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SHORT TAKES

HM, KING OF BAHRAIN DISCUSS CURRENT ISSUES

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a telephone call on Sunday from King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The two leaders reviewed perspectives on a number of current issues of mutual interest and the ways to achieve peace and security in the region. They also discussed means of boosting cooperation and partnership in various economic and investment sectors to serve mutual interests and enhance the fraternal bonds between the two sides. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere wishes of good health and well-being to the King. He also wished the people of Bahrain further stability and prosperity.

On his turn, the King of Bahrain wished His Majesty success in realising the aspirations of the Omani people towards wider horizons of development and progress on all levels. — ONA

SWISS VICE-PRESIDENT ARRIVES IN OMAN



MUSCAT: Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation and Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER), arrived in the Sultanate of Oman on Sunday on a three-day working visit.

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, was at the forefront of those receiving the guest and his accompanying delegation upon their arrival. He welcomed the guest, wishing him a successful visit and a pleasant stay. — ONA

CIRCUITS FOR COMMERCIAL COURT TO BE ESTABLISHED

The Supreme Judiciary Council has decided to establish the primary and appeal circuits of the Investment and Commercial Court across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, and to determine their headquarters and jurisdictional scope. This decision is based on Royal Decree No 35/2025, which mandates the establishment of the Investment and Commercial Court. **DETAILS ON P15**

HM issues three Royal Decrees

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued three Royal Decrees reading as follows: Royal Decree No 83/2025 appoints a Chairman for the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority.

Article 1 states that Badr bin Salim bin Marhoon al Maamari shall be appointed as Chairman of the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority.

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

Royal Decree No 84/2025 ratifies “Makkah Al Mukarramah Convention for Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Cooperation”, signed in the Republic of Maldives on May 7, 2025.

Article 1 ratifies the aforementioned convention in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

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

Royal Decree No 85/2025 ratifies an agreement signed in Muscat on May 27, 2025, between the Government of the Sultanate of

Oman and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on mutual administrative assistance in customs matters.

Article 1 ratifies the abovementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article 2 says this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

LIMIT ISRAELI POLICIES OF GENOCIDE: OMAN

Just peace is fundamental pillar for sustainable security, stability and development

THE Sultanate of Oman has affirmed that just peace is a fundamental pillar for sustainable security, stability, and development.

Delivering Oman’s address to the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Sunday, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, stated that the international community is facing a broad spectrum of critical issues that weigh heavily on the conscience of humanity and require genuine cooperation and collective responsibility to address effectively.

“The Sultanate of Oman has repeatedly expressed its vision and clear positions on these matters — foremost among them, the climate crisis and the transitioning to clean and energy sources, in addition to the call for seizing emerging opportunities in trade and sustainable development. However, there remains another humanitarian and political issue — deeply painful and enduring — that must take precedence in our deliberations and decisions: the Palestinian question,” he said.

“For too long, this conflict has persisted. The suffering has grown unbearable and the time has come to end the occupation, lift the injustice, and restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people through the implementation of the two-state solution, which is the only just and viable path toward a lasting and comprehensive peace that ends decades of conflict and



Palestinians gather to receive food from a charity kitchen, in Nuseirat. — Reuters

deprivation,” he added.

Sayyid Badr said that the Sultanate of Oman is convinced that just peace is a fundamental pillar for sustainable security, stability and development.

“From this perspective, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital must be at the forefront of strategic priorities in the pursuit of just and lasting peace in the Middle East. In this context, the recognition of the State of Palestine stands as the most crucial step in this critical



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy

phase of the Palestinian cause,” he said. “Recognising Palestine also reflects the international community’s commitment to the two-state solution, as outlined in UN resolutions, the outcomes of the Two-State Solution Conference, and the New York Declaration under the auspices of the United Nations,” Sayyid Bard said. Oman called upon the international community to adopt measures that limit the Israeli government’s ability to continue its policies of genocide.

SEE ALSO P2

New lease on life: Arabian lynx returns to Musandam mountains

KHASAB: The Environment Authority in Musandam Governorate has successfully rehabilitated and released a young Arabian lynx (locally known as Al Hamra’a) back into its natural mountain habitat, marking a new achievement in the field of wildlife protection.

A team of specialists from the Authority had spotted the animal during their periodic monitoring tours within the Natural National Park Reserve. The animal showed signs of exhaustion due to hunger and thirst,

prompting the team to immediately implement wildlife rescue procedures. The lynx subsequently underwent intensive veterinary care and a rehabilitation programme prepared by the Authority in Musandam Governorate to ensure its ability to reintegrate into the wild.

This operation is part of the ongoing efforts to monitor wildlife in the reserve, where specialists rely on periodic surveys using “camera traps” deployed in various locations across the mountainous areas. This



Data indicate a decline in the numbers of the Arabian lynx in some areas due to drought and seasonal scarcity of rain.

technology helps document rare species, such as the Arabian lynx, and monitor their behaviour in their natural environment, noting that these animals are solitary by nature and are most active at dawn and dusk.

Data indicate a decline in the numbers of the Arabian lynx in some areas due to drought and seasonal scarcity of rain, which has led to the degradation of natural habitats. This underscores the need to intensify efforts to conserve and rehabilitate all wildlife within the reserve.

The Arabian lynx is one of the key predators in terrestrial ecosystems, playing a pivotal role in regulating the numbers of prey such as rodents and birds, thereby maintaining ecological balance. This animal is characterised by its agility, weighing between 10 and 20 kilogrammes and reaching a length of 60-90 centimetres. Its fur, which ranges from yellowish-brown to rusty red, along with its long ears adorned with black tufts, helps it camouflage effectively in its mountainous environment. — ONA

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SHORT TAKES



Sayyid Badr at a reception held to mark the modernisation of the Oman Corridor inside the UN Headquarters building in New York. — ONA

SAYYID BADR, COUNTERPARTS DISCUSS TIES

NEW YORK: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met, separately, Sihasak Phuangkitkeow, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand; Luca Beccari, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Political Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Digital Transition of the Republic of San Marino and Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

These meetings were held on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

During the meetings, the ministers discussed ways to enhance cooperation in diplomatic, commercial and cultural fields. They also exchanged views on current regional and international issues, emphasising the importance of encouraging dialogue and understanding in international forums.

On a separate note, a reception was held under the auspices of Sayyid Badr to mark the modernisation of the Oman Corridor inside the United Nations Headquarters building in New York, which was first inaugurated in 1986.

This corridor serves as a message from the Sultanate of Oman as a friend to all, a country whose diplomacy is based on dialogue and cooperation. Sayyid Badr affirmed that this cultural space reflects Oman's vision for promoting the values of peace and coexistence and highlights its contributions to supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by drawing inspiration from its civilisational legacy and utilising it to serve the present and future. — ONA

OMAN, QATAR REVIEW RELATIONS



Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy holds talks with Hamad bin Ahmed al Muhannadi

DOHA: Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, reviewed bilateral relations and ways to enhance them between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar.

This came during his meeting with Hamad bin Ahmed al Muhannadi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers of the State of Qatar.

Shaikh Al Fadhl also met with Ibrahim bin Ali al Muhannadi, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs in Qatar.

The meeting explored prospects for developing existing cooperation in a manner that serves common interests. — ONA

Oman calls for just peace, Palestinian statehood at UNGA

THE Sultanate of Oman has affirmed that just peace is a fundamental pillar for sustainable security, stability and development.

The statement was made in Oman's address to the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, delivered by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

The full text of the speech reads as follows:

“President of the 80th Session of the General Assembly,

Distinguished Heads and Members of Delegations, Esteemed Attendees,

The international community today is confronted with a broad spectrum of critical issues that weigh heavily on the conscience of humanity and require genuine cooperation and collective responsibility to address them effectively. The Sultanate of Oman has repeatedly expressed its vision and clear positions on these matters — foremost among them, the climate crisis and the transitioning to clean and energy sources, in addition to the call for seizing emerging opportunities in trade and sustainable development.

However, there remains another humanitarian and political issue — deeply painful and enduring — that must take precedence in our deliberations and decisions: the Palestinian question.

For too long, this conflict has persisted. The suffering has grown unbearable, and the time has come to end the occupation, lift the injustice, and restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people through the implementation of the two-state solution, which is the only just and viable path toward a lasting and comprehensive peace that ends decades of conflict and deprivation.

The Sultanate of Oman is convinced that just peace is a fundamental pillar for sustainable security, stability and development. From this perspective, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital must be at the forefront of strategic priorities in the pursuit of just and lasting peace in the Middle East. In this context, the recognition of the State of Palestine stands as the most crucial step in this critical phase of the Palestinian cause.

Oman expresses its deep appreciation to the governments that have taken this important step — one that reinforces respect for international law and aligns with the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Recognising Palestine also reflects the international community's commitment to the two-state solution, as outlined in UN resolutions, the outcomes of the Two-State Solution Conference, and the New York Declaration under the auspices of the United Nations.



The statement was made in Oman's address to the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, delivered by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

Distinguished Heads and Members of Delegations, Esteemed Representatives,

Oman remains firmly committed to its consistent policy of working toward peace and security in the region. It has a record of notable initiatives and achievements in this regard and it continues to engage constructively with all parties and partners in pursuit of this noble goal, for the benefit of all. Today, we celebrate eighty years since the establishment of the United Nations, this global institution that embodies our collective commitment to peace and the peaceful and legal resolution of conflicts through dialogue.

Yet, despite the many calls from the international community, Israel continues to disregard international appeals, refusing to engage in serious dialogue that could lead to a just and comprehensive solution. Its continued use of force and disregard for reason threaten the credibility of the international system. Therefore, our shared responsibility demands that we intensify our efforts and apply effective pressure to bring Israel to the negotiating table and to make it clear that the path to peace cannot be forged through coercion or the imposition of facts on the ground — but rather through mutual understanding and respect for international law and the rights of peoples.

Oman calls upon the international community to adopt measures that limit the Israeli government's ability to continue its policies of genocide, destruction, and illegal occupation of Palestinian land, and its ongoing policies of starvation and blockade against the Palestinian people and the obstruction of humanitarian aid.

From this very podium, Oman calls for a global peaceful campaign to lift the siege

and the injustice imposed on the Palestinian people, and to secure their freedom through the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state.

Esteemed Attendees,

Rooted in its unwavering principles of supporting peace, regional stability, and its categorical rejection of any violation of state sovereignty, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its solidarity with the State of Qatar, supporting its right to take the necessary measures to protect its security and sovereignty. We renew our condemnation of the Israeli aggression against Qatar on September 9 of this year. We also renew our condemnation of Israeli aggressions against Iran, Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon, and we call for sanctions to be imposed on Israel in response to its blatant violations of international law and its unlawful encroachments on the sovereignty of states.

Distinguished Representatives, The international community — particularly the Permanent Members of the Security Council — must empower the Secretary-General of the United Nations to fulfil his mandate in line with the purposes of the UN Charter, particularly in the areas of international peace and security. We must also ensure supporting him to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to inclusive economic growth, job creation, innovation, global development partnerships and the eradication of poverty and disease, as well as ensuring food, health and energy security. Moreover, Oman remains steadfast in its commitment to youth empowerment through education and knowledge, acknowledging youth as the driving force behind innovation, development and the knowledge-based economy.” — ONA

Oman, UN for ceasefire to address Gaza crisis

NEW YORK: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met with António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, at his office at the UN headquarters in New York.

The Foreign Minister conveyed His Majesty the Sultan's greetings and best wishes to the UN Secretary-General for success in his international and humanitarian work and efforts.

For his part, António Guterres asked the Foreign Minister to convey his greetings and sincere wishes to



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy with António Guterres in New York

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

During the meeting, they discussed the ongoing cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Nations and stressed the importance of continuing joint efforts to support peace and sustainable development.

The two sides also exchanged views on the most pressing current international challenges, particularly the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Both sides stressed the urgent need for an immediate

ceasefire in Gaza, intensified pressure to allow relief supplies to reach the population, alleviate the suffering of civilians and advance the path toward just political solutions.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, Ambassador at Large, Omar bin Said al Kathiri, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, Shaikh Humaid bin Ali al Maani, Head of the Diplomatic Academy, and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

SHORTTAKES



UTAS UNVEILS INAUGURAL ISSUE OF HORIZONS MAGAZINE

MUSANDAM: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences has launched the first issue of its quarterly magazine, Horizons, published by the university’s Communication and Media Department. The magazine serves as an intellectual and media platform, reflecting the university’s achievements and aligning with its future aspirations. Horizons showcases the university’s research, scientific and cultural activities and initiatives that meet labour market needs, supporting Oman Vision 2040. Future issues will explore topics in education, scientific research, leadership, innovation and trends shaping higher education globally.

Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubai, Vice-Chancellor of the University, said the launch reflects the university’s vision of engaging with the community and enhancing its presence locally and internationally.

He expressed hope that Horizons would become a platform for disseminating knowledge, documenting achievements and showcasing success stories of students and faculty, thereby contributing to Oman’s development journey.

Salim bin Hamad al Hajri, editor-in-chief and director of the Communication and Media Department, described Horizons as a new media window that celebrates the university’s identity, mission and successes, aiming to enrich Oman’s knowledge and media landscape.

The September 2025 inaugural issue features an interview with Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubai, reports on the establishment of the university’s Musandam branch, and accounts of students’ scientific and cultural trips abroad, including a visit to Nasa. It highlights international student experiences, pioneering student projects such as converting fish waste into halal organic gelatine, innovations in aerial photography, research on water desalination techniques, artificial intelligence and the university’s role in advancing scientific research.

MoSD LAUNCHES HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS UNIT



The protection shelter is an integrated institution concerned with providing care

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has established an independent unit dedicated to receiving and protecting male victims of human trafficking. This represents a qualitative addition to the services provided by the protection shelter for women and children who are victims of human trafficking.

The establishment of this unit complements the efforts made by Oman in the field of combating human trafficking through joint work between various government, civil and international entities, and by adopting best international practices in protecting victims of violence and abuse. This reflects Oman’s commitment to the principles of human rights and international conventions. The unit has been equipped according to high standards that ensure a safe and private environment. It includes various essential services such as healthcare, nutrition, recreational activities and psychosocial support, with a focus on rehabilitation and community reintegration programmes. It is worth noting that the protection shelter, affiliated to the MoSD is an integrated institution concerned with providing care, social and psychological support services to children at risk of abuse, violence or exploitation, in addition to victims of human trafficking. — ONA

Dhofar hosts first govt rehabilitation forum for disabilities

SALALAH: The deliberations of the first Governmental Rehabilitation Centers Forum for Persons with Disabilities, organised by the Ministry of Social Development in Dhofar Governorate, were inaugurated on Sunday.

The forum, held under the auspices of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, aims to enhance the quality of services and



rehabilitation programmes across various government centres in Oman. It also seeks to strengthen the role of persons with disabilities, empower them to achieve comprehensive inclusion, and open new pathways for rehabilitation, training and employment.

Additionally, the two-day forum aims to familiarise institutions with the latest developments in this sector and

facilitate the exchange of expertise.

The opening ceremony programme included a visual presentation titled ‘My Right is Guaranteed’. Moreover, a set of working papers was presented, addressing recent developments in the field of disability and rehabilitation, alongside an accompanying exhibition showcasing products made by persons with disabilities. — ONA

‘Tawteen’ is digital leap in labour transformation

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

In a world where economies shift rapidly and societies redefine growth, employment remains one of the most impactful factors in people’s lives. In Oman, where youth aspirations drive Oman Vision 2040, the ‘Tawteen’ platform has grown beyond a recruitment tool into a national project that bridges individual ambition with collective development goals.

Since its launch, Tawteen has evolved into more than a job portal. It reflects the labour market’s pulse — connecting job-seekers, employers, policymakers and educational institutions. At its core, the platform places human potential at the heart of digital transformation, reshaping how citizens engage with employment and the nation’s future.

According to Umaima bint Said al Mahdhouriyah, Head of Employment Governance at the National Employment Programme – Ministry of Labour, Tawteen is a model of advanced digital transformation. Powered by artificial intelligence and predictive analytics, it offers precise labour market insights that help shape realistic employment strategies aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

Tawteen regulates employment across 18 key economic sectors, from tourism, telecommunications, and education to energy, health, logistics, food security, and finance. This ensures Oman’s workforce aligns strategically with national priorities.

Al Mahdhoury describes Tawteen as more than a recruitment tool: it is a human and national initiative that restores confidence to job-seekers while fostering transparency in the labour market. “Every job opportunity is a story of hope for one



Tawteen delivers a seamless career journey ensuring fairness and transparency



UMAIMA BINT SAID AL MAHDHOURIYAH
Head of Employment Governance

Omani and success for the nation,” she says.

