office. Power accumulates through a constitutional ratchet.

For that reason, Democrats should not treat winning the next election as their overriding purpose. Victory should be the means, not the destination. Replacing one personality while preserving the machinery that enabled him merely postpones the next crisis.

They should instead seek a mandate for constitutional repair

that binds the next Democratic president as firmly as any Republican. Reform designed only to disable an opponent is factional strategy. Reform accepted as a restraint upon one’s own side is a constitutional principle.

Some safeguards can be restored through legislation. Emergency powers should expire unless Congress renews them. Disputes over subpoenas and executive spending require expedited judicial review. Inspectors-general, whistleblowers, and the professional civil service need stronger protection. Congress must reclaim responsibilities it has allowed to migrate to the executive.

Other principles may require constitutional entrenchment. A narrow amendment should affirm that official acts do not by themselves place a president beyond criminal responsibility; prohibit self-pardons; and require extraordinary emergency powers and unilateral military action to lapse after a defined period without congressional authorisation.

Human power must be governed by an external nomos through institutions, or an internal one, through conscience and self-restraint. When both fail, another order asserts itself. Markets correct leverage through crashes. Ecosystems correct overuse through collapse. Pathogens exploit openings created by ecological intrusion and global movement. Political systems correct accumulated grievance through rupture.

These are consequences, not moral judgements. That is precisely why human law matters. Law is civilisation’s attempt to correct power before the consequence corrects it for us.

Moderation is not retreat from progress. It is the discipline that allows progress to endure.

Power will always seek expansion. The question is whether wisdom, law, and self-restraint can mature quickly enough to contain it. If we refuse to impose limits while choice remains ours, limits will eventually be imposed upon us. The deeper nomos of nature and human systems is seldom as measured as our own law might have been.

SPORTS

SEVENTEAMS



Oman U17 players during a training session as they prepare for the WAFF U17 Championship in Jordan, scheduled from September 26 to October 5.

OMAN DRAWN WITH JORDAN, UAE IN WAFF U17 CHAMPIONSHIP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

Oman’s national under-17 football team have been drawn alongside hosts Jordan and the United Arab Emirates in Group B of the 13th West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) U17 Championship, following the official draw held on Wednesday.

The tournament will take place in Aqaba, Jordan, from September 26 to October 5, with seven national teams competing for the regional title. Group A comprises Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, while Oman will face Jordan and the UAE in the three-team Group B.

Oman will open their campaign against Jordan on Sunday, September 27, before meeting the UAE on Tuesday, September 29. Both matches will kick off at 7 pm Oman time and will be played at Aqaba Stadium, which will host all matches in the tournament.

The draw presents the young Red Warriors with two important regional tests as they seek to progress to the knockout stage. Under the competition format, teams will play a single round-robin in the group stage, with the top two sides from each group advancing to the semifinals.

The winners of Group A will face the runners-up of Group B, while the Group B winners will meet the runners-up of Group A. The two semifinal winners will advance to the final, scheduled for October 5.

The championship will also provide Oman with valuable competitive experience ahead of the AFC U17 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2027 Qualifiers in November. WAFF has confirmed that its U17 Championship will become a direct qualifying pathway to the continental finals starting with the next edition, when the regional champion will receive an automatic berth. The arrangement will not apply to the 2026 tournament.

Oman continue their daily training sessions under national head coach Ahmed bin Salem Bait Said, with the technical staff intensifying physical and technical preparations to ensure the squad reaches the required level of readiness for the regional competition and the subsequent Asian qualifiers.

Abraj Energy Services win World Oil and Gas Cup

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES (B) secured a major Omani sporting achievement after being crowned champions of the 2026 World Oil and Gas Cup football in Almaty, Kazakhstan, following a thrilling 3-2 victory over hosts Arzax in the final.

The triumph marked the second consecutive year that an Omani company has claimed the prestigious title, reinforcing the strong presence of Omani teams and employees at international sporting events linked to the oil and gas industry.

The second edition of the World Oil and Gas Cup brought together teams representing major energy companies from different countries, with participation extending across three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe. The tournament is played in an elite seven-a-side football format and provides employees and professionals working in the energy sector with an opportunity to compete in a sporting environment while strengthening communication, teamwork and professional relationships away from the pressures of their daily work.

Abraj Energy Services (B) produced a consistently strong performance throughout the competition. The Omani team began its campaign by topping its group after collecting 10 points from a possible 12, securing first place and advancing confidently to the knockout stages.

The team then maintained its momentum in the Round of 16, overcoming a well-organised opponent to progress to the quarterfinals. Abraj continued its disciplined run in the knockout stages, securing another important victory before producing a hard-fought 1-0 win in the semifinals to book its place in the championship decider.

The final against Kazakhstan’s Arzax, one of the strongest sides in the competition and the host team, proved to be the toughest test of the tournament. The two teams exchanged the lead in a closely fought encounter, with the score repeatedly levelled as both sides



Oman’s Abraj Energy Services (B) team beat Kazakhstan’s Arzax 3-2 in the final in Almaty.



“We prepared as a technical staff and as players through training sessions and friendly matches against national companies in Oman, with the aim of improving our skills, level of play and technical performance

ASEEL AL BUSAIDI
ABRAJ PLAYER

battled for control.

With the championship still undecided in the closing stages, Abraj showed composure and determination to score a decisive third goal and secure a dramatic 3-2 victory. The result confirmed the Omani side as champions and brought the trophy back to Oman for the second successive year.

Abraj player Aseel bin Hamad al Busaidi said the title was the result of extensive preparation that began in Oman after the team secured its place in the World Oil and Gas Cup by winning the Oman Oil and Gas competition.

“We prepared as a technical staff and as players through training sessions and friendly matches against national companies in Oman, with the aim of improving our skills, level of play and technical performance,” Al Busaidi said.

He explained that the team continued its preparations after arriving in Almaty, conducting training sessions for two days before the tournament began. The preparations focused on physical and mental readiness, as well as specific technical aspects that the players needed to develop before entering the competition.

TEAM EFFORT

Al Busaidi also praised the administrative and technical staff for their efforts throughout the tournament, saying their careful organisation helped the players settle in quickly and remain focused on their matches.

He expressed his gratitude to Abraj Energy Services’ management for its continued support, as well as the administrative and technical teams and head coach Majid al Harouni. He also praised his teammates for their commitment and performance throughout the competition.

Several players played important roles in Abraj’s successful campaign, including Nasser al Rawahi, Qusay al Rawahi, Hamad al Rawahi and Noufal, while Al Harouni provided the technical and tactical leadership that guided the team throughout the tournament.

The 2026 edition followed the inaugural World Oil and Gas Cup held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2025, when an Omani company also emerged as champion. Abraj’s success in Almaty therefore extended Oman’s winning run in the competition to two consecutive editions.

The achievement represents another positive milestone for Omani companies on the international sporting stage and highlights how sport can bring together employees from the global energy sector, promoting teamwork, friendship and professional connections through healthy competition.

For the Abraj players, however, the significance of the achievement extends beyond the trophy. As Al Busaidi put it, the team returned home proud to have represented Oman, the company and their families on an international stage.

Oman bodybuilders gear up for IFBB World Championships in Spain

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

The national bodybuilders are gearing up for a demanding international campaign that will see the Sultanate of Oman’s leading bodybuilders to vie at the IFBB World Men’s and Women’s Championships 2026 which will take place in Santa Susanna, Spain, from October 29 to November 2.

The world championships will be followed by another major assignment at the Asian Championships and Asian Open Championships which is scheduled to be held in Thailand from November 13 to 16, giving the Omani athletes a busy international programme over a short period.

The Oman Bodybuilding Committee (OBC) has put in place a comprehensive preparation programme aimed at ensuring the athletes reach both championships in optimum physical and competitive condition. The programme includes a series of internal training camps at selected gyms and locations across the Sultanate of Oman, allowing the athletes to maintain their conditioning while working closely with the technical team. Oman head into the international season with considerable confidence following a series of impressive performances on the continental and world stages.

At the last edition of the IFBB World Championships



The IFBB World Men’s and Women’s Championships 2026 will take place in Santa Susanna, Spain, from October 29 to November 2.

in Dammam in the previous year in Saudi Arabia, Oman’s bodybuilders produced a strong show as they had managed to secure seven medals including two silver and five bronze.

The achievement had highlighted the growing competitiveness of Omani athletes against some of the strongest bodybuilders in the world. The team also had enjoyed an

outstanding campaign at the 2025 West Asian Bodybuilding Championship in Bahrain, where Omani competitors captured eight gold medals and helped Oman finish second in the overall standings. The recent achievements in West Asia and at the IFBB World Championships have reflected the steady progress of Omani bodybuilding and the athletes’ ability to compete successfully at the highest level.

