

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y



VOL. 44, NO. 342
PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 06:07 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:51 AM

DHUHR 11:57 PM

ASR 03:14 PM

MAGHRIB 05:41 PM

ISHA 06:52 PM

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MEDVEDEV WINS FIRST TITLE IN OVER TWO YEARS IN KAZAKHSTAN

INBRIEF
OMAN INVESTMENT FORUM IN LONDON



The Sultanate of Oman will organise ‘Oman Investment Forum 2025’ in London on Tuesday, as part of activities of the Omani-British Strategic Consultation Team. Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority, Head of the Omani side at the Omani-British Strategic Consultation Team, will attend the event, with the participation of officials from government departments. The forum seeks to enhance investor confidence in the Sultanate of Oman’s financial position and showcase the Omani government’s financial, investment and economic approaches. It will also present projects and initiatives that contribute to consolidating Oman’s investment attractiveness.

TREATMENT FOR CHILD DWARFISM

The National Diabetes and Endocrine Centre at the Royal Hospital has introduced the unique drug Vosoritide (Foxygo) for treating children with Achondroplasia (the most common cause of dwarfism in children). The move makes the Royal Hospital one of the first leading centres in the region to provide this advanced treatment. This drug represents a qualitative leap in the care of children with this type of dwarfism, as it targets overactive pathways that hinder normal bone growth thus stimulating bone growth in children whose growth plates are still open. The centre said that the treatment continues until the bones are fully developed and the growth cartilage close, stressing the importance of undelayed use of the drug to ensure that treatment is initiated at the optimal time in order to achieve the best possible results.

OQ POSTS \$731M PROFIT IN 1ST HALF

OQ Group, Oman’s global integrated energy group, reported a resilient first half of 2025, driven by strong financial performance and a significant rise in in-country value (ICV) contributions, underscoring the company’s growing role in supporting Oman’s economic diversification goals. The energy conglomerate achieved a net profit after tax of \$731 million, marking a 12-per cent increase from \$651 million in the first half of 2024. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) stood at \$1.6 billion, marginally down by 2 per cent compared with \$1.64 billion in H1 2024. The average realised oil price during the period was \$74 per barrel, a 9.5-per cent decline from \$82 per barrel last year.

DETAILS ON P13

Turkish President arrives on state visit tomorrow

VISIT TO BOOST JOINT COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES

PRESIDENT RECEP Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye will pay a two-day state visit to the Sultanate of Oman from Wednesday.

A statement to this effect was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court. It reads as follows: “In affirmation of the friendship relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Türkiye will pay

a two-day state visit to Oman on Wednesday and Thursday October 22-23.

“The visit comes within the context of the joint cooperation to achieve further welfare and growth in a manner that serves the two countries and meets their aspirations.

“During the visit, the two leaderships will discuss all matters that boost the joint action. They will also exchange views on a set of regional and international developments.

“May the Almighty Allah

grant the leaderships of the two countries success for the good of their peoples and the Muslim nations!”

The bilateral relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye is distinguished by a strong alignment across multiple domains, including diplomacy, economy, military affairs, investment, trade and culture. This partnership was significantly reinforced by the signing of numerous agreements and memoranda

of understanding during His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq’s state visit to the Republic of Türkiye last November, underscoring a mutual commitment to deepening cooperation in all sectors.

The state visit by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, undertaken at the invitation of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, marks a significant step in advancing bilateral relations and opening new horizons for economic and investment cooperation. — ONA

US steps in after Gaza truce shaken

GAZA: US envoys met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday aiming to corral Israel and Hamas to get the Gaza ceasefire plan back on track after an explosion of violence over the weekend that threatened to derail the week-old truce.

Israel and Hamas have both recommitted to the ceasefire plan pushed by US President Donald Trump since Sunday’s flare-up in which a Palestinian attack that killed two soldiers prompted an Israeli bombardment killing at least 28 people in Gaza.

However, with even the first stages of the truce shaken by repeated flashes of violence, including on Monday, it is far from clear whether the US

Mourners react as they attend the funeral of Palestinians killed in Sunday’s Israeli strikes in the central Gaza Strip on Monday. — Reuters

will be able to keep pressure on the two sides and maintain momentum to end the conflict.

The US envoys, Steve Witkoff and Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, were expected to push to shore up the truce and then start talks on the next, more difficult, phase of the 20-step plan during their visit.

US Vice-President JD Vance was also due to visit Israel on Tuesday, with Netanyahu saying the pair would discuss regional challenges and opportunities. On Monday, Palestinian medics said three more people had been killed by Israeli tank fire near the “yellow line” demarcating Israel’s military pullback inside Gaza from the main populated areas. SEE ALSO P6

Salalah welcomes inaugural flight of Neos from Rome

SALALAH: Salalah Airport welcomed the inaugural scheduled flight of the Italian airline Neos, arriving from Rome via Milan. This marks the launch of a direct, regular air route between the two destinations, with one flight per week during the 2025-2026 winter tourism season.

This reinforces the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a distinguished destination on the global tourism map. The new route is a qualitative addition to the network of international destinations served by

Salalah Airport.

Oman Airports confirmed that the launch of this direct route is part of joint national efforts to enhance Oman’s air connectivity with various global markets and expand the international flight network. This supports the tourism and national economy sectors and contributes to attracting more visitors to the Dhofar Governorate during the winter season, which sees increasing demand from European tourists.

This direct route is expected

to boost the local economy and enhance the tourism sector in the Dhofar Governorate, opening new horizons for tourism and investment cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Italy.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said this step is the result of joint cooperation between the ministry, Oman Airports and a number of relevant authorities. This collaboration, he

said, has culminated in strategic partnerships with international airlines such as Switzerland’s Edelweiss and Italy’s Neos. He indicated that work is under way to attract more airlines to strengthen the position of Dhofar Governorate as an integrated tourist destination.

He added that the opening of this direct route from Milan to Salalah reflects the extensive efforts to increase the number of direct international flights to the governorate. — ONA

Oman–Türkiye ties enter new era

THE Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye share a long-standing friendship built on mutual respect, shared values, and a deep sense of cooperation that extends across diplomacy, economy, defence, culture and education. This relationship has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by the commitment of both leaderships to strengthen bilateral ties and expand cooperation to new strategic levels.

The landmark state visit by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Türkiye in November 2024 marked a defining moment in the modern history of Omani-Turkish relations.

The visit laid a strong foundation for a renewed partnership, resulting in the signing of numerous agreements and memoranda of understanding covering areas such as entrepreneurship, labour and employment, health, banking and agriculture. One of the most notable outcomes was the establishment of a joint Omani-Turkish investment fund worth \$500 million, symbolising the two countries' determination to promote sustainable economic growth and joint ventures.

In a reciprocal gesture, the forthcoming state visit of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the Sultanate of Oman, at the gracious invitation of His Majesty the Sultan, represents another major step in this evolving relationship. The visit is expected to open new horizons for investment, trade, and strategic cooperation, while further deepening cultural, educational and defence collaboration.

Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari, Oman's Ambassador to Türkiye, said in a statement to ONA that the bilateral relationship between the two countries is built upon a historical legacy that spans over three centuries. He emphasised that these ties, characterised by mutual trust and continuous dialogue, have been further institutionalised since the establishment of diplomatic relations on June 28, 1973.

The creation of the Political Consultations Committee between the two foreign ministries in 1999 added a formal dimension to this cooperation, ensuring consistent coordination on regional and international issues of common interest.

The ambassador highlighted that the steady exchange of high-level visits over the past five decades reflects the ongoing political will of both leaderships to sustain a relationship grounded in mutual understanding and respect. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's visit to Türkiye last year – the first of its kind at this level in modern history – paved the way for deeper collaboration in diverse sectors, from energy and technology to tourism and higher education.

During that visit, His Majesty praised Türkiye's constructive stance on Arab and regional issues and commended the strong fraternal relations between the two nations. Both sides affirmed their shared aspiration to enhance cooperation in politics, economy, defence, science, technology and culture.

Ambassador Al Jahwari noted that bilateral trade and investment have grown remarkably. Türkiye rose to become Oman's 11th-largest destination for non-oil exports in 2024, up from 17th place the previous year, with trade volume reaching approximately RO 330.3 million.



Oman and Türkiye are entering a new era of strategic partnership, with trade between the two nations surpassing RO 330 million in 2024 and Turkish investments in Oman growing by 36.7% to nearly RO 56 million.

Oman and Türkiye continue to reinforce their strong bilateral ties, marked by alignment across diplomacy, economy, defence and culture.

The number of Turkish-registered companies has also surged to 597, reflecting expanding cooperation across energy, logistics, construction and education. A \$500 million joint investment fund underscores the two nations' shared commitment to sustainable development and mutual prosperity.

Turkish capital invested in Oman increased by 36.7 per cent to nearly RO 56 million, while the number of Turkish-registered companies rose from 385 in 2023 to 597 by the end of 2024. These firms are engaged in sectors including construction, logistics, manufacturing, and retail – reflecting Türkiye's growing role in Oman's economic landscape.

He added that both countries are keen to eliminate trade barriers and enhance joint investments, particularly through the prospective free trade agreement currently under negotiation between Türkiye and the Gulf Cooperation Council. The twelfth session of the Omani-Turkish Joint Committee, held in Muscat in December 2024, produced further progress in areas such as transport, logistics, agriculture, industry and higher education.

On the cultural front, Ambassador Al Jahwari underscored that Oman and Türkiye are bound by rich historical and civilisational ties that can be further strengthened through cultural exchanges, exhibitions, and literary cooperation. He highlighted the signing of an agreement between the Omani Society for Writers and Literati and the Turkish Writers Union in May 2025 as a milestone in enhancing dialogue between intellectual communities in both nations.

For his part, Ambassador Muhammet Hekimoğlu of Türkiye described Turkish-Omani relations as “deeply rooted and ever-evolving,” dating back to the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. He noted that the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1973, followed by the opening of embassies in Ankara and Muscat in the mid-1980s, laid the groundwork for the multifaceted partnership seen today.

The ambassador emphasised that the relationship continues to strengthen across political, economic, cultural and educational domains. The state visit by His Majesty the Sultan last year, he said, was historic and fruitful – resulting in the signing of wide-ranging agreements in health, culture, investment, agriculture and small and medium enterprises.



Ambassador Muhammet Hekimoğlu of Türkiye



Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari, Oman's Ambassador to Türkiye



He noted that both nations share similar diplomatic outlooks, guided by dialogue and balance. Türkiye appreciates Oman's constructive role as a regional mediator and its contributions to peace and stability in the Middle East, particularly its neutral and humanitarian approach to regional crises. “We in Türkiye deeply value Oman's efforts in promoting dialogue and fostering peace, as our two countries share a common understanding of the need for stability and cooperation,” he said.

On the economic front, Ambassador Hekimoğlu highlighted that trade between the two countries is approaching \$1 billion, with more than 100,000 tourist exchanges recorded annually.

Turkish construction companies have implemented projects worth over \$6 billion in Oman, including ports, tunnels, and airports, strengthening economic and infrastructural cooperation.

He added that the Turkish-Omani Business Council, established in 2006, continues to play a pivotal role in connecting the two private sectors. Preparations are underway for the Türkiye-Oman Economic Forum and ‘Exported Turkish Products’ exhibition, set to be held in Muscat in December 2025. The ambassador also noted that negotiations for a Türkiye-GCC Free Trade Agreement are nearing completion, which will open new markets for goods, tourism and health services. — ONA



SHORT TAKES



Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti signed a MoU with Michael Damianos.

OMAN, CYPRUS
EXPLORE HEALTH
COOPERATION

MUSCAT: Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, received in his office on Monday Michael Damianos, Minister of Health of the Republic of Cyprus, who is currently paying an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two ministers discussed matters of common interest, reviewed features of the health journey in the two countries and the most important achievements made by both sides in this field. They also explored ways to broaden the scope of partnership and cooperation between the two countries in the health sector.

The meeting was attended by several officials from both sides.

Meanwhile, the two ministers held an official session of talks, during which they signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the health field. The MoU pertains to enhancing cooperation in numerous health areas, including the exchange of experts and delegations in the fields of healthcare, health innovation, and medical and pharmaceutical sciences, as well as the exchange of knowledge in the fields of rehabilitation and training of healthcare workers. — ONA

ROP CHIEF, SWISS OFFICIAL HOLD TALKS



MUSCAT: Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, received on Monday Stefan Blättler, Attorney General of the Swiss Confederation, who is currently on an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The meeting reviewed a set of topics of common interest and discussed means of enhancing cooperation. — ONA

Majlis Ash’shura participates in IPU Assembly

GENEVA: Majlis Ash’shura is participating in the 151st General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Geneva, convened under the theme “Upholding Humanitarian Standards and Supporting Humanitarian Action in Times of Crisis.”

In his plenary address, Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, emphasised



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, emphasised the critical role of the assembly in reinforcing humanitarian values. — ONA

the critical role of the assembly in reinforcing humanitarian values and fostering solidarity among parliaments to build a more peaceful and sustainable future.

He stated that the meeting occurs at a pivotal moment, requiring all nations and parliaments to redouble their efforts in addressing the interconnected humanitarian,

economic, and political challenges confronting the global community.

He detailed Oman’s longstanding commitment to humanitarian action as a central pillar of its national policy, noting that the “Oman Vision 2040” formally enshrines social solidarity and communal responsibility as the bedrock of a cohesive and sustainable society. — ONA

Tech summit highlights
AI’s role in education

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

THE Oman Research and Education Network Technology Summit (OTS25) kicked off on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The summit welcomed Dr Abdullah bin Sharaf al Ghamdi, President of the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA), as guest of honour, alongside dignitaries, heads of universities and colleges, and international experts.

This year’s two-day event highlights Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a transformative force in education and research, aligning with national goals for digital transformation and innovation. It serves as a platform for exchanging ideas, exploring opportunities and learning from global best practices.

The programme features interactive panel discussions, hands-on workshops and technology exhibitions, demonstrating practical AI applications in education and research. It also aims to inspire innovation, strengthen collaboration, and present actionable recommendations to advance Oman’s education and research ecosystem.

Najah bint Mohammed al Rashdiyyah, Director-General of the Innovation Centre at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, emphasised the ministry’s commitment to integrating AI in curriculum development, learning outcomes analysis



The summit also provided a unique opportunity for networking and collaboration between academia, industry and government agencies.

and applied research. “Collaboration and sustainable partnerships are key to activating national roles across multiple pathways,” she said. The guest of honour Dr Al Ghamdi highlighted Saudi Arabia’s achievements in AI, noting the Kingdom’s global leadership in empowering women in AI, AI public awareness, job growth and AI model development. He also underscored the importance of ethical responsibility alongside innovation.

Oman’s progress under the National AI and Advanced Technologies Programme was presented by Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology. He stressed Oman’s focus on AI adoption across sectors, human-

centred governance and talent development.

Prof Marc-Antoine Dilhac from the University of Montreal, Unesco AI Ethics Expert, delivered a keynote on ‘Learning and Teaching in the Age of Generative AI’, highlighting AI’s potential to enhance creativity and personalise learning while cautioning against risks such as skill decline and loss of originality. He stressed the importance of transparency, prompt engineering skills and adherence to ethical frameworks like the Riyadh Charter.

Panel discussions explored AI enablers in education, integration challenges, and future skills aligned with labour market demands. Hands-on workshops covered AI ethics and data analytics, while the ‘Future Path Exhibition’ showcased innovative projects from 12 academic institutions.

Oman and Saudi Arabia boost defence ties

MUSCAT: Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS), received at Bait Al Falaj Camp on Monday a delegation from the Royal Saudi Land Forces, led by Maj Gen Ali Hamad al Juhani.

The Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies welcomed the visiting delegation. The two sides exchanged conversations on a number of topics of mutual interest,



The two sides exchanged conversations on a number of topics of mutual interest. — ONA

particularly in academic fields.

Furthermore, the Saudi delegation visited the Joint Command and Staff College at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies. Upon their arrival at the College’s headquarters, the delegation was received by Brigadier Mohammed bin Ahmed al Mashaikhi, Commandant of the Joint Command and Staff College.

During the visit, the delegation viewed a visual presentation. — ONA

Oman celebrates World Statistics Day

Represented by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the Sultanate of Oman on Monday joined the international community in celebrating the World Statistics Day, which falls on October 20 every year.