The platform’s “dual transparency” philosophy ensures job-seekers understand market demand while employers access the right skills. This balance turns employment into a process defined by competence, merit, and opportunity.

Tawteen also feeds data back to the education and training system, identifying emerging skills, workforce gaps and future demand. This insight guides universities and training institutions to adapt programmes for better employability outcomes.

For businesses, Tawteen offers streamlined digital services — from recruitment requests and verified job-seeker databases to contract registration and freelance integration within Omanisation quotas. Incentives are tied to compliance, encouraging businesses to contribute to workforce development.

For individuals, Tawteen delivers a seamless career journey — smart

profiles, job applications, tracking tools and freelance opportunities — ensuring fairness and transparency.

AI and big data drive Tawteen’s predictive capabilities, identifying emerging professions and declining sectors. The platform is expanding these tools to include smart career guidance, helping Omanis prepare for jobs that may not yet exist.

While Tawteen builds the infrastructure, Al Mahdhoury stresses the private sector as its ‘beating heart.’ Greater flexibility and courage are needed for opportunities to become realities. She notes that digital platforms are powerful accelerators but require smart policies, a responsive education system, and an engaged private sector to succeed.

Building trust is central to Tawteen’s mission. Success stories of placed job-seekers strengthen credibility and cultural acceptance. Strict verification processes ensure fairness and authenticity, while integration with government systems guarantees data integrity and simplicity for users.

Far from static, Tawteen evolves continuously through updates, transparent reporting, and performance tracking. Its mission is clear: to monitor, analyse, and stimulate Oman’s employment landscape while providing decision-makers with real-time insights.

As Oman advances toward Oman Vision 2040, Tawteen stands out as a strategic national initiative — transforming data into solutions, opportunities into realities and challenges into progress. In Al Mahdhoury’s words, Tawteen is not just a platform: “It is a bridge between individual ambition and national horizons — a project that restores confidence to job-seekers and proves that the future is here, in Oman.”

RAM launches startup leadership programme

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM), in partnership with the Rising Omani Startups Programme, has launched the Startup Leadership Programme, a flagship initiative for 2025 aims to empower executive leaders of Omani startups to accelerate growth and expand into international markets.

Dr Fathiya bint Abdullah al Rashdiyah, RAM’s Vice-President for Programme Affairs, said, “The Startup Leadership Programme embodies the Royal Directives that emphasise nurturing entrepreneurship and the SME sector in Oman. This tailored programme is designed to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and confidence of startup leaders, enabling them to compete effectively at local and global levels.”

She added, “We aim to nurture strategic leaders who can expand businesses internationally, attract investment and create



The programme aims to empower executive leaders of Omani startups to accelerate growth.

lasting value for the national economy. Combining academic rigour with practical learning, the programme offers expert-led sessions and international field visits to equip participants with real-world insights and leading industry practices.”

Qais bin Rashid al Toobi, General Supervisor, Rising Omani Startups Programme,

said, “This initiative reflects our vision to build an integrated entrepreneurship ecosystem, strengthening the competitiveness of Omani startups and positioning them as global success stories. It equips founders with advanced leadership skills, enabling sustainable growth and international expansion aligned

with Oman Vision 2040.”

The six-month programme, running from August 2025 to January 2026, currently includes 18 participants. Designed for founders and executive leaders of innovative, tech-driven startups, it features workshops, case studies, expert dialogues, mentoring sessions and applied projects.

Structured into four modules — strategic leadership, financial planning, growth strategies and talent management — the programme prepares leaders to navigate expansion risks, enhance organisational structures, and leverage tools such as artificial intelligence for sustainable growth. International field visits to renowned accelerators, incubators, and enterprises provide participants with exposure to global best practices, opportunities to engage with investors, and insights into expanding international networks.

SPOTLIGHT



AFRAH AL BALUSHI

THE

Environment Authority (EA) has monitored the endangered Egyptian vulture, known as 'Neophron percnopterus', in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. This effort represents a significant environmental achievement that reinforces the Sultanate of Oman's status as an international sanctuary for both migratory and resident birds. According to the Environment Authority's survey results, conducted over a distance of 116 kilometres in the Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen and across an area of 113 kilometres in the Wilayat of Al Qabil, during a three-month period from July through September, the concentrations of the endangered Egyptian vulture were found primarily in rugged mountains, deep valleys and habitats distant from human activity.

Furthermore, there were limited sightings of the vultures in both mountainous and desert areas. The monitoring methodology involved dividing the governorate into equal-sized sections using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Last July, the Authority reported the observation of more than 300 endangered Egyptian vultures in the Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen. This documentation marks one of the largest recorded sightings of this species in the governorate. It serves as a positive indicator of the rich wildlife diversity in Al Sharqiyah North.

The Sultanate of Oman is solidifying its position as an international habitat for migratory and resident birds, showcasing the success of its environmental conservation policies. Oman also seeks to protect ecosystems, promote a green and circular economy, ensure food and water security, and raise environmental awareness.

The observation of the endangered Egyptian vulture highlights the Authority's ongoing efforts to monitor biodiversity, as the governorates continue to record frequent sightings of rare bird species – further strengthening Oman's position as a prime destination for ecotourism and scientific research.

A recent EA survey confirms that Oman is strengthening its status as a global refuge for migratory birds, with one of the largest recorded gatherings of endangered Egyptian vultures in the region



ACCORDING TO THE ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY'S SURVEY RESULTS, CONDUCTED OVER A DISTANCE OF

116

KILOMETRES IN THE WILAYAT OF DIMA W'ATTAYEEN AND ACROSS AN AREA OF

113

KILOMETRES IN THE WILAYAT OF AL QABIL

LAST JULY, THE AUTHORITY REPORTED THE OBSERVATION OF MORE THAN

300

ENDANGERED EGYPTIAN VULTURES IN THE WILAYAT OF DIMA W'ATTAYEEN.

SHORT TAKES



The pact will enhance psychological and rehabilitation services for the elderly and people with disabilities

MOSD, AL AMAL SIGN PACT FOR ELDERLY, DISABILITY CARE

AL RUSTAQ: The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), represented by the Directorate-General of Social Development in Al Batinah South Governorate, signed a memorandum of cooperation with Al Amal International Hospital in Al Rustaq to enhance psychological and rehabilitation services for the elderly and people with disabilities.

The agreement was signed by Maimouna bint Salem al Mandhari, Director-General of Social Development in Al Batinah South Governorate, and Nadeem bin Yousef al Balushi, Chairman of Al Amal International Hospital.

The memorandum affirms the ministry's commitment to building community partnerships that support integrated care and mental well-being. It covers assessment, follow-up and psychological care for residents of the Social Care Home and beneficiaries of Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Al Rustaq.

Al Amal Hospital will also provide free parental consultations, urgent interventions in emergencies, treatment plans and discounted services — including a 20-per cent reduction for rehabilitation cases referred by the directorate and a 25-per cent discount for psychological cases among the elderly and people with disabilities.

— ONA

AL BATINAH NORTH HOSTS PHARMA CARE CONFERENCE 2025



The two-day conference featured rich panel discussions and workshops

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, SEPT 28

Al Batinah North inaugurated the Second Pharmaceutical Care Conference and Innovation Lab 2025 under the auspices of Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmiyah, CEO of Oman Medical Specialty Board, and Dr Hassan al Balushi from the Directorate-General of Health Services in the governorate. The event also featured an exhibition showcasing pharmacists' achievements and pioneering healthcare innovations.

The two-day conference featured rich panel discussions and workshops. "We are proud to celebrate more than 200 pharmaceutical initiatives across Al Batinah North in 2025," said Badr al Maghrebi, Director of Pharmaceutical Care and Medical Stores. He highlighted projects including the Model Pharmacy at Saham Health Complex, digital transformation efforts, Lean management applications, and the launch of the governorate's first Innovation Lab to design sustainable solutions aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

Day one included lectures and workshops led by experts such as Dr Said al Rawahi, Dr Mona al Alawi and Dr Issam al Lawati, focusing on institutional innovation, behavioural change and digital health integration.

Day two emphasised continuous learning, highlighted by the launch of a new initiative to enhance critical care response across health complexes, presented by Dr Hassan al Balushi of Sohar Hospital. The Health Innovation Competition also showcased creative projects, from awareness booklets to model pharmacy initiatives.

The conference concluded with a tour of the exhibition, honouring contributors and reaffirming innovation's central role in advancing patient care across Oman.

CPA LAUNCHES 'RESPONSIBLE SUPPLIER' DRIVE

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has launched the 'Responsible Supplier' campaign to ensure suppliers take full responsibility for the goods and services they provide to consumers.

The campaign will involve all categories of suppliers, including physical and online stores, marketing and sales professionals, legal departments in commercial institutions, and specialists interested in consumer protection. It will be implemented in cooperation with various internal and external partners.

A senior CPA official said the initiative is a strategic step towards building a transparent and sustainable supply chain. "Taking accountability for goods and services builds trust between suppliers and consumers and supports a diversified economy based on innovation and responsibility under Oman Vision 2040," the official said.

The campaign aims to create a fair and safe consumer environment based on voluntary compliance with the Consumer Protection Law. "This initiative strengthens the partnership between the Authority and commercial institutions and helps convey suppliers' concerns to

decision-makers," the official added. The campaign will focus on three main pillars: the basic duties of suppliers, violations and prohibitions, and the digital services offered to suppliers.

It will work to raise legal awareness among suppliers, reduce violations caused by lack of knowledge, improve service quality, build stronger partnerships, enhance awareness of penalties and procedures and introduce the Authority's digital services.

Through direct and continuous awareness and education, the CPA hopes to empower suppliers to understand their obligations and adopt responsible business practices.

Oman boosts Vision 2040 with early retirement

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

THE new Social Protection Law in Oman has taken a significant step towards inclusivity by extending early retirement options to persons with disabilities, reflecting the country's commitment to social justice and human-centred policies.

In an exclusive interview, Shamsa al Tamimi, Director of Medical Affairs at the Social Protection Fund, emphasised that the move provides stability and dignity to persons with disabilities and their families, offering financial security while acknowledging their unique challenges.

The decision is driven by humanitarian considerations and aligns with international conventions on the rights of persons with disabilities and Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises well-being and empowerment across all segments of society.

Under the new provisions, insured persons with severe disabilities can retire at age 50 without deductions if they have completed at least 15 years of service during their period of disability, ten years earlier than the standard retirement age. Early retirement at 45 with proportional

Insured persons with severe disabilities can retire at 50 years without deductions if they have completed at least 15 years of service during their period of disability



Shamsa al Tamimi, Director of Medical Affairs at the Social Protection Fund

deductions is also available, subject to the same service requirement.

Eligible conditions include Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down syndrome, intellectual disability (IQ below 70), severe visual or hearing impairment, and severe physical disability, verified via a 'Person with Disability' card from the Ministry of Social Development.

Al Tamimi noted that the policy aims to enhance the quality of life, allowing beneficiaries to focus on healthcare, rehabilitation, or family responsibilities while encouraging community engagement and volunteerism. Families also gain stability and economic security, helping them better manage daily

life. Regarding labour market impact, she added that the move is expected to be positive, creating space for young job-seekers while allowing persons with disabilities to retire with dignity. Civil society and NGOs will support awareness campaigns, assist with applications, provide post-retirement services and monitor policy effectiveness to ensure broad access.

The decision has received widespread acclaim in Oman, recognised as a tangible expression of national and humanitarian values. To ensure financial sustainability, the Social Protection Fund will rely on diversified investments, regular actuarial reviews, and careful integration of new beneficiaries, maintaining a balance between coverage and fiscal responsibility.

Applications for early retirement opened on September 1 through the Fund's service outlets, with eligibility verification and pension approval processes in place.

"Justice is incomplete unless it includes everyone, and human dignity should never be conditional on ability.

Persons with disabilities are an integral part of this nation, and the social protection system has been designed with them, and for them," Al Tamimi concluded.

EU Film Festival in Muscat concludes, forum highlights women's empowerment



A forum on 'Women Empowerment Beyond Borders' was held as part of the EU Film Festival 2025 in Muscat

that in pre-oil Oman, women sustained families when men worked abroad, leaving a legacy of strength and resilience.

Italian director Simmona Ricky spoke about Francesca and Giovanni, highlighting Italy's pioneering women, including the nation's first female judge and prime minister.

Festival director Sudha Sha

praised the global rise of women film-makers, citing acclaimed works such as Barbie, Anatomy of a Fall and All We Imagine as Light.

The event drew wide participation and was lauded as a groundbreaking addition to the EU Film Festival, fostering cross-cultural dialogue on women's empowerment. Organised by the EU delegation

with partner embassies, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the International Film Foundation of Oman, this year's festival introduced new interactive formats alongside powerful screenings. Hosted by the Embassy of Italy in Oman, the festival concluded on Sunday with an Omani film by Dr Khalid bin Abdul Raheem al Zadjali at 7 pm.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



South Korean President Lee Jae Myung speaks during a press conference, in Seoul. — Reuters

LEE CALLS FOR IMPROVING SECURITY AT NATIONAL DATA CENTRE

SEOUL: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung pledged a “significant improvement” in the security of government administrative systems after a major fire at the national data centre crippled online services around the country. At a meeting with dozens of ministers and senior government officials, Lee expressed concerns over disruptions of shipping, postal and financial services ahead of the Chuseok mid-autumn holidays in October. Government services such as the issuance of new passports and offering aid for underprivileged people would be also affected, Lee said.

The centre acts as a cloud server for many government services and databases for the heavily wired Asian country, which is a global powerhouse in technology. The centre also operates data centres in other locations. The accident was suspected to have started with an explosion on Friday night of a battery produced by South Korea’s LG Energy Solution during maintenance, damaging some servers and forcing the shutdown of hundreds of others.

Lee didn’t forecast how long the disruptions would continue, adding that the country will have to launch a so-called “dual system” for data security for emergencies. “I don’t understand why we don’t have an emergency plan for this kind of predictable event,” he told officials. He asked ministers to propose new budgets to prevent such accidents and investigate the fire thoroughly. Officials are seeking to resume operations at 551 of 647 government administrative systems, according to the safety ministry. — Reuters

ACTOR-POLITICIAN’S AIDES CHARGED AS STAMPEDE KILLS 40

CHENNAI: Police charged three close aides of a popular actor and politician with culpable homicide and negligence on Sunday after a stampede at his rally in southern India killed at least 40 people, officials said. Some 27,000 people thronged a public road in Tamil Nadu state in the hope of seeing the politician, known by the single name of Vijay, on Saturday, but panic broke out, triggering a deadly crush.

Police filed a case against three senior members of Vijay’s party, whom they identified as Bussy Anand, G R Nirmal Kumar and V P Mathiyazhagan. “A case has been registered and the investigation will reveal all who are involved,” senior police officer S Davidson Devasirvatham told reporters. All three have been charged with “culpable homicide not amounting to murder” and negligent conduct endangering human life.

Witnesses cited hours of delays, insufficient police presence and people falling from a tree branch onto the audience as reasons contributing to the crush.

Vijay was addressing the rally in Karur district when the crowd surged suddenly, forcing him to halt his speech. — AFP

SECOND ROUND POLLS

Seychelles presidential vote going to runoff



The Seychelles presidential election will go to a runoff between opposition leader Patrick Herminie and incumbent President Wavel Ramkalawan after no clear winner emerged in the first round of voting, the electoral commission said. Herminie, head of the United Seychelles party, secured 48.8% of the vote, while Ramkalawan, of the Linynon Demokratik Seselwa (LDS), followed closely with 46.4%. Neither candidate surpassed the 50% threshold required for an outright victory in the first round. — Reuters

IRAN DENOUNCES ‘UNJUSTIFIABLE’ RETURN OF UN SANCTIONS

Tanks thrust deeper into Gaza, many injured trapped

ISRAELI tanks moved deeper into Gaza City’s residential districts on Sunday, as local health authorities said they have been unable to respond to dozens of desperate calls, expressing concern about the fate of residents in the targeted areas. Witnesses and medics said Israeli tanks had deepened their incursions in the Sabra, Tel Al Hawa, Sheikh Radwan and Al Naser neighbourhoods, closing in on the heart and the western areas of Gaza City, where hundreds of thousands of people are sheltering. The Israeli military launched its long-threatened ground offensive on Gaza City on September 16 after weeks of intensifying strikes on the urban centre, forcing hundreds of Palestinians to flee although many still remain.

