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SHORT TAKES

HM’S GREETINGS TO SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the occasion of his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to King Salman and the people of his country. His Majesty also wished Saudi Arabia further growth and prosperity on all spheres under King Salman’s leadership.

REGISTRATION FOR LINDAU NOBEL LAUREATES MEET

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has announced the opening of nominations for participation in the 75th Annual Meeting of Lindau International Nobel Laureates (2025-2026). Registration for candidates from Oman opens from Tuesday until October 19, according to the ministry.

The Lindau conference serves as a prestigious international platform that brings together a select group of young scientists from around the world and enables them to meet winners of the Nobel Prize in the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine and physiology. The ministry encourages Omani researchers and students who excel in the aforementioned scientific fields to seize this unique opportunity.

RANSOMWARE CAUSED DISRUPTIONS AT EU AIRPORTS

Airport disruptions that affected automated check-in systems in recent days were caused by a ransomware attack, the EU’s cybersecurity agency said on Monday, highlighting the growing risks of such attacks to critical infrastructure and industries.

Several of Europe’s biggest airports still faced disruptions on Monday after hackers knocked out automated check-in systems provided by Collins Aerospace, owned by RTX, affecting dozens of flights and thousands of passengers since last Friday.

Royal Decree appoints new ambassador to Iran

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued two Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No 80/2025 on conducting transfers and placements in the Diplomatic Corps.

Article (1) transfers Ibrahim bin Ahmed bin Mohammed al Muaini, Sultanate of Oman’s Ambassador

to the Islamic Republic of Iran, to the General Diwan of the Foreign Ministry.

Article (2) appoints Sayyid Yaarub bin Qahtan bin Nasser al Busaidy as the Sultanate of Oman’s Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the

Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue.

Royal Decree No 81/2025 on ratifying a protocol amending the agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Russian Federation concerning commercial, trade and technical cooperation

signed on April 22, 2025, in Moscow.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned protocol according to the version attached to this decree. Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue. — ONA

France set to recognise Palestinian state at UN

P A L E S T I N I A N M I S S I O N I N L O N D O N R A I S E S F L A G

FRANCE and other countries prepared to recognise a Palestinian state as the UN’s centrepiece diplomatic week got under way on Monday, following a rash of Western governments in symbolically endorsing statehood and sparking Israel’s wrath.

Recognition by Britain, Canada, Australia and Portugal on Sunday of a Palestinian state piled pressure on Israel as it intensifies its war in Gaza, which has killed tens of thousands, devastated the enclave and drawn vocal rebukes from its allies.

President Emmanuel Macron has indicated France will follow suit as he prepares to host a meeting with Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on the moribund two-state solution - Palestinian and Israeli coexistence.

He said he would make the release of captives — taken by Hamas during its October 7, 2023, attack on Israel — a precondition for opening an embassy to the Palestinian state.

Israel’s foreign ministry said the recognition moves do not “promote peace, but on the contrary further destabilise the region and undermine the chances of achieving a peaceful solution.”

More than 140 world leaders will descend on New York this week for the annual United Nations General Assembly, which will be dominated by the

A displaced Palestinian child waves a Palestinian national flag as he walks past the rubble of a destroyed building at the Bureij camp for refugees in the central Gaza Strip on Monday. — AFP

Palestinian question.

One world leader who will miss the gathering is Mahmud Abbas, the Palestinian President, whom Washington denied a visa, along with his officials.

That earned a rebuke from the General Assembly, which will be the focus of world leaders’ speeches and protest walkouts this week. The assembly voted 145 to five to exceptionally allow Abbas to speak via video link.

The humanitarian catastrophe ravaging the small Palestinian territory will top the agenda, two years after the beginning of the Israeli offensive.

Meanwhile, a flag-raising ceremony was held outside the Palestinian mission in London on Monday, a day after the UK announced it would recognise the State of Palestine, along with Australia, Canada and Portugal.

Head of Mission Husam Zomlot hailed the “long overdue” recognition as the

flag was raised in front of a crowd outside the building in Hammersmith in west London.

Holding up a plaque reading “Embassy of the State of Palestine”, Zomlot said it would be put up soon, “pending some legal work, some bureaucratic work”.

He called the recognition move an “acknowledgement of a historic injustice” at a time of “unimaginable suffering” for the Palestinian people in the war in Gaza. — Agencies

Fashion show showcases Oman’s rich heritage in Osaka

OSAKA: The Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion at Expo 2025 in Kansai, Osaka, Japan, hosted a fashion show that showcased the Omani identity and its rich cultural heritage. The show featured traditional designs reimagined with innovative, contemporary touches.

The designs vividly expressed the authenticity of Omani clothing as a cultural language that reflects the diversity of Oman’s natural environments and its humanistic spirit. Eight models presented 16 outfits inspired by Oman’s sea, mountains and desert landscapes.

The garments tell stories of traditional crafts, local fabrics, and decorative patterns that have characterised Omani dress throughout history, presented in a modern style that highlighted the heritage’s ability to renew itself and remain relevant on the global cultural stage.

The show was well-received by visitors, who appreciated the deep cultural dimension of the Omani outfits. The designs, which blend symbols of national identity and historical heritage with modern touches, added a renewed vitality

that positions them to compete in international creative arenas.

This fashion show is part of a comprehensive cultural and artistic programme organised by the Sultanate of Oman at its pavilion until the end of October.

The programme aims to present Oman’s identity in a way that draws inspiration from its ancient past to build its present. Through its diverse fashion and arts, Oman confirms that its culture is capable of building bridges of communication and dialogue with people from all over the world. — ONA

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MoHERI encourages Omani researchers and students to seize this unique opportunity

OMANI RESEARCHERS INVITED TO 75TH LINDAU NOBEL MEETING

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has announced that nominations for the 75th Annual Meeting of Lindau International Nobel Laureates (2025–2026) will open today, Tuesday, and continue until October 19.

This prestigious international scientific platform brings together a select group of young scientists from around the world, alongside Nobel Prize winners in physics, chemistry, medicine and physiology.

The ministry is encouraging outstanding Omani researchers and students in these fields to seize this unique opportunity to enhance their scientific capabilities, broaden international cooperation and strengthen communication with some of the world’s most distinguished scientists.

Eligible applicants should demonstrate a strong passion for their field through academic and research achievements. Preference will be given to those among the top 5 per cent of their academic class and who can provide a strong recommendation from an academic supervisor or renowned scholar familiar with their accomplishments.

Applicants must submit a comprehensive CV, be fluent in English, and be no older than 35 years at the time of the meeting. Those who have previously participated in Lindau meetings are ineligible. Commitment to attending all sessions and activities during the meeting is mandatory.

The meeting will take place next summer in Lindau, Germany, featuring lectures, workshops, and events designed to foster dialogue and knowledge exchange between generations of scientists. Interested candidates are invited to visit the ministry’s website for detailed participation requirements and application procedures. — ONA

MoH LAUNCHES POLICY TO DISCLOSE MEDICAL INCIDENTS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

The Quality Assurance Centre of the Ministry of Health (MoH) has launched a policy and procedures for disclosing medical incidents.

This step aims to enhance transparency and effective communication between medical personnel and community members within healthcare institutions, contributing to the consolidation of a culture of patient safety.

MoH stated that disclosure is a right of the patient and their family to access health, diagnostic and treatment information, as well as any medical events that may occur. It also plays a role in enhancing community confidence in the healthcare system.

The launch is in line with the second strategy of the five-year plan for patient safety, implementing the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Disclosure is a fundamental pillar of patient engagement and empowerment, and is one of the main objectives of the Global Patient Safety Plan (2021-2030), which calls for making patients active partners in the healthcare system.