This year, the celebration takes the theme ‘High-quality statistics and data for the benefit of all.’

The theme reflects the importance attached to the quality of data and its crucial role in supporting sustainable development and guiding decision-



DR KHALIFA BIN
ABDULLAH
AL BARWANI

making. Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of the NCSI, said, “Statistical work in Oman has transcended the

traditional concept of collecting numbers.

It has developed into a strategic vision that is realised by qualified national cadres.”

Al Barwani pointed out that statistical action in Oman has evolved from a mere technical process into a fundamental pillar in shaping the future of data and information - thus enhancing Oman’s position in international forums.

Following this development, Oman has been able to conduct an annual electronic census of population, housing

and establishments at zero financial cost, said Al Barwani.

He pointed out that this achievement paved the way for the implementation of the ‘Family Expenditure and Income Survey’ using artificial intelligence (AI).

“It is the first survey of its kind in the world and its results will be announced in 2026,” he explained.

Meanwhile, the GCC Statistical Centre (GCC-Stat) also participated in the celebration of the World Statistics Day.

— ONA

Tender

مدائن
madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
8/2025/ PEIE/ HQ-8	CONSTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES (FACILITY BUILDING, PLUG & PLAY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, GREENHOUSES) AT SUWAIQ INDUSTRIAL CITY (PHASE-1) AL BATINAH NORTH GOVERNORATE	03-11-2025	30-11-2025	Constriction	Excellent	2500
9/2025/ PEIE/ HQ-9	CONSTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES AND PLUG & PLAY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AT MADHA INDUSTRIAL CITY AT MUSANDAM GOVERNORATE	03-11-2025	30-11-2025	Constriction	Excellent	500
10/2025/ PEIE/ HQ-10	CONSTRUCTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AT RUSAL INDUSTRIAL CITY AT MUSCAT GOVERNORATE	03-11-2025	30-11-2025	Constriction	Excellent	500

Interested Companies registered with Projects, Tenders & Local Content Authority may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders shall be submitted on line on the given website enclosing an **electronic copy of the bid bond** in the form of a **bank guarantee** issued by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman, amounting to **1% of the bid value**, valid for **120 days** from the date of submission of the bids, and addressed to the **Chairman of the concerned committee** as per the tender documents.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online on eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@ita.gov.om and **+968 24166670, 24166409**

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

Note: Bidders must comply with Omanization requirements specified by Ministry of Work.

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YouTube

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SPOTLIGHT



Social media keeps us constantly connected, but emotionally distant. Humans need touch, tone, and real conversation — elements a screen can never replace

AMNA AL SALMI
A psychologist

SAUD AL ANSARI

ONCE,

the aroma of freshly brewed Omani coffee filled homes — a symbol of hospitality, generosity and

togetherness. The clinking of cups, laughter of guests and unplanned visits were woven into daily life. Today, however, the scene has changed. With the rise of social media, real gatherings have grown rare, replaced by emojis, messages and online greetings that lack the warmth of genuine connection.

“In the past, coffee was made every day, and neighbours would drop by without notice — visits were part of life,” recalls Abdullah al Hadabi, a man in his sixties. “Now, a phone message is enough for some people. They send congratulations by text and consider it a visit.”

He laments how social media has turned what was once a heartfelt daily ritual into a digital formality.

For Ali al Balushi, a university student, social media has made communication easier but colder.

“We talk a lot on WhatsApp and Snapchat, but we rarely meet,” he says. “Even when we do, everyone is busy taking pictures of the coffee instead of enjoying it.”

He feels that his generation experiences life more through screens than through real emotions, leading to shallow connections despite constant contact.

According to Ahmed al Badi, a sociologist, digital transformation has profoundly reshaped Omani social life.

“The traditional majlis was the foundation of Omani society — a space for discussion, exchange and connection,” he explains. “Today, that culture has faded as people become absorbed in virtual worlds.”

He notes that while family bonds may not necessarily weaken, their form and expression have shifted — from presence to pixels.

Amna al Salmi, a psychologist, adds that this shift affects emotional health.

“Social media keeps us constantly connected, but emotionally distant,” she says. “Humans need touch, tone and real conversation — elements a screen can never replace.”

She warns that excessive screen time can lead to social isolation and a growing sense of loneliness, even within families.

The change, says Nawal al Saidi, an elementary school teacher, has also influenced children.

“In the past, children played together outside. Now, each child is lost in their own digital world,” she observes. “Even among kids, real social interaction has disappeared.”

She urges families to revive shared activities, adding, “Phones cannot build relationships the way a conversation over coffee can.”

Despite these concerns, there remains room for optimism.

Said al Aghbari, a social commentator, believes that Omani coffee still holds the power to reconnect people — if its meaning is revived.

“Omani coffee remains a symbol of generosity and connection,” he says. “If we use social media to invite people to meet — not to avoid them — we can balance tradition with modernity.”

He stresses that the solution is not to reject technology, but to reshape how we use it, ensuring digital tools strengthen, not replace, our social values.

In an age ruled by screens and endless notifications, the scent of Omani coffee still whispers of a time when visits needed no invitation, conversations were spontaneous and hearts were closer. We may not be able to stop the tide of technology — but we can choose how it shapes our lives. The dallah that once brought people together can still do so, if only we make space for it again.

TRADITIONAL GATHERINGS FADE AS DIGITAL CHATS REPLACE REAL VISITS

EXPERTS WARN OF EMOTIONAL ISOLATION IN AN ALWAYS-ONLINE WORLD

REVIVAL OF OMANI COFFEE RITUALS COULD RESTORE WARMTH AND TOGETHERNESS

WHEN COFFEE BECAME CONTENT

OMAN'S CHANGING CULTURE OF CONNECTION



Pact to help kids with disabilities signed

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

CONFIRMING its commitment to social responsibility and enhancing its support for national and humanitarian initiatives, Oman Airports signed a support agreement with the Association for Children with Disabilities that aims to contribute to supporting the operating budget of the association's rehabilitation centres, ensuring the sustainability of services provided to children with disabilities.

The commitment of various entities to such initiatives stems from the importance of integrated work between public and private sector institutions in supporting national efforts aimed at empowering various segments of society and enhancing the quality of life in Oman, along with its commitment to social responsibility in supporting national and humanitarian initiatives. Ahmed al Amri, CEO of Oman Airports, emphasised that the agreement reflects the company's deep commitment to social responsibility and its constant support for initiatives that empower various segments of society. He noted that through such partnerships, Oman Airports aims to create a positive and sustainable impact on Omani society. Al Amri added that signing this agreement falls within Oman Airports' strategy to



The agreement falls within the strategy to support community initiatives, particularly those targeting people with disabilities.

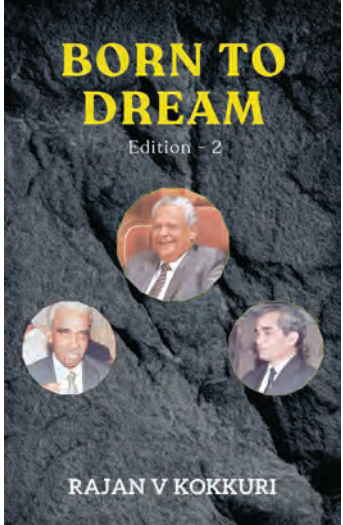
solidify its role as an effective national partner in supporting community initiatives with a tangible impact, particularly those targeting people with disabilities. This aligns with its vision for its airports to be platforms that inspire giving and responsibility, contributing to building a more inclusive and cohesive society. On her part, Khadija bint Nasser al Saatiyah, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Association for Children with Disabilities, expressed her gratitude and appreciation to Oman Airports for this initiative,

which reflects the company's deep awareness of its social responsibility. She praised its pioneering role in supporting humanitarian and development programmes that empower children with disabilities and improve the quality of services provided to them. Community initiatives contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building a stronger society and promoting sustainable development by supporting projects that foster cooperation, serve the community and utilise resources effectively.

Book chronicles India's electronics revolution

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 20

Rajan V Kokkuri, a well-known author in Oman, is set to release his fifth book titled "Born To Dream: Edition 2" in a series that pays tribute to the inspiring journey of the three pioneers of the electronics revolution in India. The book launch will take place at a glittering ceremony soon. This coffee-table book is a compelling narrative that chronicles the inspiring journey of the three founders



The book is a narrative that chronicles inspiring journey of three founders of BPL India

of the iconic Indian electronics company, BPL India (British Physical Laboratories). It is a heartfelt tribute to the founder, TPG Nambiar. The book launch will be held via Google Meet and Facebook Live on October 31. The event is particularly special as it will be attended by the other two co-founders of BPL, KPR Nambiar and MA Uppal. Following the global virtual release, the book will have its official launch in the Sultanate of Oman on November 1. "Born

To Dream: Edition 2' is more than just a corporate history; it is a deep dive into the vision, resilience and collaborative spirit that built one of India's most recognised identities," Rajan said. He mentioned that the latest work aims to preserve and honour the legacy of TPG Nambiar and the pioneering efforts of the three catalysts in the electronics history of India. The book will be available for purchase worldwide immediately following the launch, on both Amazon and Kindle.

Bodhi wins big in martial arts tourney

MUSCAT: A team of young martial arts talents from Bodhi Life Skills Academy, Oman, made the nation proud by delivering an impressive performance at the prestigious Qatar Open World Silambam Tournament, held recently. Under the expert guidance of Renshi G Kumar, the team showcased remarkable discipline, skill and dedication — securing 3rd Place in the Group Performance category among strong international competition. The tournament drew participants from across the globe, highlighting the growing global presence of Silambam, the ancient Indian martial art. The Omani team stood out not only in group performance but also through multiple



individual accolades, reflecting their hard work and the rising popularity of Silambam in the Middle East. Kumar, known for his dedication and passion, credited the success to

the students' relentless practice, discipline and the support of their families. "This is more than just a victory – it is a testament to the cultural strength and unity Silambam brings to our youth," he

remarked. The team's performance has been met with appreciation from the wider martial arts community, as well as supporters in Oman, who see this as a stepping stone towards more international success. In another event, a team of talented martial artists delivered an exceptional performance at the International Karate Championship 2025 held in Dubai. Competing in the Masters Category, Kumar showcased his elite skills and emerged as a Double Gold Trophy Champion, winning Gold Trophy in Kata (Forms) and Gold Trophy in Kumite (Sparring). His leadership and excellence continue to inspire the next generation of karatekas.

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Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Defence ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
023/2025	Building works – Masirah	Excellent	06 November 2025	08 December 2025	951/- R.O
029/2025	Building works – MAM	Excellent	06 November 2025	08 December 2025	404/- R.O
035/2025	Electrical works – Raysoot	First & Above Specialized In Electrical Works	06 November 2025	08 December 2025	124/- R.O
037/2025	Building works – Nizwa	Excellent	06 November 2025	15 December 2025	1,375/- R.O
041/2025	Building works – Masirah	Excellent	06 November 2025	15 December 2025	1,500/- R.O
042/2025	Building works – Rustaq	Excellent	06 November 2025	15 December 2025	1,500/- R.O
046/2025	Building works – UM Al-Ghawarif	First & Above	06 November 2025	08 December 2025	248/- R.O
047/2025	Building works – Nojoor Sahlanut	Excellent	06 November 2025	15 December 2025	1,500/- R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission. failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY (USB)** in two separate files:
 - A. Financial (**bill 1&2 separated file from bill3**)
 - B. Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

WORLD

MAINTAINING PEACE



Displaced Palestinian children walk, as one of them moves a cart loaded with water containers, in Gaza City. — AFP

US STEPS UP DIPLOMACY AFTER GAZA TRUCE SHAKEN

CAIRO: US envoys met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday aiming to corral Israel and Hamas to get the Gaza ceasefire plan back on track after an explosion of violence over the weekend that threatened to derail the week-old truce. Israel and Hamas have both recommitted to the ceasefire plan pushed by US President Donald Trump since Sunday’s flare-up in which a Palestinian attack that killed two soldiers with an Israeli bombardment killing at least 28 people in Gaza. However, with even the first stages of the truce shaken by repeated flashes of violence, including on Monday, it is far from clear whether the US will be able to keep pressure on the two sides and maintain momentum to end the conflict.

The US envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, were expected to push to shore up the truce and then start talks on the next, more difficult, phase of the 20-step plan during their visit. US Vice President JD Vance was also due to visit Israel on Tuesday, Israel’s airports authority said. High level US diplomacy in the region, with talks also due later on Monday with Hamas in Egypt, underscore the importance of cementing the ceasefire to Trump, who last week proclaimed “the historic dawn of a new Middle East”.

On Monday, Palestinian medics said three more people had been killed by Israeli tank fire near the “yellow line” demarcating Israel’s military pullback inside Gaza from the main populated areas. The Israeli military said forces had fired at gunmen who crossed that line. Gaza City residents said they were confused about the line, with electronic maps available but physical markings not established yet on most of the route. “The whole area is in ruins. We saw the maps, but we can’t tell where those lines are,” said Samir, 50, who lives in Tuffah. Israel’s defence minister on Monday published video showing bulldozers towing yellow blocks into place to mark out the line.

Witkoff and Kushner’s visit to Israel, aimed at discussions on the next phase of Trump’s complex ceasefire plan, was scheduled before Sunday’s flare-up in violence, according to US and Israeli sources. Trump said the ceasefire he brokered was still in place. Hamas leadership, he said, may not be involved in the violations. “We think maybe the leadership isn’t involved in that,” he told reporters aboard Air Force One. Israel is unlikely to publicise any progress in the talks until the remains of more hostages are returned, and it believes Hamas could hand over up to six more bodies immediately out of the 16 still in Gaza. Other bodies may be hard to recover because of destruction in the enclave.

On Monday, Israel’s Kan public broadcaster reported that preparations were being made for the transfer of the body of a hostage after Hamas said on Sunday it had located one. Egypt will host talks in Cairo with Khalil Al-Hayya, Hamas’ exiled Gaza chief, over ways to follow up on implementing the ceasefire, the group said in a statement. A Palestinian official close to the talks said the s delegation would discuss ways to push the formation of a technocratic body to run Gaza without Hamas representation. — Reuters

KABUL MUST REIN IN GUNMEN FOR CEASEFIRE TO HOLD, SAYS PAKISTAN

ISLAMABAD: A ceasefire agreement between Islamabad and Kabul rests on the ruling Afghan Taliban’s ability to rein in militants attacking Pakistan across their shared border, Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said on Monday, underscoring the fragility of the accord. The South Asian neighbours agreed to a ceasefire in Doha at the weekend after days of border clashes that killed dozens, the worst such violence.

Ground fighting between the

one-time allies and Pakistani air strikes across their contested 2,600-km frontier were triggered after Islamabad demanded that Kabul control militants, saying they operated from havens in Afghanistan. “Anything coming from Afghanistan will be (a) violation of this agreement,” said Asif, who led the talks with his Afghan counterpart Mullah Muhammad Yaqoob. “Everything hinges on this one clause.” The Taliban administration and

Afghanistan’s defence ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In the written agreement signed by Pakistan, Afghanistan, Türkiye and Qatar, it was clearly spelled out that there would not be any incursions, the minister said in an interview in his office at Pakistan’s parliament in Islamabad. “We have a ceasefire agreement as long as there is no violation of the agreement which is already in force.” — Reuters

Takaichi set to be the first Japanese woman premier

JAPAN’S

ruling LDP and its junior partner signed a coalition deal on Monday, paving the way for Sanae Takaichi to become the country’s first woman premier. The 11th-hour agreement with the Japan Innovation Party (JIP) came just a day before the lower house was due to vote on Takaichi’s appointment as the fifth prime minister in as many years. If she wins, she will take office the same day.

“I’m very much looking forward to working with you on efforts to make Japan’s economy stronger, and to reshape Japan as a country that can be responsible for future generations,” Takaichi told the JIP’s co-head Hirofumi Yoshimura as they signed the deal. Yoshimura said he was convinced the parties were “on the same page about our passion to move Japan forward”.

Takaichi, 64, seen as a China hawk and traditionalist from the right wing of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), won the party leadership this month. But her bid to become premier was derailed by the collapse of the LDP’s coalition with the Komeito party after 26 years. Komeito said the LDP had failed to tighten party funding rules following a damaging slush fund scandal. It was also unnerved by Takaichi’s previous harsh rhetoric on China and her regular visits to a Tokyo shrine that honours Japan’s war dead, including war criminals.

