

OMAN
Observer
DAILY

SUNRISE 05:56 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 04:41 AM
DHUHR 12:04 PM
ASR 03:29 PM
MAGHRIB 06:07 PM
ISHA 07:17 PM

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10

ROUND 3 OF
ELITE LEAGUE
TO SHAPE EARLY
TITLE RACE

His Majesty pays inspection visit to Dhofar and Al Wusta



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday paid an inspection Royal visit to some wilayats in the governorates of Dhofar and Al Wusta to view several development, economic, and social projects, and closely observe the needs and requirements of the citizens.

Citizens welcomed the country's Monarch along the route of the auspicious motorcade, expressing greetings and loyalty, and praying to Allah the Almighty to bless his endeavors in achieving more development programs.

On his turn, His Majesty the Sultan reciprocated with greetings to his people. May Allah the Almighty protect His Majesty and grant him success! — ONA

SEE ALSO P2



Oman calls for need to end cycle of violence in Gaza Strip

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday participated in the joint ministerial meeting between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and the French Republic, held in New York on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, underlined the strength of the longstanding friendly relations between the Sultanate of Oman and France, which are built on the foundations of trust and mutual respect.

He noted the significant development this partnership has witnessed in recent years in the fields of security, trade and cultural exchange. He emphasised the importance of building on this momentum to enhance joint GCC-French cooperation in a manner that serves mutual interests.

Sayyid Badr also addressed the Palestinian cause as an urgent priority, appreciating the role undertaken by both France and the



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in their joint presidency of the summit dedicated to the two-state solution.

He affirmed that restoring the credibility of the peace process requires concrete, practical steps that put an end to the cycle of violence, ensure the protection of civilians, and open a genuine political horizon that guarantees the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent state.

Sayyid Badr voiced Oman's appreciation for France's recognition of the right of the Palestinians to establish their independent state, calling on the international community to confront the grave violations perpetrated by the Israeli government against the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces pushed towards the heart of Gaza City on Wednesday, placing at risk the lives of Palestinians who had stayed put in hopes that growing pressure on Israel for a ceasefire would mean they would not lose their homes. — ONA

CITIZENS IN DHOFAR AND AL



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq paid inspection visits to several wilayats in Dhofar and Al Wusta governorates on Wednesday. His Majesty reviewed several development, economic and social projects and closely followed up on the needs and requirements of citizens. Citizens aligned along the road His Majesty's motorcade travelled by, chanting slogans of allegiance and loyalty and praying to Allah the Almighty to bless His Majesty to achieve further development. His Majesty exchanged greetings with his people. — ONA



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SHORT TAKES



Marine Security 1/25 aims to enhance the level of joint integrated coordination. — ONA

MSC CONDUCTS ‘MARITIME SECURITY 1/25’ EXERCISE

AL MUSANNAH: The Maritime Security Centre (MSC) on Wednesday carried out an exercise codenamed ‘Marine Security 1/25’ in cooperation with the Royal Navy of Oman and the Royal Oman Police, represented by the Coast Guard Command.

The exercise commenced with a briefing outlining its various stages in accordance with the pre-designated plan, in order to achieve the intended training objectives.

These include enhancing national capabilities in handling maritime incidents, simulating the exercise scenario to address operational challenges, and adopting effective procedures that ensure the application of best practices in responding to various situations.

Marine Security 1/25 aims to enhance the level of joint integrated coordination between the relevant military, security and civilian entities, ensuring their sustained operational readiness in confronting challenges during times of crisis, disasters and maritime threats.

The exercise saw the participation of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Environment Authority, and Petroleum Development Oman, represented by Mina Al Fahal. — ONA

OMAN AND VIETNAM HOLD CONSULTATIONS



The session reviewed bilateral relations in various fields. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam held the fourth round of consultations in Muscat on Wednesday.

The Omani side was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Vietnamese side was led by Nguyen Minh Hang, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The session reviewed bilateral relations in various fields, including economic, investment and cultural cooperation.

The two sides also exchanged views on a range of regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The session was attended by Ambassador Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Mohammed al Hosni, Head of the Asia and Pacific Department, Hoang Huu Anh, Ambassador-designate of Vietnam to Oman, as well as a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

OMAN AND SENEGAL REVIEW BILATERAL RELATIONS



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received Ibrahima Seck, Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal to the Sultanate of Oman, at his office in Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and discussed several matters of mutual interest. — ONA

Right to use sign language enhances empowerment

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

A call for more community partnerships that translate the values of equity and equality into a tangible reality was made by the participants of the International Deaf Week and International Sign Language Day, organised by the Omani Association for People with Hearing Disabilities.

Held under the auspices of Lujaina Mohsin Darwish with the theme ‘No human rights without the right to use sign language’, and attended by a number of official figures and representatives of national institutions, the International Deaf Week and International Sign Language Day envisaged a scene that embodied the meanings of empowerment and inclusion.

“We need to offer more empowerment to the people with hearing difficulties and better rehabilitation programmes in order to help these people live a normal life. To achieve this, better community programmes that aim at inclusion of this sector of people are the need of the hour,” said Lujaina Mohsin Darwish.

The event also indicated that deaf



The International Deaf Week and International Sign Language Day envisaged a scene that embodied the meanings of inclusion.

communities must be part of disaster planning through leadership and collaboration. They can be a part of the disaster management team using national sign languages and deaf-centred strategies.

The event emphasised the association’s pioneering role in establishing sign language as a language of life and a bridge for human communication, highlighting the contributions of deaf people and their ability to innovate and participate actively in society. The event also honoured a select group of individuals and institutions that have made a significant impact in supporting the initiatives and projects led by the association. It implied that deaf-led alliances, in collaboration with governments and other organisations, play a vital role in advancing sign language rights. Following the motto ‘nothing about us without us’, true progress comes from partnerships where deaf people lead and others support them as committed allies.

The association emphasised that this occasion represents an important milestone in raising awareness of the rights of people with hearing disabilities, highlighting their creative energies, and calling for more community partnerships that translate the values of equality and equity into a tangible reality.

Conflicts threat to sustainable development goals

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday organised a high-level international dialogue in partnership with Finland, Somalia, Sudan, Switzerland and Yemen, titled ‘Unity in Well-being: Enhancing Peace Through Global Health’ on the sidelines of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York.

In his speech, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, emphasised that Oman has consistently adopted dialogue, understanding and cooperation as steadfast pillars of its foreign policy.

He affirmed Oman’s belief that health can serve as a bridge to peace, bringing communities together, fostering mutual trust, and contributing to resilience in the face of conflict and fragility.

He reiterated Oman’s firm commitment to achieving the vision and objectives of the Health for Peace Initiative’s road map and entrenching the



Dr Hilal Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, at the UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday. — ONA

“Health and Peace” approach across all programmes to ensure they are inclusive, equitable, participatory and sustainable.

He added that this World Health Organization (WHO)-led initiative calls for designing health programmes that not only save lives, but also strengthen social cohesion and promote stability

The minister noted that the region, like many parts of the world, continues to face the repercussions of acute

and prolonged conflicts and recurrent emergencies, leading to internal and external displacement, weakened health systems, and deteriorating health conditions for millions.

He pointed out that achieving the health-related Sustainable Development Goals in such contexts would be nearly impossible unless responses are adapted to mitigate the exacerbation of challenges on the ground while enhancing the capacity to deliver necessary

assistance.

Dr Abdullah bin Hamoud al Harthy, Adviser to the Minister of Health for International Cooperation, commenced the programme with a presentation on the links between health and peace and Oman’s role in this field. This was followed by a presentation by Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, outlining the efforts of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).

Dr Mohammed Yaqub Genawi, WHO Regional Director for Africa, delivered a presentation focusing on the relationship between health and peace. Dr Asmus Hammerich, Director of Non-communicable Diseases at the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, addressed the reality of non-communicable diseases in emergency settings, highlighting the role of the Global Health and Peace Initiative. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The symposium covered topics on prospects of research and innovation. — ONA

RAFO SYMPOSIUM ON INNOVATION IN AI ERA

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) on Wednesday organised a symposium titled “Prospects of Research and Innovation in the Era of Artificial Intelligence: Towards a Sustainable Knowledge Economy”.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Ahmed bin Musallam al Rawas, Assistant to the Head of the Medical City for Military and Security Services (for Administrative Affairs and Human Resources). — ONA

LITERARY COUNCIL FOR POETRY FORUM TODAY

MUSCAT: The launch of the 16th forum of the Literary Council for Poetry and Popular Heritage in Al Kamil W'al Wafi will be held from Thursday until Saturday morning. It is expected to draw a large crowd of poets, enthusiasts of traditional folklore and fans of authentic Omani arts.

The forum includes a diverse range of activities that highlight the depth and richness of Omani heritage. The events will start on Thursday afternoon with a ‘Razhah Qassafi’, followed by a performance of the Al Azi art.

In the evening, poets will showcase various traditional art performances, including Naihah Qassafi, Naihah Lal Al Aoud and Naihah Marboo'ah, all set in a poetic atmosphere featuring spontaneous poetic duels (musajalat) between poets.

On Friday morning, the forum will focus on Omani maritime arts with an introductory lecture on the traditional songs and arts associated with sea voyages to South Africa and Zanzibar. This will include live demonstrations of traditional navigation techniques such as raising the sail, lowering the anchor, and scrubbing the deck, highlighting the role of the “Naham” (chant leader) in motivating sailors and promoting teamwork.

Saturday will be dedicated to an evaluation session, where participants and poets will discuss the outcomes of the forum, identify key positives and challenges, and develop practical suggestions to enhance future editions. This underscores the forum's ongoing commitment to preserving Omani heritage and passing it on to future generations.

Khamis bin Juma al Muwaiti, Chairman of the Literary Council for Poetry and Popular Heritage, expressed that the forum is a renewed opportunity to celebrate authentic Omani heritage.

It serves as a platform to showcase the richness of folk arts that reflect national identity and community values.



ANNOUNCEMENT

Al Omaniya Financial Services Co. SAOG hereby announces that **Mr. Sanad Sari Said Al Taibi**, an Omani national holding Civil ID No. 19808338, is no longer employed by the Company as of **21 September 2025** and no longer represents the Company in any capacity. Accordingly, the Company shall bear no responsibility for any transactions conducted with the individual, nor will it consider any claims relating to him that are submitted seven (7) days after the date of publication of this notice.

Al Omaniya Financial Services Co. SAOG
P.O. Box: 1087, Postal Code: 114, Jabrooh, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24724700 – Fax: 24813258

MOORE STEPHENS LLC
NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF INTERNATIONAL LEGACY FABRICATION SPC
(AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1614)

Moore Stephens LLC, announces the liquidation process of International Legacy Fabrication SPC, bearing commercial registration number 1111843, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company's Shareholder on 4 July 2025. The liquidator alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company's business at the following address:

Office No. 41, 4th Floor, Building No. 1022, Way No. 1013;
Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum
P O Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24061000, Fax: 24061099, Email: liquidation@moore-oman.com

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company's creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within 180 days from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company's rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC
Official Liquidators of International Legacy Fabrication SPC
(Under voluntary liquidation)

Proposal to empower youth

SUHAR: The Municipal Council of Al Batinah North Governorate discussed a proposal to launch a national initiative to empower youth in the professional labour market, considering it a pivotal step to support the ambitions of young people.

During its meeting held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, the Council also reviewed a number of responses received from relevant entities.

— ONA

OMAN, HUNGARY DISCUSS ENHANCING MILITARY COOPERATION

BUDAPEST: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Hungary reviewed bilateral relations and exchanged views on a number of issues of mutual interest aimed at enhancing military cooperation to serve their common interests.

This came during a meeting between Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, and Kristof Szalay-Bobrovniczky, the Hungarian Minister of Defence, along with a number of senior officials.

The meeting was part of the official visit by the Secretary-



Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, with Kristof Szalay-Bobrovniczky, the Hungarian Minister of Defence. - ONA

General of the Ministry of Defence and his accompanying delegation to Hungary.

The meeting was attended by Malallah bin Mahmoud al Balushi, Oman's Ambassador to Hungary. The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence and his accompanying delegation also met with a number of senior officials from Hungarian military industries companies.

During this meeting, the latest products and modern military equipment developed by these companies were highlighted. Future cooperation opportunities were also discussed. — ONA

Over 120,000 SMEs active



The total financing amounts for small and medium enterprises amounted to approximately RO 41,157,653.

The total number of SMEs obtaining an active Entrepreneurship Card reached 26,094, with 111 enterprises affiliated with the Business Development Centre.

approximately 2.2 per cent, in addition to a 10.2-per cent growth in the number of direct and indirect business opportunities. The total financing amounts for small and medium enterprises amounted to approximately RO 41,157,653.

The Authority continues its support to empower small and medium enterprises, craftsmen and start-ups, and enhance the role of these institutions in driving sustainable development.

The Authority offers numerous incentives aimed at motivating

project owners to encourage them to continue innovating and growing.

These incentives are in line with the Sultanate of Oman's strategic vision to empower the small and medium enterprises sector, enhance the capabilities of young people, and enable them to translate their creative ideas into successful projects that contribute to diversifying the national economy and consolidating the position of entrepreneurship as one of the pillars of a promising economic future.



جامعة الشرقية
A' SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

ASU's Tender Committee is pleased to invite specialized companies to participate in the following tender:
Tender details:

Tender No.	Description	Targeted Companies	Document Collection Deadline	Bids Submission Deadline	Document Fees
(ASU/05/ 25/26)	Tender for providing Consumables & Chemical for the College of Applied and Health Sciences at A'Sharqiyah University	Companies specialized in supplying consumables and chemical	01/10/2025	14/10/2025	OMR 100

- Specialized companies interested in participating in the tender should obtain the tender document during official working days from Sunday to Thursday, between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM.
- Tender collection process:** The interested companies shall follow the following steps:
 - The payment should be made directly to ASU under the following bank account:

Account Name	AL SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY
Account Number	0423010693610011
SWIFT CODE	BMUSOMRX
 - After payment, send the receipt to (abdullah.al-harthi@asu.edu.om) along with the reference number, title of the tender and CR of the company.
 - Participating companies will receive the tender document via email.
 - Companies that hold Riyadh certificate are exempted from tender document fees. Companies should send Riyadh certificate to abdullah.al-harthi@asu.edu.om, along with the reference number, title of the tender and CR of the company.
- ASU general terms and conditions of tenders shall apply on all submitted bids. http://www.asu.edu.om/downloads/purchase_terms_conditions.pdf
- ASU is not bound to accept the lowest bid.
- For further details, please don't hesitate to contact us at: abdullah.al-harthi@asu.edu.om or Tel. 25401118.

