

RO 166 million investment opportunities announced

Invest Oman has announced the launch of 10 promising investment opportunities in the converting industries sector, to the tune of RO 166 million. Invest Oman operates under the purview of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. The step highlights Invest Oman's efforts to attract foreign capital and generate business opportunities based on feasibility studies in strategic sectors. **DETAILS ON P13**

SUNRISE - 05:54 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 04:38 AM
DHUHR - 12:06 PM
ASR - 03:33 PM
MAGHRIB - 06:14 PM
ISHA - 07:24 PM



P13

NAMA PWP
SHORTLISTS DEVELOPERS
FOR RO 500M WIND
PROJECTS



P12

SENSATIONAL
FIA WEC PODIUM
FOR AL HARTHY
AT FUJI



P20

THE SLEEPY TOWN
OF AL SUWAIH IS A
COASTAL GEM FOR
CAMPERS



WASHINGTON

TRUMP SURVIVES
ATTEMPT ON LIFE

A man suspected of plotting to assassinate former US president Donald Trump was charged with federal gun crimes on Monday. Ryan Wesley Routh, 58, was charged with possession of a firearm as a convicted felon and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number at his initial court appearance. Routh, who was arrested on Sunday after an alleged abortive bid to shoot the Republican presidential candidate at his West Palm Beach golf course, is expected to face further charges at a later date. Routh appeared calm during the brief court hearing.

JESENIK

EUROPE BRACES
FOR MORE FLOODS

Residents of several areas of Poland and the Czech Republic rushed to evacuate on Monday as others in central Europe began cleaning up after the worst flooding in over two decades left a trail of destruction and a rising number of deaths. Border areas between the Czech Republic and Poland were hit hard over the weekend as heavy rain that has fallen since last week and surging water levels collapsed some bridges, forced evacuations and damaged cars and houses. At least 17 people have died in flooding from Romania to Poland in the past few days. **DETAILS ON P7**

HM, Canada PM discuss bilateral ties



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, had a phone call on Monday. During the phone call, the two leaders reviewed aspects of the bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries and exchanged views on regional and international developments. — ONA

HIS MAJESTY PARDONS 175 PRISONERS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal pardon to a number of prisoners convicted of different cases. They included 175 Omani and foreign prisoners, according to an official source

at the Royal Oman Police (ROP). The Royal pardon of His Majesty the Supreme Commander coincides with the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday Anniversary and in consideration of the families of the prisoners. — ONA

Oman, Iraq call for regional stability

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, on Monday received Dr Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq.

The guest conveyed the greetings and best wishes of success from the Iraqi leadership to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Omani government. He also conveyed their wishes for further development in Oman.

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in various fields.

Further, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest and exchanged views regarding developments in the regional and international arenas. They also highlighted efforts exerted to ensure security and stability in the region, serving the interests of its people and augmenting international cooperation. Both sides underscored



HH Sayyid Fahd with Dr Fuad Hussein.
PHOTO BY MOHAMED AL RASHDI

the importance of activating the joint Oman-Iraqi Committee and boosting consultations on matters of mutual interest. Later, Oman and Iraq underlined the historic relations binding the two countries and their peoples. **SEE ALSO P2**



GOLF LINKS

The Luxury of Nature

Ocean and golf at your door — 4 bedroom residences and 1-3 bedroom apartments — Starting price OMR 77,000

Limited availability. Reserve your new home today
almouj.com | 800 77776





Oman, Iraq review ties, means of augmenting them



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa Dr Fuad Hussein. – ONA



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office with Dr Fuad Hussein. – ONA



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met with Dr Fuad Hussein on Monday. – ONA

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa Dr Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations

and means of augmenting them. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by the ambassador of the Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman. Meanwhile, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received Dr Fuad Hussein,

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed matters of mutual interest. They also explored means of enhancing mutual cooperation to serve joint interests. The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of

the Republic of Iraq. The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Iraq underline the historic relations binding the two countries and their peoples. This came during a session of political talks, held in Muscat on Monday. The Omani side was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al

Busaidy, Foreign Minister, while the Iraqi side was headed by Dr Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq. The two ministers highlighted areas of mutual cooperation in various political, economic, trade and cultural fields, and means of enhancing them to

serve joint interests. They also reviewed developments of regional and international issues of mutual interest. At the forefront of these issues is the brutal Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the escalating situation in the region as a result of this aggression. — ONA



GEN AL NUMANI RECEIVES BRITISH AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, on Monday received Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom (UK) to the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, the two sides highlighted the march of relations between Oman and the UK. They also explored areas of mutual cooperation and means of enhancing them to serve joint interests. Further, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest. – ONA

Oman's Ambassador chosen as Brazil's 'Personality of the Year'

BRASILIA: Talal bin Suleiman al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federative Republic of Brazil, has been chosen as "Brazil's Personality of the Year" in appreciation for his contributions towards enhancing sustainable development of bilateral relations between Oman and Brazil. Al Rahbi received the Honorary Medal of "Juscelino Kubitschek", the loftiest accolade awarded by the Brazilian Academy for Influential Personalities in Brazil. The medal was conferred on the Omani ambassador at the annual ceremony held by the Brazilian National Congress to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of the founder of the Federal Capital, Brasilia, President Juscelino Kubitschek. — ONA



32 environmental violations found in Dhofar

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

The 'Environment Protectors Initiative' for the Khareef Dhofar Season 2024, led by the Environment Authority (EA) in Dhofar Governorate, aims to elevate environmental awareness among citizens and tourists while promoting sustainable practices throughout the khareef season. Field teams actively monitor key natural sites in Dhofar and the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar to curb environmental damage, particularly protecting vegetation and perennial trees from encroachment. Thanks to these awareness efforts, the 2024 season has seen a notable reduction in environmental violations compared to previous years. So far, only one serious incident was reported in Dhofar. The Environment Authority conducts annual assessments of the initiative to foster a sense of community responsibility for the protection of the governorate's natural resources. As of the current season, 32 violations have been



documented, 492 vehicles have been removed from restricted green areas, and one seizure report has been filed. Additionally, four cases were handled in coordination with other government agencies. The authority collaborates with various relevant organisations to ensure a clean and safe environment for both residents and visitors. Through a combination of field patrols, public education campaigns, and distribution of informational brochures, the initiative aims to prevent harmful activities such as driving on green spaces, drifting, and wildlife hunting. Signs were also installed on public roads in cooperation

with Dhofar Municipality, and violations are tracked via reports from the public. In partnership with the Royal Oman Police and the Public Prosecution, offenders are held accountable, with legal procedures enforced under the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Law. This initiative underscores the importance of environmental conservation, particularly during Khareef Dhofar Season, which attracts a high influx of tourists. Through sustained community engagement and strict enforcement of laws, the initiative seeks to safeguard the region's natural beauty from harmful human activities.

Youth programme enriches discussions on global issues

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

The Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth launched the second edition of the 'Youth Ambassadors Programme' on Monday, with the participation of 14 Gulf and Arab countries. This event is being held in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), from September 15 to 19. The opening ceremony took place at the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science, under the auspices of Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs. At the start of the event, Hilal al Siyabi, Director-General of the General-Directorate of Youth, delivered a speech emphasising that the 'Youth Ambassadors Programme' reflects the ministry's commitment to preparing a



Through simulation sessions, participants learn how the international community responds to pressing global issues such as peace, security. – Photos by Shamsa al Harthy

generation of young national leaders capable of representing the Sultanate of Oman in regional and international forums in the best possible way. He added that the project not only focuses on developing diplomatic skills among youth but also aims to enrich discussions on global issues and equip young people with the necessary tools to face the challenges they encounter today. Al Siyabi further explained

that the project aims to enhance Omani youth presence in international forums by acquiring the essential skills and knowledge to represent the Sultanate of Oman abroad. It also introduces young people to the mechanisms of regional and international organisations, which broadens their horizons and strengthens their ability to influence international decision-making. Al Siyabi pointed out that the



second edition of the project includes the participation of 100 young men and women, 21 of whom are from Gulf and Arab countries, while 79 are from Oman. The project's activities, spanning five days, will include training workshops in cooperation with the United Nations Institute, as well as a Model United Nations simulation session. Achievements of the First Edition of the programme

It is worth mentioning that the programme is part of the Tenth Five-Year Plan to enhance youth participation and develop their skills. The first edition of the project was launched last year, where 75 young men and women were trained in leadership and diplomacy, which enhanced their presence in international forums and introduced them to the principles of the United Nations. Through these simulation

sessions, participants learn how the international community responds to pressing global issues such as peace, security, human rights, the environment and sustainable development. This experience provides them with an opportunity to delve deeper into the needs, goals and foreign policies of the countries they represent, helping them gain new insights into international relations and their challenges. Wael al Kalbani said: "My participation in the first edition of the programme was a rich and impactful journey on a personal level, as it enhanced my diplomatic and international work skills and I gained a deeper understanding of the principles and foundations of Oman's foreign policy. The programme was a window to the world for me, through discussions and analyses in the Model United Nations simulation sessions, and meetings with inspiring diplomatic figures."



Buraimi Municipal Council debates Oman-UAE joint railway project



During the meeting, Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi and Chairman of Al Buraimi Municipal Council was briefed on the work progress at the railway project that will link Oman and United Arab Emirates. — **ONA**

AL BURAIMI: The Municipal Council of Al Buraimi Governorate held its seventh meeting for this year on Monday to discuss the implementation of the railway project that will link the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

During the meeting, Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi and Chairman of Al Buraimi Municipal Council was briefed on the work progress at the railway project that will link the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The council hosted Engineer Ahmed al Musawa al Hashemi, CEO of Hafeet Rail beside specialists from Asyad Group.

Al Hashemi, commended the pivotal role played by all stakeholders in Al Buraimi Governorate and the support provided by the Municipal Council to the project which, he said, would enhance logistical and commercial links

between the two countries. The discussion also touched on the importance of enhancing local content in all works related to the project to benefit the local communities. These advantages include opportunities for business owners and small and medium enterprises in the governorate, creating job opportunities during the implementation and operation phases.

During the meeting, the Projects Department of Al Buraimi Municipality reviewed the bicycle track and the challenges it faces and reviewed the proposed plans to improve the user experience. It also discussed community demands to repair damaged roads in a way that meets the aspirations and needs of residents and enhances the quality of services provided in the governorate. In addition, the department discussed several topics related to other projects and services. — **ONA**



OMAN REGISTERS OVER 1.7 MILLION VEHICLES BY JULY 2024

By the end of July 2024, the number of registered vehicles in Oman reached 1,711,702, with private vehicles accounting for 79.4% (1,358,320 vehicles), according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Commercial vehicles made up 14.6% (249,243 vehicles), while rental vehicles represented 2.2% (37,053 vehicles). Additionally, the number of taxis totaled 28,086, accounting for 1.6% of the total vehicle count. — **ONA**

OMAN CLIMATE WEEK

United to accelerate action

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

In an effort to accelerate climate action, the Environment Authority (EA), in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Sultan Qaboos University, the Ministry of Higher Education Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and Birba, is organising the inaugural edition of Oman Climate Week from February 24-27, 2025, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) in Muscat.

This announcement was made at a media briefing in Muscat on Monday by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority. Speaking to the Observer, he said, “Oman Climate Week is going to be an important stop on the international climate change map. It will follow other major global climate events, so they will be discussed here. Scientific research is one of the most important aspects of the event, in addition to the participation of youth, SMEs, public and private sectors, as well as regional and international organisations.”

He pointed out that Oman is actively addressing climate change through its commitments under the Paris Agreement,



As part of the event, there will be a three-day exhibition at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre

Oman Vision 2040, and a National Climate Strategy. Key efforts include emission reductions, energy efficiency, climate adaptation plans, green hydrogen production, and investments in renewable energy. The Sultanate of Oman's first Climate Week is aligned with the country's commitment to address climate change in accordance with Oman Vision 2040 and the Paris Agreement. The event series will explore the cooperation necessary to achieve a 1.5°C aligned outcome in 2025 in line with commitments made at COP29 and will focus on collaboration across governments and sectors to reduce climate impact.

As part of the event, there will be a three-day exhibition at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre,



Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri

Networking Hub, Strategic Conference, Science and Tech Talks, Women and Climate, Masterclass Workshops, and Field Trips. The Climate Awards will be held on February 26th.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Mohammed al Kalbani, Director General of Environmental Affairs at Oman's Environment Authority, emphasised the urgency of the climate crisis affecting our

planet. He said, “The rapid environmental breakdown, the massive economic fallout, and the health and security crisis have made immediate climate action necessary to protect human lives and ensure global stability.”

In light of the occasion, the Environment Authority unveiled the logo for Oman Climate Week, representing ‘Life in a Sustainable World,’ which symbolises life on land, our plant life, life below water, and a sustainable world.

Dr Al Kalbani outlined the six goals for Oman Climate Week: fostering climate action, facilitating regional cooperation, driving local and regional business, supporting the adoption and scaling of solutions, showcasing the Sultanate of Oman's commitment, and encouraging community engagement.

300 orphan students get support from Eastern Desalination

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

Under a heartwarming initiative, the Eastern Desalination Company launched an initiative to support 300 orphan students with essential school supplies.

Additionally, 100 orphan families will receive support, marking the company's commitment to social responsibility. The initiative is being carried out under the auspices of Talib bin Khamis al Balushi, Member of the Majlis Ash'ishura, alongside Murshid bin Abdullah al Fanna, the newly appointed CEO of the Eastern Desalination Company, Khamis bin Rashid bin Sultan al Harbi, Head of the Industry Department for the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, and Dr Saleh al Alawi, Director of Community Responsibility at the company. This project aims to provide



much-needed educational supplies to orphan students, using lists from registered schools. By equipping these children with the tools necessary for their academic journey, the initiative seeks to ease the material and emotional burden on their caregivers, allowing the children to focus on their education.

Khamis bin Rashid al Harbi

emphasised the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion's focus on encouraging companies to actively fulfil their social responsibility. He expressed gratitude to the Eastern Desalination Company for leading by example, and encouraged other businesses and factories in the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate to follow suit.

“This initiative not only benefits the community at large, but also serves the Omanis in particular, leaving a positive impact on society,” Al Harbi stated.

Murshid al Fanna, CEO of the Eastern Desalination Company, shared that the initiative is part of the company's annual strategy for its social responsibility programme in Sur.

“We prioritise supporting communities, especially orphaned children, as they require special attention to ensure their educational needs are met. It is well known that such families need assistance to achieve a decent standard of living,” Al Fanna remarked.