The clock was ticking for Takaichi to be appointed. US President Donald Trump is due to visit at



Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Sanae Takaichi (C) walks at the Diet, in Tokyo. — AFP



I’m very much looking forward to working with you on efforts to make Japan’s economy stronger, and to reshape Japan as a country that can be responsible for future generations

Sanae Takaichi

the end of the month on his way to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in South Korea. Details of a trade deal between Washington and Tokyo remain unresolved, and Trump also wants Japan to stop Russian energy imports and boost defence spending.

The LDP’s new coalition with JIP is still two seats shy of the lower house majority needed for Takaichi to be appointed. But Takaichi is still likely to win since in a second-round run-off vote she only needs more support than the other candidate. The announcement of a new coalition pushed the Nikkei 225 index up more than three per cent to a new record above 49,000 points.

Yutaka Miura, analyst at Mizuho Securities, said that investors were cheered by hopes of “proactive fiscal policies” by Takaichi, Bloomberg reported. Takaichi has in the past backed aggressive

monetary easing and expanded government spending, apeing the “Abenomics” of her mentor, former premier Shinzo Abe. In Nara, Takaichi’s hometown, 39-year-old company worker Keiko Yoshida said she was hopeful that if Takaichi became prime minister, she would “make Japan a more livable place for women”. “Maybe she’ll help create towns that are more supportive of women, with support for mothers, support for working women,” she said.

During the leadership campaign, Takaichi toned down her rhetoric both on the economy and on China. Being in a minority in both houses of parliament, the new coalition will need support from other parties to push through legislation. JIP’s other co-head Fumitake Fujita admitted on Sunday that forming legislative agreements would “remain difficult”.

The JIP wants to lower the consumption tax rate on food to zero and to abolish corporate and organisational donations, Kyodo News reported on Sunday.

The smaller party is also in favour of reducing the number of lawmakers. Reports say it will not hold any ministerial posts in Takaichi’s cabinet.

Besides handling Trump, Takaichi’s many challenges ahead will include addressing Japan’s falling population and boosting its flatlining economy.

Takaichi will also be under pressure to halt the steady slide in support for the LDP, which has governed Japan almost non-stop since 1955. — AFP

CARGO PLANE SKIDS OFF HONG KONG RUNWAY

HONG KONG: A cargo plane veered off a runway on Monday during landing in Hong Kong, hit a security patrol car and then skidded into the sea, leaving two men in the vehicle dead, authorities said.

Officials said an investigation would aim to determine what caused the Boeing aircraft to leave the tarmac at Hong Kong International Airport, the world’s busiest for cargo last year, according to an industry ranking.

The plane’s damaged fuselage was left partly submerged in the seawater that borders the airport, with its emergency evacuation slides extended, following one of the most serious incidents since the airport began operations in 1998.

Steven Yiu, executive director of airport operations at Airport Authority Hong Kong, said the cargo plane from Dubai “went off from the north runway upon landing and crashed through the fence and into the sea” at around 4 am.

Yiu said the patrol car was not on the runway at the time of the accident, and that “it was the aircraft that veered off the runway to hit the patrol car, which was outside the fence” and pushed it into the water. — AFP

LARGE CROWDS

Nigeria police detain capital protesters



Nigerian authorities arrested protesters on Monday as they scattered a demonstration in the capital in support of a separatist leader, firing tear gas to disperse people before they could gather in large crowds. Nnamdi Kanu and his Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group advocate for independence for southeastern Nigeria, a sensitive topic in a country that saw a brutal civil war from 1967 to 1970. The military was stationed at intersections. — AFP

INCORRECT VOTING FORMULA

Mongolian president vetoes PM dismissal



Mongolia’s president vetoed a parliamentary resolution to dismiss the prime minister. Lawmakers voted to remove Zandanshatar Gombojav as prime minister, citing among other reasons his appointment of a minister without prior consultation. Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, Mongolia’s president, found procedural irregularities in the parliament’s dismissal vote, including the use of an “incorrect voting formula”, Montsame said, citing a statement. — Reuters

SUSPECTED SCAMMERS

Myanmar junta seizes 30 Starlink receivers



Myanmar’s junta raided one of the country’s most notorious cyberscam centres and seized Starlink satellite Internet devices, it said on Monday. A crackdown by Thai, Chinese and Myanmar authorities starting in February saw thousands of suspected scammers repatriated. State media said that the military “conducted operations in KK Park near Myanmar-Thai border” and had “seized 30 sets of Starlink receivers and accessories”. — AFP

TENSIONS SURGE



A demonstrator throws a canister of tear gas during a protest demanding no US interference, in Bogota. — Reuters

COLOMBIA RECALLS AMBASSADOR FROM US AMID TARIFF SPAT

BOGOTA: Colombia’s foreign ministry said on Monday the country has recalled its ambassador from the United States after US President Donald Trump said he would raise tariffs on the South American nation and stop all payments to it, in a feud stemming from US military strikes on vessels allegedly transporting drugs. Trump also called Colombian President Gustavo Petro an “illegal drug leader” on Sunday, which Petro’s government described as offensive.

“Daniel Garcia-Pena, Ambassador of Colombia in the United States of America, has been recalled for consultations by President Gustavo Petro and is now in Bogota,” the Colombian foreign ministry said. “In the coming hours the national government will inform of the decisions taken.” Trump’s drug leader comments marked a new low in relations between Washington and Bogota, which Trump accuses of being complicit in the illicit drug trade. Petro has objected to the US military’s strikes against vessels in the Caribbean, which have killed dozens of people and inflamed tensions in the region. Many legal experts and human rights activists have also condemned the military actions.

Trump said US financial aid to Colombia would be cut off and details about the new tariffs would be unveiled on Monday, but it was not clear what funding Trump was referring to. Colombia was once among the largest recipients of US aid in the Western Hemisphere, but the flow of money was suddenly curtailed this year by the shuttering of USAID, the US government’s humanitarian arm. Colombia currently pays 10 per cent tariffs on most imports to the United States, the baseline level Trump has imposed on many countries. Colombia’s foreign ministry has vowed to seek international support for Petro, who first rose to prominence as a senator by exposing links between right-wing paramilitary groups involved in drug trafficking and corrupt politicians, as well as for the country’s autonomy.

Petro condemned a new bombing of a vessel which killed three people, saying the boat belonged to a “humble family,” and not the leftist National Liberation Army rebel group, as claimed by US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth in his own comments. “Mr. Trump, Colombia has never been rude to the United States... but you are rude and ignorant to Colombia,” Petro said. “Since I am not a businessman, I am even less a drug trafficker. There is no greed in my heart.” Petro has pledged to tame coca-growing regions in the country with social and military intervention. — Reuters

RODRIGO PAZ WINS BOLIVIAN PRESIDENCY, ENDING YEARS OF LEFTIST RULE

LA PAZ: Centrist Rodrigo Paz won Bolivia’s presidential runoff, defeating conservative rival Jorge “Tuto” Quiroga, as the country’s worst economic crisis in a generation helped propel the end of nearly two decades of leftist rule. Paz, a senator from the Christian Democratic Party, won 54.5 per cent of the vote, beating Quiroga’s 45.5 per cent, according to early results from Bolivia’s electoral tribunal. But Paz’s party does not hold a majority in the country’s

legislature, which will force him to forge alliances to govern effectively. The new president takes office on November 8.

“We must open Bolivia to the world,” said Paz during his victory speech from La Paz, after Quiroga conceded defeat.

The 58-year-old senator’s win marks a historic shift for the South American country, governed almost continuously since 2006 by Bolivia’s Movement to Socialism, or MAS, which once enjoyed overwhelming

support from the country’s Indigenous majority.

Paz’s moderate platform - pledging to maintain social programmes while promoting private sector-led growth - appeared to resonate with left-leaning voters disillusioned by the ruling MAS, founded by former President Evo Morales, but wary of Quiroga’s proposed austerity measures. He is the third member of his extended family to be elected president of the landlocked nation. — Reuters

Ready to join Putin-Trump talks if invited: Zelensky

UKRAINIAN

President Volodymyr Zelensky has said he would be ready to join

Russian President Vladimir Putin and US counterpart Donald Trump at their summit in Hungary if he is invited. Trump and Putin said they would meet in the Hungarian capital, possibly in a matter of weeks, as the US leader continues to try to broker a peace deal to end the three-and-a-half-year war, triggered by Russia’s 2022 attack. “If I am invited to Budapest — if it is an invitation in a format where we meet as three or, as it’s called, shuttle diplomacy, President Trump meets with Putin and President Trump meets with me — then in one format or another, we will agree,” Zelensky told reporters in remarks released on Monday.

The Ukrainian president criticised the choice of Hungary, which has a terse relationship with Kyiv and is seen as the most Kremlin-sympathetic member of the European Union. “I do not believe that a prime minister who blocks Ukraine everywhere can do anything positive for Ukrainians or even provide a balanced contribution,” Zelensky said, referring to Hungarian leader Viktor Orban.

Kyiv has said it is ready to join a three-way meeting between Zelensky, Putin and Trump in a number of neutral countries, including Turkey, Switzerland and the Vatican. In 1994, Moscow signed a memorandum in Budapest aimed at ensuring security for Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan in exchange for them giving up numerous nuclear weapons left from the Soviet era. “Another ‘Budapest’ scenario wouldn’t be positive either,” Zelensky said.

Trump has been aiming for a speedy end to the years-long conflict in Ukraine since he returned to White House earlier this year, pushing for a series of direct talks between Ukrainian and Russian officials and hosting Putin for a summit in Alaska -- diplomatic efforts that have ultimately not lead to any breakthrough.

Meanwhile, EU countries on Monday agreed to phase out their remaining gas imports from Russia by the end of 2027,



Residents stand near their apartment buildings hit by a Russian drone strike, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in the town of Shakhtarske in Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine. — Reuters

breaking a dependency the bloc has struggled to end despite Moscow’s war on Ukraine. Energy ministers meeting in Luxembourg approved a plan by the European Commission to phase out both pipeline gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports from Russia, subject to approval by the bloc’s parliament.

Lars Aagaard, energy minister of Denmark, which holds the European Union’s rotating presidency, called it a “crucial” step to make Europe energy independent. The plan is part of a broader EU strategy to wean the bloc off Russian energy supplies. “Although we have worked hard and pushed to get Russian gas and oil out of Europe in recent years, we are not there yet,” Aagaard said. The commission is in parallel pushing for LNG imports to be phased out one year earlier, by January 2027, as part of a new package of sanctions aimed at sapping Moscow’s war chest. But sanctions need unanimous approval from the EU’s 27

nations, which has at times been hard to reach. Trade restrictions like those approved on Monday instead require the backing of a weighted majority of 15 countries.

All but Hungary and Slovakia, which are diplomatically closer to the Kremlin and still import Russian gas via pipeline, supported the latest move, according to diplomats.

“The real impact of this regulation is that our safe supply of energy in Hungary is going to be killed,” Budapest’s top diplomat, Peter Szijjarto, told reporters. His government says the landlocked country needs to import gas from Russia due to geographical constraints.

Under the proposal approved on Monday, which is expected to win the support of the European Parliament, Russian gas imports under new contracts will be banned as of January 1, 2026. Existing contracts will benefit from a transition period, with inflows under short-term contracts allowed until June 17 next year and those under long-term contracts until January 1, 2028.— AFP

Louvre closes for second day as France hunts jewel thieves

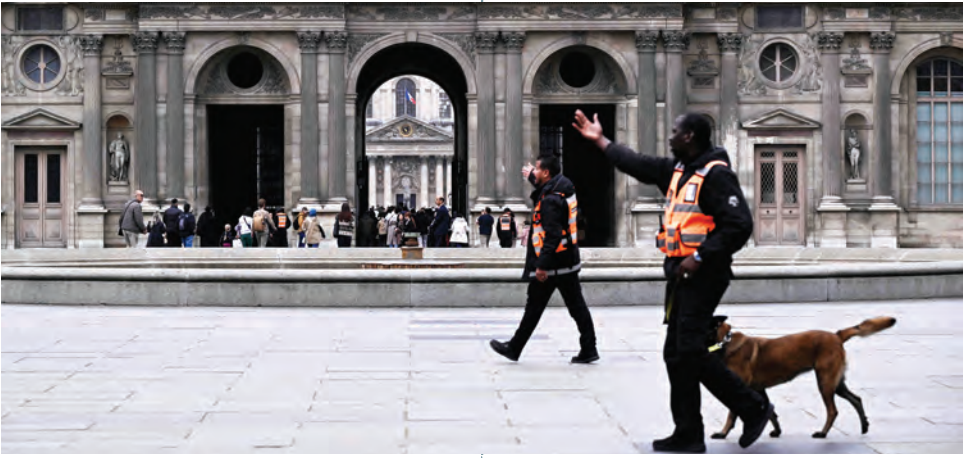
PARIS: The Louvre was closed for a second day on Monday as police hunted for thieves who broke in and stole priceless jewels in a spectacular daylight robbery. Officials said a team of 60 investigators was working on the theory that an organised crime group was behind the theft on Sunday of nine pieces of jewellery, one of which — a crown covered in more than 1,000 diamonds — they dropped as they fled.

The thieves arrived at around 9:30 am (0730 GMT), shortly after the museum opened at 9:00 am, and completed the robbery in just seven minutes, sources and officials said. They parked a truck with an extendable ladder like those used by movers below the Paris museum’s Apollo Gallery, home to an imperial jewel collection, clambering up and using cutting equipment to get in through a window and open the display cases.

The world-famous museum, whose extensive collections include the Mona Lisa, said it was closing for a second day. It may not open again until Wednesday, as the museum is usually shut on Tuesdays. At the museum, US tourist Jesslyn Ehlers, 38, and her husband were busy rebooking their tickets.

“We’re just kind of disappointed. We’ve been planning this for a very long time,” she said.

Shortly before the announcement, queues of impatient visitors snaked their way across the museum’s pyramid courtyard and under the tall arches of the main entrance gallery. Carol Fuchs, an elderly tourist from the United States, had been standing in line for more than three-quarters of an hour. “The audacity, coming through a window,” she told AFP after the disappearance of the jewels. “Will they ever be found? I doubt it. I think it’s long gone,” she said.



Security staff ask people to leave a courtyard of the Louvre, in Paris. — AFP

The masked thieves dropped and damaged the crown of Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoleon III, as they made their escape.

It is covered in 1,354 diamonds and 56 emeralds, according to the museum’s website. But eight priceless items of jewellery remain

missing, according to the culture ministry. The list they released included an emerald-and-diamond necklace that Napoleon I gave his wife, Empress Marie-Louise. Also stolen was a diadem that once belonged to the Empress Eugenie, which is dotted with nearly 2,000

diamonds, and a necklace that once belonged to Marie-Amelie, the last queen of France. It is adorned with eight sapphires and 631 diamonds, according to the Louvre’s website.

The loot would be impossible to sell on in its current state, said Alexandre Giquello, president of the leading auction house Drouot. The heist has reignited a row over a lack of security in France’s museums, with Interior Minister Laurent Nunez on Monday in a meeting with police ordering better protection measures around cultural sites, according to his advisers. Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin earlier on Monday admitted to flaws in securing the Louvre. “What is certain is that we have failed, since people were able to park a furniture hoist in the middle of Paris, get people up it in several minutes to grab priceless jewels, giving France a terrible image,” he told France Inter radio. — AFP

OPINION

High hopes ahead of upcoming tourism season



AS the new winter tourism season approaches, optimism is running high across Oman's tourism sector. The recent signing of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, ending the nearly two-year-old conflict in Gaza, has injected fresh momentum into regional travel. This development is expected to restore confidence among international tourists and encourage exploration across the Middle East.

A shining example of success is the Dhofar Governorate, which welcomed a record number of over one million tourists during khareef in both 2024 and 2025. This achievement underscores the effectiveness of intensive marketing strategies and the growing appeal of Oman's natural and cultural offerings.

With peace returning to the region and tourists showing a renewed willingness to travel and explore new areas, hopes are high that the winter of 2025-26 will shatter all previous records in tourism arrival numbers.

Adding to this optimism is the latest data from UN Tourism, which reports that 690 million tourists travelled internationally between January and June 2025 — about 33 million more than in the same period of 2024.

The Middle East recorded four per cent fewer arrivals during these six months. However, after a very strong post-pandemic rebound, the region still saw 29 per cent more arrivals than the same period in

2019 — the strongest regional performance relative to pre-pandemic levels.