WORLD

SEVEREWEATHER



A Guangfu village resident rides his scooter past a damaged car, in Hualien. — AFP

RAGASA BEARS DOWN ON SOUTHERN CHINA, KILLING 17

SHENZHEN: Typhoon Ragasa, the world’s most powerful tropical cyclone this year, struck the southern Chinese city of Yangjiang on Wednesday after killing 17 people in Taiwan and lashing Hong Kong with ferocious winds and heavy rains. The typhoon was tracking towards Maoming, one of China’s biggest oil refining cities, in Guangdong province.

In Taiwan, 17 people were missing in the eastern Hualien county after a barrier lake overflowed and sent a wall of water into a town, while Ragasa brought Hong Kong to a standstill. More powerful typhoons are likely to hit southern China due to climate change, said Benjamin Horton, dean of the School of Energy and Environment at the City University of Hong Kong, after a summer of record-breaking rainfall. “The weather experienced in Hong Kong this summer is only a taste of what is to come,” Horton said.

Officials are used to moving people out of potential danger zones swiftly as the island is frequently hit by typhoons, but many residents in the tourist town of Guangfu said they were given insufficient warning when a lake overflowed during Tuesday’s torrential rains brought by Ragasa. In Hong Kong, where huge waves crashed over areas of the Asian financial hub’s eastern and southern shoreline, some roads and residential properties were submerged.

At the Fullerton Hotel on the island’s south, videos on social media showed seawater surging through glass doors. No injury has been reported, the hotel told Reuters. China’s marine authority issued its highest red wave warning for the first time this year, forecasting storm surges of up to 2.8 metres (9 feet) in parts of Guangdong province, as Ragasa headed towards the densely populated Pearl River Delta.

“Authorities have taken lessons from Hato and Mangkhut, which both caused billions of dollars in damage in 2017 and 2018,” said Chim Lee, a senior energy and climate change specialist at the Economist Intelligence Unit. “The Pearl River Delta is one of the best-prepared regions for typhoons, so we’re not expecting major disruptions. One change this year is that the Hong Kong stock market has stayed open during typhoons - a sign of how resilient the infrastructure has become,” he said.

After passing around 100 km south of Hong Kong, Ragasa made landfall along the south Chinese coast. Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Foshan and Dongguan, the largest cities in the storm’s path, are home to around 50 million people.

More than 2 million people have been evacuated across Guangdong and the ministry for emergencies dispatched tens of thousands of tents, folding beds, lighting equipment and other rescue supplies, Chinese state media reported. Some shops and restaurants in the province parked large rented trucks in front of storefronts in a bid to shield them from the storm.

China’s marine authority warned of a high risk of flooding in Shenzhen with a storm surge alert expected to remain in effect until Thursday. A woman and her five-year-old son were swept into the ocean on Tuesday after watching the typhoon from the Hong Kong waterfront. — Reuters

MALAWI PRESIDENT CONCEDES DEFEAT, RIVAL’S SUPPORTERS CELEBRATE

LILONGWE: Malawi President Lazarus Chakwera conceded defeat on Wednesday in this month’s election and pledged to ensure a peaceful transfer of power to his main rival Peter Mutharika, who has built a commanding lead based on results so far. Malawi’s electoral commission had been due to release the final result around 12:00 GMT, but delayed its announcement until Wednesday evening.

“It is only right that I concede defeat out of respect for your will as

citizens and out of respect for the constitution,” Chakwera said in an address to the nation. Mutharika’s supporters celebrated at the election results centre and on the streets of the capital Lilongwe when they heard Chakwera had conceded.

Security was tight in Lilongwe, with armed police officers patrolling the streets and banks closed in case of violence. This month’s election was the fourth showdown between Mutharika, 85, and Chakwera, 70. Mutharika won in the 2014

and 2019 elections, though his 2019 victory was annulled by the constitutional court because of widespread irregularities including the use of correction fluid on results sheets. Chakwera won the re-run of that election in 2020.

“This election result is less about Mutharika, but more of a protest vote against Chakwera, especially in regards to his government’s handling of the economy,” said Boniface Dulani, a politics expert at the University of Malawi. — Reuters

Italy deploys frigate after attack on Gaza aid flotilla

ITALY’S Defence Minister Guido Crosetto sent a navy frigate on Wednesday to assist a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, after organisers said several of their boats had been targeted by drones off Greece. The Global Sumud Flotilla said more than a dozen explosions were heard around the flotilla late on Tuesday, with damage caused by “unidentified objects” dropped on deck. Crosetto said he “authorised the immediate intervention of the Italian Navy’s multi-purpose frigate Fasan, which was sailing north of Crete as part of Operation Safe Sea”. “The vessel is already en route to the area for possible rescue operations”, he said in a statement posted on X.

The Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) set sail from Barcelona this month with the aim of breaking the Israeli blockade of Gaza and delivering humanitarian aid. Israel, which blocked two previous attempts by activists to reach Gaza by sea in June and July, has said it will not allow the flotilla to reach the embattled Palestinian territory. “Israel will not allow vessels to enter an active combat zone and will not allow any breach of the lawful naval blockade,” foreign ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein said. “If their intentions are sincere, they should transfer any such aid to the nearby Ashkelon Marina so it can be forwarded promptly to the Gaza Strip in a non-violent manner,” he said.

Several of the boats reported explosions on Tuesday and unidentified objects being dropped on and near boats, causing damage



Displaced Palestinians move with their belongings southwards on a road in the Nuseirat refugee camp. — AFP

Italy’s Defence Minister Guido said he authorised the immediate intervention of the Italian Navy’s multi-purpose frigate Fasan, which was sailing north of Crete as part of Operation Safe Sea. The vessel is already en route to the area for possible rescue operations

and widespread obstruction in communications, GSF said. It accused Israel of “endangering the 500+ unarmed civilians aboard the flotilla” that is carrying activists from 45 countries, including Swedish environmentalist Greta Thunberg. “The drones that have been following us for days have detonated an explosive device, knocking off the boat’s jib, and we’re at risk of the mast falling,” said Stefano Bertoldi, an Italian activist with the climate group “Ultima Generazione” (Last Generation) that is sailing in the flotilla. Bertoldi issued several maydays as the explosions rang out. Last Generation said in a statement.

Crosetto expressed “the strongest condemnation” of the “attack” by “currently unidentified perpetrators”. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said he had asked Israel to ensure the

safety of “Italian citizens, along with members of parliament and MEPs”. He has already informed Israel that “any operation entrusted to Israeli forces must be conducted in compliance with international law and the principle of absolute caution,” the ministry said in a statement.

Tajani has also asked the Italian Embassy in Tel Aviv to “reiterate its previous request to the Israeli government to guarantee the absolute protection of the personnel on board,” it said. The Global Sumud Flotilla currently numbers 51 vessels, most of which are off the Greek island of Crete. Vessels waiting to join the flotilla had already been targeted in two suspected drone attacks in Tunisia.

The Greek coastguard said that a patrol boat from the EU agency Frontex had approached one vessel and saw no damage. — AFP



BANGKOK MASSIVE SINKHOLE FORCES EVACUATIONS

BANGKOK: A portion of a busy road in Thailand’s capital caved, leaving a hole dozens of metres deep that forced people to evacuate and drew a visit from the prime minister. Just outside a local police station and Vajira Hospital in a residential district of Bangkok, a roughly 50-metre (160-foot) hole pulled down power lines and exposed a burst pipe gushing water, journalists saw.

Suriyachai Rawiwan, director of Bangkok’s disaster prevention department, said at the scene that the collapse was likely linked to heavy rain and a leaky pipe that eroded earth under the road. “The water that eroded brought some soil that dropped down to an under-construction subway station, causing the collapse,” he said, adding that there were no known casualties.

Thailand’s Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul visited the site, telling reporters he was “concerned” and had ordered people at risk to be moved out of the area. — AFP

CONFLICT CASUALTIES

Strike on market in Sudan kills 15 people



A drone strike on a market in Sudan’s besieged city of El Fasher killed 15 people, a medical worker said. The strike “killed 15 citizens and wounded 12, three of them critically”. The local resistance committees, activists who coordinate aid and document atrocities in the Sudan conflict, called the attack a “massacre” that killed or wounded a total of 27 people, and accused the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of carrying it out. — AFP

PEACE AGREEMENT

Chad signs deal with gold region group



Chad’s government has struck a peace deal on Wednesday with an armed group in the north of the country, ending years of conflict over gold deposits in the region, a mediator said. It sees “the definitive return of peace in Miski and the entire province of Tibesti”, Ibrahim Edji Mahamat, who acted as a facilitator for talks. The agreement offers an amnesty to both the Chadian defence and security forces and rebels. — AFP

DISPUTED AREAS

Five killed in Ladakh autonomy protests



Five people were killed in India as police clashed with hundreds of protesters demanding greater autonomy in the Himalayan territory of Ladakh, leaving “dozens” injured, police said. In the main city of Leh, demonstrators torched a police vehicle and the offices of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party, while officers fired tear gas and used batons to disperse crowds, police said. Several people, including some policemen, were injured. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off carrying NASA's Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe (IMAP) mission, Florida. — Reuters

NASA LAUNCHES MISSION TO STUDY SPACE WEATHER

WASHINGTON: The United States launched three spacecraft on Wednesday in an effort to better monitor space weather such as solar storms, which can interfere with technology and power systems on Earth. The three probes blasted off from Florida's Kennedy Space Center aboard a Falcon 9 rocket, built by the private company SpaceX. Once in space, the probes will begin a long journey to reach the Lagrange 1 point — a spot approximately 1.5 million kilometers from the Sun that offers a stable vantage point for observation. The "Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe" (IMAP) will use its instruments to study the Sun's high-energy particles and the protective magnetic bubble surrounding our solar system known as the heliosphere, data that can offer insight into space weather and cosmic radiation. Solar storms are high-radiation events caused by flares on the Sun's surface, and are very difficult to predict. They can impact activities on Earth, including aviation, mobile communications and power grids — and potentially endanger astronauts and satellites in space. The Space Weather Follow-on (SWFO-L1) spacecraft, operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), aims to detect the weather patterns in advance. — AFP

2 BOYS AMONG HELD OVER OSLO ATTACK



Norwegian police said that they had detained three youths, including two 13-year old boys, after grenades were thrown the previous day in downtown Oslo, causing no injuries. On Tuesday evening, an explosion was heard near the Norwegian capital's Oslomet university. Investigators believe the incident was likely the result of what they called "violence as a service", where the youths might have acted under orders. "The police have detained extremely young boys. Two of them are only 13 years old," Police Commissioner Ida Melbo Oystese told a press conference. — AFP

EU CHIEF BACKS CALLS TO KEEP CHILDREN OFF SOCIAL MEDIA

UNITED NATIONS: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday threw her support behind growing calls to ban social media use for children, promising to weigh action at the European level in coming months. "Many member states believe the time has come for a 'digital majority age' for access to social media," the European Commission head told an event on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. "I must tell you as a mother of seven children, and grandmother of five, I share their

view," she told the gathering in New York. Von der Leyen was speaking alongside Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, whose country is at the forefront of global efforts to curb internet harms — with its social media ban on under-16s a world-first. "We all agree that young people should reach a certain age before they smoke, drink, or have access to adult content," she said. "The same can be said for social media."

Von der Leyen said she would establish a panel of experts and talk to parents, teachers and young people "to assess what steps make sense" at the EU level. The 27-nation bloc has some of the world's strictest rules to fight harmful content online, with several investigations looking into how the biggest social media platforms protect children — or not. France, Greece and Spain are among several EU states pushing for restrictions on minors' access to online platforms. — AFP

Russia to press offensive, rejects Ukraine land retake

THE Kremlin said on Wednesday it would press on with its military offensive in Ukraine and rejected US President Donald Trump's claim that Kyiv's army could retake territory it had seized. Moscow also pushed back on Trump's characterisation of Russia as a "paper tiger", a day after the US president dismissed Russia's army and said he could see Ukraine winning back every inch of land captured by Russia's forces. Trump's remarks, delivered after a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the United Nations, were a major pivot in his stance on the three-and-a-half-year conflict, which he had at one point boasted he could end within hours. But the Republican has for weeks voiced mounting frustration with Putin for refusing to halt his offensive. "We are continuing our special military operation to ensure our interests and achieve the goals" set by Putin, said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, using Moscow's term for its assault on Ukraine. "We are doing this for both the present and the future of our country. For many generations to come. Therefore, we have no alternative," he added in a radio interview.