This initiative stands as a testament to the company's ongoing commitment to societal welfare, and it is hoped that other organisations will be inspired to contribute to similar causes.

Sharing Wi-Fi is illegal, say service providers

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Sharing Wi-Fi or any other internet services with parties outside the residential premises where the Wi-Fi connection is provided is considered an illegal telecom activity and can result in punitive actions, including discontinuation of the connection, according to telecom service providers.

In a mass message, service providers have warned individuals against reselling or sharing Wi-Fi services with outsiders, stating, “It is strictly

prohibited to redistribute or sell internet services outside the contracted residential or commercial unit.” “Such actions are violations of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority Law, and those found to be reselling or redistributing Wi-Fi services may face legal consequences,” telecom service providers said.

If caught reselling or redistributing Wi-Fi services, individuals may have their service contract terminated, be subject to an early termination fee, and be banned from receiving



If caught reselling or redistributing Wi-Fi services, individuals may have their service contract terminated

Internet services from any telecommunications company for a period determined by the

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). To avoid these legal

consequences, service providers further warn internet users to adhere to the law and only obtain internet services from licensed telecommunications companies.

There are approximately 16 operators licensed to provide telecom services in Oman, with nearly 15,000 telecom towers installed by licensed operators across all service categories, including 2G (4,498 towers), 3G (5,399), and 4G (around 5,250), according to a TRA report.

Mobile broadband subscribers have increased by 12 per cent, with about 99 per

cent of the population currently enjoying 3G/4G coverage, representing a 10 per cent growth over 2018 trends.

While broadband subscriptions by residential and commercial customers have been increasing in Muscat Governorate, subscription trends have been significantly lower in other governorates. This is mainly attributed to the high uptake of services in Muscat Governorate due to the high population density in the capital area, as well as the concentration of commercial activities.



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

BURJ AL SAHWA in Muscat has become synonymous with daily traffic woes, particularly during the morning rush hour. The area’s congestion affects everyone, with many taking to social media platforms like X to vent their frustrations, making the hashtag “#Burj_Al_Sahwa” into a trending topic. For many, the traffic gridlock has real-world consequences.

Commuters often face significant delays getting to work or school, which in turn impacts productivity and academic performance.

Despite ongoing efforts to alleviate the congestion, including the introduction of flexible working hours and the installation of traffic lights at the Burj Al Sahwa roundabout, these solutions have not provided the desired relief.

In fact, some argue that the traffic lights have only added to the problem, giving many others a thought of giving much needed focus on public transportation.

A key factor in the area’s congestion is Burj Al Sahwa’s strategic location. It serves as a crucial intersection that links Muscat Governorate with other regions, making it a major crossing point for thousands of commuters.

Additionally, the increasing number of vehicles on the road has exacerbated the situation, compounding an already strained infrastructure.

Abu Ahmed al Balushi, a local resident, emphasises the symbolic and practical importance of the Burj Al Sahwa roundabout, noting that it stands as a landmark of Oman’s Renaissance. However, he also highlights that its central position has made

it a chokepoint for traffic. He remains hopeful that future infrastructure developments, such as the construction of new roads and suspension bridges, will provide much-needed relief.

Rahaf, a resident of the nearby Maabela area, echoes this frustration. “We leave home two hours early to cover a relatively short distance of about 40 kilometres. The congestion affects our daily lives, and we hope for a lasting solution soon,” she shares, underscoring the impact of traffic on everyday routines.

The consensus among commuters is clear: A more efficient, long-term solution is needed. Many suggest transforming Burj Al Sahwa into a modern traffic station that not only eases congestion but promotes smooth transit. Proposals include enhancing public transportation systems, spreading awareness about safe driving, and encouraging companies to adopt remote work practices to reduce the number of commuters during peak hours.

Ultimately, the goal is to turn Burj Al Sahwa from a bottleneck into a beacon of progress, where traffic flows as seamlessly as the aspirations of those who pass through it daily.

BEATING TRAFFIC BLUES AT BURJ AL SAHWA



OMAN SHOOTING ASSOCIATION HOLDS ANNUAL MEETING

MUSCAT: The Board of Oman Shooting Association today held its annual meeting at the Olympic shooting complex in Muscat under the chairmanship of Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, Board

Chairman of Oman Shooting Association. The meeting discussed a set of topics, including the training plan for the national and military shooting team, the Olympic shooting complex and flying target shooting ranges, and private Olympic



shooting clubs. In addition, it reviewed the annual plan for external participation and touched on a set of other topics included in the agenda. The meeting was attended by Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of

the Royal Army of Oman, First Deputy Chairman of the Board, Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operation, Second Deputy Chairman of the Board, and other members of the Board. — ONA

Workshop delves into art of business management

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

A workshop to develop skills for entrepreneurs was held for participants of Gulf Takatuf Exhibitions recently. Titled ‘The Art of Business Management and Marketing’, the event brought together owners of small and medium enterprises to enhance their skills and knowledge. In her opening address, HH Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said, organiser of the Gulf Takatuf Exhibitions and founder of Links for Social Initiatives, emphasised the importance of continuous development in the business field and the necessity of exchanging experiences among participants. She noted that Links for organising exhibitions and social initiatives does not only support them during the three days of the exhibition but continues to provide assistance even after the exhibition concludes. To this end, the company organised this free workshop aimed at promoting collaboration among entrepreneurs and equipping them with the essential tools needed for success in their projects. The workshop included



The participants said they learned how to develop their business as well as marketing techniques

lectures and workshops presented by specialised trainers in management, finance and marketing. Among the prominent trainers who participated in the event were Trainer Bassem bin Ahmed al Balushi and Trainer Buthaina bint Hamood al Hadhramiyah, who provided insights into business development strategies and effective project management. “All the entrepreneurial skills that are required should be

elevated,” said Al Balushi. The participants said they learned how to develop their business as well as marketing techniques. Buthaina explained, “We want the entrepreneurs to have the skills that give them confidence to face any challenges they face in their business.” One of the participants, Manal al Maskari said, “I learned how to make a proper business plan for the next five years for my business that deals

with beauty products, including five branches.” Certified certificates were also awarded to participants from Nasmo Academy, giving additional value to the workshop and reinforcing the organisers’ commitment to delivering high-quality content. At the end of the workshop, participants highlighted the importance of exchanging ideas and innovations that could contribute to the success of their business.

CBO allocates RO 30 million in treasury bills



These bills offer high liquidity, allowing banks to discount them or conduct repo operations with the CBO.

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced the allocation of government treasury bills worth RO 30 million for this week. The bills are divided across three maturity periods: 28 days, 91 days, and 182 days. For the 28-day maturity, the allocation amounted to RO 5.3 million, with an average accepted price of RO 99.654 per RO 100. The lowest accepted price was RO 99.640, resulting in an average discount rate of 4.50839% and an average return of 4.52404%. The 91-day maturity bills were allocated RO 2 million, with an average accepted price of RO 98.770. The lowest accepted price matched the average, at RO 98.770 per RO 100. The average discount rate stood at 4.93352%, and the average return was 4.99495%. The largest allocation, RO 22.7 million, went to the 182-day maturity bills. These had an average accepted price of RO 97.584, with the lowest accepted

price at RO 97.565 per RO 100. The average discount rate was 4.84583%, and the average return reached 5.96582%. According to the CBO, the interest rate for repurchase (repo) operations on these treasury bills is 6.00%, while the discount rate on treasury bill facilities is 6.50%. Treasury bills are short-term financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance to provide secure investment options for licensed commercial banks. The CBO manages their issuance. These bills offer high liquidity, allowing banks to discount them or conduct repo operations with the Central Bank. Additionally, commercial banks can engage in interbank repo transactions using treasury bills. This financial tool helps establish short-term interest rate benchmarks in the local market and provides the government with a flexible mechanism to finance its expenses. — ONA

Oman participates in Unesco schools network meeting

BEIJING: Represented by the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, the Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the first meeting of the board of directors of the International Centre for Unesco Associated Schools Network. The meeting, being held in Hainan Province, the People's Republic of China, will continue until September 21. The meeting discusses ways



The meeting, being held in Hainan Province, the People's Republic of China, will continue until September 21. — ONA to consolidate international partnerships, endorsement of the centre's annual plans and programmes (2024-2025),

the centre's 2025 budget and the recommendations of the centre's partners and associates (governmental institutions, regional and international organisations). On the sidelines of the meeting, the delegates will go on visits to some Chinese schools affiliated to Unesco and some heritage sites registered on the Unesco World Heritage List. — ONA

Expo on olive oil and its uses from Sep 26

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR), will organise a dedicated exhibition focused on olive oil production in the country. Titled ‘Olive Oil Exhibition and Its Value-Added Uses,’ the event will be held at Muscat Grand Mall from September 26 to 28. Meanwhile, olive oil production in Oman is relatively in progress, as Oman seeks to diversify its agricultural sector. While Oman's typically arid climate has posed challenges for olive cultivation, efforts have been initiated in areas like Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, where cooler temperatures and fertile soil provide favourable conditions.

Indian expatriates celebrate Onam festival

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Resident Indians in the Sultanate of Oman joined their brethren across the world in celebrating Onam, a confluence of flowers of various colours that symbolise goodness triumphing over evil, celebrated by Indians globally. Known as the ‘Harvest Festival of Kerala’, Onam holds a wealth of memories for every Indian, many of which are tied to childhood experiences. The myth behind the

festival evokes nostalgia for days spent in villages with loved ones, both in India and Oman. Starting on the first day of the Malayalam month ‘Atham’ and lasting for ten days, which falls on September 15, believers adorned their patios with flowers bought from markets or picked from their surroundings to welcome the return of the ancient king Mahabali, according to Hindu mythology. Organisations and cultural groups hosted floral carpet design



Known as the ‘Harvest Festival of Kerala’, Onam holds a wealth of memories for every Indian, many of which are tied to childhood experiences

competitions nationwide in honour of Onam, where teams from different regions showcased their artistic skills and teamwork through intricate floral designs on the ground. “The conclusion of Onam festivities on the tenth day of the Malayalam month ‘Chingam’, particularly on Thiruvonam day, is a time for Indians, especially Malayalis, to come together and celebrate harmony and coexistence,” said CM Najeeb, a businessman.

Onam is a blend of myths, folklore, and traditions, providing a wonderful opportunity for people to unite and appreciate the goodness within each other. Many Omani nationals, along with their families, joined expat friends in celebrating the festival at hotels, enjoying the vibrant colours and delicious feasts. “We are delighted to partake in the Onam celebrations with our colleagues and thoroughly enjoyed the feast that marks the culmination of the festivities.



Israeli deadly strikes demolish Gaza

GAZA: Gaza medics and rescuers on Monday said Israeli strikes on several homes killed at least 18 people, as Palestinian Hamas claimed it had ample resources to sustain its fight nearly a year into the war.

The latest strikes came as Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant warned that prospects for a halt in fighting with Hezbollah militants along the Lebanon border were dimming, yet again raising fears of a wider regional conflagration.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said during an interview in Istanbul on Sunday: “The resistance has a high ability to continue.” “There were martyrs and there were sacrifices... but in return there was an accumulation of experiences and the recruitment of new generations into the resistance.”

His comments came less than a week after Gallant told journalists that Hamas “no longer exists” as a military formation in Gaza.

Deadly fighting raged on in the Gaza Strip on Monday, with survivors seen searching through the debris of crushed buildings following a strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

Ten people were killed and 15 others were wounded when an air strike hit the home of the Al Qassas family in Nuseirat on Monday morning, a medic at Al-



Palestinians check the rubble of a house following Israeli bombardment in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip. — AFP

Awda hospital, where the bodies were brought, said.

Gaza’s civil defence agency said six Palestinians were killed in a similar air strike during the

night on a house belonging to the Bassal family in Gaza City’s Zeitun neighbourhood, a regular target of Israeli military raids since the war began. Two people

were killed in another overnight air strike in Rafah that targeted a house belonging to the Abu Shaar family, the agency said. Israel’s retaliatory military offensive

has so far killed at least 41,226 people in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Palestinian territory.

The war has also drawn in

The dollar rose 0.1 per cent against a basket of major currencie
Deadly fighting raged on in the Gaza Strip on Monday, with survivors seen searching through the debris of crushed buildings following a strike on the Nuseirat refugee camp s, heading for its third weekly gain in a row.

groups from across the region, including in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq. Tensions have surged along Israel’s northern border with Lebanon, amid fears the violence could explode into an all-our war. Lebanon’s Hezbollah group has traded near-daily cross-border fire with Israeli forces since October 7. Hezbollah deputy chief Naim Qassem said that his group has “no intention of going to war”, but if Israel does “unleash” one “there will be large losses on both sides”.

The cross-border violence has killed 623 people in Lebanon, including at least 141 civilians. On the Israeli side, including in the annexed Golan Heights, authorities have announced the deaths of at least 24 soldiers and 26 civilians. — AFP

Shanghai cleans up after storm

SHANGHAI: Emergency workers cleared fallen trees and other debris from Shanghai’s streets after the strongest storm to hit the Chinese megacity since 1949 disrupted transport and left tens of thousands of people without power. Typhoon Bebinca landed in Shanghai’s eastern coastal area early on Monday morning with wind speeds of around 150 kilometres per hour, state media said.

The municipal news service said the typhoon had caused “significant damage across the city”, felling more than 1,800 trees and leaving 30,000 households without electricity.

Many businesses were already closed for the Mid-Autumn Festival public holiday and the city’s 25 million residents were advised to avoid leaving their homes.

Only one injury had been reported so far, the municipal news service said.



Workers remove a fallen tree brought down during the passage of Typhoon Bebinca in Shanghai. — AFP

Workers in orange jumpsuits cleared a big pile of corrugated iron and other metal that appeared to have fallen from a nearby building onto a major road in the city centre.

Authorities said 414,000 people across Shanghai had been evacuated to safer locations and tens of thousands of emergency personnel were on hand to be

deployed. Uprooted trees blocked off several roads in the city centre and the municipal news service said cars had been smashed by flying debris.

Many streets in the city’s former French Concession turned a vivid green, carpeted with the felled boughs and leaves of the quarter’s famous plane trees. Bicycles and rubbish bags littered

the road as clean-up crews and some delivery drivers persevered against the driving rain.

The typhoon brought the normally heaving city to a standstill as it made landfall. Live video feeds during the morning rush hour showed Shanghai’s usually jammed roads almost empty of traffic and its famed skyline obscured by thick fog.

