

O M A N
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Observer

SUNRISE 06:08 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:52 AM

DHUHR 11:56 PM

ASR 03:13 PM

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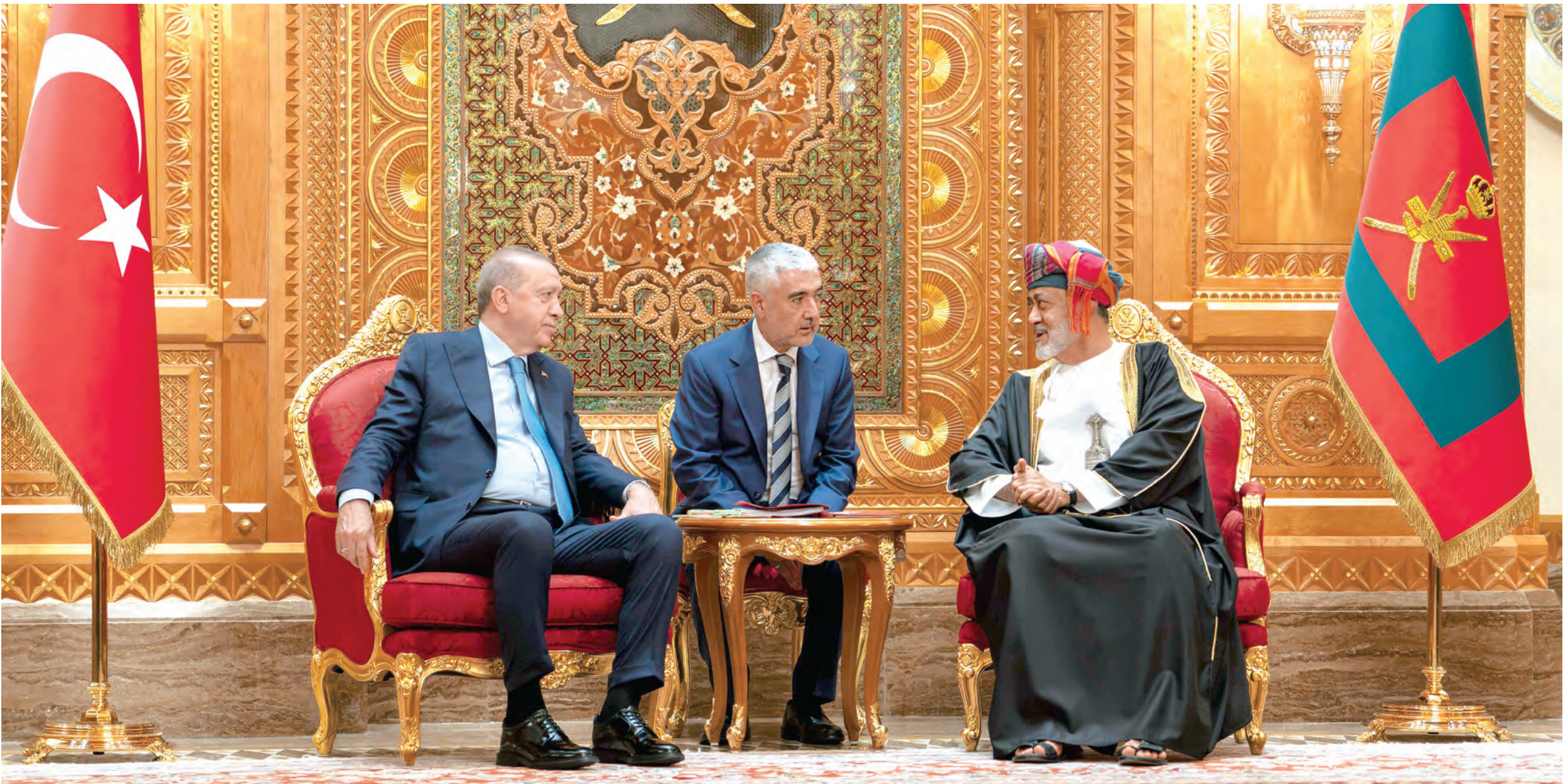
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YOUNG OMANI SAILORS EARN 12 MEDALS AT MUSANNAH RACE WEEK 2025

HM, TURKISH PRESIDENT HOLD TALKS

L E A D E R S R E V I E W H I S T O R I C A L T I E S B E T W E E N T H E T W O C O U N T R I E S



HM LEADS WELCOMING PARTY FOR TURKISH PRESIDENT

HM WELCOMES PRESIDENT AND HIS DELEGATION

HM, TURKISH PRESIDENT HOLD A SESSION OF TALKS

LEADERS REVIEW COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TOPICS DISCUSSED

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye held a session of talks at Al Alam Palace on Wednesday.

At the outset of the session, His Majesty the Sultan reiterated his welcome to President Erdogan and his accompanying delegation. On his turn, President Erdogan expressed his utmost thanks and appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan for the warm welcome and hospitality.

The session reviewed the historical ties and the relations of cooperation and partnership between the two countries, as well as means of promoting them to serve interests of the two countries' peoples. The two leaders also discussed a set of regional and international topics of mutual interest.

The session of talks was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head



HIS MAJESTY HOSTS DINNER IN HONOUR OF TURKISH PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik hosted an official dinner at Al Alam Palace guesthouse on Wednesday evening in honour of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye, and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The dinner was attended by some Royal Family members, ministers and senior officials.

Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, also hosted a dinner in honour of the Spouse of the Turkish President. It was attended by some invitees from both sides.

Prior to the dinner, His Majesty the Sultan and President Erdogan exchanged commemorative gifts, in the presence of HH The Honourable Lady, Spouse of His Majesty the Sultan, and the Spouse of the Turkish President. — ONA

of Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Türkiye.

Meanwhile, it was attended from the Turkish side by Necmettin Bilal Erdogan, son of the President, Hakan Fidan, Foreign Minister, Alparslan Bayraktar, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Yasar Guler, Minister of Defence, Mehmet Fatih Kacir, Minister of Industry and Technology, Omer Bolat, Minister of Trade, Mehmet Hakimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye, to the Sultanate of Oman and several officials.

Earlier, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his spouse Emine Erdogan arrived here on a two-day state visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik led the welcoming party for the Turkish President and his accompanying delegation. When the jet of President Erdogan touched ground at the Royal Airport, His Majesty the Sultan met the guest at the foot of the ramp, welcoming him and wishing him and the accompanying delegation a successful visit and a pleasant stay.

Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, also welcomed the Turkish President and his spouse upon their arrival. — ONA

PRESIDENT ERDOGAN BEGINS



His Majesty and President exchange gifts



PRESIDENT Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye and his spouse Emine Erdogan arrived on Wednesday on a two-day state visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

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Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, also welcomed the Turkish President and his spouse upon their arrival.

When the guest's jet entered the Omani airspace, it was escorted by a squadron of military aircraft of the Royal Air Force of Oman till its arrival at the Royal Airport, in a manifestation of warm welcome for the guest.

Along with His Majesty the Sultan, President Erdogan was received by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (Head of the Mission of Honour), Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Türkiye, Mehmet Hakimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman, members of the Mission of Honour and some members of the Turkish Embassy in Muscat.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan and the Turkish President proceeded to the reception hall, passing between two rows of the guard of honour of the Royal Guard of Oman.

After a short stay, the motorcade of His Majesty the Sultan and his guest left the Royal Airport heading to Al Alam Palace for the official reception protocols. Prior to its arrival at Al Alam Palace, the motorcade was surrounded by a group of horse riders.

When the official motorcade arrived at the internal courtyard of Al Alam Palace, the artillery fired a 21-gun salute for the President. Then, the music band of the Royal Guard of Oman played the welcoming tune in an atmosphere of fanfare and ambience.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan accompanied President Erdogan to the dais of honour where the national anthem of Türkiye was played. Then, His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with members of the official delegation accompanying the Turkish President.

On his turn, President Erdogan shook hands with some members of the Royal Family, ministers and military commanders.

During his visit, the President of Türkiye is accompanied by an official delegation comprising Necmettin Bilal Erdogan, son of the President, Hakan Fidan, Foreign Minister, Alparslan Bayraktar, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Yasar Guler, Minister of Defence, Mehmet Fatih Kacir, Minister of Industry and Technology, Omer Bolat, Minister of Trade, and Mehmet Hakimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Oman. — ONA

HISTORIC 2-DAY STATE VISIT



WARM WELCOME FOR ERDOGAN



MUSCAT: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye and his spouse Emine Erdogan arrived on Wednesday on a two-day state visit to the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik led the welcoming party for the Turkish President and his accompanying delegation. When the jet of President Erdogan touched ground at the Royal Airport, His Majesty the Sultan met the guest at the foot of the ramp, welcoming him and wishing him and the accompanying delegation a successful visit and a pleasant stay. — ONA



Oman, Türkiye convene meeting to strengthen strategic partnership

MUSCAT: A roundtable meeting titled “New Challenges and Areas of Cooperation in the Middle East: Oman and Türkiye” was convened at the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, forming part of the state visit of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting served to reaffirm the profound and enduring relations

between the two nations while providing a platform to examine the current state and future aspirations of their bilateral cooperation. Discussions also encompassed several regional matters of mutual concern to both countries.

During the proceedings, participants reviewed the historical trajectory of Omani-Turkish relations and their progressive development across various



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phases. The dialogue emphasised expanding prospects for strategic collaboration across cultural, social and media domains, aiming to advance the shared interests of both the Omani and Turkish peoples.

The meeting was attended from the Omani side by Shaikh Ahmed bin Hashel al Maskari, Head of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Regional Neighbourhood Department at the Foreign

Ministry, accompanied by several ministry diplomats and representatives from the Ministry of Information and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). The meeting was attended from the Turkish side by Dr Fahrettin Altun, Head of Communications for the Presidency of Türkiye and member of the Republic Presidency’s Security and Foreign Policy Council, alongside several senior officials. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



SYMPOSIUM
EXPLORES OMAN’S
CULTURAL HERITAGE

MUSCAT: The German University of Technology hosted a national symposium titled “Living Heritage: A Human Story and the Sustainability of Knowledge.” The symposium was held under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, and in the presence of Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture.

The event, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in partnership with the Ministry of Education, commemorated the International Day of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The symposium gathered researchers, academics, postgraduate students specialising in intangible cultural heritage, and professionals working in this field to examine cultural indicators of intangible heritage and discuss the crucial role of both governmental and private institutions in its preservation and documentation.

The symposium aimed to highlight the significance of the International Day of the Intangible Cultural Heritage while exploring Oman’s intangible cultural heritage indicators within sustainable development frameworks.

Khulood al Rashdi, Head of the Intangible Heritage Department at the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, delivered the first paper titled “Indicators of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Oman within Sustainable Development Dimensions.” Eng Majed al Muhanna from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia presented the second paper addressing “Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Relationship Between Culinary Arts, Traditional Knowledge, and Sustainable Development.”

Lieutenant Commodore Hilal bin Ali al Hinai from the Royal Navy of Oman concluded the session with a presentation highlighting intangible cultural heritage milestones documented during the “Glories of the Seas 2025” maritime voyage. — ONA

Oman, US forge pathways in healthcare collaboration

MUSCAT: Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation, welcomed a high-level delegation of senior officials representing prominent American and international healthcare and academic institutions specialising in medical care.

This visit, scheduled to continue through October 23, forms part of ongoing efforts to strengthen collaborative ties between the Sultanate of Oman and leading



Discussions focus on exploring future partnerships in healthcare sector development. — ONA

international health and academic organisations. The discussions focus on exploring future partnerships in the healthcare sector development,

aligning directly with the strategic objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

The delegation’s agenda centres on identifying cooperation opportunities across multiple critical domains, including healthcare workforce development, medical education and training programmes, digital health transformation, scientific research initiatives, academic exchange, patient care protocols, overseas treatment coordination, medical innovation, paediatric and rare

disease management, oncology services and organ transplantation capabilities.

During the comprehensive meeting, participants examined Oman’s international cooperation priorities and the existing framework for coordination with foreign institutions.

The dialogue encompassed Oman’s national digital health and cross-border telemedicine strategy, international remote medical consultation platforms, and methodologies. — ONA

42,000 APPLY FOR HAJ

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 22

AROUND 42,000 applicants have registered online for Haj 2026, which will begin at the end of June but only 14,000 people would be selected for the same, according to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA).

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the Haj and Umrah Exhibition at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Wednesday, Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, said, “We received 42,000 applicants this year against 39,000 last year and this has been on the rise since the last few years. These figures are significant because they indicate the trust that the people reposed on the ministry and secondly, the facilities and personal attention that the ministry is providing for Haj pilgrims.”

The exhibition, organised by the MoARA, features government agencies, Haj and Umrah companies, besides other commercial outlets that provide goods and services for



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AHMED
AL RASHDI

Under-Secretary,
MoARA



Said bin Hamoud al Maawali and other ministers at the expo in Muscat on Wednesday

the pilgrims. The exhibition was launched by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

The aim is to highlight the partnerships between all Haj and Umrah partners by bringing them together on a single platform.

It also aims to encourage creativity and innovation, provide quality services to pilgrims, facilitate the means of presenting services to pilgrims, assist them in making the most appropriate choices, and enhance the wealth of knowledge, history, documentation,

science, culture, and Islamic law through quality and diverse programmes that accompany the exhibition.

“We, at the ministry, have been working through its online system for registering pilgrims to develop the Haj and Umrah system to achieve quality and satisfaction. The online system won the “Laytim Excellence” award from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the best digital service among 76 countries. The exhibition is accompanied by the “Nusuk” activities, in its eleventh edition, which presents the rituals.

5,000 employees to participate in
‘One Team Initiative for Government’

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

Following the Royal Blessing of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Royal Academy of Management has launched the first interactive workshop of the ‘One Team Initiative for Government’ in Muscat Governorate.

The initiative aims to foster an impact-driven mindset within government institutions and emphasise the crucial role of public service.

Its ultimate goal is to enhance a shared sense of purpose among all members of the national administrative system, uniting them under the vision of a single, cohesive government team.

In the inaugural year of the initiative, 5,000 employees from 19 government entities within the state’s administrative apparatus will participate.