Despite global uncertainty, travel demand is expected to remain resilient throughout the remainder of the year. UN Tourism's January projection of three to five per cent growth in international arrivals for 2025 remains unchanged.

In 2024, international tourism receipts grew 11 per cent to a record \$1,734 billion, about 14 per cent above pre-pandemic levels. Oman's tourism sector mirrored this global upswing, with its contribution to the national economy rising to RO 2.12 billion by the end of 2024, compared to RO 1.75 billion in 2018 — representing a growth rate of 3.2 per cent, according to the data by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Oman received around 3.8 million visitors in 2024, of which 68.2 per cent were overnight visitors and 31.8 per cent were same-day visitors. Total tourism spending by these visitors amounted to RO 989 million.

Looking ahead, the governorates of Musandam, Dhofar and Al Dakhiliyah are all set to receive arrivals. Events like Muscat Nights, scheduled to start from January 1, 2026, and the anticipated opening of major projects such as the Oman Botanic Garden and the Muttrah Cable Car, along with the launch of the GCC Unified Visa and a peaceful regional climate, will add extra flavour to the 2025/26 tourism season.

With strong foundations, promising trends, and strategic developments underway, Oman is poised to make the winter of 2025/26 a landmark season for tourism

The data also showed that more than 55 per cent of incoming visitors were from the UAE, underscoring the importance of land connectivity and ease of travel between Gulf countries.

Tourism across the Gulf Cooperation Council contributed \$247.1 billion to the region's economy in 2024, marking a nearly 32 per cent increase compared with 2019, according to the latest official data. Intra-GCC travel experienced a sharp rebound, rising 52 per cent over the same period, with 19.3 million visitors travelling between member states.

As for reasons for coming to the Sultanate of Oman, leisure topped the list with 70.2 per cent, followed by visiting relatives and friends (17.9 per cent), and shopping (5 per cent). The average length of stay ranged between 5 and 6 nights, with a total of 14.8 million tourist nights — confirming the ability of destinations in Oman to attract visitors for longer periods.

Meanwhile, the number of outgoing visitors was 8.1 million, spending a total of RO 1.8 billion. This reflects the volume of domestic spending on outbound tourism and opens the way for developing initiatives to enhance tourism retention and domestic offerings.

With strong foundations, promising trends and strategic developments underway, Oman is poised to make the winter of 2025/26 a landmark season for tourism — one that could redefine its place on the global travel map.

Coalition unruliness threatens Merz's reform agenda

SARAH MARSH AND ANDREAS RINKE

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is struggling to push through two key policy proposals on pensions and military service, in a setback fuelling concerns that some of the political instability seen in France could soon echo in Europe's largest economy.

Merz's conservatives and the centre-left Social Democrats had promised to provide more stability when they formed their "marriage of convenience" five months ago after the collapse of a fractious three-way coalition. A historic spending package agreed before they took office helped smooth the path for a coalition, giving a certain fiscal leeway for them to achieve their differing goals.

But the coalition, which only has a slim parliamentary majority, has been beset by tensions since day one, when Merz became the first ever chancellor to fail to be elected in the first round of voting. While the coalition leaders have a good working relationship, they are struggling to keep their lawmakers in line. Many within Merz's own conservatives are disappointed at the degree of compromise needed when their campaign promised radical change — making secret ballots, like the one to elect the chancellor, particularly risky, lawmakers said. Merz, who had no government experience prior to taking office as chancellor, has taken a hands-off approach towards infighting both within the coalition and his own party.

"If the coalition continues in this way, it will not be able to effect any meaningful change," Philipp Koeker, political scientist at the University of Hanover, said. Analysts say governance is being complicated by distrust between and within the parties, ideological misalignment, a lack of governing experience in Merz's cabinet, and the scale of the challenges facing Germany.

Yet the coalition needs to move fast as the economy is facing its third year of contraction and the unreliability of its top security partner, the United States, makes it all the more vulnerable to growing Russian security concerns.

The bill reintroducing voluntary military service and opening the door to a reintroduction of the draft is urgently needed, for example, to help boost Germany's long-neglected armed forces, say its proponents. — AFP

What matters is you, not destination or process

WE love to talk about leadership as a journey. We talk about milestones, destinations and the path we're walking. Some call it "the process." Others insist it's all about "the destination." But here's the thing: leadership is not about the road at all. It's about the person walking it.

Think about it. Two people can go through the same programme, face the same challenges and follow the same steps but come out completely different. What made the difference? Not the process. Not the finish line. It's the way they grew, the values they lived and the kind of person they became while living the experience. Leadership is deeply personal. It's forged in the moments no one claps for: the way you handle criticism, the patience you show when others lose theirs, the humility you choose when ego would be easier. These are not items on a checklist or milestones on a map. They are shifts inside you. And they shape the leader you are becoming.

The paradox is that leadership development often disguises itself as "skills" and "processes." And yes, you can learn models, attend workshops and refine competencies. You can memorise theories and practice case studies. Those things are useful, but they are not the essence. Because if all of that doesn't touch who you are at your core, then it's decoration. The real question is not "What steps did you follow?" or "What title did you reach?" but "Who did you become in the process?" This shift in perspective matters because too often we confuse leadership with outcomes. We celebrate promotions,



DR ASMA AL YAHYAEI

The writer is an assistant professor at SQU



People will never forget who you were while you were leading.

awards and recognition as proof that someone is a leader. But those are external. They can be taken away, or they may never come. What remains is the internal compass, the part of you that defines how you act when no one is watching.

And here's something else worth noticing: the becoming never really ends. There is no final arrival point where you can say, "I've mastered leadership." Every new challenge, every unexpected turn, every failure or success adds another layer to who you are. The question is whether you allow those moments to harden you or refine you. So maybe we need to stop glorifying the journey or the destination. Instead, let's ask harder, deeper questions: Am I becoming more authentic? More grounded?

More human in the way I lead? Am I able to carry responsibility without arrogance, authority without losing empathy and vision without neglecting the people who help bring it alive? Because at the end of the day, titles fade. Processes change. Destinations move. But the leader you become, that stays with you. That's the legacy you carry, whether or not the world gives you a certificate for it.

And if there's one truth every leader eventually realises, it's this: people will forget the steps you followed, they'll forget the goals you hit, but they'll never forget who you were while you were leading.

That is the heart of leadership. Not the process. Not the destination. It's you.

Nothing can stop you...



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

WE Are still in the midst of celebrations of Omani Women's Day, which is celebrated on October 17 every year. Women are known to have always had resilience, so now the focus has been on empowerment. If in the past empowerment depended on self-motivation, today the government takes immense care in providing opportunities to women. What is empowerment? It is about having freedom to make their own choices and thrive in every aspect of life. Empowerment can happen on personal, social, economic, legal and political levels. Let us take a look at the different ways women can be empowered: One of the most important means of empowerment is educational empowerment. It could make all the difference when an individual has access to quality education at all levels, from primary to higher education. Vocational training and skill development had been emphasised from the early years of the modern renaissance of Oman. Encouraging STEM education — science, technology, engineering, and math — is important, say the educators. Along with all this, promoting financial literacy and digital skills is a necessity today. Another area is economic empowerment. Equal access to employment opportunities and fair wages are basic needs. Oman has been successful in enabling workplace rights like maternity leave and equal pay. A young woman, while we were discussing this aspect, pointed out that, “Yes, there is equality in

wages, but there is a slight concern about equal job opportunities.” On the other hand, women have been leaving a mark on entrepreneurial spirit. What support do women entrepreneurs need? The support could be in the form of microloans, mentorship, grants, etc. Political empowerment is an integral part of life today, and it can be in the areas of participation in politics and decision-making processes as well as representation in parliaments, councils and leadership positions. Voting rights and political education become part of an individual's growth. They say social and cultural empowerment are significant because they challenge gender stereotypes and cultural norms that limit women. Legal empowerment happens when there is awareness of legal rights, in addition to access to justice and legal protection against violence, discrimination, etc. Access to affordable healthcare, including maternal and mental health, empowers a woman further. Psychological and emotional empowerment includes building self-esteem, confidence and self-awareness and promoting mental health support and therapy in addition to creating safe spaces for expression, healing, and growth, including mentorship and role models for guidance. Is there a gender gap when it comes to the digital world? That is why digital empowerment will deal with bridging the digital gender divide. Tech skills such

Political empowerment is an integral part of life today, and it can be in the areas of participation in politics and decision-making processes as well as representation in parliaments, councils and leadership positions

as coding, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity are essential in today's world. Obviously empowerment is not a one-size-fits-all solution — it is about removing barriers and giving real choices. Empowered women contribute not only to their own lives but also to families, communities and entire economies. Maybe we need to truly analyse the general statement that women have limited access to capital and funding. Could it be true that investors often favour male-led startups, whether consciously or unconsciously? And another issue is that women may have less collateral or financial history to secure loans. Apparently venture capital firms and angel investors are overwhelmingly male-dominated, which can affect decisions and risk perceptions. In a recent corporate event highlighting the startups, women stood shoulder to shoulder with successful projects that already had secured financial and professional backing. There are several entrepreneurial projects that have been established, and a key factor to keep in mind is diversification of the economy, and the key areas include renewable energy (solar, wind and hydrogen), logistics, tourism (especially cultural and eco-tourism), and agriculture. There are also initiatives such as the Oman Technology Fund and other programmes from the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development. Universities and government agencies provide incubators, mentor networks, and training programmes to help entrepreneurs develop business plans and secure funding.

ALARM SOUNDED AS F5 HACK EXPOSES BROAD RISKS

RAPHAEL SATTER AND A J VICENS

A more than year-long digital intrusion into cybersecurity company F5, publicised last week and blamed on foreign spies, has defenders across the industry hunting for signs of compromise among the many corporate networks that use its products. Several worry that more disclosures are coming. So far, little is known about the scope of the hack beyond statements from F5 that its source code and sensitive information about software vulnerabilities were stolen. The company's website says it serves more than four in five Fortune 500 companies in some capacity, and US officials have said that federal networks were among those targeted in the hack's aftermath and have urged immediate action. That extensive presence alone has triggered widespread unease. F5's stock tumbled 12 per cent last Thursday, the day it published a host of fixes for previously vulnerable products, although it rebounded slightly by the end of the week. Several cybersecurity executives and analysts compared the hack at F5 to the extraordinary intrusion at the software company SolarWinds discovered in December 2020. That company, whose Orion software was used for network monitoring, became the unwitting springboard into a number of highly sensitive networks after its source code was tampered with. Around a dozen government departments were eventually breached in the wide-ranging spy operation. Just like SolarWinds, which was little known in the consumer market before the hack, F5 has a host of tech equipment and services - load balancers, content delivery networks and firewalls - that typically play low-profile but critical roles in directing, managing and filtering organisations' internet traffic. “I'm not equating this to the SolarWinds attack, but I'm equating it to the fact that people never hear of it, but it's in everybody's network,” said Michael Sikorski, the chief technology officer at Palo Alto Networks' threat intelligence-focused Unit 42. “When we're talking about 80 per cent of the Fortune 500, we're talking about banks, law firms, tech companies, you name it.” Sikorski said the F5 hackers stole source code and undisclosed vulnerability information, potentially giving them the ability to develop tools for cyberespionage in a tight time frame. Bob Huber, chief security officer of cybersecurity firm Tenable, said he, too, had SolarWinds in mind as he tried to make sense of what was going on at F5. “As of right now, this is not SolarWinds,” he said, noting that F5 has said it had “no evidence of modification to our software supply chain.” — Reuters

Serious and popular... Meloni marks 3 years

ITALIAN

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni marks three years in office this week with her far-right party more popular than ever, her government remarkably durable and the economy stable, if not exactly booming.

“She's a serious person,” said Giulia Devescovi, a 31-year-old doctor who joined a rally with hundreds of supporters of Meloni's Brothers of Italy party in Florence earlier this month. “She's perhaps one of the best prime ministers since Silvio Berlusconi,” she said among a sea of Brothers of Italy flags. Meloni is way off the late Berlusconi's record of nine years as prime minister, but her coalition stands out for its longevity among the 70-odd post-war governments in Italy. Her party tops opinion polls with support levels consistently above the 26 per cent it secured to win 2022 elections, which saw Meloni installed as Italy's first woman prime minister on October 22 that year. In three regional elections in recent weeks, her party increased its support, even in Tuscany, a bastion of the left. Headlining the campaign event in the picturesque Piazza San Lorenzo in central Florence, Meloni railed at the left who she said were happy to see Italy confined to junior partner to EU giants France and Germany. She particularly noted the economic progress of her indebted country, emphasising that borrowing costs are now lower than those of France. “A leading nation like Italy doesn't act as anyone's spare tyre,” she declared to cheers and applause from the crowd. As a stateswoman, Meloni appears to have a seat at every table, almost a regular at the White House and recently the only woman leader to attend the signing of the Gaza ceasefire in Egypt. There, US President Donald Trump interrupted a speech on his peace efforts for the Middle East



Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni holds the cabinet minister during a handover ceremony at Palazzo Chigi in Rome on October 23, 2022. — AFP file photo



JULIETTE RABAT

The writer is journalist for AFP and is based in Rome

to praise Meloni as “incredible”, a “very successful politician” and a “beautiful young woman”. “Italians are proud of the way she represents them on the international stage. And she communicates brilliantly,” noted one European diplomat. In Garbatella, the working-class neighbourhood of Rome where Meloni grew up, local resident Martina Ladina agreed. “When she speaks with the other heads of state, she speaks all these languages - she manages to stand up to the men,” the 36-year-old said last week. For Lorenzo Pregliasco, founder of the YouTrend polling institute, the prime minister's diplomatic “activism” has “consolidated her image as leader” while “she has not suffered any major slip-ups”. On the domestic front, too, he noted that she has not made major changes that might alienate her electorate. “I don't think it's a contradiction that doing little in government is accompanied by stable support - I believe it's one of the reasons,” Pregliasco said. Irregular immigration - a key campaign issue for Meloni and her allies - is down, but the government

has also ramped up the number of visas for non-EU legal workers. Rome has cut taxes, toughened penalties for protesters and taken steps on judicial reform, but has yet to confront the structural issues that many believe hold Italy back. Surveys show that Italians are most concerned about purchasing power, with wages stagnating. Another major complaint is the state of the public health system, investment in which has not kept pace with inflation. Italy hopes its deficit will fall within EU limits this year, but debt remains an eye-watering 135 per cent of gross domestic product. And growth is forecast to be just 0.5 per cent this year, despite Italy having already received 140 billion euros (\$163 billion) under the EU's post-Covid recovery plan, with more expected by 2026. “Look, we haven't performed miracles,” Meloni acknowledged in Florence, but insisted that “Things are getting better.” Pregliasco noted the solidity of Meloni's coalition, which includes the far-right League of Matteo Salvini and Berlusconi's conservative Forza Italia. This contrasts with the divided opposition, represented by the left-wing Democratic Party and the Five Star Movement. “They don't necessarily love Giorgia Meloni” but “a significant portion of Italian voters don't see any truly credible alternatives,” the analyst said. The PD and Five Star have been cooperating more, fielding joint candidates in elections - and recently have sought to harness waves of anger over Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets in recent weeks, demanding Meloni take a tougher line on Israel over its actions in Gaza, and for Italy to join other European countries in recognising a Palestinian state. Back in Garbatella, there was no love for Meloni among locals Maria, Mirella and Lucrezia, who were happy to chat as long as they did not have to give their surnames.

SPORTS

NEWINITIATIVE



The centres will help identify and train young athletes under the supervision of school sports specialists.

MOE, MOCSY LAUNCH SCHOOL ATHLETES DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

The Ministry of Education (MoE), represented by the Oman School Sports Association (OSSA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), inaugurated the School Athletes Development Centres Project during a ceremony held at the Oman Olympic Academy’s lecture hall on Tuesday.

The event was held under the auspices of Basíl bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth and attended by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaídi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, and OSSA Chairman, along with association heads, sports officials and project supervisors.

In his address, Jaber bin Mohammed al Shabibi, Director of the Athletes Development System at MoCSY, stated that this ambitious national project reflects the integration of efforts between the two ministries to build a promising generation of Omani athletes and expand the base of sports participation in schools, emphasised that the project provides an environment for discovering and developing young talents through scientific training methods led by qualified national coaches.