Russia launched its all-out offensive on Ukraine in February 2022, when its forces tried to capture the capital Kyiv and Putin publicly called for Zelensky to be toppled. The conflict has since killed tens of thousands of people, devastated much of eastern and southern Ukraine and forced millions to flee their homes. Trump had on Tuesday dismissed Russia's military prowess and mocked its inability to quickly beat Ukraine. In a post on Truth Social, he said Ukraine may "be able to take back their Country in its original form and, who knows, maybe even go further than that". Russia rejected that notion. "The idea that Ukraine can recapture something is, from our point of view, mistaken," Peskov told reporters. Russia also bristled at the accusation it was weak. "The phrase 'paper tiger' was used in relation to our economy," Peskov said. "Russia is more associated with a bear. And paper bears don't exist. Russia is a real



A resident walks near burned cars hit by a Russian drone strike, in Zaporizhzhia. — Reuters

bear," he added. He did concede, however, that Russia's economy — slowing after two years of rapid growth and with stubborn inflation — was "experiencing tensions and problems". Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called on world powers on Wednesday to work together to stop Russia's war in his country, accusing Russian President Vladimir Putin of seeking to expand the fighting beyond Ukraine. He said in a speech to the 193-member United Nations General Assembly that the war had helped unleash the most destructive arms race in history and that Ukraine was moving to open up the export of its weapons to allies. "The facts are simple, stopping this war ... is cheaper than building underground kindergartens or massive bunkers for critical infrastructure later," he said. He pointed to alleged airspace violations by Russian drones and fighter jets in NATO's Poland and Estonia as evidence that Putin was testing new boundaries in the war in Ukraine. "Now Russian drones are already flying across Europe, and Russian operations are already spreading across countries," he said. "Putin wants to continue this war by expanding it, and no one can feel safe right now."

Zelenskiy said Ukraine had decided to begin exporting its weapons to allies. "You don't need to start this race from scratch. We're ready to share what has already proven itself," he said, referring to defense production. "We are ready to make our modern weapons become your modern security. We have decided to open up arms export. And these are powerful systems tested in a real war when every international institution failed," he said. Peskov also dismissed claims that Russia breached Nato's airspace as "hysteria", after Trump said the allies should shoot down Russian jets if they violate their territory. Nato countries say multiple Russian fighter jets and drones have violated European member states' airspace in recent weeks, accusing Moscow of testing the alliance's boundaries. With peace progress on Ukraine stalled, Peskov said a broader rapprochement between Moscow and Washington ushered in when Trump returned to the White House in January has yielded "close to zero" results. Zelensky has hailed Trump's apparent change of position as a "big shift", though it is unclear if the US leader will follow through with concrete steps, such as sanctions on Russia. — Reuters

UK police arrest man after European airports cyberattack

LONDON: UK police said on Wednesday a man in his 40s had been arrested after a cyberattack disrupted major European airports including Brussels, Berlin and London's Heathrow. Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) said the suspect had been released on conditional bail after officers detained him late on Tuesday in West Sussex, southeast England, on suspicion of offences under the Computer Misuse Act. It follows days of disruption at key European hubs which the EU's cyber security agency confirmed was "caused by third-party ransomware" that had targeted services provider Collins Aerospace. "Although this arrest is a positive step, the investigation into this incident is in its early stages and remains ongoing," NCA Deputy Director Paul Foster said in a statement. "Cybercrime is a persistent global threat that

continues to cause significant disruption to the UK," he added. The agency said it had launched its investigation after the "cyber incident impacting Collins Aerospace" was reported last Friday. The aviation technology company — a subsidiary of US aerospace and defence group RTX, formerly known as Raytheon — is used by several airlines at multiple airports globally for their check-in and baggage drop operations. It said on Saturday it had "become aware of a cyber-related disruption to our MUSE software in select airports" and that it was "limited to electronic customer check-in and baggage drop". Impacted airlines were forced to carry out manual check-ins and baggage drops, slowing down the procedures. The disturbances, still ongoing in a limited way at some European airports Wednesday, also led to flight cancellations and delays, in



Travellers wait in terminal 4 at Heathrow Airport, west of London. — AFP file photo

particular on Saturday. Dublin and Cork airports in Ireland were among those affected. At Brussels airport, where scores of outbound flights were cancelled over recent days, a spokesperson quoted by Belga news agency said the situation on Wednesday was gradually returning to normal. A

Brussels airport spokeswoman said 45 of 257 departing flights had been cancelled and passengers could expect delays of "between 30 and 90 minutes". Heathrow Airport, Europe's busiest, said the "vast majority" of flights were now operating as scheduled, according to the latest passenger notice posted.

Dublin airport said it expected to function normally throughout Sunday. Its "team is continuing to support airlines today as they deal with the ongoing disruption caused by a Europe-wide technical issue that is impacting on their check-in and boarding systems," it said in a post on X. Cyberattacks and tech outages have rattled various airports in recent years, as air travel increasingly relies on online, interconnected systems. The sector saw a 600 per cent increase in such attacks from 2024 to 2025, according to a report by French aerospace company Thales released in June. "From airlines and airports to navigation systems and suppliers, every link in the chain is vulnerable to attack," the report warned, noting the strategically and economically important sector had become a "prime target". — AFP

OPINION

Unfinished work in an unfinished city



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

NEW York offered a study in stillness and motion. One minute the city surged, the next it paused. President Trump’s motorcade locked an avenue in place, and even the French president stood waiting with the rest of us. Sirens washed over glass, and for a moment, the hierarchy flattened. Inside the marble flooring of the United Nations, another kind of stillness cracked. More voices spoke the word state when they named Palestine, and the room felt rearranged by a syllable. It does not end danger, yet it narrows the distance between a life and the law that should shelter it. Then came the speech that pulled attention into its orbit. President Trump asked what purpose the United Nations serves, then called climate change the greatest con job ever perpetrated. His words struck because they collided with what the city itself was staging all week: a gathering built on the message that climate change is not only real, but urgent. The contradiction was plain. Climate drives migration, displacing families from fields that crack under heat and from coasts that slip under water. To dismiss it as

fraud while naming migration as a threat is to argue against oneself, and the silence in the chamber carried that tension. Around the city, Climate Week turned Manhattan into a web of parallel conversations. One room heard of islands battered by storms, another of trillions that could be freed if subsidies ended and polluters paid. Beneath the numbers were lives being measured, and three impressions remained within my thoughts. The first was about demand. Climate does not only appear in storms or speeches. It shows up in daily routines. Bathroom shelves may no longer hold heavy bottles of shampoo but compact powders and bars that use little water. Supermarket aisles may change as heat and scarcity decide which crops survive and which disappear. Consumption will be shaped less by preference and more by necessity, and that necessity will redefine what feels normal. The second was about value. Investors spoke of risk as if stripping away old assumptions. Once you apply a climate lens, some assets that look secure collapse under scrutiny, while others reveal unexpected

The opportunity lies not in optimism but in seeing fragility where habit pretends there is stability, and noticing resilience where models overlook it.

strength. Portfolios tilt when weather is no longer steady. The opportunity lies not in optimism but in seeing fragility where habit pretends there is stability, and noticing resilience where models overlook it. The third was about the sea. I kept circling back to coral. Bleaching is no longer rare; it is becoming routine. Reefs are nurseries for fish and natural barriers for coasts, places where colour has always meant life. When they pale, fish scatter and shorelines erode. People say adaptation will save us, but change does not wait. Corals grow slowly, and patience is the one resource heat keeps taking from us. Naming loss is uncomfortable, but it matters for those who depend on reefs for food, for work and for safety along the shore. So much of this week has been about recognition and the insistence that words become real. Statehood must mean safety. Markets must reveal risk honestly. Seas must keep their colour. None of this is finished. Manhattan feels like a rehearsal space where contradictions share the stage; sirens halting traffic, speeches cancelling themselves, lively panels sketching futures. The city will move on, but the questions will not.

Russia-linked disinfo campaign targets Moldovan election

CHISINAU: Ahead of Moldova’s parliamentary elections on Sunday, deepfake videos and unsubstantiated accusations targeting pro-EU President Maia Sandu are spreading online, with analysts warning the country has become Moscow’s “testing ground” for information warfare in Europe. The vote is seen as crucial in deciding whether the EU candidate country of some 2.5 million people will deepen its ties with the bloc or drift back towards Moscow, from which it gained independence in 1991. Most polls so far suggest that Sandu’s pro-EU party, in power since 2021, is in the lead, but it faces a tough challenge from the opposition. Sandu has warned of “unprecedented interference” by the Kremlin, accusing it of “pouring hundreds of millions of euros” to buy votes and targeting voters with disinformation. Weeks before the polls, Sandu became the subject of a mocking, deepfake video — created with Luma AI — of her performing a rap song in Russian that portrays her as an ineffective leader. It was just one type of misleading content spread by the Russian-aligned disinformation campaign known as Operation Overload or Matryoshka (Russian doll), according to the online collective Antibot4Navalny. Other unsubstantiated accusations levelled at Sandu include that she suffers from schizophrenia and that her party has “rigged” the election. On Telegram, among the claims spread in Russian is that European leaders want to use Sandu — an ally of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky — to start a war in Moldova, and impose a dictatorship before mobilising Moldovans to fight in neighbouring Ukraine. Several investigations have all found Russia-linked disinformation campaigns. Meanwhile, the BBC this week published its findings about a secret Russia-funded network attempting to disrupt the election. Experts say such Russian disinformation campaigns targeting elections — also exposed in neighbouring EU and Nato member Romania — are ultimately designed to push Moldova back towards Moscow and destabilise the European Union. “The objective is not just to manipulate a few votes, but to erode confidence in the democratic process,” said Corneliu Bjola, professor of Digital Diplomacy at the University of Oxford. Russia will continue to target other European democracies with similar disinformation campaigns if its tactics succeed in Moldova, analysts say. “Europe, with Romania on the frontline, is the ultimate target,” Bjola, the Oxford professor said. — AFP

The new contest over right and recognition

I have long been fascinated by how words carry weight beyond their letters — the way “veto” can mean paralysis, “victim” can become identity, “victory” can loom just beyond reach and “vanish” can describe the erasure of lives, rights, or memory. In the Israel-Palestine conflict today, these words are not rhetorical flourishes but tools of diplomacy and accusation. When a UN resolution is vetoed, when statehood is recognised, when genocide is verified — each term changes not just how the world talks, but how it acts or should act. On September 21, 2025, the UK, Canada, Australia and Portugal joined over 140 other countries in formally recognising the State of Palestine. The count has reached 157 countries thus far. These decisions were driven by mounting frustration over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, widespread civilian suffering and a sense that the two-state solution is slipping from feasibility into obsolescence. But recognition has not been without controversy. Israel condemned the move as rewarding violence, undermining prospects for peace, and rejecting hard realities on the ground. Critics argue that recognition in the absence of enforcement — or demands for accountability — risks being seen as performative rather than transformative. These warnings underscore that affirming “victory” in word does not necessarily yield rights or change in deed. Almost in parallel with moves towards recognition, the US again used its veto at the UN Security Council to block a resolution demanding an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, lifting of aid restrictions and release of hostages. Fourteen of fifteen members supported the draft. The US defended its veto by insisting that the resolution lacked explicit condemnation of Hamas’s actions and did not



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

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If the world allows vetoes to silence suffering, victims to vanish and norms to erode, then recognition alone cannot save the Palestinian people.

sufficiently affirm Israel’s claimed right to self-defence. For many around the world, this veto was not just an act of diplomacy; it was a statement about whose suffering is acknowledged. Palestinian envoy Riyad Mansour decried the veto as a failure of the Council to protect civilians in the face of what many UN bodies and independent investigators now say are atrocity scale harms. The act of veto, thus, becomes more than a procedural block — it becomes a political shield for action that many believe is morally and legally questionable. In recent reports, including a UN Human Rights Council mission established to examine the war, findings have identified evidence that Israel’s conduct in Gaza meets the criteria under the Genocide Convention. This includes claims of killing members of the protected group, inflicting conditions of life aimed at physical destruction, and preventing births. Israel and its defenders reject the term. They argue that intent — a requirement under international law — is not proven, and emphasise Hamas’s role in the conflict, the asymmetry of warfare, and the complexity of distinguishing legitimate military targets from civilians in dense urban environments. Yet the calls for accountability are growing louder: protests, legal complaints and diplomatic rebukes. The term “genocide” may once have been unlikely, but it no longer feels beyond the realm of possibility. Recognition of Palestine is important not just for symbolism; it opens legal and diplomatic doors. Recognising states can enter treaties, dialogue, and possibly increase pressure on Israel to adhere to international law. But without deeper measures, arms embargo, sanctions, or binding international mechanisms, it risks becoming a word rather than a tool. Diplomacy, too, must adapt.

States recognising Palestine should coordinate their policies, perhaps linking recognition to conditions: ensuring humanitarian access, ending settlement expansion, or protecting civilian infrastructure. Public opinion — now intensely anti-war in many Western countries — can be leveraged not just for pronouncement, but to build pressure for diplomatic consequences. In short, veto, victim, victory — each word now carries implication and consequence. The recognition of Palestine by Western powers, the US’s repeated vetoes, and increasing affirmations of genocide mark moments when diplomacy, moral outrage and international law collide. If the world allows vetoes to silence suffering, victims to vanish and norms to erode, then recognition alone cannot save the Palestinian people. Israel’s actions — if allowed to proceed without meaningful checks — risk not just rendering the concept of statehood hollow for Palestine, but eroding the very integrity of international law. And when law falters, words rise to fill the void — not as neutral symbols, but as weapons, shields, and sometimes lifelines. They become the battleground where legitimacy is forged or denied, where victims are remembered or erased, where futures are imagined or foreclosed. In the absence of enforceable justice, it is language that dictates who is seen, who is silenced, and who endures. That is both the danger and the possibility: words can entrench impunity, but they can also become the first stones laid on the path back to accountability. Yet therein lies a silver lining: this moment could also catalyse a new system — one where recognition carries real weight, where the impulse to shield aggression is countered by legal and political consequences, and where the possibility, however tenuous, of a more accountable world order might begin.

Drones, systems hack test Europe’s aviation defences



JAMES PEARSON

The writer reports on hacks, leaks and digital espionage in Europe for Reuters



JOANNA PLUCINSKA

The writer reports for Reuters on airlines and travel in Europe, including tourism trends, sustainability and policy

A hack hitting major airports across Europe followed by drone incursions in Copenhagen and Oslo are testing the weak spots of the region’s aviation infrastructure and raising fears about coordinated attacks leading to increased disruption.