All flights from Shanghai’s airports were grounded earlier but started up again slowly as the storm moved on through the afternoon.

Highways were opened after being closed at 1 am local time and some ferries, metro services and trains resumed service.

State broadcaster CCTV said Bebinca was expected to move northwest, causing heavy rain and high winds in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui provinces. Some residents still braved the weather even at the storm’s peak to go about their errands. — AFP

Vietnam puts typhoon losses at \$1.6 billion

HANOI: Typhoon Yagi caused \$1.6 billion in economic losses in Vietnam, state media said on Monday, as the UN’s World Food Programme said the deadly floods it triggered in Myanmar were the worst in the country’s recent history. Yagi battered Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand with powerful winds and a huge dump of rain over a week ago, triggering floods and landslides that have killed more than 400 people, according to official figures.

It tore across Vietnam’s densely populated Red River delta damaging factories and infrastructure, and inundating farmland.

The typhoon caused an estimated \$1.6 billion in economic losses, state media reported, citing an initial government assessment. The death toll in Vietnam stands at 292, with 38 missing, more than 230,000 homes damaged and 280,000 hectares of crops destroyed, according to authorities. — Reuters



People wade through flood waters on a boat in Hanoi. — AFP file photo

SEOUL

North Korea trash balloon causes fire on Seoul

A trash balloon from North Korea landed on a Seoul building rooftop and caused a fire, fire department said, among thousands of balloons Pyongyang has sent southward this year, sparking a tit-for-tat propaganda campaign.

“At around 9:04 pm on Sunday, a fire broke out on the rooftop of a four-story commercial building in the Western district of Seoul,” Seoul’s Gangseo Fire Station said.

The fire was extinguished with 15 fire trucks and 56 person-



nel were deployed. Pyongyang launched about 120 trash-filled balloons towards the border late on Sunday, following 50 balloons that were sent on Saturday, South Korea’s military said. — AFP

MADRID

First Palestinian submits credentials to Spain

The first Palestinian ambassador to Spain presented his credentials on Monday to Spanish King Felipe VI after Madrid in May formally recognised a Palestinian state. The head of state welcomed Housni Abdel Wahed to the royal palace in Madrid for the traditional ceremony for newly appointed foreign ambassadors to Spain.

Spain along with Ireland and Norway formally recognised a Palestinian state comprising the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.



The three countries said at the time they hoped their decision would spur other countries to follow suit and accelerate efforts towards securing a ceasefire in Israel’s war in Gaza. — AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan court grants bail to 10 lawmakers

An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan granted bail on Monday to 10 lawmakers from jailed former prime minister Imran Khan’s party. At least 30 people from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party were remanded in custody last Tuesday, two days after they led a major rally in the capital, Islamabad. The anti-terrorism court granted them bail of \$100.

The 10 MPs, some detained at their offices in the National Assembly, were charged under a new protest law and the anti-



terrorism act. They were accused of violating the Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act, passed just days before the rally was held. — AFP



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 17 | 2024

7

In brief

■ STOCKHOLM



SWEDEN SAYS WILLING TO LEAD NATO IN FINLAND

Sweden is ready to manage a future Nato land force in neighbouring Finland, the two newest members of the military alliance announced on Monday. “This kind of military presence in a Nato country requires a framework nation which plays an important role in the implementation of the concept,” Finnish Defence Minister Antti Hakkanen said. “The Swedish government has the ambition to take the role as a framework nation for a forward land force in Finland,” Swedish counterpart Pal Jonson told reporters. Nato says it currently has eight such forward presences, or “multinational battlegroups”. — **AFP**

■ PARIS



BRETON STEPS DOWN AS FRANCE'S EU COMMISSIONER

Thierry Breton of France abruptly resigned from the European Commission and was replaced by Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne as his country's candidate for the next EU executive body, an unexpected twist in the highly political EU power transition.

Breton announced his resignation in a toughly-worded statement as Commission President Ursula von der Leyen - whom he accused of “questionable governance” - prepares to announce this week who will be part of her new five-year team. — **Reuters**

■ ROME



BRITAIN, ITALY AGREE TO DEEPEN SECURITY COOPERATION

Britain and Italy agreed to deepen their security cooperation through Nato exercises, naval operations and defence initiatives, British PM Keir Starmer said after a meeting with Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni on Monday. “Our forces will continue to exercise together through Nato, the Italian Navy will join UK carrier operations next year, and with vital projects like GCAP, Global Combat Air Programme” Starmer said. In addition, Meloni said: “We agree with Prime Minister Starmer that the first thing we need to do is to intensify the fight against human trafficking.” — **Reuters**

Ukraine invites UN and ICRC to Kursk

KYIV: Ukraine said on Monday it had asked the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to join humanitarian efforts in Russia's Kursk region following a cross-border incursion by Ukrainian forces.

Ukraine's army remains in the Kursk region more than a month after launching the assault, in which President Volodymyr Zelensky says Kyiv has taken control of about 100 settlements. Russia's Defence Ministry said on Monday its forces had regained control of two more villages.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said he had instructed his ministry to invite the UN and ICRC to work in the Kursk region on Sunday. The ministry confirmed that it had issued the requests.

“Ukraine is ready to facilitate their work and prove its adherence to international humanitarian law,” Sybiha said on X after visiting the Sumy region, from where Ukrainian forces launched the cross-border attack.

He said the Ukrainian army was ensured humanitarian



Burnt-out cars are seen near a residential building after shelling, in Belgorod, Russia. — **Reuters**

assistance and safe passage to civilians in the Kursk region.

The Foreign Ministry said the invitations had been sent to the ICRC and UN, “taking into account the humanitarian situation and the need to properly ensure basic human rights in the territory of the Kursk region.”

It said it had asked the ICRC to monitor Ukraine's compliance with the principles of



Ukraine is ready to facilitate their work and prove its adherence to international humanitarian law

ANDRII SYBIHA
Ukrainian Foreign Minister

international humanitarian law.

It was not immediately clear how or whether the UN or ICRC had responded.

Russia's state-run TASS news agency quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying such statements were “provocative”. He made clear Moscow, which began its full-scale attack of Ukraine in 2022, expected the UN and ICRC not to accept the invitations.

A Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the Kremlin's reaction showed a disregard for the humanitarian needs of its own people and a fear of letting international observers see the situation in Kursk.

Russia's state-run RIA news agency said ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric had arrived on a visit to Moscow and planned to meet Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Last week, Russian shelling killed three Ukrainians working for the ICRC and wounded two others in a village in the frontline Donetsk region, Ukrainian officials said. Spoljaric has condemned the attacks.

Meanwhile, Russia said on Monday that its forces had retaken control of two villages in its western Kursk region from Ukraine, continuing what Moscow says is a significant counter-offensive there.

Russian forces have been battling Ukrainian troops in Kursk region since Aug. 6, when Kyiv surprised Moscow with the biggest foreign attack on Russian soil since World War Two.

— **Reuters**

Central Europe braces for more flooding



General view taken of a flooded area by Nysa Kłodzka river in Poland. — **Reuters**

JESENÍK: The death toll from the worst flooding central Europe has seen in at least two decades rose on Monday, as authorities in some areas counted the cost of the trail of destruction left by the deluge while others prepared for the crisis to reach them.

Border areas between the Czech Republic and Poland were hit hard over the weekend as heavy rain that has fallen since last week and surging water levels collapsed some bridges, forced evacuations and damaged cars and houses. At least 15 people have died in flooding from Austria to Romania.

Poland's government announced a state of natural disaster in affected areas and said that it had set aside \$260 million to help victims. Prime Minister Donald Tusk said he was in touch with the leaders of other affected countries and that they would ask the European Union for financial aid.

Michał Piszko, mayor of the Polish town of Kłodzko along the Czech border, said waters had receded there but help was needed. “We need bottled water and dry provisions... half of the city has no electricity,” he told

Polish radio.

Television footage showed streets in Kłodzko strewn with debris and mud. In the Polish town of Nysa, a hospital was evacuated, with patients including pregnant women and elderly people taken away in rafts.

In Jeseník, a Czech town across the border that was inundated on Sunday, a clean-up was starting after waters receded to show damaged cars and debris on the streets.

“There were two metres of water that ran through the street... There are many, many destroyed cars,” said resident Zdeněk Kuzilek. “Telephones are not working, there is no water, no electricity.”

In eastern Romania, where villages and towns were submerged over the weekend, Emil Dragomir, mayor of Slobozia Conachi, told Romanian television the flooding had a devastating impact.

Flooded parts of the northeastern Czech city of Ostrava forced the closures of a power plant supplying heat and hot water to the city as well as two chemical plants. — **Reuters**

US media names suspect in Trump assassination attempt



Trump supporters gather around Mar-A-Lago, in Palm Beach, Florida. — **Reuters**

WASHINGTON: US media named Ryan Wesley Routh as the suspected would-be assassin of Donald Trump. US media said it was Routh, 58, who was arrested after US Secret Service agents “opened fire on a gunman” carrying an AK-47 style rifle near the boundary of Trump's Florida golf course where the former president was golfing on Sunday. The suspect had bolted out of the shrubbery he had been hiding in and escaped in a black car before he was tracked down by authorities.

Trump had been playing golf at his course in West Palm Beach, Florida, not far from his Mar-a-Lago residence, when the would-be shooter was spotted in bushes one hole ahead of the former president, Bradshaw said.

“President Trump is safe following gunshots in his vicinity,” his campaign spokesman Steven Cheung said in a statement, while Democratic presidential hopeful



Ryan Wesley Routh, suspect of Trump assassination attempt. — **AFP**

Kamala Harris expressed relief her political rival was out of danger.

CNN and CBS reported Routh was a self-employed affordable housing builder in Hawaii who had an arrest record spanning decades and regularly posted on politics and current events, including sometimes criticising Trump, the Republican presidential candidate.

One cause Routh expressed support for was Ukraine's fight against the attack launched by Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

“I am willing to fly to Krakow and go to the border of Ukraine

to volunteer and fight and die... Can I be the example We must win,” Routh said in an X post in March 2022, according to the New York Times, which interviewed him.

AFP interviewed Routh in Kyiv in late April 2022, while he was taking part in a demonstration in support of Ukrainians trapped in the port city of Mariupol.

“Putin is a terrorist, and he needs to be ended, so we need everybody from around the world to stop what they are doing and come here now,” he said at the time. The United States has been a staunch support of Ukraine since Russia attacked in February 2022.

President Joe Biden will be replaced next January either by his Vice-President Kamala Harris, who has indicated she will continue his policies of backing Ukraine, or by Trump, who would not say at a debate earlier this week whether he wanted Kyiv to win the war.

— **AFP**

Dhofar... A potential year-round destination



Traditionally known for the khareef season, which attracts tourists during the monsoon months, there are efforts to position Dhofar as a year-round tourist destination.

The Dhofar Khareef Season, which is characterised by lush greenery and a pleasant climate, makes the governorate an attractive destination for visitors.

The influx of tourists during the khareef season has led to significant developments in the hospitality sector, with hotel room availability projected to improve significantly.

This boom in tourism has spurred investments in infrastructure and services that cater to both local and international visitors.

To capitalise on the momentum generated by the khareef season, more efforts are needed to extend tourist activities throughout the year.

Initiatives such as the ‘Sarb’ season, aimed to diversify attractions beyond the monsoon months, need to be promoted with vigour.

By developing year-round tourist destinations and promoting various cultural and recreational

activities, Dhofar Governorate can stabilise tourist arrivals and ensure continuous economic benefits to the country.

The efforts of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), on enhancing the visitor experience through various initiatives, are paying dividends. These initiatives not only attract visitors but also promote local heritage and crafts, fostering a deeper connection between tourists and the governorate.

Dhofar Governorate’s archaeological sites, including Samharam, Al Baleed, Shisr, and Khor Rori, serve as open-air museums, reveal the ingenuity and heritage of past civilisations.

These sites, alongside historical shrines and traditional architecture, can draw increasing interest from local and international visitors towards heritage and culture.

The area’s rich historical narrative can be complemented by its natural beauty, with picturesque landscapes enhancing the travel experience.

Since sustainability is a crucial aspect of Dhofar Governorate’s tourism strategy, the ministry is

POSITIONING
DHO FAR
GOVERNORATE AS
A YEAR-ROUND
DESTINATION
HINGES ON
EXTENDING
ITS TOURISM
OFFERINGS
BEYOND THE
KHAREEF SEASON
WHILE ENSURING
SUSTAINABLE
PRACTICES
ARE AT THE
FOREFRONT OF
DEVELOPMENT
EFFORTS

implementing environment-friendly practices while promoting all-round tourism development.

Sustainable tourism ensures that natural resources are preserved while providing economic opportunities for local communities. This can help in creating jobs for nationals in tourism sector.

Despite its potential, Dhofar Governorate faces challenges related to managing increased tourist numbers while preserving its natural environment.

Balancing growth with environmental stewardship requires careful planning and strategic initiatives from both government bodies and private stakeholders. Addressing these challenges will be vital in establishing Dhofar Governorate as a world-class tourist destination.

Positioning Dhofar Governorate as a year-round destination hinges on extending its tourism offerings beyond the khareef season, while ensuring sustainable practices are at the forefront of development efforts. With strategic planning and investment in infrastructure, Dhofar Governorate can enhance its appeal as a vibrant tourist hub that celebrates its unique culture and stunning landscapes throughout the entire year.

French YouTuber hits peak with Everest film

YASSINE KHIRI AND JOSEPH BOYLE

The pitch is a classic: a young celebrity with no climbing experience and minimal training somehow scales Mount Everest, succeeding against some (if not all) odds.

French YouTuber Ines Benazzouz, known everywhere as Inoxtag, brought the story to life with a two-hour-plus documentary about his year preparing for the ultimate challenge.

The film, titled “Kaizen”, proved a smash hit on its release this weekend.

Young fans queued around the block to get into a preview screening in Paris and it was seen more than 11 million times in its first 24 hours on YouTube. The platform said it was “undoubtedly one of the biggest launches in the history” of YouTube in France, though a spokesperson contacted by AFP could not give a precise ranking.

The 22-year-old content creator started posting video game footage in his mid-teens and his livewire energy has since catapulted him to superstardom among young French. He has more than eight million subscribers on YouTube and more than 10 million followers on other platforms.