Al Shabibi highlighted that the next phase focuses on on field implementation and continuous evaluation to ensure the centres’ effectiveness, calling on coaches and supervisors to dedicate their efforts to making the initiative a cornerstone for Oman’s sporting future.

Meanwhile, Hisham bin Salem al Adwani, OSSA Vice-Chairman, affirmed that the project comes in line with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to nurture sports talents and create a sustainable pathway for their development. The centres will help identify and train young athletes under the supervision of school sports specialists, forming a direct pipeline to clubs and national teams.

The event featured a visual presentation outlining the objectives and scope of the initiative, followed by a briefing from Yousef bin Fadhl Bait Saleem, OSSA Board Member, who explained that the project will launch 10 training centres across Oman, targeting 250 students in four disciplines: handball, athletics, hockey and basketball.

The ceremony concluded with a memento presented by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaídi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education to Basíl bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth in recognition of his patronage and support for the project.



The project will launch 10 training centres across Oman, targeting 250 students in four disciplines: handball, athletics, hockey and basketball.

Oman teams make strong start at West Asia tourney

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

OMAN teams delivered top show in the opening day of the West Asian Beach Volleyball Championship Muscat 2025 which began on Sunday at the sands court of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The four days event, organised by the Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) in cooperation with the West Asia Volleyball Federation, featured participation of 21 teams representing various West Asian nations.

In the men’s preliminary round, Oman Team 2 claimed an impressive 2-1 victory over Lebanon, while Oman Team 3 earned a convincing 2-0 win over Yemen in a tight clash.

Meanwhile, Oman Team 4 suffered a 2-0 loss against Saudi Arabia and Qatar with the same result and Oman Team 2 lost to Saudi Arabia by 2-1 in a closely contested match.

In the women’s category competition, Oman Team 2 went down 2-0 to Lebanon and later lost with the same result to Qatar, while Oman Team 3 suffered 2-0 defeats to both Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Oman teams in the men’s competitions are represented by Team 1 through the pair of Hood al Jalboobi and Ahmed al Hosni while Team 2 featured Dawood and Al Buraiki besides Team 3 comprised Nooh and Yousef and Team 4 featured Khalfan and Saleh.

In the women’s category, Maryam and Liqaa represented Oman Team 1 while Fatma and Amna were players of Team 2 and Al Shaima and Furat in Team 3.

Elsewhere, Bahrain registered a strong start in the men’s competition with a 2-0 victory over Yemen.

On Tuesday, the quarterfinals actions will be held while the semifinals and finals are scheduled on Wednesday. The event attracted elite teams including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan and hosts Oman.

On Saturday, Oman beach volleyball team, comprising Hood al Jalboobi and Ahmed al Hosni, lifted the title of the



Oman Team 3 earned a convincing 2-0 win over Yemen.

30th edition of Arab Beach Volleyball Championship following a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Tunisia in the final clash while Morocco emerged victorious in

the 20th edition of Arab Women’s Beach Volleyball Championship after they defeated Lebanon in straight sets (2-0) to claim the gold medal.

Oman rugby team returns for Asia Rugby Sevens

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

Just days after announcing their withdrawal at a previous press conference, the Oman Rugby Committee officially confirmed on Tuesday that the national team will return to compete in the Asia Rugby Sevens Championship, hosted by Oman on October 25–26 at the Royal Oman Police Stadium in Al Wattayah, with the participation of 15 Asian countries.

This comeback reflects the team’s determination and ambition to perform honourably before home fans in the nation’s first continental rugby event.

The Oman national team enters the tournament with a balanced line-up combining experience and ambition. The squad includes captain Imad al Marjabi, along with Haitham al Harthy, Majid al Dhakhri, Ahmed al Balushi, Rashid al Rashdi, Faisal al Faliti, Zakaria al Faliti, Awsid al Rawahi, Julian Dadon, Dwyte Ferreira, Mahmoud Sabri and Finlay Watson. The team is led by coach Brian Hopkin, with Mohammed



The Oman national team enters the tournament with a balanced line-up.

Rabeeh al Hashami as team manager and Donna Hopkin as physiotherapist, aiming to deliver a performance worthy of the Sultanate’s name in its first continental appearance on home soil.

ECONOMIC IMPACT
Nabil bin Riyadh al Busaidy, Chairman of the Oman Rugby Committee, revealed that hosting the Asia Rugby Sevens Championship was not part of the annual plan, but rather an unexpected opportunity wisely seized in collaboration with Oman Sports Events Company.

He explained that the committee is in constant communication with Asia Rugby, and when the chance to host arose, they examined what Oman would gain from it. After conducting a feasibility study, they found that every Omani rial spent on the championship would return three to four rials in economic and tourism benefits.

Al Busaidy emphasised that bidding to host an international tournament was not an easy task, as it required meeting strict standards related to anti-doping, medical facilities, nutrition, and

organisation. He said the bid file was comprehensive, but what set Oman apart was its strategic location, excellent air connectivity, and the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in building a new national team to represent the Sultanate. He added that the ministry was a key partner in achieving this milestone, noting that the committee also organised training courses for doctors, physiotherapists and referees in preparation for the tournament.

The championship features 18 teams representing 15 nations, including Oman. Bahrain are considered one of the top contenders, given their roster of experienced players trained in British schools and universities.

Al Busaidy described the tournament as an opportunity to gain valuable experience from Asia’s strongest teams, adding that the Omani squad would rely on speed and fitness as its main strengths.

The matches will be broadcast live through a partnership between an Omani company and another from Dubai.

SHORT TAKES



Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 finished third overall at a rain-hampered Indianapolis 8 Hours presented by AWS in the USA.

AL FAISAL JOINS MARCIELLO, FARFUS TO CLAIM PODIUM IN INDIANAPOLIS

INDIANAPOLIS, USA: Oman’s Al Faisal al Zubair teamed up with Raffaele Marciello and Augusto Farfus to finish third overall in their Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 at a rain-hampered Indianapolis 8 Hours presented by AWS in United States of America at the weekend.

Severe weather, lightning and torrential rain affected the famous race at the iconic Indianapolis Motor Speedway and it ended under a yellow flag.

The first four hours featured some fascinating racing action with Farfus and Al Zubair running strongly in the Pro class and Marciello able to pass Luca Stolz and fend off Kelvin van der Linde to take the lead before the onset of lightning and torrential rain triggered an extended red flag.

Race strategies then came into play for the closing stints, only for the weather and heavy rain to intervene again. The pit strategy helped Van der Linde and the second Team WRT crew were able to take full advantage with no time available to Marciello under full power to regain the positions lost.

Van der Linde opted to take on fuel immediately and Marciello stayed out a lap longer and lost out. Just two laps of actual racing under the green flag took place on the 14-turn road course in the final four hours because of lightning and thunderstorms rolling through central Indiana.

Overall victory duly went to the Team WRT BMW trio of Kelvin van der Linde, Charles Weerts and MotoGP legend Valentino Rossi. The result and third place for Al Zubair, Marciello and Farfus enabled Team WRT to clinch a first GT3 manufacturers’ championship for BMW.

Maro Engel, Tom Kalender and Luca Stolz finished second in their Team GMR Mercedes-AMG.

Al Zubair, Marciello and Farfus had been fourth quickest in the free practice session with a best lap of 1min 23.361sec and then Marciello had topped the times in Q1 with a best run of 1min 23.072sec.

The crew were third in the Pro class in Q2 and eighth in Q3. With the three sessions combined, they qualified for the race in third place behind the Team Lone Star Racing and Team GMR Mercedes’.

MUSALIH CT, ZUBAIR CT REGISTER WINS

MUSCAT: Musalih CT beat Mordern Muscat Mountains A by 52 runs in the B Division of the OC League 2025-26. Bilal Munir scored 27 of 21, batting at the lower order, to help Musalih CT get to a respectable total of 155.

In return, MMM-A could only make 103 runs courtesy of three wickets from Manish Bhatia and two wickets each from Muhammed Muslim and Bilal Munir.

Brief Scores : Musalih CT 155/9 in 20 overs (Bilal Munir 27(21); Noorul Haq 3/30) beat MMM-A 103/10 in 20 overs (Mithun Balaji 21(17) ; Manish Bhatia 3/18) by 52 runs.

In J Division, Zubair CT beat MF Redwing XI by 30 runs. Rajesh Pai scored 25 of 21 balls helping Zubair CT linger to 132. Sudheesh PV and Prince John picked 3 wickets each for MF Redwing XI.

Batting second, MF Redwing XI could manage to score only 102 runs courtesy 3 wickets from Ruwan Rupasinghe and 2 wickets each from Shibin Lal and Shankar MG.

Brief Scores : Zubair CT 132/10 in 16.5 overs (Rajesh Pai 25(21); Prince John 3/18) beat MF Redwing XI 102/10 in 17.2 overs (Rishad K 29(23); Ruwan Rupasinghe 3/11) by 30 runs.



Abhijit Ajikumar, Ruwan Rupasinghe, Shibin Lal of Zubair CT



The taekwondo squad includes Qaboos al Balushi, Ziyad al Balushi, Al Mutasim al Maskari, Shahinaz al Maawali and Fidaa al Barwani. — Nawaf al Busaidy

Oman to compete in 6 events at Asian Youth Games

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 20

THE official delegation of the Sultanate of Oman will arrive in Bahrain on Tuesday morning to take part in the 3rd Asian Youth Games, which will be held from October 22 to 31 with the participation of elite young athletes from across the continent. The Games will feature 24 sports divided into 31 events and a total of 253 competitions for both boys, girls and mixed teams.

Oman will participate with a strong line-up of youth athletes across six disciplines.

In athletics, the team consists of Raed al Balushi competing in the 100m and 200m races, Al Yazan al Shamsi in the 800m and Hamad al Riyami in the 2000m steeplechase.

In golf, the trio of Adam al Barwani, Maher Sumbat, and Branch Jajwani will compete in both individual and team events. The esports team will contest in the Rocket League competition through players Sultan al Balushi, Mashari al Ajmi and Abdullah al Amri. The swimming team will be represented by Mohammed al Wahibi, who will take part in the 50m and 100m



The equestrian team (show jumping) comprises riders Abdulaziz al Busaidy, Taha al Balushi and Sarah al Kathiri.

backstroke and 50m butterfly events.

The taekwondo squad includes Qaboos al Balushi, Ziyad al Balushi, Al Mutasim al Maskari, Shahinaz al Maawali and Fidaa al Barwani. Meanwhile, the equestrian team (show jumping) comprises riders Abdulaziz al Busaidy, Taha al Balushi and Sarah al Kathiri, competing in both individual and team events.

The official Omani delegation is headed by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education

for Education, accompanied by Dr Said bin Mohammed al Hajri, Deputy Head, and Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamkhalaf, Secretary-General of the Oman Olympic Committee. The competitions will be hosted at Issa Sports City, Khalifa Sports City, the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre, the Endurance Village and the Sama Bay Zone.

SIX TEAMS

Oman is represented by six national teams in athletics, golf, swimming, electronic sports, taekwondo and equestrian.

The golf team and the administrative mission had arrived earlier, while the remaining teams will join the Games three days before their respective competitions begin. A welcoming ceremony for all participating nations and the official flag-raising event will take place on Tuesday evening at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre.

The Omani flag will be raised by Adam al Barwani from the golf team, while during the official opening ceremony on Wednesday, the honour will go to equestrian athlete Sayyid Abdulaziz al Busaidy and taekwondo athlete Fidaa al Barwani.

ISM honours star athletes at CBSE National Games

MUSCAT: The Indian School Muscat (ISM) recently hosted a grand felicitation ceremony to honour the triumphant athletes who brought laurels by excelling in the CBSE National Sports and Games 2025-26.

The event, held in the school sports ground, was graced by the president, members of the School Management Committee and other dignitaries.

The students were recognised for their outstanding performances at the national level in chess, badminton and cricket. The winners were presented with medals, trophies and certificates of excellence.

The U14 Girls 4 x 100 m Relay team won the overall trophy at CBSE National Sports and Games 2025-26 and securing a chance to represent School Games Federation of India (SGFI). The team which comprised of Lavishka Jiss -VIII F, Zerín Nishad - VII F, Jessel Ruth Pinto - VIII H, Vidusha Mahesh Prabhu - VII



C and Avira Vijay Raj - IX L has proved their mettle and won hearts by clinching the gold medal. With her prowess and subtle thinking, Shybi Binoj of XII B continued the winning streak by clinching gold in U19 Girls Individual Chess Championship.

The silver medal winners of U19 Boys (Cricket) comprised of Jayesh Mal -XII G, Hafiz

Mohamed-XII L, Harshil Shetty-XII G, Mathew Samuel Kevin-XII A, Haider H Sikora-XII G, Jeet Shah-XII I, Ojjus Pachisia-XII A and Hussain Madeh-XII I.

Jeet Shah won the Man of the Match in one of the matches. Ojjus Pachisia was awarded the Man of the Match in one of the matches and the Player of the Tournament 2025-26. Himnish Shahlot- XI F brought laurels by

winning a silver medal in U17 Boys Mixed Doubles Badminton.

The bronze medal winners of U14 Boys (Cricket) consisted of Aarav Sachin Chirmure-VI E, Shah Kevin Sujal -IX L, Yohan Sriram Balamurugan-VIII F and Aarav Keskar-VI B. Shah Kevin Sujal of IX L was awarded the Man of the Match in one of the matches. The U17 Girls 4 x 100 m relay team that secured bronze medals comprised of Manha Mariyam- XI L, Sree Nidhuna P Nair- X M, Shanza Mehreen- IX D, Hifza Ayscha- IX N, Evelia Achsah Aneesh- XI D. The bronze medal winners of U19 Girls Team Chess Championship constituted of Shybi Binoj- XII B, Sahanna Rajmohan- XII E, Sarah Mary Renny- XII C and Dhvani Modha- IX M.

The bronze medal winners of U14 Girls Team Chess Championship included Vidusha Mahesh Prabhu – VII C, Stuthi Nayak- VIII B, Sloka Sujith- V K, Vadapalli Varshika- VII B.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Medvedev celebrates with the trophy ATP 250 tournament in Almaty.

MEDVEDEV CLAIMS FIRST TITLE IN OVER 2 YEARS IN ALMATY

PARIS: Daniil Medvedev won his first title in two years on Sunday, defeating Frenchman Corentin Moutet 7-5, 4-6, 6-3 in the final of the ATP 250 tournament in Almaty.

Since winning in Rome in May 2023, Medvedev, ranked 14 in the world, has lost six finals including the US Open the same year, and the Australian Open the following January.

This year he lost in the second round in Melbourne before going out in the first round at Roland Garros, Wimbledon and Flushing Meadows.

After the US Open, Medvedev started working with new coaches Thomas Johansson and Rohan Goetzke and responded by reaching the semifinals in Beijing and Shanghai.

The 21st victory of his career also boosts his hopes of reaching the year-ending ATP Finals, moving him up three spots to 12th, just 875 points behind Lorenzo Musetti who is in the eighth and final place. — AFP

MOROCCO EMERGE U20 WORLD CHAMPS



CHILE: Sixteen years after Ghana’s historic triumph, Morocco have joined the elite circle of Fifa U20 World Cup winners. The Atlas Lion Cubs stunned Argentina 2-0 on Sunday at the Julio Martínez Prádanos Stadium in Santiago, Chile, to lift their first-ever global title.

Inspired by a dazzling Yassir Zabiri, who netted both goals in a man-of-the-match performance, Morocco delivered a flawless display that left the six-time champions with no answers.

Under the guidance of coach Mohamed Ouahbi, the young Moroccans combined defensive solidity with fearless attacking football. Zabiri, the tournament’s revelation, struck twice to seal a famous victory and finished as the Golden Boot winner with five goals. Othmane Maamane was named Player of the Tournament, claiming the Golden Ball, while final hero Yassir Zabiri took home the Silver Ball as the second-best player.

VERSTAPPEN CLOSES GAP TO PIASTRI IN CHAMPIONSHIP RACE AFTER PERFECT WEEKEND

NORRIS FINISHES SECOND, NOW 14 POINTS BEHIND PIASTRI WHO ENDED UP FIFTH

LECLERC THIRD FOR FERRARI, HAMILTON FOURTH

VIRTUAL SAFETY CAR DEPLOYED AFTER ANTONELLI AND SAINZ COLLISION

RED Bull’s Max Verstappen dominated the US Grand Prix from pole position on Sunday, leading every lap to take another significant chunk out of Oscar Piastri’s Formula One championship lead on a perfect weekend in Texas.