Initially, the implementation will focus on the governorates of Muscat, Dhofar, Musandam and Al Batinah



The Royal Academy of Management launched the first interactive workshop of the ‘One Team Initiative for Government’ on Wednesday.

North. Over the next five years, the initiative will progressively expand to include all employees across the state’s administrative system, at every level of government.

Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management (RAM), emphasised that the launch of the interactive workshops signifies a significant milestone in the One Team Initiative for Government.

The initiative, he noted, was introduced

in response to the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, highlighting the importance of operating as a unified system and enhancing the positive, effective contribution of individuals within the government workplace.

He stressed the strategic significance of this stage, reflecting the collaborative spirit of the One Government Team and the continuous participation of the targeted institutions at every phase of the initiative.

The initiative was developed following extensive focus group sessions that brought together participants from various professional levels.

Drawing on behavioural science and international best practices, the Academy ensured that its approach was firmly rooted in Omani values.

Hilal al Riyami, Head of the One Team Initiative for Government, emphasised that the launch of the interactive workshops marks a pivotal moment in which the Academy directly engages with the first group of national participants contributing to the initiative’s goals.

He mentioned that this event is the first of 100 workshops planned for the initiative’s inaugural year. Additionally, the initiative includes a network of communities to support participants in integrating the initiative’s principles into their daily workflows and continuing their journey beyond the one-day workshop experience.

محافظة مسقط

Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (41/2024)

Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with Authority of Projects, Tenders & ICV, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below:

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRF/25/024	Supply & Laying Concrete for various locations of Muscat Nights Events 2026	02/11/2025	12/11/2025
PRF/25/025	Supply of Road Safety Plastic Barriers for Muscat Nights 2026	02/11/2025	12/11/2025
PRF/25/026	Supply & Instalation IP Video System & PA System	02/11/2025	12/11/2025
PRF/25/027	Supply of Electrical & Lighting Materials for Muscat Nights 2026	02/11/2025	12/11/2025

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The projects comprise a stormwater drainage system for residential areas and internal road networks. — ONA

FLOOD PROJECTS VALUED AT OVER RO 6M LAUNCHED IN SALALAH

SALALAH: Dhofar Municipality is currently executing two critical infrastructure initiatives in the Wilayat of Salalah as part of its comprehensive strategy to strengthen urban infrastructure systems. The projects comprise a stormwater drainage system for residential areas and internal road networks, along with protective barriers designed to prevent valley erosion resulting from seasonal flooding, representing a combined investment exceeding RO 6 million.

Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed Baowain, Director-General of Projects and Technical Affairs at Dhofar Municipality, said that the stormwater drainage network project in Salalah carries an estimated value of RO 4 million, with physical progress currently standing at 76 per cent. The project remains on schedule for completion in April 2026.

He elaborated that the initiative focuses on enhancing drainage efficiency across multiple residential districts and internal roadways within Salalah city, effectively reducing water accumulation during rainfall and ensuring uninterrupted traffic flow.

Dr Baowain further detailed that the valley protection project, valued at approximately RO 2.6 million, involves substantial concrete construction works at Wadi Sahalnut and Wadi Thamrin in Salalah. Implementation has reached 54 per cent completion, with project finalisation anticipated during the second half of 2026. — ONA

CANADIAN VISITOR DROWNS IN DHOFAR

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 22

A Canadian citizen who came to Oman on a visit to Dhofar Governorate was reported to have drowned in Wadi Ain Darsis on Tuesday evening, according to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA).

Pookalat Hashim Abdulkadir, aged 36, was accompanied by his friends and relatives to the tourist spot when the incident occurred.

The deceased had performed Umrah on his way from Canada to Muscat with his wife Sharifa and three children last week before he reached Salalah to spend time with his parents.

An alumni of Indian School Salalah, Hashim was working as an engineer for an IT firm in Canada. The body, which is kept at Sultan Qaboos Hospital, will be buried in Salalah after legal proceedings, the sources said.

SQU HIGHLIGHTS ROLE OF LEGISLATION IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

MUSCAT: The 9th Conference of Sultan Qaboos University's College of Law kicked off on Wednesday under the theme: "Role of the Legislative System in Social Protection".

The conference's opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, in the presence of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU.

The sessions of the conference



The conference takes place amid significant legislative developments in social protection and labour. — ONA

will deal with social protection from various perspectives (civil,

commercial, constitutional, legal and procedural). A special session will be dedicated to the students of the College of Law at Sultan Qaboos University. During this session, the students will review joint scholarly papers on issues of relevance.

The conference takes place amid significant legislative developments in the Sultanate of Oman in the fields of social protection and labour. It aims to analyse related national legislation and review the best international practices. — ONA

Offer sops to make green business sustainable

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, OCT 22

SOME of the biggest challenges for young entrepreneurs in starting a green business are the lack of awareness, followed by the lack of training and mentorship and not having enough capital, according to the participants of a workshop on "Green Entrepreneurship" organised by the Environment Society Oman and Asyad Group.

Khalid al Huraiibi, Managing Director, Impact Integrated, was the moderator. "A key takeaway from the workshop is that there is a growing potential of green entrepreneurship and cleantech startups in Oman. Founders from Oman in fields such as circular economy and green data centres noted how the demand has been growing more over the past five years due to the rising environmental awareness in the communities," he said.

An audience poll showed that the number one priority today for both students, founders and experts is for the ecosystem to offer incentives that make green entrepreneurship more financially sustainable. The



SADIYA AL BAKRI
Founder of EFP Oman



Now, because of the environment, social and governance requirements, people are calling. It is the mindset that needs to be changed. We have talks, but we need actions; for example, we need to have facilities.



Agriculture, drip irrigation, vertical gardening and organic farming are all areas that can be developed for green entrepreneurship

workshop also highlighted the importance of awareness of the new green incubators, accelerators and initiatives.

The panelists were Dr Dina Belal, Assistant Manager, SME Development Department at Sharakah; Michael Laermann, Managing Director at Reason and Rhyme, Senior Policy Adviser at Ecopreneur.eu; Sadiya al Bakri, Founder of EFP Oman, an eco-

friendly packaging company using recycled materials; and Sharifa al Kalbani, founder of Biocool-Teq, AI-driven sustainable cooling systems.

"Drastic steps need to be taken by the policy makers," said Al Bakri.

Dr Belal noted that renewable energy has huge potential.

The majority of the attendees said there should be more support.

They pointed out that agriculture, drip irrigation, vertical gardening and organic farming are all areas that can be developed for green entrepreneurship. While describing her journey, Al Bakri said, "We do not segregate the waste, and this was my biggest challenge because I was wondering where I was going to get my waste paper from. Today, I have 60 partners. Now, because of the environment, social and governance requirements, people are calling. It is the mindset that needs to be changed. We have talks, but we need actions; for example, we need to have facilities."

Al Kalbani said, "Most companies are worried about profit. We are working on improving our hardware. If the product is cheaper, companies are interested. Eco-friendly products are still expensive in Oman. Circular economy is the answer today."

Ministry tightens food safety measures for imported products

MUSCAT: In an effort to enhance the food safety system and ensure the health and wellbeing of consumers, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources announced new regulations for food import operations.

The decision, issued through the Food Safety and Quality Centre, mandates compliance with updated food safety

requirements in line with Royal Decree No. 84/2008, which promulgates the Food Safety Law and its executive regulations.

According to the ministry, the new directive applies to companies and establishments importing food products into the Sultanate of Oman.

It stipulates that approval will not be granted unless the

concerned establishments in the country of origin and/or export meet the required food safety standards. The rule covers a range of imported products including bottled drinking water, canned fish products, and aquaculture fish products.

The announcement grants a six-month grace period from the date of publication for importing companies

and institutions to rectify their status and fulfil the approval requirements for their production and/or export establishments.

The ministry urged all relevant companies to take prompt action within this period to avoid shipment delays or potential financial losses that could result from the rejection of consignments.

Exhibition features Oman before 1970 in words and pictures

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

Under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat, the National Museum inaugurated the exhibition 'Reflections from the Not So Distant Past in Oman' by Eugene H Johnson, Director of the Unspoken Dialogue Organisation.

The exhibition showcases portraits and stories of Omanis from before 1970, taken from a two-volume book project commissioned by the Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs and approved by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. "Every time an old person passes away, a wealth of history goes with them," Johnson said, emphasising why he pairs photographs with oral narratives. "A person without knowledge of their history is like a tree without roots.



The exhibition showcases portraits and stories of Omanis from before 1970

I hope young Omanis cherish these stories," he said. His connection to Oman began in 1994 when the Ministry of Information invited him

to document the people of Oman. He later returned in 1997 to teach at SQU. He realised that many young people couldn't appreciate the nation's progress without understanding its origins. "The driving force behind this project was to give a gift to the Omani people," he noted. "I'm just a vessel — recording their stories and placing them in context." He added that the portraits are "not just faces," but windows into the lives people lived and the resilience they showed in the face of adversity.

Dr Abdulmonim bin Mansour al Hasani, a photography enthusiast, praised the exhibition for revealing the depth of portraiture as "the art of the soul." He said, "You can find a story and history behind each picture. Many of the individuals are in their sixties or seventies — they experienced the challenging years before 1970, and their faces tell that story." Mirasol Delphin Johnson,

Deputy Director of the Unspoken Dialogue Organisation, described the exhibition as the culmination of a twelve-year journey of listening first, then photographing. "This project belongs to the people of Oman," she said. "We spent many late nights with prints and stories so each image would reflect not just a face, but a life lived. We hope the younger generation will look at then and now — and feel proud of what Oman has become."

Tamas Dombovari, a photographer and lecturer at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Muscat, praised the exhibition for being "rich in a photographic sense" because "you don't just see a face — you read life stories." He added, "Even in a time when everyone can post portraits online, the story is what matters. These images help paint a broader picture of Oman in our minds."

SHORT TAKES



Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson (R) and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky give a joint press conference in Linkping, Sweden. — AFP

SWEDEN, UKRAINE SIGN LETTER TO SUPPLY GRIPEN FIGHTERS

LINKOPING: Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said on Wednesday that Sweden and Ukraine had signed a letter of intent to develop air capabilities, which could see Ukraine buy up to 150 Gripen fighter jets. Speaking alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at a press conference in Sweden, Kristersson said the letter of intent would create the conditions for a “very large defence industry deal”. “Probably somewhere between 100 and 150 fighter jets of the model Gripen E that are now beginning to be made,” Kristersson said, adding the deal could have a 10- to 15-year timeline.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Norway, the first leg of a European tour aimed at shoring up support for Kyiv amid a string of deadly Russian attacks. Russia’s latest overnight barrage on Wednesday, which went into the morning hours, killed seven people and triggered power outages across Ukraine, also damaging a kindergarten in the east of the country, according to officials. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday shelved plans to meet Russia’s Vladimir Putin for peace talks in Budapest, saying he did not want a “wasted” meeting. — AFP

MACRON ORDERS TIGHTER SECURITY AS LOUVRE REOPENS



Visitors queue in front of the Pyramide du Louvre, in Paris. — AFP

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron ordered stepped-up security measures at the Louvre, as the Paris museum reopened its doors days after a shocking daytime heist. During a Wednesday meeting of cabinet ministers, Macron ordered a “speeding up” of security measures at the Louvre, government spokeswoman Maude Bregeon said. Scores of investigators are looking for the culprits, working on the theory that it was an organised crime group that clambered up a ladder on a truck to break into the museum, then dropped a diamond-studded crown as they fled. The investigation “is progressing”, Interior Minister Laurent Nunez told local media on Wednesday, saying “more than 100 investigators” had been mobilised. “I have full confidence, that’s for sure, that we will find the perpetrators,” he said.

The thieves made off with eight pieces, including an emerald-and-diamond necklace that Napoleon I gave his wife Empress Marie-Louise and a diadem that once belonged to the Empress Eugenie, which is dotted with nearly 2,000 diamonds. Calling the financial loss “extraordinary”, Paris prosecutor Laure Beccauau said the greater damage was to France’s historical heritage. — AFP

BANGLADESH COURT DETAINS ARMY OFFICERS FOR LANDMARK TRIAL

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi court remanded in custody on Wednesday 15 high-ranking army officers on charges of enforced disappearances and atrocities committed during the 2024 uprising that toppled the government. It is first time that formal charges have been brought for enforced disappearances in Bangladesh, and the first time so many senior military officials have faced a civilian trial.

The men, including five generals, are accused of running a secret

detention centre during the tenure of the now-ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina. All have served in Bangladeshi military intelligence or the feared paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). Defence lawyer Sarwar Hossain said all rejected the charges. The army has said it will assist the judicial process, but the situation has been tense since the court issued arrest warrants earlier this month.

“They declared their allegiance to the law of the land and their

respect for the judicial process,” the court’s chief prosecutor Tajul Islam told reporters. “That was reflected in the cooperation they have extended.” UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk, in a statement on October 15, said that the court process was an important step towards accountability. “It is a significant moment for victims and their families,” Turk said. The officers were brought by a prison van to the court, guarded by a heavy deployment of police. — AFP

Top UN court starts ruling on Gaza aid obligations

THE top United Nations court on Wednesday began its ruling on Israel’s obligations towards agencies providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza, as aid groups scramble to scale up assistance following a ceasefire. International Court of Justice President Yuji Iwasawa opened the public hearing to deliver its “advisory opinion” laying out Israel’s duty to facilitate aid in Gaza.

The UN asked the ICJ to clarify Israel’s obligations, as an occupying power, towards UN and other bodies “including to ensure and facilitate the unhindered provision of urgently needed supplies essential to the survival” of Palestinians. An ICJ opinion is not legally binding but the court believes it carries “great legal weight and moral authority”.

ICJ judges heard a week of evidence in April from dozens of nations and organisations, much of which revolved around the status of UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

Israel did not take part in the hearings but an official told journalists earlier on Wednesday it was “an abuse of international law”. The official added that Israel “cooperates with international organisations, with other UN agencies regarding Gaza. But Israel will not cooperate with UNRWA.”

Israel banned UNRWA from operating on Israeli soil after accusing some of its staff of taking part in the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack that sparked the war.