Hamas, which Israel has demanded must surrender, said on Sunday it had not received a new proposal from mediators, after US President Donald Trump said on Friday that “a deal on Gaza” seemed likely. Trump is scheduled to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on Monday. A spokesperson for the US Embassy in Israel separately said that Ambassador Mike Huckabee would travel to Egypt to meet with Egyptian officials “as part of regular diplomatic consultations conducted between US embassies in the region”.

Hamas’s armed wing urged the Israeli military to temporarily halt air strikes and withdraw from part

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday condemned as “unjustifiable” the reinstatement of United Nations sanctions over its nuclear programme, after the collapse of talks with Western powers and Israeli and US strikes on its nuclear sites. The measures, which bar dealings linked to the Islamic republic’s nuclear and ballistic missile activities, took effect overnight after Western powers triggered the so-called “snapback” mechanism under the 2015 nuclear accord.

“The reactivation of annulled resolutions is legally baseless and unjustifiable... all countries must refrain from recognising this illegal situation,” the Iranian foreign ministry said in a statement. “The Islamic Republic of Iran will firmly defend its national rights and interests, and any action aimed at undermining the rights and interests of its people will face a firm and appropriate response,” it added.

The return of the sanctions ends months of tense diplomacy aimed at

reviving nuclear talks derailed since June, when Israeli and US forces bombed Iranian nuclear facilities. Despite the reimposition, Western leaders stressed that channels for dialogue remained open.

Kaja Kallas, the European Union’s top diplomat, on Sunday said the reimposition of sanctions “must not be the end of diplomacy”, adding that “a sustainable solution to the Iranian nuclear issue can only be achieved through negotiations”. — AFP



A Palestinian woman and a child who fled Gaza City sit near their belongings in the Nuseirat refugee camp. — AFP

Over the past 24 hours, the air force had struck 140 targets across Gaza. At least five people were killed in an air strike in Gaza’s Al Naser area. Medics reported 16 more deaths in strikes on houses in central Gaza, bringing Sunday’s death toll to at least 21

of Gaza City on Sunday as it tried to locate two Israeli hostages it said it had lost contact with. “The lives of the two prisoners are in real danger, and (Israeli) forces must immediately withdraw to the south of Street 8 and halt aerial operations for 24 hours starting from 18:00 today to allow attempts to rescue the prisoners,” wrote the Ezzedine Al Qassam Brigades in a statement.

In a previous announcement, the group said the loss of contact was due to Israeli military operations in two southern Gaza City neighbourhoods over the previous 48 hours, where Israeli forces have stepped up air and ground assaults. In the past, the movement announced that it had lost contact with an Israeli-American hostage, who was released a few days after that announcement. Since launching its offensive on Gaza City, the Israeli military has repeatedly ordered Palestinians to move south.

The Civil Emergency Service in Gaza said late on Saturday that Israel had denied 73 requests, sent

via international organisations, to rescue injured Palestinians in Gaza City. Israeli authorities had no immediate comment. The military earlier said forces were expanding operations in the city and that five fighters firing an anti-tank missile towards Israeli troops had been killed by the Israeli air force.

Over the past 24 hours, the air force had struck 140 targets across Gaza, the military said. At least five people were killed in an air strike in Gaza’s Al Naser area, local health authorities said. Medics reported 16 more deaths in strikes on houses in central Gaza, bringing Sunday’s death toll to at least 21. Later on Sunday, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement that at least 77 people have been killed by Israeli fire in the past 24 hours. Israel’s military siege has caused a humanitarian catastrophe across Gaza. Four health facilities in Gaza City have shut down this month, the World Health Organization has said. Some malnutrition centres have also closed, the UN says. — AFP



VIETNAM EVACUATES THOUSANDS AS TYPHOON NEARS

VINH: Vietnam closed airports and evacuated thousands of people in areas under storm threat on Sunday, as intensifying Typhoon Bualoi barrelled towards the country, days after causing at least 10 deaths and widespread flooding in the Philippines. The typhoon was generating winds of up to 133 km/h and is forecast to make landfall in central Vietnam on Monday, slowing as it nears the coast, state-run Thanh Nien newspaper reported.

“This is a rapidly moving storm - nearly twice the average speed - with strong intensity and a broad area of impact,” the national weather forecast agency said. “It is capable of triggering multiple natural disasters simultaneously, including powerful winds, heavy rainfall, flooding, flash floods, landslides and coastal inundation.” — Reuters

ECOLOGICAL DAMAGE

Namibia deploys soldiers to fight Etosha fire



Namibia began deploying hundreds of soldiers to fight a fire that has burned through a third of the vast Etosha National Park, one of Africa’s largest game reserves. The park in the north of the largely desert nation is home to 114 species of mammals, notably the critically endangered black rhinoceros, and is a major tourist attraction. The fire had been raging since September 22 and has caused extensive ecological damage. — AFP

CROSSINGS TRAGEDY

Migrant found dead on beach in France



A young migrant was found dead early on Sunday on a beach in northern France. “The body of a young man was discovered on the beach of Saint-Etienne-au-Mont. It is highly likely that he was a migrant who attempted the crossing to Great Britain last night,” the Pas-de-Calais prefecture said in a statement. An investigation will need to determine if there is a connection between the death and an attempted crossing. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



People dance as they queue outside a polling a station located in the embassy of Moldova, in Moscow. — Reuters

MOLDOVA VOTES, TORN BETWEEN EUROPE AND RUSSIA

CHISINAU: Moldovans voted on Sunday in parliamentary elections that could see Ukraine’s neighbour swerve from its pro-European path back toward Moscow’s orbit, with the government and the EU accusing Russia of interfering in the ex-Soviet country. The European Union candidate country, which has a pro-Russia breakaway region, has long been divided over whether to move closer with Brussels or maintain Soviet-era relations with Moscow.

Most surveys ahead of the vote showed the pro-EU Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), in power since 2021, in the lead. But analysts say the race is far from certain. The ballot is overshadowed by fears of vote buying and unrest, as well as an “unprecedented campaign of disinformation” from Russia, according to the EU. Moscow has denied the allegations.

Moldova’s cybersecurity service said on Sunday it detected several attempts at attacks on the electoral infrastructure, which were “neutralised in real time... without affecting the availability or integrity of electoral services”.

Pro-EU President Maia Sandu of PAS warned after casting her vote of a “massive interference of Russia”, saying Moldova was “in danger” and “might lose everything it has won” posing “significant risk also for other countries like Ukraine”. — AFP

VENEZUELA MILITARY EXERCISES

Venezuela carried out military exercises in coastal areas after the US deployed ships off its coast, stirring invasion fears. Washington has deployed military vessels to the Caribbean based on claims of combatting drug trafficking, targeting at least three boats in recent weeks allegedly loaded with drugs from Venezuela, resulting in 14 fatalities. Caracas denounces the US deployment, calling it a “military threat.” Saturday’s exercises, in the northwest state of Falcon and the northeast state of Sucre. — AFP

DENMARK BANS ALL CIVILIAN DRONE FLIGHTS DUE TO EU SUMMIT

COPENHAGEN: Denmark will ban all civilian drone flights across the country this week to ensure security as Copenhagen hosts an EU summit gathering heads of government, the transport ministry said on Sunday. Mysterious drone sightings across Denmark since September 22 have prompted the closure of several airports, with Denmark hinting at possible Russian involvement, charges Moscow has rejected.

Drones were observed over Danish military sites overnight for

the second straight day, Denmark’s army said. Copenhagen is to host an EU summit on Wednesday and Thursday. “Denmark will host EU leaders in the coming week, where we will have extra focus on security. Therefore, from Monday to Friday, we will close the Danish airspace to all civilian drone flights,” Transport Minister Thomas Danielsen said in a statement. “In this way, we remove the risk that enemy drones can be confused with legal drones and vice versa,” he added.

A violation of the ban can result in a fine or imprisonment for up to two years, the ministry said. Justice Minister Peter Hummelgaard said in the same statement the purpose of the ban was to simplify the work of police and other authorities. “The police are on heightened alert, and our authorities must use their forces where necessary to take care of Danes and our guests.”

The ban does not apply to military drone flights and state-operated drones. — AFP

Russia pounds Ukraine in mass drone, missile attack

RUSSIA launched hundreds of drones and missiles at Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine early on Sunday, killing at least four people and injuring dozens, in one of the most sustained attacks on the capital since the full-scale war began. Neighbouring Poland closed its airspace near two southeastern cities and its air force scrambled jets in response until the danger had passed. Ukraine’s military said that Russia launched 595 drones and 48 missiles overnight and its air defences shot down 568 drones and 43 missiles. It noted that the main target of the strike was the capital Kyiv.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said the attack, which lasted more than 12 hours, damaged a cardiology clinic, factories and residential buildings. Russia’s defence ministry said on Sunday it had carried out a “massive” attack on Ukraine using long-range air and sea-based weapons and drones to target military infrastructure, including airfields. Moscow has denied targeting civilians in its war against Ukraine, although thousands have been killed and residential areas extensively damaged by its attacks.

Zelensky again urged the international community to act decisively to cut off Russia’s energy revenues that fund its attack. Ukraine has so far failed to convince US President Donald Trump to impose punitive sanctions on Moscow.

“The time for decisive action is long overdue, and we count on a strong response from the United States, Europe, the G7, and the G20,” he said on the Telegram messaging app. Kyiv awoke to loud explosions, drones flying overhead and air defences booming. Smoke from one of the strike sites drifted across the morning sky as the air raid alert ended at 09:13 am (06:13 GMT), nearly seven hours after it began.

Journalists visited an area in the suburbs of Kyiv, where rows of newly built homes were almost totally destroyed, and parked cars flattened by falling debris. Residents sifted through the wreckage of an apartment block after their windows were blown in by the force of a blast. Some people hurried to metro stations underground, from where they followed events on their mobile phones.



Men stand at the site of heavily damaged buildings following a Russian air attack, in Kyiv. — AFP

Attacks on such a scale have stretched Ukraine’s limited air defences throughout 2025. Zelensky said on Saturday an additional Patriot missile system from Israel had been deployed and he expected two more to arrive this autumn. He and other officials have asked international partners for more to protect Ukraine’s skies, but air defence systems are limited in availability and other nations are keen to bolster their defences amid perceived threats from Russia.

Zelensky said Sunday’s attack targeted several regions, including the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, where authorities said at least 16 people were injured. Emergency services said at least four people were killed, while 67 people were reported wounded across the country by local authorities. Among the fatalities was a 12-year-old girl, although that has not been officially confirmed, Tymur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv’s military administration, said on Telegram.

The Kremlin on Sunday dismissed threats by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that Kremlin officials should know where the bomb shelters were, saying that Ukraine was losing the war and that its negotiating position was worsening. Zelensky suggested

to Axios that the centres of Russian power, like the Kremlin, were potential targets, saying that Kremlin officials “have to know where the bomb shelters are.”

“Zelensky is trying to demonstrate to the Europeans, who now act as the breadwinners, that he is such a brave soldier,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state television. “Meanwhile, the state of affairs at the front indicates the opposite. With every passing day, the situation for Ukraine is inexorably deteriorating. And everyday Ukraine’s negotiating positions are inexorably deteriorating.”

Russia controls 114,918 square km, or about 19 per cent of Ukraine, and has taken 4,729 square km of Ukrainian territory in the past year, according to the pro-Ukrainian DeepState map project. When asked directly by state television’s Kremlin correspondent Pavel Zarubin how the Kremlin would perceive an attack on the centre of Russian power, Peskov said that “it’s better not to even talk about it.” In May 2023, Russia accused Ukraine of trying to attack the Kremlin with drones. President Vladimir Putin was not in the Kremlin at the time of the attack. — Reuters

Starmer warns UK Labour in ‘fight of our lives’ as party meets

LIVERPOOL: Britain’s ruling Labour party gathered for its annual meeting on Sunday, with Prime Minister Keir Starmer battling to convince nervous lawmakers that he can lead the “fight of our lives” against the insurgent hard-right. Although the ex-lawyer led Labour back to power in July last year after 14 years in opposition, scandals, policy missteps and plummeting poll ratings have already raised doubts about his future.

The four-day gathering in Liverpool, northwest England, comes amid chatter about a possible leadership challenge and follows two recent high-profile departures from government in the wake of embarrassing revelations. The conference, which ends on Wednesday, takes place with Labour lagging well behind the upstart anti-immigrant Reform UK party, led by anti-EU firebrand Nigel Farage, in national surveys.

Starmer said on Sunday that the party has “got the fight of our lives ahead of us, because we’ve got to take on Reform. We’ve got to beat them. “The effects will be there for generations,” he told the BBC. He also called Reform’s plan to make migrants reapply for new visas with tougher rules “racist”, adding it would “tear our country apart”.

Ahead of the conference, finance minister Rachel Reeves said she was pushing for a post-Brexit youth migration deal with the European Union. She told the Times newspaper that an exchange scheme for young workers would be “good for the economy, good for growth and good for business.”

Despite some success on the international stage for his handling of US President Donald Trump and helping co-ordinate European support for Ukraine, Starmer has endured a largely miserable first 14 months domestically as prime



British PM Keir Starmer delivers his keynote speech, in Liverpool. — Reuters

minister. Britain’s sluggish economy means a tax-raising budget is reportedly looming, while Starmer has U-turned on welfare reforms and scrapping energy benefits for millions of pensioners following anger among Labour’s left-wing base.

Meanwhile, small boat crossings to England of undocumented migrants are at record levels, fuelling support for Reform. Starmer attempts to reboot his government earlier in September were quickly overshadowed by Angela Rayner’s resignation as deputy prime

minister for underpaying property tax.

Starmer then sacked Peter Mandelson as Britain’s ambassador in Washington over his friendship with late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, with the row raising questions about his judgment. “His leadership is in crisis, really,” said political scientist Steven Fielding. “And the conference isn’t really going to resolve that. It’ll give people occasion to air their discontent with Starmer,” he said.

Starmer will seek to spark a turnaround in his fortunes when he takes to the stage for the gathering’s keynote speech on Tuesday. “The conference is a pivotal moment because it’s an opportunity for him to lay out a clear vision of where he is taking the country,” said Patrick Diamond, politics professor at Queen Mary, University of London. He is expected to pitch the next general election, due in 2029. — AFP

OPINION

Arab cinema gains global spotlight with festival triumphs



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

TWO important events took place in the last couple of weeks that have a direct relation to Arab cinema. The first is the phenomenal reception that the film ‘The voice of Hind Rajab’ got in the Venice and Toronto film festivals and the second is the passing of renowned film-maker Robert Redford.

The first is not a surprise. ‘The voice of Hind Rajab’ portrays the harrowing tale of 6-year-old Hind who was trapped in a car with her family in Gaza, all of whom were killed by the IDF, along with the first responders who tried to access the car. The film was made by acclaimed Tunisian director Kaouthier Ben Hania who was also nominated for an academy award in 2021 and 2024.

The film is due to be showcased in other film festivals, including London and Cairo.

But this film is only a series of powerful films emerging from the Arab world which have increasingly won international recognition, becoming part of essential viewing for a global audience.

Right from the ‘golden age’ of Egyptian cinema, Arab cinematographers have

been showcasing their skill and passion in creating a variety of films. These include social dramas and moving tales of individual trauma. After the 2010s, Arab cinema ventured into other genres like science fiction and fantasy.

Most importantly, Arab cinema makers have successfully projected their work beyond western stereotypes of Oriental life and culture

We do have the late Robert Redford to thank for this, to an extent. Redford has a lesser-known connection to the Arab film world. His Sundance Institute has long encouraged and facilitated the meeting of young creators in screenwriters’ labs and commissioned a variety of films by Arab film-makers.

This journey culminated in Cherien Dabis’ ‘All that’s left of you’ which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2025. Nominated for many awards this season, the film recounts the multiple displacements of a Palestinian family which lost all its orchards in 1948.

This was one of the last of Redford’s international collaborations.

Right from the ‘golden age’ of Egyptian cinema, Arab cinematographers have showcased their skill and passion in creating a variety of films

The Sundance Institute, founded by Redford in 1981, became a crucial door for Arab directors. The lab often paired regional writers with international mentors and created the infrastructure that linked Arab film-makers to Hollywood.

The institute also gave much-needed finance to North African and Arab film makers, both individuals and organisations.

Redford’s institute helped Arab cinema in multiple ways. Not only did it fund specific projects, but as a whole, it helped to focus on telling real-world stories from the Arab world, not just using it as a backdrop for suffering.

It also helped Arab film makers to use their own words and pictures to build their narrative.