Expo sees record turnout of global health providers

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

THE 14th Oman Health Exhibition and Conference opened on Monday, drawing strong international and local participation with nearly 160 hospitals and health institutions showcasing their expertise.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, in the presence of dignitaries who also attended the opening workshop on Investment and Technology in Healthcare.

Speaking to Observer, Rashid al Aghbari, investment adviser to the Minister of Health, underlined Oman’s potential to emerge as a hub for the pharmaceutical industry. “Oman’s political stability, the FTA agreement with the US, proximity to Yemen, Asia and Africa, along with attractive investment incentives, provide a strong foundation to localise pharmaceutical production and ensure medical security,” he said. Currently, Oman is home to 18 entities in the medical consumables and pharmaceutical sector.



Oman Health Expo spotlights the growing health insurance sector. — Picture by Shamsa Al Harthi

The Ministry of Health is represented at the exhibition by the Quality Assurance Center, Directorate of Private Establishments, Drug Safety Center, and the Directorate of Projects and Engineering Services.

This year’s spotlight is on the growing health insurance sector, with the participation of the Financial Services Authority and Oman Qatar Insurance Company, highlighting the importance of integrated healthcare financing in Oman.

Hospitals from Canada, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand and Türkiye are present, offering

options for advanced medical treatments abroad while exploring investment opportunities and partnerships in Oman.

The Treat in Oman Pavilion has seen a 30 per cent increase in participation, featuring a wide range of hospitals and clinics including Oman Rehabilitation Center, Asnan Lounge, Aster Royal Hospital, Starcare Hospital, Sukhumvit Hospital, Noor Iranian Poly Clinic, and Free Movement, among others. The pharmaceutical and medical devices sector is another key highlight, with Muscat Pharmacy joining as a Silver Sponsor alongside leading players such as Philex Pharmaceuticals, Mazoon Pharmacy, Al Mazroui Medical Group, Gulf Med Group, Al Awadi Trading, AWS Distribution Healthcare, Delta Majan, Gulf Trade Links and ISWILL International.

Keeping pace with global trends, the exhibition also showcases innovations in online and home-based healthcare services through participants like Tabibak Home Medical Care and Hospiline.

The Oman Health Exhibition 2025 continues to serve as a vital platform for collaboration, innovation and investment in building a robust and inclusive healthcare ecosystem in Oman.



BURAIMI HOSPITAL OPENS EYE OPERATING ROOM

AL BURAIMI: Al Buraimi Hospital on Monday inaugurated a minor operating room at its eye clinic as part of the hospital’s ongoing efforts to improve the quality of health services rendered to citizens and residents.

The room serves as a leading experiment aimed to enable patients to undergo minor surgeries directly at the clinic, without having to be transferred to the Main Operating Room.

The procedure cuts down waiting time and eases pressure on operating rooms that are designated to deal with complex surgical interventions.

The minor operating room has been established in accordance with top safety and security standards to ensure proper patient care and avoid the risk of surgical site infections. It is also supervised by a team of experienced medical and nursing personnel. — ONA

Oman signs UN declaration to protect aid workers

NEW YORK: As part of its participation in the opening of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Sultanate of Oman on Monday took part in the launch of the “Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel” at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

This declaration stems from the international community’s political and humanitarian will to ensure safe and rapid delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians impacted by conflicts.

The declaration was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Ali bin Ahmed al Najjar, a member of the International Organizations Department at the Foreign Ministry.

Prior to the start of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Omar bin Said al Kathiri, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations (UN), participated in a coordination meeting of foreign ministers of



Omar bin Said al Kathiri, Permanent Representative of Oman to the UN with GCC ministers

GCC states. During the meeting, the ministers exchanged views about strategic relations and dialogue between GCC states and global blocs. They also reviewed regional and international developments.

Meanwhile, Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign

Ministry, held a meeting with Dr Denzil Douglas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The meeting dealt with various aspects of joint cooperation on matters of common interest. The two sides also exchanged views about regional and international issues. — ONA



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SHORTTAKES



Ahmed bin Salem al Rujaibi led Oman at the meeting

OMAN JOINS GCC ANTI-CORRUPTION MEETING

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the 10th meeting of the GCC Anti-Corruption Undersecretaries Committee, which was held via video conference.

The Sultanate of Oman was represented at the meeting by Ahmed bin Salem al Rujaibi, Deputy Chairman of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution for Auditing Government Units.

The meeting reviewed the draft guide for corporate liability for corruption crimes, the draft guide for parallel financial investigations in corruption cases, and the draft guide for procedures and measures for identifying the beneficial owner in the GCC countries. The meeting also discussed the Public Funds Protection Law and the Excellence Award for the ideal employee in anti-corruption agencies.

It also selected the theme for the 2026 annual event and approved the recommendations for the 2025 annual event.

The meeting also included the selection of the topic for the GCC competition to raise awareness of integrity and combat corruption, the joint Gulf event on the sidelines of the 11th Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and the memorandum of understanding signed between the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and the International Anti-Corruption Academy. — ONA

GCC ADVISORY BOARD PREPARES FOR UNEA-7 IN KENYA



EA organised the meeting in its capacity as the President of the Assembly's 7th session

MUSCAT: The Advisory Board of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Monday held a preparatory meeting in Muscat to coordinate participation in the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7), scheduled to take place in the Republic of Kenya during December 8-12. The meeting saw the participation of representatives from GCC member states and the General Secretariat. It was organised by the Environment Authority (EA) in its capacity as the President of the Assembly's seventh session.

The aim was to formulate a unified GCC stance to enhance the region's effective role in international environmental forums.

The meeting discussed several key areas, most notably: the latest preparations for the seventh session, the national efforts of member states, formulating a common GCC position on priority environmental issues, as well as reviewing the draft ministerial declaration, resolutions on the Assembly's agenda, and accompanying side events. — ONA

MOL TIGHTENS RULES ON PRIVATE TRAINING ACTIVITIES

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has announced that all private training in the Sultanate of Oman, regardless of type or delivery method, will fall under its direct supervision.

This includes training programmes, courses, workshops and similar activities conducted in person, virtually, or in blended formats.

According to the ministry, such activities may not be carried out without obtaining the necessary

licences and official approvals from the Directorate-General of Private Training Institutions.

The move is in line with Ministerial Decision No 2021/40 regulating the organisation of private training and Royal Decree No 2024/61, which transferred the vocational training sector to the Ministry of Labour.

The ministry stressed that conducting private training without a licence constitutes a legal violation and will subject offenders to administrative and legal measures, including



The decision aims to ensure quality and compliance with approved standards.

finances, suspension of activities and referral to the competent authorities.

Reaffirming its commitment to regulating the training sector, the ministry said the decision aims to ensure quality and compliance with approved standards.

It urged all entities and individuals wishing to engage in training activities to submit licensing applications through the official channels of the Directorate-General of Private Training Institutions.

Urban conference on sustainable cities in Oct

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

THE Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has announced that the Urban October Conference and Exhibition for Housing and Construction will be held from October 6 to 9 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the theme 'Sustainable Cities for People', marking the sixth edition of Urban October.

The event highlights Oman's role as a regional hub for sustainable urban development, showcasing pioneering projects, innovative solutions, and specialised discussions aligned with Oman Vision 2040's goal of promoting inclusive and smart cities.

Attendees will explore residential projects, investment opportunities and financing options, with participation from over 30 developers, six banks and leading initiatives, including Sultan Haitham City and Surooh developments.

The conference will feature more than 70 specialised papers across five key themes, alongside forums such as the Sustainable Urban Forum, Circular Cities Summit and the Urban Planning Hackathon 'Makers of Tomorrow.'



Urban October will be held under the theme 'Sustainable Cities for People'

Interactive initiatives, including the 'Urban Puzzle' and Urban Planning Debates, aim to engage youth and foster awareness of smart city solutions.