A series of investigations,



Judges arrive for the session of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, Netherlands. — Reuters

The UN asked the ICJ to clarify Israel’s obligations, as an occupying power, towards UN and other bodies “including to ensure and facilitate the unhindered provision of urgently needed supplies essential to the survival” of Palestinians

including one led by France’s former foreign minister Catherine Colonna, found some “neutrality-related issues” at UNRWA. However, the April 2024 report said Israel had “yet to provide supporting evidence” of its allegation that “a significant number of UNRWA employees are members of terrorist organisations”.

At the ICJ hearings in April, a US official raised “serious concerns” about the impartiality of UNRWA, and alleged that Hamas used the agency’s facilities.

The US official, Josh Simmons, said Israel had “no obligation to permit UNRWA specifically to provide humanitarian assistance”. Simmons added that UNRWA was not the only option for delivering aid into Gaza. Palestinian official Ammar Hijazi told the ICJ judges that Israel was blocking aid as

a “weapon of war”, sparking starvation in Gaza. UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini has described his organisation as a “lifeline” for the nearly six million Palestinian refugees under its charge. The agency still has some 12,000 staff in Gaza and aims to play a major part in its reconstruction after the fragile ceasefire agreed earlier this month. More than 370 of UNRWA workers have been killed since the start of the war, according to the agency.

On the eve of the ICJ ruling, Abeer Etefa, Middle East spokeswoman for the UN’s World Food Programme, said 530 of the organisation’s trucks had crossed into Gaza since the ceasefire. Those trucks had delivered more than 6,700 tonnes of food, which she said was “enough for close to half a million people for two weeks”. — AFP



FIRE ERUPTS OUTSIDE SERBIAN PARLIAMENT

BELGRADE: One man was wounded and an alleged elderly attacker arrested after a shooting and fire at a pro-government camp outside Serbia’s parliament on Wednesday, with the country’s embattled president quick to label it a “terrorist attack”. A Belgrade pensioner was arrested at the camp after firing multiple shots and setting a tent on fire, President Aleksandar Vucic told a press conference hours after the incident.

Vucic said the use of a gun against his supporters made the motivation “unmistakable” and “in my political assessment, a horrific terrorist attack”. Officials confirmed the victim was undergoing surgery following the shooting. At a well-organised press conference, Vucic played several videos of the incident and purported confession of the alleged attacker, showing a man in police custody claiming to be behind the shooting. Although police were at the press conference, they did not provide further details about the investigation or whether formal charges had been made against the man. — AFP

ROAD TRAGEDY

Uganda bus crash leaves 46 dead



Ugandan police on Wednesday revised down the death toll from a major bus crash on one of the country’s busiest highways, saying it had killed 46 people whereas before they had given a toll of 63. The crash happened just after midnight on the highway between the capital Kampala and the northern city of Gulu. Initial investigations suggest it was caused by two buses coming from opposite directions trying to overtake other vehicles. — Reuters

SWEEPING ARRESTS

Greece detains 37 in EU subsidy scandal



Greek police said they had arrested 37 people in connection with a burgeoning EU farm subsidy scandal in which millions of euros are suspected to have been illegally claimed. A police advisory said the arrests had occurred in the greater Athens area, Thessaloniki, the island of Crete and other areas in an ongoing operation. The EU probe has found that most of the allegedly fraudulent subsidy claims came from Crete. — AFP

CONTINUOUS STRIKES

Drone attacks target Khartoum airport



Paramilitary drones targeted Khartoum International Airport on Wednesday for a second consecutive day, a military source said. The source said “drones targeted Khartoum airport once again at dawn” on Wednesday. Khartoum has seen a relative lull in ground fighting since the army retook parts of the capital earlier, but drone strikes have continued amid ongoing efforts by the government to restore services and relocate key institutions back. — AFP

OPINION

Rooms where better thinking happens



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is an environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development Follow her on LinkedIn @

In Al Duqm, Oman’s green hydrogen hubs are rising on a foundation of renewable energy and industrial-scale desalination. The infrastructure is already programmed: steady power, reliable water, and long timelines. One question keeps returning. Could a portion of that power run cold chains for local fisheries? Could a share of that water supply agriculture pilots or rural clinics? The answer is yes, if those priorities are written into plans from the start.

Most large projects are designed in silos. Energy stays with energy, water with water, and communities are consulted late, if at all. By the time social priorities surface, the financial model is fixed. What could have been designed in becomes bolted on or left out entirely. Uncertainty is the hardest tariff, and siloed planning makes it heavier.

Last week, I took part in the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting of the Global Future Councils, one of the largest collective brainstorm I have experienced. People who rarely share a table worked side by side: economists and environmentalists, engineers and educators, artists and ministers. The shared aim was to understand complexity and move past sectoral walls.

People tested each other’s logic without performance. Ideas arrived rough and left

sharper. Spaces like this are rare in our region, and we need more of them in Al Duqm, Muscat, and Salalah.

What makes these rooms valuable is simple. Dialogue becomes a method. It holds complexity long enough to turn abstraction into choices that citizens can feel. It shows up later as better policies, clearer permits and stronger coalitions.

Energy, water, food and people belong on the same page.

When we stopped treating them as separate systems and mapped them together, the conversation changed. Abstract trade-offs turned into practical questions. Who is affected? What is consumed? What gets restored? Over what timeline? Language matters too. The word “transition” suggests a fixed destination. The work ahead is navigation, with rules that hold under changing currents.

Capital accounting helps that navigation. It places natural, human, and social capital beside financial returns and exposes hidden dependencies. Projects that seem efficient in year 1 can appear fragile by year 10. When costs are counted across a full life cycle, new options emerge. A desalination plant that serves only industry may meet its numbers. A plant that also supports a clinic and a school

When farmers, utilities, financiers and regulators sit together at the start, trust grows. Trade-offs surface early, surprise shrinks, and listening becomes risk management.

builds trust, reduces opposition, and creates local champions. The payback may take longer while the system grows stronger.

This way of working needs rooms designed for it. Empathy becomes a planning tool. When farmers, utilities, financiers and regulators sit together at the start, trust grows. Trade-offs surface early, surprise shrinks and listening becomes risk management.

These rooms are not easy to build. They take time that investors resist and reveal conflicts bureaucracies avoid. They ask people to speak from where they stand, which can feel uncomfortable. They rarely produce tidy conclusions in week 1. Yet, enduring projects typically start in environments such as these, where individuals embrace ambition from the outset and depart with greater precision than when they arrived.

I keep returning to the image of a room where ideas arrive rough and leave sharper. Al Duqm can be that kind of room, scaled to the landscape: a place where energy, water, and community share the same sentence, and where ambition feels like oxygen again. Everything enduring begins in such a space: open enough for argument, steady enough for trust, and clear enough for everyone to see themselves in the plan.

COLOMBIA’S PRESIDENT EMBRACES WAR OF WORDS WITH TRUMP

CARLOS REYES GARCIA

Donald Trump’s decision to freeze millions in aid to Colombia and brand its president a drug trafficker has smashed long-standing ties and could yet shake up the country’s 2026 presidential race. With the US president’s threat of “significant” punitive tariffs looming, Colombian businesses are panicking and investors are spooked. But one person seems unfazed by the row between Colombia and its largest trading partner: Colombian President Gustavo Petro.

The ex-guerrilla-turned-politico has embraced the battle with Trump, using it as a tool to stir his base and, he hopes, Colombian voters ahead of the May presidential elections. He has recalled Colombia’s ambassador from Washington, attacked Trump in lengthy social media posts — and at the United Nations — and embraced ever-more nationalist rhetoric. “President Trump doesn’t like us being out of his control,” he wrote on X Tuesday, while claiming the threat of a US invasion and stating “they want a coup against me”. Visiting New York last month, he urged the US military to refuse Trump’s orders, earning him a US visa ban. Over the weekend, Petro backed US demonstrations, posting ‘No to kings’ and sharing protest videos. For decades, the two countries jointly fought drug cartels, traded broadly, and enjoyed close political ties.

Colombia was arguably the United States’ closest ally in South America.

Today, “Petro is looking for a confrontation with Washington,” said Theodore Kahn, of global risk consultancy Control Risks in Bogota.

According to Kahn, Petro wants to use the spat to influence a presidential primary in his Historic Pact party this Sunday and push the electorate to the left. Petro is constitutionally barred from running for president again, but he is keen to have a say over who Colombia’s next leader will be.

So, it seems, is Trump and his Secretary of State, Marco Rubio. Petro may also be betting that the attacks help revive his popularity and influence at home, as they have done for Brazil’s leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Maria Claudia Lacouture, president of the Colombo-American Chamber of Commerce, said the implications of Washington’s message cannot be “taken lightly.” Oil, coffee, flowers, and minerals such as iron and ferronickel are most exposed.

Javier Diaz, head of the National Association of Foreign Trade (Analdex), warned of uncertainty among businesses: “We hope diplomatic channels are activated,” he said.— AFP

No kings means no kings. No wonder Trump hates it



JAMELLE BOUIE

The writer is NYT Opinion columnist

ON Saturday, between 5 and 7 million people assembled on streets, sidewalks and town squares across the country — in “red” states and in “blue” — to protest against President Trump and his administration, in what may have been the largest single-day demonstration in American history. This came on the heels of a similar demonstration in June, which, despite its smaller size (approximately 2 to 5 million participants), was still one of the largest single days of protest ever recorded in this country.

Here is what Trump, whose job it is to represent the whole people of the United States, had to say about the day. “It’s a joke,” he told reporters on Air Force One. “I looked at the people. They are not representative of this country. And I looked at all the brand-new signs I guess paid for by Soros and other radical left lunatics. We’re checking it out. The demonstrations were very small. And the people were whacked out.” Trump’s calumny aside, it is useful to compare the president’s response in this moment to one of President Barack Obama’s early reactions to the much smaller Tea Party protests that took off during his first term in office.

“I think that America has a noble tradition of being helpfully sceptical about government,” he said in 2010 during a news conference a few weeks before the midterm elections:

And I think that’s a good thing. I think there’s also a noble tradition in the Republican and Democratic parties of saying that government should — should pay its way, that it shouldn’t get so big that we’re leaving debt to the next generation. All those things, I think, are healthy.

Obama then went on to ask the Tea Party movement to make specific demands — to say what they would have him do so that they could work, constructively,

to find common ground. Now, you can attribute this yawning distance between the two men to their respective temperaments, which we do not need to elaborate on any further than we already have. But even after you account for personality, Trump stands out. Recall that even President Richard Nixon, infamous for his endless resentment toward — and acid contempt for — his political opponents, met with student protesters of the Vietnam War at the Lincoln Memorial to try to understand their perspective, not as adversaries but as fellow Americans.

What we see in Trump is not just a difference of personality but one of political interpretation. Trump does not see himself leading the people of the United States, but his people — the denizens of MAGA America, defined by the colours on the 2024 presidential election map.

It would be one thing if this were just a preoccupation with the interests of his supporters. But Trump combines sectarian partisanship with genuine hatred for those Americans on the other side of the political divide. As he told the audience at a state-sanctioned memorial for Charlie Kirk last month, “I hate my opponent and I don’t want the best for them.”

What he wants, instead, is to dominate them: to subjugate them to his will. To that end, he has refashioned the most coercive parts of the federal government into instruments designed to force his opponents — or as he sees them, his enemies — to bend the knee. And it is this, as much as anything else, that inspired millions of Americans to define their opposition to Trump in terms of royal power and royal prerogatives.

To borrow language from one of the nation’s founding documents, Trump has “erected a Multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People,

and eat out their Substance”; he has “kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies, without the consent of our Legislatures”; he has “affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power”; he has cut “off our Trade with all Parts of the World” and imposed “Taxes on us without our Consent.” He has transported us “beyond Seas to be tried for pretended Offences” and in deigning to spend tax dollars without congressional authorisation — to pay soldiers in the midst of a shutdown, in a move reminiscent of Stuart absolutism — he has “invested” himself “with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.” The president’s opponents can see, quite clearly, that Trump wants authoritarian power so that he can crush their dissent. And Trump has been nothing but open about his desire to turn the federal state against blue America, punishing Democrats and Democratic voters for the crime of acting against him.

“We’re under invasion from within, no different than a foreign enemy,” he said in remarks to the military’s top brass last month. “It’s a war from within.” Hence the president’s use of the National Guard to occupy American cities and, as much as possible, to replace civil law with military order. Hence his use of federal law enforcement to harass and intimidate his political adversaries as well as universities and civil society organisations deemed liberal. Hence, his impoundment of funds meant for

One irony, here, is that in his zeal to punish Democrats for their opposition to his administration, Trump is harming millions of his own voters who live in states such as New York, Illinois and California. He seems unaware that there were more Trump voters in, for example, Los Angeles County than there were in the state of Oklahoma.

India proposes strict rules to label AI content



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MUNSI VENGATTIL

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INDIA'S government on Wednesday proposed that artificial intelligence and social media firms should clearly label AI-generated content to tackle the spread of deepfake and misinformation, prompted by similar moves by the European Union and China.

With nearly one billion Internet users, the stakes are high in a sprawling country of many ethnic and religious communities where fake news risks stirring up deadly strife and AI deepfake videos have alarmed officials during elections.

The new rules require platforms to label AI-generated content with markers covering at least 10 per cent of the surface area of a visual display or the initial 10 per cent of the duration of an audio clip, placing more responsibilities on the likes of OpenAI, Meta, X and Google. Social media companies will also have to obtain a user declaration on whether uploaded information is AI-generated, and deploy reasonable technical measures to ensure checks and balances, the Indian government's draft proposal said.

The rules will "ensure visible labelling, metadata traceability, and transparency for

all public-facing AI-generated media," India's IT ministry said, inviting suggestions from the public and industry by November 6.

The potential for misuse of generative AI tools "to cause user harm, spread misinformation, manipulate elections, or impersonate individuals has grown significantly," the government added.

OpenAI, Google and Meta did not respond to Reuters queries.

Indian courts are hearing high-profile lawsuits related to deepfakes. Bollywood stars Abhishek Bachchan and his wife Aishwarya Rai Bachchan have asked a New Delhi judge to remove and prohibit creation of AI videos infringing their intellectual property rights, and challenged YouTube's AI training policy.

The rules about covering 10 per cent of surface area are "among the first explicit attempts globally to prescribe a quantifiable visibility standard," said Dhruv Garg, founding partner at public policy research firm, Indian Governance and Policy Project.