The director and activist himself justified the motivation behind the Sundance project by saying that he was on a “lifelong quest for truth and freedom”.

Redford’s contribution has been recognised by the Arab film world as well. He was awarded a lifetime achievement award at the Marrakesh International Film Festival in 2019.

FOREIGN DOCTORS SAY GAZA’S WOUNDS ‘WORST EVER’

DANIEL LAWLER

International doctors and nurses who treated Palestinians in Gazan hospitals described wounds more severe than civilians had suffered in other modern conflicts, according to a peer-reviewed study published.

For the research in the leading medical journal BMJ, 78 humanitarian healthcare workers mostly from Europe and North America, answered survey questions describing the severity, location and cause of the wounds they saw during their stints in the Gaza Strip.

The British-led team of researchers said it is the most comprehensive data available about Palestinian injuries during Israel’s nearly two-year offensive against Hamas, given that the territory’s health facilities have been devastated and international access is heavily restricted.

Two-thirds of the healthcare workers had previously deployed to other conflict zones, the vast majority of whom said the injuries in Gaza were “the worst thing that they’ve ever seen”, the study’s lead author, British surgeon Omar El Taji, said.

Up to three months after they returned from Gaza, the doctors and nurses — aided by log books and shift records — filled out a survey about the injuries they saw during deployments lasting from two to 12 weeks between August 2024 and February 2025.

They catalogued more than 23,700 trauma injuries and nearly 7,000 wounds caused by weapons — numbers which broadly echoed data from the World Health Organization, the study said.

It is difficult to get data about injuries in any conflict, but the study described the wounds in Gaza as “unusually severe”.

In the territory, which has been relentlessly bombed and shelled by the Israeli military, over two-thirds of the weapon-related injuries were caused by explosions, according to the study. That is more than double the rate of explosive injuries recorded among civilians in other modern conflicts, the study said.

Instead, it was similar to the rate suffered by US soldiers during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it added.

El Taji emphasised this was a “really significant” difference, because unlike civilians, soldiers have training and protection, and know that they are headed towards danger.

“The volume, distribution, and military grade severity of injuries indicate patterns of harm that exceed those reported in previous modern-day conflicts,” the study said. — AFP

UN walkout deepens rift over Gaza crisis

THE United Nations chamber fell into symbolic silence, broken only by the shuffle of footsteps, as delegates rose from their seats and filed out during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s speech. His pledge to “finish the job” in Gaza — words delivered with defiance — was met with visible rejection, a striking moment that captured the world’s growing disapproval.

That walkout crystallised a shift already well underway: Israel stands increasingly isolated as the humanitarian disaster in Gaza deepens.

The toll is staggering. More than 65,000 lives have been lost, entire neighbourhoods reduced to rubble, and vital infrastructure obliterated.

What began as a declared retaliatory operation has, in the eyes of governments, institutions, and global opinion, evolved into what many now call a campaign of genocide. This accusation is no longer confined to Israel’s adversaries; it reverberates in Western capitals, cultural circles, and humanitarian bodies, shaping an unprecedented crisis of legitimacy.

Politically, the reorientation is unmistakable. Nations once firm in their support now openly condemn Israeli actions. The recent recognition of a Palestinian state by the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Australia, Portugal and others would have seemed unthinkable just a few years ago.

Across Europe and North America, calls for arms embargoes and sanctions gather momentum, while in the US — Israel’s closest ally — support is eroding, particularly among younger generations and within the Democratic Party.

Netanyahu’s speech at the UN, meant to project resolve, instead underscored this unravelling consensus.



A Palestinian child checks the damage in a room inside a house hit by Israeli bombing in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. — AFP



BADR AL DHAFARI

The writer is head of proofreading and translation at Oman Observer

Institutional and legal pressure has grown equally intense. The United Nations has issued a series of sharp denunciations, with an independent commission concluding that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza — a finding supported by leading genocide scholars and human rights groups such as Amnesty International.

The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, while the International Court of Justice has declared Israel’s presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory illegal. Even the sporting world has weighed in: UEFA has announced its intention to suspend Israel from international football, underlining how deeply the conflict has penetrated arenas once thought beyond the reach of geopolitics.

On the streets, public pressure is visible and growing. From London to Milan, vast demonstrations call for an immediate ceasefire and

unrestricted humanitarian access. Social media has galvanised these movements, amplifying solidarity and creating counter-narratives to official discourse. Writers, artists and actors who once hesitated to speak out now lend their voices, signing open letters and endorsing cultural boycotts. Within Israel, protests have also gathered pace, reflecting rising frustration over the war’s toll and the fate of hostages.

Economic consequences mirror these shifts. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, long dismissed as fringe, has entered the mainstream.

Multinational brands such as McDonald’s and Starbucks have reported declining sales in several markets amid consumer boycotts. Institutional investors are also acting: Norway’s sovereign wealth fund has divested from Israeli companies, citing Gaza-related concerns. UN experts have called for an end to trade with what they describe as Israel’s ‘economy of genocide,’ adding further pressure.

Beneath these layers lies an unmistakable ethical reckoning.

The scale of Gaza’s suffering, captured and broadcast daily, has forced societies to confront the moral compromises that long defined the global response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The endurance of Gaza’s population, facing unimaginable hardship with extraordinary dignity, has become both a symbol of human resilience and an indictment of the world’s inertia.

The silence of past decades weighed heavily on Gaza, yet the current wave of disillusionment signals a slow but irreversible rethinking. It points towards a moment in which the principles of human rights and international law may be reclaimed as universal — and the suffering of any people, whatever their identity, can no longer be brushed aside.

A call to listen with your eyes



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

IMAGINE waking up in a world where no one speaks your language. Not your family, not your teachers, not the people on the news, nor the strangers at the store. The language you speak isn't something you learned; it is how you were born to communicate. It is the rhythm of your thoughts, the shape of your voice, the bridge between you and everyone else.

Now picture a moment in the middle of a crowded café: two people sit across from each other, their hands dancing through the air. They are deep in conversation filled with laughter, frustration and excitement, but not a single word is spoken. This is a language not of sound, but of sight and motion. This is sign language.

In a world driven by sound — ringing phones, talking voices, blaring announcements — it is easy to overlook the power of visual communication. However, for millions of people around the world, sign language is not only a way of communication, but also a vital part of identity, culture and community.

For the deaf community, sign language is not a backup plan or a substitute. It is a living, fully-formed language — rich with emotion, grammar, humour and storytelling. It is how stories are told, jokes are shared, love is confessed and debates are won.

Like any spoken language, it evolves, travels and reflects the culture of its people.

Sign language is a complete, natural language that uses hand gestures, facial expressions and body movements to convey meaning.

It is most commonly used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing, but also by those who have difficulty speaking. Many hearing individuals also learn sign language to communicate with loved ones or in professional roles such as interpreting, teaching, or caregiving.

What many people don't realise is that sign language is not universal. Just as spoken languages differ from one country to another, so do sign languages.

American Sign Language, used in the US and parts of Canada, is different from British Sign Language, used in the UK. In fact, the first language has more in common with French Sign Language than with latter — despite the shared spoken language between the US and the UK. There are hundreds of sign languages worldwide, each with its own grammar, vocabulary and unique cultural distinctions.

Far from being just a set of gestures, sign languages are linguistically rich and complex. They have rules for sentence structure, word formation and even regional dialects. Recognising the value of sign language also means acknowledging the

Sign language is not just for the deaf. It is a tool, a bridge and a celebration of human expression

rights of deaf individuals.

Learning sign language, even at a basic level, can be an eye-opening and rewarding experience. And beyond its practical uses, sign language teaches us something deeper: to truly pay attention. It reminds us that communication is more than just spoken words. It's about connection, understanding and respect.

Across the world, more people are learning sign language out of curiosity, compassion, or a desire to connect. A sibling wants to talk with their deaf brother. A teacher wants every student to feel seen.

Sign language is not just for the deaf. It is for parents and babies before speech develops. It is for stroke survivors, non-verbal individuals, children with autism, and even for performers, poets and visual storytellers. It is a tool, a bridge and a celebration of human expression.

So next time you are in a café and you see two people signing across a table, take a moment to appreciate the quiet magic between them. What you are witnessing is not silence — it is fluency, poetry and power.

In a world obsessed with noise, sign language reminds us that connection doesn't always need sound — just a willing heart, open eyes and hands ready to speak. You don't have to be deaf to use sign language. Learning even a few signs — thank you, I see you — can turn a moment into a bridge.

SARKOZY CONVICTION DEEPENS FRANCE’S POLITICAL DIVIDE

ANNA SMOLCHENKO & FABRICE RANDOUX

A court verdict sending former president Nicolas Sarkozy to prison for criminal conspiracy has laid bare France's stark political divisions, with the ruling cheered by the left but slammed by the ascendant right.

Sarkozy, seen as a mentor to many conservative politicians, was convicted on Thursday over a scheme enabling late Libyan Muammar Gaddafi to fund his 2007 presidential run.

He must serve his sentence while awaiting the outcome of his appeal, and will be the first French postwar leader to serve jail time.

"I will not forget what he did and gave for our country," Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said in carefully worded comments to the *Le Parisien* newspaper, expressing his "friendship for the man and his family".

Lecornu, whose political roots are on the right, said he would not comment on a judicial verdict or question the judiciary. The conviction comes at a deeply sensitive moment, with France in political deadlock and the far right sensing its best chance ever to come to power.

Speaking to broadcaster RTL, Henri Guaino, a former special adviser to Sarkozy, called the conviction "a humiliation for the state and its institutions".

Guaino urged President Emmanuel Macron to pardon Sarkozy, who was president from 2007 to 2012, allowing him to avoid prison.

There was no immediate reaction from Macron's office. Some commentators have suggested such a move is inadmissible at this stage.

Despite his legal troubles, Sarkozy still enjoys considerable influence and popularity on the French right and has on occasion had private meetings with Macron.

In an editorial, conservative French daily *Le Figaro* denounced the court ruling as "absurd and incomprehensible", claiming there was no "tangible evidence" of wrongdoing.

Left-leaning *Liberation* featured Sarkozy's face on its front page, with the words "The slammer" printed over it.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen, who has herself been convicted of embezzlement and says she is a target of a "witch hunt", criticised Thursday's ruling. She argued on X that the use of provisional enforcement represented "a great danger, in view of the fundamental principles of our law, foremost among which is the presumption of innocence".

In France, provisional enforcement means that a judicial decision will be implemented even as the appeal process plays out. Le Pen drew parallels between her own case scuppering her chances of running in France's 2027 presidential election unless she wins her appeal -- and that of Sarkozy.

— AFP

Norway’s responsibility to future generations



By embracing a more radical model of deliberative democracy that focuses on the long-term collective good, Norway is setting a precedent for other countries.

OVER the first four months of 2025, 56 Norwegian citizens convened to discuss how Norway's immense oil wealth can best serve current and future generations, both domestically and globally.

Unlike traditional policymaking, where elected officials and experts call the shots, this so-called Future Panel – the second such assembly held in Norway – allowed ordinary citizens, selected through a representative process and equipped with the necessary knowledge, to craft recommendations through informed debate.

The Panel was established by seven civil-society organisations – WWF Norway, Save the Children Norway, Caritas Norway, Framtiden i våre hender (The Future in Our Hands), the Norwegian Children and Youth Council, and the think tank Langsikt – to conduct a fact-based



SOPHIE HOWE

The writer was the first Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

public discussion about Norway's wealth. Its remit is to amplify the people's voice on this highly important topic before the general election in September.

By embracing a more radical model of deliberative democracy that focuses on the long-term collective good rather than short-term political interests, Norway is setting a precedent for other countries. Perhaps more importantly, when presenting its recommendations to the Norwegian parliament on May 13, the Future Panel formally demanded a legal framework – including a dedicated commissioner – to safeguard future generations. If enacted, it would demonstrate that grassroots advocacy can bring about a paradigm shift in governance.

I experienced the potential of this shift firsthand as the first Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, which passed the Well-being of Future Generations Act

in 2015. The law requires public bodies to consider the long-term consequences of their decisions, ensuring that sustainability and intergenerational justice are embedded in policymaking.

The act was the result of a year-long national conversation – another deliberative democratic process. In 2014, the Welsh government asked its citizens to discuss what kind of country they wanted to leave behind for their children and grandchildren. Their answers helped shape the legislation's seven long-term well-being goals, which serve as a north star for policymakers.

Momentum for such legislation is growing globally. In September, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Declaration on Future Generations that encourages governments to institutionalise long-term thinking.

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



The forum is open to the public of all ages and nationalities, with events held in two sessions morning and evening

2ND EDITION OF THE AMATEUR SPORTS FORUM BEGINS TODAY

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

The second edition of the Amateur Sports Forum will kick off this evening, Monday, organised by the General Directorate of Sports Activities at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), represented by the Amateur Sports Department. The forum will run until the evening of Wednesday, October 1, at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

This year’s forum builds on the success of the first edition held last year, which featured ten sports aimed at introducing them to the community and spreading awareness. In this edition, the forum takes a significant step forward by hosting three official championships for the first time in Oman the First Oman Archery Championship, the First Oman Sepak Takraw Championship, and the First Oman Pickleball Championship.

These championships aim to measure public and athletic interest in these sports, highlight their growing momentum, and provide athletes and enthusiasts with the opportunity to practice them in a structured, competitive environment. So far, more than 80 male and female participants of various age groups have registered in one of the championships, reflecting the increasing enthusiasm for these emerging sports.

Mohammed bin Said al Niyadi, Head of the Amateur Sports Department, stressed that the forum represents a long-awaited platform for those interested in new and non-mainstream sports in the Sultanate of Oman. It serves as a bridge for communication between practitioners and official sports authorities, creating effective channels of cooperation and helping to integrate these athletes into active sporting communities in the country. He also pointed out that some Arab federations are closely following these sports, paving the way for future cooperation and potential affiliation, which will enhance development opportunities both locally and regionally.

The forum is open to the public of all ages and nationalities, with events held in two sessions morning session: 8:30 am – 12:30 pm, and the evening session: 3:30 pm – 9:30 pm.

Amid the global momentum for investing in sports, Oman seeks through this forum to position itself as a hub for emerging sports, given their societal and health benefits, as well as their role in supporting the national economy and diversifying income sources.



Young participants trying out boxing during the first edition of the Amateur Sports Forum

Al Seeb beats Sohar in thriller, Al Khabourah downs Ibri

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

AL SEEB

Club secured a thrilling 2-1 victory over visiting Sohar in the closing match of Round 3 of the Jindal Football League, held at Al Seeb Sports Stadium.

The hosts started strongly, surging toward goalkeeper Majid Al Ajmi’s net from the opening minutes, relying on the midfield duo Arshad al Alawi and Abdullah Fawaz to supply precise passes to the forwards. Despite their pressure, Al Seeb struggled to break through Sohar’s solid defence and the brilliant goalkeeping of Al Ajmi.

In the 20th minute, Al Seeb was awarded a penalty after Nasser al Rawahi was brought down by Moaid al Abdulsalam. Abdulaziz al Muqbali converted confidently to put his side ahead. The goal raised the tempo, prompting Sohar to push forward in search of an equaliser, but the first half ended with Al Seeb leading 1-0.

Sohar’s Spanish coach, Gonzalez Lopez, introduced Khalid al Mujaini at the start of the second half to boost attacking play. The changes paid off as the team created several chances through Limory Keita and Abdullah al Balushi, before professional player Dorin netted the equaliser in the 61st minute.

With the game wide open, both teams pressed for a winner amid loud cheers from the stands. Al Seeb focused on quick counterattacks, while Sohar intensified pressure through the middle and flanks, but neither side could find the finishing touch.

Just as the match seemed destined for a draw, Nasser al Rawahi stole the spotlight in the 91st minute with a powerful strike from the edge of the box, sealing a dramatic victory for Al Seeb. The stadium erupted in celebration as the hosts clinched all three points.

With this result, Al Seeb climbed to third place with 7 points, while Sohar



Al Seeb and Sohar players in action

slipped to fifth with 6 points.

AL KHABOURAH OUTCLASS IBRI WITH A FOUR-GOAL DISPLAY

Al Khabourah claimed a convincing 4-2 win over Ibri in their Round 3 clash of the Jindal League, played at Al Buraimi Sports Complex.

The match began evenly, with Ibri striker Bisan Jacob missing two golden chances early on, while Al Khabourah squandered a free-kick opportunity. The breakthrough came in the 37th minute when Baba Moussa opened the scoring for Al Khabourah. Just two minutes later, Salem Habib doubled the lead, and by the

43rd minute, Said Obeid added a third, giving Al Khabourah a comfortable 3-0 advantage at halftime.