“I’ve always liked to have adventures — when I was younger, they were on video games,” he said in an interview before the release. After obsessing over “Minecraft” and “Fortnite” for years, he said he wanted these experiences to be real.

Inoxtag posts relentlessly upbeat content and challenge videos like “30 seconds to save a life” or “Five days to walk across Corsica” but also professes a serious concern for the environment.

His film has the moments of tension and personal drama online documentaries are expected to serve up, while mixing in serious issues like over-tourism and pollution. Fans have been in raptures over the movie, but the French press has not exactly embraced it.

The *Liberation* newspaper accused the filmmakers of erasing the work of the Sherpas, the Nepalese who help climbers with their ascents — though some later joined Inoxtag on stage in Paris.

Mountaineer and photographer Pascal Tournaire told L’Equipe newspaper the movie was “very egotistical” and said the YouTube star had not achieved any real feat. On the other side of the ledger, Mathis Dumas, the climber who helped Inoxtag prepare for the ascent, told local media the young star had a “real love” for the mountain.

And fans gathered outside the cinema in Paris would not hear a word of criticism.

“I know there are plenty of people who climb the mountain and don’t film themselves,” said 19-year-old student Lucie Bonin. “But it’s wild that a YouTuber is entertaining us like this, just by setting himself such crazy goals.” — AFP

Digital transformation in Oman



Dr Najma Al Zidjaly

The writer is an Associate Professor of Social Media and Omani (Arab) identity in the Department of English and Translation at Sultan Qaboos University

Over the past decade, Oman has witnessed a significant transformation in civic engagement and public-government collaboration, driven largely by the adoption of digital tools and social media platforms. This shift has redefined communication, governance, and public discourse in the country, fostering new forms of interaction between citizens and government officials.

The widespread use of mobile phones initially changed how Omanis communicated, evolving from personal devices to essential tools for public discourse and engagement. My research in Oman has highlighted that these devices now serve as critical gateways to the digital world, facilitating connections and interactions not only within social and academic spheres but also with the government.

As Omanis have embraced the Internet, platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (X) have opened new avenues for expression and public engagement. Social media in fact has broken down traditional barriers, enabling more direct, informal, and immediate interactions between citizens and their government. This digital revolution has empowered Omanis to participate actively in the development of their country by amplifying their voices and advocating for change.

WhatsApp, in particular, has become a key platform for public discourse. During the Covid-19 pandemic, WhatsApp stickers emerged as tools for raising awareness and supporting public health campaigns, illustrating how digital platforms can facilitate community resilience and government collaboration. Additionally, Omani teachers in 2013 used WhatsApp to coordinate educational activities and engage in discussions on broader societal issues, influencing policy decisions and driving social change. Twitter (X) has also played a crucial role in digital activism, providing a space for Omanis to express opinions, critique public policies, and engage in socio-political discourse. Through hashtags and memes, citizens have



Despite the positive impact of social media, challenges remain.

bypassed traditional media channels, advocating for social change and contributing to nation-building.

Social media has not only empowered citizens but also facilitated new connections with government officials, allowing for more transparent and immediate interactions. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this dynamic was particularly evident, as citizens actively supported government efforts through innovative actions like creating Covid-19 WhatsApp stickers. Social media has also enabled Omanis to hold officials accountable, with ministries involving the public in decision-making processes through online questionnaires, reflecting a strengthened relationship between citizens and their government.

My recent research (co-authored with a Omani colleague) has further highlighted the role of social media in civic engagement, identifying four main types of digital civic activities: reforming services, preserving cultural norms, disseminating knowledge, and promoting Omani products and tourism. These activities contribute to the public good, community building, and policy implementation, showcasing the potential of social media to drive social change and public-government collaboration.

Despite the positive impact of social media, challenges remain. Digital literacy is a significant issue, particularly in rural areas, where segments of the population lack proper access to technology or the skills to use it effectively. This digital divide limits the potential of social media as a tool for empowerment.

Furthermore, the risks of misinformation and harmful content pose challenges to public opinion and decision-making, underscoring the need for promoting digital literacy and critical thinking. While social media has opened new channels for communication between citizens and government officials, there is a need for more formal mechanisms for public participation in decision-making processes. Social media should complement, rather than replace, traditional forms of civic engagement.

As Oman continues to navigate the digital age, social media will remain a crucial force in shaping public-government relations. Over the past decade, these platforms have transformed communication, civic engagement, and governance in Oman, fostering transparency and accountability. To ensure that social media continues to serve as a positive force for social change, it is essential to address its challenges and limitations by promoting digital literacy, combating misinformation, and developing more inclusive governance. Through these efforts, Oman can continue to leverage the power of social media to create a more engaged, informed, and empowered society.

Get to know social currency

Have been enchanted with Gen Z and their world. It would be wonderful to know who influences them the most. A generation ago, psychologists and counsellors were concerned about peer pressure among school students, where parents and teachers found it difficult to guide the children, especially in their teen years.

Most parents quietly prayed, shying away from a verbal clash. Now it is not just peer pressure but a whole ecosystem of digital networking. The trend is set there, and it is not even a physical world.

Is it truly illusionary? They watch a social media influencer, sometimes their own age group, and are impressed by the lifestyle they have portrayed. And this is the case with YouTubers and gamers. But most of the time it is just that - a portrayal.

To understand more about it, we need to dive into the world of social currency.

So what is social currency? If you are an impactful social media influencer with an impressive number of followers, businesses would actually invite you to experience their products and services. So if it is a restaurant, for instance, then the person would be invited to experience and share their moments.

When it comes to the viewers, they may be left wondering when they will be able to experience it for themselves. But the business got what they wanted- they got the word out. In the past, advertising in the traditional media meant pumping out a lot of money in the traditional media.

Now this also means doing a review of a product or service, which in the past was done by the experts. But today it is presented by anyone who can communicate well and has the ability to reach out to a wider audience.

According to the experts, there are benefits of social currency, and one of them is insight into customers.



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

IF YOU ARE AN IMPACTFUL SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER WITH AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS, BUSINESSES WOULD ACTUALLY INVITE YOU TO EXPERIENCE THEIR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

This is an interesting point because, as humans, we love to comment and respond. We like to project our opinions, and that is what social media thrives on- the likes and shares as well as commenting. This helps the marketing people understand our emotional triggers. There are people who find it interesting to understand the reels and situations by just dreading the comment section.

Emotions are crucial- what you like and dislike matters. In a way, it is important data.

The other aspect, the experts point out, is that social currency is good for organic growth. There are ways to boost your posts, but organic growth has a better feel.

What was one of the most traditional forms of marketing?

It used to be the word of mouth. Even in the modern world, it works. Inform someone not to tell anyone, and rest assured that it will soon be making the rounds. Maybe humans like the element of gossiping. On social media platforms, we share what we like, but there are also individuals who like to share videos and posts that have a shock element.

Now if the audience liked what they saw, then it is a stepping stone towards loyalty. The viewers will look forward to experiencing it for themselves and sharing the images on the platforms, encouraging others to follow suit.

However, we have to remember that often the social media influencer could have been invited to experience the place, and they may not have had to spend money for it. And that is another feature of social currency.

You, yourself, are the asset. The fact is many individuals are doing well, and social currency is here to stay and will become part of lifestyle.

So maybe it is a good idea to have a conversation just on the realities of social currency and as always to be wary of what you post on one's timeline or in the comment section. Whether we like it or not, we are part of the story.

CITY FROM THE TOP!



This aerial photograph shows the city skyline of Paris and the Eiffel Tower in Paris on Monday. – AFP

Conflict and competitiveness in Europe

Returning from their summer recess, European Union leaders have a packed agenda. At the top of the list are strengthening the bloc's readiness for conflict and bolstering its economic competitiveness.

For decades, the EU relied on economic influence as a substitute for hard power. But in an era of renewed geopolitical tensions, soft power is not sufficient. The evidence of this comes in many forms. If Europe's shrinking industrial base and scramble to adjust to the reality of deglobalisation are not convincing enough, the Ukraine war surely must be.

That conflict has not only upended the long-held belief that full-scale wars in Europe belonged to the past; it has also demonstrated the limits of economic ties and levers to shape countries' behaviour.

Despite facing one of the most expansive sanctions regimes in history, Russia's economy grew by 5.4 per cent in the first quarter of this year, and 4 per cent in the second – well above the global average.

A key reason for this resilience is that Russia has found ways to circumvent sanctions and acquire restricted goods, including defence and high-tech products. More than half of the battlefield equipment that Russia obtained between



Ana Palacio

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain and former senior vice president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

FLAWS IN THE WEST'S SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA, TOGETHER WITH EUROPE'S FAILURE TO REFORM ITS ENERGY FRAMEWORK, HAVE UNDERMINED EUROPEAN SECURITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

February and August of 2022 contained components made in Europe or the United States. And the majority of the semiconductors being exported to Russia – a trade that has surged tenfold since the war started – originated with US manufacturers.

The Western firms producing those goods, however, are not reaping the full profits of this trade, which is happening largely through complex networks involving third countries. It is no coincidence that Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Türkiye, and several Central Asian countries have drastically increased their trade with both Russia and Europe since the 2022 war.

Kazakhstan has a relatively small tech industry, yet its tech exports to Russia surged from \$40 million in 2021 to \$298 million in 2023.

Russia's success at circumventing sanctions – often at high cost to Western businesses – has forced European policymakers to scramble to adapt. While 14 rounds of sanctions have been introduced in two and a half years, Europe's leaders have so far failed to devise effective solutions.

The new trade with Russia is simply too lucrative for

intermediary countries to pass up. While the EU could step up its pressure on these countries, using either carrots (like aid packages) or sticks (secondary sanctions), coercion would create its own challenges, and it could undermine Europe's economic and security interests.

Intermediaries are also handling goods headed in the opposite direction: as the EU has sought to reduce its energy dependence on Russia, it has often ended up importing refined Russian fuel at inflated prices via third countries, such as India.

Even in terms of direct energy imports, many EU countries continue to rely on Russia. Austria now gets a staggering 98 per cent of its natural gas from Russia's state

energy company, Gazprom, with the share having risen since the start of the Ukraine war. Moreover, the EU's imports of liquefied natural gas from Russia surged by 37.7 per cent between 2021 and 2023. Given that LNG is particularly expensive, this has further exacerbated energy costs – and internal discord.

The EU's failure to update its fragmented and reactive energy framework has left it unable to balance geopolitical considerations with economic realities.

This has not only eroded the bloc's soft power – including its international credibility and its economic competitiveness – but also has undermined its ability to invest in strengthening its hard power.

This situation calls for a fundamental rethink of Europe's priorities and policies, argues Mario Draghi, a former head of the European Central Bank and prime minister of Italy, in a just-released report.

For example, he suggests that the EU should break its habit of blocking mergers over competition concerns – a practice that has often kept European firms too small to compete globally – and instead introduce a new regime for monitoring potentially problematic mergers after they happen.

More broadly, Draghi argues that the EU must urgently strengthen its industrial base, simplify its regulatory framework, and increase investment in defence and innovation.

Without these reforms – designed carefully and implemented quickly – the EU risks falling even further behind at a time when it can ill afford to. The stakes will grow only higher if Donald Trump returns for a second term in the White House, which would surely lead to the US becoming a far less reliable partner, leaving Europe's security and economy even more vulnerable than they already are.



For decades, the EU relied on economic influence as a substitute for hard power.

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



SEEB KEEP LEAD, AL NAHDHA STAY PERFECT

AL SHABAB, SOHAR SHARE SPOILS IN OMANTEL LEAGUE



FROM LEFT: Players fight for the ball in the Omantel League fourth round matches between Bahla and Seeb, Al Nahdha and Sur and Al Shabab and Sohar.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

Seeb defeated Bahla 2-1 to keep their lead on top of Omantel League after the fourth round match at the Ibri Sports Complex Stadium on Sunday.

Bahla took the lead through their defender Loki Vikme in the 27th minute but Seeb quickly responded by scoring the equaliser through Ali al Busaidy in the 33rd minute, before Abdulaziz al Muqbal added the second goal in the 50th minute, securing Seeb's victory and raising their score to 12 points, thus maintaining their lead in the league standings.

On the other hand, Bahla

remained without points, as this was their first match since the start of the season after being promoted as a replacement for the Dhofar team in the Omantel League.

AL NAHDHA'S WINNING STREAK CONTINUES

Al Nahdha achieved a valuable 1-0 victory over their hosts Sur at the Sur Sports Complex.

The only goal of the match came through Thani al Rashidi in the 49th minute, as Al Rashidi took advantage of an accurate pass from Osama via a direct free kick to put the ball into Sur's net with a perfect header. Despite the efforts made by Sur club players to return to the

match, Al Nahdha managed to maintain their lead thanks to their organised defence and their goalkeeper who stopped several dangerous attempts.

With this victory, Al Nahdha raised their score to 12 points, achieving a full score from 4 matches, which strengthens their position at the top of the standings with Seeb and confirms their strong start to this season.

For their part, Sur continue to suffer, as they remained without points after suffering a third consecutive defeat.

This loss is a major blow to Sur's ambitions this season, as they will have to work hard in the upcoming rounds to

make up for the lost points and improve their position in the league table.

AL SHABAB HOLD SOHAR

Al Shabab and Sohar tied 2-2 at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex on Sunday.

The first half was average, and both teams tried to score an early goal. The most dangerous opportunity fell to Sohar in the 12th minute when Saud al Muqbal wasted a golden opportunity with a shot outside the goal.

The attempts continued, and Sohar almost took the lead in the 15th minute, but their attackers did not take advantage of the opportunity.

Al Shabab responded through Issam al Subhi, who shot a powerful ball that went over the crossbar in the 18th minute. In the 30th minute, Khalid al Buraiki scored the lead goal for Al Shabab with a header from a set piece. However, Sohar equalised in the 37th minute through Mohsen Jawhar, and the first half ended in a 1-1 draw.

In the second half, the level of enthusiasm increased between the two teams as each sought to achieve victory and collect points. Al Shabab pressed intensively on Sohar's goal from the right and left sides.

Despite the attempts of both teams, play was confined to the middle of the field for periods

without any real danger.

In the 65th minute, Abdullah al Shabli managed to score the first goal for Sohar with a powerful shot to the right of Al Shabab goalkeeper, but Sohar's joy did not last long, as Issam al Subhi managed to score the equaliser for Al Shabab with a header just one minute later from a perfect cross.

Both teams continued to search for the winning goal without retreating, but to no avail, as the match ended in a 2-2 draw.