If implemented, the rules will require AI platforms in India to build in automated labelling systems to identify and mark AI-generated content at the point of creation, he added. India is emerging as a big market for AI firms.

Social media companies will also have to obtain a user declaration on whether uploaded information is AI-generated, and deploy reasonable technical measures to ensure checks and balances, the Indian government's draft proposal said

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said in February that India was its second-largest market by number of users, which had tripled in the past year.

"Recent incidents of deepfake audio, videos and synthetic media going viral on social platforms have demonstrated the potential of generative AI to create convincing falsehoods - depicting individuals in acts or statements they never made. Such content can be weaponised to spread misinformation, damage reputations, manipulate or influence elections, or commit financial fraud," said the accompanying explanatory note on the IT Ministry website.

Globally and domestically, policymakers are increasingly concerned about fabricated or synthetic images, videos, and audio clips (deepfakes) that are indistinguishable from real content, and are being blatantly used to produce non-consensual intimate or obscene imagery; mislead the public with fabricated political or news content; commit fraud or impersonation for financial gain.

The IT Rule changes seek to provide statutory protection to intermediaries, removing or disabling access to synthetically generated information based on reasonable efforts or user grievances.

GET MARRIED... THE REALITY OF JAPANESE POLITICS FOR WOMEN

After Sanae Takaichi took office as Japan's first woman prime minister, AFP spoke to some of her younger counterparts who called it a symbolic victory. The three local councillors anticipate Takaichi's win will do little to shift the male-dominated world of politics or entrenched expectations that women will prioritise family over career.

After spending time away, Makoto Sasaki returned to her northern hometown Miyako, hoping to change local politics.

But as soon as she arrived, she was told by members of the public to focus on having a family.

"They said, 'You won't be able to get married if you work so hard'," Sasaki said.

They also said I "wouldn't be a proper adult without giving birth", she recalled. "It was shocking." In Japan, gender roles are rigid, with women usually expected to look after the home and family, even if they work. As a result, women are grossly underrepresented at all political levels, as well as in business and media. Last year, Sasaki ran for election, aged 27, and became one of 22 local councillors.

"Unless we start cutting into these larger societal structures - like the gender gap, the division of household chores by gender, or care work - (the number of women politicians) won't increase," she said. Takaichi, whose hero is Margaret Thatcher, had promised to appoint a cabinet with "Nordic" levels of women, but on Tuesday, she appointed just two, the same number as her predecessor, Shigeru Ishiba.

"My region, Iwate, has never had a female political leader, whether for governor or mayor," Sasaki said, emphasising the magnitude of the problem in Japan, which ranked 118 out of 148 this year in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report.

Men older than 70 make up about half of Sasaki's council in Miyako, and there are just three women. In the coastal city of Toba, Chihiro Igarashi "worries constantly" about juggling her work as a councillor with caring for her two children, aged two and three. "The belief that mothers are the ones who step in when children need them in an emergency remains deeply ingrained," said Igarashi, 37, stressing that her husband and in-laws fully support her.

For couples with children under six in Japan, women spend an average of seven hours and 28 minutes on housework, caregiving, childcare and shopping, while men spend 1 hour and 54 minutes, according to 2021 government data, the latest available. Igarashi said she initially did not want Takaichi to be elected as prime minister because of her conservative policies, including opposition to same-gender marriage and support for a 19th-century law requiring married couples to share the same surname.

Takaichi also wants Japan's imperial family to stick to its male-only succession rules. But equally, "her toughness is appealing... she must have made extraordinary efforts to reach the level," said Igarashi, one of two women councillors out of 13 in Toba. — AFP

Global majority's fight for economic justice

THE world is experiencing a series of political, ecological, social, and economic ruptures. Astonishing levels of wealth concentration and inequality have eroded development gains, accelerated social fragmentation, and fueled civil unrest. According to the Indicators of Global Climate Change report, we are only three years from breaching the 1.5° Celsius global warming limit set in the 2015 Paris climate agreement, increasing the risk of irreversible changes in planetary conditions.

These cascading crises are converging in the world economy. Insufficient climate finance from wealthy countries has led some developing countries to double down on fossil fuels. Moreover, an unfair debt system traps low-income countries in a perpetual cycle of distress: servicing short-term dollar-denominated loans with high interest rates prevents them from meeting development targets. Rich countries are also unwilling to cooperate on stopping illicit financial flows and taxing billionaires and multinational firms, further undermining low-income countries' ability to raise revenue.

This economic instability is inextricably linked to global democratic decline. When wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, political discontent is sure to follow, as evidenced by the surge of far-right parties in Western democracies.

Strengthening democracy is essential to tackling these crises. At the national level, citizens must be at the center of decision-making regarding development policies and outcomes. At the international level, multilateral institutions and processes – including the G20, the United Nations Climate Change Conferences, and the Bretton Woods institutions – must be democratised to regain credibility and legitimacy. So far, they have been too slow in addressing their shortcomings, and too focused on the developed world's interests.

Examples abound of how multilateralism has reproduced inequalities. Developed countries offer climate finance in the form of guarantees for commercial loans, which increase debt burdens rather



Campaign hats for Republican presidential candidate and former US President Donald Trump.



SEKOETLANE PHAMODI

The writer is Director of the African Climate Foundation's New Economy Hub in South Africa

than build resilience. Time and again in Africa, ratings agencies and the International Monetary Fund's lending conditionalities prevent governments from investing in inclusive growth and development. The global consensus is to pursue a private-sector-led green transition, even though this approach intensifies precarity for those who contributed the least to global warming but are most vulnerable to its effects.

The decisions and actions taken in the interest of global capital have expanded the ranks of so-called "surplus people." These populations on the margins include workers made redundant by multiple and convergent socio-technical shifts, communities displaced by mine closures and climate shocks, and households pushed into poverty by soaring food and energy prices.

So, what can be done? To answer this question, civil-society groups and NGOs from across the Global South will meet with our Global North allies at the People's Summit for Global Economic Justice on the sidelines of the upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg. In keeping with the meeting's theme – "We, the 99 per cent" – the attendees will work together to map structural alternatives to the "societies of enmity" produced by capitalism. The goal is to develop a locally rooted but globally

connected programme of action for achieving economic justice.

Chief among the proposed solutions to be deliberated at the People's Summit is a wealth tax on ultra-rich individuals and companies under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation. Such a tax is technically feasible and politically necessary to address the interconnected financial, sovereign-debt, and sociopolitical crises destabilising advanced and developing economies alike.

Another important solution is scaling the availability, accessibility, and affordability of public climate finance, as provided for under the Paris agreement. Given that advanced economies rely on developing countries for the commodities that fuel their industrial growth, financial and technological support must flow in the opposite direction to ensure development gains and to compensate for the extensive loss and damage caused by the escalating climate crisis.

Given that South Africa's G20 presidency is focused on solidarity, equality, and sustainability, we are approaching these structural alternatives as an ethical project of repair that reflects our shared vulnerability and views the Earth as our common home.

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



13 drivers represent Oman at Mena Nations karting in Qatar

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is proudly participating this year in the Mena Nations Karting Cup, held at the Lusail Karting Circuit in Qatar from October 21 to 25. The event brings together more than 150 drivers representing 18 countries from across the Middle East and North Africa region.

Oman is represented by 13 drivers competing across various categories, carrying the nation's flag in one of the region's most prominent karting championships. The event is organised under the supervision of the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) and supported by the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA).

The championship features a wide range of race categories, providing an ideal platform for showcasing emerging talents in the sport of karting.

The participation of the Omani team comes as part of the Oman Automobile Association's (OAA) ongoing efforts to support and develop karting in the Sultanate, empowering young Omani drivers to take part in regional and international competitions to gain valuable experience and exposure to global standards.



Seeb dominated Ahli Sidab with a 26-17 win.

Muscat, Seeb close in on final as rivals fight for survival

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

All eyes turn to the Oman Club Sports Hall on Friday, as the second-leg semifinals of the 2025-26 Youth Handball League promise thrilling encounters to determine the finalists who will compete for the championship title on October 29.

The first match will see Muscat face Nizwa, followed by the second clash between Seeb and Ahli Sidab, both promising high paced action and tactical battles.

Last week's first leg matches showcased intense competition and fine displays of skill, Muscat earned a hard fought 23-21 victory over Nizwa in a tightly contested match that went down to the final minutes, marked by solid defences and fast counterattacks, While Muscat hold a slight advantage, Nizwa need to win by at least two goals to reach the final.

Meanwhile, Seeb dominated Ahli Sidab with a convincing 26-17 win, controlling the tempo from the start through organised attacks and a disciplined defence. Despite a strong second half effort, Ahli Sidab struggled to break Seeb's defensive wall but remains determined to stage a comeback in the return leg.

According to tournament regulations, if two or more teams finish tied on points, rankings will be determined by head to head results, followed by goal difference and then total goals scored. If the tie persists, a draw will be conducted in the presence of club representatives and the match supervisor to resolve any remaining technical or administrative issues.

Oman to launch campaign today at Asian Youth Games

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 22

WITH high morale and strong competitive spirit, Oman's national teams for athletics, equestrian and golf will begin their participation on Thursday in the third Asian Youth Games, hosted by Bahrain from October 22 to 31. The event brings together more than 5,000 athletes representing 45 Asian National Olympic Committees, competing in 24 sports and 253 events.

Oman, represented by the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), took part in Tuesday's welcome and flag-raising ceremony held at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre, where golfer Adam bin Masoud al Barwani raised the Sultanate of Oman's flag.

The official opening ceremony took place on Wednesday evening, led by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, head of the Omani delegation, in the presence of Brigadier (Retd) Said bin Mohammed al Hajri, deputy head, and Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamkhalaf, OOC Secretary-General. During the ceremony, the Omani flag was raised by Sayyid Abdulaziz bin Fahad al Busaidy from the equestrian team and Fida bint Fuad al Barwaniyah from the taekwondo team.

The equestrian team begins its participation in the team events, represented by Abdulaziz bin Fahad al Busaidy, Taha bin Ziyad al Balushi and Sarah bint Suhail al Kathiriyah.

In athletics, Raed bin Mohammed al Balushi opens the competition in the 100m preliminary rounds, followed by Al Yazn bin Rashid al Shamsi, who will compete in the 800m on Friday. Al Balushi will also take part in the 200m race, while Hamad bin Nasser al Riyami competes in the 2000m steeplechase on Saturday.

The golf team features three players: Adam bin Masoud al Barwani, Mahir Nikhil Sampat and Pransh Jagwani, competing in both individual and team events.

Meanwhile, taekwondo athletes underwent weigh-ins ahead of their matches scheduled for Friday and Saturday. The team includes Shahnaz al Maawali, Ziyad al Balushi, Qaboos al Balushi, Al Mutasim al Hajri and Fida al Barwani.



The golf delegation at the Games venue.

Pictures by **Nawaf al Busaidy**



Oman contingent at the opening ceremony.



Oman taekwondo players during training.

INTENSIVE TRAINING
The national teams continued their intensive training sessions yesterday in an atmosphere of optimism and enthusiasm. Said al Hajri and Abdullah Bamkhalaf visited the teams at their training venues,

expressing confidence in the athletes' ability to deliver strong performances.

Bamkhalaf said that with determination and will power, the athletes can be among the leaders and achieve results that meet the nation's aspirations.

Said al Hajri emphasised that Oman's participation in this Asian event holds great sporting and cultural value, as it represents an investment in youth who embody the future of Omani sports. He added that the Games provides athletes with valuable international exposure and experience, while strengthening Oman's presence on the Asian stage.

He noted that associations and sports committees had carefully prepared the teams through well-planned training camps, both locally and abroad, to enhance performance levels. He stressed that this participation serves as a platform to assess the progress of Omani sports and continue improving them.

Dr Ali al Marzouqi, Vice-Chairman of the Oman Athletics Association and administrative supervisor of the delegation, explained that this participation is a strategic investment in developing youth potential. He said that preparations included training camps and local trials to ensure technical readiness.

He added that competition at the Games would be strong but also a golden opportunity for Omani athletes to gain valuable experience.

Seeb, Al Shabab all set for AFC Challenge League

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

Oman's Al Shabab will make their debut at the 2025/2026 AFC Challenge League (ACGL) as they will play in the West Zone's Group A which will feature from Altyn Asyr (TKM), the hosts Paro FC (BHU) and FC Abdysh-Ata (KGZ). Another Omani club Seeb will vie for a slot in Group B which includes Al Ansar FC (LBN), Bashundhara Kings (BAN) and hosts Kuwait SC (KUW).

The Al Shabab team arrived in Bhutan on Tuesday to gear up for the matches and adapt with the weather and venue conditions. The team, under guidance of Hassan Rustam, began their training sessions on Wednesday.

The southern Batinah based team, which won their maiden HM Cup title in 2024-25, will face home side Paro FC, who are involved in the ACGL for a second time after winning their fourth consecutive



Al Shabab club team during a training session in Bhutan.

league title—and record fifth overall—in 2024, on Saturday at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu, Bhutan. The match will kick off at 4 pm (Oman time). The next match will be against Abdysh-Ata from Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday and they will conclude group matches on October 31 as they will meet Altyn Asyr from Turkmenistan.

Seeb will play their matches at the Jaber Al Mubarak Al Sabah Stadium in Sulaibikhat in Kuwait City which will host Group B matches.



Seeb players during practice in Kuwait City.

Seeb, 2024-25 Oman League champions, will begin their campaign against opponents Bashundhara Kings, who lifted a fourth domestic cup trophy in 2024-25 on top of finishing third in the Bangladeshi League on Saturday. The match will kick off at 5 pm (Oman time). The last season's quarterfinalists will meet hosts Kuwait team in their second match on Tuesday while the concluding match is scheduled against Lebanon's Al Ansar, who ended a four-year drought in claiming a record 15th Lebanese League title in 2024-25, on October 31.

Seeb will look to rekindle the 2022 memories as they had recorded their name in golden letters after lifting their historic continental 2022 AFC Cup title following the 3-0 win over Kuala Lumpur City FC. The Seeb delegation arrived in Kuwait on Wednesday night and they will commence their training sessions on Thursday in Kuwait City.