The accompanying exhibition will feature over 226 booths highlighting urban projects, government programmes, smart home technologies, sustainable building materials and interior design innovations.

Prizes, including luxury cars, apartments and cash rewards, will add excitement for visitors, while parallel events across various governorates will promote sustainability education and community participation.

This year's Urban October underscores Oman's leadership in building sustainable cities that prioritise people and innovation.

Dakhiliyah's sites draw over 300,000 visitors

NIZWA: Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is currently executing a number of projects for the restoration, rehabilitation, and maintenance of historical monuments and old neighbourhoods.

This reflects the governorate's keenness to preserving cultural heritage and enhancing Omani heritage as a significant economic and tourism contributor in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, said that the total value of projects being implemented within the framework of heritage revival and strengthening the local economy has crossed RO 4.5 million. This reflects the scale of efforts to preserve cultural and urban heritage, on the one hand, and stimulating economic and tourism activity, on the other hand.

Al Hajri added that heritage



revival projects go beyond restoration and maintenance, becoming part of an integrated economic system that invests in people and place and enhances local content by opening broader horizons for the local community and entrepreneurs to take advantage of available opportunities.

Work is underway, in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and other relevant authorities, to restore and maintain castles, forts

and historic neighbourhoods. The aim is to preserve their authentic value and ensure their sustainability, while also developing modern facilities and quality services that enhance tourism industry in the governorate, he said.

The existing projects have directly contributed to stimulating tourism, with historic castles and forts attracting more than 302,000 visitors during the first half of 2025. This reflects growing

awareness of the value of heritage and its impact on supporting economic activities, and highlights the need to continue promoting and rehabilitating heritage sites to ensure they remain competitive at the regional and international levels, he said.

Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, stressed that these efforts are part of the decentralised development path to which Oman Vision 2040 attaches great importance. They contribute to enhancing the governorate's position as a cultural, tourism and investment destination, and support its aspirations to become a model of sustainable development.

He added that the future holds promising opportunities for new projects that will enhance these paths, requiring continued partnership with various entities. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

Some teachers describe inclusion as rewarding, teaching patience and acceptance to all students

AUTISM AND CLASSROOM DILEMMA



SIHAM AL SAIDI

SHOULD CHILDREN with autism be fully integrated into mainstream classrooms? It's a question dividing parents, educators and specialists across the country. While many families advocate for inclusion, others believe mainstream schools are not yet equipped to support their children's needs.

For parents like Alia, whose 9-year-old son has autism, inclusion is essential. "My son communicates better and feels more confident when he is with other children," she said. "Segregation limits his potential."

Dr Naeema, a mother of an 11-year-old, echoed the sentiment: "In a normal school, my child has learned to solve problems, interact with others and present himself confidently."

But not all share this view. Fahad, a father of a 7-year-old girl, believes his daughter needs specialised support.

"A regular classroom cannot provide the therapy and calm environment she requires. Without that, she suffers — and so do her teachers." For these families, specialised schools — with therapies, small classes and trained staff — remain the safest choice.

Teachers are similarly divided. Some describe inclusion as rewarding, teaching patience and acceptance to all students. Others say large class sizes and a lack of resources make it difficult to give children with autism the attention they need. "I want to help," admitted one teacher, "but with 30 students in the room, it becomes overwhelming without support staff."

Experts caution against framing the issue as a simple yes or no. Child development specialist Dallas al Badi stressed: "Inclusion only works if the environment is prepared — trained teachers, therapies and individual plans. Otherwise, the child may be physically present but educationally excluded."

Specialists agree that each child is different: some thrive in mainstream schools with support, while others progress better in specialised environments. Advocates insist that inclusive classrooms reduce stigma and build empathy, while critics warn that without resources, inclusion risks failing everyone involved.

With government initiatives underway to build special centres and gradually integrate children into schools, progress is being made. As one teacher summed it up: "Inclusion is not just about where a child sits — it's about whether they can succeed."

SHORT TAKES



From left: Loura al Siyabi, Sudha Sha, Irina Gusachenko and Dirk Lolke during opening of the EU Film Festival 2025 in Muscat

EU FILM FESTIVAL 2025 OPENS IN MUSCAT

MUSCAT: The second edition of the European Union Film Festival opened on a high note at Cinopolis, Avenue Mall, Muscat, drawing a full house of ministers, ambassadors, cultural leaders and cinema enthusiasts. The cultural showcase, organised by the Delegation of the European Union to Oman along with participating EU member states in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Cinopolis Oman, and the International Film Foundation of Oman (IFFO), marked a vibrant celebration of global storytelling.

The opening ceremony began with an address by Dirk Lolke, Ambassador of Germany to Oman, who highlighted cinema’s role in inspiring and uniting people. Loura al Siyabi, Head of Cinema at the Ministry, praised the festival as a “beacon for cultural exchange and cinematic excellence.”

This year’s programme features 24 acclaimed films from nine EU countries, along with a special screening of the Omani feature film Zayana. The opening night film, ‘When Hitler Stole the Pink Rabbit’ (Germany), based on Judith Kerr’s novel, set a poignant tone with its themes of resilience and belonging. The festival, which runs September 21–28, also offers masterclasses and seminars, including a film-making workshop by Italian director Edoardo Bellino, a seminar on Arab cinema led by German curator Irit Neidhardt, and a women empowerment panel featuring Booker Prize winner Jokha al Harthy, Italian actress-director Simona Izzo, and Omani activist Neem al Zadjali and writer/director Sudha Radhika Sha.

Festival Director Sudha Sha noted that the event “offers a feast for movie lovers while giving film-makers opportunities to hone their skills and bring their works to international platforms.”

With its growing profile, the EU Film Festival continues to deepen Oman-Europe cultural ties through the shared language of cinema.

MUSCAT HOSTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AUTISM CARE

MUSCAT: Muscat Family Physicians’ Group, in association with Jeevaniyam Ayurvedic Hospital, Cochin, India, and Global Treatment Services, organised an International Medical Conference on September 19, at City Seasons Hotel.

Dr Reshmi Pramod, Founder and CEO of Jeevaniyam Ayurvedic Hospital, was the guest speaker,



Doctors at an international medical conference organised by Muscat Family Physicians’ Group and Jeevaniyam Ayurvedic Hospital

delivering a session on ‘Integrated Management for Autism’, with a focus on sensory integration therapy and AI-based rehabilitation.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex condition characterised by communication challenges, repetitive behaviours and sensory sensitivities. Given its multifaceted nature, a single system of medicine or isolated therapies is often

insufficient.

Experts highlighted that integrating evidence-based therapies with multiple medical systems addresses the underlying biological processes, promoting holistic development for affected individuals and enhancing the psychosocial well-being of their families.

The conference also showcased the first research work in Ayurveda.

Enrolment for 1st grade students starts on Oct 1

SUHAIL BIN NASSER AL NAHDI
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

THE Ministry of Education (MoE) announced that the registration for grade 1 in public schools for the 2026-2027 academic year will open on October 1 and end on November 27 this year. Registration for grade 1 in private schools will start on October 15 and continue until July 9, 2026.

The Ministry of Education has set several conditions for registering students in public schools, most importantly, registration will be limited to children born between September 1, 2019, and January 1, 2021. The child and their guardian must have a civil ID number, and a valid Omani residency card for a non-Omani child and their guardian. Registration applications must be submitted by the guardian via the Mandhara platform, using the Request to Register a Student in a Public School window, on a website designated by the MoE.

Following registration on the website, the guardian and their would-be students must approach the school carrying the requisite documents (the child’s medical record to ensure they have received the required vaccinations, a medical



The Ministry of Education has set several conditions for registering students.