With this draw, Al Shabab earned their first point of the season and moved up to 10th place, while Sohar moved to four points in sixth place.

Al Bashayer edge past Seeb in Credit Oman Cup



An Al Bashayer player makes a move past a Seeb player. – Zakaria al Falahy

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

Al Bashayer Club achieved a thrilling victory over Seeb Club with a score of 62-60 in the 2024 Credit Oman Basketball Cup, adding two valuable points to their tally, reaching four points. The match took place in the secondary hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, where both teams showcased a balanced performance, with the game remaining highly competitive until the final moments.

The match began with Al Bashayer taking the lead in the first quarter through a successful basket by Osama al Riyami but Seeb quickly responded with a basket from Rasheed al Zuhaibi. The exchanges continued between the two teams, as Hadeed Bait Bukhait scored four points for Al Bashayer, while Ayman al Mahrami responded with two points for Seeb, ending the first quarter with Al Bashayer ahead 11-8.

In the second quarter, Seeb came out stronger, attacking to narrow the gap. Rasheed al Zuhaibi and Ayman al Mahrami scored four points, giving Seeb the lead at 12-11. However, Al Bashayer bounced back through a three-pointer and another basket from Hadeed Bait Bukhait, taking a five-point lead. Seeb then regained



control, scoring six points through Ayman al Mahrami and Marwan al Hadidi, ending the second quarter with a 29-27 lead.

In the third quarter, the offensive exchanges continued, with Al Bashayer scoring five points through Saeed al Saadi, while Seeb responded with two points from Marwan al Hadidi and another two from Mazen al Hadidi, maintaining a 33-32 lead. Despite this, Al Bashayer managed to turn the game around, adding 16 points compared to Seeb's 13, ending the third quarter with Al

Bashayer leading 48-46.

In the fourth quarter, the game remained tightly contested, with both teams scoring 14 points each. The match concluded with Al Bashayer securing a 62-60 victory.

The match was officiated by international referee Ahmed al Balushi as the first referee, with international referees Issam al Siyabi and Mazen al Hilali as the second and third referees, respectively. The score table was managed by Mariam al Zadjali, Miad al Hamdani and Hafedh Oulad Ahmed.

Shapovalov enjoys Davis Cup redemption

PARIS: Denis Shapovalov let out a roar of delight as he sealed 2022 champions Canada's place in this year's Davis Cup finals on Sunday beating Britain's Dan Evans 6-0, 7-5 — redemption for the last time he faced the same opponents.

Back in 2017 Shapovalov's wild hitting of a ball in frustration hit the umpire leading to him being defaulted and Britain awarded the tie as a result 3-2.

The 25-year-old made no such slip-up on Sunday as he won the opening rubber and ensured the Canadians and not Britain would be joining Argentina as the two countries to progress from the group in Manchester, England.

Shapovalov, who has slipped to 100 in the world having once been as high as 10th, admitted having cruised through the first set it was tough to keep the momentum going.

"Very happy to get the win,



Canada's Denis Shapovalov celebrates winning his singles match against Britain's Daniel Evans during the Davis Cup Group D match at AO Arena, Manchester, Britain. — Reuters

he's a tricky opponent and he fights so well," said Shapovalov, who managed to silence the partisan 15,700 crowd.

"He was clawing his way back in the second set. I haven't played a cleaner first set than that in my life so super happy to get the win.

"I could feel Dan getting pumped up and the crowd too so I was definitely starting to turn so I was happy to get it done in straights."

Felix Auger-Aliassime settled the tie for Canada with a 7-6 (10/8), 7-5 win over Jack Draper.

The British won the final doubles to make it 2-1 but it was not enough to guide them into the finals.

Netherlands clinched the last of the eight places going by avoiding a 3-0 defeat against defending champions Italy in Bologna, a result which would have seen Brazil progress instead.

With US Open champion

Jannik Sinner watching from the stands, the Dutch were looking down the barrel when Matteo Berrettini came from behind to beat Botic van de Zandschulp 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 with Flavio Cobolli following up with a 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-3 win over Tallon Griekspoor.

But Van de Zandschulp returned to the court to join Wesley Koolhof in the doubles and they saw of Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori 7-6 (8-6), 7-5 to get the result they needed.

In the day's other matches Spain beat Australia 2-1 in Valencia, although both teams have already qualified, while Chile edged Slovakia 2-1 in the Zhuhai group from which Germany and United States had already qualified.

The finals are in Malaga, Spain, from November 19-24 with the draw for the quarterfinals taking place next Thursday. — AFP

Salt proud of England as rain ensures series level

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom: Stand-in England captain Phil Salt said he was "very proud" of the side after rain denied them the chance to complete a comeback T20 series win against Australia at Old Trafford on Sunday.

Australia overwhelmed their arch-rivals by 28 runs in Wednesday's opener in Southampton before England, with all-rounder Liam Livingstone making 87, bounced back courtesy of a three-wicket success in Cardiff on Friday.

But with the three-match series all set for an intriguing decider, rain saw Sunday's match in Manchester — where bad weather meant last year's fourth Test ended in a draw as Australia retained the Ashes — abandoned



Australia captain Mitchell Marsh and England captain Phil Salt with the trophy. — Reuters

without a ball being bowled.

"I'm very proud of this team," Salt told Sky Sports.

The 28-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman added: "When you lose the first one you're always under pressure and we came back harder."

Salt was leading England instead of the injured Jos Buttler,

who has not played since the end of the team's lacklustre T20 World Cup title defence in Guyana in June.

"I've enjoyed it, it's different," said Salt of his initial experience as England captain.

"It's the first time in an England shirt I've had to look at the game differently but I've enjoyed the added responsibility."

Livingstone was named player-of-the-series after starring with both bat and ball, the spinner taking 3-22 and scoring 37 in Southampton before making 87 at Sophia Gardens in a match where he also had bowling figures of 2-16.

Those two fixtures saw the 31-year-old, previously best known as a T20 'finisher', given a chance to impose himself as

a number four batsman in a new-look England side. "I'll bat wherever I'm told to bat," said Livingstone. "I want to play for England for as long as I can but hopefully I've proven that higher up the order is better for me."

The teams will next meet in a five-match one-day international (ODI) series starting in Nottingham on Thursday, with Harry Brook now leading England instead of the still-sidelined Buttler against Australia, the 50-over world champions. "It would have been nice to finish with a match today (Sunday)," said Australia captain Mitchell Marsh. "We've got a few guys who will come back in at some stage. It's amazing to see young guys playing for Australia."

— AFP

Frech downs Gadecki in Guadalajara Open for first WTA title



Poland's Magdalena Frech celebrates with her trophy on the podium after winning the final of the WTA Guadalajara Open in Zapopan, Mexico. — AFP

GUADALAJARA, Mexico: Magdalena Frech captured her first WTA tour title on Sunday, beating Australian qualifier Olivia Gadecki 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 to lift the trophy in Guadalajara.

It's the latest big moment in a breakthrough season for the 43rd-ranked player from Poland.

She reached her first singles final in the clay court tournament in Prague last month, and then reached her first hard court quarter-final in Monterrey before going all the way to her first hard court final in this 500-level event.

Neither player broke serve in a neck-and-neck first set. They were 5-5 in the tie-breaker when Gadecki fired a service return wide to give Frech a set point, which she seized on Gadecki's forehand error.

Gadecki gained the first break of the match to open the second set, but Frech earned the

decisive break for 5-3.

Frech faltered in her bid to serve out the match but broke again to seal it.

"I just want to say that dreams do come true," Frech told the crowd as she accepted her trophy and tried to balance a big sombrero that came with it on her head.

"It's my first WTA title and it's really, really amazing," added the 26-year-old, who won a lower-level event in Massachusetts in 2021.

Her triumph denied 152nd-ranked Gadecki, who was playing in her first tour-level final after a run that featured wins over former US Open champion Sloane Stephens and second-seeded Danielle Collins.

Gadecki's runner-up finish means the 22-year-old Aussie will break into the top 100 in the world rankings for the first time.

— AFP

Abdulmonem officiates at World Aquatics Championship as chief referee

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

Oman's international referee Abdulmunim al Alawi ended his successful participation as chief referee at the World Aquatics Junior Open Water Swimming Championships (Alghero 2024) which was staged in ancient city of Alghero, Italy during September 5-8. As many as 200 open water athletes aged 14-19 from 35 countries took part in this prestigious event including future stars of the sport, such as David Bethlehem (HUN), Katie Grimes (USA) and Bettina Fabian (HUN).

Commenting on his participation at this world level event, Al Alawi said in exclusive remarks to Oman Observer: "I am very glad to take part in the World Aquatics Open Water Swimming Junior World Championships 2024 as chief referee in different events including: 5 km Boys and Girls (14-15 Years), 7.5 km Boys and Girls (16-17 Years), 10 km Boys and Girls (18-19 Years), Mix Relay Event (14-16 Years) and



Open Relay Event."

"This is happening for first time that the chief umpire to be assigned for several different events at the same championship. I would like to thank FINA for their trust and confidence to choose me on this position. During my stay in Italy, I had the honour to meet HH Sayyid Nizar bin Al Julanda bin Majid al Said, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Italy. I am very thankful for the ambassador and his team in the embassy for their support and assistance during my stay in Italy,"



he added.

Two months ago, Abdulmunim al Alawi had completed his third successive Olympic Games attendance in Paris Olympic Games 2024 following his presence in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. He was named as the chief referee in both the Men's and Women's 10 km Marathon swimming (open water) in Paris 2024. He had officiated in Women's and Men's 10 km Marathon swimming (open water) event.

Al Alawi, who hails from Sur, affirmed that representing the

country in these high-profile sporting events was a great honour. "This attendance in World Aquatics Junior Open Water Swimming Championships followed after great milestone achieved through my attendance in Olympic Games in Paris 2024.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the World Aquatics for their confidence and trust to assign me in this position.

A special thanks goes to Oman Aquatics Association for their continuous support and assistance," he concluded.



Poland's Magdalena Frech (R) and Australia's Olivia Gadecki celebrate on the podium with their first and second place trophies in Zapopan, Mexico. — AFP



Team WRT trio climb to P5 in LMGT3 Driver Championship standings

Al Harthy thanks Omani Ambassador Dr Mohammed Said al Busaidi

Faultless drive from P12 on grid and perfect teamwork secures P3 result

Exceptional performance in Japan from Al Harthy, Martin and Rossi

Richly deserved podium return for Ahmad al Harthy in 6 Hours of Fuji



Sensational FIA WEC podium for Al Harthy

FUJI, JAPAN: Ahmad al Harthy, Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin celebrated a joyous return to the FIA World Endurance Championship podium at Fuji Speedway in Japan on Sunday with an absolutely outstanding performance to climb through the order to third place in LMGT3.

Taking their maiden FIA WEC silverware together back in April at Imola in Italy, the Team WRT trio has been striving hard to return to the LMGT3 podium ever since and during the weekend's 6 Hours of Fuji they delivered in style.

Oman's Al Harthy qualified the No 46 car 12th on the class grid, the track not suiting the strengths of the BMW M4 in qualifying trim, but a fabulous race from all three drivers and an excellent strategy enabled the squad to finish the race only three seconds shy of second place, and

just seven seconds adrift of the LMGT3 winner.

Al Harthy took the start of the race from the sixth row of the LMGT3 grid and after a terrific opening he quickly gained four places, scything into the top eight. He then took seventh prior to the appearance of the Safety Car due to an incident among the Hypercar class at the start of lap two.

During the opening hour of the race the Omani performed superbly and he concluded the first 60 minutes of racing in a very competitive fifth position, within 16 seconds of the LMGT3 lead. After the first round of pit-stops Al Harthy stayed aboard the No 46 BMW M4 and the progress continued.

Making no mistakes, and looking after the Goodyear tyres well, the OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Oman supported driver made his way into the podium placings and by the end of hour two he was an incredibly strong third, before then moving into second – a remarkable double stint.

Martin took over behind the wheel next and continued the podium challenge, closing on the race leading No 92 Porsche 911 and holding second place as the race reached the halfway point. After the third round of stops was complete, he was third and the bid for silverware began to be solidified.

6 HOURS OF FUJI LMGT3 RACE RESULT:

1. Davide Rigon / Francesco Castellacci / Thomas Flohr (AF Corse / Ferrari 296)
 2. Klaus Bachler / Joel Sturm / Aliaksandr Malykhin (PureRxcing / Porsche 911)
 3. Ahmad al Harthy / Maxime Martin / Valentino Rossi (Team WRT / BMW M4)
 4. Charlie Eastwood / Rui Andrade / Tom van Rompuy (TF Sport / Corvette Z06)
 5. Michelle Gattling / Rahel Frey / Sarah Bovy (Iron Dames / Lamborghini Huracan)
 6. Alessio Rovera / Simon Mann / Francois Heriau (AF Corse / Ferrari 296)
- FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP LMGT3 DRIVER STANDINGS (AFTER RD7)**
1. Klaus Bachler / Joel Sturm / Aliaksandr Malykhin, 136 pts
 2. Morris Schuring / Richard Lietz / Yasser Shahin, 90 pts
 3. Augusto Farfus / Darren Leung / Sean Gelael, 85 pts
 4. Alex Riberas / Daniel Mancinelli / Ian James, 83 pts
 5. Ahmad al Harthy / Maxime Martin / Valentino Rossi, 61 pts

Hour four provided the first mileage of the race for Rossi and he delivered some exceptional driving too. Running in eighth when initially taking the car over, he passed two rivals in one corner and took sixth before soon progressing back into the podium placings – ending hour four in third.

The Italian pushed on but as the penultimate hour of action neared its conclusion, Rossi was edged back to fourth by the No 54 Ferrari 296 of compatriot Davide Rigon. Pitting inside the final hour, Martin got back behind the wheel of the BMW and with 50 minutes to run he emerged in seventh before moving back into the top four as rivals started to take their last stops.

With 40 minutes to go Martin was within 15 seconds of the podium, the top three actually running nose-to-tail, and the hope was the lead trio would slow each other up defending, enabling Martin to make up chunks of time.

Lapping more than a second faster than the cars ahead at that point, with half an hour to go the gap had reduced to around eight seconds. Not putting a wheel wrong, Martin caught the third placed No.59 McLaren with just under 20 minutes remaining on the clock and on lap 184 he was alongside his rival – sealing the move to take third.