McLaren’s Piastri finished fifth with his teammate and closest rival Lando Norris second after passing Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc, last year’s winner, five laps from the chequered flag.

Piastri now leads Britain’s Norris by 14 points with five rounds and two sprints remaining, while Verstappen has slashed his gap to the Australian to 40 after being 104 behind at the end of August.

Verstappen also won the Saturday sprint from pole position at Austin’s Circuit of the Americas, while the McLarens collided and retired, on a weekend of maximum points for the four-times world champion.

McLaren have already sealed the constructors’ title.

VERSTAPPEN SAYS THE TITLE CHANCE IS THERE

“For sure, the chance is there,” Verstappen said of the title battle. “We just need to try and deliver these weekends until the end.

“We will try whatever we can. It’s exciting,” he added after his third win in the last four races and 68th of his career.

Piastri said he still had full confidence in his ability to become Australia’s first champion since Alan Jones in 1980, and no worries.

“I’d still rather be where I am than the other two,” added the 24-year old.

Norris lost out to Leclerc at the start and then took 21 laps to find a way back past as the Monegasque, on the faster but less durable soft tyres, held a defensive masterclass.

Leclerc then battled with Lewis Hamilton, who started on mediums, before pitting on lap 23 and coming back out in ninth place with his teammate moving up to third and Piastri to fourth.

Verstappen by then was 10 seconds down the road from his closest rival.

Once the rest of the frontrunners had made their pitstops, Leclerc was again second on the road — but more than six seconds behind Verstappen — with Norris third and having to overtake all over again with a track limits warning hanging over him.

Job done, Norris pulled away and finished 7.9 seconds behind Verstappen and 7.4 ahead of the Ferrari.

“It was tough. We did everything we could,” he said of a battle that gave the fans some excitement as Verstappen completed



Red Bull Racing’s Dutch driver Max Verstappen hoists the trophy on the podium after winning the United States Formula One Grand Prix at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas. — AFP

Verstappen wins USGP from pole



(L/R) Second-placed McLaren’s Lando Norris, first-placed Red Bull Racing’s Max Verstappen, Red Bull Racing mechanic Chris Gent and third-placed Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc on the podium. — AFP

lap after lap largely absent from the global television feed.

“I expected a slightly easier second attempt to get through, but it wasn’t the case. Charles drove a very good race. It was good fun, good battles. So we have to take second. Not a lot more we could’ve done today.”

McLaren team boss Andrea Stella said,

however, that Norris could have fought for the win had he not been held up by the Ferrari.

Hamilton was fourth, with Piastri just 1.1 seconds behind, and George Russell - winner last time out in Singapore - taking the chequered flag in sixth for Mercedes.

Red Bull’s Yuki Tsunoda finished seventh, ahead of Sauber’s Nico Hulkenberg and Haas’s Oliver Bearman. Fernando Alonso took the final point for Aston Martin.

The virtual safety car was deployed on lap seven when Mercedes’ Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli and Williams’ Carlos Sainz collided, with the Spaniard retiring after trying to overtake on the inside for seventh place.

Stewards handed Sainz a five-place grid penalty at next weekend’s Mexican Grand Prix, plus two penalty points, for causing the collision.

Sainz’s teammate Alex Albon had also been caught up in a first corner collision with Sauber’s Brazilian rookie Gabriel Bortoleto.

The weekend was declared a heat hazard, although the air temperature during the race was lower than feared at around 28.6 degrees Celsius (83.5 Fahrenheit). — Reuters

Fleetwood triumphs in India to continue blistering form

DELHI: Tommy Fleetwood shot a superb final round of seven-under 65 on Sunday to win the DP World India Championship by two strokes, continuing a blistering run of form. Japan’s Keita Nakajima began the day in the lead with a two-shot cushion at 17-under par, but his three-under 69 was not enough to hold off the charge of the Englishman who finished at 22-under par.

After tapping in for par at the last, the popular Fleetwood enjoyed a magical moment when his seven-year old son Frankie charged across the green to hug his father to huge cheers from the packed galleries. “So we were at home last week and we were playing golf together and (Frankie) just said randomly: ‘Do

you know what you’ve never done?’” explained Fleetwood. ““You’ve never won a tournament and I’ve been able to run on to the 18th green’.

“All day today, I had in my mind: ‘Could I put myself in a position where I can actually make that moment happen?’. “It’s just one of those little things that means a lot to me. That was really cool. That’s what I wanted to do all day.”

Fleetwood took control with four birdies from the seventh at the devilishly tight Delhi Golf Club, but it was a crucial par putt at the 11th that kept his round going. “That one on 11 — I hit a couple of poor iron shots there on 11 and 12 — but that putt was big and I managed to just keep it going through the back nine,” said Fleetwood.



Tommy Fleetwood celebrates with the DP World India Championship trophy.

The 34-year old put the title beyond doubt with a brilliant 25-foot putt for an eighth birdie of the day at the 17th to end Nakajima’s chances and the Japanese player had to settle for second. The Englishman’s win followed him lifting the PGA Tour’s FedEx Cup order of merit in August.

He sealed that by finishing in the top four of the first two PGA Tour playoff events and then winning the season-ending Tour Championship for his maiden victory on the US-based circuit. “There’s plenty of times where things haven’t gone my way,” said Fleetwood. “But the last two tournaments (where) I’ve been in contention I’ve won, so maybe things are starting to even out a little bit.” Fleetwood, the world number five, was also the leading points

scorer for the victorious European team at the Ryder Cup last month.

The inaugural \$4 million event in India attracted a host of Ryder Cup players and star names to the historic Lodhi course at Delhi Golf Club. Ireland’s Shane Lowry had a final-round 68 to tie for third on 18-under par with England’s Alex Fitzpatrick and South Africa’s Thriston Lawrence.

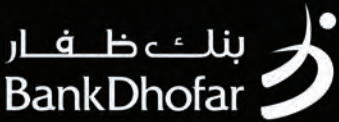
Norway’s Viktor Hovland finished with a flourish, sinking a chip for an eagle three at the 18th to get into a three-way tie for sixth at 17-under. Rory McIlroy struggled to get going on Sunday and a 71 that left him on 11-under and a share of 26th place. New Zealand’s Daniel Hillier slipped back to finish at 16-under par and a share of ninth place. — AFP



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OQ posts \$731 million net profit in H1

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 20

OQ Group, Oman's global integrated energy group, reported a resilient first half of 2025, driven by strong financial performance and a significant rise in in-country value (ICV) contributions, underscoring the company's growing role in supporting Oman's economic diversification goals.

The energy conglomerate achieved a net profit after tax of \$731 million, marking a 12% increase from \$651 million in the first half of 2024. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) stood at \$1.6 billion, marginally down by 2% compared with \$1.64 billion in H1 2024.

The average realised oil price during the period was \$74 per barrel, a 9.5% decline from \$82 per barrel last year.

Despite the softer oil prices, OQ maintained its investment-grade standing, with FitchRatings assigning a bbb- standalone credit profile and S&P Global reaffirming a BBB- rating with a stable outlook, reflecting market confidence in the group's fundamentals and disciplined portfolio management. The group's contribution



Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) stood at \$1.6 billion.

to Oman's local economy strengthened notably during the period.

Total spend in contracts and procurement rose to \$729 million, a 35% increase from \$ 541 million in H1 2024.

Local spend reached \$565 million, up 34% from \$ 421 million, highlighting the company's ongoing efforts to maximise domestic participation in its operations.

OQ also achieved significant growth in ICV retained value,

which climbed to \$238 million, a 37% rise compared with \$174 million last year.

Spending on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) reached \$128 million, up 29%, while Riyadh spend — investments directed towards national capacity-building — increased 30% to \$44 million.

Ashraf Hamed al Mamari, Group CEO of OQ, said the performance reflects both operational strength and commitment to national priorities. "Our performance reflects the strength of our

portfolio and the discipline of our strategy as we continue to deliver steady growth and create lasting value, driven by efficiency, diversification and a clear vision for Oman's energy future. Our local spend reaffirms our commitment to national value", he said.

Analysts noted that OQ's strong local spend and ICV performance align closely with Oman Vision 2040 objectives, particularly in strengthening domestic supply chains, enhancing SME



Our performance reflects the strength of our portfolio and the discipline of our strategy as we continue to deliver steady growth and create lasting value, driven by efficiency, diversification and a clear vision for Oman's energy future. Our local spend reaffirms our commitment to national value.

**ASHRAF HAMED
AL MAMARI**
Group CEO, OQ

financial returns with a growing contribution to the Sultanate of Oman's sustainable development agenda.

participation and fostering employment.

While the slight decline in EBITDA indicates continued sensitivity to oil price movements, the growth in profitability and procurement spend demonstrates OQ's operational resilience and focus on value creation beyond hydrocarbons.

The H1 2025 performance reinforces the company's position as one of Oman's key economic drivers, balancing robust

State Audit Institution report flags gaps in oil ICV enforcement

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

OMAN'S State Audit Institution (SAI) has found wide inconsistencies in how oil and gas companies apply the In-Country Value (ICV) programme, alongside unpaid training levies and weaknesses in fuel-subsidy verification systems.

The review of ICV implementation under the Ministry of Energy and Minerals showed minimum contract thresholds varied sharply between operators — from \$1 million to \$10 million — limiting the use of smaller contracts to support local suppliers.

A PDO contractor was exempted from penalties estimated between RO 6 million and RO 11.6 million after failing to allocate 10% of contract scope to SMEs, contrary to programme aims to deepen domestic value-addition. Auditors also reported 334 contracts missed Omanisation targets in 2018–2021, breaching the ministry's 2013 strategy; the baseline cited included 7,530 Omani workers.

On workforce development funding, companies failed to pay



The review of ICV implementation showed minimum contract thresholds varied sharply between operators — from \$1 million to \$10 million — limiting the use of smaller contracts to support local suppliers.

about RO 4.2 million in Training Fund levies and withheld around RO 1.5 million that should have been transferred to the government.

The audit further flagged ineligible fuel-subsidy disbursements between 2021 and Q3 2023, citing the absence of a robust eligibility-verification mechanism and no electronic linkage with the National Records Centre to

auto-check beneficiaries.

As corrective steps in response, the Ministry pledged to update the ICV strategy to standardise thresholds and committed to followup up with companies that missed ICV/Omanisation targets. The National Subsidy System Committee, for its part, promised to tighten controls and link electronically with the records authority.

OMAN CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

Announcement of Tender

Oman chamber of commerce and industry would like to announce the following public tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Tender Fees (irrevocable)	Specialized Companies	Deadline for Obtaining Documents	Deadline for Tender Submission
8/2025	Edit, designs, printing and marketing for Oman chamber magazine for the year 2026 - 2027	100 /- R.O for all companies. 50/- R.O for companied holding Riyada	Companies specialized in content creation, design, printing and marketing	3 November 2025	Before 12 pm 11 November 2025

Companies may obtain the tender documents from the Administration Department at the Second Floor of the chamber's Headquarters in Ruwi, during the official working hours against the payment of tender fees.

Tender Terms:

- Provide valued CR,OCCI membership and taxation certificate .
- Interested companies should enclose their bids a 1% Bank guarantee/ certified cheque of proposal value issued by one of the banks operating in Oman valid for 120 days from the deadline of submitting the bids addressed in the name of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The bids without this temporary guarantee will not be considered.
- Omanization percentage in the company is considered one of the technical evaluation criteria and preference is given to companies that have higher Omanization percentages.
- The bids should be submitted in red waxed envelopes addressed to - Head of main tendering Committee, OCCI, written outside the Number and title of the Tender. No indication about the bidder is allowed on the envelope.
- Offers should be deposited in the tender box kept at the Administration Department in the Second floor of OCCI Head office.
- OCCI is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bids. It has the right to accept or reject any bids without showing reasons.

Interested companies should submit the Tenders on 11 November 2025 Before 12 pm
For any inquiries please contact as on : 24763881, Email : Shahla.zadjali@omanchamber.om

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MHD ACERE LAUNCHES JAGUAR & LAND ROVER APPROVED PRE-OWNED PROGRAMME

MUSCAT: MHD ACERE, the exclusive distributor of Jaguar and Land Rover vehicles in Oman, reaffirms its commitment to excellence and customer trust through the Jaguar and Land Rover approved pre-owned programme — a premium initiative that ensures every pre-owned Jaguar and Land Rover meets the same exceptional standards of performance, capability and luxury the brand is celebrated for.

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Each approved Jaguar and Land Rover undergoes a 165-point mechanical and cosmetic inspection carried out by Jaguar and Land Rover-trained technicians using only genuine parts and diagnostic tools. This rigorous process ensures that every vehicle performs to the highest standards and leaves the showroom in pristine condition.

Customers can also enjoy the following exclusive benefits:

- Minimum one-year approved warranty — There are no limits to the number of claims that can be made, up to the purchase price of the vehicle. This is only available through an authorised Land Rover Retailer.
- Minimum one-year, 24/7 roadside assistance — Round-the-clock support covering breakdowns, accidents and emergencies, including home start, onward travel and vehicle recovery.
- Certified mileage & history check — Full transparency and independent verification to guarantee authenticity and peace of mind.
- Road test assessment — Evaluation across key performance parameters including suspension, braking and transmission to ensure driving perfection.
- Trade-in & finance options available — Designed to make ownership easier and more accessible.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said: “Land Rover represents a timeless blend of heritage, innovation and capability.

Through the Jaguar and Land Rover approved pre-owned programme, we aim to extend that experience to a wider audience — ensuring that every customer, whether purchasing new or used, enjoys the same trust, confidence and world-class standards that define the Jaguar and Land Rover names. At MHD ACERE, our goal is to make luxury ownership both rewarding and reassuring”.

EMPOWERING EVERY ROLE: NBO CELEBRATES OMANI WOMEN’S DAY

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has joined the nationwide celebrations of Omani Women’s Day, organising an event that brought together women from across its workforce and the wider community.

This initiative was designed to foster empowerment, creativity and connection, while reflecting the Bank’s commitment to recognise and support the vital role women play in shaping the nation’s future.

The event featured a series of interactive workshops and focused on fostering team building, creativity and connection. These sessions provided NBO employees with an opportunity to engage with one another, strengthen teamwork and share experiences that



encouraged collaboration and positive energy across the organisation.

Adding to the vibrancy of the occasion, a marketplace featuring Omani Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) was also organised to highlight local talents and creativity.

BankDhofar signs pacts to provide finance solutions

IN a major step towards supporting Oman Vision 2040 goals of sustainable urban development and accessible home ownership, BankDhofar has announced strategic agreements with the developers of three integrated residential neighbourhoods to provide housing finance solutions.

These agreements were signed during the ‘Home and Building Expo’, co-located with Urban October, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) recently.

The pacts enable prospective homeowners to secure financing for properties still under construction in three of Oman’s most promising integrated housing communities: Hay Al Shuroq by Al Dhahab Real Estate; Hay Al Sumo by Al Dahham Real Estate; and Hay Al Ahd by Al Madina Real Estate.

All three projects are being developed in partnership with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) as part of the Sultanate of Oman’s integrated neighbourhood initiative, designed to deliver modern, fully serviced residential communities that meet the needs of Omani families while advancing



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national housing and sustainability objectives.

Through these partnerships, BankDhofar will offer attractive and flexible housing finance options to qualified buyers, including competitive rates, tailored repayment plans and phased disbursements aligned with project construction milestones.

The initiative marks a significant expansion of the bank’s home finance portfolio and reflects its commitment to empowering citizens to own quality homes in thriving, well-

planned communities.

Hay Al Sumo, developed by Al Dahham Real Estate in collaboration with MoHUP, is located in Seih Al Nama, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. Spanning 275,000 sqm, the project comprises 181 residential units and three commercial plots.

Hay Al Shuroq, by Al Dhahab Real Estate, covers 324,000 sqm, including 40,000 sqm of landscaped areas. The project features 558 residential units, comprising villas and apartments, along with a

commercial centre, cultural hub, mosque, fuel station and well-connected internal roads.

In Al Amerat, Al Madina Real Estate’s Hay Al Ahd project — developed under the Surouh initiative — introduces the first fully serviced residential community in the area.

Spanning 450,000 sqm with a total investment of RO 50 million, the neighbourhood offers 1,065 residential units across standalone, semi-attached, and townhouse villas, as well as apartments designed for modern Omani family lifestyles.