Among the leading names expected to be considered for the national team for the upcoming championships are Ahmed al Hadidi, Abdullah al Amri, Ahmed al Hasni, Abdulmajeed al Raisi, veteran athlete Fairouz al Alawi, Ali al Maamari, Salam

al Riyami, Khalid al Shukaili and beside other new faces. In the physique categories, Muneer al Luwaihi is also among the probable representatives. The final selection will be based on the athletes’ readiness and performance during the preparation period as the committee will seek to field a competitive squad for both major events.

The Spanish world championships will also provide an important platform away from the competition stage. The Oman Bodybuilding Committee delegation headed by Imad al Salti will attend the IFBB World Congress which will be held on the sidelines of the global championship.

JINDAL LEAGUE



Action from Seeb's 2-0 victory over Sur in the second round of the Jindal League at Seeb Stadium.

Al Nahda-Seeb
showdown headlines
third round

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

The Jindal League enters its third round on Thursday with an early top of the table clash as Al Nahda host defending champions Seeb at Al Buraimi Sports Complex in the standout fixture of the week. The round opens with three matches on Thursday before four more fixtures are played on Friday, with the standings still tightly packed after an intense start to the 2026-27 season. Four clubs, Seeb, Al Nasr, Oman Club and Al Nahda, have collected maximum points from their opening two matches, while Ibri and Sohar remain close behind with four points each.

Seeb lead the table on goal difference after scoring five goals and conceding once, while Al Nasr sit second, Oman Club third and Al Nahda fourth, all on six points. That makes the Al Nahda-Seeb meeting at 6:55 pm the key fixture of the round, as both sides look to protect their perfect start and make an early statement in the title race.

Seeb arrive in Buraimi with confidence after opening their title defence with a 3-1 win over Bahla before beating Sur 2-0 in the second round. Their attacking rhythm has been one of the early features of the competition, while their defensive control has helped them remain at the summit.

Al Nahda, meanwhile, have also shown strong early character. After beginning with a narrow victory over Al Musannah, they claimed a thrilling 3-2 away win over Al Shabab in the second round. That result lifted morale and confirmed their ability to handle pressure in major fixtures. Playing at home in Buraimi could give them an added push against the champions.

IBRI TAKE ON SAHAM

Thursday's action begins at 5:40 pm when Ibri host Saham at Ibri Sports Complex. Ibri enter the match with four points and strong momentum after their 4-0 win over Samayil, one of the biggest results of the season so far. Saham, on three points, will aim to build on their 1-0 victory over Bahla and prove that their first win was more than a short reaction.

At 8 pm, Samayil meet Fanja at Nizwa Sports Complex in a match carrying different pressures for both sides. Samayil started with a win but suffered a heavy defeat to Ibri in the second round, while Fanja are still looking for their first point after back-to-back defeats left them at the bottom of the table.

The third round continues on Friday with Sur facing Bahla at Sur Sports Complex at 5:30 pm, Al Nasr meeting Al Musannah at Al Saada Sports Complex at 6:55 pm, Sohar hosting Dhofar at Sohar Sports Complex at 8 pm, and Oman Club taking on Al Shabab at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex at 8 pm.



Ben Shelton of the US in action during his quarterfinal against Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in the US Open at Flushing Meadows in New York. — *Imagn Images*

Shelton stuns Alcaraz in late
finish, Sabalenka battles on

NEW YORK: Ben Shelton stunned holder Carlos Alcaraz in an epic US Open quarterfinal that ended at 3:34 am Wednesday, breaking the record for the latest finish in Flushing Meadows history.

The big-hitting Shelton won 6-7 (5/7), 6-1, 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 (10/7) on Arthur Ashe stadium in a 4hr 28min classic, ending the Spaniard's hopes of retaining his title in his first tournament back after a four-month injury absence.

On a marathon day that stretched well into the early hours, two-time defending champion Aryna Sabalenka earlier beat Wimbledon winner Linda Noskova 7-6 (7/1), 3-6, 7-6 (10/7) in another match for the ages.

The Belarusian will now face Jessica Pegula, who had to come from a set down to beat fellow American Emma Navarro 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, for a place in the final.

Shelton will have an all-American last-four meeting with Frances Tiafoe, who came from two sets down to beat compatriot Alex Michelsen 5-7, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3, 7-6 (10/6) in another match that went the full distance.

It ensures a US player will be in the final — no American man has won the US Open since Andy Roddick in 2003.

"It's incredible," said Shelton as he thanked the New York crowd for staying so late.



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka in action during her quarterfinal against Czech Republic's Linda Noskova.

"I always say that this is the greatest sports city in the world. I say that this is the greatest stadium in the world.

"To be here in front of you guys tonight is an absolute honour. "Sharing the court with Carlos is an absolute honour, and I cherish every moment that I have out here."

Alcaraz was disappointed to go out but also happy with his performance following the long injury layoff.

"I'm just proud about myself, about how I fought," he said, calling his opponent "a beast" physically.

"It was close. It was close. So I'm just not going to be disappointed about not getting the win at the end," he said.

"Shelton is an unbelievable player, powerful. He just managed how to play really,



Jessica Pegula of the US celebrates winning her quarterfinal against Emma Navarro of the US. — *Reuters*

really well in every situation, so credit to him."

'WHAT A BATTLE' Sabalenka had to dig deep against her 21-year-old Czech opponent Noskova.

"What a battle," Sabalenka told the crowd. "I was pushing myself to the limit, especially in the third set.

"I honestly thought that was it, the match was over, and that's what helped me to feel loose and go for my shots," she added after trailing 4-2 in the third set on the back of two double faults.

Sabalenka beat Pegula in the 2024 US Open final — still the American's only appearance in a Grand Slam title match — and beat her again last year in the semifinals.

Sabalenka looked headed for another Grand Slam

disappointment in a season in which she has so far been unable to add to her stash of four major titles.

Clearly frustrated, she nevertheless regrouped and broke Noskova to love to pull level at 4-4.

They hurtled into a 10-point tie-break where Sabalenka finally sealed victory with a second-serve ace.

The victory was Sabalenka's first win over a top-10 player since she beat Coco Gauff in the Miami final in March.

American 11th seed Tiafoe also came back from the brink after Michelsen, ranked 46th, served for the match at 5-4 in the third.

"He gave me some gifts, a couple of double faults there," Tiafoe said.

"But then I slowly started to get my rhythm there, snuck out third set and slowly started playing better and better.

"But he is a hell of a player," Tiafoe added of Michelsen, who wept in Tiafoe's arms as they met at the net after 4hr 38min. "He should have easily won today."

Third-seeded Pegula needed two hours and 20 minutes to get past Navarro. "It was really tough," Pegula said after a match featuring nine breaks of serve.

"It was physical, humid. I wasn't exactly serving my best and I was fighting a lot of demons out there today." — **AFP**

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

Oman's hopes of extending their Asian Championship campaign ended on Wednesday with a 3-0 defeat to Bahrain in their final Pool A match in Fukuoka, Japan.

Bahrain won 25-16, 25-19, 25-23, but the victory was not enough to secure a quarterfinal place. India claimed the final berth as the second-best third-placed team, edging Bahrain on point ratio after the sides finished level on wins, ranking points and set ratio.

Oman completed their campaign without a victory, following earlier defeats to Japan and Australia, although they showed encouraging periods against all three opponents.

Oman began confidently, capitalising on Bahrain's early errors before Mahmoud al Saadi and Osama al Maamari helped establish a 5-2 lead. Majid al Shibli, Falah al Jaradi and Saud al Maamari also contributed as the national side moved 9-5 ahead.

Bahrain gradually found their rhythm, drawing level at 11-11 before taking control through effective blocking and stronger attacking. Oman struggled to maintain their early momentum as Bahrain closed the opening set 25-16.

The second set followed a similar pattern. Bahrain moved 5-1 ahead, but Falah al Jaradi and Adam al Jaradi helped Oman reduce the deficit to 6-4. The Bahrainis responded with greater consistency in attack and at the net,



An Oman player attempts a smash against Bahrain.

eventually taking the set 25-19.

Oman produced their strongest resistance in the third set. Al Shibli contributed important attacking points, while improved blocking and defensive work helped the national side recover from 11-7 down to level at 12-12.

The teams exchanged points during a closely contested second half of the set. Bahrain moved 17-14 ahead, but Oman remained within reach and continued to press for a fourth set. The Bahrainis held their nerve in the closing exchanges to complete the victory 25-23.

Falah al Jaradi led Oman with 13 points, sharing match-high honours with Bahrain's Sayed Hashem Ali. Majid al Shibli added 11 points, while Bahrain's Hasan Haider Mohamed

contributed 11, including seven successful blocks.