Ibri fought back in the second half, with Jacob heading home in the 53rd minute to make it 3-1. Later, Abdulrahman al Yaquobi converted a penalty in the 82nd minute to bring his side within touching distance. However, Al Khabourah sealed the win in stoppage time when professional striker Anderson scored the fourth, dashing Ibri’s comeback hopes.

The victory lifted Al Khabourah to 4 points, placing them eighth in the table, while Ibri remained on a single point in 11th place.

Queiroz calls 18 players for decisive AFC Asian qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Oman head coach, Carlos Queiroz, announced on Sunday the initial squad list for the Red Warriors first phase camp ahead of their decisive AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 2026 fixtures against Qatar and United Arab Emirates, scheduled for October 8 and 11 respectively in Doha. The opening local short gathering will begin on Monday and will run until Wednesday while the second one will start on Thursday and continue until October 6.

The preliminary list of the first phase camp featured 18 players and notably excluded Al Nahda club’s stars, who are preparing for their Gulf Club Championship opener against Saudi Arabia’s Al Shabab on Wednesday as they playing alongside Yemen’s Hadramout FC and Qatar’s Al Rayan club. The experienced midfield maestro Harib al Saadi will also miss the first clash against Qatar due to suspension while Seeb’s Nasser al Rawahi expected to step into the role after impressing in all four matches of the recent CAFA Nations



The preliminary list of the first phase camp featured 18 players and notably excluded Al Nahda club’s stars

Cup and with his club at Jindal league.

Professional midfielder Jameel al Yahmadi cleared from his Iraq’s Al Karma FC to join the camp of the national team, while the remaining overseas professionals are expected to link up with the squad during the second phase of preparations, scheduled between October 2 and 6 in Muscat ahead of travelling to Doha. As part of the final plan, the national team will depart for Doha on October 6, two days before the highly anticipated

opener against hosts Qatar at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium. The Red Warriors will hold one official training session in Doha before their first encounter.

Oman team, currently ranked 78th in the latest Fifa Men’s World Ranking, will focus on October qualifiers are regarded as the most significant fixtures in the nation’s football history, with a maiden Fifa World Cup berth firmly within sight. Red Warriors delivered strong momentum from the CAFA Nations Cup, where they drew with Uzbekistan, defeated

Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, and narrowly bowed out to India on penalties in the third and fourth playoff.

SQUAD: Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Bilal al Balushi, Ahmed al Rawahi, Ali al Busaidy, Mahmood al Mushaifri, Ahmed al Khamisi, Musab al Shaqsi, Nayef Bait Subaih, Sultan al Marzooq, Musab al Maamari, Arshad al Alawi, Abdullah Fawaz, Ahmed al Riyami, Zaher al Aghbari, Jameel al Yahmadi, Hatim al Roushdi, Nasser al Rawahi, and Salah al Yahyaei.

SHORT TAKES



Shihan al Zakwani crowned the winners in different categories

ALI KARATE CLUB CLINCHES KARATE PIONEERS TITLE

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

The ninth edition of the Karate Pioneers Open Championship concluded on Friday evening, September 26, at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The tournament was organised by the Karate Pioneers Academy under the leadership of Shihan Ahmed bin Said al Zakwani, and witnessed an enthusiastic atmosphere with strong public attendance.

The championship featured wide participation from athletes representing six countries Oman, UAE, Qatar, Syria, Tunisia and Iran. A total of 25 clubs, centers and academies took part with male and female participants ranging in age from 5 to 45 years, divided into various age and weight categories.

The competitions were held in two main disciplines Kumite and Kata, were officiated by an elite panel of international, Asian and local referees, giving the event highly professional and competitive character.

The championship was held under the auspices of Fahad bin Khamis al Balushi, Chief Financial Officer of AL Zubair Corporation, who expressed his pride in supporting such sporting events that help develop youth talents and enhance Oman's presence on the regional and global sports map.

At the closing ceremony, the patron and Shihan al Zakwani crowned the winners in different categories. Ali Karate Club secured first place, with Nsoor Samayil Club finishing as runner up, while Al Qudra Club and Al Emperor Club shared third place.



Inter Miami midfielder Sergio Busquets (5) controls the ball. — **Imagn Images**

SERGIO BUSQUETS RETIRING AT END OF SEASON

MIAMI: Inter Miami midfielder Sergio Busquets announced over social media that he will retire at the end of the season.

Busquets, 37, was a teammate with superstar Lionel Messi with FC Barcelona for 15 years. The Spaniard then reunited with Messi in MLS after landing a deal with the Herons in July 2023 that ran through the 2025 season.

"I feel that the time has come to say goodbye to my career as a professional soccer player," Busquets said in a video on Instagram late on Thursday night. "It has been almost 20 years enjoying this incredible story I always dreamed about. Football has given me unique experiences in wonderful places with the best teammates as travel companions.

"... I retire happy, proud, fulfilled, and above all, grateful."

Busquets was a member of Spain's FIFA World Cup-winning squad in 2010 and earned 143 caps before retiring from international play following the 2022 World Cup.

Busquets leads Inter Miami in minutes played (2,452) to go along with nine assists in 28 MLS appearances (27 starts) this season. He has one goal and 16 assists in 69 career MLS matches (64 starts). — **Reuters**



Oman and Yemen players fight for the ball

Oman U-17 conclude Gulf Cup with victory over Yemen

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

THE Oman U-17 national football team ended their journey at the Gulf Cup in Qatar with a morale-boosting 2-1 victory over Yemen at Suheim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha, in the third and final round of Group A matches. In the other group fixture, Qatar defeated the UAE 2-0 at Hamad Al Kabir Stadium.

With these results, Qatar topped Group A with 9 points to advance to the semifinals as group leaders, while the UAE finished second with 6 points and also booked their place in the next stage. Oman concluded their campaign in third place with 3 points, while Yemen finished bottom without a single point.

Oman entered the match determined to wrap up their participation on a positive note, but it was Yemen who struck first. Fahd al Faqih opened the scoring

Oman entered the match determined to wrap up their participation on a positive note, but it was Yemen who struck first

in the 10th minute after a precise pass from Saqr Nasser. Yemen nearly doubled their lead in the 19th minute when Muhannad al Dhammari went one-on-one with the goalkeeper but fired wide. Yemen maintained their pressure, while Oman responded with dangerous chances, including Bashar al Shamsi's effort that hit the post in the 41st minute, sending the teams into halftime with Yemen leading 1-0.

At the start of the second half, Oman came out with greater determination and pressed hard from the opening minutes. In the 52nd minute, Saad al Maamari won the ball in midfield, drove into the box, and unleashed a rocket strike into the net to equalise. The goal lifted the team's spirits and sparked an intense spell of play.

Oman continued their assault, with Turki al Ghasani missing a golden chance in the 55th minute when his shot struck the post. A minute later, Bashar al Shamsi

fired just wide of the right post. The relentless pressure paid off in the 61st minute, when Abdullah al Saadi pounced on a loose ball in the box and skillfully slotted it into the net to give Oman the lead.

After taking the advantage, Oman did not sit back but kept pressing. Mohammed al Jabri went close with a header that sailed over the bar in the 70th minute. Yemen tried to respond with counterattacks, but Oman's defence and the sharp reflexes of goalkeeper Abdullah al Zaabi preserved the 2-1 victory until the final whistle, securing a deserved win.

ANTICIPATED SEMIFINALS
The semifinals will be played next Tuesday. Qatar, the Group A leaders, will face Saudi Arabia, leaders of Group B, at Hamad Al Kabir Stadium at 7:00 pm Muscat time. In the later fixture, Iraq, the runners-up of Group B, will take on the UAE at Suheim Bin Hamad Stadium at 9:30 pm.

Pogacar defends cycling world title with solo run

KIGALI: Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar won an epic men's road race at the cycling world championships on Sunday, going solo from 66 km out in the 267 km slog over the hills around Kigali.

"This fills me with sheer joy," Pogacar said clutching his mascot gorilla, troops of which live in the nearby mountains.

Defending his 2024 title the 27-year-old finished 1min 28sec ahead of the Olympic champion Belgian Remco Evenepoel, who crossed the line with his head down after a mid-race mechanical.

"I didn't come here for the silver, I wanted the gold. Destiny had other ideas for me," he said smiling later.

Ireland's 2025 breakout star Ben Healy also wore a broad smile as he took bronze over the balmy, 1500m altitude course leading the chase to catch Pogacar over the 33 hills and earning a place on the podium



at 2min 16sec. Just as impressive was Paul Seixas, the 19-year-old Frenchman tipped as a future Tour de France winner, who came in 13th on a day where officials said crowds of around one million turned out for the final day of the week-long worlds, the first ever on African soil.

The course was made up of 15 loops around the city with two climbs and one longer, even harder loop.

FELT SO GOOD
Pogacar broke away with Mexican Isaac del Toro and Spain's Juan Ayuso, who were both on the books of Team UAE

this season, but Ayuso had a mechanical and Del Toro ran out of steam. Pogacar though was a man transformed just a week after a humiliation in the time-trial where he was overtaken by Evenepoel who started 2min 30sec later than him. "It wasn't the original plan, to attack so far out. The boys tried to stop me but I felt so good," said Pogacar, a four-time winner.

This time Evenepoel displayed frayed nerves when he suffered a mechanical, waving away a reserve bike and kicking away stones waiting for his team car. He lost valuable time with his tantrum but when his car arrived he set off again on another of his golden framed bikes, denoting his Olympic champion status.

He swiftly caught Healy and the Pogacar pursuit, but never at any time was able to chip away at a constant 1min 20sec lead held by the Tour de France champion. — **AFP**

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in action during his quarter final match against Brandon Nakashima of the US. — Reuters

ALCARAZ INTO JAPAN OPEN SEMIS, RUNE CRASHES OUT

TOKYO, JAPAN: World number one Carlos Alcaraz stormed into the semifinals of the Japan Open on Sunday with a commanding 6-2 6-4 win over American Brandon Nakashima, while Danish third seed Holger Rune was sent packing by Jenson Brooksby.

Alcaraz, who overcame an injury scare in his straight-sets win over Argentine Sebastian Baez in Thursday's opener, showed scintillating form to dispatch Nakashima for his 65th win of the season, thumping 39 winners in the one-hour 20-minute contest.

The 22-year-old Spaniard, fresh from reclaiming top spot in the world rankings after clinching his sixth Grand Slam title at the US Open earlier this month, next faces Norwegian fourth seed Casper Ruud.

Earlier, Ruud blazed past Australian qualifier Aleksandar Vukic with a clinical 6-3 6-2 win.

"These kind of matches help to keep my confidence really, really high. I played some great tennis," Alcaraz said.

"It's great to go through, to play another semifinal. It's special, because it's the first time I'm playing in Japan, here in Tokyo. To reach the semis in my first appearance is something great."

The biggest upset of the day came in Rune's 6-3 6-3 loss to American Brooksby, ranked 86th in the world.

"Once I get on a roll from a couple of matches, I just think I'm really able to get into my zone. I think that's one of my big strengths," Brooksby said.

"I thought I had a pretty good plan on him coming out here. I had never played him before, but I think that's good maybe, someone who hasn't faced my unique skills, I guess.

"I had a good rhythm from the first two matches and thought I was playing really good tennis, and I think I just stayed a little bit more consistent today." — AFP



Denmark's Holger Rune in action during his quarter final match against Jenson Brooksby of the US. — Reuters



Ducati Lenovo Team's Marc Marquez and Honda HRC Castrol's Joan Mir in action during the MotoGP race. — Reuters

Marquez wins seventh MotoGP world title

AN emotional Marc Marquez said he was "at peace" with himself after winning his first MotoGP world title since 2019 on Sunday, capping a remarkable comeback from an injury nightmare.

The Spaniard finished second at the Japan grand prix behind fellow Ducati rider Francesco Bagnaia to clinch his seventh world title with five events to spare.

It marked a triumphant return from a gruelling struggle with injuries since breaking his right arm in 2020 that almost forced him to hang up his helmet.

The 32-year-old said his title was "written in the stars" but admitted he had doubts he would return to the top.

"Of course I feel happy but the first feeling is that I feel at peace with myself," he said.

"It was Marc against Marc during five years, Marc against injury, but especially about the mental side was difficult.

"I took super difficult decisions but I closed the circle in the perfect way," he added.

Marquez has been in brilliant form all year and knew that placing first or second would clinch the title regardless of where his brother and closest championship rival Alex finished.

He wrapped up the world championship in Japan for the fourth time in his career, following 2014, 2016 and 2018, and now draws level with Italian motorcycle legend Valentino Rossi on seven titles.



Ducati Lenovo Team's Marc Marquez celebrates on the podium with the trophy after winning the 2025 MotoGP World Championship. — Reuters

After crossing the line, Marquez raised both arms aloft before sobbing and yelling as his achievement began to sink in.

"One of the good things of humans is you can't forget the bad moments," he said.

"It's difficult to forget because still today, I feel it some days. But the dream comes true."

Marquez has 11 grand prix wins so far this year and his championship points total was already a single-season record for a MotoGP rider before the Japan weekend.

MACHINE MARQUEZ Bagnaia claimed only his second grand

prix win of what has been a frustrating season for the two-time world champion.

The Italian also won the Saturday sprint and looked back to his best all weekend.

He paid tribute to Marquez's achievement, saying he "did amazing things this season".

"He was starting in a fantastic way, then he had two or three races where he needed to calm down a bit," said Bagnaia.

"Then he was a machine for the rest of the season, so congratulations to him."

Bagnaia started the race from pole and kept his lead into the first turn, with Marquez maintaining his position from third on the grid.

Marquez overtook Pedro Acosta to move into second just before the halfway mark and from there it was a procession to the title.

Bagnaia had a scare when smoke started coming out of his Ducati with around nine laps remaining but he held on to win in Japan for the second year running.

Honda's Joan Mir finished third, followed by Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi. Alex Marquez was sixth.

Marc Marquez is in his first season with Ducati and he said it had been "a very long journey" to the championship.

"We took some difficult, important decisions but always followed my instincts," he said.

"The people around me help a lot to take the decisions, but just to give me the chance to follow my instincts." — AFP

Zverev downs Moutet in Beijing as Gauff digs deep

BEIJING: Alexander Zverev sent off racket snapper Corentin Moutet on Sunday for a quarterfinal date with Daniil Medvedev at the China Open as Coco Gauff kept her title defence hopes alive. The world number three from Germany kept his calm to beat the Frenchman 7-5, 3-6, 6-3 to set up a 21st Tour meeting with his Russian rival.

"I'm looking forward to the quarterfinals and playing my good friend Daniil," Zverev said after the match.

Zverev held on in the first set to get the better of an angry Moutet, whose racket met its end against the 26-year-old's leg.

The world no. 37 triumphed in set two, littering the court with short shots to make Zverev run, but it was the German who cleaned up shop.

"It was a great match," Zverev

said, adding that Moutet's game had improved since their June meeting in Stuttgart.

Earlier on Sunday 29-year-old Medvedev put away Spaniard Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-3, 6-3 in an hour-and-a-half without much fuss.

And Lorenzo Musetti apologised on court for an outburst at coughing fans earlier in the tournament.

Fans booed when the 23-year-old Italian entered the court for his match and some were making loud guttural coughing noises.

"I totally understand your point and I... regret what I've said and what I've done, so sorry, thanks for understanding," he said in English after beating France's Adrian Mannarino 6-3, 6-3 to move into the quarterfinals.

The on-court interviewer,



Germany's Alexander Zverev hits a return to France's Corentin Moutet during their men's singles match at the China Open tennis tournament in Beijing. — AFP

however, did not translate his apology into Chinese for the fans, only relaying Musetti's brief comments about the match.

GAUFF MARCHES ON In the women's draw, defending champion Gauff powered through a tough examination by Leylah Fernandez, battling through 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 to keep her hopes of winning back-to-back China Opens alive.

"I did what I needed to do to win today," the 21-year-old American said.

"It was very physical," Gauff said. "We were going back and forth."

Gauff looked in control in the first set but the gritty Fernandez hit back in the second to force a decider.

The 25th-ranked Canadian survived a match point to level at 5-5 but Gauff finally clinched the 2hr

45min marathon when Fernandez netted.

The world number three next plays Switzerland's Belinda Bencic for a place in the quarterfinals.

Also in the women's event Germany's Eva Lys stunned world number 10 and former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina 6-3, 1-6, 6-4.

"I was trying to get a top 10 win the whole year," said the 23-year-old Lys, ranked 66.