In Denmark, drones halted flights at Copenhagen’s main airport on Monday for several hours, with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen linking the incident to a series of suspected Russian drone incursions and other disruptions across Europe. That came alongside a separate drone incident in Norwegian capital Oslo, and days after hackers hit check-in systems with a ransomware attack at airports including London’s Heathrow, Europe’s busiest, as well as in Berlin and Brussels.

Investigators are yet to determine who was behind the disruption, but experts see it as part of a spate of recent “hybrid threat” incidents in the region to test how countries manage their critical infrastructure.

“First is to test how the method works. In this case, it leads to closing down airports,” said Jukka Savolainen, network director at the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. “The second testing point is our reaction.”

Russia’s ambassador to Denmark, Vladimir Barbin, said in a statement sent to Reuters that allegations of Russian involvement were ungrounded. Reuters could not independently confirm who was behind the

drone disruption or the weekend hack.

The disruptions, though, lay bare how vulnerable the civil aviation sector’s operations can be, with outages down the supply chain rippling across airports and airline operations, leading to hundreds of delayed and cancelled flights.

As so-called “hybrid war” threats grow, including drones, GPS interference and hacks, experts say aviation regulators need to take more proactive steps to mitigate against risks to cybersecurity, navigation systems and overall safety.

“This attack shows just how vulnerable highly connected industries like aviation can be,” said Bart Salaets at US cybersecurity firm F5, speaking about the weekend hack of Collins Aerospace check-in software.

Analysts and experts Reuters spoke to pointed to an increase in activity by possible Russian actors across Europe in recent weeks as an impetus for regulators to offer clearer guidelines and encourage more action to defend critical infrastructure.

“(Drone activity) is getting worse and in my opinion it won’t stop,” said Eric Schouten, director of security intelligence and aviation advisory firm Dyami.

Moscow has consistently denied responsibility for any hybrid attack in Europe. Europe’s air traffic control body Eurocontrol said it was providing support to local air traffic control and national authorities to manage the impact of such incidents. “Operators need to be able to

The disruptions, though, lay bare how vulnerable the civil aviation sector’s operations can be, with outages down the supply chain rippling across airports and airline operations

dynamically risk assess their operations, have plans in place for diverts and risk mitigation measures,” aviation security consultancy Osprey’s intelligence officer Matthew Borie said.

The cost and burden of upgrading infrastructure could prevent airports from moving fast to react, even as security concerns in civil airspace gain prominence with a war at Europe’s eastern edge after Russia’s 2022 war on Ukraine.

Upgrading technology at airports, such as jamming tools, lasers and trackers, to mitigate risks from hacks and drones can cost millions of dollars and be a cumbersome process - one that not all infrastructure operators are willing to undertake imminently. Airline trade body IATA also said that anti-drone technology was still developing and was often beyond an airport’s budget. In the United States, the FAA says that it receives more than 100 reports of drone sightings near airports each month.

Jake Moore, an adviser at ESET, a Slovakian cybersecurity firm, said that when aviation supply chains were attacked, it created disruption on a global scale.

“Regulators need to tighten standards even more for critical aviation IT suppliers,” he said.

“Whether this was a deliberate disruption attack, a financially motivated ransom or a major technical failure, the impact demonstrates how fragile such systems can be in a digitally focused world.”

Financial firms to feel impact from Trump’s H-1B visa overhaul

SAEED AZHAR AND MILANA VINN

The Trump administration’s overhaul of the H-1B system could have an outsized impact on the finance industry, which could face hiring challenges following the imposition of the new \$100,000 fee. Financial firms are among the largest users of H-1B visas, employment-based visas awarded by an annual lottery, although their usage is dwarfed by tech companies. In 2025, the 10 top US financial firms received about 12,000 H-1B visas, according to government data, with JPM the biggest by far with 2,440.

One analyst said it will be harder for banks than for tech companies to bear the increased cost. “Banks may have the highest hurdle to overcome with the new H-1B visas, as many tech firms report record profitability, making them more insulated to this one-time cost,” said David Wagner, head of equities at Aptus Capital Advisors LLC, which owns stakes in major US banks.

A large number of the H-1B holders filled engineering and technology roles and are involved in essential activities for banking and the finance industry, according to commentary by Prospect Rock Partners, a financial search firm, which highlights investment banking as specifically impacted. These employees develop quantitative models, algorithmic trading, risk management and software, according to Prospect Rock. The \$100,000 fee for new H-1B visas will make hiring entry-level junior analysts or tech workers prohibitively expensive, said Meridith Dennes, managing partner at Prospect Rock Partners.

“Hiring for entry-level jobs using H-1B becomes nearly impossible,” said Dennes. The new fee may force banks to hire more offshore workers if the skills needed are difficult to find in the US, said Tim O’Brien, managing director, North American Financial Institution Ratings at Morningstar DBRS. “One interesting unintended consequence may be that certain global experts may end up in jurisdictions outside the US, such as Canada,” said O’Brien. “Some banks may also move certain tech functions offshore.” JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon said that the bank will discuss the issue with policymakers and that Trump’s announcement “caught everyone off guard”. JPM declined to comment beyond Dimon’s remarks. Wall Street’s other major banks, as well as credit card companies and consultancies that use H-1Bs, declined to comment.

The Trump proposal to rework the H-1B visa is aimed at favouring higher-skilled and better-paid workers, as officials say the visa allows companies to suppress wages, and curbing it opens more jobs for US tech workers. A partner at a Big Four audit and consultancy firm said professional services firms will have to assess the percentage of employees using the various visa programmes, and how to replace them after visas expire. — Reuters

Turning the tide back towards peace in ME

THE 2025 United Nations General Assembly opened with a major step towards implementing a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict: recognition of the State of Palestine. Recognition is not merely symbolic. It is a prerequisite to any eventual peace. Spain took this step in May 2024, alongside Ireland, Norway and Slovenia, and now others – including Australia, Britain, Canada and Portugal – are following suit.

But there is little to celebrate. The spiral of violence unleashed by the attacks of October 7, 2023, continues unabated. In addition to daily massacres in Gaza and captives still being held, instability is rising across the Middle East. Israel’s unacceptable bombing of Qatar on September 9 is among the most serious challenges to international law and the United Nations Charter that the international community has seen.

Equally unacceptable is the annihilation of the Palestinian people and their legitimate aspirations to live in peace and security alongside their Israeli neighbours. This week in New York, we all have a collective responsibility to ensure that the latest aggravation of the conflict becomes a turning point. We must start to generate positive dynamics, making this a moment for action and for hope. That means stopping the war and standing up firmly for peace, justice, and dignity.

Since October 2023, Spain has been courageous and decisive in its response. We were very clear from the beginning that this was not just another crisis, and that we must pursue the solution that is widely accepted as the only way forward: two states, side by side. We called for an international conference on the matter, and it is now being held this week in New York. We also called for effective collective action, and this led to the launch of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution. And we maintained Euro-Arab dialogue



Since October 2023, Spain has been courageous and decisive in its response.



JOSÉ MANUEL ALBARES BUENO

The writer is Spain’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation

through the Madrid+ Group, a forum to build political momentum for the conference this month. Spain has also pursued three key objectives at the national level. We have joined the arms embargo to curtail the flow of weapons to Israel. We have imposed sanctions on those who violate human rights, breach international law, and work against the implementation of the two-state solution (such as through ongoing settlement activities). And we have maintained our support for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority (PA), our partner for peace.

This week in New York, we will pursue every possible channel to create the conditions for a sustainable peace. We are also leveraging an important new instrument: the New York Declaration. Endorsed by the General Assembly on September 12, it commits us to taking tangible, time-bound and irreversible steps towards implementing the two-state solution. Governments will be taking concrete actions to realise the vision of an independent, sovereign, viable, and democratic State of Palestine living in peace and security with Israel. On the

humanitarian front, we are co-chairing, together with Jordan and Brazil, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees ministerial meeting. We will continue to support UNRWA as the agency with the strongest presence on the ground, and as the one most capable of providing humanitarian assistance. At the same time, we will reject any proposal that does not comply with humanitarian principles.

Implementing the two-state solution requires keeping the PA afloat. It is already extremely fragile, since Israel’s withholding of tax revenues has pushed it to the verge of financial collapse. Fortunately, a UN Ad Hoc Liaison Committee will give us the opportunity to work together with major donors and international organisations towards reinvigorating the PA’s viability and institutional capacity. We will even go one step further, using this high-level international gathering to build support for the “Emergency Coalition for Palestine.” Launched together with Saudi Arabia, Norway and France, this initiative will mobilise additional financial support to shore up the PA’s budget.

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SPORTS

MAJOREVENTS



Ali bin Said Fadhil, Chairman of the Committee, stressed the importance of securing sustainable financial support for the OMSC.

OMAN MARINE SPORTS COMMITTEE SETS 2-YEAR PLAN

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 24

Oman Marine Sports Committee (OMSC) convened its meeting on Wednesday, chaired by Ali bin Said Fadhil, with the participation of board members. The session focused on reviewing achievements of the last phase and setting a clear direction for the committee's work over the next two years, aiming to strengthen Oman's position on the regional and international marine sports map.

Abdulaziz al Shidi, Head of the Sailing and Rowing Committee, presented a detailed report highlighting progress made on local, regional and international fronts, underlining the growing presence of Omani teams in key competitions.

Ali bin Said Fadhil, Chairman of the Committee, stressed the importance of securing sustainable financial support to ensure the committee's continuity and expansion of its programmes, also noted the formation of new sub committees, comprising members from the board as well as external experts to enhance the committee's operational capacity.

The chairman emphasised the need to develop a plan for the next two years, focusing on hosting major championships and preparing national teams for upcoming commitments.

Among the most significant events, Oman is set to host the 2025 Optimist Asian & Oceanian Championship, scheduled to begin on October 25 at Musannah Sailing School, Barcelo Resort. The championship will feature over 180 sailors from 26 countries across Asia and Oceania, competing in a week long regatta under ideal sailing conditions. This will mark the second time Musannah hosts the event, following its successful edition in 2019, further enhancing Oman's reputation as a world class destination for international sailing events.

Earlier this year, Musannah Sailing School was recognised as an 'A' Category High Performance Centre by the Asian Sailing Federation (ASAF), underscoring its capability to stage elite international regattas and training camps.

Concluding the meeting, members reaffirmed that hosting such prestigious events not only raises the level of Oman's national teams but also contributes to sports tourism.

Round 3 of Elite League to shape early title race

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 24

THE third round of the Elite Football League 2025-2026 will kick off on Thursday, featuring competitive encounters between teams, given the close levels and the clubs' pursuit of strengthening their positions in the standings.

Sur Club will open their third round campaign against Samayil Club at Sur Sports Complex at 17:15, with both teams eager to recover from their previous results and secure their first three points.

At nearly the same time, League leaders Bahla with six points will face Al Rustaq at Al Rustaq Sports Complex at 17:20. Bahla hope to continue their strong start and cement the lead on top, while Al Rustaq searches for their first points in the league.

The day concludes with a fiery clash between Al Nahda (4 points) and Saham, who have one point. Saham will aim to improve their performance, while Al Nahda seek to capitalise on their technical stability and solid defence to challenge for the top spots. This match could shape the early competition for the summit.

FRIDAY MATCHES

The round continues on Friday, September 26, with a match between Al Shabab and Oman Club at 17:15 at Seeb Stadium. Al Shabab enter the game with confidence, having collected six points while conceding only one goal so far. On the other hand, Oman (3 points) is keen to regain balance after inconsistent results, as another loss could push them down the standings early.

Later, at 19:45 at Salalah's Al Saada Sports Complex, Al Nasr (third with 6 points) will meet Dhofar. The 'Royals' will be looking to bounce back from their previous round defeat and reenter the competition, as they remain without any points.

SATURDAY MATCHES

The round concludes on Saturday, September 27, with two matches. The first at 17:25 will see Khabourah face Ibri at Buraimi Sports Complex. Both teams sit with one point each from two games, separated by goal difference. This match will be crucial for both sides to escape the lower ranks and secure mid table stability.

The last match takes place at Seeb Stadium at 19:45, where Seeb (sixth with 4 points) face second-placed Sohar. It promises to be a highly competitive encounter between two of this season's



The last match is at Seeb Stadium at 19:45, where Seeb (sixth with 4 points) face second-placed Sohar.

strongest contenders.

Bahla enter the third round at the top of the table on goal difference, tied on points (six) with Sohar, Al Nasr, and Al Shabab. Seeb and Al Nahda (four points each) are also close behind, pressing for the lead. Meanwhile, clubs without any points yet, such as Al Rustaq and Sur, face a tough

challenge to recover from their shaky starts.

The third round will serve as a crucial checkpoint in shaping the early race for the Elite League title, as Omani football fans anticipate thrilling matches that will influence the course of the competition.

21 teams to compete in fifth edition of Oman Corporate League

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 24

The stage is set for 21 teams to compete at the highly anticipated fifth edition of 2025 Oman Corporate League (OCL). The action will kick off on Sunday to mark the continuation of one of Oman's most prestigious corporate sporting competitions.

The official draw ceremony for both the OCL and the Expatriate Communities League took place on Wednesday under the auspices of Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish, Consul of South Africa in Muscat. The event was attended by senior officials, corporate representatives, sports figures and media, highlighting the growing importance of amateur football in Oman.

The participating teams in the OCL are divided into two main categories, with Category A designated for the elite teams vying for a place in the 2025 World Socca Championship. Group A comprised PDO 1, Nama, Marafiq and Sohar International. Group B was further subdivided into three

pools including: Pool A featured Ooredoo, Oman LNG, MDO, Majid Al Futtaim and Daleel Petroleum while Pool B comprised Abraj Energy, OTE, Mazoon Dairy and Al Bustan Hotel. Pool C saw Voltamp Energy, BP Oman, Oman Arab Bank and MB Petroleum teams.

Meanwhile, six teams will contest the Expatriate Communities League, split into two groups. Group A featured Syria, Iran and Egypt, while Group B included Sudan, Morocco and Algeria.