Oman had opened the tournament with a 3-1 defeat to hosts Japan, taking the third set 25-20, before losing 3-0 to Australia.

The campaign followed Oman's historic West Asian title triumph in Muscat. Although the step up in continental competition proved demanding, head coach Nizar al Shukaili gave younger players opportunities alongside experienced members of the squad, providing valuable exposure against established Asian opposition.

The national team will now look to build on those experiences as it seeks greater consistency and stronger results in future international competitions.

SPORTS



The riders during the start of the fourth and final stage of Tour of Salalah 2026 from Ain Razat to Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex in Salalah. Li Ning Star’s Cameron Scott from Australia won the stage.

PELLAUD GRABS TOUR OF SALALAH CROWN

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
@anuroop_ath

SWISS rider Simon Pellaud of Li Ning Star emerged the Tour of Salalah 2026 champion after edging his teammate Eduardo Sepulveda for a 15-second overall lead after the fourth and final stage in Salalah on Wednesday. China's Li Ning Star dominated the Tour to claim the overall team title.

The 106 km fourth stage from Ain Razat to Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex was won by Li Ning Star's Cameron Scott from Australia in two hours 22 minutes and 34 seconds.

Jakarta Pro Cycling Team cyclists Yosandy Darmawan Oetomo and Terry Yudha took the second and third spots respectively in the sprint finish, which saw 65 riders clock the same time as the winner among the total 79 that completed the stage.

Team Roojai Insurance Winspace was the best team of the stage.

Pellaud, who finished 27th in the last stage, also kept his green jersey for the leader of the points classification with 37 points.

Oman's Asad al Habsi (22) and Mohammed al Wahibi (25th) were impressive in the fourth stage.

The final podium ceremony for the sixth edition of Tour of Salalah was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, and Saif bin Sebaa al Rashidi, Chairman of the Oman Cycling Association.

Pellaud claimed the Golden Jersey (sponsored by Dhofar Municipality) for leading the general classification and the Green Jersey (sponsored by Mohsin Haider Darwish) for leading the points classification.

Netherland's Jeroen Meijers, Stage 1 winner and fourth in the last stage, of Victoria Sports Pro Cycling secured the Grey Jersey for the aggressive rider (sponsored by Badr Al Samaa Hospital), while the White Jersey for the Under-23 category (sponsored by Oman Oasis) went to Indonesian rider Dimas Nur Fadhil Rizqi (Jakarta Pro Cycling Team).

STAGE 4			
Ain Razat - Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex 106 km			
TOUR OF SALALAH			
HONORS			
STAGE RESULTS			
STAGE WINNER	12	Cameron, SCOTT	ARG 02:22:34
2nd PLACE	73	Yosandy Darmawan, OETOMO	JAK 02:22:34
3rd PLACE	74	Terry, YUDHA	JAK 02:22:34
BEST TEAM		ROOJAI INSURANCE WINSPACE	01:07:42
LEADERS			
General Classification by Time	14	Simon, PELLAUD	LNO 11:15:55
General Classification by Points	14	Simon, PELLAUD	LNO 37
Best Young Rider Classification	72	Dimas Nur, FADHIL RIZQI	JAK 11:19:40
Most Aggressive Rider Classification	12	Jakobson, MEIJERS	NED 11:18:31
Team General Classification		Li Ning Star	02:09:26



The overall winners of the Tour of Salalah pose on the podium.



The pack rides during the fourth and final stage from Ain Razat to Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex in Salalah.

LI NING STAR DOMINATE
Li Ning Star comfortably took the team championship with an overall time of 33:49:26. Thailand's Roojai Insurance Winspace was second (+0:49), while Rwanda's Team Amani finished third (+9:40). Philippines Victoria Sports Pro Cycling (+12:18) and Guam-based EuroCyclingTrips – CCN (+16:59) completed the top five.

PREMIER POSITION
OCA Chairman Saif al Rashidi noted that the Tour has successfully cemented its status as one of the premier international sporting events hosted by the Dhofar Governorate, thanks to the high-calibre participation, fierce competition, and professional organisation that showcased growing national capabilities in managing

major events.

Al Rashidi stated: “We take pride in the achievements of the sixth edition of the Salalah Tour, which was the fruit of an effective partnership between Dhofar Municipality and the Oman Cycling Association, alongside significant cooperation from various government and private entities and organising committees. This synergy of efforts ensured the event was delivered in a manner befitting the Sultanate of Oman’s stature and its capability to host and organise international championships to the highest standards.”

He added: “The participation of 95 cyclists — representing 16 teams and 28 nationalities — clearly underscores the Salalah Tour’s growing international reputation. This extensive participation also

reflects the confidence the Tour has earned from the teams and cyclists — particularly given the four challenging and diverse stages that tested the participants’ physical, technical, and tactical capabilities — contributed to heightening the level of competition right up to the race’s final metres.”

TECHNICAL SUCCESS
For his part, OCA Vice-Chairman Ishaq bin Abdullah al Balushi, Tour Director, affirmed that the sixth edition achieved remarkable technical and organisational success. He explained that the fierce competition and the diverse routes across the four stages contributed to a comprehensive race that showcased the true capabilities of the participating cyclists and teams. The

- event tested their speed, endurance, and ability to handle varied terrain and tactical strategies.
- TOUR OF SALALAH
FOURTH STAGE RESULTS**
(Read as rank, rider, country, team and timing)
1. Scott Cameron (Australia) Li Ning Star 2:22:34
 2. Yosandy Darmawan Oetomo (Indonesia) Jakarta Pro Cycling Team 2:22:34
 3. Yudha Terry (Indonesia) Jakarta Pro Cycling Team 2:22:34
 4. Jeroen Meijers (Netherlands) Victoria Sports Pro Cycling 2:22:34
 5. Ethan Kulsen (South Africa) JR Pro Cycling Team 2:22:34
 6. Tillman Sarnowski (Germany) Embrace The World 2:22:34
 7. Ronnilan Quita (Philippines) 7Eleven Cliqq Roadbike Philippines 2:22:34
 8. Eduardo Sepúlveda (Argentina) Li Ning Star 2:22:34
 9. Aurelien de Comarmond (Mauritius) The Joyrun & Hurricane Cycling Team 2:22:34
 10. Tegshbayar Batsaikhan (Mongolia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 2:22:34

- TOUR OF SALALAH
OVERALL RESULTS**
(Read as rank, rider, country, team and timing)
1. Simon Pellaud (Switzerland) Li Ning Star 11:15:55
 2. Eduardo Sepúlveda (Argentina) Li Ning Star 11:16:10
 3. Tegshbayar Batsaikhan (Mongolia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 11:16:16
 4. Edison Alejandro Callejas (Colombia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 11:16:16
 5. Adne van Engelen (Netherlands) Terengganu Cycling Team 11:16:30
 6. Calum Johnston (Great Britain) Li Ning Star 11:16:47
 7. Samuel Niyonkuru (Rwanda) Team Amani 11:16:51
 8. Carter Bettles (Australia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 11:17:21
 9. Hugo Lutz-Atkinson (Great Britain) EuroCyclingTrips – CCN 11:18:31
 10. Fadhil Rizqi Dimas Nur (Indonesia) Jakarta Pro Cycling Team 11:19:40

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,625.865

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$121.69
BRENT \$100.70
LIGHT \$95.31



SHORT TAKES



Asyad Shipping & Vale - Arrival of Sohar Max, the world's first wind-assisted Valemax, on its first call to the Sultanate of Oman, delivering iron ore to Vale's operations in Suhar.

FIRST WIND-ASSISTED VALEMAX DOCKS IN OMAN

SUHAR: Marking a pivotal advancement in sustainable logistics, Asyad Shipping and Vale welcomed Sohar Max, the world's first wind-assisted Valemax, on its first call to the Sultanate of Oman, delivering iron ore to Vale's operations in Suhar.

This milestone builds on a long-standing partnership between the industry giants focused on advancing vessel efficiency and lower-emission maritime transportation across the iron ore value chain. Owned by Asyad Shipping and leased to Vale, Sohar Max is a 400,000 DWT ore carrier designed for high-capacity, deep-sea voyages across key trade corridors between Brazil, China and the Middle East; and is fitted with five towering rotor sails, or Flettner rotors, developed by Anemoi Marine Technologies.

Standing 35 meters tall and 5 meters in diameter, the cylindrical sails harness the Magnus effect to capture wind energy, generating additional thrust and reducing fuel consumption.

The rotor sails on Sohar Max are integrated with Anemoi's proprietary folding deployment system, enabling each sail to transition to a horizontal position during port manoeuvres or when passing under height-restricted structures.