The ministry clarified that if a student is registered in kindergarten for the current academic year, their guardian will register them for the first grade for the next academic year

report from an accredited health institution in case the child has a chronic illness or any disability requiring special education).

Besides, the child must undergo medical examinations by government health institutions before final admission to the school.

The ministry clarified that if a student is registered in kindergarten for the current academic year, their guardian will register them for the first grade for the next academic year. They will not delegate the registration process to a private school, provided they adhere to the

specified conditions and timeframe.

The MoE stipulated that registration in private schools is exclusive to children born between July 1, 2019, and July 1, 2021. The Omani child and their guardian must have a civil ID number, and the non-Omani child and their guardian must have a valid residency permit in Oman.

Other conditions are the same as those required for enrolment in government schools, including medical records and health reports, online registration, and adherence to specified deadlines.

TENDER NOTICE

وزارة الزراعة والسمكية وموارد المياه

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
974/2023/MAFWR/HQ-103 Recall - 2	Supply and Installation of Pesticide Residue and Quality Control Analysis Instruments to determine the quality and safety period of insecticide used in RPW IPM	Monday 15/9/2025	Thursday 25/9/2025	Sunday 5/10/2025	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
610/2025/MAFWR/HQ-68	Aerial Spraying Operation using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to Control Dubas Bug on Date Palms and other Pest of Palms and Agricultural Crops	Sunday 21/9/2025	Sunday 12/10/2025	Sunday 2/11/2025	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(30/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.

The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.

All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.

All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

‘Sea Lion 2/2025’ naval drill till Sept 25

MUSCAT: The annual naval exercise ‘Sea Lion 2/2025’ commenced in the Sea of Oman, conducted by the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) with support from the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) and the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO). The joint drill will run until September 25.

The opening session included a briefing on training objectives, followed by a speech from Brigadier General Ali bin Mohammed al Hosni, Commander of Said bin Sultan Naval Base.

He highlighted the importance of the exercise in enhancing combat readiness, developing skills and broadening operational capabilities across multiple maritime disciplines. The exercise forms part of the RNO’s annual training programme aimed at maintaining high readiness levels.

— ONA

محافظة مسقط

Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (36/2025)

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

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRE/24/261 Re-call	Correcting Street Levels with Protection Works of Channel at Falaj Al Sham (Re-Call)	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/24/315 Re-call	Design, Implementation and Operation of Mobile Toilets Wilayat of Quriyat (Re-Call 2)	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/101 Re-call	Road Leveling & Paving Works at Al Khoudh (Re-Call)	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/110 Re-call	Operation & Maintenance of Flag Pole at Al Khuwair Square (Re-Call)	30/09/2025	07/10/2025
PRE/25/128	Renewal of AMC for Computers & their Accessories	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/139	Design, Supply & Installation of Lighting at Different Areas at Muscat Governorate	30/09/2025	07/10/2025
PRE/25/140	Paving Works at Al Khoudh Area	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/143	Supply & Installation of Bridges & Gateways Lighting at Muscat Governorate	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/144	Renewal of Adobe Software Licenses	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/145	Construction of Bike Pathway & Site Preparation Works at Al Ansab	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/146	Development of Al Ghubrah Lake Park at Bosher	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/147	Paving Works at Hillat Al Fatah at Al Seeb	11/10/2025	02/11/2025
PRE/25/148	Supply & Installation of Interlock at The "Green Walkway"	11/10/2025	02/11/2025

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

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For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi (C) delivers a speech at the kick-off of the campaign, in Tokyo. — AFP

JAPAN RULING PARTY LEADERSHIP RACE KICKS OFF

TOKYO: The leadership contest for Japan’s ruling party kicked off on Monday, with five candidates vying to become the country’s fourth prime minister in as many years. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba threw in the towel on September 7 after a string of poor election results for the long-dominant but ailing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Of the five contenders who filed their papers on Monday ahead of an October 4 party vote, Sanae Takaichi and Shinjiro Koizumi are the favourites, polls suggest. Takaichi, 64, who would be Japan’s first woman premier, is seen as a hard-line nationalist while Agriculture Minister Koizumi, 44, is the telegenic son of an ex-premier.

The others are Toshimitsu Motegi, 69, a former top diplomat with a reputation as a tough trade negotiator; Yoshimasa Hayashi, 64, the top government spokesman in Ishiba’s cabinet with large ministerial experience; and former economic security minister Takayuki Kobayashi, 50.

Whoever wins will face a host of complex issues including a rapidly ageing population, colossal national debt and a faltering economy plagued by rising prices. The election on October 4 will be open to ordinary members of the LDP. — AFP

DEADLY AIR RAID KILLS 23 IN PAKISTAN BORDER REGION

PESHAWAR: Pakistan police and security sources said aerial bombing in a remote border region killed at least 23 civilians on Monday in an area where militancy has been rising. Opposition MPs accused the military of carrying out the night raid as part of a counter-terrorism operation, but no official statement has been released by the government or armed forces.

Pakistani Taliban (TTP) gunmen have in recent months stepped up a campaign of violence against security forces in the mountainous areas of Khyber Pakhtunkwa province that border Afghanistan. “It was the security force’s aircraft that carried out the shelling. It’s their shelling that killed 23 people,” Iqbal Afridi, an opposition member of the National Assembly whose constituency covers Tirah, where the assault happened, said.

Speaking in the Khyber Pakhtunkwa assembly on Monday afternoon, provincial MP Sohail Khan Afridi also blamed the military. “This assault by the security forces is nothing less than an attack on unarmed civilians,” he said. Both MPs are members of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan’s party which controls Khyber Pakhtunkwa province. On Monday afternoon, around 2,000 people gathered in a nearby town to protest against the deadly raid. — AFP

FOOD POISONING

Indonesia urged to halt \$10 bn school meals



NGOs urged the government to temporarily halt President Prabowo Subianto’s flagship free school meals programme, days after 500 children became sick in the biggest mass food poisoning outbreak so far. Food poisoning has affected 6,452 children nationwide, which was “a systemic failure,” Network for Education Watch head Ubaid Matraji told a committee, saying the government must stop the programme to put in place stronger oversight. — Reuters

EGYPT’S PRESIDENT SISI PARDONS HIGH-PROFILE ACTIVIST ALAA ABDEL FATTAH

CAIRO: Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah el Sisi pardoned high-profile Egyptian-British activist, Alaa Abdel Fattah, after a lengthy imprisonment and repeated hunger strikes that prompted international pleas for his release, Al Qahera news said on Monday.

Abdel Fattah, 43, became Egypt’s most prominent political prisoner after spending much of his adult life in and out of detention due to his activism, and a rare symbol of opposition to a far-reaching

crackdown. Despite many local and international campaigns calling for his release, most notably during the COP27 climate summit that Egypt hosted in 2022, that possibility only became tangible when Sisi ordered the relevant authorities in September to study his possible pardon. Abdel Fattah’s name had been removed from Egypt’s “terrorism” list months earlier. Abd el-Fattah, who obtained British citizenship through his mother in 2021, comes from a family of well-

known activists and intellectuals who have launched multiple campaigns to plead for his release. His mother, Laila Soueif, met British PM Keir Starmer earlier this year to lobby for her son.

In 2014, Abdel Fattah was sentenced for protesting without permission to 15 years in prison, later reduced to five years. He was released in 2019, but remained on parole and was arrested again later that year, accused of spreading fake news. — Reuters

Thousands denounce Gaza genocide in Italy

TENS of thousands of people protested on Monday across Italy as part of a day of action to “denounce the genocide in Gaza”, which included transport strikes and port blockades. The demonstrations came the same day as France and other countries prepared to recognise a Palestinian state at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, following recognition by the UK, Australia and Canada on Sunday. Italy’s hard-right government under Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has said it will not recognise a Palestinian state for now.