The partnerships are closely aligned with BankDhofar’s comprehensive housing finance strategy, which encompasses Murabaha-based Islamic home finance and conventional mortgage products designed for both citizens and expatriates.

The bank also offers ready property, land purchase and construction finance, now complemented by off-plan financing for new integrated projects. By expanding its offerings, BankDhofar reinforces its role as a key enabler of Oman Vision 2040 housing goals, supporting affordable home ownership and public-private housing partnerships.

Sohar Aluminium celebrates conclusion of new training programmes

SUHAR: Sohar Aluminium celebrated the graduation of a group of employees who successfully completed a series of training programmes. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North and attended by members of the company’s executive management, alongside officials from the governorate.

The training programmes are designed to develop technical and leadership capabilities among Sohar Aluminium’s workforce, in line with the company’s commitment to nurturing skilled Omani talent. Among the initiatives was the four-year Bachelor’s Degree Development Programme, tailored for newly graduated employees.

This programme provides extensive on-the-



The programmes are designed to develop technical and leadership capabilities among Sohar Aluminium’s workforce.

job training across various technical disciplines relevant to the company’s smelter operations. Additionally, a two-year programme

for diploma holders focused on upskilling maintenance technicians in mechanical, electrical and precision instrumentation fields. Both programmes aim to equip participants with the practical expertise and soft skills — such as leadership, problem-solving and teamwork — needed to excel in industrial environments.

A key highlight of this year’s graduation was the awarding of internationally accredited certificates from the UK-based Excellence, Achievement and Learning Institute (EAL) to the Diploma graduates — a first in the company’s history. Graduates also received recognition from Oman’s Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, marking a significant milestone in the quality and impact of Sohar Aluminium’s technical training.

Bank Muscat continues offer on Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to providing the best banking services and solutions tailored to meet the diverse needs of the customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues the special offer on its Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card designed to provide an exceptional banking experience for new cardholders.

The card opens up a world of opportunities with a wide range of benefits and features that enhance customers’ banking journey, especially for those planning trips within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.



This exclusive promotion is part of the Bank’s ongoing efforts to enrich the customer experience by offering value-added benefits on credit cards.

With the current offer which is valid until December 31, 2025, new customers applying for the Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card will enjoy a waiver of the first year’s annual fee.

This exclusive promotion is part of the Bank’s ongoing efforts to enrich the customer experience by offering value-added benefits on credit cards. It also supports the growing adoption of digital payments by offering customers a secure and convenient way to initiate transactions, particularly during travel when minimising cash usage is ideal.

The exclusive offer is provided

for new customers applying for the Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card, in line with Bank Muscat’s vision to enhance customer experience by offering valuable features and benefits that meet their evolving needs.

The full suite of credit cards continues to receive positive feedback and uptake from customers who benefit from our ongoing promotions.

The Bank will continue providing special offerings to allow customers to enjoy a superior travel experience. The Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card offers customers several benefits, including complimentary

travel insurance services, 1% cashback on both domestic and international transactions; and access to a wide network of airport lounges worldwide, including lounges at Muscat, Salalah and Al Duqm airports.

Cardholders can also enjoy a variety of discounted offers on services such as health, beauty, entertainment, travel and hotel bookings.

In line with its commitment to enhancing digital banking and its corporate vision of “To serve you better every day”, Bank Muscat launched a new version of its Mobile Banking App earlier during the year.

FIRMTRANSPARENCY



'We have implemented several key measures and practices to further strengthen governance': OIA

OIA COMMENDS STATE AUDIT FINDINGS

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 20

THE Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has lauded the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority for its continued work in reinforcing transparency, accountability, sound governance and the protection of public funds.

Welcoming the release of the State Audit’s annual report on Sunday, the Authority said: “Driven by its firm belief in the principles of governance and integrity, the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) highly values the observations made by the State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority on OIA and some of its subsidiaries, as presented in the community summary of its Annual Report for 2024”.

In a statement, the OIA also reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with the Authority to ensure that all identified observations are addressed with seriousness and diligence; and that the necessary corrective measures are implemented to eliminate their causes — in full compliance with relevant policies and regulations, and in line with the Unified Governance Charter for OIA-affiliated companies issued in 2022.

“This reflects OIA’s comprehensive and rigorous multi-layered audit framework, which consists of four key levels: 1. Internal Audit Unit: Fully independent and reporting directly to the Audit and Risk Committee of OIA’s Board of Directors. It covers all OIA activities to ensure adherence to approved policies and controls. 2. External Auditor: Appointed by the Board of Directors to conduct audits in accordance with the highest international standards. 3. Audit and Risk Committee: Reporting to the Board, focusing on audit and oversight functions, reviewing financial statements and monitoring the enterprise risk management framework; And 4. State Financial and Administrative Audit Authority: Exercising its independent oversight role over OIA and its subsidiaries in accordance with its legal and regulatory mandate.

New tools manufacturing project planned in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 20

MUSANDAM Global Investment Company (MGIC), one of Oman’s fastest-growing investment firms, has announced a partnership with local oilfield services company Black Rock Energy LLC to establish a state-of-the-art downhole tools manufacturing facility in the Sultanate of Oman.

As a first step towards realising this goal, Musandam Global has acquired a majority stake in Black Rock Energy. MGIC CEO Abdul Razzaq al Balushi described the move as “a pivotal step in our diversification strategy that reinforces our commitment to building Oman’s industrial future”.

He further added: “Together, we are launching a state-of-the-art downhole tools manufacturing facility in Oman, equipped with advanced computer numerical control (CNC) machinery and world-class quality systems. This facility will produce high-performance tools that meet stringent regional and international standards, driving innovation, industrial excellence and global competitiveness”.

Welcoming the partnership, Black Rock Energy noted in a post: “We believe this partnership will open new opportunities, strengthen Oman’s industrial capabilities, and support the sustainable growth of the energy sector”.

Downhole tools, often described as the “eyes and ears” of the oilfield, are specialised instruments used inside the wellbore during drilling, completion and production operations. They include stabilisers, jars, reamers, packers, motors and other assemblies that make drilling possible in complex geological formations.

As many of Oman’s fields are mature, carbonate-heavy and geologically challenging, downhole tools are critical for optimising drilling trajectories, managing high temperatures and pressures; and maximising reservoir contact. Reliable downhole equipment prevents blowouts, stabilises drilling conditions and ensures long-term well integrity.

According to the partners, local downhole tool



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According to the partners, local downhole tool

manufacturing aligns with Oman Vision 2040 goals for economic diversification and industrial development. It also reduces vulnerability to global supply disruptions, while in-country value (ICV) mandates incentivise operators to procure locally made equipment.

“This venture is not only a testament to our growth strategy, but also a significant enhancement to Oman’s in-country value. By investing in local manufacturing, technology transfer and workforce development, we are directly contributing to national capabilities and achieving a sustainable economic impact”, Musandam Global’s CEO stated.

Local downhole tool manufacturing aligns with Oman Vision 2040 goals for economic diversification and industrial development. It also reduces vulnerability to global supply disruptions, while in-country value (ICV) mandates incentivise operators to procure locally made equipment.

Over the past year, Musandam Global — a publicly listed closed joint-stock company on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) — has significantly expanded and diversified its investment portfolio across multiple sectors. The company is partnering with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning on Tilal Al Nakheel (Palm Hills) — Musandam Governorate’s first integrated residential project under the Surouh initiative — featuring 650 housing units across 650,000 m² in the Wilayat of Khasab.

In renewable energy, Musandam Global is collaborating with Poland’s Njord Energy to pilot the region’s first Airborne Wind Energy (AWE) system, testing continuous renewable power generation in Musandam. The company is also joining Turkish investors to establish Musandam Drydock and Marine Industries LLC, offering ship repair, maintenance and manufacturing services.

Additional initiatives underway include an integrated fish hatchery and packing facility, beautification projects in the Wilayats of Khasab and Bukha, high-end resort and heritage developments, smart city and education zones; and efforts to deepen Musandam’s integration into global trade networks.

Digital Cooperation Organisation expands ties with Oman

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 20

IN a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the Digital Cooperation Organisation (DCO) is emerging as a leading intergovernmental body advancing collaboration with the Sultanate of Oman, among other governments, private sectors and global institutions.

Founded in 2020 and headquartered in Riyadh, the DCO brings together 16 member states with a combined GDP of \$3.5 trillion and a population of more than 800 million. It promotes inclusive and sustainable growth in the digital economy, focusing on bridging policy gaps and facilitating knowledge exchange.

“The DCO is the only intergovernmental organisation



Dr Hajar El Haddaoui, Director General of the Digital Cooperation Organisation.

serving its member states towards the digital economy”, said Director General Dr Hajar El Haddaoui. “We work to close the gap in digital transformation while supporting 16 member states — serving more than 800 million people”.

The organisation operates through

collaboration with both the public and private sectors. “Our council is served by ministers of technology or telecom depending on the country”, Dr Haddaoui explained.

“We also have 55 observers — from global corporations to local champions — who contribute to our shared digital vision”.

At the heart of the DCO’s work is the concept of “tech diplomacy”, which connects policymakers, regulators and innovators to ensure that technological progress aligns with sustainable development.

“Tech diplomacy today is not just a ministerial theory — it’s a practice”, she noted. “We bring experts, politicians and industry leaders together to discuss and act on emerging digital priorities”.

Earlier this year, the DCO expanded its presence in Oman

during Comex 2025, convening its Observer Committee meeting in Muscat and gathering more than 50 international and regional CEOs.

The organisation also announced the global rollout of STRIDE, an initiative that helps startups access markets, capital, mentorship and regulatory guidance.

STRIDE has supported over 300 startups, attracted more than \$20 million in investment and partnered with over 30 entities worldwide, strengthening the startup ecosystem across member states.

Another milestone in Muscat was the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on data privacy, described by Dr Haddaoui as “a starting point and a collaboration about building resilience among our member states”. The agreement supports

harmonising cross-border data governance through the DCO’s Data Embassy initiative — creating a trusted framework for digital economies.

In parallel, the DCO is collaborating with the World Economic Forum and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on the Digital Foreign Direct Investment project, which is currently being piloted in Oman.

The initiative aims to identify Oman’s digital strengths and provide policy recommendations to attract investment in digital infrastructure and innovation. The findings will be published in a joint report, showcasing Oman’s digital readiness and potential to become a leading regional destination for digital investment.

RISKIER ASSETS

Gold rises after falling from record highs



Gold prices rose slightly on Monday, recovering some of their losses after last week’s sharp decline from record highs above \$4,300 an ounce, following comments by US President Donald Trump that eased trade tensions between the United States and China and pushed investors towards riskier assets.

Spot gold rose 0.4% to \$4,263.59 an ounce, after falling about 1.8% last Friday, the largest decline since mid-May. — ONA

FRAGILE DEMAND

China’s economy slows to weakest pace



China’s economic growth slowed to the weakest pace in a year in the third quarter as fragile domestic demand left it heavily reliant on the humming of its exporting factories.

While the 4.8% growth rate met expectations and kept China on track to reach its target of roughly 5% this year, the economy’s dependence on external demand raises questions over whether that pace can be sustained. — Reuters

ENERGY DEMAND

Oil slip on concerns over supply glut



Oil prices dipped on Monday, pressured by worries over a global glut as US-China trade tensions added to concerns about weaker energy demand. Brent crude futures were down 18 cents, or 0.3%, at \$61.19 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate futures fell 17 cents, or 0.3%, to \$57.04

Oil traders’ concerns have shifted from under-supply to over-supply, the futures contract structure of the global benchmark Brent showed. — Reuters

OPINION

Schedule an appointment with yourself



DR RAJA TUMATI

The writer is a senior lecturer and programme coordinator at Oman Tourism College

WE often hear people saying, “I have no time; I am busy; my schedule is packed”. This shows that we are constantly busy, which often leads to neglecting personal needs and this negatively impacts mental well-being.

As modern life becomes increasingly hectic, self-care is becoming more important. Self-care does not require a significant amount of time; however, it requires careful planning and execution to be effective and sustainable.

One such plan is to make an appointment with oneself to engage in self-care activities. The expression “schedule an appointment with yourself” refers to making time for oneself, such as booking personal time on your calendar in the same manner as you would for a dentist, hairdresser, colleague, or client.

We all run the risk of believing that thumbing our phones or letting our fingers move across a keyboard constitutes active participation in our lives. However, active participation constitutes being actively “involved” with others and spending time introspecting, which can help explore our inner selves and uncover our true selves.

We can become wiser and better through genuine contact with ourselves. How many appointments on your calendar are truly for yourself?

That is, how frequently do you set aside time to look after yourself and achieve something that fuels your spirit or replenishes your energy? The chances of this happening are very slim. Self-care activities, including

mental, emotional, physical, artistic, recreational, social, relational and spiritual care, are often ignored during hectic times because they are not scheduled on the calendar.

Frequent self-appointments provide individuals with respite from external pressures, helping them reduce stress and anxiety.

According to psychological studies, solitude and self-examination enhance self-awareness and emotional control, tackling the modern problem of perpetual constant activity, which leads to emotional exhaustion.

Making an appointment for oneself is a deliberate choice that honours one’s time, self-care, introspection and personal self-reflection.

Top-performing companies in the world, such as Apple, Salesforce, General Mills, Nike, Procter & Gamble, Aetna, Bellabeat and JPMorgan Chase, have constructed meditation rooms, relaxation spaces, wellness centers and quiet areas where staff members can meditate, take a nap, pray, or simply have some alone time for introspection and quiet self-reflection.

We are increasingly busy with meetings, calls and emails, which leave little time for reflection and self-communication.

The routine of immediately reaching for smartphones in the morning spurs a relentless pace of technology use.

However, successful organisations such as 3M, Google and Intel emphasise the importance of ‘thinking time’ in the workplace, allowing employees to dedicate a portion of their hours (approximately 10 %–20

The expression “schedule an appointment with yourself” refers to making time for oneself, such as booking personal time on your calendar in the same manner as you would for a dentist, hairdresser, colleague, or client.

%) to generating creative ideas. Samsung’s Creative Lab offers similar allocations for innovative projects.

Nevertheless, these practices only bear fruit if employees practice self-appointments, as they enhance problem-solving, long-term planning and creativity by shifting the focus from immediacy to results-driven outcomes. It may be essential to reconsider the importance of solitude and thinking time, as technology often dominates our schedules and limits our personal times.

Taking time for yourself shows that you are worth more than your social and work identity. It also promotes authenticity by aligning one’s life with one’s values, rather than with external influences.

Strategies for keeping self-appointments

- Acknowledge the need for self-appointment. Believing that self-care is neither selfish nor self-indulgent is crucial for mental health, as it lowers stress and anxiety and promotes a balanced life.
- Treat self-care appointments with the same importance as any other commitment on your calendar. Make a conscious decision to prioritise your schedule, allowing for occasional rescheduling for valid reasons, but avoid repeatedly cancelling, as it undermines the respect you owe yourself.
- Do not completely change your schedule at once to accommodate self-appointments. Schedule one self-appointment per day or week and regard it as a top priority. Increase the frequency as you continue to fulfil this promise to build self-confidence.

CHINA’S ECONOMY RISKS SITTING ON HOLD FOR TOO LONG

KA SING CHAN

Chinese planners have to prove their credentials more than ever. For the past couple of years they refrained from a big stimulus package to get the masses spending even as the fallout from the property collapse buffeted the economy.

Now trade tensions are taking their toll. It raises the stakes for President Xi Jinping’s new five-year plan due this week.

The world’s biggest exporter had weathered Washington’s tariff war well in the first half of the year. The slowing of GDP growth to 4.8% in the three months to the end of September suggests cracks are starting to appear, however.

The same economists who predicted that drop in a Reuters poll expect economic expansion to slow to around 4.3% in the fourth quarter and beyond.

At the start of this year, Beijing warned against “external shocks” on growth and vowed to boost domestic demand in response. Exports still grew 7.1% in the first three quarters as manufacturers turned to other markets in Europe and Asia.

And Chinese officials are keen to stress the economy’s nine-month track record by pointing out it grew 5.2%, implying it’s on track to hit the official growth target for the year of “around 5%”. Yet consumption has been less of a bright spot. Retail sales only expanded 4.5% in the same period, cooling to 3% last month.