This adaptive design reduces air draught limitations, optimizing vessel clearance and cargo-handling efficiency. As the maritime sector works to reduce its emissions, the International Maritime Organisation is targeting at least a 20% to 30% reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions from shipping by 2030, with net-zero emissions targeted by or around 2050.

Improving vessel efficiency remains a critical part of this transition, particularly in long-haul, high-capacity maritime transport.

The integration of Rotor Sail technology on Sohar Max advances this effort at Valemax scale, where Asyad Shipping's investment in advanced technology and strategic partnerships is supporting emissions mitigation while strengthening Oman's position as a global logistics hub.

SQU study identifies Salalah, Taqah for urban growth

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 9

A Sultan Qaboos University study has ranked parts of Salalah and Taqah among Oman's three most suitable areas for new urban development, while finding that a new urban community outside Dhofar's main vegetation belt could ease pressure on vegetation.

Only 2.1 per cent of Oman's land area fell into the study's highest suitability class. Three locations qualified: a stretch of Arabian Sea coast between Al Jazir and Al Duqm, Salalah and Taqah in the south; and Suhar in the north.

The study does not treat them as equals. It identifies Al Duqm as the highest priority and the most suitable location in the country, citing its physical conditions, renewable-energy potential, infrastructure and proximity to the port. The highly suitable zone there extends for roughly 100 kilometres along the coast, compared with about 20 kilometres at each of Salalah and Suhar.

For Dhofar, the finding is narrower but more immediate. Although vegetation has come under pressure from urban encroachment and climatic factors, the study says a new urban community outside the main vegetation belt could ease pressure on that natural resource.

The finding comes as official planning material gives differing estimates of how large Salalah may become by 2040.

Planning scenarios presented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning at the final-framework workshop on July 13 projected Greater Salalah's population rising from around 378,500 in 2024 to nearly 613,000 by 2040, while employment could increase from approximately 191,750 to more than 357,000.

The ministry has used a higher figure elsewhere. A New City Salalah planning document projects Wilayat of Salalah reaching about 674,000 people by



The study recommended making biodiversity a priority in urban projects, particularly at sites holding rare species.

Research identifies Salalah-Taqah among Oman's most suitable areas for urban development, as ministry forecasts for Salalah's 2040 population diverge

2040. Greater Salalah's planning boundary includes Salalah and part of Taqah, making it a broader geography than the wilayat alone. The same 674,000 total was repeated in a ministry presentation on water and infrastructure on August 30, this time as the population capacity for Greater Salalah. The source material does not explain the discrepancy, so the figures should be treated as different planning forecasts rather than a single settled projection.

The July framework also identified 261 proposed interventions with an estimated investment requirement of RO 4.3 billion through 2040. Strategic spatial development accounted for around RO 1.89 billion, while sustainability and climate-related measures were estimated at about RO 469 million. These are planning estimates rather than approved government expenditure or confirmed investment commitments.

The study, by Mohamed E Hereher of SQU's Geography Department and published in the 2026 volume of the journal Sustainability, used satellite-derived data and Geographic Information System analysis at national scale. It evaluates seven factors: topography, diurnal

temperature range, relative humidity, atmospheric dust, wind speed, solar radiation and access to electricity. Each carries equal weight, a deliberate choice to create a baseline model without subjective weighting.

It does not prescribe where individual neighbourhoods, roads or developments should be built. Hereher identifies several limitations, including the relatively coarse resolution of some datasets, reliance on remotely sensed data because ground meteorological stations are sparse, and the absence of different climate-change scenarios. He recommends feasibility studies and pilot projects in all three highly suitable regions.

Detailed planning would also need to weigh groundwater, biodiversity, agriculture, flood risk, infrastructure capacity, land ownership and local community requirements — issues that fall outside the model's seven-factor assessment.

An earlier SQU-led study shows how far Dhofar's landscape has already changed. Published in IEEE Access in 2022, it used satellite imagery from 1978 to 2018 across the governorate's mountains, plains and coastal areas.

International tender floated for Salut World Heritage bid

BAHLA: Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has floated an international tender for consultancy services to prepare the nomination dossier and management plan for inscribing the 'Salut: Iron Age Settlement' site, in preparation for submitting it to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) for consideration for inscription on the World Heritage List.

The strategic step reflects the Sultanate of Oman's continuous commitment to protecting and preserving its cultural heritage and enhancing its presence on the international stage.

Ibtisam bint Abdullah al Maamari, Director of the World Heritage Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that this step comes as part of national efforts aimed at fulfilling nomination



requirements in accordance with approved international standards, enhancing the presence of Omani cultural sites on the world heritage

map, strengthening the site's sustainability, and maximising the benefit from its cultural and tourism assets.

She added that the Bisya and Salut Archaeological Site in the Wilayat of Bahla is considered one of the most prominent archaeological sites in the Sultanate of Oman due to its rich civilisational evidence spanning from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age up to the Islamic periods, reflecting the continuity of human settlement and its development over thousands of years.

She explained that the results of archaeological studies and excavations indicate that the site possesses Outstanding Universal Value qualifying it for nomination on the World Heritage List under the name 'Salut: Iron Age Settlement'.

The MoHT had previously floated a competition for the management and utilisation of the visitor centre and the Bisya and Salut Archaeological Site, contributing to raising the quality of services provided to visitors,

developing the tourism and cultural experience at the site, and expanding the scope of private sector participation in operating and managing associated facilities and services.

Ibtisam al Maamari affirmed that these initiatives reflect the integration of efforts between the twin paths of heritage preservation and sustainable development, as the tender for preparing the nomination dossier and management plan focuses on documenting the site's Outstanding Universal Value and fulfilling requirements for inscription on the World Heritage List, while the site management and operation competition focuses on enhancing its tourism readiness and operational efficiency to achieve economic and cultural sustainability, reinforcing its role as a leading heritage and tourism destination at the national and international levels. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES

25% Rewards Points

with our Easy Payment Plan using your Credit Card at **Gadgets**

 10 - 12 September 2026



NBO OFFERS 25% CASHBACK AS REWARD POINTS AT GADGETS

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has announced an exclusive offer for its Credit Cardholders, providing 25 per cent cashback as Reward Points on eligible purchases at Gadgets stores across Oman from September 10 to 12, 2026.

Customers can benefit from the offer by converting their purchases into an Easy Payment Plan (EPP) in-store using their NBO Retail Visa Credit Cards, giving them greater value when purchasing electronics and gadgets.

Through the EPP facility, customers can choose to spread their purchase payments over 6 or 12 months, giving them greater flexibility in managing their monthly expenses.

In addition, eligible purchases will qualify for 25 per cent cashback as Reward Points, with cashback capped at RO 100 per customer, inclusive of transactions made using both primary and supplementary cards.

Commenting on the offer, Maha bint Saud al Raisti, Assistant General Manager – Head of Products at NBO said: “At NBO, we continuously look for ways to enhance the value we offer to our Credit Cardholders by combining meaningful rewards with greater flexibility and convenience.

This offer allows customers to enjoy and purchase their favourite gadgets while benefiting from our Easy Payment Plan and earning Reward Points. We encourage our customers to take advantage of this limited-time offer and make the most of their NBO Credit Cards”.

NBO Credit Cards offer customers a range of benefits designed to provide greater value and flexibility in their everyday spending and travel, including airport lounge access, chauffeur services, travel insurance and cashback of up to 5 per cent, depending on the card variant.

Cardholders can also enjoy up to 50 per cent off at VOX Cinemas and talabat and many more lifestyle benefits, along with the flexibility of NBO’s Easy Payment Plan and Reward Points. Together, these features enable customers to enjoy greater convenience while making their Credit Card work harder for them.

Customers can visit any Gadgets store across Oman from September 10 to 12, use their NBO Retail Visa Credit Card and convert their eligible purchase into an Easy Payment Plan in-store to benefit from the offer.

KR Group boosts AI readiness with executive workshop

THE Khimji Ramdas (KR) Group has strengthened its focus on building an AI-ready organisation with the successful completion of a four-day Executive AI Adoption and Readiness Workshop, led by KR Digital in partnership with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).

The initiative marks an important step towards building AI readiness and enabling wider adoption across the organisation, as part of KR’s broader commitment to accelerating digital transformation and equipping its people with the knowledge and capabilities required to navigate an increasingly AI-enabled business environment.

Bringing together employees from across KR Group businesses, the workshop focused on developing a common understanding of Artificial Intelligence, exploring its practical applications and identifying opportunities to leverage AI to enhance productivity, encourage innovation and support business growth. The programme recorded 122 registrations from across the Group, with 72 participants attending in person and 50 joining online.

The hybrid format enabled broad participation across KR’s diverse businesses while creating opportunities for meaningful in-person collaboration, discussion and hands-on learning.