"This is my first one. I'm very happy I finally got it done."

Poland's Iga Swiatek is the top seed at the WTA 1000 event after world number one Aryna Sabalenka withdrew.

Italy's Jannik Sinner is the top seed in the men's ATP 500 event being played alongside the women's tournament. — AFP

BUSINESS



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SHORTTAKES



The three Newcastlemax Dry Bulk Carriers will join the fleet in Q1 2026.

ASYAD SHIPPING EXPANDS DRY BULK FLEET WITH \$209M INVESTMENT

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Asyad Shipping, the majority Omani state-owned maritime transportation company, has announced that it is acquiring three Newcastlemax Dry Bulk Carriers for a total of \$209 million as part of the company’s growth strategy.

Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, Chief Executive Officer, commented: “With an increase in our Dry Bulk capacity, we are further strengthening our capabilities to deliver solutions for our customers while keeping pace with rising global demand. Growing our Dry Bulk segment is part of our growth strategy as per our business plan and executing this deal means we can meet rising demand and increase our service offerings to our customers”.

The vessels are expected to be delivered in the first quarter of 2026, effectively increasing the company’s fleet of Dry Bulk Carriers to position it as a major player in the region. Each vessel has a capacity of 208,000 deadweight tonnage and is equipped with an Exhaust Gas Cleaning System (EGCS) and a Ballast Water Treatment System (BWTS). Furthermore, they feature an energy-efficient hull design with engines designed for thermal and mechanical efficiency, ensuring compliance with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) environmental regulations.

FORUM SHOWCASES INNOVATION IN ISLAMIC BANKING

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

The Thimar 2025 Islamic Banking Forum opened under the auspices of HH Sayyid Numeir bin Salim Al Said, highlighting digitalisation, knowledge exchange, and integration of endowments, investment, and takaful.

Bank Nizwa won the Innovation in Islamic Banking Award, while Meethaq was recognised for Best Digital Application. Other awards went to Ishraq Endowment Fund, Badiyah Endowment Foundation, Takaful Oman, and Tawafuq Consultancy.

Bank Nizwa CEO Khalid Al Kayed said Islamic banking in Oman now holds 20 per centof the market, contributing to the GCC’s 24 per cent. He cited digitalisation, sustainability initiatives, and over RO 150 million in green financing.

Al Ahli Islamic Bank’s Noora Sabah Sultan pointed to innovations such as Oman’s first Islamic liquidity fund and socially responsible credit card, alongside major projects in sukuk and sustainable city development.

Panel sessions addressed open banking, digital transformation, and maximising sustainable impact through endowment funds and takaful.

Oman to deliver clean hydrogen globally: Al Aufi

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

UNDERSCORING the European market’s pivotal importance to its global green hydrogen strategy, the Sultanate of Oman is backing European Hydrogen Week 2025 — the continent’s leading clean energy expo — as ‘Country Partner’ for the first time.

A high-level delegation headed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, is taking part in the four-day conference and exhibition, which opens today, September 29, 2025, in the Belgian capital, Brussels.

Also representing Oman’s sizable contingent at the event are Hydrom — the country’s green hydrogen sector orchestrator; OQ — the integrated energy group of Oman; OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) — the operator of the country’s gas transportation network; Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO) — the operator of the Ras Markaz crude terminal near Al Duqm; Nama Water Services; and Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) — the operator of the national power transmission system.

According to the event’s organisers, the Omani delegation will contribute to key discussions on certification, infrastructure and project implementation — building practical pathways that connect Omani hydrogen with Europe’s industrial demand.

In a pre-event interview, Al Aufi



Oman has moved decisively from ambition to delivery. Backed by a Royal Decree, we have allocated land, launched structured public auctions, implemented targeted fiscal incentives and demonstrated progress on the ground.

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUF
AL AUF
Minister of Energy and Minerals

stressed Oman’s commitment to delivering on its ambitious green hydrogen goals. He said: “Oman has moved decisively from ambition to delivery. Backed by a Royal Decree, we have allocated land, launched structured public auctions, implemented targeted fiscal incentives and demonstrated progress on the ground.

This ensures our world-class renewable resources are translated into bankable hydrogen and ammonia projects, not just plans”.

Referencing Oman’s strategy to support Europe’s low-carbon energy needs, Al Aufi further stated: “We are an open, pragmatic partner, committed to collaborating on certification, logistics and technology — always with execution at the centre.

Ammonia will anchor near-term exports, while strategic frameworks such as the Oman–Amsterdam–Germany liquid hydrogen corridor position us for large-scale flows by decade’s end”.

At the same time, Oman is laying the foundation for domestic demand. A double-sided allocation mechanism and a future domestic hydrogen auction will allow green molecules to support local industries — from steel to chemicals — creating a balanced, resilient hydrogen ecosystem that serves both international partners and national development goals, he said. “Oman is ready to deliver clean hydrogen globally, forging partnerships that drive decarbonisation and sustainable economic prosperity”, Al Aufi

added in conclusion.

Hydrom Managing Director Abdulaziz al Shidhani, who will take part in a panel discussion on the opening day, commented: “Oman’s hydrogen sector is governed by a policy-backed framework that’s already in motion — led by Hydrom through structured public auctions, land allocations, single permitting and coordination of common-use infrastructure. The current focus is certification and offtake alignment to support cross-border delivery”.

Over the past year, Oman has garnered significant European interest in its ability to supply large volumes of green hydrogen (and derivatives such as green ammonia or liquefied hydrogen) as the continent pushes aggressively for decarbonisation, industrial emission reductions and clean energy security.

Notable is the landmark Joint Development Agreement (JDA) signed earlier this year between Oman, the Netherlands and Germany, establishing the world’s first commercial liquid hydrogen corridor.

This commitment links production in Al Duqm to ports in Amsterdam and transit/logistics hubs in Germany.

Oman is also partnering with European ports (Amsterdam, Duisburg, etc), terminals and companies for import/regasification, transport/logistics and handling, aimed at ensuring the reliable delivery of hydrogen to European offtakers.

MoF, Huawei sign partnership agreement

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance (MoF) on Sunday signed a Partnership for Development (Offset) program agreement with Huawei.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the Ministry of Finance by Mahmoud Abdullah Al Owaini, Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Partnership for Development Programme. It was signed on behalf of Huawei by David Shi, CEO of Huawei Oman.

The agreement includes the implementation of three main projects. The first project aims to train 5,000 beneficiaries, including students, graduates, and employees, over five years in the field of Information and Communication Technology.

The second project involves establishing six innovation labs in cooperation with a number of Omani higher education institutions to support research, development, and encourage innovation.

The third project aims to provide 100 specialised training opportunities annually for two years, totaling 200 trainees, to prepare and qualify Omani youth in the fields of 5G technologies,



Mahmoud Abdullah Al Owaini and David Shi, CEO of Huawei Oman, signed the agreement

artificial intelligence, and cloud computing according to the latest global practices. The Partnership for Development (Offset) Programme at the Ministry of Finance aims to transfer modern technology from committed companies and build national capacities

and competencies across all sectors. This is achieved through knowledge transfer and best practices established by the partnership relationships that the Ministry of Finance maintains with leading institutions and companies worldwide. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The bank shared insights on Sharia governance in Islamic finance, activation of zakat committees and fostering community culture.

MEETHAQ HIGHLIGHTS ZAKAT GOVERNANCE AT SALALAH CONFERENCE

Meethaq Islamic Banking, part of Bank Muscat, participated in the 3rd Zakat Conference & Exhibition, organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs from September 23 to 25 at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate. The bank shared insights on Sharia governance in Islamic finance, activation of zakat committees and fostering community culture.

On the opening day, Dr Mohamed Akram, Deputy Chairman of Meethaq’s Sharia

Meethaq’s participation as a Strategic Partner reflected its commitment to promoting Islamic values, collaborating with public and private stakeholders, and raising awareness of zakat as a tool for social justice and community solidarity.

Supervisory Board, presented “Governance in Islamic Banking and its Application in Zakat Management”. He outlined processes used by Islamic financial institutions to ensure Sharia compliance, emphasising a robust governance framework for institutional soundness. Key topics included the importance of governance in Islamic finance, the need for clear regulatory guidance and the four essential elements of governance: efficiency, independence, confidentiality and consistency. Dr Akram also discussed the role of Sharia Supervisory Boards, operational considerations, challenges and principles of fairness in zakat distribution.

On the final day, he presented “Malaysia’s Experience in Zakat Management and Governance”, highlighting Malaysia’s transformation of zakat collection and distribution into an institutionalised, transparent system integrated with modern technologies and the banking sector. The model demonstrated governance, regulatory frameworks and technological integration that can serve as a global benchmark.

Meethaq’s participation as a Strategic Partner reflected its commitment to promoting Islamic values, collaborating with public and private stakeholders and raising awareness of zakat as a tool for social justice and community solidarity.

DOES YOUR KIA HAVE GENUINE PARTS? NEVER COMPROMISE ON SAFETY

Reliable International Automotive, the authorised dealers for Kia vehicles in Oman, urges customers to prioritise safety and reliability on every journey by using genuine Kia parts. Counterfeit parts pose a serious threat, despite appearing similar to authentic components.

Recent insights from Hyundai Mobis, Kia Motors’ global spare parts distributor, reveal that 90% of Korean Domestic packaged parts in the market are counterfeit. These parts are often made for vehicles

sold in Korea, not for regional conditions and may lack proper heat resistance, structural integrity and safety compliance.

Using them can lead to mechanical failures, costly repairs, voided warranties and increased accident risk.

Genuine Kia Parts are engineered for each Kia model, tested to meet global and regional standards; and built to perform safely in Oman’s diverse climate and road conditions. They carry warranty support

and ensure every component works harmoniously with the vehicle’s advanced safety systems.

A representative from Reliable International Automotive said, “Automobile parts directly impact the safety of passengers and everyone sharing the journey. When it comes to your family’s wellbeing, affordability should never outweigh safety. Our mission is to ensure every Kia journey remains safe, comfortable and reliable, as originally designed”.

Abraj Energy leads at SPE fracturing conference, expo

ABRAJ Energy Services, Oman’s leading oil and gas services provider, highlighted its regional leadership and technical excellence as the Official Sponsor of the International Hydraulic Fracturing Technology Conference and Exhibition 2025, held from September 23 to 25 in Muscat under the theme “Fracturing for a Resilient Energy Future – Innovation, Sustainability and Global Collaboration”.

The event brought together international and regional energy leaders to exchange knowledge and explore the latest developments in hydraulic fracturing. As the first company in the MENA region to offer fully integrated fracturing services, Abraj showcased its innovation, strong track record and commitment to safety. By the end of 2024, the company held a 33 per cent share of Oman’s fracturing market, reflecting its pivotal role in delivering safer, more efficient and sustainable energy solutions.

At its conference booth, Abraj offered an interactive experience, including a live demonstration of Abraj Fluid and an interactive display of SPE technical papers, case studies, videos and posters

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covering enhanced productivity, heavy oil development and record-breaking fracturing operations. The booth served as a hub for knowledge sharing and innovation, aligned with the conference theme.

Abraj experts also conducted two technical sessions, sharing new ideas to improve production and efficiency while reinforcing the company’s commitment to the future of energy services in Oman and the region. In addition, Abraj

participated as an Official Sponsor of the MEIRA Annual Conference 2025, the region’s leading investor relations event. This dual participation highlights the company’s dedication to operational excellence, transparency and long-term value creation, while enhancing Oman’s presence in regional capital markets.

Abraj Energy Services continues to lead, delivering sustainable solutions to meet the energy sector.

FORESTER GETS STRONGER WITH NEW ENGINE

MUSCAT: The Subaru Forester has returned to Oman with a major upgrade, now powered by a 2.5L BOXER® engine that replaces the previous 2.0L unit. The new powertrain delivers greater performance and torque while maintaining the Forester’s hallmark balance, efficiency and reliability.

A Subaru signature for more than 50 years, the BOXER® engine features a horizontally opposed piston layout that lowers the vehicle’s centre of



Proudly built in Japan, the new Forester is available now at Subaru showrooms in Oman

gravity, offering improved stability, smoother handling and long-term durability.

Inside, the Forester debuts a modern vertical infotainment display with a driver-focused layout, echoing the premium digital cockpits of next-generation vehicles.

Standard Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive ensures confident traction across Oman’s diverse terrain — whether navigating city streets, mountain passes, or coastal roads. Combined with

the upgraded 2.5L powertrain, this capability makes the Forester more versatile than ever.

“With the return of the 2.5L BOXER® engine, the Forester offers even more confidence and capability while staying true to what makes it a Subaru — balance, safety and long-term dependability”, said a senior spokesperson from OTE Subaru.

Proudly built in Japan, the new Forester is available now at Subaru showrooms.

Sohar International secures two prestigious banking awards

Sohar International has reinforced its leadership in Oman’s banking sector by securing two prestigious accolades during a recent awards ceremony.

For the second year in a row, the bank was named the Best Performing Company in the Large Cap segment and was also honoured as the leading Enabler of National Initiatives and Progress.

The event, held under the auspices of Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), brought together senior government officials, policymakers, business leaders and market experts.

Based on a rigorous ranking



For the second year in a row, the bank was named the Best Performing Company in the Large Cap segment and was also honoured as the leading Enabler of National Initiatives and Progress.

process conducted by United Securities, the awards recognised top companies across Large Cap, Medium Cap and Small Cap categories.

Assessment was based on seven key performance parameters: Revenue Growth, Net Profit Growth, Return on Average Assets, Return on Average Equity, Net Profit Margin, Operating Profit Growth and Operating Profit Margin. Sohar International ranked first in its category, excelling across all measures.

Commenting on the achievement, Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Government and Private Banking Officer at Sohar International, said, “By receiving this dual recognition, Sohar International reaffirms that

financial excellence and broader responsibility go hand in hand.

This honour reflects the disciplined execution of our strategy, the strength of our governance and the dedication of our people.

While excelling across performance parameters, we remain equally committed to supporting Oman’s national priorities and advancing Oman Vision 2040.

Sustainable growth for us means creating enduring value for stakeholders and enabling long-term progress”.

Sohar International continues to align its operations with Oman’s development agenda, championing economic diversification, financial inclusion, digital innovation and investment in Omani talent.

SHORTTAKES



The announcement reflects the Supreme Judicial Council’s commitment to developing the judicial system and providing a legal environment conducive to investment.

COMMERCIAL COURT TO HAVE PRIMARY AND APPELLATE CHAMBERS

MUSCAT: The Supreme Judicial Council has decided to establish primary and appellate chambers of the Investment and Commercial Court across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, specifying their locations and jurisdictions. This decision is based on Royal Decree No 35/2025, which established the Investment and Commercial Court and issued its governing law. According to the decision, four appellate chambers will be established outside the Muscat Governorate, located in the governorates of Dhofar, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah North and Al Sharqiyah North. Each chamber will handle cases within its designated geographical jurisdiction. The decision also includes the creation of ten primary chambers in the governorates of Dhofar, Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah North and South, Al Sharqiyah North and South, Al Dhahirah and Al Wusta, ensuring coverage across all wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman. This move aims to enhance ease of litigation and ensure speedy resolution of investment- and commerce-related cases. It is worth noting that the decision will come into effect on October 1, 2025. This step reflects the Supreme Judicial Council’s commitment to developing the judicial system and providing a legal environment conducive to investment, thereby supporting economic growth and facilitating business operations. — ONA

FSA HOSTS MEETING ON LEGISLATIVE EMPOWERMENT

The Financial Services Authority (FSA), represented by the Supreme Sharia Supervisory Authority, hosted an introductory meeting titled ‘Legislative and Regulatory Empowerment of Supreme Sharia Supervisory Authority’. The meeting comes within the framework of the FSA’s efforts to strengthen the Sharia supervisory role and to develop the legislations governing the financial services sector. The meeting reviewed the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern this vital sector, alongside discussions on legislations related to Islamic financial services, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 which emphasises strengthening the investment environment by diversifying financing instruments and insurance products, including those compatible with Sharia principles. Muscat Stock Exchange also contributed a working paper highlighting best practices and experiences in the field of Sharia-compliant financial services.