People march with a giant Palestinian flag during a nationwide strike, “Let’s Block Everything”, in Rome. — AFP

In Rome, some 20,000 people gathered in front of the main Termini train station, according to local police, many of them students, shouting “Free Palestine!” and holding up Palestinian flags

more than 10,000 took to the streets, according to local police, while protesters also took place in Turin, Florence, Naples and Sicily. In Genoa and Livorno, dock workers blockaded port entrances, according to Italian media.

Strike action disrupted local buses and the metro service in Rome, while national train operators also warned of delays and cancellations. Meloni’s government, which is ideologically close to US President Donald Trump, has condemned Israel’s relentless assault on the besieged Palestinian territory.

It says it had not sold any Italian weapons to Israel since the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas inside Israel.

But it has said it will not, for now, recognise a Palestinian state and has also expressed reluctance about implementing the European Union’s proposed trade sanctions on Israel.

According to a recent survey by polling company Only Numbers, published by La Stampa newspaper, almost 64 per cent of Italians consider the humanitarian situation in Gaza “very serious” and almost 41 per cent want Italy to recognise a Palestinian state.

Recognition of a Palestinian state drew sharply contrasting reactions, with Palestinians in Gaza hailing it as a sign of hope while Israelis voiced anger and concern. In Gaza, many saw the recognition as an affirmation of their existence after nearly two years of war between Hamas and Israel. “We shouldn’t just be numbers in the news,” said Salwa Mansour, 35, displaced from Rafah to Al Mawasi, which the Israeli military has declared a humanitarian zone. “This recognition shows that the world is starting to hear our voice and that, in itself, is a moral victory. — AFP

CHINA TO EVACUATE 400,000 OVER SUPER TYPHOON

MANILA: The Chinese city of Shenzhen began preparing to evacuate 400,000 people while residents of the northern Philippines sought shelter from gale-force winds on Monday as Super Typhoon Ragasa continued on a collision course with southern China. The typhoon made landfall on the Philippines’ Calayan Island, part of the sparsely populated Babuyan chain, at 3:00 pm, according to the Philippine weather service.

As of 5:00 pm, maximum sustained winds of 215 kilometres per hour were reported at the storm’s centre, with gusts reaching as high as 295 kph, the national weather service said. Just over 10,000 Filipinos were evacuated across the country, with schools and government offices closed on Monday in the Manila region and across 29 other provinces.

A much larger operation will take place in China’s Shenzhen, where authorities said late on Sunday they planned to move hundreds of thousands of people from coastal and low-lying regions. — AFP

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Treason trial of S Sudan’s Machar begins



The treason trial of South Sudan’s suspended First Vice-President Riek Machar opened on Monday under tight security in the capital Juba, with his lawyer arguing the court lacked jurisdiction to hear the case. Machar’s SPLM-IO party rejects the charges against him which include murder, treason and crimes against humanity for their alleged involvement in raids. Seven of Machar’s allies were charged alongside him earlier this month. — Reuters

VIOLENCE SURGE

Mozambique port town sees brutal attacks



Insurgents linked to the IS group attacked a key Mozambique port town near a major international gas hub, beheading several civilians. The attackers entered in the early hours of the morning and forced a resident to go from house to house, calling out names of certain people, a local military official said. “As soon as they emerged, they were beheaded,” he said, adding three civilians were killed this way. — AFP

REVIVINGRELATIONS



Officials applaud North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during a meeting at the Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang. — Reuters

NORTH KOREA’S KIM OPEN TO FUTURE TALKS WITH US

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un says he has “fond memories” of US President Donald Trump and is open to future talks with the United States — if he can keep his nuclear arsenal. Kim met Trump three times for high-profile summits during Trump’s first term, before talks collapsed in Hanoi in 2019 over what concessions Pyongyang was prepared to make on its atomic weapons. The US demand that Kim give up his banned weapons has long been a sticking point between the two countries, with Pyongyang under successive rafts of UN sanctions over its nuclear and missile programmes.

“If the United States discards its delusional obsession with denuclearisation and, based on recognising reality, truly wishes for peaceful coexistence with us, then there is no reason we cannot meet it,” Kim said, according to a report on Monday by the official Korean Central News Agency. “I still personally hold fond memories of the current US president, Trump,” Kim added, in a wide-ranging speech to the country’s Supreme People’s Assembly.

Kim reiterated that denuclearisation was not an option. “The world already knows well what the United States does after it forces a country to give up its nuclear arms and disarm,” he said. “We will never give up our nuclear weapons.”

Kim said sanctions had only helped the North in “growing stronger, building endurance and resistance that cannot be crushed by any pressure”. Kim also added he had “no reason to sit down with South Korea”, even as Seoul’s new President Lee Jae-myung has sought to ease tensions with the North. “We make it clear that we will not deal with them in any form,” he said.

Kim’s speech reiterates Pyongyang’s position that it must be recognised as a nuclear state before any talks can take place, Hong Min, a senior analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification, said. “It reaffirms the North’s stance that recognition as a nuclear-armed state, along with a willingness to improve relations with it, are the prerequisites for dialogue,” he said. “It calls for a fundamental shift toward equal dialogue and improved relations as a nuclear-armed state.” North Korea has in recent years declared the South its principal enemy and blown up rail links and roads connecting the two countries.

“The lengthy and detailed justifications reflect equal parts confidence and desperation,” Yang Moo-jin, former president of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said. — AFP

UK’S REFORM PARTY PLEDGES TOUGHER RESIDENCY RULES

LONDON: Nigel Farage’s populist Reform UK party will make it harder for foreign nationals to move to Britain if it wins the next election, tailoring the system to higher earners with strong English with the aim of reducing the number of migrants. Under the plans, Reform would scrap the current “Indefinite Leave to Remain” status which migrants can claim after five years, and replace

it with a five-year renewable work visa, which would prevent holders from accessing welfare benefits. “There will be a route to citizenship, but a much tougher route to citizenship than we currently have,” Farage told a press conference on Monday. Reform UK has just five lawmakers in the 650-strong British parliament but leads opinion polls, with 28 per cent of people saying they would vote for

the party, a lead of eight points over the governing Labour party. The next election is expected in 2029. Immigration has become a major political issue in Britain, eclipsing concerns over a faltering economy, following a jump in arrivals after the Covid pandemic and as the country faces a record number of asylum claims. Responding to the Reform threat, the government is already trying to make it harder

for migrants to stay in the country, and has said it will launch a consultation on making people wait 10 years to apply for ILR, instead of the current five years. Reform’s policy would require anyone wanting to start the citizenship process to live in the UK for seven years, rather than the current five. Under current rules, migrants first apply for ILR and then citizenship. — Reuters