The four-day workshop was structured around four key themes, taking participants from foundational knowledge to practical application and future planning.

Commenting on the initiative, Hritik Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group, said: “AI is reshaping the way businesses operate, innovate and create value.

At KR, we see AI readiness not simply as a technology agenda, but as an opportunity to strengthen our people, capabilities and



A four-day Executive AI Adoption and Readiness Workshop, led by KR Digital in partnership with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).

businesses for the future. This supports our broader commitment to innovation and aligns with Oman’s vision for a knowledge-based, diversified economy”.

Varun Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group, said: “Our focus is to give our people the confidence and capabilities to embrace AI and explore its practical applications.

By building awareness and readiness across the Group, we can identify new ways of working, improve efficiency and create greater value across our businesses”.

The workshop provides a foundation for continued AI adoption across the Group, as KR looks to build on the learning and insights gained to explore practical applications, enhance productivity and

support innovation across its businesses.

Headquartered in Muscat, the Khimji Ramdas (KR) Group is one of Oman’s leading diversified business groups, with a presence across Oman, India, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Its businesses span Lifestyle, Consumer Products, Projects and Logistics; and Infrastructure, serving diverse markets through a portfolio of established businesses and brands.

With a legacy spanning decades, KR remains committed to creating sustainable value, contributing to the economies and communities in the markets where it operates and supporting Oman’s continued growth and development.

BANKDHOFAR DRIVES THE ADVANCEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ASSET MANAGEMENT IN OMAN

MUSCAT: As Oman accelerates towards the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, professional asset management has moved to the centre of the Sultanate of Oman’s economic transformation.

BankDhofar is committed to leading this evolution – mobilising savings, deepening capital market opportunities and directing capital towards productive opportunities across local, regional and international markets.

Asset managers perform a role that extends well beyond generating returns. They channel capital efficiently, preserve and grow wealth; and connect



JUMA AL JABRI
Assistant GM, Treasury & Investment Banking, BankDhofar

investors with opportunity based on acceptable risk metrics for investors. For institutional investors – pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, corporates, endowments and family businesses – the requirements are broader still, encompassing liquidity management, capital preservation, diversification, risk management, governance and long-term portfolio resilience.

These demands have intensified in an environment shaped by shifting interest rates, AI Capex cycle, geopolitical developments and volatility across global financial markets.

Institutions increasingly

seek investment managers that combine deep knowledge of the local and regional landscape with access to international opportunities that generate medium to long term value creation to investors – and BankDhofar has built its asset management capabilities to deliver precisely that combination.

“Professional asset management is fundamental to how institutions and individuals in Oman will build, grow and protect wealth over the coming decade”, said Juma al Jabri, Assistant General Manager – Treasury & Investment Banking, BankDhofar.

OETC concludes ‘Experience Khareef... Embrace Safety’ campaign

MUSCAT: Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) has concluded its “Experience Khareef. Embrace Safety” awareness campaign, which was implemented over 12 days from August 24 to September 4, 2026 in Dhofar Governorate. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of unsafe practices around high-voltage transmission towers and within transmission line rights-of-way.

Launched in conjunction with the Khareef Dhofar Season, the campaign generated notable engagement across various segments of the community. It focused on promoting safe practices, including maintaining a safe distance from high-voltage transmission towers and lines,



The campaign aimed to raise awareness of unsafe practices around high-voltage transmission towers and within transmission line rights-of-way.

avoiding encroachment on transmission line rights-of-way, and refraining from camping or sitting near these areas. The campaign also highlighted the risks associated with flying kites and drones near these critical high-voltage infrastructure assets, as well as the importance of avoiding the placement of beehives beneath towers or the construction of permanent or temporary structures within electricity lines rights-of-way.

The campaign witnessed wide reach across social media platforms through the publication of more than 15 awareness messages and posts, achieving engagement, views and audience reach rates of over 69,000. In addition, awareness messages were broadcast through

SMS targeting 15,000 recipients, supported by visual content.

Furthermore, OETC’s interactive booth at Salalah Gardens Mall attracted more than 1060 visitors throughout the campaign period.

The booth featured a variety of activities, including engaging competitions, Q&A sessions, and direct interactive awareness activities designed to enhance public understanding of safety practices.

In this context, Eng Salim al Zubaidi, General Manager of Transmission Department – Dhofar Governorate, highlighted OETC’s ongoing and dedicated efforts to enhance awareness across all segments of society and ensure public safety.

SHORTTAKES



Oman is targeting investments in Oman’s burgeoning pharmaceutical and medical industries segment.

OPAZ SHOWCASES PHARMA INVESTMENT AVENUES IN INDIA

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) participated in Pharma MachTech & LabNext Expo 2026 in New Delhi from September 7 to 9.

Through its participation, OPAZ sought to engage companies, business leaders and investors operating in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sectors and introduce them to investment opportunities available across the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities in the Sultanate of Oman.

OPAZ also participated in the Oman Pavilion and Trade & Investment Desk at the exhibition, which served as a platform for direct meetings with Indian and international companies, investors and institutions to explore opportunities for cooperation, partnerships and investment in Oman, while strengthening engagement between the business communities of the two countries.

Majada al Ruzeqi, Investment Promotion Specialist at OPAZ, said that the Authority’s participation is aimed at attracting high-quality investments in targeted sectors, noting that the pharmaceutical and medical industries represent promising sectors offering significant opportunities for growth and industrial integration across the zones supervised by OPAZ.

She added that the meetings held by OPAZ with companies and investors provided an opportunity to position the Sultanate of Oman as a promising market, an investment partner and a platform for accessing wider markets.

Oman-India CEPA poised to boost trade and investment

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 9

OMANI and Indian companies were urged on Wednesday to convert the preferential terms of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the two countries into export contracts, joint ventures and investment projects, three months after the pact entered into force.

The Oman-India Business Forum, organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, was held under the auspices of Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and brought together businesspeople and investors from both countries alongside government and diplomatic representatives.

The agreement, signed in Muscat on December 18, 2025 and in force since June 1, 2026, is the Sultanate of Oman’s first bilateral trade agreement in nearly two decades and India’s second with a Gulf state.

Eng Said bin Ali al Abri, OCCI board member and Chairman of the Chamber’s Al Batinah North Governorate branch, said the agreement opens around 98 per cent of Omani tariff lines to Indian goods, while India has committed to reducing or eliminating customs duties on around 77 per cent of its own tariff lines.

The pact also covers investment, customs facilitation, digital trade, intellectual property and the movement of professionals, he said. “The agreement creates



The agreement creates opportunities, but it is the private sector that turns these opportunities into actual trade, investments and partnerships.

opportunities, but it is the private sector that turns these opportunities into actual trade, investments and partnerships”, Al Abri said.

Al Rawas said CEPA provides a foundation for deeper commercial and investment flows, and called on Omani businesspeople to study export-capable products, engage directly with Indian counterparts and pursue joint ventures. The next phase, he said, requires translating the agreement’s advantages into tangible deals.

Prashant Pise, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, described the agreement as a new phase in bilateral economic relations, saying it was not confined to raising trade volumes but created scope for long-term investment and production partnerships across multiple sectors.

Delivering a keynote address on Oman as an investment destination for Indian

companies, Dr Yousuf Hamed al Balushi, Founder and Managing Director of Smart Investment Gateway, said the Sultanate of Oman should treat CEPA as an investment and production platform rather than a trade instrument alone.

He identified manufacturing as the leading route to added value and said the ports of Al Duqm, Salalah and Suhar could be used to build manufacturing, storage, re-export and distribution capacity for regional markets.

Opportunities also exist to attract Indian companies in information technology, artificial intelligence, data centres and cybersecurity, he said. Dr James J Nedumpara, Professor and Head of the Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL) in India, said the agreement establishes a free trade area with a significantly wider range of duty-exempt goods than treatment under Most-Favoured-Nation terms.

India holds the advantage in labour-intensive products, he said, while Oman has openings in energy and petroleum products, vaccines, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, electronics and chemicals.

Electronics — particularly smartphones, photovoltaic cells and modules, and electrical transformers — was among the more promising areas, he added, noting India’s chemicals exports exceed \$40 billion globally.

Marine products offered scope for processing, value addition and re-export, he said.

The forum featured two panel sessions. The first, on implementation, was moderated by HH Dr Adham bin Turki al Said, Chairman of the OCCI Economic Committee, with speakers including Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Farooji, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion.

Salalah business forum adds China to Oman-Africa investment push

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 9

The 2nd Omani Afro-Chinese Business Forum opened in Salalah on Wednesday with the launch of a digital business platform and the addition of Chinese participation to an initiative that began in Muscat last year as an Oman-Africa business gathering.