WOMEN’SWC



South Africa’s Marizanne Kapp (C) celebrates with captain Laura Wolvaardt (R) after taking the wicket of Pakistan’s Aliya Riaz in Colombo. — AFP

WOLVAARDT STARS AS SOUTH AFRICA CRUSH PAKISTAN

COLOMBO: Laura Wolvaardt led from the front with an attacking 90 as South Africa hammered Pakistan by 150 runs in a rain-marred Women’s World Cup match on Tuesday.

Opening batter Wolvaardt hit 90 to guide South Africa to a mammoth 312-9 in their reduced 40 overs in Colombo.

The Sri Lankan capital has endured heavy rain over the past two weeks and has seen four matches abandoned.

Pakistan finished on 83-7 while chasing a revised target of 234 in 20 overs after several rain interruptions plagued the match.

The defeat means they have bowed out of the semifinal race without a win in six matches.

Pakistan’s exit means the semifinals and the final on November 2 will be played in India.

Sri Lanka were chosen as co-hosts with India to accomodate Pakistan matches at a neutral venue as part of a compromise deal.

South Africa, who had already booked their place in the semifinals of the women’s 50-over marquee tournament alongside Australia and England, won their fifth successive match.

Invited to bat first, South Africa were 6-1 in two overs when rain interrupted play and it was more than two hours later that their innings re-started.

Wolvaardt and Sune Luus (61) found their groove and hit regular boundaries against a Pakistan bowling attack that was wayward in their line and length as they bowled with a wet ball due to moisture and intermittent spells of drizzle.

The pair put on 118 runs for the second wicket to lay the foundations for the mammoth total -- South Africa’s highest in a World Cup.

Luus reverse-swept Sadia Iqbal for a boundary to reach her fifty and hit two more fours in the next over before falling to Nashra Sandhu. She hit eight fours and two sixes.

Wolvaardt looked fluent and raised her third half-century of the tournament with a boundary off Iqbal’s left-arm spin as she kept up the charge.

Sandhu, a left-arm orthodox, denied Wolvaardt her 100 when she had the batter stumped in a two-wicket over.

But there was no stopping South Africa as Marizanne Kapp and Nadine de Klerk tore into the Pakistan attack with boundaries galore.

Kapp hit an unbeaten 68 and De Klerk struck 41 off 16 balls to take the total past 300 in a 25-run 39th over.

Pakistan were never in the chase and slipped to 35-4 in their first revised target of 306 in 40 overs when rain interrupted play. — AFP

PSG hit 7 as Barcelona, Arsenal run riot in CL

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN scored seven and both Barcelona and PSV Eindhoven hit six in big victories while Arsenal crushed Atletico Madrid 4-0 on a prolific night of Champions League action on Tuesday.

Erling Haaland was among the scorers in Manchester City’s 2-0 win at Villarreal as a total of 43 goals rained down across nine games. However, it was champions PSG who stole the show with their 7-2 win at Bayer Leverkusen in Germany.

Desire Doue scored twice in between goals by Willian Pacheco and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia for PSG in a first half which saw Alejandro Grimaldo miss a penalty and Aleix Garcia net from the spot for Leverkusen. Both sides had a man sent off in the opening period, with Robert Andrich seeing red for Leverkusen and Illia Zabarnyi walking for the visitors.

Nuno Mendes got the French side’s fifth goal shortly after the break and Garcia pulled it back to 5-2.

Ousmane Dembele, on his return from injury and first appearance since winning the Ballon d’Or, got PSG’s sixth and Vitinha completed the scoring at the death. “I am not yet at 100 per cent. I wanted to play at the weekend and the coach told me to wait a bit, but I felt great,” Dembele told Canal Plus.

It is the first time PSG have scored seven goals away from home in a Champions League game, and they are top of the standings after three outings in the league phase, with a maximum nine points and the best goal difference.

GYOKERES ENDS DROUGHT Inter Milan and Arsenal are the other teams with a 100 per cent record after three outings, with the Italians easing to a 4-0 victory at Union Saint-Gilloise in Brussels.

Denzel Dumfries and Lautaro Martinez both netted late in the first half before Hakan Calhanoglu added a penalty soon after the restart and Pio Esposito completed the scoring.

Meanwhile, Premier League leaders Arsenal hammered Atletico at the Emirates Stadium, as Mikel Arteta’s side made it three straight wins all with clean sheets in Europe this season. All the goals came in the second half, with Gabriel putting them ahead and Gabriel Martinelli getting the second before Viktor Gyokeres struck twice to end a run of seven club appearances without finding the net. “Hopefully it’s the start of some beautiful sequence now,” said Arteta of the Sweden striker.

HAALAND SCORES AGAIN Haaland put City ahead against Villarreal in Spain and Bernardo Silva got their second goal before half-time as Pep Guardiola’s team moved on to seven points from three outings.

Norway superstar Haaland kept up his remarkable record in front of goal this season and he has now found the net 15 times in 11 appearances for City in all competitions. “I see that things are looking good, we are playing a little bit better day



Olympiakos’ Portuguese midfielder Daniel Podence (L) and Barcelona’s Spanish defender #24 Eric Garcia go for a header during the Uefa Champions League league phase match. — AFP

after day and that’s a good sign,” Guardiola told broadcaster Movistar.

Felix Nmecha hit a brace as Borussia Dortmund won 4-2 away to FC Copenhagen, with Ramy Bensebaini converting a penalty and Fabio Silva also scoring. Waldemar Anton’s own goal had brought the Danes back level at one point in the first half, while Viktor Dadason got their other goal late on. They are yet to win in the league phase.

Beaten at home by PSG last time out, Barcelona bounced back to thump Olympiacos 6-1 at Montjuic as Fermin Lopez

starred with a hat-trick.

Lamine Yamal got his name on the scoresheet with a penalty and Marcus Rashford scored twice, with Ayoub El Kaabi’s spot-kick scant consolation for the Greeks.

Newcastle United got their second straight win in the competition by easing to a 3-0 victory against Benfica at St James’ Park.

Anthony Gordon got the opener and Harvey Barnes emerged from the bench to score twice in the second half.

PSV claimed a stunning 6-2 home win against Italian champions Napoli. — AFP

Oman U20s step up preparation with two friendlies against Iraq

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

The Oman national U20 football team continues its intensive preparation programme within its ongoing internal training camp in Muscat Governorate, which began on October 19 and will run until October 29. The camp is supervised by the technical staff led by national coach Hamad al Azzani and his assistants, as part of a comprehensive plan to prepare the team for upcoming regional competitions, most notably the West Asian U19 Championship, for which the organising committee has yet to confirm the date and venue.

The Young Reds will play their first friendly match against the Iraqi national youth team next Saturday

at 6:15 pm at Seeb Sports Stadium, and will face Iraq again in a second friendly at the same venue and time next Tuesday.

These two friendlies aim to assess the players’ physical and technical levels, test tactical formations, and give as many players as possible the opportunity to participate and gain match experience.

Over the past few days, the team has conducted several training sessions at Seeb Sports Stadium, during which the coaching staff, led by Al Azzani, evaluated players’ fitness and skill levels while applying tactical drills and playing patterns.

The current 26-player squad for the camp includes Moamin al Sooli (Al Wahda Club – UAE), Haitham Bait Khuraif (Dhofar Club), Husam al Naabi, Ahmed al Omrani, Ahmed



The Young Reds will play their first friendly match against the Iraqi national youth team next Saturday at 6:15 pm at Seeb Sports Stadium.

al Rawahi, Al Hassan al Qasmi, Fahad al Mashaykhi, Ibrahim al Shamsi, and Ziyad al Furaji (Al Amerat Club); Khalid al Qutaiti (Al Khabourah Club); Fahad Bait Rabee, Mohammed Amer Jaid, and Hazzah Bait Salim (Al Nasr Club); Ziyad Swailem (Taqah Club); Hassan al Hinai (Bahla Club); Yousef al Farsi (Saham Club); Wubran al Saadi, Al Waleed al Buraiddi, and Tamim al Buraiki (Al Suwaiq Club); Anas al Sabqi (Dima W’attayeen Club); Basil Mubarak (Fanja Club); Ali al Alawi and Sulaiman al Kharousi (Al Seeb Club); Abdulaziz al Manwari (Al Musannah Club); Said al Amri (Salalah Club); and Firas Awlad Thani (Bausher Club).

Both friendly matches are expected to feature a large rotation of players from the starting

and reserve line ups, allowing everyone to gain match rhythm and international exposure. The Iraqi team is regarded as one of the strongest sides in the region, boasting a group of highly skilled talents.

A strong sense of motivation prevails in the camp, with players showing great commitment to the technical staff’s instructions. The Oman Football Association continues to provide full administrative and logistical support to ensure the success of the current preparation phase, paving the way for the youth team to enter its upcoming competitions with confidence and ambition to achieve positive results that reflect the ongoing development of Omani football at the youth level.

YOUNG OMANI SAILORS EARN 12 MEDALS AT MUSANNAH RACE WEEK 2025



ILCA 7 overall winners.



Optimist Race team winners.

OMANI sailors dominated on home waters at the 14th edition of Musannah Race Week, winning 12 medals after a week of high-level sailing. Raced in the spirit of friendship and sailed in impeccable conditions, Musannah Race Week brought together over 120 young sailors and coaches from eight nations, highlighting the depth of talent across Oman and the wider region.

The closing ceremony and prize-giving was attended by Guest of Honour, Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education.

Prizes were awarded for the top three in the Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7 and Hansa 303, as well as the Optimist Junior category and the winning Optimist team, as well as overall and girls competition winners in ILCA 4 and ILCA 6.

Oman's Hussain al Jabri won the ILCA 7 overall competition after leading all week. It was an all-Omani podium as Ali al Saadi claimed silver and Al Salim al Hamdani took bronze.

Omani sailors won gold, silver and bronze in the Hansa 303 competition as



ILCA 4 Girls winners.

well, with the crew of Malik al Qartubi and Ahmed Zaal Nabout taking first place on the final day ahead of Zahir al Atabi and Abdulrahman al Hamdani who had enjoyed a strong start to the week. Hassan al Lawati and Adil al Siyabi sailed consistently throughout the races and ended the competition in third to take the bronze medal.

Al Moatsem al Farsi won gold in the ILCA 6 overall competition as a result of a series of perfect days on the water. He led all week and extended his

lead going into the final day to ensure victory. Mohammed al Hammadi of the UAE was second and Jihad al Hasani from Oman finished third.

The ILCA 6 girls overall competition was won by Amina Shah of Kuwait, ahead of Ibtisam al Salmi from Oman in second.

Sailors from the UAE took gold in the ILCA 4 overall and ILCA 4 girls overall. Abdulla al Zoubaidi had led all week and sailed to victory on the final day. Oman's Tamin al Balushi finished second to win silver and teammate Abdulatif al Qasimi ended the week in third for the bronze medal.

Mawra al Hammadi won the ILCA 4 girls competition ahead of UAE teammate Al Yazia al Hammadi in second. Mahi Verma from India won the bronze.

SINGAPORE SHINE

The Optimist competition was dominated by Singapore, winning all three prizes. Anya Zahedi won gold in both junior overall and girls overall categories. Jean-Luc Hervey from the UAE finished third overall and second in the junior category with teammate Khalifa al Romaithi in third. Yuxuan

Oman's Hussain al Jabri won the ILCA 7 overall competition after leading all week. It was an all-Omani podium as Ali al Saadi claimed silver and Al Salim al Hamdani took bronze. Omani sailors won gold, silver and bronze in the Hansa 303 competition as well, with the crew of Malik al Qartubi and Ahmed Zaal Nabout taking first place.

Li of China finished second in both overall and girls, and Shreya Krishna Lakshminarayanan moved up to third in the girls category.

By winning gold in both categories, Singapore claimed team gold ahead of Oman in second and the UAE in third.

“As we conclude the 14th edition of Musannah Race Week 2025, we take pride in the remarkable performances of our young sailors whose dedication and sportsmanship reflect the spirit of Oman Sail,” said Dr Khamis Al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail. “This event has become a global platform for nurturing future sailing talent, promoting inclusion, and highlighting Oman's position as a leading destination for marine sports and sustainable adventure tourism. Our success is built on strong partnerships, particularly with Asyad Group, and on our shared commitment to youth empowerment, environmental stewardship, and the goals of Oman Vision 2040.”

Essam al Sheibany, VP Sustainability at Asyad Group, said: “Our partnership with Oman Sail as the Main Sponsor of the 14th edition of Musannah Race Week reflects Asyad Group’s commitment to creating long-term sustainable impact where economic growth, community development, and environmental responsibility go hand in hand. This initiative embodies our belief that investing in youth is investing in the nation’s future by equipping them with the confidence, discipline, and leadership needed to navigate tomorrow’s opportunities.

Al Sheibany added: "Through initiatives like Musannah Race Week, we reaffirm our role as a national enabler driving progress across industries and generations. It is about empowering young Omanis today to become the innovators and change-makers who will define the nation's maritime and sustainable future."

Musannah Race Week 2025 was supported by title partner ASYAD, Gold partner QNB Oman, bronze partners Barceló Musannah Resort, Mazoon Dairy, Tanuf Water and Visit Oman.

Royal Cavalry beat Qatar Club in polo



The Royal Cavalry Polo Team secured a thrilling 4-3 victory over the Qatar Polo Club.



During the award presentation.

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

The Royal Cavalry Polo Team secured a thrilling 4-3 victory over the Qatar Polo Club in a friendly encounter held at the Royal Cavalry Polo Complex in Al Safnat. The match took place as part of the joint training camp between the two sides in preparation for upcoming regional and international tournaments.

The match was held under the auspices of Eng Hilal bin Mohammed al Waeli, Head of Horse, Camel and Royal Gardens Affairs at the Royal Court Affairs, and attended by Colonel Ahmed bin Khalfan al Lamki, Acting Director-General of the Royal Cavalry and Fouad al Mudahka, Director-General of the Qatar Polo Club, along with several equestrian enthusiasts and polo fans.

The game featured four competitive chukkas, with Sameer al Rahbi scoring twice in the opening period to give the Royal Cavalry an early lead.

Qatar Polo Club responded strongly in the second chukka, equalising through Ahmed al Badi and Saleh al Marri.

The momentum shifted again in the third chukka when Mazen al Zadjali capitalised on a swift counterattack to make it 3-2, before extending the lead with a brilliant goal early in the final chukka. Despite a late effort from Badr al Marri, who netted Qatar's third goal, the Royal Cavalry held firm to claim a well-deserved 4-3 victory.