The People’s Bank of China reinforced this wait-and-see approach to stimulus on Monday by keeping its one-year loan prime rate, a benchmark for most corporate loans, unchanged for the fifth consecutive month.

Equity investors might not be as patient. A policy salvo unveiled a year ago, including measures to reinvigorate confidence, fuelled a 26% rally in the A-share market.

That has helped negate much of the “China is uninvestable” narrative, which was popularised by a JPMorgan report in 2022. Yet shareholders have since been looking for more stimulus, especially for measures to boost demand.

Expectations have been mounting ahead of Chinese leaders huddling this week in a closed-door session to flesh out their 15th five-year development plan for the People’s Republic.

The previous one, which ran from 2021 to 2025, expanded the world’s second-largest economy from \$14.5 trillion to \$18.9 trillion on the back of a 5% annual growth.

Yet household consumption accounted for just 36% of GDP as of September.

Planners’ chief task is likely to ensure that the annual 5% growth rate remains achievable through the end of the decade. Yet the pressure is growing on them to prove that a consumption-driven economy can also be a planned one.

— Reuters

From silica to industry: Vision 2040 cluster play

OMAN’S mining sector is a fundamental pillar of its economic diversification path, given the Sultanate of Oman’s varied mineral wealth, which includes copper, chrome, manganese, gypsum, limestone and silica. The sector is viewed as an important source of government revenue and a driver for enhancing local added value through the development of downstream mining industries and the expansion of investments in exploration, production and processing.

According to the latest data, the value added of the mining sector reached approximately RO 219 million in 2024, contributing about 0.6% of the GDP at constant prices.

The data also indicates that the sector’s real growth rate during the 2021–2024 period registered a decline of about -2.0%, reflecting structural challenges in investment and production, alongside delays in some projects and mineral processing.

The new Mahout Silica Sands Project presents a strategic opportunity to change this. With 47 million tonnes of proven, high-purity (exceeding 98%) reserves, this project is a major national asset.

This discovery must be leveraged as the foundation for a complete industrial cluster.

By clustering processing, manufacturing and support services, Oman can develop high-value downstream industries in glass, chemicals, metallurgy and even semiconductors. This approach is the only way to transform a natural resource into a durable source of skilled jobs, new technological capabilities and sustainable economic value.

Silica is the backbone of everyday manufacturing. It feeds float and container glass, sanitaryware and ceramics, fiberglass and foundry sand — and, if purity allows, solar glass for the energy transition. According to the US Geological



The new Mahout Silica Sands Project presents a strategic opportunity to change this. With 47 million tonnes of proven, high-purity (exceeding 98%) reserves, this project is a major national asset.



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The writer is founder and CEO - Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor

Survey (USGS), global industrial sand and gravel output is on the order of 400 million tonnes annually, with glass-consuming sectors taking a large share.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects global solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity to roughly triple by 2030 under stated policies, signalling rapid growth in solar glass demand. Meanwhile, global trade in glass and glassware exceeds \$100 billion a year, according to United Nations trade statistics. In short: the world needs more high-spec silica products, reliably supplied.

First, the resource appears good enough to justify processing at home. Early assays indicate high SiO₂ content with low contaminants and a multi-decade reserve base. That supports beneficiation — washing, grading and magnetic separation — to meet international specifications. With disciplined quality control and steady feedstock, primary processing can anchor downstream lines for glass and ceramics, giving lenders and buyers confidence.

Second, markets and logistics favour value-addition in Oman. Industrial zones linked to reliable power and water; and deep-water ports on open sea lanes, offer predictable routes to market.

Demand for container and architectural glass continues to rise across the region; PV glass is the fastest-growing segment as building codes tighten and renewable energy expands. Co-locating plants near the resource and port shortens supply chains, reduces waste, and boosts on-time delivery — advantages buyers will pay for.

Third, clustering multiplies benefits. A designated Silica Cluster Zone that co-locates an anchor processor with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) creates a web of local services: kiln and furnace maintenance, mould making, precision grading, laboratory testing, packaging and logistics.

Over time, these firms turn imported machinery into an Omani capability. That is private-sector dynamism of the kind Oman Vision 2040 seeks to nurture.

Fourth, good governance reduces risk and cost. Clear Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) baselines; early Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); and consistent reporting lower financing costs because lenders prize predictability.

Joint ventures with experienced operators bring Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), technology transfer, supplier development and access to premium markets. Prudence, not haste, should guide each permit and contract.

Some argue we should export raw silica quickly and leave downstream investment for later. That recognises near-term prices but locks Oman into a low-margin, high-volatility cycle. A balanced approach is better: maintain modest raw exports under long-term offtake while advancing pilot processing and then commercial lines. This preserves revenue today while building capability for tomorrow — steady, not speculative.

What should we do now? The task is to organise steps we already know, apply them consistently and measure results in the open. Three priorities stand out, each tied to clear roles, timelines and metrics.

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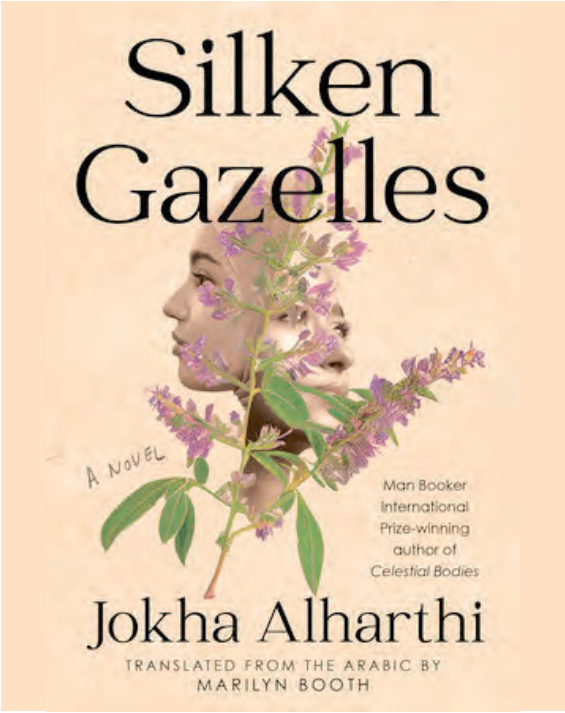
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A COLOMBIAN ARTIST'S CREATIVE JOURNEY IN OMAN > 20

BRIDGE OF WORDS

OMANI NOVELS FIND A NEW VOICE IN PERSIAN



THE official Iranian newspaper, Iran, has devoted a full page to Omani literature, highlighting the Persian translation of Omani novelist Jokha al Harthy's 'Gazelle's Silk'.

In her article, 'In the Silk of Words', Iranian translator and writer Ma'ani Shabani described translating contemporary Omani works as "an exceptional opportunity to gain intimate insight into the lives of Omani women and the rich, distinctive local language that shapes their stories". She added that Omani expressions felt "like a refreshing breeze from beyond the Gulf,



JOKHA AL HARTHY

carrying the scent of the sea, history and the presence of steadfast, strong-willed women".

Shabani emphasised that translation, for her, became "a spiritual window onto a world brimming with secrets, beauty and discovery", highlighting Omani literature's balance of simplicity and depth,

the use of authentic names and a vivid reflection of the natural and social landscape.

She further noted that Omani writers, including Huda Hamad, Jokha al Harthy and Zahran Al Qasimi, have created a multi-dimensional Arabic literature characterized by thoughtfulness, humanity, and profound contemplation. Persian readers, she said, gain a unique chance to discover "the other close to us," sharing universal human experiences despite linguistic and cultural differences.

Iranian journalist Taha Hussein Farahani, in his piece 'Identity, Love and Other Things', praised Gazelle's Silk for portraying women's experiences with literary depth.

He highlighted how Al Harthy's characters, while rooted in Omani culture, carry universal appeal — showcasing struggles, identity, and belonging that resonate globally.

The release of Gazelle's Silk in Persian also highlights the expanding cultural exchange between Oman and Iran, showcasing the power of literature to transcend borders.

Scholars and readers alike see such translations as a bridge fostering mutual understanding, where stories of Omani women, their traditions and social landscapes can resonate with Persian-speaking audiences, enriching cross-cultural dialogue and appreciation. — ONA

QUICK FEATURES

TRAVEL



People ride camels as they visit the Mingsha mountain and Crescent Moon Spring scenic area in Dunhuang, Jiuquan, northwestern China's Gansu province. — AFP

FESTIVAL



A woman poses as she looks out from a window of pumpkins house during the festival 'Hello, pumpkin' in Kyiv amidst Russian war in Ukraine. — AFP

GRAND PRIX



Lea Werner celebrates after winning the Cow Race Grand Prix, a two-round race exclusively for jockeys and the only event of its kind in Switzerland, in the Alpine resort. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Meta study: Instagram risks teen health



Instagram exposed vulnerable teens to 'high doses' of content that Meta's own advisors support limiting

META RESEARCHERS have found that teens who reported Instagram often made them feel worse about their bodies were exposed to significantly more 'eating disorder adjacent content' than peers who did not, according to an internal study. The posts frequently displayed chests, waists, or thighs, included explicit judgments about body types, or contained references to disordered eating and negative body image. Although such material is not banned, parents, teens and experts have warned Meta that it may be harmful. The research, conducted over the 2023–2024 academic year, surveyed 1,149 teens about whether Instagram use left them feeling bad about their bodies. For 223 teens who often reported such dissatisfaction, "eating disorder adjacent content" made up 10.5 per cent of what they saw, compared

with just 3.3 per cent for other teens. "Teens who reported frequent body dissatisfaction saw about three times more body-focused/ED-adjacent content than other teens", the authors wrote. Researchers also found these teens encountered more provocative content more broadly. Meta classified it under 'mature themes', 'risky behaviour', 'harm & cruelty' and 'suffering. Altogether, such content made up 27 per cent of their feeds, nearly double the 13.6 per cent seen by teens who did not report negative feelings. The report emphasised that the study did not prove Instagram caused body dissatisfaction, noting teens might actively seek out troubling material. Still, it acknowledged Instagram exposed vulnerable teens to "high doses" of content that Meta's own advisors support limiting. — Reuters



KABEER YOUSUF

SHEER determination and compassion led Dr Omama bint Mustafa al Lawatiyah, an Omani academic and communication specialist at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), to embark on one of the most challenging humanitarian journeys of her life — the Sumud Flotilla, a maritime mission carrying aid and solidarity to the people of Gaza.

Dr Omama, who also holds a Master's in Interfaith Dialogue, was among hundreds of international activists and humanitarians from 47 countries who joined the Global Sumud Flotilla, the largest civilian sea convoy ever assembled for Gaza. Comprising more than 50 small vessels loaded with food and essential supplies, the flotilla departed from Spanish ports on August 31 and regrouped in Tunisia on September 4 before heading east.

Their ship, Marinette, carried six passengers — including participants from Türkiye, Germany and Australia — and was at sea for 20 days. As storms raged and drones hovered, the crew pressed on undeterred. "There were high waves and strong winds, but our determination was stronger than nature's fury", recalls Dr Omama.

The flotilla made brief halts in Sicily and Greece, where several boats were attacked by drones and hazardous chemicals were released into the sea to intimidate the participants. "But none turned back", she says firmly. "We continued our voyage until we were intercepted and arrested by Zionist forces 53 miles from Gaza, well within international waters".

The group was taken to the Port of Ashdod and later held in the Naqab Desert Prison, about 30 km from Gaza. "The feeling that we were in Palestine gave us strength", she recounts. "We were transported in closed military vans, unable to see outside. It was an illegal abduction — each vessel sailed under a national flag and international law protects us in such waters".

Upon her release, Dr Omama was warmly received at Muscat International Airport, where supporters celebrated her courage and humanitarian spirit.

A former faculty member

OMANI ACADEMIC'S JOURNEY ON THE SUMUD FLOTILLA



Dr Omama bint Mustafa al Lawatiyah, a media scholar from Sultan Qaboos University, joined the global Sumud Flotilla — a daring humanitarian mission that set sail to break the Gaza siege. Her ordeal at sea and brief imprisonment by Israeli forces have only strengthened her resolve to stand for Palestine



and current officer in Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance at SQU, Dr Omama is also a columnist and children's author. Her advocacy for Palestine, she says, is deeply rooted in Omani education and culture. "We studied about Palestine in school and sang Palestinian songs in class. It became part of our identity to speak for them", she reflects. Her interest in joining the flotilla was sparked in Tunisia, during a visit for her academic work. From her hotel overlooking Habib Bourguiba Street, she witnessed a massive rally welcoming a returning

flotilla participant. "I attended the press conference and learned about the registration link for the mission. I went back in August to attend preparatory lectures — we were mentally and psychologically prepared for what could await us, even imprisonment". Despite the ordeal, Dr Omama remains unwavering. "Our global legal team is now fighting to recover the boats and supplies seized illegally. The mission continues", she affirms. "It is the duty of every human being — especially in Oman — to stand with Palestine".



FEATURES



A COLOMBIAN ARTIST 'S CREATIVE JOURNEY IN OMAN

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

YOU may have already seen her work — walking through Al Mouj, past the murals near Spinneys, or more recently on the communication tower nearby. Bold colours and flowing patterns breathe life into Muscat’s skyline.

These public artworks have turned ordinary walls into vibrant encounters with art, transforming blank spaces into stories of joy and connection.

Colombian visual artist and educator Lupie Lup calls it her instinct to awaken stillness. “I can’t resist blank spaces”, she says. “I’m always tempted to cover them in colour. In many ways, I remain a child at heart — forever curious and playful”.

Her journey into art began far from Oman, rooted in her childhood in Colombia. Shy and introverted, she discovered in painting a language when words failed her.

“Art gave me a way to connect — a space where I could find peace and express myself freely”, she recalls. What began as refuge soon became identity, guiding her into murals, illustration, textiles and now, fashion.

The ocean is one of her deepest

From murals to fashion, Colombian artist Lupie Lup transforms Muscat’s landscapes — and wardrobes — with bold colours

inspirations. “It feels like another world — an escape where noise disappears and everything slows down”, she says.

Alongside this, her Colombian heritage — rich in colour and magical realism — fuses naturally with the serene landscapes of Oman. “These two influences meet in my work”, she explains.

Her recurring whale shark motif captures this duality. Whether gliding across the walls of Al Mouj or reimagined in illustration, the creature moves through coral and colour, embodying both childlike wonder and emotional depth — memory, vulnerability and renewal.

“Colour is my strongest tool”, Lupie says. “It’s a language of emotion, contradiction and transformation”.

For many in Muscat, her art has become part of the public fabric. “It feels humbling and energising”, she adds. “I love the idea that a mural might brighten someone’s day — or that a garment I’ve designed could make someone feel more confident, more beautiful, or simply more themselves”.

That leap into fashion came with the launch of Lupie’s own clothing line — a natural extension of her murals. Her designs are alive with playful ocean patterns, from swim shorts in vivid blues, pinks and greens to swimsuits adorned with tropical birds, flowers and hearts.

Many pieces carry affirmations such as “What you water grows” or “We grow through what we go through”, blending art, positivity and personal storytelling.

Just as her murals turn walls into canvases of emotion, her garments turn daily life into a living gallery. By wearing them, people carry fragments of her art — colour and imagination now in motion. Her creativity doesn’t stop there. Lupie’s playful universe extends into furniture, textiles and illustration, turning everyday objects into carriers of joy.

Chairs bloom with leopards, whales and protective symbols, while murals in schools and neighbourhoods bring marine life to the cityscape — rays, corals and whales reminding onlookers of the ocean’s beauty.

“For me, art is everywhere”, she

says. “It’s in the chair you sit on, the street you walk by, even the clothes you wear. I want people to live with colour, not just look at it”.

The dream began years ago when, with money from her first freelance job, she bought a sewing machine and made herself a graduation skirt.

“Looking back, that moment planted the seed”, she reflects. Creating her first collection came with challenges. Balancing artistic vision and wearability pushed her beyond her comfort zone. “Everything new both scares me and excites me”, she says. “That uncertainty is terrifying and thrilling — but that’s where the magic happens”.

Looking ahead, Lupie smiles: “My problem is that I want to do it all”. She’s preparing to showcase an art garment at the Ras Al Khaimah Art Festival in 2026, while continuing mural commissions and her work as an art educator in Muscat.

“I don’t have all the answers”, she says, “but by continuing to explore and take risks, my path as an artist will keep unfolding in unexpected and meaningful ways”.