The oman-africa.com platform was launched during the forum, held under the auspices of Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). According to the forum programme, the multilingual platform will provide electronic services and business packages aimed at facilitating commercial links between Oman and countries



The forum aims to attract investment and encourage African businesses and capital to establish operations in Oman.

in the Horn of Africa. The second edition broadens the format of the Omani-African Business Forum held in Muscat in 2025 by bringing Chinese businesses and

investors into discussions alongside African and Omani companies. Majid Said Akak, chairman of the organising committee, identified the African countries represented

in the initiative as Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan and Djibouti.

Akak said the forum’s central objectives included attracting investment and encouraging African businesses and capital to establish operations in Oman.

He said the presence of investors from the participating African countries had increased by more than 400 per cent compared with the two years preceding the first forum, citing recently issued official statistics. He also linked the first edition to efforts to establish direct air connectivity between Oman and Somalia. That connection became operational this month. SalamAir launched the first scheduled non-stop service between Muscat and Mogadishu on September 3, with two flights a week. The airline has

said the route is intended to support travel, trade and business links, although it has not attributed the decision to the forum.

A separate claim from the African delegation suggested that some companies were considering Oman as a new commercial base.

Abdulwali Bashir, a Djiboutian businessman speaking on behalf of African participants, said companies involved in the initiative had been attracted by the earlier forum to shift their centre of business from China to Oman.

“We are a group of companies who were attracted by the previous forum to transfer their centre of business from China to the Sultanate of Oman”, Bashir said.

China’s inclusion gives the second edition a substantially larger commercial context.

OIL PRICES

Brent tops \$100 on ME tensions



Benchmark Brent crude oil futures rose past \$100 a barrel, hitting a more than six-week high and breaching the symbolic threshold for the first time since July 24 as intensifying conflict in the Middle East heightened concerns about oil flows from the region.

Brent crude futures were up \$2.01, or 2.05%, at \$99.93 a barrel by 08:02 GMT after earlier touching \$100.19.

— Reuters

NEXT-GEN CHIPS

Open AI partners with Samsung Electronics



OpenAI is deepening cooperation with Samsung Electronics as the ChatGPT maker develops its own chips.

“One of the areas where we have made the most progress and gained the most recognition with Samsung Electronics is our joint production and research on the next-generation chips we are developing”, Harrison Kim, General Manager of OpenAI Korea said.

— Reuters

SUPERINTELLIGENCE

Meta’s AI assistant debuts



Meta rolled out on a long-touted AI assistant that can autonomously send emails, sell a car and book travel on a person’s behalf, despite internal concerns that the technology mismanages its access to sensitive personal data.

The company’s Muse agent, is the centrepiece of CEO Mark Zuckerberg’s plan to supply “personal superintelligence” to the billions of users. — Reuters

OPINION

Combating crime is a shared responsibility



HAIDER
AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

It is no secret that societies around the world face the problem of crime. Crimes occur every day in many places, particularly in societies where laws and legislation are not given sufficient importance or respect, and where corruption, bribery, deception and misinformation are widespread.

Human nature, individual behaviour, personal desires can all contribute to criminal activity, while modern technologies are increasingly playing a significant role in facilitating and accelerating certain types of crime. As the number of expatriates increases in any society, the number of crimes may also rise, particularly when some individuals become involved in activities that violate public morals or local laws.

This is an issue that deserves attention in the Sultanate of Oman. Crime statistics indicate that Omani society is facing a range of challenges, particularly economic, labour-related and financial offences, which account for a significant proportion of the overall caseload.

Some of these crimes require further research to identify the underlying factors contributing to changes in criminal behaviour. There is also a need to improve reporting and monitoring mechanisms; and to expand the use of available technologies and institutional tools to combat cybercrime.

According to recent figures from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, approximately 21,000 crimes were recorded in Oman during 2025, representing an increase of 14.8 per cent compared with 2024.

The crime rate stood at approximately 3.9 offences per 1,000 inhabitants. Offences against property accounted for the largest share, representing 62.3 per cent of total recorded crimes, followed by offences against persons at 28.8 per cent, with other social and regulatory offences making up the remainder.

With Oman’s population continuing to grow each year, the number of alleged offenders has also increased. In 2025, the number of offenders reached 26,847, compared with 24,341 in 2024, representing an increase of approximately 10 per cent.

A substantial proportion of cases are associated with labour regulations, bounced cheques, residency violations and financial transactions rather than conventional violent crime. Nevertheless, several trends require particular attention, especially fraud, cybercrime, drug-related offences and crimes involving children. According to Public Prosecution data, the total number of cases received in 2025 reached 55,164, an increase of 19 per cent compared with 2024.

Addressing these challenges will require improvements in electronic payment systems

Human nature, individual behaviour, personal desires can all contribute to criminal activity, while modern technologies are increasingly playing a significant role in facilitating and accelerating certain types of crime.

to reduce abuses and fraudulent practices, as well as efforts to limit undocumented cash transactions and strengthen customer identification and verification procedures.

It is equally important to accelerate the settlement of commercial disputes and increase legal awareness among owners of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Particular attention should also be given to the growing threat of cyber fraud.

Such offences reportedly increased by 50 per cent during the first half of last year, with criminals increasingly exploiting technologies such as artificial intelligence and deepfakes, alongside fake commercial advertisements and fraudulent video calls.

These developments demonstrate how crime is gradually moving from the street to the mobile phone, the bank account and the digital platform.

Combating this new generation of crime requires coordinated efforts involving the police, banks, telecommunications companies, digital platforms, schools, universities and religious institutions.

Ultimately, addressing crime cannot be the responsibility of law-enforcement agencies alone. Government institutions, civil-society organisations and the wider community all have an important role to play in highlighting emerging criminal risks, warning the public about new forms of fraud and strengthening legal and digital awareness.

UNPAID WORK
IN THE AI AGE

DIANE COYLE

Discussions about how AI might disrupt the economy have a blind spot: they largely fail to account for the valuable activities people do outside of paid work. Statisticians call such activities “household production”, but they collect very little data about them.

The American Time Use Survey (ATUS) is conducted annually in the United States, but its scale is small and most OECD countries collect such information less frequently. As a result, there is very little economic research and next to no policy debate, on how most of us spend most of our time. But investors and policymakers should care about unpaid activities.

When social or technological shifts move activity across the production boundary — from paid to unpaid or vice versa — our interpretation of economic signals must also change.

In the 1970s and 1980s, official GDP- and productivity-growth figures rose in countries like the United Kingdom and the US partly because changing social conventions were causing more married women to spend more of their time doing paid work.

Digital technology has already led to major shifts across this production boundary, mainly from paid to unpaid.

People now use digital tools to handle a wide range of tasks, from banking to travel planning, that once required consultation with a professional, not to mention ringing up their own groceries at the supermarket checkout.

Meanwhile, many people share their output — open-source software, entertaining videos, music lessons, or DIY tutorials — online for free.

All of these examples represent the substitution of unpaid for paid work. And, for the most part, they have created a good deal of consumer value.

With AI promising to move yet more activity across the production boundary, the question is how to ensure that this, too, will prove valuable for households.

Answering this question will require us, first, to get a sense of where people find AI most useful outside paid work. Google’s ATLAS project (on which I was an adviser) provides some early insights.

It mapped millions of anonymised Gemini interactions to the task categories used by the ATUS and contrasted the volume of US users’ AI conversations related to each category against the actual hours people dedicate to it.

By this metric, topics like “Eating and Drinking” and “Traveling” were significantly underrepresented in AI interactions, compared to actual time spent.

Interactions relating to “Socialising, Relaxing, & Leisure” — the category where overall AI usage is the highest — were relatively close to parity with actual time spent. “Education”, however, was overrepresented, with its share of AI interactions about 5.8 times larger than its share of people’s time. © Project Syndicate2026

UK equity outflows hit
£135 bn since Brexit

INVESTORS have had more than £130 billion from UK-focused funds in the 10 years following the Brexit referendum.

According to data from Morningstar, net outflows from UK equity funds stood at £134.8 billion at the end of April, with withdrawals increasing by £25 billion over the 12 months to July alone. The products notched up their worst year for outflows in 2023, when almost £30 billion was pulled.

Veteran stock picker Richard Buxton, who spent almost 40 years as a fund manager in London, said a once deep and liquid UK equity market had shrunk “to a small puddle” since the Brexit referendum.

“When I started, investors were nervous to allocate to the US because what you might gain on Wall Street you probably lost on the dollar”, said Buxton, who retired from Jupiter in 2023. He added: “Those days are long gone and the self-inflicted wound of Brexit saw sterling plunge, with no prospect of ever regaining the lost ground. This has again increased the attraction of investing outside the UK market”.