EXPANDING AMATEUR FOOTBALL

Waleed bin Juma al Obidani, Chairman of Socca in the Middle East and Executive Director of Sports Makers in Oman, delivered a speech in the draw ceremony and he emphasised the company's vision to promote amateur football. "Since 2017, we have been working hard to develop amateur football teams in Oman. The Socca tournaments for both corporate and expatriate communities provide a vital platform to strengthen the amateur sports sector at all levels, from workplace to



The official draw ceremony for both the OCL and the Expatriate Communities League took place on Wednesday under the auspices of Lujaina Mohsin Aider Darwish, Consul of South Africa in Muscat.

grassroots," he said.

He commented on the link between community-based tournaments and international recognition: "We are very proud that the World Socca Championship, which Oman successfully hosted last year, was inspired by the Socca Social Expatriate Community tournament,"he ended.

The draw ceremony also featured a documentary film revisiting memorable chapters from the World Socca Championship in Oman last year, underlining the tournament's success and its positive impact on the local sports landscape. The evening concluded with the presentation of awards to Socca ambassadors and prominent sports personalities who have played key roles in promoting the sport.

Oman had made history in the Socca World Championship in the last edition as they beat Kazakhstan 2-1 in the final in a penalty shootout to secure the Socca World Cup 2024 title. Croatia team claimed the bronze medal after a 2-0 victory over Romania in the third-place playoff.

SHORT TAKES



Oman Cricket (OC) has announced the extension of its partnership with Skechers.

OMAN CRICKET EXTENDS GLOBAL BRAND PARTNERSHIP

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket (OC) has announced the extension of its partnership with Skechers, which will continue as an Official Team Partner for the ICC T20 World Cup Asia EAP Qualifiers 2025, taking place in Muscat this October.

The collaboration, facilitated by ITW Consulting, follows Skechers’ successful association with Oman during the Asia Cup 2025, and will once again see the brand featured on the back of the national team’s jersey.

Alkesh Joshi, OC Treasurer, said: “We are delighted to extend our partnership with Skechers beyond the Asia Cup and into the ICC T20 World Cup Asia EAP Qualifiers. Their support comes at a crucial time as our team strives to secure a place in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026. This partnership reinforces Oman Cricket’s position as a high-performing nation and our commitment to building a stronger future for the game in Oman.”

A Skechers Middle East spokesperson added: “Skechers is proud to continue its association with the Oman cricket team. This collaboration reflects our shared values of performance, comfort, and resilience. As cricket unites nations on the international stage, we are honoured to stand alongside Oman once again and support their pursuit of excellence.”

Oman’s Asia Cup 2025 campaign recently saw the team go head-to-head with regional heavyweights India and Pakistan. The spirited performances on such a major stage underlined the team’s rapid growth and growing reputation in global cricket, providing the perfect momentum ahead of the high-stakes qualifiers at home.

TABILO STUNS MUSETTI TO WIN CHENGDU OPEN



Chile’s Alejandro Tabilo poses with the trophy after winning against Italy’s Lorenzo Musetti in the final at the Chengdu Open tournament. — AFP

CHINA: Qualifier Alejandro Tabilo stunned world number nine Lorenzo Musetti 6-3 2-6 7-6(5) to win the Chengdu Open on Tuesday, while French Open quarter-finalist Alexander Bublik edged Valentin Royer 7-6(4) 7-6(4) in the Hangzhou Open final.

Tabilo saved two match points to force a tiebreak in the third set and set up his own championship point with a drop-shot. The 28-year-old fell to the floor as exhausted Musetti’s forehand hit the net, sealing the Chilean’s third ATP 250 title. “It’s been a very, very tough year. Lots of injuries. So, just being here right now, it’s unbelievable. I still can’t believe it,” said Tabilo, ranked 112th in the world.

Italy’s Musetti, who reached the French Open semi-finals this year, has now lost the Chengdu Open final twice in a row, having gone down to China’s Shang Juncheng last year. “It’s a tough night for me, I guess. Probably was not my day,” said Musetti, who has now lost five consecutive finals on the ATP tour. “It’s three years now that I’ve made some finals but never lifted a trophy. (But) every time we’re a step closer, so hopefully next is the lucky one.”

Bublik’s Hangzhou Open triumph has made him the second most successful singles player on the ATP tour so far this year with four titles behind Carlos Alcaraz who has lifted seven trophies. World No 19 Bublik was tested by French qualifier Royer in the final as neither player could break serve, with both sets going to a tie-break. — Reuters



Pakistan’s Haris Rauf (C) bowls during the Asia Cup 2025 Super Four Twenty20 match against Sri Lanka at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

Pakistan stay alive in Asia Cup with win over Lanka

PAKISTAN

kept their Asia Cup campaign alive with a hard-fought five-wicket win over Sri Lanka in a Super Four clash in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

With both teams having lost their opening fixtures of the second round, defeat wasn't an option and Pakistan's bowlers rose to the occasion tying Sri Lanka down to 133-8 on a featherbed of a pitch.

Chasing what looked a modest target, Pakistan made heavy weather of it. After a brisk opening stand of 45, their innings went into free fall at 80-5.

But a cool-headed 58-run partnership off 41 balls for the sixth wicket between Mohammad Nawaz and Hussain Talat steadied the ship and saw them home with 12 deliveries in hand.

Nawaz struck a breezy 38 off 24 balls, while Talat anchored the innings with an unbeaten 32 off 30.

Sri Lanka’s Kamindu Mendis plays a shot during the Asia Cup 2025 Super Four Twenty20 match against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

Earlier, Shaheen Shah Afridi set the tone with the new ball, nipping out Sri Lanka’s in-form openers inside his first two overs.

The left-arm quick returned at the death to dismiss top-scorer Kamindu Mendis and closed with figures of three for 28 — a spell

that put Pakistan on the front foot.

Talat and Haris Rauf chipped in with two wickets apiece, while leggie Abrar Ahmed bowled with miserly precision, giving away just eight runs in his four overs and dismissing fellow leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga.

Sri Lanka, unbeaten in the first round with three wins on the trot, have hit a brick wall in the Super Four, losing to Bangladesh on Saturday and now to Pakistan.

With only India left to play, their chances of making the final are hanging by a thread.

Put in to bat, Sri Lanka slumped to 58-5 and looked set to be bundled out inside 20 overs.

But Kamindu Mendis dug in, compiling a fighting 50 off 44 balls with three fours and two sixes, his third half-century in T20Is.

He stitched together a 43-run stand with Chamika Karunaratne for the seventh wicket, but the former champions were still left high and dry. — AFP

Omani runners compete at Bosnia Marathon

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 24

Omani runners are increasingly making their mark on the global stage, promoting the Sultanate of Oman through their participation and achievements in various international and local running events.

This growing presence highlights Oman's natural beauty and cultural heritage, while also fostering a vibrant sports culture within the country.

Recent successes include the Bosnia Marathon 2025, where Omani athletes Hamed al Mahrouqi and Abdullah al Numani, successfully finished 21 km half marathon in Bosnia. Their aim was to promote Oman while representing Muscat Road Runners. They started their running career in 2010.

Hamed did 80 half marathons, nine full marathons and four ultra marathons in different parts of the world.

For Al Mahrouqi taking part in various marathons around the world means promoting Oman. “I feel proud when I see myself at such events. It makes

me feel fit while doing my small bit to tell the world about Oman,” he said.

Al Numani, 50, who has participated in different marathons in various countries, said: “I always participate in international events whenever I can. I am doing my part to promote my country Oman.”

“Also, the marathon is not really about winning, it’s about fitness. Toeing the starting line of a marathon, regardless of the language we speak, or the colour of your skin, we all stand as equal. Perhaps the world would be a better place if more people run,” Al Numani added.

Oman itself hosts significant running events that attract international participants, further showcasing its diverse landscapes. The Himam Trail Run Race, for instance, has become the largest event of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region, with over 4,000 competitors from 65 countries.

Similarly, the International Mountain Running Challenge, organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), highlights Oman’s mountainous



Omani athletes Hamed al Mahrouqi and Abdullah al Numani, successfully finished 21 km half marathon in Bosnia.

terrains and aims to rejuvenate tourism.

These events, featuring various race categories for all ages, underscore the strong

passion for physical activity in the community and aim to build a generation of athletes capable of representing Oman internationally.

SPORTS

CYCLINGWORLDS



Australia's Michael Matthews, Lucas Plapp, Jay Vine, Brodie Chapman, Amanda Spratt and Felicity Wilson-Haffenden celebrate on the podium after winning the team time trial mixed relay. — Reuters

AUSTRALIA CLINCH TENSE MIXED RELAY WORLD TITLE

KIGALI: Australia won the mixed relay at the cycling worlds in Kigali on Wednesday after edging France and Switzerland in a nail-biting finale.

The Australian men Luke Plapp, Michael Matthews and Jay Vine were on their feet cheering as Felicity Wilson-Haffenden, Brodie Chapman and Amanda Spratt raced up the last hill of the closing leg of the relay win.

Having won the event last season Australia successfully defended their title with limited preparation on the 42.4km course just five seconds ahead of France and 10s ahead of Switzerland.

"It's not often we get the chance to ride with a full Aussie team," said top men's rider Matthews.

"We only arrived a couple of days ago and we didn't ride out there on the roads until yesterday," he said, explaining they had arrived for the elite road races that will be contested at the weekend.

"Today it all came good," beamed Matthews, known in the team as 'Bling' due to a penchant for diamond earrings.

The women were dragged gasping from their bikes after a ride at altitude and with high humidity.

"I knew it was going to be like hell, Brody was strong and I held her wheel. I could hear them (the men) screaming 'sprint, sprint sprint' coming to the close" said Spratt.

Combining men and women the event was created in 2020 with three male riders completing a lap and the women going down the starters ramp when the men finish theirs.

There were 16 nations riding Wednesday with five of them from Africa - Benin, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Rwanda and Uganda. — AFP

Real Madrid thrash Levante as Mbappe hits brace

REAL Madrid extended their winning start to La Liga with a comfortable 4-1 triumph at Levante on Tuesday. Kylian Mbappe scored twice to reach seven league goals in six matches as Xabi Alonso's side maintained their 100 per cent record. Vinicius Junior opened the scoring with a superb finish and Franco Mastantuono was also on target for the league leaders.

Second-placed Barcelona visit Real Oviedo on Thursday, with the Spanish champions trailing Madrid by five points.

"It was a very good game, from the start, we were really committed in defence and the first goal was fundamental, to go ahead and give us confidence," said Alonso.

Vinicius was unhappy to be taken off by Alonso during the win over Espanyol on Saturday but the Brazilian winger started on the left flank and delivered.

Since coming second to Manchester City's Rodri in last year's Ballon d'Or rankings Vinicius has struggled for consistency.

However, he found his rhythm at the Ciutat de Valencia stadium and opened the scoring after 28 minutes, following a bright start to the game.

"Vini had a very complete, very good game and I am very happy for him," said Alonso.

Valencia goalkeeper Mathew Ryan made a good save to deny Vinicius and Mastantuono hit the bar from the rebound as Los Blancos threatened in the opening stages.

Then fed by Fede Valverde on the right of the box, Vinicius used the outside of his right boot to bend a sumptuous effort in at the far post. Ivan Romero and Adrian de la Fuente came close for Levante in the opening stages but they were forced back and Madrid found their second when Vinicius set up



Real Madrid's French forward Kylian Mbappe kicks the ball next to Espanyol's Urko Gonzalez. — AFP

Mastantuono, who rifled into the top corner.

It was the promising 18-year-old attacker's first goal for the club since his summer switch from River Plate. Ryan denied Vinicius with a good stop from close range before half-time. Levante striker Karl Etta Eyong, in fine form himself at the start of the season, nodded home his fourth goal from close range after Romero's cross was deflected and looped into the air.

It offered Levante a brief glimmer of hope but that was quickly quashed by Mbappe.

Unai Elgezabal clumsily brought down the French superstar in the box and Mbappe

cheekily dinked the resulting penalty down the middle for the third. Then two minutes later the forward, released by Arda Guler, rounded Ryan and tapped home his second of the night.

Mbappe struggled in his first few months at Madrid after joining from Paris Saint-Germain in the summer of 2024, but hit top form in the second half of the season.

Villarreal earned a late 2-1 win at Sevilla to rise to third in the table, above fourth-placed Espanyol who drew 2-2 at Valencia.

Bottom side Girona earned a creditable 1-1 draw at Athletic Bilbao, fifth. — AFP

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Liverpool, Chelsea win in League Cup

LONDON: Alexander Isak scored his first Liverpool goal to inspire a 2-1 win against Southampton in the League Cup third round, while Chelsea survived a scare to beat third-tier Lincoln on Tuesday.

Isak was making his third appearance for Liverpool since his British record £125 million (\$169 million) move from Newcastle on transfer deadline day.

The 26-year old had drawn a blank in his 58-minute debut appearance against Atletico Madrid and also failed to net after coming off the bench for the last 23 minutes of Saturday's Merseyside derby win over Everton.

But Isak got off the mark in the 43rd minute as Southampton goalkeeper Alex McCarthy tried a short pass that was intercepted by Federico Chiesa, who picked out the Sweden striker to fire home.

It was a belated birthday present for Isak, who turned 26 on Sunday.

Isak, who had scored for Newcastle in their League Cup final win against Liverpool last season, was taken off at half-time as he builds up his fitness after missing pre-season training while his transfer was being negotiated. Shea Charles equalised for the Championship side in the 76th minute with a close-range finish after a wayward header from Liverpool's Wataru Endo.

Arne Slot had made 11 changes from the Everton game but substitute Hugo Ekitike saved Liverpool's understudies from a penalty shoot-out when he finished off Chiesa's pass in the 85th minute.



Lincoln City's Justin Obikwu in action with Chelsea's Marc Cucurella and Andrey Santos. — Reuters

The French striker took off his shirt to celebrate and was dismissed for a second bookable offence.