Just under five seconds shy of second position with a quarter of an hour to go,

anything more looked unlikely with the pace of the new top three then pretty evenly matched. Martin did close some more before taking the flag in third – a fantastic return to the podium for the No 46 BMW M4.

AHMAD AL HARTHY:
“What an unbelievable result – I’m really, really over the moon! This was one of the hardest races we had to do to achieve this result, by far it was a very, very challenging race but everybody drove extremely well. I’m delighted with the way I started the race and was able to overtake all those cars, that was crucial to being able to make our strategy work.”

“Some of the Safety Cars and Full Course Yellows did work somewhat towards our direction, but others went against us. More importantly, everybody didn’t put a single foot wrong. It’s great to be back on the podium and celebrate with all of the sponsors and partners from Oman who attended the race, including the Ambassador to Japan, His Excellency Dr Mohammed Said al Busaidi. I am so grateful for their support and delighted to see the Omani flag back on the FIA WEC podium!”

The season finale of the 2024 FIA World Endurance Championship, round eight, will mark a return to the Middle East with a visit to Bahrain International Circuit on November 1 and 2.



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
4,730.896

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$72.44
BRENT \$71.78
LIGHT \$67.97



Create a brighter future for your Children
Visit your nearest BankDhofar branch





































































































































































































































































































































BUSINESS

QUICK TAKES



Five more projects are planned for the next two years.

NESTO EXPANDS PRESENCE IN OMAN

MUSCAT: Nesto Hypermarket, a leading regional retail chain, has announced the opening of its 17th store in Oman and its 129th globally, on September 18 at 12 pm.

The new hypermarket, branded as Bilad Mall, is located in the heart of Maabala on Salam Street and is guaranteed to offer a shopping experience like no other, according to the management.

Spread over 215,000 sqf t built-up area, the new Nesto hypermarket offers a truly exceptional shopping experience, and will have 40 checkout counters for efficient and streamlined service.

The management hoped that an opulent interior design and a user-friendly store layout will ensure ease of navigation and a pleasurable shopping atmosphere. Other features of the new outlet include: Nesto Home: A dedicated section featuring a wide variety of home furnishing and décor products; ample parking: With over 750 parking slots, finding a convenient spot is a breeze; tenant shops: Offering a diverse range of additional stores to cater to your every need.

Nesto hypermarket at Bilad Mall aspires to be a one-stop destination for the entire community. Beyond the exceptional shopping experience, the mall will also feature: Kids Play Centre (Fun today): A dedicated space for children's entertainment (opening in a few weeks); Vegetarian and non-vegetarian restaurants: Offering delicious dining options for all preferences (opening in a month); Sky hall: A multipurpose hall ideal for gatherings and events (opening in a month).Nesto hypermarket is firmly committed to expanding its presence in Oman.

Dedication
This latest opening marks a significant milestone, and with five more projects planned for the next two years, the company demonstrates its dedication to serving the Omani community. The grand opening ceremony will be graced by the esteemed presence of HH Sayyid Faher bin Fatik al Said. This is a testament to Nesto's dedication to contributing to the growth and development of Oman. The press conference announcing the grand opening was attended by Haris Palollathil, Regional Director, Mjueeb VTK, Regional Director, Hamed al Wahaibi, HR Director, Mussavir Mustafa, Group commercial head, Shahal Shoukath, HR country head, Maskari, HR Operations Manager, Shaji Abdulla, Regional Operations Manager, Muscat, Shamsudeen, Regional Operations Manager, Noushad KV, Buying Head-FMCG, Sameer Abdul Salam, Finance Manager, and Haris H H, Regional Media and Marketing Manager.

Highlights
The grand opening ceremony will be graced by the esteemed presence of HH Sayyid Faher bin Fatik al Said. This is a testament to Nesto's dedication to contributing to the growth and development of Oman.

Highlights
The grand opening ceremony will be graced by the esteemed presence of HH Sayyid Faher bin Fatik al Said. This is a testament to Nesto's dedication to contributing to the growth and development of Oman.

Highlights
The grand opening ceremony will be graced by the esteemed presence of HH Sayyid Faher bin Fatik al Said. This is a testament to Nesto's dedication to contributing to the growth and development of Oman.

MHD Automobiles successfully hosts first-ever Salalah test drive event

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles, the exclusive distributor for Jeep, Dodge, RAM and Alfa Romeo in Oman, has successfully concluded its first-ever Test Drive Event in Salalah. Held during the khareef season, the event took place at the prominent Belad Bont Hotel and showcased the latest models from these iconic brands.

The event received an overwhelming response from residents in Salalah, as well as visitors from other parts of Oman, who were in town to experience the monsoon season.

The 3-day event featured a range of models, including the rugged Jeep Wrangler, the luxurious Jeep Grand Cherokee, the powerful Dodge Durango, the sophisticated Alfa Romeo

The 3-day event featured a range of models, including the rugged Jeep Wrangler, the luxurious Jeep Grand Cherokee, the powerful Dodge Durango, the sophisticated Alfa Romeo Tonale, and the robust RAM 1500 Limited.

Tonale and the robust RAM 1500 Limited. Customers were invited to book their test drives online in advance, arriving at their appointed times — many with their families and friends.

This allowed them to learn more about the models and enjoy the unique experience of test driving their favourite vehicle in the refreshing khareef weather, making for a truly memorable experience.

Commenting on the success of the event, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles, said, “We are thrilled with the incredible turnout at our first Salalah Test Drive Event.

“The khareef season provided the perfect backdrop for customers to



The event received an overwhelming response from residents in Salalah, as well as visitors from other parts of Oman.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

AUSTRALIA'S NEW national blueprint for hydrogen development, recently unveiled by the federal government, presents potential opportunities for collaboration with the Sultanate of Oman, according to the Australian Business Group Oman (ABGO), a non-profit organization promoting trade between the two countries.

The 2024 National Hydrogen Strategy, launched last week by Australian Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen, aims to position the country as a global leader in the production and export of green hydrogen.

With funding support of \$8 billion, the strategy targets an output of 500,000 tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030, increasing to 15 million tonnes per year by 2050.

In a statement, Muscat-based ABG Oman said the new roadmap opens up “exciting opportunities” for collaboration between Australia and Oman in the rapidly growing green hydrogen sector.

The group noted that the mutual ambition of both countries to become “hydrogen powerhouses” bodes well for joint cooperation in this field.

The new national strategy, in particular, paves the way for businesses from both countries to explore mutually beneficial partnerships in this emerging sector, said Mac Thomson, Chair of the Australian Business Group Oman.

“Australia is seen by many countries as a leader in renewables and green hydrogen. This updated strategy positions Australia well to attract further international interest,” he noted.

Thomson also highlighted



The mutual ambition of Oman and Australia to become “hydrogen powerhouses” bodes well for joint cooperation in this field: ABG Oman

Highlights

With funding support of \$8 billion, the strategy targets an output of

500,000 TONNES of green hydrogen annually by 2030, increasing to 15 million tonnes per year by 2050.

Oman's national strategy for green hydrogen development, which targets investments of over \$37 billion by 2030.

This shared pursuit of green energy industries reveals “significant potential for synergies” between the two nations, he said.

There is already evidence of green energy collaboration between Oman and Australia, even before last week's announcement. IDO Investments, the venture capital arm of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), was among several international strategic and financial investors that recently participated in a funding round launched by Australian electrolyser company Hysata.

The Wollongong-based company is developing high-efficiency electrolyzers designed to produce green hydrogen at scale with greater energy efficiency and lower costs than alternative technologies.

Additionally, a consortium comprising Australia-based global integrated green energy, metals, and technology company Fortescue, and UK-based sustainable infrastructure investment firm Actis, has been awarded a land block for the development of a major green hydrogen project in Oman's Dhofar Governorate. The project, powered by renewable solar and wind energy, aims to produce 200,000 tonnes of green hydrogen per year.



This year, the awards continue to offer an exceptional opportunity for outstanding postgraduate students: a paid internship at CCED.

Awards have been pivotal in advancing winners into senior roles within Oman's leading industrial companies and influential positions in the public sector. This year, the awards continue to offer an exceptional opportunity for outstanding postgraduate students: a paid internship at CCED.

This unique experience allows recipients to gain practical insights and bridge the gap between academic research and

industry practice, providing a crucial steppingstone for significant career advancement.

Walter Simpson, Managing Director of CCED, emphasised the urgency of investing in postgraduate talent.

“These postgraduate students are the key to our future innovation and leadership. Without rapid investment in their development, we risk falling behind in the global knowledge economy.”

MINERAL Development



The optimisation of the box design was meticulously tailored to meet the stringent requirements of MDO’s exploration and mining operations.

MDO LOCALISES PRODUCTION OF CORE BOXES

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

As part of its ongoing efforts to contribute to sustainability and innovation in Oman’s mining sector, Titronic Middle East, with the support of Mineral Development Oman (MDO), has announced its readiness to locally produce core boxes. This collaboration is within MDO’s strategy to enhance local content and expand local value addition.

During its initial exploration phases, MDO depended on importing core boxes from international markets. However, driven by its commitment to local content policies and the development of local value chains, the company sought to partner with local enterprises for the production of core boxes. This strategic move aims to address local market demands, decrease import reliance and explore new export opportunities. These efforts are a cornerstone of the ‘Qimam’ programme, an initiative by the Oman Investment Authority dedicated to enhancing local value addition.

In 2022, MDO entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Titronic Middle East, a Riyadh-registered firm specialising in plastic manufacturing, to locally develop and produce core boxes to the highest standards. This agreement marked a pivotal milestone in MDO’s growth journey. With MDO’s technical support and oversight, Titronic embarked on designing molds, creating prototypes, and performing quality tests.

The optimisation of the box design was meticulously tailored to meet the stringent requirements of MDO’s exploration and mining operations. The sample boxes will be manufactured through 6 production lines containing different moulds for different parts of the boxes. This will increase the company’s production capacity to 550,000 boxes annually, enabling it to meet the needs of the local and regional markets in addition to the global markets.

Eng Khalid al Hosni, CEO of Titronic Middle East, remarked: “We take great pride in our partnership with MDO, which has entrusted us to deliver high-quality products that meet international standards. Our objectives extend beyond reducing import dependency; we aim to stimulate the local economy and offer eco-friendly solutions through material reuse and innovative manufacturing techniques. This initiative represents a significant stride towards empowering Omani industries and exploring new pathways for sustainable growth.”

Demonstrating its commitment to value chain enhancement, Titronic Middle East utilises local polymer raw materials to guarantee superior quality and bolster the local economy. Additionally, the company adopts an innovative approach by recycling damaged boxes, contributing to waste reduction and reinforcing its dedication to sustainable practices.

Digital Economy Programme kicks off national tour

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), and the Office of the Governor of Al Sharqiyah South, launched an introductory tour for the National Digital Economy Programme. This tour aims to introduce Oman’s key digital transformation initiatives, including e-commerce, financial technologies and digital infrastructure development. The tour began in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and will expand to other governorates across Oman. The goal is to inform citizens about government projects in the digital economy and demonstrate Oman’s commitment to innovation and economic diversification through technology.

In the first stop of the tour, presentations outlined the objectives and indicators of the National Digital Economy Programme. The MoCIIP presented a paper on the national e-commerce executive programme, showcasing achievements and future visions that aim to build trust between consumers and merchants.

This initiative is seen as crucial to establishing a reliable e-commerce environment in Oman.

The CBO shared its progress in promoting financial technologies, emphasising the importance of innovation and its alignment with Oman’s long-term vision. They also discussed initiatives to support emerging fintech companies.



The ministry’s tender seeks proposals for the development of programmes that foster AI competencies.

The TRA highlighted efforts to improve Oman’s digital infrastructure, focusing on expanding the country’s communications networks, including optical fibres, 4G and 5G technologies, submarine cables and data centres. These improvements aim to position Oman as a competitive player in the global digital economy.

The TRA highlighted efforts to improve Oman’s digital infrastructure, focusing on expanding the country’s communications networks, including optical fibres, 4G and 5G technologies, submarine cables and data centres. These improvements aim to position Oman as a competitive player in the global digital economy.

Ahmed al Balushi, Head of Programmes and Projects at the Technology Programmes Office of MoTCIT, explained that the National Digital Economy Programme is built around three pillars: digital government, digital society and business digitisation. These components aim to simplify e-government services, enhance job opportunities through Omanisation in the IT sector and promote innovation in operations and services.

He added that the programme’s broader objectives include cutting costs, growing businesses and improving service quality, all aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

The programme encompasses eight key areas: government digital

transformation, digital industry, e-commerce, artificial intelligence and advanced digital technologies, space, cybersecurity, financial technologies and digital infrastructure.

Azza al Kindi, Director of the Commercial Affairs and E-Commerce Department at MoCIIP, elaborated on the National E-Commerce Plan, approved by the Council of Ministers in 2021 and running until 2027. The plan includes 30 initiatives spread across eight main pillars, aiming to make Oman a regional e-commerce hub.

Al Kindi emphasised that e-commerce is more than just online shopping — it offers new opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and boosts economic diversification.

She added that the plan seeks to enhance consumer awareness and update regulations governing the sector. She also discussed the “Ma-roof Oman” platform, launched in early 2024, which documents licensed e-stores to enhance trust and reliability in the local e-commerce market.

OMAN CLIMATE WEEK A PLATFORM FOR GREEN INVESTMENTS

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

The Oman Climate Week, set to take place during February 24–27, 2025, will showcase investment opportunities across a wide array of green and renewable energy projects, according to the Dr Mohammed al Kalbani, Director-General of Environmental Affairs at the Environment Authority. Speaking at a press conference on Monday, September 16, 2024, the official shared that the event will feature over 100 local and global companies specialising in the field of clean energy and climate change. It will also spotlight investment opportunities for small and medium-

sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, he noted.

“The rapid environmental breakdown, the massive economic fallout and the health and security crisis have made immediate climate action inevitable to protect human lives and ensure global stability,” Dr Al Kalbani stressed.

Significantly, climate financing will also be an important highlight of the forum. Speaking to the Observer, Ibrahim al Ajmi, Adviser to the Environment Authority Chairman for Climatic Affairs, commented: “Financial support is one of the key topics for climate change projects. There is a new perspective on the mechanisms of financial

support to enable countries to benefit from them.”

He further explained, “There are multiple funds that work on environmental issues by providing financial support. However, there are, of course, conditions, criteria and regulations that countries must meet to qualify for these grants. All these matters are currently being strongly discussed, with a focus on reducing the number of funds and concentrating them on specific issues according to the national priorities of the countries in this regard.”