Putin offers Trump a year extension to nuclear pact

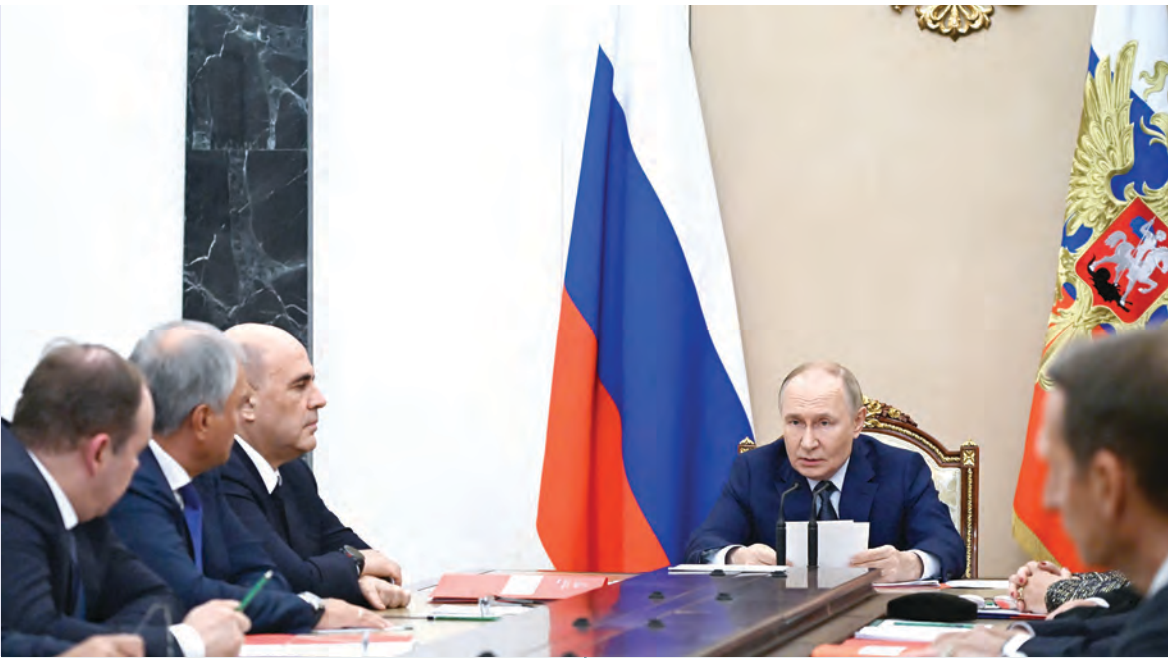
RUSSIAN

President Vladimir Putin offered his US counterpart Donald Trump a nuclear arms control deal on Monday that would extend the last treaty limiting both countries’ nuclear weapons by one year while Moscow and Washington discuss what comes next. Russia and the United States have by far the biggest nuclear arsenals in the world. The last remaining treaty between them that limits the numbers of these weapons is due to expire on February 5 next year.

The New START treaty covers strategic nuclear weapons — those designed by each side to hit the enemy’s centres of military, economic and political power — and caps the number of deployed warheads at 1,550 on each side. Both are likely to breach that limit if the treaty is not extended or replaced. Putin, who said his proposal was in the interests of global non-proliferation and could help spur dialogue with Washington about arms control, has been under pressure from Trump to agree to end the war in Ukraine, something Moscow says is part of a slew of security issues that have raised East-West tensions to their most dangerous level since the Cold War.

The offer, made at a time when Ukraine is trying to persuade Trump to impose harsher sanctions on Russia, was made public by Putin at a meeting of his Security Council. “Russia is prepared to continue adhering to the central numerical limits under the New START Treaty for one year after 5 February 2026,” said the Russian president. “Subsequently, based on an analysis of the situation, we will make a decision on whether to maintain these voluntary self-imposed restrictions. “We believe that this measure will only be viable if the United States acts in a similar manner and does not take steps that undermine or violate the existing balance of deterrence capabilities.”

The proposal appears to be a unilateral change of policy by Moscow which has until now insisted it would only engage with



Russia’s President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow. — AFP

Washington on such matters if overall ties - hampered by stark differences over the war in Ukraine - improved. There was no immediate response from Washington.

With just over four months to go before the New START runs out, differences over the Ukraine mean Russia and the United States have not started talks on renewing or overhauling the treaty though Trump has spoken of his desire to do a new nuclear arms control deal, albeit with China as well. Beijing has rejected the idea that it should be included too.

Putin said Russia would be monitoring US nuclear arms and defence activity, paying particular attention to Washington’s plans to beef up its missile defences and ideas to deploy missile interceptors in space. “We will proceed on the basis that the practical implementation of such destabilising actions could nullify our efforts to maintain the status quo in the field of START,” said Putin. “We will respond accordingly.”

Separately, Russia on Monday accused Nato member state Estonia of falsely claiming that Russian military jets had

violated its airspace last week, saying Tallinn had no evidence to back up its claim and was seeking to ratchet up East-West tensions. Estonia said on Friday that three Russian MiG-31 fighter jets had entered Estonian airspace without permission and stayed for a total of 12 minutes before they were forced to withdraw in an episode that Western officials said was designed to test Nato’s readiness and resolve.

Asked about Estonia’s allegation, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused Tallinn of making false statements. “We never heard in the Estonian statement that they have objective monitoring data (to back up their claim),” Peskov told reporters. “That is why we consider such words to be empty, unfounded and a continuation of a completely reckless pattern of escalating tensions and provoking a confrontational atmosphere,” he added.

Peskov, who noted that the Russian Defence Ministry had categorically denied the Estonian accusation, said Russian pilots always operated in accordance with international law. — Reuters

Peru marks second day of violent anti-government protests

LIMA: Hundreds of anti-government demonstrators in Peru’s capital Lima took to the streets again following clashes that injured at least 18 people, including police officers and journalists. The youth-led “Generation Z” collective led another march toward the seat of President Dina Boluarte’s administration in downtown Lima, where police were deployed in force. Unrest has been brewing for months in Peru, fuelled by a wave of organized crime and extortion cases. Several opinion polls have shown that many view the government and conservative-majority Congress as corrupt.

Protests intensified this week after the legislature passed a law requiring young adults to join a private pension fund, despite many facing a precarious working environment. As night fell on Sunday, groups of protesters threw stones and Molotov cocktails at police, with officers firing tear

gas in response. “I am outraged, I feel completely misled by this government... and this Congress that serves the political parties,” said Xiomi Aguilar, 28, adding that the parties were “a mafia entrenched in the state.”

Jonatan Esquen, an 18-year-old student, said the protest is “the beginning of an awakening, as people are finally realizing that young people are more active on social media and in the political arena.” Saturday’s clashes, which took place near the presidential and parliamentary buildings, were some of the most violent in Peru this year. At least 18 people — including police officers and journalists — were injured, according to tallies from authorities and independent organizations released on Sunday.

Among the 12 police officers injured were “a female police officer with serious injuries and another officer diagnosed with multiple



A riot police officer is hit by a Molotov cocktail during an anti-government demonstration in Lima. — AFP

contusions... who remain under observation” in hospital, according to a police statement. Authorities have not yet released a final tally of injuries or arrests related to the weekend’s demonstrations. Some 450 protesters took part in Saturday’s clashes, which also damaged public

roads, police said.

Images of protesters injured by projectiles allegedly fired by police were circulated on social media. The National Association of Journalists of Peru (ANP) reported that six journalists were hit by pellets fired by police while

covering the protest, including two from the Exitosa Noticias radio station. Cesar Zamalloa, a photojournalist from the weekly newspaper Hildebrandt En Sus Trece, said that the police “began firing pellets... directly at the bodies” of people. “That’s when I felt an impact on my leg and hip,” he said, according to testimony collected by the ANP in a statement posted on its Facebook page on Sunday.

Both the union and the National Human Rights Coordinator in Peru denounced the police repression during the demonstrations. Boluarte’s popularity ratings have plummeted, with her term set to end in July 2026. Nearly 80 per cent of Peruvians say they are ashamed of the government, with 85 per cent saying the same of Congress, according to a survey of 1,200 people published on Sunday by the newspaper El Comercio. — AFP

OPINION

Future fund aligns with Oman’s aim for clean energy



In a significant move to bolster SME financing, Future Fund Oman (FFO) launched a lending portfolio in collaboration with Beehive, a regional digital SME lending platform. This initiative provides loans within two weeks of application and offers flexible repayment plans to meet the strong demand for working capital among entrepreneurs.

The fund is Oman's first dedicated energy transition fund, aiming to accelerate investment in clean molecules, energy storage, e-fuels, smart mobility, renewables, and green data centres, aligning with Oman's ambition to become a clean energy hub and its commitment to economic diversification, attracting foreign investment, fostering innovation, and creating job opportunities.