Chelsea were in danger of a humiliating exit after boss Enzo Maresca made eight changes following the 2-1 defeat at Manchester United on Saturday. In their first meeting with Chelsea since 1911, Lincoln took the lead thanks to a Blues blunder in the 42nd minute.

Enzo Fernandez's careless pass inside his own penalty area was intercepted by Ivan Varfolomeev before it reached the dawdling Malo Gusto.

Varfolomeev headed on to Rob Street and he guided a composed

finish past Filip Jorgensen from 12 yards.

Chelsea had lost their last two games against United and Bayern Munich. But Tyrrique George got them back on track three minutes into the second half with a half-volley that crashed in off the post.

Facundo Buonanotte put Maresca's men in front after 50 minutes, dancing through the Lincoln defence before slotting home.

Burnley crashed to a shock 2-1 defeat against third-tier Cardiff at Turf Moor. Clarets boss Scott Parker paid the price for changing his entire team from last weekend's game against Nottingham Forest. — AFP



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SHORTTAKES



Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), was nominated as President of the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly.

OMAN’S CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY PRESIDENT CHAIRS ICAO ASSEMBLY

BUSINESS REPORTER
MONTREAL, SEPT 24

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has announced the nomination of Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) of the Sultanate of Oman, as President of the 42nd Session of the ICAO Assembly.

The session opened on Tuesday at ICAO headquarters in Montreal, Canada, bringing together 193 Member States and 18 specialised international organisations from across the civil aviation sector. Held every three years, the Assembly represents the highest global forum for civil aviation governance and policy.

Eng al Abri’s election reflects the culmination of a distinguished career marked by extensive national and international experience, recognised expertise and adept leadership in managing complex strategic files. He has overseen significant national achievements in aviation safety oversight, air navigation and aviation security, in addition to his successful leadership of the Muscat Declaration (2024) on international civil aviation security, a milestone in Oman’s aviation record that reinforced the country’s global standing in the sector.

In his opening address, Eng al Abri stated: “Assuming the presidency of this Assembly is a source of pride and honour, reflecting the international community’s confidence in the Sultanate of Oman and its accomplishments in civil aviation”. He added: “I stand today supported by our beloved nation, Oman and its wise leadership, guided by a visionary approach and a steadfast commitment to international cooperation, to serve this Assembly and contribute to our shared mission”.

Highlighting the critical role of international collaboration, he said: “We gather at a pivotal moment for international air transport, as the sector faces cross-border challenges, from the global pandemic and economic fluctuations to rising geopolitical tensions.

Yet, our resilience and adaptability have been evident through cooperation, innovation and unwavering commitment to our shared mission: ensuring the safe and sustainable development of civil aviation”.

He also drew inspiration from Oman’s historical legacy: “Omani ships traversed the seas not in pursuit of domination, but to foster peace, tolerance and cultural and commercial exchange, a spirit that continues to guide us today in managing our skies and ensuring safe flights”.

Concluding his address, Eng al Abri emphasised the forward-looking priorities for global aviation: “The challenges before us are complex and demand our collective collaboration from accelerating digital transformation and reducing emissions to strengthening safety and security frameworks, ensuring fairness, sustainability and economic resilience; and leaving no country behind”.

OQ listing in MSX boosts confidence of investors

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 24

OQ’s Capital Markets Day, which coincided with the MEIRA Annual Conference, reaffirmed Oman’s growing relevance in the regional capital markets domain.

MEIRA 2025 attracted more than 900 participants and 100 institutional investors, with OQ standing at the forefront of the discussions on transparency, governance and sustainable growth. Its listed subsidiaries on the Muscat Stock Exchange have a combined market capitalisation of more than RO 4 billion, with dividends amounting to RO 212 million distributed year-to-date.

Presenting a consolidated investment narrative through its listed subsidiaries, OQ underscored the resilience of Oman’s energy sector as a sound platform for financial transformation, reaffirming itself as an engine for economic diversification and sustainable growth.

OQ Chief Portfolio Officer Azzan al Abdullatif stressed the importance of the occasion saying, “For the first time in the Sultanate of Oman, OQ has hosted a Capital Markets Day for its Muscat Stock Exchange-listed companies. The landmark event was conducted in tandem with the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA) Conference, demonstrating OQ’s push towards increased engagement with the

The forum builds on four IPOs launched over the past two years, which collectively reshaped Oman’s capital markets, attracted sustained international investment and added over 6 billion shares to trading volumes.



OQ’s Capital Markets Day was held alongside MEIRA 2025.

investment community”.

Al Abdullatif continued, “The initiative aims to enhance relations with investors by providing them with timely information and updates on the performance and prospects of OQ’s listed companies — matters that directly affect the value of shares and future growth. We in OQ affirm that its priority is to build closer relationships with investors, increase transparency and encourage greater communication with the market”.

Eng Mansoor bin Ali al Abdali, OQ Gas Networks CEO stated, “OQ Capital Markets Day was actively attended, where the company showcased its latest financial and operational performance. The session stirred extensive interest from investors, particularly from outside the Sultanate of Oman, a testament to the forum’s success in showcasing the strength and potential of local corporations. The initiative will contribute to further

developing and expanding Oman’s capital market”.

OQ subsidiaries underscored respective strengths: OQ Exploration & Production reaffirmed its shareholders’ returns through dividends and share buy-backs; OQ Gas Networks focused on regulated model and predictable cash flows; OQ Base Industries focused on financial discipline and growth agenda; Abraj Energy Services demonstrated operational expertise; and Musandam Power Company reaffirmed its stable dividend track record.

The forum builds on four IPOs launched over the past two years, which collectively reshaped Oman’s capital markets, attracted sustained international investment, and added over 6 billion shares to trading volumes. Supported by accredited market makers, the offerings improved transparency, liquidity and confidence.

Bounced cheques on the decline in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 24

The incidence of bounced cheques — also known as dishonoured or dud cheques — continues to trend downward, a development that bodes well for “reduced payment risks”, according to the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

A total of 311,764 cheques were branded as “unpaid” in 2024, down from 362,072 a year earlier, representing a decline of 13.89 per cent, the apex bank noted in its newly published Financial Stability Report 2025.

As a share of total cheques presented for clearing in 2024, bounced cheques accounted for 8.9 per cent of the total (3.5 million). This figure had slipped from 9.8 per cent of the 3.7 million cheques presented in 2023, “reflecting improved controls and overall better financial health”, the Central Bank report stated.



The continued decline in unpaid cheques and non-sufficient funds incidents reflects improvement in payment reliability and stronger financial discipline: CBO

Commenting on the downward trend in unpaid cheques in recent years, the Central Bank said: “The continued decline in unpaid cheques and non-sufficient funds incidents reflects improvement in payment reliability and stronger financial discipline. However,

technical errors such as stale cheques and early payments have shown a slight increase, highlighting areas for further improvement in payment system efficiency”.

Significantly, the total number of cheques presented for clearing also continued to decline in line with a gradual shift towards digital transactions, according to the report. It dipped 6.0 per cent to 3.5 million cheques in 2024, down from 3.7 million a year earlier.

Cases of ‘insufficient funds’, while the dominant reason for cheques being returned, dipped 12.2 per cent in 2024, indicating “better account balance management by customers and less use of cheques”, the report said.

The share of bounced cheques with a ‘refer to drawer’ citation — a generic catch-all term for problematic cheques — plummeted by a significant 43.7 per cent.

Similarly, instances of cheques marked ‘payment stopped/ payment stopped awaiting confirmation’ slumped 41.9 per cent. Those attributable to ‘account closed/frozen’ declined by 29.1 per cent, underscoring “enhanced bank customer engagement and fewer inactive or abandoned accounts”, the report explained.

Also contributing to the reduction in unpaid cheques are measures adopted by financial institutions to strengthen their cheque-clearing frameworks. “In parallel, the rising adoption of digital transactions and the implementation of more robust compliance practices are further supporting payment efficiency. As customers increasingly manage their accounts more effectively, the incidence of bounced cheques due to insufficient funds is expected to decline further”.

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SHORT TAKES



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MITSUBISHI RALLIART WINS FIRST PLACE AT AXCR

Mitsubishi Motors Corporation announced that Team Mitsubishi Ralliart secured first place in the Asia Cross Country Rally (AXCR) 2025, held in Thailand from August 8 to 16. The team competed with the L200 pickup truck (T1 specification, modified cross-country vehicle), covering a total of 2,316.32 kilometres, including 1,002.95 km of Special Stages. In the overall standings, driver Chayapon Yotha finished first with a total time of 16 hours, 15 minutes and 12 seconds. Teammates Katsuhiko Taguchi and Kazuto Koide placed fifth and 22nd respectively. The team also earned the Team Award, given to squads with three or more finishers based on the combined time of their top two vehicles, marking their second such achievement and the first in two years.

Team Director Hiroshi Masuoka said, “Winning was our top priority this year and I am thrilled we achieved it while showcasing the strength and spirit of Mitsubishi Motors. Securing the team award highlights the collective effort of Team Mitsubishi Ralliart. By refining the L200’s stability on high-speed stages and agility on winding roads, we gained a competitive edge over rivals with larger-displacement engines. Looking ahead, we will continue enhancing the vehicle to further boost competitiveness and maintain our position as a leading rally team”.

Driver Chayapon Yotha of Car #112 added, “I am truly happy to claim overall victory again, thanks to the entire team’s flawless support and the L200’s reliability. This year’s rally was extremely demanding, with rocky sections, mud and slippery terrain, but the vehicle’s durability and handling allowed me to stay in control and achieve top performance.

I am proud of what we accomplished and look forward to defending the championship next year”. For more information on the Mitsubishi L200 and the full range of Mitsubishi vehicles, call or WhatsApp 24500500, or visit a showroom in Al Athaiba, Al Maabela, Barka, Suhar, Nizwa, Ibri, Sur, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, or Salalah.

LOT marks milestone with seventh branch in Suhar

LOT, the value shop, has officially opened its seventh outlet in Falaj Al Qabail, Suhar, marking another milestone in the group's expansion in Oman. The store was inaugurated on September 20, in the presence of dignitaries, officials and customers. With six other branches in Bidiyah, Mall of Muscat, Wadi Al Lawami, Amerat Nujum Mall, Al Buraimi and Salalah, LOT continues to focus on offering accessible retail solutions at affordable prices. Shoppers can explore household essentials, kitchenware, travel

accessories, stationery, toys, seasonal fashion for men, women and kids, footwear, jewellery and ladies’ bags. A dedicated section features household products priced under 0.350 baisas. Speaking at the launch, a senior official said, “The opening of our seventh store reinforces our commitment to delivering quality products and an exceptional retail experience to customers across Oman. This expansion allows us to reach more communities and provide budget-friendly shopping while maintaining high standards of service and product variety”.

LOT continues to focus on offering accessible retail solutions at affordable prices.



LOT continues to focus on offering accessible retail solutions at affordable prices.

CBO Hosts CIBAFI workshop on Islamic Finance innovation

The General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions (CIBAFI) conducted a two-day Technical Workshop on “Driving Innovation in Islamic Finance: Exploring the Role of Digital Transformation, AI and Fintech”, hosted by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO). With digitalisation reshaping financial services, the workshop reflects CIBAFI’s commitment to helping Islamic banks build capacity, share knowledge and adopt practical solutions to remain competitive. Participants gained insights into developing digital transformation strategies, covering trends such as AI and fintech collaboration, data privacy, cybersecurity and talent management. The programme also highlighted successful case studies and practical steps for navigating



Participants gained insights into developing digital transformation strategies, covering trends such as AI and fintech collaboration, data privacy, cybersecurity and talent management.

innovation challenges in Islamic financial institutions. Zainab al Owainaty, CIBAFI Director of Administration and Finance, inaugurated the workshop, emphasising the role of digital transformation, AI and fintech in shaping Islamic finance. She highlighted CIBAFI’s support for banks through advocacy, research, training and advisory services, including working groups on sustainability and innovation and the Digital Momentum Guide. Representing CBO, Suhail al Zadjali, Acting Deputy Chief Financial Stability & Banks Supervision for Islamic Banking, stressed Oman’s commitment to fostering digital innovation in line with Oman Vision 2040. He noted that Islamic banks can leverage fintech and AI to enhance competitiveness and customer experience while maintaining Sharia compliance and financial stability. The workshop was facilitated by Dr Ahmed Tahiri Jouti, with insights from experts including Professor Hussein Abdou (Northumbria University) and Dr Philipp Wackerbeck and Maurice Schroff (Strategy&). In addition, CIBAFI, with the College of Sharia Sciences — Oman, hosted a public lecture on AI and fintech for students, delivered by Rachid Ettaai, highlighting the transformative impact of innovation on Islamic finance. CIBAFI, founded in 2001, supports over 140 members in 30+ jurisdictions, promoting advocacy, sustainability, research and professional development across the Islamic financial industry. The Central Bank of Oman regulates the banking sector, ensures monetary and financial stability.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



The seminar was held within the context of Oman's participation in the Marmomac International Exhibition currently taking place in the Italian city of Verona. — **ONA**

VERONA SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS MINING SECTOR INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

VERONA: The supervisory team for promoting Omani products (OPEX) organised a seminar titled "Investment Opportunities in the Marble Sector in the Sultanate of Oman" during its participation in the Marmomac International Exhibition for Stone, Architectural Design and Stone Technology, currently taking place in the city of Verona, Italy.

The seminar highlighted key investment opportunities in the marble sector across industrial cities in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. It also presented detailed on investment opportunities to be unveiled through the "Taqa" platform, as well as the incentives and facilitations included in the new investment regulations.

His Highness Sayyid Nizar bin Al Julanda al Said, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Italian Republic, emphasised that Oman's pavilion at the exhibition has had a strong presence due to its eye-catching design, the high quality and distinctive colours of Omani marble; and the services and facilitation provided by government entities to investors in this sector.