Examples of these funds include the Green Climate Fund, agreements related to combating desertification and

agreements concerning biodiversity.

“All these systems are now employed through the United Nations framework under the umbrella of sustainable development. This entire integrated system is examined by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. After this examination, discussions take place and proceed to specialised organisations in various environmental sectors to achieve the intended benefits,” Al Ajmi stated.

Oman Climate Week will feature a roster of over 100 speakers, and include 30 technical presentations as well. It will be accompanied by an exhibition and several site visits.

Omran invites SMEs to showcase local creative products

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 16

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (AS-MED) has announced a promising opportunity for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to showcase their products at the SME Market, which is part of the Design Walk event. This notable event will be held on December 10, 2024, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. Omran Group, the event organiser, is inviting local businesses to participate and highlight their creative products, emphasising their dedication to supporting the growth of local enterprises and empowering Omani talent.



Omran Group’s initiative is designed to provide SMEs with a valuable platform to broaden their market presence

Omran Group’s initiative is designed to provide SMEs with a valuable platform to broaden their market presence, establish a new customer base and promote their innovative offerings.

This event is a prime opportunity for businesses to gain visibility, connect with potential customers, and interact with entrepreneurs and investors interested in supporting local innovation and development.

The SME Market at the Design Walk is specifically targeting creative project owners and small to medium-sized enterprises involved in various categories. These include businesses offering innovative products in design, art and fashion, as well as those specialising in

advanced technologies such as 3D printing or unique design-focused items. Additionally, the event is open to companies providing updated and inventive handmade products or crafts.

Omran Group’s event aims not only to showcase these creative products, but also to support the growth of local businesses by fostering networking and collaboration opportunities. Participants will have the chance to broaden their business reach, attract new clients and engage with potential investors who are keen on supporting local talent and promoting sustainable development.

To register for the event, interested SMEs need to provide essential

information, including their brand name, the names of the project owners and a contact number. They should also submit product photos, their Instagram page and e-mail address, along with a website link. Notably, product photos are requested twice to ensure a thorough presentation of the products.

For more information and to secure a spot at the Design Walk event, businesses can reach out to Omran Group via e-mail at crea-tourism@omran.om.

This platform offers SMEs a chance to demonstrate their unique offerings and connect with a diverse audience, marking a crucial occasion for growth and market visibility.

OPINION

Meetings without accountability are a recipe for disaster



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The author
is the founder of
Knowledge
Oman

YOU ATTEND a meeting that has a well-defined agenda, where ideas are shared, a few topics or so are discussed, progress on some items and/or projects is followed, but they seem to go nowhere. Did you experience or have been part of such a meeting? This is another common type of poorly executed meeting setting, and my article today will focus on an ideal solution for the same.

Last week, my article revolved around ensuring an agenda is created, shared and circulated among its members and attendees.

Upon receiving valuable feedback from one of the readers of the article last week, who is also a senior executive that I respect from one of the leading organisations, stating “Meetings without accountability is a recipe for disaster,” I decided to write on that.

Unless you have more than one person working on a task, project, or assignment, unless you have some meaningful information or an announcement that needs to be shared, and unless there are teams that work on projects that correlate and/or depend on one another, and finally, unless there are some decisions that need to be made, then don't or avoid setting up a meeting.

It is not only a waste of valuable resource

es (time and money), yet it can also demotivate many productive employees as a result.

Furthermore, and from the learnings and experience of working from home (WFH) during Covid-19, you could also utilise digital technologies to undertake these meetings, be it via video conferencing tools like Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Zoom, or even WebEx.

A lot of cost and time will be saved as a result, needless to mention the focus that will be attained too.

So now you have a clear agenda (created, shared and circulated in advance to all the attendees); however, you realise that these meetings do not have results, and the effectiveness is poor.

What could possibly be the reason? Simply, no accountability!

No clear action, repetitive meetings discussing the same issues and topics, no deadlines agreed and very poor quality work (if any) are some of the results that you will encounter in such meetings that have no clear assignment of tasks (accountability per se).

Productivity among the members will be reduced, frustration and confusion will follow, projects will be missed or even delayed, and lastly, talented employees and members of the team may end up leaving the team, department, and/or organisation

Highlights

No clear action, repetitive meetings discussing the same issues and topics, no deadlines agreed and very poor quality work (if any) are some of the results that you will encounter in such meetings that have no clear assignment of tasks (accountability per se).

altogether. A possible way to find out the effectiveness of the scheduled reoccurring meetings is by noticing whether the number of employees/members attending is decreasing, so as items and actions discussed in the previous meeting are not moving an inch but are repeated again during the meetings.

So how do you go about ensuring accountability? Simply, for every item/action discussed, assign someone to lead/follow up. Each of the items must have timelines, timeframes, and/or deadlines.

A status on each of the items must be discussed at every meeting before it is removed or archived from the action list.

Finally, the item/action must be followed up during every meeting to ensure status is tracked.

Meetings can be important and very productive. Meetings are a way of getting complex things that depend on more than one individual done. Every organisation has many rooms created for conducting meetings.

Just ensure the next time you get an invite for a meeting that a clear agenda is shared before hand, and during the meeting, ensure every discussion or action item has a clear individual responsible as an owner for it. Trust me, you will see and feel value.

THE EUROPEAN UNION RISKS A SAD, BAD FUTURE

The European Union brought peace and prosperity to a troubled region in the decades following World War Two. But it may lack energy and become impotent in the decades ahead.

Not only is the EU economy stagnating. The bloc may also be bullied by Russia, China and even the United States. While there are potential fixes, such as the plan former European Central Bank boss Mario Draghi set out last week, the EU and its members are unlikely to implement them. It's a sad, bad future.

The sad part of the prognosis is economic stasis. EU productivity has grown on average only 0.7 per cent a year since 2015.

Combine that with a shrinking working-age population and the economy will stall, Draghi concluded in a report the European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, asked him to produce. The bad bit is that a moribund EU is easier for more powerful countries to push around. Russia poses a military threat, especially if the Kremlin wins its war in Ukraine. The danger from China and the United States, whose economies are growing more rapidly

than the EU's, is commercial.

If Donald Trump wins the US presidential election in November, the risks to the EU will be acute.

The Republican nominee could not even bring himself to say he wanted Ukraine to win the war with Russia in last week's debate with his Democratic

rival Kamala Harris. He has also threatened to impose tariffs on allies as well as China. And if the EU and the United States engage in a trade war, there's little chance of them joining forces to stand up to Beijing.

Industrial policy

Draghi has a blueprint to revitalise the EU. He wants the region to invest an extra 800 billion euros a year, equivalent to nearly 5 per cent of its output. Much of this would fund an industrial policy to compete with the United States and China, with an emphasis on clean technology and high-tech sectors such as artificial intelligence.

The EU would also boost its defences to meet the threat from Russia. The bloc's armaments industry suffers from fragmentation. Europe operates 12 different types of tank, while the United States makes only one. Germany's defences are in a particularly parlous state, according to a separate report by the Kiel Institute published last week. — Reuters

Highlights

Draghi has a blueprint to revitalise the EU. He wants the region to invest an extra

€800 BILLION,

a year, equivalent to nearly 5 per cent of its output

What NRIs can expect from the Indian budget

THE Indian pre-budget (2022–26) meetings with the various ministries are likely to commence in mid-October 2024. The consultations, a significant part of the budget exercise, are likely to be completed by November, and the draft will be finalised by December or early January 2025. The Union Budget for 2025–26 will be presented in Parliament in February 2025.

Therefore, this is the most appropriate time to highlight certain pending demands of the Indian diaspora living abroad.

It is estimated that more than 35 million Indians are living abroad. The inward remittance in 2023 was the highest among all countries globally and was ranked only second to export receivables.

The NRIs were not happy with the announcements in the budget presented in July 2024.

Barring the cut in basic customs duty on gold and mobile accessories, the abolition of angel tax and the measures to boost the NRI investments in India, the expectations of a major chunk of NRIs were not met.

The blue-collar segment among NRIs has long demanded a comprehensive social security scheme under one umbrella, having been disappointed by existing schemes that have not benefited them for various reasons. A comprehensive scheme covering pension, health insurance, family welfare, children's education, resettlement, etc, is needed to ensure a decent life after repatriation or retirement.

Secondly, there is a differential treatment of NRIs concerning popular small savings schemes of the government, namely the Public Provident Fund, Sukanya Deposit Scheme for girl children, Senior Citizen Deposit Scheme, etc. NRIs are also not allowed to invest in the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme (SGB), a very popular scheme.

When the NRIs are allowed to invest in the Central (CGS) and



Red folder holding the Indian federal budget. — Reuters



R MADHUSOODANAN
pakku_ms@yahoo.com

The writer
is a former SBI and
financial planner,
currently resident in
Oman.

state government securities (SDL) through the online platform of RBI, viz., RBI Retail Direct, the government may consider suitable changes in the FEMA Act in this regard.

There is also large-scale discrimination in respect of the income tax laws applicable to the NRIs. Many deductions allowed to the residents are not passed on to NRIs. A higher rate of Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) of 30 per cent plus 4 per cent, an effective rate of 31.20 per cent, needs a review.

The above rate of 31.20 percent is applicable irrespective of the income of the NRI. An NRI having a domestic income of say Rs 100,000 is required to pay TDS of Rs 31,200.

Most of the NRIs are neither aware of this nor their working environments permit them to file IT returns and get refunds. In effect, the NRIs are not entitled to a refund.

Currently, NRIs are required to file Form ITR2, which is complicated; instead, a simplified

form is to be made available to them to encourage the filing of tax returns. Also, upon permanent repatriation, they may be permitted to continue their 'NRI status' on their existing fixed deposits till maturity.

The exorbitant fares by airlines, particularly during the festive season and the school vacation periods, require urgent intervention of the Indian government.

Though this issue has been brought to the notice of the authorities on several occasions, no fruitful steps have been taken to date.

As a result, many NRIs are unable to visit their home country for family engagements or other exigencies.

This is not an exhaustive list. There are other issues as well.

It is worthwhile to mention that during 2023, NRIs have remitted over \$115 billion to India, which is the highest among all the countries of the world.

As Indian citizens, NRIs are also deserving of equitable treatment.

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

أوربيت
ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

TUESDAY

SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 | RABEE AL AWWAL 13, 1446 AH

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

SIT. VACANCY

BACHELOR degree in mechanical or electrical engineering ASNT level 2 (NDT), ASNT level 3 (NDT) additional advantage. LEAA foundation, LEAA lifting accessories diploma (LAC). Contact: pipe2566@yahoo.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

29 YEARS old Indian female, MBA holder with 2 years experience. Seeking a suitable position. Currently in Muscat on visit visa. Contact: 78641071, shazashakeel@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

Indian male 14 years experience light/ heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman. Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkadmou@gmail.com

Planning Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving License. Contact: 78002582, email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

Indian male 6 years experience in accounts/ automobile/admin. Seeking for suitable opening in any field, currently in Oman. Contact: 78988055/ 92850930, email: ullasmon8@gmail.com

SENIOR accountant - Indian male above 12 years experience (8 years in Oman). Seeking for suitable opening. Currently in Oman. Contact: 98957235. Email: unnikrishnanalways@gmail.com

28 YEARS Experience in Oman in sales, marketing and management, Indian with DL and release. Looking for a good job change. Contact: 78501743.

INDIAN male 6 years of experience in accounts / automobile / admin. Seeking for suitable opening in any field, currently in Oman. Contact: 78988055 / 92850930, email: ullasmon8@gmail.com

INDIAN MALE, 10 years experience in Oman as Coordinator have diploma, valid D/L with NOC ready to join. Contact: 95645241.

A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, Bsc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

Indian male Mechanical Engineer have overall 3 years experience in Oil and Gas Piping Field as QA/ QC and welding inspection. Seeking for suitable in any filed, currently in Oman.

Contact: 78805060.
Email: princeroaranmula@gmail.com

FOR RENT

WAREHOUSE / workshop 2,600 sqm for rent in Misfa near Oman Cement Factory including accommodation contact: GSM 98286899, email: sales@jetsoman.com

16,000 sqm (2 portions of 8,000 sqm each). Open yard/ storage area with compound wall 24 hours CCTV surveillance & other amenities for rent in Jifnain close to Muscat Nizwa Highway. Contact: 99105784.

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

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

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

FOR RENT

In Ruwi, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, hall, kitchen, with car parking. RO 150 monthly only. Tel: 94402003.

SIT. WANTED

Indian female, B tech, Electronics and Communication graduate 2yr experience, looking for suitable job, now in Muscat. Call: 94061884, whatsapp: +919946440893 email: anjupg62@gmail.com

Accountant with overs 6 years of experience Detail-Oriented Financial Professional: Expert in Accounting, Audit Prep, and Expense Management: Contact: +968 78320801, Ready to join immediately.

FOR SALE

FIND your dream home in Muscat's finest residential neighbourhoods near a children's park and sports promenade, a 6 room villa in Al Ghubrah South opposite Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. For more details, contact: 91377029.

I am Filipina looking for part-time/ full-time job. I have work experience as a saleslady, school work, teacher assistant/ nanny, hotel receptionist/ housekeeping & caregiver/ housemaid work as well. I can join immediately. You can reach me on this number: 96213157.

B. COM. 35 years of experience in accounts, sales coordinator, admin, HR, personal assistant, document controller with Oman D/L, looking for a job. Contact: 92558734

SITUATION VACANT

RAS AL HAMRA RECREATION CENTRE (PDO) Requires PADEL COACH

Qualification:
- Certified Padel Coach with recognized coaching certification or relevant experience.

Experience:
- Young, Dynamic & Experienced Padel Coach.
- Minimum 3 years experience of Padel Coaching.
- In-dept knowledge of padel rules, techniques, and strategies.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Proven track record of coaching experience & success.

Responsibilities:
- Conduct individual & group padel coaching sessions.
- Develop personalized training programs to enhance players' skills and performance.
- Organize and supervise practice sessions for members.
- Set up weekly mini social tournaments.
- Supervise 3 Padel courts.
- Update and maintain social media communication to grow the Padel community.