Between the chukkas, spectators were treated to a special equestrian showcase featuring presentations of pure Omani horse breeds, followed

by traditional riding performances, including Al Tahwirib and horse sleeping displays unique disciplines that highlight Oman's rich equestrian heritage.

This victory continues the Royal Cavalry's string of successes in international polo, the team notably captured the 2023 International Polo Championship in France and finished runner up at the 2024 Doha Open, reinforcing its growing presence and competitive excellence on the regional and global stage.

The Royal Cavalry Polo Team will continue its preparation programme for upcoming international tournaments, aiming to further strengthen Oman's position in global equestrian sports and uphold the Sultanate's proud tradition of horsemanship and sporting achievement.



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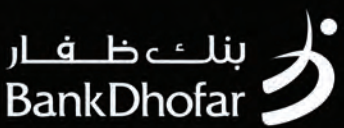


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OMIFCO owns and operates a major ammonia and urea fertiliser production plant at Sur.

REPORT: OMIFCO UNDERUTILISED CSR BUDGET

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

Oman’s State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority reported that Oman India Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO) did not utilise all funds allocated to its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme during 2019–2022. Projects approved totalled RO 11.5 million, about 55% of the CSR allocation for the period, indicating unspent amounts.

The brief lists a CSR allocation figure of RO 20.9 million alongside this section.

OMIFCO is a joint venture between the governments of Oman and India that produces and exports ammonia and urea fertilisers from its plant in Sur.

According to the Authority’s recently published Community Brief 2024, the company had approved additional projects of roughly RO 5 million but says it is working to utilise the remaining allocations and implement agreed projects on an approved timeline.

Auditors also noted projects executed outside the CSR policy’s scope during 2019–2022, valued at RO 537,000.

OMIFCO said it would align with the Authority’s recommendations, limiting support to projects that fit its CSR policy and coordinating with relevant government entities.

For 2022, the Authority said CSR funds were not transferred to the Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) in line with a Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion decision requiring at least 20% of CSR budgets to go to OCO; RO 1.2 million (11%) was transferred instead.

The brief records that the due amounts were subsequently transferred to OCO.

OQEP and Petronas forge pact in upstream energy

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 22

Exploration and Production New Ventures LLC (OQEP), a wholly owned subsidiary of OQ Exploration and Production SAOG, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Petronas Carigali International Ventures Sdn Bhd (PCIV), a subsidiary of Petronas, marking the start of a potential strategic collaboration in the global upstream oil and gas sector.

The MoU was signed at OQEP’s headquarters in Muscat by Mahmoud al Hashmi, Acting Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operations Officer of OQEP; and Mohd Redhani bin Abdul Rahman, Vice President of International Assets at Petronas Upstream.

The agreement sets a framework for both parties to jointly explore upstream exploration and production opportunities worldwide. The collaboration reflects



The MoU was signed by Mahmoud al Hashmi, Acting Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operations Officer of OQEP; and Mohd Redhani bin Abdul Rahman, Vice President of International Assets at Petronas Upstream.

the shared ambition of OQEP and PCIV to strengthen their international presence and generate long-term value through strategic cooperation and alignment.

“This MoU represents a meaningful step towards expanding OQEP’s international footprint through

strategic partnerships”, said Mahmoud al Hashmi, Acting CEO and COO of OQEP. “Petronas brings a wealth of experience and technical depth and we look forward to exploring synergies that can unlock new value and drive sustainable growth across key markets”.

Through the partnership, OQEP and PCIV will leverage their combined technical capabilities, operational excellence and innovative approaches to capture new growth opportunities and deliver reliable, sustainable energy solutions in international markets.

“We are pleased to formalise this collaboration with OQEP, a partner that shares our commitment to innovation and operational excellence”, said Mohd Redhani bin Abdul Rahman, Vice President of International Assets, Petronas Upstream. “Together, we aim to pursue impactful opportunities that contribute to the energy transition and create long-term value for our stakeholders”.

The MoU underscores both companies’ shared commitment to building strategic partnerships that advance their global growth ambitions while supporting the continued evolution of the international energy landscape.

NON-OIL EXPORTS UP 9.4% BY AUGUST 2025

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

Oman’s non-oil exports increased by 9.4% from January to August 2025 compared to the same period last year, reaching a total value of RO 4.4 billion, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Electrical machinery and equipment recorded the sharpest growth among non-oil products, rising by 195.5% to RO 429 million, up from RO 145 million in 2024.

Other manufactured goods,

including mechanical parts and consumer products, increased by 12.1% to RO 757 million.

Products of chemical industries rose by 10.2% to RO 561 million, followed by base metals and their articles, which climbed 3.3% to RO 912 million.

Plastics and rubber products were stable at RO 636 million, showing a 0.4% increase. Mineral products declined by 5.8% to RO 1.13 billion.

Oil and gas exports declined by 16.8%, totalling RO 9.8 billion. Crude oil fell by 16.6% to RO 5.7 billion, refined oil decreased by

17.1% to RO 2.7 billion and liquefied natural gas dropped by 17.2% to RO 1.4 billion.

Re-exports dipped slightly by 0.8% to RO 1.1 billion, while total merchandise exports stood at RO 15.3 billion, reflecting a 9.5% overall decrease. Imports rose 5.6% to RO 11.4 billion, driven by transport equipment and electrical machinery.

Despite weaker oil performance, Oman maintained a trade surplus of RO 3.9 billion, supported by the continued expansion of non-oil sectors and diversification efforts under Oman Vision 2040.

Oman calls for stronger global cooperation at UNCTAD Conference

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman took part in the 16th Ministerial Conference of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva, held under the theme “Shaping the Future: Driving Economic Transformation for Equitable, Inclusive and Sustainable Development”.

Oman’s delegation was led by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, accompanied by Ambassador Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations, other international organisations in Geneva and senior officials from the ministries of Commerce and Foreign Affairs.

UNCTAD’s Ministerial Conference, convened every four years, serves as the organisation’s top decision-making body, drawing participation from heads of state, ministers, international organisations and private sector representatives. The



Oman’s delegation was led by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, accompanied by Ambassador Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations.

discussions focus on global economic challenges faced by developing and least-developed countries, shaping UNCTAD’s strategic road map for the next four years.

Al Yousef stressed the importance of international cooperation in an era of economic transformation, highlighting the role of trade, investment and technology as

drivers of inclusive and sustainable growth. He noted that Oman Vision 2040 provides a clear framework for national economic diversification, focusing on sectors such as industry, logistics, renewable energy and the digital economy.

The minister emphasised that the conference outcomes should strengthen

developing economies through equitable financing and technical assistance, enabling them to achieve their sustainable development goals. He also reaffirmed Oman’s commitment to deepening cooperation with UNCTAD in areas of capacity-building, innovation, and policy development.

Ambassador Al Khanjari underlined that the conference offers a vital platform for reinforcing multilateral collaboration to address global challenges in a spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility.

On the sidelines, Al Yousef held bilateral meetings with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Directors-General of the WTO and WIPO; and the President of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), exploring avenues for enhanced technical cooperation. He also met with his counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Türkiye, Vietnam and Bhutan, discussing ways to strengthen economic ties and partnerships. — ONA

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The Braille Debit Card offers a wide range of benefits for visually impaired customers.

NEW BRAILLE DEBIT CARD REINFORCES BANKDHOFAR’S COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVITY

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has announced the launch of its new Braille Debit Card, available across all branches in the Sultanate of Oman, underscoring the Bank’s strong commitment to inclusivity, accessibility and customer-centric innovation.

The new card is designed to ensure that customers with visual impairments can enjoy equal access to financial services, reinforcing BankDhofar’s promise to create a banking environment that is welcoming and empowering for everyone. The Braille Debit Card reflects the Bank’s core value of putting people first while delivering solutions that are both innovative and accessible.

The Braille Debit Card offers a wide range of benefits for visually impaired customers. It enables greater financial independence by allowing users to read important details such as card numbers, CVV and expiry dates by touch, eliminating the need for third-party assistance and helping preserve privacy and dignity. The tactile features make it easier to identify the card, insert it correctly in ATMs and POS machines, and reduce errors. It also enhances security by minimizing the need to share sensitive information with others, while ensuring safer and faster transactions.

Beyond convenience, the initiative reflects BankDhofar’s commitment to inclusion and social responsibility. It aligns with Oman’s national goals to expand access for persons with disabilities, supports customer equality and strengthens compliance with global best practices on accessibility. By empowering visually impaired customers with tools comparable to those used by others, the Braille Debit Card promotes self-confidence, equality and broader participation in financial and social life.

OMAN AIR WELCOMES NEW BOEING 737 IN ONEWORLD LIVERY

MUSCAT: Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, launched a new chapter in its global journey with the arrival of its newest Boeing 737, bearing the distinctive colours of the Oneworld Alliance. This step embodies its growing international standing and its vision to enhance air connectivity around the world.

The arrival of the new Boeing 737, in the Alliance’s livery, is a visual expression of this partnership, which combines the efficiency of global air connectivity with the spirit of Omani creativity



that soars high into the horizons without borders.

Oman Air launched a unique artistic collaboration between Omani artists Al Warith al Hosni and Afrah al Maamari, in an initiative that reimagines aviation from a creative artistic perspective.

This experience highlighted how art can express movement, imagination and the beauty of human connection through the vision of a new generation of Omani creators.

The artists’ works were showcased across Oman Air’s digital platforms to celebrate the arrival of the new aircraft and highlight emerging national talents whose creativity expresses the authenticity of Omani art. Oman Air officially joined the Oneworld alliance in June 2025, becoming the 15th member of a global network of more than 900 destinations worldwide.

Sohar Intl sponsors Oman Investment 2025 Forum

REINFORCING its role as a strategic enabler of Oman’s global investment ambitions, Sohar International proudly sponsored the “Omani Investment 2025” Forum held yesterday in London, UK.

Organised by the Sultanate of Oman through the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the Foreign Ministry, the forum served as a high-level platform to deepen financial and economic partnerships with the UK highlight Oman’s diverse investment opportunities and bolster investor confidence in the nation’s dynamic and resilient economy.

The Omani delegation at the “Omani Investment 2025” Forum comprised senior leaders from key government and financial institutions, highlighting the Sultanate of Oman’s strategic emphasis on investment and economic growth.

Their presence reaffirmed Oman’s commitment to attracting investment, driving economic diversification and deepening collaboration with international partners. Representing Sohar International at the forum were Abdulwahid bin Mohamed



The forum served as a high-level platform to deepen financial and economic partnerships with the United Kingdom.

al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer; Aziz al Jahdhami, Chief International Banking Officer; and Abbas bin Hassan al Lawati, Senior Executive Vice President & Head of Investment Banking, FIG and International Operations.

Highlighting Oman’s changing economic landscape, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “Oman’s economic transformation over the past five years is a testament to the Sultanate of Oman’s resilience and strategic vision, with public debt reduced from 68% of GDP

in 2020 to 34% in 2024.

The Sultanate of Oman’s global rankings — 5th in safety, 1st in Asia, 4th in quality of life and 21st as a destination for investment and business — underscore its stability and attractiveness as a strategic investment hub. Sohar International’s contribution to the Omani Investment 2025 Forum reflects our commitment to advancing Oman’s position on the global stage, while creating new avenues for both local and international investors.

As a strategic partner to the national economy, we remain dedicated to fostering

sustainable growth, supporting the private sector and delivering long-term value to investors and the wider community”.

During the forum, the Omani government presented its reform policies and economic diversification initiatives aimed at strengthening economic stability, stimulating private sector growth, and attracting foreign investment. National debt instruments and the role of the financial sector in supporting sustainable growth were also emphasised, highlighting Oman’s robust financial infrastructure and proactive policy environment.

Meethaq strengthens presence at 2nd Haj and Umrah Exhibition

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, proudly announces its participation in the second Haj and Umrah Exhibition organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The event takes place from October 22 -24, 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). At this significant event, Meethaq showcases a wide range of Sharia-compliant services tailored for pilgrims and Umrah travellers, including Islamic finance products, takaful solutions, card services, payment options and saving plans.

All attendees have the opportunity to learn about Meethaq’s Haj and Umrah packages designed to meet the unique needs of pilgrims and Umrah travellers while adhering to Islamic principles.

During the exhibition, Meethaq Islamic Banking and the Ministry



Meethaq Islamic Banking and Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs signed an MoU reaffirming Meethaq’s commitment to supporting pilgrims and Umrah travellers.

signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) reaffirming Meethaq’s commitment to supporting pilgrims and Umrah travellers with a full suite of Sharia-compliant financial solutions. The

MoU further strengthen Meethaq’s successful partnership with the Ministry in preparation for the upcoming Haj season.

The MoU was signed by Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager of Meethaq Corporate Banking and Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The second edition of the Haj and Umrah Exhibition serves as an effective platform uniting service providers from across the Haj and Umrah sectors within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

It highlights the diversity of services available to pilgrims through workshops and awareness sessions, fostering collaboration among stakeholders and enriching the knowledge base across historical, cultural and religious

dimensions.

During the three-day event, visitors have the opportunity to interact with Meethaq team and gain insights into the services offered, including modern digital payment solutions that enhance customer experiences and streamline transactions.

On this occasion, Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager of Meethaq Corporate Banking, expressed pride in taking part in this premier gathering of Haj service providers in Oman.

He emphasises Meethaq’s commitment to promoting Islamic banking and its contributions to the field of Islamic finance. Ali al Lawati invites attendees to visit Meethaq pavilion to explore the offerings and discover new opportunities for collaboration in service provision for Haj and Umrah.

SHORTTAKES



“Consumer cooperatives are a strong pillar in supporting the national economy”: OEA

OEA SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS ROLE OF COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN OMAN

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, OCT 22

THE 28th Economic Council seminar was conducted by the Oman Economic Association (OEA) on October 21, 2025, with deliberations focusing on the topic, “Cooperative Societies: Reality and Aspirations”.

Dr Khalid bin Said al Amri, Chairman of the Oman Economic Association, spoke about the global impact of cooperatives. “From humble origins in 18th-century England with the Rochdale Pioneers, today there are some three million cooperatives around the world with over a billion members. 300 of the world’s biggest cooperatives have \$2.2 trillion in sales and provide over 100 million jobs, making them larger than many multinational corporations”.