The mining sector is one of the main pillars of Oman Vision 2040. It is underpinned by modern regulations that protect investor rights, embraces digital technologies to simplify procedures and enhance transparency; and provides incentives that support sustainable growth of both local and international investments. — **ONA**

OMAN LNG SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH OQ

Oman LNG has signed a Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) with OQ Refineries and Petroleum Industries to supply natural gas liquids (NGLs) over a four-year period, starting in 2026. The agreement was signed by Hamad bin Mohammed al Numani, Chief Executive Officer of Oman LNG and Kamil bin Bukhait al Shanfari, Chief Executive Officer of OQ Refineries and Petroleum Industries.



Under the terms of the agreement, NGLs produced at Oman LNG's Qalhat complex in Sur will be transported to OQ's Suhar facilities. These liquids serve as feedstock for the production of fuels, chemicals and plastics. The supply is expected to contribute to the operations of Oman's downstream industries and aligns with the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040. — **ONA**

Oman's MSX, MEIRA unite to shape Mideast markets

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 24

UNDER the auspices of Ahmed bin Jaafar Al-Musalmi, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman, the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), in collaboration with the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA), hosted the MEIRA Annual Conference 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Wednesday.

The two-day event has attracte over 900 participants, including more than 150 institutional investors and 130 listed issuers, alongside policymakers, regulators, and capital market professionals from across the region and around the world. The agenda underscores the conference's standing as the region's leading forum dedicated to the advancement of investor relations and the promotion of sustainable capital market practices.

Haitham Al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) remarked, "Investor relations today are more than a corporate function—they are a strategic asset. By fostering transparent engagement with investors and



Muscat Stock Exchange and MEIRA jointly hosted the landmark MEIRA Annual Conference 2025

stakeholders, they help build trust, drive long-term value, and support institutional goals."

Al Salmi added, "Together, we move towards more diverse, resilient economies and world-class financial markets capable of attracting investment and delivering sustainable growth."

Andrew Tarbuck, Chairman, Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA), stated: "The size and energy of today's gathering clearly signal that we have not only a quorum, but a powerful mandate to advance the practice of investor relations — not just for the benefit of the Middle East, but for global capital markets as a whole.

It is time we stop viewing ourselves merely as a regional

player. The Middle East is now a vital participant on the global financial stage. The work MEIRA has undertaken over the past year reflects this shift. From deepening market transparency to fostering stronger corporate engagement, the progress has been nothing short of remarkable.

This event also highlights Oman's growing stature as a compelling destination for the global capital markets community. The level of participation and dialogue we've seen here is a testament to the region's ambition and the global relevance of its investor relations professionals".

Paolo Casamassima, CEO at MEIRA remarked, "In

recent years, we've witnessed remarkable developments across the region: stock exchanges expanding, global asset managers establishing offices in key hubs such as Riyadh and Dubai; and a steady flow of new listings entering the market. Sovereigns and corporates alike are embracing greater transparency and active engagement, with investor relations now firmly embedded at the heart of corporate strategy. What was once considered a 'nice-to-have' has become a strategic necessity — a recognised, essential function that connects companies with investors, regulators and wider society", he added.

Public services governance panel announces 641 contract jobs

MUSCAT: The Public Services Sector Governance and In-Country Value Committee, chaired by Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) and Head of the Basic Services Sector; and in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, has announced the launch of 641 new permanent contract jobs through the digital platform "Tawteen".

This brings the total number of jobs announced by the Committee since the beginning of this year to 2,148, reflecting its ongoing commitment to supporting employment and increasing the participation of national talent in the labour market.

This announcement aligns with national efforts aimed at empowering the Omani workforce and creating an enabling work



Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) and Head of the Basic Services Sector, presiding over the meeting of the Public Services Sector Governance and In-Country Value Committee. — **ONA**

environment that contributes to enhancing in-country value and achieving sustainable development.

The announced jobs cover areas such as electricity, water, wastewater, service contracts and maintenance, in cooperation with companies regulated by the Authority for Public Services Regulation, addressing the needs of the local market and supporting Oman's economic growth trajectory. The Committee called on job seekers to apply for these opportunities through the "Tawteen" digital platform, emphasising that this step is a key milestone in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

This vision aims to build a sustainable economy based on innovation and effective

partnerships while providing quality job opportunities that raise Omanisation rates and enhance the contribution of economic sectors to the GDP.

The Committee reaffirmed its strong focus on employment as one of the main pillars of national development.

It stressed its ongoing efforts to implement the strategic objectives of regulated sectors and ensure their alignment with economic development priorities, with an emphasis on developing and qualifying national talent and creating an attractive work environment that strengthens the active presence of Omani workforce in driving economic development and enhancing the national employment ecosystem. — **ONA**

TARIFF TENSION

US to finalise Southeast Asia deals



The US expects to finalise trade deals with more Southeast Asian nations in the coming months, amidst concerns over tariffs. ASEAN ministers warned of slower trade in late 2025 and rising protectionism. Talks with Vietnam and Indonesia are ongoing. The US seeks "balanced and reciprocal" trade, while potential 100% tariffs on semiconductors raise further concerns. — **Reuters**

LOSS OF CONTROL

Ford recalls vehicles for defect



Ford Motor Co is recalling 115,539 vehicles in the US due to a defect that could cause the steering column's upper shaft to detach, potentially leading to a loss of steering control. The recall affects 2020–2021 F-250, F-350 and F-450 models. Ford dealers will inspect, repair, or replace the faulty component free of charge. — **Reuters**

GLOBAL EXPANSION

Alibaba expands AI, opens data centres



Alibaba plans to open data centres in Brazil, France and the Netherlands, with additional facilities in Mexico, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Dubai. The expansion supports its AI strategy, including a \$53.4 billion investment. At its Apsara Conference, Alibaba unveiled the Qwen3-Max model with 1 trillion parameters and announced a partnership with Nvidia. — **Reuters**

OPINION

Banks: key enablers of education & workforce development



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

BANKS worldwide play a pivotal role in promoting education and employing national cadres. They work in several ways, including providing tuition financing and student loans for higher education, both locally and internationally. They also finance to support universities and schools in developing infrastructure and offering partial or full scholarships to outstanding students. Omani banks have taken the initiative in providing such services in recent years, but they need to provide more to support educational, cultural and social trends in general. Recently, Meethaq Islamic Bank introduced several financing options in this regard. Education financing from such institutions is one of the preferred options for customers to achieve their academic goals and aspirations to complete various levels of education. Today, we see many banking institutions around the world supporting training and qualification programmes for students at various educational levels, especially university students. These institutions receive university and college students and provide them with the necessary practical training, in addition to providing employment programmes for national graduates and preparing them for banking work. They also continue to provide ongoing

training in various banking units for overall benefit and with the goal of developing the skills of national cadres through specialised training programmes. Banks also contribute to supporting scientific research and innovation in educational fields and sponsoring educational conferences and seminars. This enables them to strengthen strategic partnerships and cooperate with ministries of education and universities to design programmes that meet the needs of the labour market. In the Sultanate of Oman, many Omani banks play an active role in financing educational programmes. At the forefront of this work is the significant role played by the Central Bank of Oman, through its continuous guidance and encouragement to commercial banks to support educational institutions and provide them with the necessary funding. This is in addition to participating in the training of Omani cadres in the fields of banking and finance. Furthermore, an annual budget is allocated to the bank's College of Banking and Financial Studies to allocate study places for Omanis wishing to study banking, finance, insurance, accounting, auditing and other programmes required by banking and financial institutions. This is achieved within the framework of policy guidance for commercial banks to support the education sector as part of their

In the Sultanate of Oman, many Omani banks play an active role in financing educational programmes. At the forefront of this work is the significant role played by the Central Bank of Oman, through its continuous guidance and encouragement to commercial banks to support educational institutions and provide them with the necessary funding.

social responsibility, while simultaneously supporting the governance framework and establishing controls and regulations for financing education. Today, the major commercial banks supporting education in Oman are numerous. Some offer loans specifically for students studying inside or outside Oman, some participate in establishing partnerships with numerous universities, and some offer scholarships, which should be increased for both studies inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman, as part of their social responsibility. Some Omani banks are also working on community initiatives to improve the quality of education, while others offer interest-free educational loans with grace periods for students, in addition to sponsoring student activities. In general, these banking institutions face many challenges from their perspective when financing educational programmes in Oman. These challenges include financing risks and the lack of collateral, as most students lack sufficient collateral. Furthermore, it is difficult to follow up with graduates after that due to graduates changing jobs or residence. Other challenges relate to operational matters, as well as the need to analyse students' creditworthiness and monitor repayment of small loans, which are relatively expensive for these banking institutions.

QUESTIONS OVER NVIDIA’S \$100 BN OPENAI DEAL

STEPHEN NELLIS

Nvidia’s plan to invest up to \$100 billion into OpenAI while supplying millions of its market-leading AI chips to the ChatGPT creator has little precedent in the tech industry. Under the deal, Nvidia will take a financial stake in one of its largest customers, but without receiving voting power, according to a person close to OpenAI. The company will receive only part of the capital needed for its ambitious supercomputer projects. Nvidia’s initial \$10 billion investment would fund one gigawatt of computing capacity using its next-generation Vera Rubin chips, with build-out beginning in the second half of 2026. The financial questions are significant. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang said in August that AI data centres cost about \$50 billion per gigawatt of capacity, with \$35 billion spent on Nvidia’s chips and gear. Nvidia has committed \$10 billion per gigawatt for OpenAI, leaving about \$40 billion in additional funding per gigawatt still required. OpenAI has not disclosed how it will cover those costs, whether through other investors, debt financing, or a deeper role from strategic partners such as Microsoft. Another uncertainty is structural. OpenAI, currently a non-profit, is pursuing conversion into a public benefit corporation to raise money more easily and potentially go public. Microsoft, an early backer, has supported the plan, though it still requires state approvals. Nvidia’s initial \$10 billion commitment will not begin until both sides finalise terms and it remains unclear whether investment flows depend on OpenAI’s conversion. OpenAI’s valuation is also in focus. The company is currently valued at \$500 billion and Nvidia’s first \$10 billion investment would be at that level. But neither side provided a timeline for the full 10 gigawatts or the remaining \$90 billion. It is unclear whether subsequent investments would be priced at the current valuation or future ones, which could affect how the market views OpenAI’s worth. Investors are also watching how much dilution existing shareholders, including Microsoft, may face as OpenAI raises more capital. The deal could also intensify competition in the AI chip market. Nvidia may allocate a significant portion of its scarce processors to one customer in which it holds equity, raising questions about whether rivals such as Anthropic, or even Microsoft, will retain equal access. It also casts doubt on whether AMD can secure meaningful sales to major AI companies as it rolls out its own accelerators. The agreement may also reshape cloud computing economics. Earlier this month, Oracle said it had signed “hundreds of billions” in contracts with OpenAI and other large customers, sending its stock higher and boosting co-founder Larry Ellison’s wealth. Ratings agencies questioned whether OpenAI had the resources to pay for such deals, but Nvidia’s capital commitments could help underpin Oracle’s revenue outlook. — Reuters

COMPETITION

in dealmaking remains intense while Japanese bank Mizuho looks to break into the top 10 investment banks in Europe after making a handful of dealmaking acquisitions. Mizuho wants to emulate its US push in Emea (Europe, Middle East, Africa) by moving up the rankings, according to Slava Slavinskiy, the head of its corporate and investment banking team in the region. The bank added 370 dealmakers to its rank when it acquired boutique investment bank Greenhill for \$550 million in 2023. This boosted its M&A fees significantly and it has ambitions to become a top 10 player in the US as a result. “We eventually need to get to the same place (in Emea)”, said Slavinskiy, who has previously worked at Citigroup and Deutsche Bank, “No investment bank is globally successful without having a significant presence in Emea”. Mizuho had revealed on July 25 that it had acquired specialist energy boutique Augusta & CO in a fresh European push. The firm will form Mizuho’s new renewables investment banking division and add 40 dealmakers to its London team. Slavinskiy said Mizuho has built “global M&A sector coverage” with a particular focus on renewables, healthcare and technology. These are the “sectors of the future” when it comes to dealmaking activity, he added. “We are also heavily invested from hiring into infrastructure”, he said. “This is from an advisory, structured finance and supporting finance products perspective. We are top seven in leveraged finance, so that helps enormously to penetrate infrastructure funds of private equity. What we are adding is infrastructure sector and knowledge”. Mizuho is 25th in the Emea investment banking fee league table, according to data provider Dealogic. It is 14th globally and in the US, where it has made gains. The



Mizuho is 25th in the Emea investment banking fee league table, according to data provider Dealogic. It is 14th globally and in the US, where it has made gains. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

Japanese bank will soon welcome Matthew Ponsonby as president and CEO of Mizuho International. Ponsonby has spent the past seven years as head of UK global banking at BNP Paribas, helping build out its London dealmaking functions as it upped its investment banking ambitions in Europe. During the 2020 Covid pandemic, with Ponsonby in charge, BNP Paribas continued to offer financing to clients in desperate need of capital even as some rivals pulled back, pushing it to third in the investment banking league tables in Emea that year. Under Ponsonby, BNP Paribas’s mantra for its UK business was “no excuses”. But a top 10 position has remained elusive. It is currently in 11th place in the UK investment banking league tables, according to Dealogic, with \$67 million and a 2.1 per cent market share. The French bank has not broken into the top 10 since 2020. The UK accounts for around 30 per cent of the European investment banking fee pool and is key to gaining ground in the region. Part of

BNP Paribas’ strategy was to create a corporate banking platform, which is seen as integral to securing a position on UK advisory deals. There has been considerable consolidation in the sector, including Deutsche Bank’s acquisition of London broker Numis for £410 million in 2023. But Slavinskiy said Mizuho is focused on building sector expertise, rather than looking to expand into corporate broking. “We look at this from a talent perspective, so a team lift out could give us a better result than an acquisition from corporate broking”, he said. “It takes a long time to build and I have seen disappointed corporate brokers not getting strategic business. The structure to support it is very costly”. Slavinskiy said Mizuho bank is also looking to hire in the Middle East, which has become a hot spot for both hedge funds and investment banks. He had been in interviewing in Dubai and Abu Dhabi last month, he said. “We have around 75 people on the ground, but we are quite ambitious in this area”.