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Britain guarantees \$2 bn Jaguar loan



Britain will provide a £1.5 billion (\$2 billion) loan guarantee to support Jaguar Land Rover’s supply chain after a month-long production shutdown caused by a cyberattack. The loan, guaranteed by UK Export Finance and privately financed, aims to protect skilled jobs and sustain operations in Birmingham and Liverpool, where the automaker runs key factories. — Reuters

INDUSTRY MOVE

EA nears \$50 bn private buyout



Electronic Arts (EA), the video game publisher behind “FC” and “Battlefield”, is in advanced talks to go private at a \$50 billion valuation. Investors include Silver Lake, Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund (PIF) and Jared Kushner’s Affinity Partners. The deal could be the largest leveraged buyout ever, reflecting Saudi’s Vision 2030 push into gaming and entertainment. — Reuters

AI SECTOR

UAE president, OpenAI CEO discuss AI ties



UAE President Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed met OpenAI CEO Sam Altman in Abu Dhabi to discuss AI collaboration. The talks support the UAE’s ambition to build an integrated AI ecosystem and a knowledge-based economy. The UAE is investing heavily in AI, developing Arabic models, major data centres and strengthening tech ties with the US. — Reuters

MSX sees record trading surge with RO 1.9bn in eight months

THE Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has witnessed exceptional activity this year, with trading volumes during the first eight months of 2025 reaching approximately RO 1.9 billion — an increase of 152% compared to the same period last year. The daily trading average in August rose to around RO 25 million, the highest recorded in 2025, compared to RO 20.3 million in July and RO 12.7 million in June. The lowest averages were seen in January (RO 3.7 million), April (RO 5.4 million), March (RO 6.2 million) and May (RO 7.1 million). Haitham bin Salem al Salmi, CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange, stated that the trading volumes reflect active market-making and liquidity enhancement efforts. This growth has been supported by the activation of two liquidity support funds. He noted that the 2025 volumes have already surpassed the total of the previous year, driven by positive market sentiment and increased investor engagement. This led to a 5.2% increase in the MSX index by the end of August compared to the end of 2024 and an 8% rise in market capitalisation over the same period. He revealed plans to list new companies affiliated with the Oman Investment Authority in 2026, hoping early announcements will allow investors to prepare. He urged investors to adopt informed investment practices, such as reviewing company disclosures and financial statements before making decisions and considering regional geopolitical and economic developments. Al Salmi emphasised that listed companies on MSX performed well, with combined profits reaching RO 881 million in the first half of 2025, up 20% compared to the same period in 2024. Dividend payouts also increased, attracting

The trading volumes reflect active market-making and liquidity enhancement efforts. This growth has been supported by the activation of two liquidity support funds.

HAITHAM BIN SALEM AL SALMIB
CEO, MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE



Trading volumes on the MSX reached approximately RO 1.9 billion during the first eight months of this year — an increase of 152% compared to the same period last year. — ONA

investors to high-growth and high-dividend companies. He added that IPOs held last year helped expand the market with new sectors and diversified financial instruments, enabling investors to broaden their portfolios. These developments have supported trading activity and market vibrancy. Looking ahead, Al Salmi expressed optimism that the government’s ongoing privatisation and IPO programmes would further energise the market and help MSX advance towards being classified as an emerging market. Ahmed bin Ali al Maamari, Deputy CEO of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), stated that the authority, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, has launched several initiatives to stimulate and develop the capital market in Oman. This includes coordinating to list more companies on MSX, encouraging them to rely on the market to fund their expansion plans, which boosts market depth and attracts both local and foreign capital. He highlighted that by the end of 2024, MSX’s market capitalisation had increased by 15.93% compared to 2023. This year, the upward trend

continued, reaching RO 29.82 billion by the end of August 2025. Al Maamari also pointed to the launch of a national capital market stimulus programme, which aims to bolster investor confidence. The programme includes a package of incentives to improve the investment and business climate and expand access to diversified financing options. Among the regulatory enhancements is the licensing of several market participants — three local companies and one foreign market maker — to support market-making and liquidity provision, contributing to free float shares and overall market efficiency. He added that the CMA is working to simplify the investor journey by launching digital trading platforms for licensed brokerage firms, making investment more accessible and efficient. These efforts have led to improved market performance, driven by the effective use of these tools and the involvement of both institutional and individual investors. The CMA also aims to introduce new financial instruments and strengthen the role of licensed firms, especially brokers. — ONA

CAA OMAN TAKES PART IN ICAO EXPO

MONTREAL: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), is participating in the exhibition held alongside the 42nd General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), currently taking place at the organisation’s headquarters in Montreal, Canada. The event will continue until October 3. Oman’s participation in the exhibition includes representatives from the Royal Oman Police (General Directorate of Airport Security), the Civil Aviation Authority, Oman Airports, Oman Air and SalamAir. The goal is to showcase the development of the civil aviation sector in the Sultanate



The exhibition is taking place alongside the 42nd General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

of Oman and highlight achievements in aviation safety and security, environmental sustainability, as well as to

present key national projects and initiatives contributing to the sector’s development in line with international standards.

This participation aims to strengthen Oman’s presence on the international stage and reinforce its position as an active contributor to the development of global civil aviation policies. It also demonstrates Oman’s commitment to implementing relevant international standards and agreements by presenting its national strategies and projects designed to enhance the civil aviation system. Additionally, it reflects Oman’s focus on environmental sustainability and emissions reduction, while promoting the exchange of expertise and engagement in global initiatives that support the safety, security and sustainability of the aviation sector. — ONA

OPINION

The H-1B visa ruling: a turning point in global migration



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies

ON September 19, 2025, the Trump administration issued an order imposing “restrictions on entry of certain non-immigrant workers”. A one-time fee of \$100,000 will be levied on employers applying for a new H-1B visa petition. About three-quarters of a million US workers use the H-1B visa to provide high-skilled foreign labour in specialty occupations. This visa category requires a minimum of a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent. The law came into effect on September 21, 2025. The fee does not apply to existing or renewal cases; it specifically applies to new H-1B visas filed after September 21, 2025.

During his first term in office, President Donald Trump drastically reduced H-1B visa approvals, with a denial rate of 24% in FY 2018. Before this, in 2016, he explicitly stated, “I will forever end the use of H-1B as a cheap labour programme”.

He also said that he would institute an absolute requirement to hire Americans first for every visa and immigration programme. Strangely, in a 2025 statement, he expressed support for the H-1B visa and the influx of highly skilled individuals coming to and settling in the US. This shift in stance is most likely linked to his alignment with tech companies, which supported him during his

second term. American voter perceptions have also shifted gradually. According to The Hindustan Times in 2024, 60% of American voters believe that the US does not need more H-1B visas, while 26% favour hiring foreign workers.

Currently, the annual quota of 85,000 H-1B visas is distributed through a random lottery system. The US government also plans to reform the lottery by prioritising wages, ensuring that only high-skilled workers are retained. The new rule increases the H-1B fee from \$2,000 to \$100,000. More than 5,200 small companies may suffer if the new H-1B programme is implemented. The proclamation has created confusion and uncertainty, with many awaiting clarifications. Legal challenges may also arise due to its lack of clarity.

There are approximately 5.2 million Indian Americans and the Indian diaspora represents a significant presence in the US, particularly in the tech industry. Approximately 71% of H-1B visas are held by individuals from India. Indians account for 31% of the Silicon Valley workforce.

In 2024 alone, 283,000 Indians received H-1B visas. Indians contribute 5–6% of the total US income tax, paying an estimated \$250–300 billion in 2024. Sixteen Fortune 500 companies have Indian-origin CEOs, who

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employ 2.7 million Americans and generate over \$1 trillion in revenue. About 40% of Google’s workforce is Indian.

There are 59,000 Indian doctors in America, making up 22% of immigrant doctors. Since 2018, Indians have founded 72 of the 358 US unicorns. Despite these contributions, sentiment within the White House and among many Americans has fuelled fear, instability, anxiety and confusion about the legal status and future of the Indian diaspora in the US.

The reactions from other countries, however, are more welcoming. German Ambassador Philipp Ackermann stated that Germany welcomes highly skilled Indians and has assured them that its immigration laws are modern, reliable and predictable, without plans for fundamental changes.

Canada is offering multiple skilled migration pathways. The UK, through its “Global Talent” programme, is considering abolishing visa fees for highly skilled professionals in select fields. Similarly, alternative destinations such as China and Australia are poised to benefit from the potential outflow of talent.

This H-1B rule marks a historic turning point in global skill migration, with far-reaching implications that will continue to unfold over time.

AI FUELS BOOM IN ROBO-ADVISORY MARKET

JOICE ALVES

As ChatGPT approaches its third birthday, at least one in 10 retail investors is turning to the chatbot to help pick stocks, fuelling growth in the robo-advisory market. Yet even its supporters acknowledge that relying on artificial intelligence is a high-risk strategy that cannot fully replace traditional advisors.

AI tools allow individuals to select stocks, track performance and access market analysis once reserved for large banks and institutional investors. The robo-advisory industry — spanning fintechs, banks and wealth managers offering automated, algorithm-driven advice — is forecast to generate \$470.91 billion in revenues by 2029, up from \$61.75 billion in 2022, representing nearly 600% growth, according to Research and Markets.

Jeremy Leung, who spent almost two decades analysing companies for UBS, has turned to ChatGPT for his multi-asset portfolio since leaving the Swiss bank late last year.

“I no longer have the luxury of a Bloomberg terminal or other expensive data services”, Leung said. “Even ChatGPT can replicate much of the workflow I used to do”, he explained, though warning it cannot access subscription-only data and may overlook crucial details.

Surveys show broad appetite for AI. Roughly half of retail investors worldwide say they would consider using tools such as ChatGPT or Google’s Gemini to shape portfolios, while 13% already do, according to broker eToro, which polled 11,000 investors globally. In Britain, a Finder survey found that 40% of respondents had tried chatbots for financial advice.

“AI models can be brilliant”, said Dan Moczulski, UK managing director at eToro. “The risk comes when people treat general models like ChatGPT or Gemini as crystal balls”. He said platforms trained specifically to analyse markets are safer, as general systems may misquote figures, lean too heavily on narratives, or rely on past prices to predict the future.

Finder tested ChatGPT in March 2023, asking it to design a portfolio based on balance-sheet strength, growth prospects and competitive advantages. The resulting basket of 38 companies — including Nvidia, Amazon, Procter & Gamble and Walmart — has risen nearly 55%, outperforming the UK’s 10 most popular funds, including those managed by Vanguard, Fidelity, HSBC and Fundsmith, by almost 19 percentage points. Still, AI-driven stock picking requires skill. Leung said prompts such as “assume you are a short analyst” or “use only credible sources like SEC filings” yield stronger results. But enthusiasm carries risks. Many retail investors may not be applying safeguards if markets reverse.

The STOXX 600 is up almost 10% this year, while the S&P 500 has gained 13% after a 23% surge in 2023.

“If people get comfortable investing with AI and keep making money, they may not be prepared for a downturn”, Leung warned. — Reuters

The United Kingdom loses more billionaires

THE UK has lost the most billionaires of any country in the world over the last couple of years, new data has shown, exacerbating fears that the UK’s free-moving super-rich residents would continue to leave the country if forced to pay a wealth tax.

According to updated numbers from New World Wealth, Britain lost a quarter of its billionaire population over the course of 2023 and 2024, the highest share of any major economy including sanction-hit Russia. The country lost 18 billionaires to other jurisdictions over the two-year period, researchers said, taking the total number residing in the UK down to 72 by the end of 2024.

The figure is considerably higher than the 12 that quit second-placed China and the 10 that left India, which suffered the third largest exodus. Russia lost eight billionaires overall, the second-highest in percentage term. The findings will also not include the more recent high-profile departures from the UK of steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal, chemicals tycoon Nassef Sawiris, or property investors Richard and Ian Livingstone.

All four billionaires left Britain since the start of this year, after the government announced a host of punitive tax rises targeted at the country’s wealthiest taxpayers, including the non-dom regime, applying VAT on private school fees and raising the top rate of capital gains tax.

Global wealth specialist at Utmost Wealth Solutions, Marc Acheson, said that a series of decisions by consecutive governments meant the findings were “unsurprising”.

“This outflow began in March 2024 when the Conservatives announced the end of the resident non-dom regime and then accelerated at pace following the measures announced at the Autumn Budget”, he said, adding: “As an internationally mobile group, they have the means and most incentive to leave.

“They are moving rapidly to countries that are competing aggressively to welcome them with more attractive regimes”.

The figures also bring into sharp



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

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relief growing fears that a wealth tax would accelerate the rate of departures from Britain, after a deluge of warnings from Tax lawyers and wealth advisors that the UK is losing its wealthiest residents at a record rate.

HMRC’s own data shows that the top one per cent of earners now pay 28 per cent of all income tax. That is a massive burden on a small group. When just one thousand of them leave, Britain doesn’t just lose their personal tax but also their business. It loses their spending too. The jobs they create are also lost. And the rest of the country — already bearing the weight of a cost-of-living crisis — is left to pick up the tab.

Keir Starmer and his spokesman have refused to rule out a blanket levy on wealth forming part of the government’s upcoming Budget, as he and Chancellor Rachel Reeves look to plug a roughly £20 billion hole in the public finances without raising any taxes on “working people”.

As recently as April, Reeves vowed she would not impose any new wealth taxes in the Autumn

Budget. The outgoing director of the non-partisan Institute for Fiscal Studies, Paul Johnson, has previously said that implementing the levy would be “practically impossible”.

According to an analysis of Companies House data, 3,790 company directors removed Britain as their official country of residence between last October and last July, a steep rise from the 2,712 that did so over the same period the previous year.

The data, which was compiled by the Financial Times, unearthed several high-profile business figures who had left the UK whose departures were not already known.

The former boss of London-listed consumer giant Reckitt Benckiser, Bart Becht, FTSE Russell brand’s founder Mark Makepeace and AC Milan and Miami Football Club-backer Ricardo Silva were all found to have left the UK since the Budget.

The United Arab Emirates enjoyed the largest influx of UK-based company directors, the data showed, with over 150 joining between April and June of this year.

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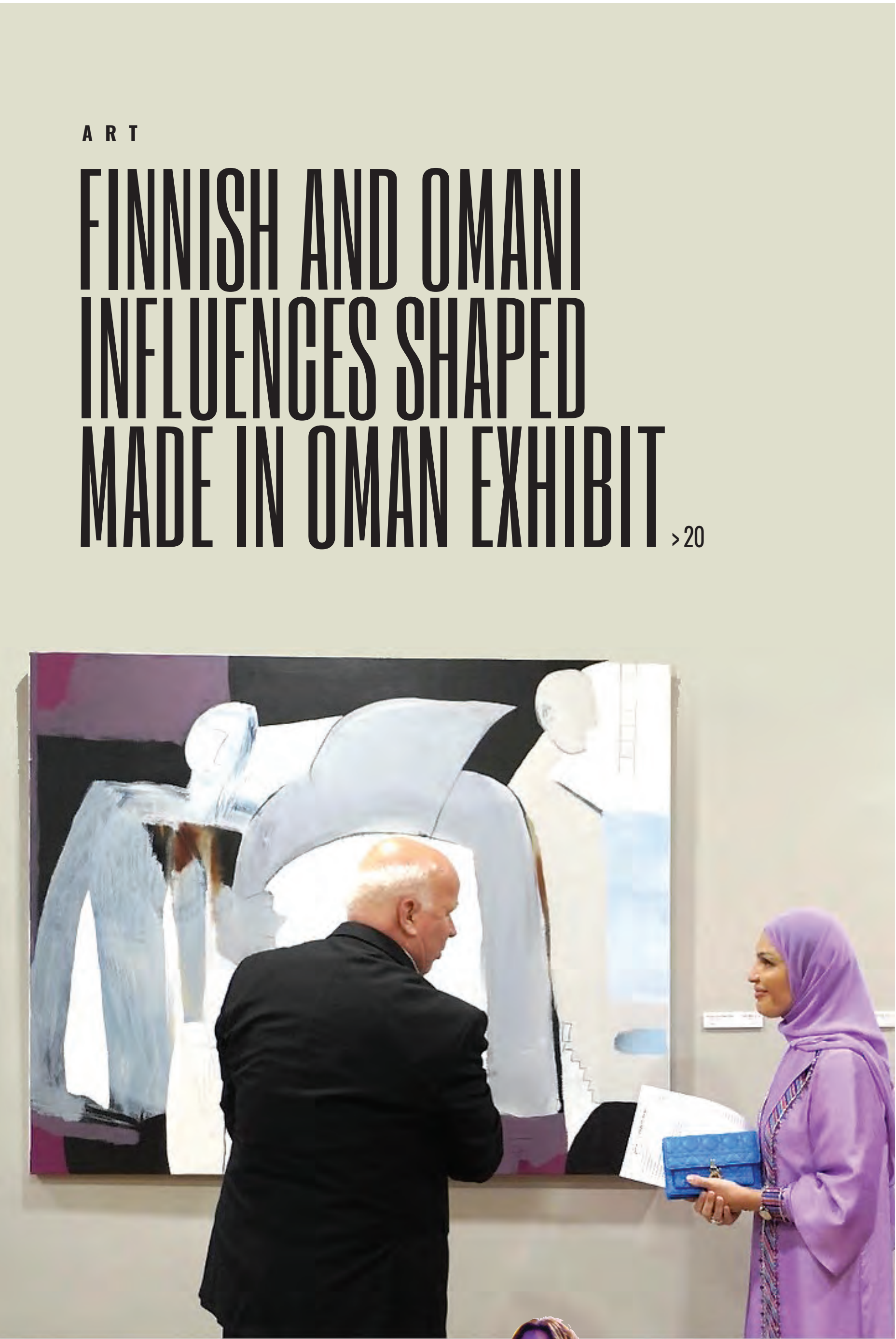
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*Images are representative

92439312

ART/LIFE



A R T

FINNISH AND OMANI INFLUENCES SHAPED MADE IN OMAN EXHIBIT > 20

ENTERTAINMENT

AI hologram of Spider-Man creator Stan Lee debuts at LA Comic Con



WEARING a green sweater and tan pants against a bright blue screen, Marvel comic book superhero creator Stan Lee will return to LA Comic Con in holographic form to meet fans of his characters including Spider-Man, Hulk, Iron Man and Thor.