Please email your credentials (CV) to: **minton@ocean.co.om**
cc: **antonio@ocean.co.om**

Job Vacancy

Looking for the following position at our Steel Fabrication Sohar Factory:

Job Description: PRODUCTION MANAGER

Location : Sohar, Sultanate of Oman
Education : (B. Tech/BE) Mechanical Engineering / Diploma in Mechanical Engineering
Experience : 7+ years of experience in the Steel Fabrication Industry

Key Responsibilities:

- Active participation, Developing and Leading the Production, Planning, Quality, Stores, Sub Contracting, and Despatch departments.
- Responsible for complete planning and production process.
- Preparation of monthly production plan, monitoring, and obtaining maximum throughput.
- Assigning jobs to engineers , workforce, and responsible for the daily, weekly, and monthly output.
- Planning of raw materials, Machineries, Manpower etc based on production plan.
- Controlling manufacturing costs within the given budget.
- Preparation of daily reports and MIS. Maintaining status of all pending jobs up to date.
- Single point contact to the customers from order intake till delivery.
- Follow-up with design / drawing departments for drawings, BOM, and Nesting.
- Responsible for maintenance teams' activities and preparation of preventive maintenance schedule.

Please email your credentials (CV) to: **recruitmentftel@gmail.com**

FOUR STAR TECHNICAL SUPPLIES LLC
(FORMERLY) OMEIR NASSER AL FALAHY & PARTNERS TRAD. CO. LLC)
"Quality products defined by exceptional service"

Our Products:
ELECTRICAL, BUILDING MATERIAL, HARDWARE, OILFIELD INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT & TOOLS

KRUPP, DEWALT, Schneider Electric, HUNTER-DOUGLAS, DELTA, HITACHI, DORMER, Makita, BOSCH, Beta, Milwaukee, STANLEY, MOXSLIP, IRWIN, MK, OLFA, SUNBEL, shindaiwa, Clarke, USAG, SUNBEL, KLINGSPOR, PCE, SENCOR, METZ CONNECT, CRO, Wera, DEVCON, BLACK & DECKER

P.O. BOX 3897, P.C. 112, RUWI, MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: +96824837874, Fax: +96824831341
Mobile: +96899354944
Email: onasser@omantel.net.om / nelson@onasser.com

HOTEL FOR RENT/SALE

PRIME LOCATION IN QURUM HEIGHTS
LUXURY HOTEL

7 STORIED BUILDING WITH 44 SUITES, BREAKFAST AREA RESTAURANT & OTHER FACILITIES.

CONTACT NOS: **99643760 / 92192020**

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team
95210257

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.com

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Location : **Sultanate of Oman – Muscat**
Position : **Sales Representative**

Qualifications and experience required

- Bachelor's degree in business administration, preferably with a specialization in sales and marketing.
- Minimum of eight years of practical experience in sales and marketing.
- Fluency in English (both spoken and written).
- Proficient in the use of Microsoft Office applications

Interested candidates should send their CV, along with copies of their qualifications and work experience, to the following email address within 15 days from the date of this announcement:

hr.recruitment.oman.2021@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

Indian Female B.Com having 9 years experience as assistant accountant and administration looking for any suitable job. Contact 98500291. Email: andreacardoz23@gmail.com

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels

To advertise 71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdiyar_info izdiyar.info

اردھار izdiyar

IZDIYAR_INFO

ART/LIFE



THE SLEEPY TOWN OF AL SUWAIH IS A COASTAL GEM FOR CAMPERS 20

COLUMN

Pause Before Hitting Send



ERAM AL RAWAS
iram.alrawas@gmail.com

The author is actively engaged in Oman's education sector and is a keen observer of current events, particularly those affecting youth and the broader community.

In an era so dependent on social media as a primary source of information and opinion, one might wonder about the effect this phenomenon has on our everyday lives. Everyone has a voice, an opinion, or a fun fact that they would like to share with the world, but we often become

so expressive that we don't consider the impact our words might have on the external world.

As a double-edged sword, social media can be very helpful, but controlling it is a must. Anti-democrats often justify the suppression of individual expressiveness by arguing that too much freedom leads to chaos, moral decay, or a breakdown of social cohesion. Therefore, if we view social media as a democratic platform where individual freedom is prioritised, would it not lead to the same outcomes feared by anti-democrats?

Actions speak louder than words, they say, but have you ever thought about how words can lead to actions? When looking at the influence of social media on reality, there is an influence on every sector. Still, if we focus on national security, we can notice that a single criticism, for example, on some law or a certain event that is based solely on opinion rather than facts, can lead to disruption, where people may begin to argue, take sides, and turn against policymakers. Even without direct action, the spread of hatred alone can be enough to create a sense of insecurity and instability.

While looking at the democratic spectrum of poor, healthy, and advanced democracies, we usually can conclude that poor democracy can result in instability where the people feel oppressed and unheard, whereas advanced democracies can have too many parties and freedom that eventually lead to instability as well. This means a healthy democracy where freedom exists to a certain level can lead to peace.

When applying this spectrum to social media, it's not about enforcing laws that silence people and make them feel oppressed, but rather about spreading awareness that not every thought should be shared. And if shared, not every opinion should be taken at face value; reasonableness is key.

INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS



TRAVEL
A woman carries red pepper ristras during processing at a yard in Salqin village in Syria's rebel-held Idlib province, near the border with Turkiye. — AFP



FASHION
A model presents a creation from Tolu Coker's Spring/Summer 2025 collection during the London Fashion Week in London. The show created a sense of homecoming, with walls covered in vibrant '70s-inspired graphics, and photographs celebrating proud Black women in stylish attire. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

The stone-eaters that threaten Iran’s ancient Persepolis

Conservationists at Persepolis, Iran’s most iconic ancient site, are waging a delicate battle against an unlikely adversary: tiny but persistent lichens eroding the millennia-old monuments.

The fight, which began years ago, is aimed at stopping the threat to the integrity of the site’s structures and its intricate carvings from lichens, organisms that grow on surfaces like stone and can slowly break them down over time. Built in the 6th century BC by Darius I, Persepolis has withstood destruction, looting, earthquakes, fires and harsh weather. It remains a source of pride for Iranians and a major tourist destination.

“It’s an open-air museum reflecting 25 centuries of Middle Eastern life,” said Alireza Asgari Chaverdi, director of the site located about 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the southern city of Shiraz.

“It is the foundation of Iran’s history, culture and socio-cultural life.” A Unesco World Heritage Site since 1979, Persepolis features colossal sculptures and intricate stone reliefs of ancient Persian kings, nobles and deities. But these have suffered over the years from lichen, a combination of an algae and a fungus.

“This is the most serious problem, especially for carvings on stones,” said Shahram Rahbar, a conservationist at the site.

“If we do nothing, these organisms could reduce these relics to dust within 50 to 100 years,” he said as he treated lichen growth on one slab.

LOST MOTIFS
Red lichen marks are now etched



into many of the ancient relics at Persepolis.

The spread of lichens, which dissolve minerals and penetrate stone surfaces by more than 1.5 centimetres (.6 inches), is driven by industrialisation, acid rain and the harsh desert climate, said lichenologist Mohammad Sohrabi. “We cover the lichens with a material and, after a week, repeat the process until they weaken enough to be removed with suction devices,” said Rahbar.

Iran is home to more than 3,000 species of lichens, with 500 to 700 varieties growing on historical monuments, Sohrabi said, noting that some at Persepolis were over 1,700 years old.

“Many of Persepolis’s intricate motifs have already been lost due to lichen activity,” he said.

Beyond Persepolis, other sites in Iran, like the Bisotun inscription in Kermanshah province, have also been affected.

Bisotun, another Unesco World Heritage Site, features a massive carved inscription recounting the conquests of King Darius I and has suffered significant degradation due to lichen growth. —AFP



JAPAN CELEBRATED on Monday the record-breaking Emmy Awards triumph of “Shogun”, although many confessed not having watched the series about the country’s warring dynasties in the feudal era. “Shogun” smashed all-time records at the television awards in Los Angeles on Sunday, taking home an astounding 18 statuettes and becoming the first non-English-language winner of the highly coveted award for best drama series.

Lead Hiroyuki Sanada, who played Lord Toranaga, became the first Japanese actor to win an Emmy, while Anna Sawai achieved the same for her performance as Lady Mariko.

“As a Japanese, I’m happy Sanada won,” Kiyoko Kanda, a 70-year-old pensioner, said.

“He worked so hard since he moved to Los Angeles,” she said.

“In ‘Last Samurai’, Tom Cruise was the lead, but it’s exciting Sanada is the main character in ‘Shogun,’” Kanda added.

But she admitted that she only watched the trailer.

The series is available only on Disney’s streaming platform, which is relatively new in Japan.

“I want to watch it. I’m curious to know how Japan is portrayed,” Kanda said.

Otsuka, who declined to give her first name, said she, too, has not watched the show.

“But I saw the news and I’m happy he won.” Sanada, now 63, began his acting career at the age of five in Tokyo and moved to LA after appearing in “Last Samurai” in 2003.

The words “historic achievements” and “Hiroyuki Sanada” were trending on X in Japanese, while Sanada’s speech at the awards racked up tens of thousands of views.

Yusuke Takizawa, 41, also only



watched a trailer but he said he was amazed by the quality of the show.

“I was impressed by the high-spirited acting, the attention to detail and the film technology,” Takizawa said outside Osaka Castle, a major historical location for the series.

“I think many young people will want to try their hand in Hollywood after watching Sanada,” he said.

Tourists at the castle also welcomed the record Emmy win.

“I think was the best TV show that I’ve seen this year,” said Zara Ferjani, a visitor from London.

“I thought it was amazing... The

direction was beautiful, and I really enjoyed watching something that wasn’t in English as well,” the 33-year-old said.

She said she had planned to watch “Shogun” after returning home from Japan.

“But one of my friends strongly advised me to watch it beforehand, just to appreciate the culture more and definitely Osaka Castle more,” she added.

BREAKING FROM CLICHES

Many in the Japanese film industry were also jubilant.

“He won after many years of trying hard in Hollywood. It’s too cool,” wrote Shinichiro Ueda, director of the hit low-budget film “One Cut of the Dead”, on X.

Video game creator and movie fan Hideo Kojima, who has described the show as “Game of Thrones in 17th-century Japan”, reposted a news story on the win.

The drama, adapted from a popular novel by James Clavell and filmed in Canada, tells the tale of Lord Toranaga, who fights for his life against his enemies alongside Mariko and British sailor John Blackthorne.

A previous TV adaptation made in 1980 was centred on Blackthorne’s perspective.

But the new “Shogun” breaks away from decades of cliched and often bungled depictions of Japan in Western cinema, with Japanese spoken throughout most of the show.

Sanada, who also co-produced the drama, is credited with bringing a new level of cultural and historical authenticity to “Shogun”.

An army of experts, including several wig technicians from Japan, worked behind the scenes to make the series realistic, poring over sets, costumes and the actors’ movements. —AFP

FROM P18

The sleepy town of Al Suwaih is a coastal gem for campers



BY YERU EBUEN

AL SUWAIH, a hidden gem on Oman's eastern coast, is often overshadowed by its more famous neighbours. Located just an hour and a half from Sur, this coastal town is a perfect retreat for those seeking cooler climates, with temperatures often dipping nearly 10 degrees below Muscat's scorching heat. Nestled between the stunning cliffs of Al Kabbah and the rising town of Al Ashkharah, Al Suwaih is more than just a quick stopover on the way to Duqm or Dhofar's khareef season. It's a place where time seems to slow down, offering a blend of natural beauty, simple living and authentic Omani hospitality that makes it an ideal destination for campers and adventurers alike. The most well-known attraction in Al Suwaih is its seasonal pink lake, a breathtaking natural phenomenon that draws visitors to its otherwise quiet shores. Yet beyond this seasonal spectacle, the town's windswept beaches

are a constant source of allure. Stretches of unspoiled coastline beckon campers, who set up tents along the shores to enjoy the cool sea breeze, the sound of crashing waves and a starry sky unobstructed by city lights. The beaches of Al Suwaih are as rugged as they are serene, with winds that can get strong at times, adding a refreshing wildness to the landscape. As you explore further inland, you'll find a series of villages that feel forgotten by time, their humble houses standing as silent witnesses to a simpler way of life. These villages, with their narrow, quiet streets, offer a glimpse into a culture that has remained largely unchanged for decades. Life here revolves around the sea, with fishing being the primary livelihood. You'll often see small fishing boats bobbing in the water, their nets filled with the day's catch, which is later served in the local eateries. These small restaurants, though modest, offer some of the best seafood in the region, especially fish biryani made from the freshest catch of the day.



relaxing by a beach fire, the town offers everything needed for a laid-back camping experience.

One of the most striking aspects of Al Suwaih, and Oman's coastal villages in general, is the warmth of its people. Omanis are known for their hospitality, and in Al Suwaih, this is evident in the way locals readily offer help to travellers. Should your car get stuck in the sand, it's not uncommon for passing Omanis to stop and lend a hand. If you find yourself lost, it's almost certain you'll be invited into someone's home for lunch, where you can experience the local cuisine and customs firsthand. This spirit of generosity and openness is a hallmark of life along Oman's coast, where traditional values still hold strong.

Oman's coastal villages, like Al Suwaih, are vibrant with an authentic culture that is hard to find elsewhere in the Middle East. These towns are living museums of Oman's maritime heritage, where fishing remains a way of life and the traditions of the sea are passed down through generations. The simplicity of life here, combined with the breathtaking natural surroundings, creates an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity that is increasingly rare in today's world.

While much of Oman has modernised rapidly, places like Al Suwaih retain their old-world charm, offering a slower pace of life that appeals to both tourists and locals. For those seeking a true escape, where the worries of the world melt away in the face of nature's raw beauty, Al Suwaih offers a perfect retreat. Its windswept shores, welcoming people, and cooler climate make it not only a great destination for campers, but also a place where one can reconnect with the timeless rhythms of life by the sea.

The village stores, though few, carry essential goods for the local families, and business here operates at a leisurely pace. Many small grocery shops and petrol station stores are closed during prayer times when the community gathers at the local mosques. Despite the town's quiet demeanour, the mosques come alive several times a day as villagers and workers alike come together for prayer, filling the air with the peaceful hum of daily worship. This rhythm of life, punctuated by the call to prayer, lends an air of timelessness to Al Suwaih, reminding visitors that they are far from the rush of modern life.

PUBLIC RESTROOMS

For campers, Al Suwaih is particularly well-suited. Public restrooms are available near the main camping areas, making it a practical choice for those looking to stay overnight. The facilities are basic but clean, adding to the convenience of an extended stay. Whether you're spending the day fishing, swimming in the clear waters, or simply