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L I F E S T Y L E

FROM A 15-YEAR-OLD BOY ON HORSEBACK TO THE LEADER OF OMAN’S EQUESTRIAN HERITAGE REVIVAL >20



FASHION

A model walks the runway during the Alberta Ferretti collection show at Milan’s Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2026. — AFP

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



LIFESTYLE

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova presents her collection of Chinese teapots as part of the exhibition “The Magic of Purple Clay” at the Museum of the East. — AFP



MUSIC

French film music composer Cyril Morin poses with his commemorative compilation “25 Years Soundtracks” during a photo session in Paris. — AFP

CHANGING WORLD

Why do we spend more when cheaper options are available?



SHADDAD AL MUSALMI
The writer is a Senior Editor at the Oman Daily Observer.

WHETHER salaries are increased or not, our circumstances will not change unless we resolve to spend wisely. It is a common observation that consumers often spend more on certain services despite the availability of more affordable alternatives offering comparable quality. This phenomenon can be attributed to a complex interplay of factors, including brand perception, perceived value, convenience and a lack of awareness regarding cheaper options.

The primary reason people spend more on certain services when cheaper alternatives exist is often a combination of brand loyalty, perceived higher quality or convenience associated with the more expensive option and a lack of comprehensive information or time to research more economical choices.

This behaviour is not necessarily irrational, as the perceived benefits, whether real or imagined, can outweigh the monetary savings for some consumers. For instance, why don't we go to a barber's shop that charges RO 1 and instead go where RO 3 is charged, yet we receive the same service? Why would we want to spend RO 25 at the tailor when we can get the same service for RO 8? Also, many of us buy a cup of tea that costs RO 1.5 when 100 baisa chai is available.

And many times, a consumer might choose a well-known, higher-priced brand of coffee over a generic one due to a consistent taste profile and a pleasant in-store experience, even if the generic option offers similar caffeine content at a lower price.

In the travel industry, many travellers opt for full-service airlines despite budget carriers offering significantly lower fares for the same route, often valuing the included amenities, baggage allowance and perceived reliability of the former.

The psychological aspect of “you get what you pay for” also plays a significant role, leading consumers to believe that a higher price inherently equates to superior quality, even when evidence suggests otherwise.

This cognitive bias can be particularly strong in services where the quality is subjective or difficult to assess before consumption, such as consulting or personal training.

Furthermore, the convenience factor cannot be overstated. In today's fast-paced world, the time and effort required to research and switch to a cheaper alternative can be a deterrent, leading individuals to stick with familiar, albeit more expensive, options.

This is particularly evident in subscription services, where the inertia of cancelling and signing up for a new service can be enough to keep consumers paying for a service they might not fully utilise or could obtain cheaper elsewhere.

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Lego buys entertainment centres from Madame Tussauds owner Merlin for \$270m

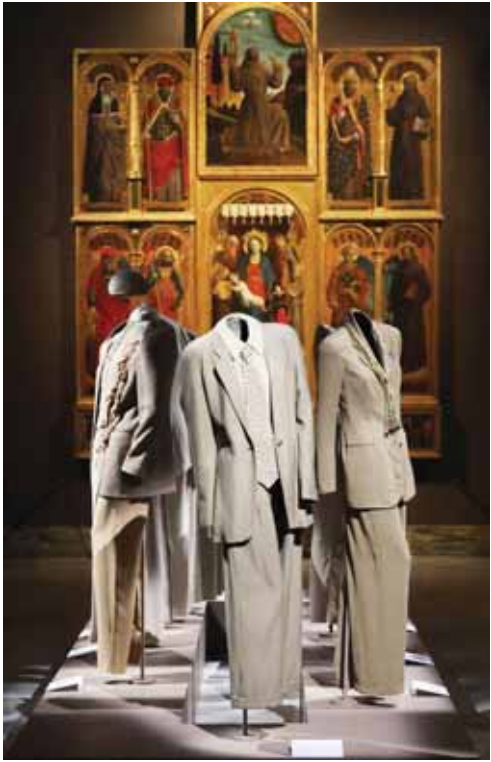


DANISH toymaker Lego said on Wednesday it will buy 29 discovery centres from theme park operator Merlin Entertainments in a 200 million pounds (\$269.5 million) deal, in line with a strategy to strengthen control over consumer interactions with its brand. The indoor entertainment venues featuring Lego building zones, creative workshops and retail outlets have around five million visitors per year, the companies said in a joint statement. "They will be an important addition to our global network of retail stores and allow us to offer fans of all ages even more memorable hands-on brand and shopping experiences", Lego CEO Niels Christiansen said in a

statement. The maker of colourful plastic bricks has expanded its store footprint in recent years, taking the global total to some 1,079 branded stores in 54 markets. Merlin, which also operates attractions such as the Madame Tussauds wax museums and the London Eye observation wheel, will continue to run 11 Legoland theme parks globally under licence from Lego, the companies said. Of the discovery centres, 15 are located in North America, seven in Europe and seven spread across the Asia-Pacific region in China, Japan and Australia. Lego, founded in Denmark in 1932, derives its name from "leg godt", meaning "play well" in Danish. — Reuters



Armani mixes with Renaissance masterpieces in Milan



MORE THAN 120 of Giorgio Armani's creations went on display on Wednesday at a prestigious Milan gallery, mixing high fashion with fine art to mark 50 years of the late designer's label. Red-carpet gowns and classic suits displaying Armani's soft tailoring, neutral tones and exquisite decoration have been placed among masterpieces of Italian art at the Pinacoteca di Brera. It was one of the final projects of the late designer who died earlier this month aged 91, organised as part of his label's 50th anniversary celebrations. In one room, a Tuareg blue Armani skirt and top worn by actress Juliette Binoche stands in front of Giovanni Bellini's Madonna and Child, the colour picking out the blue in the Renaissance painting. Elsewhere a greige suit worn by Richard Gere in the 1980 film "American Gigolo" — a movie that catapulted both the actor and Armani to the top of their industries — was placed among Donato Bramante's famous frescoes of soldiers. "Fashion, conceived as a decorative art, enters Brera in a

unique event — a dialogue between Giorgio Armani, the museum and the artistic heritage it safeguards", said Chiara Rostagno, deputy director of the gallery, in the show notes. Entitled "Giorgio Armani: Milano, per amore" (for love), the exhibition opened to the public on the second day of Milan Fashion Week, where the designer's last two collections will be shown. This week was intended as a celebration of 50 years of Armani's multi-million-euro luxury empire, but the final catwalk show on Sunday is expected to be a sombre tribute. — Works that could resonate — Armani helped put Milan on the fashion map and was particularly linked to the Brera neighbourhood. His apartment overlooked the gallery and he was an honorary member of the Academy of Fine Arts in Brera, which founded the Pinacoteca in 1809 as a resource for its students. The Pinacoteca came up with the idea of a collaboration last year and work carried on until right before his death. The clothes are not arranged in any particular order, chosen rather to reflect their surroundings. The muted palette of

embroidered jackets, shirts and trousers in one space recalls the marble pillars between the rooms. Other outfits are more assertive, such as the 1993 poppy-red silk bustier and skirt worn by Katie Holmes, which brings out the pinks in Bernardino Luini's scenes of the Virgin's early life. "He searched his visual alphabet... for works that could resonate with our environments", Rostagno told reporters. It was "more about participating in the beauty of the rooms", although "in some cases, he lingered on certain works", she said. Another highlight is a 1989 jacket and trouser suit in black silk velvet with a yoke that falls at the back decorated with Maltese crosses, arranged as if contemplating the frescoes of the Porro oratory at Mocchirolo. Armani was wary about putting his designs in such a storied space, according to organisers. He insisted the outfits not obscure any of the paintings and kept them away from the most emotive works, notably Andrea Mantegna's Lamentation over the Dead Christ. "He loved this painting but he decided not to put it in" the exhibit, said Rostagno. — AFP

FEATURES



Ibri Cup, the Seeb Cup and the Al Mudhaibi Cup. With each triumph, he moved closer to his ultimate goal: to leave a lasting mark in the world of horsemanship. But beneath the speed and glory lay a deeper calling. While he excelled in sprint races, Saeed felt a pull towards something greater — endurance racing, a discipline that demanded not just speed but patience, resilience and an unspoken bond with his horses. In 1998, before he had even finished his teens, he began dreaming of creating a larger legacy. Starting with a simple practice track under the shade of a ghaf tree, this humble beginning would grow into the renowned Blue Stable, a symbol of dedication,

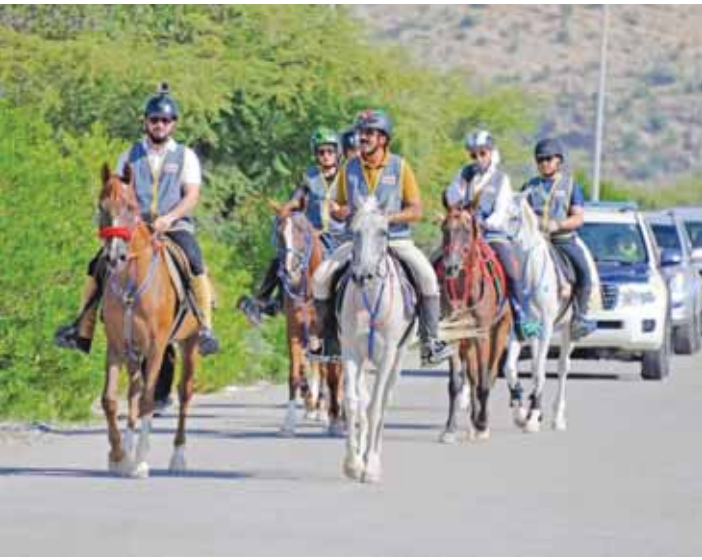
Endurance racing, in particular, stands as a modern reflection of this long-standing love affair — demanding not only physical stamina but strategic intelligence and profound understanding of the terrain, terrain that often echoes Oman's historic landscapes. Oman's equestrian heritage runs deep, especially within its military. Traditionally, the Royal Army of Oman has integrated horsemanship into its training and operational tactics, recognising the horse's vital role in mobility and communication in the harsh desert environment. Over generations, this integration of horsemanship has evolved into a discipline that emphasises endurance, strategy and respect for the animal — values that continue to underpin Oman's



FROM A 15-YEAR-OLD BOY ON HORSEBACK TO THE LEADER OF OMAN’S EQUESTRIAN HERITAGE REVIVAL

RIYADH AL BALUSHI

IN THE QUIET plains of Oman, beneath the shade of humble ghaf trees, a young boy named Saeed bin Salim al Balushi first mounted a horse. It was 1997 and he was just fifteen years old — stepping into a world that would shape his destiny. Little did he know that this moment marked the beginning of a remarkable journey, one defined by unwavering passion, resilience and the relentless pursuit of excellence. Saeed's early years were spent racing against time and tradition, first in speed races that showcased his natural talent and determination. Among the prized horses he rode was Al Sho'la, a gift from the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos himself and others like Nouf and Afnan, with whom he secured multiple victories. Despite his youth, Saeed's talent caught the eye of Oman's elite, earning him respect and admiration on the racetrack. His partnerships with prominent owners, including Shaikh Saeed bin Ahmed al Shanfari and the former Minister of Oil, Sayyid Hilal bin Sammar al Busaidy, saw him achieve a string of victories, proving he was a force to be reckoned with. By the turn of the millennium, Saeed's name began echoing across Oman's racing circles. His hunger for victory grew and his list of trophies expanded — winning at prestigious events like the



ambition and hope. Saeed's journey took him beyond the tracks into the heart of Oman's Royal Army. By 2006, he was appointed the Army's first official endurance trainer — a role that would test his skills and deepen his understanding of the sport. His commitment paid off when, in 2007, he stood proud at Seeb, lifting local awards and confirming his place among Oman's finest. His resilience was further tested in 2013, at the Asian Championship, where a fifth-place finish was seen not as a setback but as a testament to his unwavering dedication. In 2015, Saeed was entrusted with leading Oman's national endurance team — an immense honour that underscored his standing in the sport. Under his guidance, the team achieved remarkable results, securing significant placements at international competitions and inspiring a new generation of riders. Throughout his career, Saeed's philosophy remained rooted in trust, patience and respect — values he believed were vital not only in training but in life itself. His stories of how horses listen with their hearts, of bonds forged in patience and understanding, reveal a man deeply committed to the harmony between rider and horse. Today, Saeed bin Salim al Balushi stands as a testament to the power of perseverance and passion.

OMAN'S ENDURANCE EQUESTRIAN HERITAGE For centuries, horses have been woven into the very fabric of Oman's cultural and strategic identity. From desert navigation to military prowess, the Omani relationship with horses exemplifies resilience, loyalty and a deep-rooted tradition of horsemanship.

approach to both national defence and sporting excellence. This ancient bond with horses has shaped Oman's approach to endurance racing — a sport that demands an intricate balance of technical skill, tactical planning and cultural reverence. Strategy plays a crucial role: selecting horses with the right blend of speed, stamina and temperament; understanding terrain and weather conditions; and devising pacing strategies that conserve the horse's strength for the final stretch. Saeed bin Salim al Balushi stands as one of the most pivotal figures in refining and elevating these practices. His deep understanding of Oman's landscapes and legacy has positioned him as a key architect in the sport's modern development. By blending strategic mastery, technical proficiency and cultural pride, Saeed has become a cornerstone in nurturing a tradition that symbolises Oman's enduring resilience and identity — ensuring that the nation's love for horses remains a powerful testament to its history and future. From a boy under a ghaf tree to a revered trainer shaping Oman's future in endurance racing, his journey inspires all who dream of turning their aspirations into reality. His story reminds us that with resilience, dedication and love for what we do, greatness is within reach.