Dr Al Amri emphasised that cooperatives are not only an economic force but also a social one, offering opportunities to local communities while promoting global economic stability.

“Consumer cooperatives are a strong pillar in supporting the national economy”, said Abdullah bin Mohammed al Abri, member of the Oman Economic Association.

“They greatly contribute to local value addition and also provide several local producers with an outlet to present their products on a larger scale. Beyond their contribution to the economy, such cooperatives are people-owned initiatives — initiated by the people and for the people — which ensures that the spent money is kept within the nation, contributing further to local growth”.

Forum to boost Oman and Lebanon economic ties

THE Omani-Lebanese Economic Forum will be held from October 27-29 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, with the participation of senior officials, business leaders and investors from both countries.

The event aims to strengthen economic relations and expand areas of trade, industrial and investment cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Lebanon.

The forum is jointly hosted by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) and the Ministry of Economy and Trade in Lebanon, in cooperation with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Lebanon (FCCIAL), with the participation of a number of investment institutions and industrial and service companies from both sides.

Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), noted that the event embodies



SHAIKH FAISAL BIN ABDULLAH AL RAWAS
Chairman of the Board of Directors at the OCCI.



KHALID BIN HAMED AL KHARUSI
Director General for Investment Promotion.

the aspirations of both sides for a deeper economic partnership based on the exchange of expertise and the development of joint investments.

He explained that the forum and exhibition present an opportunity to activate the role of the private sector in both countries and to open new channels for trade, industrial and service cooperation, thereby contributing to diversifying the national economy and enhancing its competitiveness.

Khalid bin Hamed al Kharusi, Director General for Investment Promotion at the MoCIIP, said that B2B meetings to be held between Omani and Lebanese business people on the sidelines of the forum represent a genuine opportunity to build long-term trade and investment partnerships

The opening day of the forum will feature an introductory presentation on investment opportunities in both countries, along with several specialised working sessions, most notably a session titled ‘Prospects for Economic Integration between the

Sultanate of Oman and Lebanon: Towards a Sustainable Industrial, Trade and Investment Partnership’, with the participation of prominent economic leaders. Another discussion session will address the theme of tourism and investment integration between the two countries, with contributions from experts from both the public and private sectors.

On the sidelines of the forum, the Lebanese-Omani Economic and Trade Forum and Exhibition will be inaugurated, showcasing the products and services of more than 100 companies and institutions from both countries in various sectors, including industry, food, tourism and logistics.

According to MoCIIP data, the value of Omani exports to Lebanon reached around RO 5.6 million in 2024, marking a 70 per cent increase compared to 2023.

Omani exports are concentrated in iron products, polyethylene and glass containers, while Lebanese imports include grains, oils, personal care products and paper goods.

OMAN DELEGATION EXPLORES TRADE OPPORTUNITIES AT CANTON FAIR

GUANGZHOU: An Omani trade delegation, led by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is participating in the Canton International Trade Fair in Guangzhou, China, one of the world’s largest trade exhibitions.

The delegation is headed by Eng Hamoud bin Salem al Saadi, OCCI Second Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Al Batinah South Branch, with the participation of Eng Saeed bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Al Batinah North Branch, alongside several Omani entrepreneurs.

Al Saadi said the visit reflects the Chamber’s ongoing efforts to strengthen international trade relations and empower Omani entrepreneurs. “We are committed to building strong partnerships with leading Chinese companies and creating an environment conducive to trade and investment exchange, in line with Oman Vision 2040”, he noted.

Al Abri added that such visits help business owners explore foreign markets, identify investment opportunities and apply global best practices to

strengthen Oman’s private sector. Several participants praised the visit’s value in fostering business ties. Saeed bin Khalfan al Qutaiti, owner of Al Qutaiti Cement Products Factory, said he established promising initial agreements with Chinese firms.

The visit, running from October 17–24, 2025, aims to expand trade cooperation, explore import and investment prospects; and enhance bilateral partnerships. It is expected to lead to new agreements that will boost trade exchange between Oman and China.

OAB drives sustainable growth through innovation and national talent

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 22

OMAN Arab Bank (OAB) has reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable growth, innovation and national talent development as key pillars of its strategy, following a media briefing led by CEO Sulaiman al Harthy at the Bank’s headquarters in Muscat.

During the open dialogue with journalists, Al Harthy outlined the Bank’s strategic priorities and progress, highlighting its continued focus on operational excellence, digital transformation and financial inclusion.

He described the past period as one of consolidation and forward momentum, marked by stronger customer engagement, enhanced efficiency and an expanding suite of innovative banking solutions.

“At Oman Arab Bank, we believe that progress is built on trust,



Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of OAB.

innovation and partnership”, said Al Harthy. “Our initiatives are not only aimed at achieving sustainable financial performance but also at empowering our shareholders, customers, employees and communities.

This open dialogue embodies our commitment to transparency and

engagement with the public, whom we consider integral to our success”.

The CEO emphasised that OAB’s strategy remains closely aligned with Oman Vision 2040, focusing on strengthening digital capabilities, nurturing local talent and maintaining high standards of governance and risk management.

He added that despite a dynamic economic environment, the Bank continues to maintain positive performance momentum while supporting national development priorities.

OAB’s achievements in recent months reflect this forward-looking approach. The Bank enhanced its capital position to support future growth initiatives and solidified its role as a key financial partner in projects that advance Oman’s economic diversification.

It has also expanded its support for major industries, including food security, energy, manufacturing

and tourism, while continuing to empower small and medium enterprises through accessible financing and digital banking tools.

The Bank’s Tumouhi programme, dedicated to nurturing entrepreneurs and SMEs, remains a cornerstone of its community impact.

The initiative provides business owners with access to funding, mentorship and tailored digital solutions, reinforcing OAB’s contribution to private sector growth and job creation.

On the retail front, OAB has introduced a range of new consumer and SME propositions aimed at improving customer experience and expanding access to finance.

These include innovative personal and microloan products, tailored financial packages for high-net-worth clients and new partnership offerings with leading institutions such as Oman Housing Bank.

Digital transformation continues to be one of OAB’s defining strengths. The Bank recently rolled out new mobile and online banking platforms to deliver secure, seamless and user-friendly services to individuals and businesses.

The introduction of SoftPOS, a mobile-based payment acceptance tool, empowers merchants to receive card payments directly through their smartphones, supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s transition towards a cashless economy.

OAB has also been an active supporter of national digital initiatives, including the domestic card scheme Maal, developed under the guidance of the Central Bank of Oman. Currently in its pilot phase within OAB’s point-of-sale network, Maal aims to strengthen local value creation and enhance payment system independence in line with the country’s financial sector modernisation goals.

TOP SPOT

China now Germany’s top trading partner



China overtook the US as Germany’s largest trading partner in the first eight months of 2025, regaining the top spot as higher tariffs weighed on German exports to the United States, preliminary data from the German statistics office showed.

German imports and exports with China totalled 163.4 billion euros (\$190.7 billion) from January to August, while trade with the US amounted to 162.8 billion euros, according to Reuters calculations. — Reuters

PUSHED HIGHER

Oil rises 2% on trade talk optimism



Oil prices pushed higher for a second day on Wednesday, rising by about 2%, buoyed by hopes of progress of a US trade deal with China and India. Brent crude futures rose \$62.42 a barrel, while Light crude futures to \$58.31.

“Oil prices climbed after reports suggested the US and India are close to finalising a trade deal that could see India gradually cut imports of Russian crude”, MUFG analyst Soojin Kim said. — Reuters

IMMINENT INVESTIGATION

Trump plans probe into global drug pricing



President Donald Trump’s administration is preparing a new probe into drug pricing practices among US trading partners, a move that would lay the ground for fresh tariffs, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday.

The imminent investigation would consider whether United States trading partners are underpaying for drugs, the report said, adding that the investigation would come under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. — Reuters

OPINION

Why we need a national risk management strategy



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

LOCAL media outlets sometimes raise questions about the necessity of a national risk management strategy. Indeed, this topic is important because it highlights a fundamental element of any economy that strives for sustainability and resilience in the face of shocks. Over the past five decades, the national economy has faced several shocks resulting from sudden declines in global oil prices, financial and climate crises; and increased competition among countries due to shifting political climates.

The Sultanate of Oman's s economy remains heavily dependent on oil — a traditional feature in the region — and continues to face significant challenges in diversifying. This has led many stakeholders to ask whether there is a clear national strategy for risk management within economic policies. Risks are numerous in any rentier state that relies on oil for its financial and economic foundations, underscoring the need for a unified and integrated strategy to address future risks.

In this regard, the Sultanate of Oman has launched numerous initiatives and programmes, most notably the Fiscal Balance Plan (2020–2024), which serves as a framework for financial risk management.

The plan aims to reduce dependence on oil, control public spending, enhance the

efficiency of non-oil revenues and gradually reduce the deficit and public debt. It also includes mechanisms for monitoring short- and medium-term financial risks, such as revenue forecasts based on oil price scenarios, early warning indicators for deficits and debt; and contingency plans for external shocks.

The Central Bank of Oman plays a vital role in strengthening monetary and supervisory policies to monitor inflation risks and global volatility, maintain financial stability and issue annual financial stability reports that analyse potential systemic risks to the economy. In addition, the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority contributes significantly to oversight and the fight against corruption through its monitoring of public funds.

Meanwhile, the government continues to integrate the concepts of economic, environmental and technological risk management across institutions by emphasising economic diversification, financial sustainability and investment in innovation and institutional resilience. Through Oman Vision 2040, it seeks to enhance the nation's capacity to anticipate shocks, strengthen institutional preparedness for crises, develop governance and financial oversight systems; and detect operational risks and mismanagement. It also aims to combat corruption and misuse of public

In this regard, the Sultanate of Oman has launched numerous initiatives and programmes, most notably the Fiscal Balance Plan (2020–2024), which serves as a framework for financial risk management. The plan aims to reduce dependence on oil, control public spending, enhance the efficiency of non-oil revenues and gradually reduce the deficit and public debt.

resources in both government entities and publicly listed companies.

Furthermore, the government is advancing efforts to develop a unified official document entitled the “National Strategy for Economic Risk Management”. It is employing risk management methodologies to identify and address economic challenges, mitigate the negative effects of crises and maintain relative stability.

These efforts address key issues such as inflation, price fluctuations, exchange rate instability, economic recessions, policy shifts, supply chain disruptions and declining purchasing power.

At the same time, the government is developing risk response strategies that include eliminating high-risk activities, diversifying income sources, forming insurance and risk-sharing partnerships; and establishing emergency and resilience plans.

Building financial reserves through contingency funds and developing flexible business models capable of adapting to change are also key components.

In general, risk management methodologies provide a structured framework for tackling economic challenges, mitigating their impact and enhancing the resilience of individuals and institutions.

They are not instant solutions, but rather tools for proactive planning and intelligent adaptation to change.

JAPAN’S NEW PM
FACES \$550 BILLION
US FUNDING
CONUNDRUM

HUDSON LOCKETT

Sanae Takaichi wants to spend a lot of money on Japan, but she also needs to sort out some hefty financial obligations to the United States. The fiscally expansionary prime minister, who took office on Tuesday, heads into supplementary budget negotiations under pressure to secure backing for \$550 billion her predecessor Shigeru Ishiba pledged to invest in US projects as part of his tariff deal with the White House.

The entire amount has to be spent before her US counterpart Donald Trump's term ends in January 2029. Failure to deliver would enable the American president to raise tariffs on Japanese goods back up from the 15% level Ishiba secured.

on a mix of public and private funding. Given Takaichi's desire to use fiscal spending to boost growth, she's likely to lean on the latter to avoid immediate budgetary constraints.

Right now, though, the path for government funding is more fully sketched out. Last month the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC), an import-export bank owned by the government, announced a dedicated fund for US projects.

Ryosei Akazawa, Ishiba's chief trade negotiator, said in July he expected JBIC to cover a third of the total via loans and suggested in September that half of this \$183 billion could be paid for using investment proceeds from Japan's \$1.3 trillion in foreign reserve holdings.

The other half could be funded by debt issuance from JBIC or the finance ministry.

That leaves another \$367 billion for Takaichi to drum up, which is where private lenders and Nippon Export Investment Insurance (NEXI) can come in. NEXI, whose involvement was flagged by the finance ministry alongside JBIC, provides insurance for loans and other transactions in risky foreign markets.

The state-owned insurer could act as guarantor for Japanese commercial bank loans to US projects, though it's not clear what share of lending might be covered. Both options raise questions about Japan's credit profile. — Reuters

The entire amount has to be spent before her US counterpart Donald Trump's term ends in January 2029. Failure to deliver would, per a memorandum of understanding signed by both sides in September, enable the American president to raise tariffs on Japanese goods back up from the 15% level Ishiba secured. Fortunately, his successor has inherited a flexible policy framework that can potentially draw

LSEG strikes deal with
Databricks for AI tools

IN a bid to bring more AI tools to its customers the London Stock Exchange Group has struck a deal with software company Databricks. Finance workers will be able to add AI agents to their investment analytics, risk management and trading tools, the companies said in a statement.

Traders could cash in on enhanced backtesting, portfolio optimisation, transaction cost analysis, predictive forecasting and algorithmic trading. In addition, AI bots could improve how they check for credit and counterparty risk, LSEG and Databricks said.

Group head of analytics and AI at LSEG, Emily Prince, said the deal would “unlock new levels of intelligence, efficiency and compliance” for financial institutions.

San Francisco-based Databricks platform is used by around 20,000 organisations worldwide, the firms said. LSEG signed a landmark decade-long deal with Microsoft in December 2022, heralding a new era of data, analytics and cloud infrastructure at the group. It was already transitioning into a more financial information led company, primarily through its bumper purchase of Refinitiv the previous year.

In February 2025, LSEG said AI-enhanced products arising from the Microsoft deal would be ready later in the year amidst a “strong pipeline” of interest.

Meanwhile LSEG has dropped imagery of its eponymous bourse from group-wide branding as the data and analytics provider's reliance on equities trading continues to shrink.

Last month, the Group changed the logo on its website, removing a blue coat of arms resembling that of the London Stock Exchange, as well as the bourse's motto ‘dictum meum pactum’ — Latin for ‘my word is my bond’.