Head of markets at AJ Bell, Dan Coatsworth, said that international investors shunned UK stocks over fears of “economic upheaval” following the vote to leave the EU.

“Brexit created considerable uncertainties and foreign investors simply looked elsewhere for places with a clearer path forward.

There is typically a home bias towards a stock market, but even domestic investors lost interest in the UK market if you look at fund flows”, he said. The outflows come as London struggles to maintain a grip on listed companies. Over the past decade several of the UK’s best-known companies have delisted from the London Stock Exchange in favour of the US.

Flutter, the online gaming and betting firm, announced in June it would delist from the London Stock Exchange to New York, having previously moved its primary listing



Over the past decade several of the UK’s best-known companies have de-listed from the London Stock Exchange in favour of the US.



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

to the US. Other firms that have shifted London listings to New York include money transfer company Wise and equipment rental firm Ashtead.

Some UK companies have been snapped up by private equity players, including fund platform Hargreaves Lansdown and cyber security specialist Darktrace. Tate & Lyle will also disappear from the London stock market after it was snapped up by US-headquartered rival Ingredion.

Meanwhile, London-headquartered fund group Schroders will delist from the FTSE once its 9.9 billion acquisition by US-headquartered rival Nuveen is finalised.

“We have lots of entrepreneurial spirit in the UK, lots of net new business formation but companies either stay private or list in the US because that’s where the money is”, said Buxton.

“The only buyers of UK equity are overseas companies buying businesses: my retirement fund has seen Darktrace, Schroders and Tate & Lyle go. I have friends running global equities and they haven’t looked at a UK company in years. They have plenty of choice in the

US, Europe, Japan and Asia”.

Several government initiatives have been implemented to try to encourage more domestic investment into UK shares, including an overhaul of the cash ISA arrangement. In addition, a government backed retail investing campaign was launched in April to encourage more people out of savings into capital markets.

AJ Bell’s Coatsworth said the past two years have seen a “significant turnaround” in terms of the performance and valuation of UK stocks, adding that some overseas investors have sought to increase their exposure to non-US companies, including those in the UK.

Sentiment towards the UK is in a much better shape than post-Brexit and during the pandemic.

The key challenge is sustaining this momentum. The government’s push to get more people investing is positive, yet the UK has none of the excitement that has fired up the US with SpaceX’s IPO or AI’s tech revolution.

Looser listing rules could attract more IPOs, but the political backdrop is unhelpful and so is the stagnant economy.

ART/LIFE



NATIONAL MUSEUM OPENS WINDOW TO BELARUSIAN TATAR HERITAGE > 20

VENICE FESTIVAL

FEAR SHADOWED THE MAKING OF MUSK DOCUMENTARY



Director Alex Gibney poses during a photocall for the documentary "Musk". — Reuters

Many people were too frightened to speak publicly about Elon Musk, director Alex Gibney said, as he unveiled his marathon documentary about the billionaire entrepreneur at the Venice Film Festival.

The nearly four-hour movie charts Musk's rise from the dotcom era to become one of the world's most influential figures, questioning how an unelected tech titan came to wield such sway over politics and public debate.

"There was a tremendous sense of fear of talking, really almost existential fear, both among people who were his critics, people who were his business colleagues and people who are his friends", Gibney said ahead of the screening of "Musk".

The Tesla and SpaceX chief has dismissed the film, writing on his social media platform X this month that Gibney was biased and was "obviously going to make the most convincingly terrible hit piece on me that he can possibly think of".

Gibney said he began work on the project in 2023.

"We intended to make a shorter film before Elon Musk became wrapped in the career of Donald Trump and the presidency of the United States", Gibney said, adding that the first thing he did was to contact Musk, who declined to be interviewed.

Gibney, whose previous subjects have included the collapse of energy firm Enron and Scientology, said Musk's ascent was "the story of the confidence man" whose empire was built on an ability to sell inflated visions and hyped-up promises.

Without necessarily presenting any new bombshells, the film links Musk's takeover of Twitter, his government cost-cutting drive and his reliance on federal contracts to the creation of unprecedented power and wealth in the hands of just one man.

The documentary uses an AI-generated version of Musk that speaks words he has uttered over the years. Asked whether he expected legal challenges, Gibney said: "We consulted our lawyers and they gave us a sign-off to go forward".

After embracing Trump's MAGA movement, the film shows Musk's growing support for far-right political causes internationally, including the surging Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

St Clair, who revealed in the documentary that she had turned down a \$40 million non-disclosure agreement after her relationship with Musk ended, echoed the criticism.

"His most complicated relationship is with the truth", she said. In the film, she says simply: "Elon is a nuke". "Musk" is being shown out of competition at the Venice festival, which runs until September 12. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A model displays a creation from the Grace Unfolds collection by Zhou Yujun during the China Fashion week in Beijing. — AFP



RENOIR ART

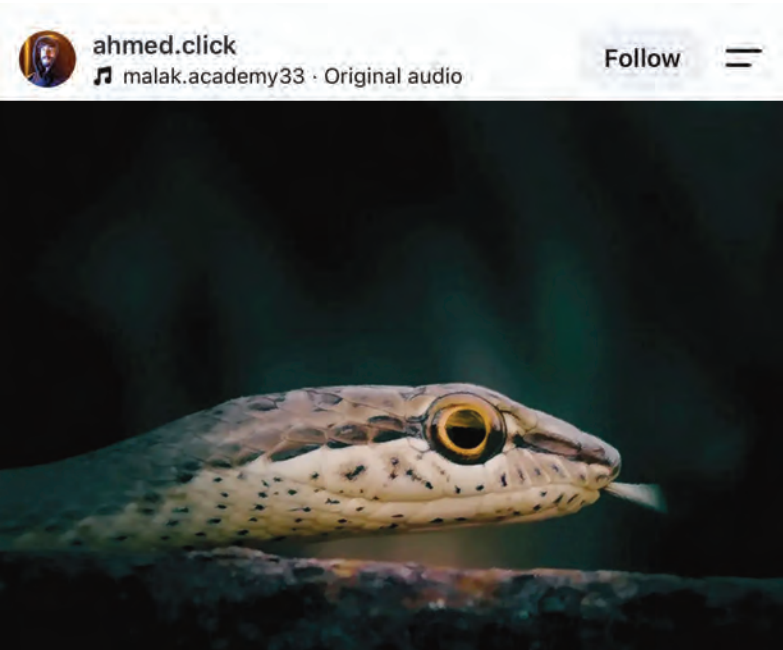
Painting of 'Madame Colonna Romano' by French painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir which was stolen from Renoir Museum in Cagnes-sur-Mer, France. — Reuters



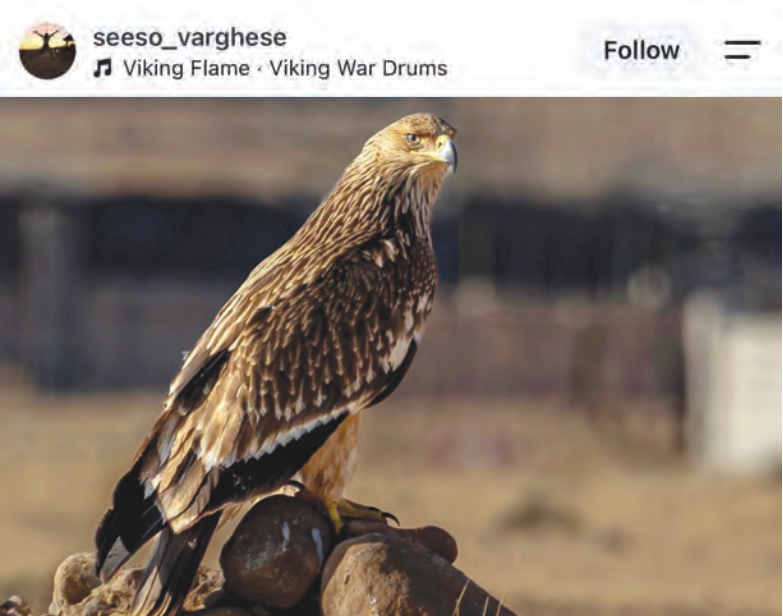
MUSIC AWARDS

US composer David Fleming, winner of the Emmy for Outstanding Music Composition for a Series (Original Dramatic Score) for "Widow's Bay". — AFP