Future Fund Oman, a significant initiative by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), is poised to substantially boost Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Oman through various strategic measures. Launched with a capital of RO 2 billion, the fund aims to accelerate access to capital, foster entrepreneurship, and contribute to the nation's economic diversification goals outlined in Vision 2040.

A key component of the fund's strategy is its newly launched 'quick' loan scheme for SMEs. This programme promises to process and release capital within two weeks of application, addressing a critical need for

rapid financing among small businesses.

The scheme also offers flexible repayment terms and simplified lending procedures, making it more accessible to a wider range of SMEs and startups. Beyond direct lending, the fund is committed to allocating 10 per cent of its capital specifically for SMEs, particularly those that are innovation-driven and technology-based.

This strategic allocation aims to enhance access to non-traditional financing, which is crucial for fostering innovation and supporting emerging companies. The fund's broader mandate includes attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).

Future Fund Oman has demonstrated positive performance during its first year of operations, having approved 44 projects with a total project value of approximately RO 1.2 billion. Its contribution to these projects amounted to RO 333 million, while foreign capital contributions reached RO 885 million. This reflects growing international confidence in Oman's investment environment.

With the recent legal and regulatory improvements in Oman aimed at attracting foreign investment and diversifying income sources, these reforms, which include the introduction of a new law allowing 100 per cent foreign ownership in most sectors and the launch of the "Invest in Oman" platform as a unified digital gateway to streamline

Future Fund Oman has demonstrated positive performance during its first year of operations, having approved 44 projects with a total project value of approximately RO 1.2 billion

licensing procedures, will help boost business in Oman.

Other initiatives include the implementation of the privatisation law, which enabled transferring government assets to the private sector and international investors through IPOs. As a result of these improvements and OIA's efforts, Future Fund Oman has been able to contribute significantly to the national economy.

Projects approved by FFO in 2024 alone are anticipated to create over 1,600 direct jobs, diversify the economy to reduce reliance on oil and gas, empower entrepreneurial ventures, and foster innovation.

These objectives align with the pillars of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to build a productive and diversified economy led by the private sector, support sustainable development through clean energy and green industries, create jobs, develop local talent and transfer knowledge to Omani workers while strengthening local and international partnerships in renewable energy and advanced technologies.

Crucially, Future Fund Oman is playing a pivotal role in advancing Oman's energy transition and Net-Zero 2050 goals. This initiative positions Oman as a frontrunner in global energy transition and a strategic hub for clean energy and advanced manufacturing, attracting future-focused global capital.

Foreign journalists face uncertain future under Trump

When US President Donald Trump berated an Australian reporter for asking an unpleasant question, his colleagues took that as a warning.

With the administration planning to slash correspondent visas and issuing not-so-veiled warnings, foreign journalists find themselves under pressure in the United States.

Earlier this week, a journalist from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation asked Trump about his business dealings while in office. Trump was visibly irritated. “In my opinion, you are hurting Australia very much right now, and they want to get along with me,” Trump told the reporter, John Lyons. “Your leader is coming over to see me very soon. I’m gonna tell him about you. You set a very bad tone.” The exchange was widely discussed in Washington media circles. One foreign correspondent said Trump’s hostility towards the media was not concentrated on foreigners. “When Trump insults a journalist, it doesn’t matter to him whether it’s a foreigner or not,” the correspondent said. What worries the reporter much more is the administration’s plan to slash journalists’ visas to a renewable 240-day period, down from five years — or just 90 days for Chinese media workers.

“How am I supposed to rent a flat? To get a driver’s licence? To put my kids in school with a 240-day visa?” the correspondent wondered, adding that it takes time to build a network of sources in the country. “It’s going to be a nightmare.” Another journalist said that “the precariousness of foreign journalists doesn’t make them prime targets for this administration,” but “is part of a very worrying overall picture.” The White House prefers journalists, wherever they come from, “who are committed to its stories or self-censor enough to normalise what’s happening,” the European correspondent said.

“The shortened timeframe for I-visa renewals creates a framework for possible editorial censorship in which the Trump administration can trade access for compliance in reporting,” Katherine Jacobsen with the Committee to Protect Journalism said in a statement. But Trump’s return to power has not been bad news for all foreign media outlets. Some news organizations who are known for sharing views similar to Trump’s in their home countries have been embraced by the White House. British TV channel GB News, whose stars include far-right leader Nigel Farage, was recently welcomed into the Oval Office, and its journalist was given a coveted seat on the US presidential plane during Trump’s visit to the UK this week. — AFP

Dreams lead to solutions

HAVE you ever noticed how problems look ten times bigger at night, but half the size after a good night’s sleep? That is because while you are snoring, your brain is busy working the night shift. We have all been told to sleep on it. I know it sounds like lazy advice, but it often works more effectively than you might think.

Dreams are not just strange movies your brain plays but workshops where the mind fiddles with problems, mixes old memories with new ones, and sometimes hands you answers you could not find, no matter how much coffee you drank.

History is full of dream-fuelled discoveries. August Kekulé saw a snake biting its tail and cracked the structure of benzene. Einstein admitted some of his ideas came from dreamlike thought experiments. Makes you wonder: who is the real genius, the man or his dreams? Indeed, sometimes the night brings counsel. Apparently, it also brings Nobel Prizes.

Scientists have been digging into this for years. A study in Nature showed sleepers were twice as likely to crack a hidden rule in a puzzle. Another study in PNAS found that REM sleep (the stage with wild, colourful dreams) helps the brain link unrelated ideas. Dreams feel random because your brain is tossing spaghetti at the wall, and sometimes one noodle is the answer you need.

That half-asleep moment before you drift off (called N1 sleep) is a surprisingly creative zone. A Science Advances study found people in this stage were three times more likely to solve a hidden problem. Thomas Edison knew the trick: he would nap holding a steel ball that clattered to the floor when he nodded off, waking him before he slipped too deep. He got



Studies even show that dreaming about a task, like navigating a maze, boosts performance the next day.



DR KHALFAN AL HARRASI

The author is an academic and researcher

Shut the laptop, crawl into bed and let your brain do its weird thing. You might wake up with a theory, or at least a better idea

the spark without losing the idea.

Scientists have gone further with “dream incubation”, basically giving your brain a hint before bed. In 2023, researchers nudged people’s dreams towards a theme with gentle cues, and the next day, those dreamers were more creative on related tasks. Think about your presentation at night, and you might wake up with a slide idea. Think about pizza, and your solution may come loaded with extra cheese. So yes, do consult your pillow before making a decision.

Dreams are not just about puzzles; they are also dress rehearsals for life. Late for an exam? At work in pajamas? Annoying, yes, but scientists say such dreams prepare us for stress safely. Studies even show that dreaming about a task, like navigating a maze, boosts performance the next day. Of course, not every dream is useful.

Some dreams will always be junk; some are pure nonsense. Nobody is doing algebra while riding a purple dragon, or waking up with a flying toaster army invading Paris instead of a solution for your business plan.

So how do you use this in daily life? Keep it simple. Put a notebook by your bed and jot down dream scraps before they vanish. Think about a problem as you fall asleep; you might nudge your brain to work on it. Studies show pre-sleep thoughts often shape dream content. Whatever is on your mind tends to echo in your dreams. Edison was right: never go to sleep without a request to your subconscious. Next time you are stuck, skip the all-nighter. Shut the laptop, crawl into bed and let your brain do its weird thing. You might wake up with a theory, or at least a better idea. After all, a good laugh and a long sleep are the two best cures for anything.

Let’s sit alone with our thoughts, shall we?



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

THEY are saying we are seeing the death of boredom, the biggest reason being our shift from idle moments to scrolling moments.