Fans can interact with a hologram of Lee, who died in 2018 at the age of 95, in an enclosed booth at the Los Angeles Convention Centre.

“It was obviously sad for many of us when Stan passed”, said Chris DeMoulin, chief executive of Comikaze Entertainment, which operates Los Angeles Comic Con. “For the last couple of years, we’ve been talking about things we might be able to do to help extend Stan’s legacy”.

About six months ago, DeMoulin said he came up with the idea of creating an avatar of Lee to serve as an “entry point for fans, old and new, into the Marvel universe”. <blockquote>The project was a collaboration of Proto Hologram, a company whose holographic technology has been used in malls to promote films such as “The Conjuring” and “A Minecraft Movie” and Hyperreal, an artificial intelligence firm that creates realistic-looking digital humans. The hologram was trained on Stan Lee’s myriad appearances on red carpets and at fan conventions. Fans who never met Lee in person might recognise him from his cameo appearances in every live-action Marvel movie made during his lifetime.

</blockquote>“This avatar will never say something that Stan didn’t say”, said DeMoulin. “It will never have a point of view about Marvel or the stories or Stan’s role in them that hasn’t come directly from something Stan has said”.

Mammoth Vision’s George Johnson said that they used technological guardrails to prevent Lee from saying something out of character.

“We take Stan Lee’s words and import them into the model and then we put rails on the side of it”, said Johnson, “So he doesn’t go off and talk about things that Stan wouldn’t have said”.

In a demonstration on Friday, holographic Lee talked about his love of fan conventions.

“My favourite thing about being at a comic convention is getting to meet all the amazing fans and hearing their stories about how Marvel has impacted their lives”, Lee said in the late actor’s voice.

Not everyone welcomed Lee’s posthumous appearance at the convention. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



BOLLYWOOD

Actors Vishal Jethwa (R) and Ishaan Khatter attend a press conference for their upcoming Indian Hindi-language drama film ‘Homebound’ in Mumbai. — AFP



MUSIC

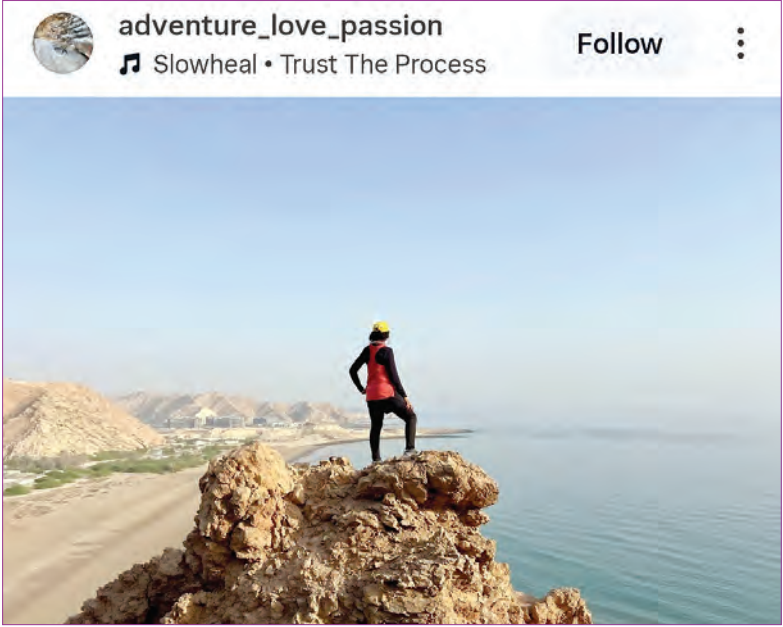
Colombian singer Shakira performs during the Global Citizen Festival at Central Park’s Great Lawn in New York. — AFP



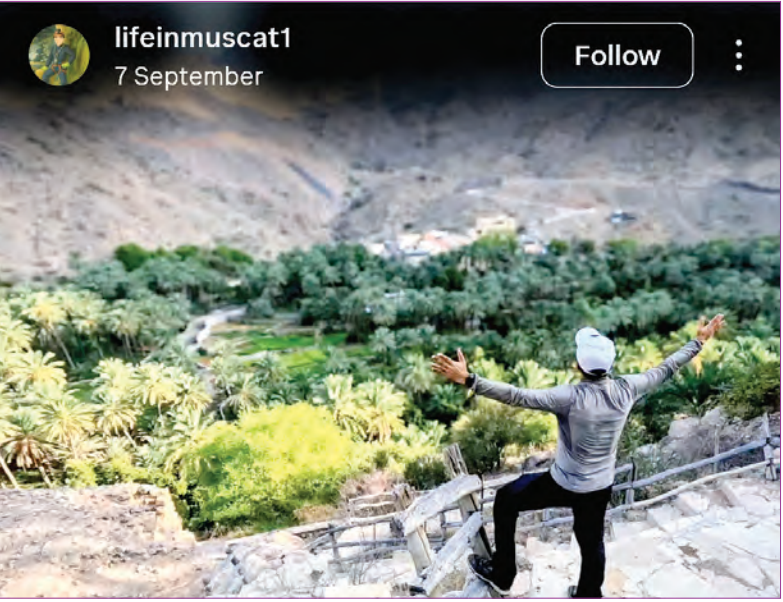
FASHION

A model displays a creation from the Maggie Ma collection during the China Fashion week in Beijing. — AFP

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Rijksmuseum digs up sketch behind dog in Rembrandt’s ‘Night Watch’



THE RIJKSMUSEUM in Amsterdam said on Tuesday that it had finally sniffed out a sketch that inspired the dog in Rembrandt’s 17th century painting *The Night Watch*. Anne Lenders, a Rijksmuseum curator, said she made the discovery while walking through the exhibition gallery of Dutch Golden Age painter Adriaen van de Venne at the Zeeuws Museum in Middelburg. “Suddenly my eye fell on a book by Jacob Catz with a dog depicted on it and the design drawing that was made by Adriaen van de Venne was also on display”, she said. Using her phone to compare the two images side by side, the 39-year-old Dutchwoman saw “striking similarities” between van de Venne’s dog and the canine depicted in Rembrandt’s 1642 masterpiece. “Immediately when I saw the dog, the *Night Watch* dog came to my mind”, she said. Each dog is shown with a

collar and ring, their heads angled the same way and their bodies lowered diagonally across the picture plane. Chalk sketches beneath the paint of *The Night Watch*, uncovered with the help of curators, restorers and scientists, confirmed Lenders’ hypothesis about Rembrandt’s inspiration. “*The Night Watch* is Rembrandt’s most famous painting and we always think that it was created out of nothing, out of his genius”, Taco Dibbitts, the director of the Rijksmuseum, said. “But Rembrandt, like the great Italian masters Michelangelo and Raphael, used works of art by artists before him to make his own compositions”. Although discreet the dog is renowned by art lovers for bringing a vitality to the colossal 363 cm (11 foot nine inches) by 437 cm (14 foot three inches) group portrait representing a company of Amsterdam’s 17th-century civic militia. — AFP



Slips, salt and stripes: key looks from Milan fashion week



THE MAIN shows at Milan Fashion Week wrap up on Sunday after another season of knock-out dresses, immaculate tailoring, leather coats and glorious handbags. Here are some of the key looks from the spring/summer 2026 women’s collections:

1920S CHIC Ferragamo designer Maximilian Davis went back to the 1920s with a chic and colourful collection of speakeasy suits and dresses with dropped waists, low-slung backs and long tassels, with a flash of animal print. “It was a period when people were creating spaces for themselves and rebelling against societal norms; and that spirit translated into people’s wardrobes”, he said in the show notes. Antonio Marras looked back to a similar era, imagining writers Virginia Woolf, DH Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield on holiday in Sardinia. On a runway comprising piles of salt — a famous produce of the island, doubling here as sand on the beach — the models were dressed in patterned frocks and suits, carrying sketch books, suitcases and even a violin.

SHIRTS AND STRIPES Prada once again took inspiration from the uniform, with military-style jumpsuits, shirts worn under dresses with nipped in waists and full skirts, accessorised with long evening gloves. There were button-down shirt dresses at Fendi as well as tight collars on sheer blouses, a mix it described as “both boyish and ladylike”. At Tod’s, oversized striped shirts

were laid over leather minis, while there were more stripes, diagonal this time, on draped dresses and matching handbags in warm, natural tones. At Dario Vitale’s debut for Versace, there were bright striped trousers for men and women, matched with garish print shirts and day glow shirts worn under dark suits. The house said theme of the collection was “outrageous and uncomplicated elegance designed for a life led by feeling”. Dolce & Gabbana, meanwhile, reinterpreted men’s classic striped pyjamas, adding jewel details or matching them with black lingerie for a woman who moves “between boudoir and city life”. In the front row were actors Meryl Streep and Stanley Tucci from the film “*Devil Wears Prada*”. It seems these days he wears D&G.

BELTS AND ELASTIC Across the week, skirts were fluid and jacket shoulders and trousers wide, but given definition by elastics and sportswear-inspired draw-strings, including at Fendi. At Max Mara, black elastic tightened the waist of a floral printed coat, or was worn around a naked midriff above a pencil skirt, or with a feather-like gown made of pieces of black organza. “I wanted a modern, twangy, snappy element to contrast anything that could have been deemed as floaty or delicate or feminine”, Max Mara designer Ian Griffiths explained, adding that “there was something almost fetishistic about it”. At Emporio Armani there were kimono fastenings, black or brightly coloured over tops and trousers or floaty dresses. Thin leather belts and cumberbunds were laid low

around the waist at Boss, providing definition to leather jackets and the ends left loose. **ALL THAT GLITTERS** Amidst the quiet luxury and easy elegance, Milan is also known for its over-the-top glamour, epitomised by Roberto Cavalli, which showed its “Gold Obsession” collection on a gold catwalk. Lead designer Fausto Puglisi cited Elizabeth Taylor’s Cleopatra among his influences for a collection of figure-hugging, light dresses in rippling gold, from liquid jersey to coated lace. The collection “makes no compromises”, the label said, adding that gold was not just a colour, but “an aesthetic vision: precious, bold and contemporary”. Demna also went big on the red carpet glamour with his first collection for Gucci, displayed in a short film starring Demi Moore. There were huge faux fur coats worn as dresses, silver bodies and extravagant gowns, including modelled by tennis star Serena Williams on the red carpet.

SHRINK AND SHORTEN “Everything gets shortened”, said Missoni in its show notes for a collection where many models wore just swim briefs, shorts were rolled up and mini dresses became open-backed t-shirts. The slips were coordinated with tops in the label’s signature bold patterns, or worn under tailored jackets, legs bare despite the pouring rain outside. There were also slips from Fendi — matched with a blue sports-style bomber or embellished with flowers — and Tod’s, where matched burnt orange underwear was matched with a jersey and printed scarf. — AFP

FEATURES



FINNISH AND OMANI INFLUENCES SHAPED MADE IN OMAN EXHIBIT

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

UPON CROSSING the threshold of the elegant ABCN Business Centre at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Qurum, your gaze is immediately drawn to a striking large canvas that entices with swirling hues and daring brushstrokes.

This initial piece bursts with colour and form — a vibrant explosion of abstraction alive with movement.

Bold strokes of orange and deep blacks clash and dance across the canvas, evoking the energy of a city awakening at dusk or a powerful emotion bubbling beneath the surface. The painting’s sweeping curves and jagged lines evoke unrestrained passion, inviting viewers to lose themselves in its dynamic rhythm.

As you venture further into the hall, an expansive artwork commands attention — a scene that balances chaos and harmony, with gentle pastel hues blending into fiery accents. Here, Matti Sirvio’s mastery of abstraction becomes almost poetic, hinting at forms and figures just out of reach, yet familiar enough to stir a whisper of recognition. Luminous whites and soft browns intertwine with sharper blacks and reds, creating a layered narrative of quiet contemplation amidst vibrant life — a true celebration of contrasts and coexistence.

The opening of Made in Oman, a solo exhibition by Finnish painter Sirvio, was inaugurated on September 27, 2025 graced by Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, Chairperson of ITICS Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC and Honourary Consul for South Africa in Oman. The exhibition runs until October 16.

Sirvio, who divides his time between Finnish Lapland and Muscat, is renowned for his semi-abstract expressionist style that blends layered colours, bold forms and spiritual motifs. His works, including It Could Be Me, The Impossible Balance and Fishing Village Bandar Al Khairan, reflect both personal introspection and a dialogue with the surrounding landscapes.

Much of that depth springs from his own inner sources of inspiration. “The Bible is my greatest influence”, Sirvio shared. “Its words fill my heart and even if I didn’t intend it, my work inevitably carries that spiritual resonance. My aim isn’t to persuade but to inspire hope”.

He emphasises that his art is not about propaganda but about offering a glimmer of hope — for others to find solace or strength through his colours and forms. “If someone walks away with a little more hope in their life, then I’ve achieved what I set out to do”.

Having lived and worked across Finland, Türkiye and Central Asia before settling in Muscat, Sirvio finds Oman a uniquely inspiring environment. The



For the artist, the exhibition title holds deeper significance. “I feel very privileged that I have been able to create art in Oman”, he remarked. “Though I have my own style and philosophy, I am open to the people and environment where I live. These paintings are made in Oman”.

This influence is particularly evident in his colour palette. Sirvio notes that Oman revealed unexpected subtleties: “When I first arrived, I thought the country’s colours were olive green. I was mistaken. Oman is grey and brown, with all their shades and nuances. I love the minimalistic, elegant visual language — the hundreds of hues of sand, rocks and hills — the white of the dishdasha and kumma — the humility and shyness of it all”.

His works explore extremes — from the fiery tones of It’s So Hard to Say Goodbye to the Summer to the contemplative geometries of Weeping May Endure for a Night, But Joy Comes in the Morning. Together, they invite exploration of themes such as loss, endurance and renewal.

Yet for Sirvio, painting is more than a formal exercise in colour or composition. His abstraction reaches beneath the surface. “Not everyone can verbalise it, but everyone can experience it”, he explained. “There are many unspoken issues — secrets, attractions, shames, private pain. If I can connect with someone emotionally, simply through colours and symbols, and show that I understand their experience, then I consider that a success.”

Sharing such work involves vulnerability. “It’s not easy to hang your soul on a wall for others to see. Come — don’t judge too harshly. Meet me there hiding beneath the surface”, he said with quiet conviction.

city’s blend of tradition and modernity, coupled with its natural grandeur, continually shapes his artistic outlook.

He also regards Made in Oman as part of a broader cultural dialogue. “Every village here seems to have at least one artist, if not more”, he observed. “With more encouragement and greater connection to the international art scene, Oman should be proud to stand alongside other nations. Omani art isn’t behind; it’s simply distinct — expressive in its own unique way”.

As the exhibition continues, Made in Oman remains both a tribute to the landscapes and traditions that inspired it and an invitation for viewers to look beyond the surface. It’s a conversation between an international artist and Oman — a reminder of the creative vitality thriving within the country’s artistic community.

This dialogue reflects the ongoing fusion of ideas and emotions — an inspiring testament to how art can transcend borders, connect hearts and ignite new perspectives. Visitors are encouraged not just to observe but to experience the work, to let their own stories intertwine with Sirvio’s vivid expressions.