INSTA PICKS



A beautiful Omani Schokari sand racer



Majestic in the golden light, the Eastern Imperial Eagle

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CRUZ, BARDEM PLAY STRAINED ON-SCREEN COUPLE IN NEW FILM

Married stars Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem play a wealthy couple facing a mid-life crisis in their latest film, “Bunker”, insisting on Tuesday that the story bears no resemblance to their real relationship. The Hollywood duo, who began dating after appearing together in 2008’s “Vicky Cristina Barcelona”, portray a married couple in London struggling to balance two careers far from home. Directed by French filmmaker Florian Zeller, the film, premiering on Tuesday at the Venice Film Festival, also takes aim at Silicon Valley billionaires, a theme that drew Cruz and Bardem to the project. Bardem plays a successful architect offered a lucrative contract to design an underground survival bunker for a Silicon Valley billionaire. Zeller said the story was inspired by Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg’s compound in Hawaii. Asked whether the characters reflected their real relationship,

Bardem said: “Nothing. We are really good at creating fiction and reality. Otherwise, we would not survive in this job”. Cruz said she identified with her character’s criticism of technology billionaires behind social media and artificial intelligence, questioning whether their pursuit of technology has come at the expense of empathy. “My hope is that young people are actually beginning to realise they’re being manipulated”, she said. The couple, who have appeared together in around 10 films, said they have had to maintain a balance between their careers and family life. Cruz praised Zeller for guiding them through the film’s emotionally intense scenes, while the director said the movie explores isolation, xenophobia and the growing influence of technology. Cruz and Bardem last appeared together in Asghar Farhadi’s “Everybody Knows” in 2018. — AFP



Bahla Fort Cultural Heritage Forum engages youth

STAFF REPORTER

THE Bahla Fort Cultural Heritage Forum, organised by the Bahla Volunteer Team under the World Heritage Volunteers Initiative, continues to bring together more than 30 volunteers from Oman and abroad in a programme combining knowledge, hands-on experience and community engagement. The Forum aims to strengthen youth participation in safeguarding cultural heritage, support traditional crafts and ensure inherited knowledge and skills are passed on to future generations. Launched at Bahla Fort, a Unesco World Heritage Site, under the auspices of Shaikh Mahmoud bin Rashid al Saadi, Wali of Nizwa and Acting Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, the programme has featured workshops, educational sessions and field visits exploring Oman’s cultural heritage and its place within the global heritage landscape. Participants visited Bahla Souq and the historic neighbourhoods of Al Aqr, Al Hawiyah and Al Ghuzaili, gaining insight into traditional Omani architecture and the social and economic life of these communities. A symposium on Omani Heritage within the World Heritage Framework was also held, alongside sessions on conservation, responsible digital documentation and volunteerism. Traditional crafts remain central to the Forum, with emphasis on pottery, metalwork and woodworking. Volunteers met local artisans and took part in practical activities involving clay shaping, painting and decoration. Visits to the Omani Women’s Association in Bahla and Bait Hirfati highlighted the role of women and local artisans in preserving traditional crafts.



More than 30 volunteers from Oman and abroad are taking part in the Bahla Fort Cultural Heritage Forum, exploring traditional crafts, historic sites and community practices while gaining hands-on experience in preserving Oman’s cultural heritage for future generations.



At a pottery workshop, volunteers also met young people and children with disabilities who are learning the craft, demonstrating how traditional skills can promote inclusion, learning and community empowerment while preserving Bahla’s cultural identity. Beyond Bahla, participants visited the Oman Across Ages Museum, Nizwa Fort and Nizwa Souq, as well as historic sites in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, gaining further insight into the region’s architectural and cultural diversity. They were also introduced to traditional copper smithing and the skills passed down through generations. The volunteers met Shaikh Said bin Ali al Nuaimi, Wali of Bahla and Head of the Local Community, who highlighted the importance of involving young people

and local communities in safeguarding cultural heritage. The Forum will continue until September 12, with visits planned to the archaeological sites of Salut and Bisya and Misfat Al Abriyeen. Further workshops will focus on traditional woodworking. The programme will conclude with presentations of participants’ experiences and completed work, followed by a review of outcomes and recommendations. These will be documented in a report and charter to be submitted to Unesco. Through field experience, craftsmanship, community participation and volunteerism, the Forum demonstrates that heritage preservation extends beyond historic sites to the knowledge, skills and cultural memory that sustain them for future generations.

FEATURES

NATIONAL MUSEUM OPENS WINDOW TO BELARUSIAN TATAR HERITAGE



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

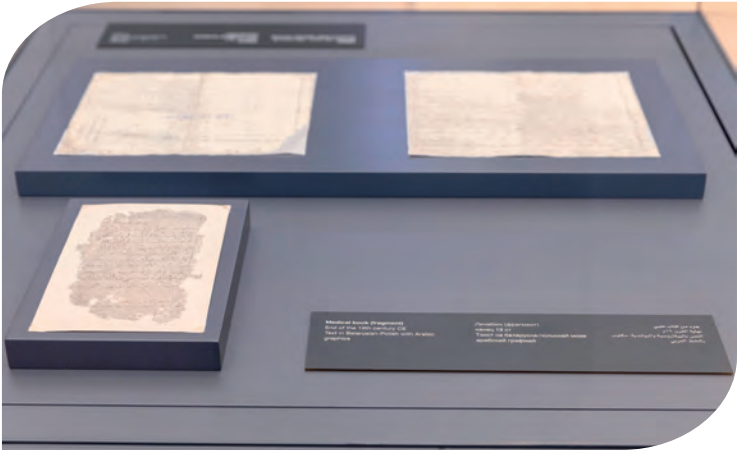
A MANUSCRIPT can be more than a book. Between its pages, it can preserve a language, carry a faith across generations and quietly tell the story of a community determined not to lose its identity.

That story sits at the heart of a new exhibition at the National Museum, where centuries of Belarusian Tatar heritage have arrived in Oman through manuscripts written in an unexpected combination of languages and script.

The National Museum, in cooperation with the National Library of Belarus, opened The Book Culture of Belarusian Tatars on Wednesday, presenting a selection of manuscripts from the Belarusian library's collections. Held under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the exhibition runs until November 6 and offers a glimpse into a lesser-known chapter of Islamic and European history: that of the Belarusian Tatars, a Muslim community deeply integrated into Belarusian society while retaining its religious and cultural roots.

"The written heritage of the Belarusian Tatars represents one of the most valuable and significant parts of Belarusian history", said Vadzim Hihin, Director General of the National Library of Belarus. "This exhibition not only showcases these heritage treasures, but also serves as a symbol of the growing ties between the Republic of Belarus and the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting our shared respect for history and our commitment to safeguarding cultural heritage".

The most striking feature of the collection is its writing system.



This cooperation represents a bridge between our two countries, linking the past with the future and contributing to the protection and study of the rich Islamic book culture.

**VADZIM HIHIN,
DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF
THE NATIONAL
LIBRARY OF
BELARUS**

Quranic manuscripts and other works were written in Arabic script, yet their contents could appear in Arabic, Turkish, Belarusian or Polish, a tradition that allowed even the Belarusian language to be recorded using Arabic letters. Among the manuscripts on display is a Quranic copy transcribed by Zdanovich Yakub, alongside kitabs bearing the names of their copyists, including Ibrahim Khasinevich and Hasan Mishutovich, along with the towns where each was produced.

For Krystsina Yermak, Head of the Scientific Research Department of Historical and Cultural Heritage at the National Library of Belarus, these manuscripts are more than old books. Speaking during a lecture accompanying the exhibition, she described them as "testimony of preserving culture" and as bridges between countries and peoples, including between the Muslim and Orthodox worlds.

Hihin added that the exhibition marks only one part of a broader partnership. "We express our deep gratitude to the National Archives and Records Authority and the National Museum of the Sultanate of Oman for their pioneering initiative to launch a specialised training programme for conservators from



the National Library of Belarus", he said. "This cooperation represents a bridge between our two countries, linking the past with the future and contributing to the protection and study of the rich Islamic book culture".

The Muslim identity of the Belarusian Tatars took shape centuries ago and developed further during the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th and early 15th centuries. Living among Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian cultures, the community underwent significant linguistic and social change, yet its religious foundations survived intact.

The manuscripts on display bear that out. They include Quranic manuscripts from the early 19th to early 20th century, alongside commentaries, handwritten kitabs and small prayer books known as khamails, produced in cities such as Slonim and Minsk. The collection

extends beyond religion too, including a medical text written in Belarusian and Polish using Arabic script, showing how the writing system entered everyday knowledge as well as faith.

Yermak also pointed to places such as Iwye, in Belarus's Grodno region, which remains an important centre of Muslim culture and drew a parallel between Belarus's history as a meeting point of cultures and Oman's own experience of coexistence, a connection that gives the exhibition particular resonance in Muscat.

As these manuscripts leave their shelves for public view, their significance grows beyond the ink and paper that hold them. They are reminders that identity does not always survive through monuments or declarations. Sometimes, it survives quietly, one handwritten page at a time.