The new design features only LSEG's initials with no emblem. The LSE's coal of arms and motto still appear on the exchange's dedicated website, where it is



Last month, the Group changed the logo on its website, removing a blue coat of arms resembling that of the London Stock Exchange, as well as the bourse's motto ‘dictum meum pactum’ — Latin for ‘my word is my bond’.



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

The 224-year-old exchange received its coat of arms and motto in 1923 from the College of Arms, a royal corporation that grants such emblems in Britain. Its Latin motto is meant to reflect the importance of trust in the financial marketplace.

referred to as “An LSEG business”. “The London Stock Exchange's iconic crest will remain part of the LSE's logo.

We have updated LSEG's brand and have streamlined our logo to improve its legibility on digital platforms”, a spokesperson for LSEG said in a statement.

The 224-year-old exchange received its coat of arms and motto in 1923 from the College of Arms, a royal corporation that grants such emblems in Britain. Its Latin motto is meant to reflect the importance of trust in the financial marketplace.

The coat of arms has two crown-wearing griffins, a golden lion and a shield of a red cross and sword. LSEG's version of the emblem will remain on buildings and event spaces, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Exchanging businesses: Since acquiring data and analytics firm Refinitiv for \$27 billion in 2021, equities trading has become a significantly smaller part of LSEG's business. The group's data and analytics division has grown to comprise almost half of its revenue.

Meanwhile, its equities unit — includes the LSE — makes up less than 5 per cent.

Under American chief executive David Schwimmer, who joined from Goldman Sachs in 2018, LSEG has transformed into a more Global company with around 27,000 staff across 65 countries.

The strategy had driven a surge in its stock price and given LSEG a £42.6 billion market capitalisation, although the FTSE 100 firm's shares have slumped in recent months amidst concerns overs its flagship Workspace platform, a software system for financial workers.

LSEG has already shifted its marketing to reflect its broader international presence and additional business lines over the last few years. The LSE's shrinking contribution to the group's earnings has led some investors and market participants to suggest LSEG should sell or spin off the exchange.

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ART/LIFE

T H E A T R E F O R T H O U G H T

A WINDOW INTO THE UNDERTOW OF POWER_{>20}

CHANGING WORLD

It's okay to be an 'average' person



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
The writer is a Senior Editor at the Observer

If I were to ask you right now, when was the last time you did something that brought you joy without needing to be the best at it, would you have an honest answer? Unfortunately, we are currently living in a society that values excellence and perfection so highly that being 'average' is seen as an insult.

Competition has become so intense that we often focus solely on reaching the top without appreciating the journey or the middle steps along the way. Many of us have given up

hobbies or passions simply because we did not feel we were 'good enough'.

The freedom derived from averageness allows for exploration, trying new experiences and spending time with loved ones without the burden of needing to excel. It encourages participation for intrinsic reasons, such as fun or personal growth

As an observer of social media, I feel it plays a significant role in this, as it showcases millions of people living seemingly extraordinary lives. From perfect report cards to impressive LinkedIn profiles, luxurious vacations, fine dining experiences, dream careers and ideal bodies, the pressure to appear exceptional is

constant. This constant comparison can lead to confusion between self-worth and achievements.

Perhaps it is time to reconsider what it means to be 'average'. Being average does not mean being unworthy; it means being human. Most of us fall into the category of average and that's perfectly normal. True happiness comes from finding contentment and balance in our lives. The daily routine of getting up, working, cooking, caring, loving, worrying, trying, resting and repeating brings a sense of beauty and stability to life.

Embracing imperfection and understanding that our worth is not defined by achievements or recognition is key. You can love your job without aspiring to be the boss, enjoy painting without being a famous artist, or find joy in cooking without being a master chef. It is okay to do things for yourself, find joy in them and take pride in knowing you are not doing them to prove your perfection to the world.

For instance, engaging in an activity like running, even if one is the slowest on the team, can still provide a sense of achievement simply through consistent participation. This mindset extends to creative pursuits, where the act of creation itself, such as writing to process emotions or explore ideas, can be more valuable than the pursuit of an 'exceptional' final product.

The freedom derived from averageness allows for exploration, trying new experiences and spending time with loved ones without the burden of needing to excel. It encourages participation for intrinsic reasons, such as fun or personal growth, rather than for external recognition.

Q U I C K F E A T U R E S



FESTIVAL

A light installation during the Filux Light festival on Paseo de la Reforma Avenue, in Mexico City, Mexico. — **Reuters**



MUSIC

Opera singer Wei Hai-min performs on a raft inside the Zhaishan Tunnel during the tunnel festival in Kinmen, Taiwan. — **Reuters**



POLLUTION

Boys play with a toxic thick layer of white foam choking the polluted Marina beach in Chennai. — **AFP**

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London ‘scream club’ helps young people relieve stress



The scream therapy is a technique to release tension

LONDON: At a London park, dozens of young people gathered, awaiting the starting signal, then screamed at the top of their voices — all in a bid to release tension. So-called scream therapy is a technique that is rapidly growing in popularity on TikTok and has made its way to Britain from the United States.

“It was very therapeutic”, 23-year-old Rebekah Drakes said after screaming at the top of Parliament Hill on Hampstead Heath, in the north of the British capital. She, along with other participants mostly in their 20s, were taking part in a “Scream Club” on Saturday.

“I feel like you don’t realise how much you’re holding in until you can let it all out”, the bartender added.

Mona Sharif organised the event after seeing on TikTok that people were gathering to scream together in the United States.

“I made a TikTok saying that London should do one and from

that video I created a group chat after I gained some traction and views and likes”, she said.

“A thousand people joined the group chat within three days”, she explained.

Sharif counted to three and then everyone let out a roar while filming themselves on their phones, much to the surprise of passersby.

“It’s kind of drawing from, like, group therapy”, she said.

In this case, “people are letting out frustrations that they can’t really talk about”.

Julia Dewit, a 29-year-old teacher, was pleased that so many women took part.

“There is sort of a stigma around women being told to sort of be calm and cool under pressure”, she said.

“I think that nowadays, talking about how we’re feeling and mental health is a lot more prominent than how it was in previous years, which is a really good thing.” — AFP



A boy helps a water buffalo to a bag of feed in Al Mashab near Basra. — AFP

IRAQI farmer Umm Ali has watched her poultry die as salinity levels in the country’s south hit record highs, rendering already scarce water unfit for human consumption and killing livestock.

“We used to drink, wash and cook with water from the river, but now it’s hurting us”, said Umm Ali, 40, who lives in the once watery Al Mashab marshes of southern Iraq’s Basra province.

This season alone, she said brackish water has killed dozens of her ducks and 15 chickens.

“I cried and grieved, I felt as if all my hard work had been wasted”, said the widowed mother of three.

Iraq, a country heavily impacted by climate change, has been ravaged for years by drought and low rainfall.

Declining freshwater flows have raised salt and pollution levels, particularly further south where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers converge before spilling into the Gulf.

“We haven’t seen such high levels of salinity in 89 years”, Iraq’s water ministry spokesman Khaled Shamal said. Last month, salinity levels recorded in central Basra province soared to around 29,000 parts per million compared to 2,600 ppm last year, according to a report from the ministry.

Freshwater should contain less than 1,000 ppm of dissolved salts, while ocean water salinity levels are around 35,000 ppm, according to the US Geological Survey.

Lowest Water Levels

The Tigris and Euphrates converge at Basra’s Shatt Al Arab waterway “laden with pollutants accumulated along their course”, said Hasan al Khateeb, an expert from Iraq’s University of Kufa.

In recent weeks, the Euphrates has seen its lowest water levels in decades and Iraq’s artificial lake reserves are at their lowest in recent history.

Al Khateeb warned that the Shatt Al Arab’s water levels had plummeted and it was failing to hold back the seawater from the Gulf.

Farmer Zulaykha Hashem, 60, said the water in the

IRAQI FARMERS FACE CRISIS AS SALINITY RISES



Spoiled dates are pictured in the farm of Iraqi farmer Zuleikha Hashim Taleb, where crops are suffering from high water salinity, in the village of Al Mashab in the marshes north of Basra in southern Iraq. — AFP

The UN has warned that increased water salinity is destroying palm groves, citrus trees and other crops. Some 170,000 people were displaced in central and southern Iraq due to climate-related factors

area had become very brackish this year, adding that she has to wait for the situation to improve in order to irrigate her crop of pomegranate trees, figs and berries.

According to the United Nations, almost a quarter of women in Basra and nearby provinces work in agriculture.

“We cannot even leave. Where would we go?” Hashem said, in a country where farmers facing drought and rising salinity often find themselves trapped in a cycle of water crisis.

The UN’s International Organisation for Migration, which documents climate-induced displacement in Iraq, has warned that increased water salinity is destroying palm groves, citrus trees and other crops.

As of October last year, some 170,000 people were displaced in central and southern Iraq due to climate-related factors, according to the agency.

Water scarcity pushed

Maryam Salman, who is in her 30s, to leave nearby Missan province for Basra several years ago, hoping her buffalo could enjoy the Shatt Al Arab.

Near her house, correspondents saw three buffalo skeletons on the parched land, with locals saying the animals had died due to lack of water.

Rising salinity is not the only problem now, said Salman, a mother of three children. “Water is not available... neither summer nor winter”, she said.

Fewer Fish

The Tigris and Euphrates originate in Türkiye and Iraqi authorities have repeatedly blamed dams across the border for significantly reducing their flows.

Iraq receives less than 35 per cent of its allocated share of water from the two rivers, according to authorities, in a country with inefficient water management systems after decades of war and neglect.

— AFP

FEATURES



Adapted from Mohamed bin Saif al Rahbi's play *Who Killed Shahryar* and directed by Nooh al Hasani, the play captures the restless pulse of the street and the anguish of those unheard.

A WINDOW
INTO THE
UNDERTOW
OF POWER

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

IN a daring and thought-provoking performance that stripped away illusions and confronted the uneasy bond between authority and the people, the play *The Rose-Coloured Glasses* took centre stage at Azzan bin Qais International School on Monday.

Adapted from Mohamed bin Saif al Rahbi's play *Who Killed Shahryar* and directed by Nooh al Hasani, the play offered an unflinching critique of power, corruption and the struggles of ordinary citizens, capturing the restless pulse of the street and the anguish of those unheard.

The performance was part of the Noor Cultural Forum, a six-day event organised by the Noor Association for the Blind, the first of its kind in Oman. The forum gathers blind artists and intellectuals from 14 Arab countries, including the GCC states, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Algeria, Iraq and Yemen, to showcase their talents in literature, theatre, music and visual arts. From its opening scenes, this version of *The Rose-Coloured Glasses* struck a sharp tone of social inquiry. The dialogue between a merchant and his friend, arguing over inflated prices, quickly revealed the play's investigative voice and inquisitive language. Beneath the humour and sarcasm lay raw frustration with economic injustice and the widening gap between ruler and ruled. The narrative gained momentum in earnest when a poor, disheveled old man emerged as the voice of defiance, a symbol of the people's suppressed courage. Standing before authority, he dared to question oppression and mock the hollow illusion of happiness imposed by the state.

"Why don't you wear rose-coloured glasses?" the policeman demands. "Because I can't afford them", the old man replies, his tone dripping with irony. "Of course, I'm overjoyed by the birth of the king's son!". This exchange crystallised the play's central metaphor: a society forced to view its reality through rose-coloured lenses, to pretend that all is perfect while poverty and injustice spread unchecked. Throughout the performance, the minister emerges



"*The Rose-Coloured Glasses*" exposes power and deception in Oman's first cultural forum for the blind

as a master manipulator, distorting facts and painting false portraits of prosperity. The play's pacing accelerates until it reaches a chilling revelation: the old man, the people's voice of resistance, is in fact the King himself in disguise, wandering among his citizens to witness their suffering firsthand.

But the truth arrives too late. In a tragic final act, the corrupt minister murders the King and crowns the infant prince as heir, symbolising the endless cycle of manipulation and inherited tyranny. The play closes not with resolution, but with a haunting repetition, a system destined to perpetuate its own deceit.

Director Al Hasani approached the politically charged material with bold minimalism. The scenography defied theatrical conventions, the stage reduced

to a stark open space with a single staircase as its centrepiece. A moving chorus of dancers and singers flowed across the stage, transforming from passive spectators into the voice of the people, mirroring the shifting political mood.

The artistic strength of *The Rose-Coloured Glasses* was anchored by a dedicated creative team whose combined effort elevated the performance beyond mere storytelling. Under the general supervision of Tahir al Harassi and with Mohammed al Ruqadi preparing the production, the team demonstrated meticulous attention to thematic and visual detail. The visual tone was shaped by Mahmoud al Balushi and Amjad al Shraiqi, whose work in set design and costume subtly captured the contrast between illusion and decay. Their use of simple yet symbolic props enhanced the play's metaphorical weight. Meanwhile, Noor Al Huda al Battashi's striking makeup transformed the old man's appearance, accentuating his weariness and grit; and added a haunting realism that deepened the audience's emotional connection.

Omani actress Amina Abdulrasool praised *The Rose-Coloured Glasses* as a deeply meaningful and beautifully executed production. She described Mohammed al Rahbi's writing as creative, purposeful and rich with symbolic depth. Abdulrasool commended the visually impaired cast for their exceptional performance, noting that while they lack sight, their inner vision and emotional awareness are remarkably strong.

Dr Said al Siyabi, Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts at Sultan Qaboos University, also noted the effective use of theatrical elements within the play such as lighting, music, costumes and stage movement, particularly the symbolic role of the rose-coloured glasses prop, which conveyed multiple layers of meaning. He concluded by expressing gratitude to all participants, affirming that the performance left a memorable mark on the Omani theatre scene and contributed to expanding the creative boundaries of inclusive performance.

Fundamentally, the play proved to be more than an ordinary performance as it embodied the spirit of the Noor Cultural Forum and turned art into an instrument of truth and empowerment. Through theatre, music and dialogue, the event seeks to amplify the voices of the blind and visually impaired, affirming their place in shaping the Arab cultural landscape.

As the curtains fell, the audience was left with a lingering question, not about who killed the king, but about who dares to remove the rose-coloured glasses and truly see.