We literally jump out of our sleep to the messages on our mobile phone. I remember the mornings at the boarding school, waking up to the sound of the bell, and our teacher’s voice calling us out to do our morning exercises on the dew-topped sand. She was sweet enough to give us a second round of bell to wake up from our thoughts.

Those moments of thought were important. The first thought used to be on how I could manage a few more minutes of sleep. I even contemplated sleeping in the cupboard. As sense would take over desperation, thoughts would go to my family and to the present moment and then, of course, to the day at school. Then it was time for yoga on the sand. The gentle sea breeze would welcome in the day as the sun would slowly light up the sky.

Jump forward to 2025. The alarm on my mobile phone wakes me up, and it gives me morning greetings from far and near, and not to forget, news. Before I see the sunlight, I see the screen light of the mobile phone.

Gone are the “lost in thought” moments.

If we have to wait in line for our turn, we

soon turn to our phone to scroll. We don’t think of striking up a conversation with others in the queue. Content creators are enjoying this obsession of the millennium.

We don’t like to stroll anymore, but maybe with AirPods or earphones. Even here, we want someone else’s song, words, or voice to fill our thoughts.

Maybe, boredom, you were good for us.

Boredom used to spark daydreams, creativity, and reflection. It is even linked to problem-solving and even empathy. Apparently, the brain’s default mode network, activated during boredom, is crucial for memory consolidation and meaning-making.

Now, though, boredom is a trigger we want to avoid by indulging in videos. Indulgence is not just about watching videos but also about creating them. Inability to do so and not getting enough likes could create its own frustration.

How long can you sit still without your mobile phone?

This is an era where even mindfulness is appified and gamified. We need constant stimulation. Our minds know no rest.

This is what Blaise Pascal said: “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.”

But on the other hand, boredom, according

Boredom, according to research, can be more than just unpleasant, and in some cases, it may contribute to serious psychological distress

to research, can be more than just unpleasant, and in some cases, it may contribute to serious psychological distress.

Besides, a systematic review of 28 studies found that trait boredom is a strong factor in problematic behaviour such as smartphone overuse, social media, Internet use, gaming addiction, etc.

Digital switching was yet another problem that has been observed. Sticking to one video could be more enjoyable than jumping from one to another. Would we have to relearn to focus on content? This could be the result of having too many options. And with AI, even our thought process can be outsourced.

We are yet to see the results of today’s toddlers playing with mobile phones as a toy. They already know how to operate and even pick up other languages. They do pick up some knowledge. What makes one wonder is their level of boredom and the required stimulation.

Shall we invite boredom for an hour a day to preserve it?

Could preserving boredom become an art?

A dopamine detox could reduce stress levels, provide better sleep, address negative behaviour, and, of course, increase awareness.

So, a detox might be just what we need. To start with, how about for one hour?

NIGERIAN WOMEN PROTEST FOR RESERVED SEATS IN PARLIAMENT

Hundreds of women protested in the Nigerian capital on Monday to push for a bill that would add women-only seats in the Senate and House of Representatives.

Several African countries, from Senegal to Rwanda, have increased the number of women legislators by using quota systems.

Nigeria, which has no such system, only counts four women senators out of 109 and 16 women in the 360-member House of Representatives, according to the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), a local NGO.

Dubbed the “Special Seats Bill”, the legislation would add one woman-only seat for both the House and the Senate in each of Nigeria’s 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory, though implementing the changes would require a constitutional amendment.

“We want the legislature to work for women,” said Dorothy Njemanze, one of the organisers, who said she had counted more than 1,000 demonstrators in attendance.

Women’s groups from across the country converged in Abuja, organising a caravan of buses, vans and a truck blasting up-tempo Afrobeats music that snaked through the wide boulevards of the planned city.

Advocates say that reserved seats would serve as a corrective to the financial barriers, entrenched gender roles and a domination of politics by male power brokers that keep women out of power in Africa’s most populous nation.

The caravan ended with the delivery of signatures in support of the legislation to a House committee holding a hearing on constitutional reform.

President Bola Tinubu’s minister for women’s affairs, Hajiya Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, has signalled support for the legislation.

However, the PLAC, in its legislative analysis, warned that constitutional amendments are “no walk in the park”, with two-thirds of the National Assembly and 24 state legislatures required to approve any changes.

Several similar attempts at creating reserved seats for women have failed in recent years.

“I want that seat, because tomorrow, I may be the one contesting” for it, Onu Ihunania, a 50-year-old civil servant and member of the caravan, said.

A National Assembly with more women might better focus on women’s health and economic inclusion, said Nyiyam Ikyereve, 40, who travelled several hours from Benue state to join the protest.

The lack of women’s representation came to a head earlier this year when Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan was suspended from the chamber after she complained about harassment.

The Senate president maintained that Akpoti-Uduaghan was suspended for a separate incident related to an argument that erupted in the chamber over her seating arrangement. — AFP

North Africa’s scramble for the pivot in the Sahel

AS Western governments lament their waning influence across the Sahel – France handed over its last base in Chad in January, effectively ending its military presence in the region – they cling to an outdated narrative. The Sahel is no longer a chessboard on which the struggles between the West and Russia play out. More importantly, it is now the site of a contest between Algeria and Morocco, two North African powers vying for strategic dominance.

While the world watches Russia’s Africa Corps, the Wagner Group’s successor, expand its footprint in the Sahel, it overlooks the more permanent and transformative presence of Algeria and Morocco. For these economies, with a combined GDP of over \$418 billion, the region is not a distant frontier for proxy battles; rather, it is an important trade corridor and key source of minerals, making it critical to their national and economic security.

For decades, the Sahel’s orientation was a foregone conclusion, shaped by its postcolonial ties to France and the security architecture of the United States-led global war on terror. But that era is over. The widespread frustration with Western intervention has resulted in eight military coups across West and Central Africa since 2020. Algeria and Morocco have stepped into the resulting power vacuum, each with a distinct vision for bringing the region into its economic orbit.

The most visible battle concerns trade. In 2023, Morocco launched its Atlantic Initiative, which will offer landlocked Sahel countries a secure and efficient gateway to global markets through the planned deep-water port of Dakhla in the disputed Western Sahara. This mega-project – the port will cost an estimated \$1.2 billion and is expected to handle 35 million tonnes of goods annually – seeks to reorient the region’s commercial flows westward. Moreover, by positioning itself as the bridge between the Sahel and the Atlantic, Morocco aims to expand trade with Sub-Saharan Africa, which, according to my



The Sahel is no longer a chessboard on which the struggles between the West and Russia play out.



DALIA GHANEM

Ghanem is a Senior Fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs, is the author of Understanding the Persistence of Competitive Authoritarianism in Algeria

calculations, totalled \$1.2 billion in 2022 – a more than 17-fold increase since 2004.

Algeria, for its part, has almost completed the Trans-Saharan Highway, which will stretch nearly 5,000 km from Algiers to Lagos, Nigeria, passing through Niger. The road has been decades in the making, as part of a larger strategy to connect Algeria with West Africa, boost its non-oil exports, and make it the region’s preeminent power broker. It will also establish Algeria as the main gateway between Europe and the massive West African market and give landlocked African countries a direct route to the sea.

While the highway was intended to feed into a new \$5 billion mega-port in Cherrchell, Algeria – financed and built by China – that project has been shelved indefinitely.

The rivalry between Algeria and Morocco is not just about asphalt and shipping lanes. It is also a race to secure the Sahel’s vast mineral wealth, which will be critical for both economic diversification and decarbonisation. For example, Niger is the world’s seventh-largest producer of uranium, Mali is Africa’s third-largest producer of gold, and Burkina Faso has large deposits of manganese. For Morocco, which has a large mining sector and holds 70 per cent of the world’s phosphate reserves, securing access to these minerals is a top strategic priority. Meanwhile, Algeria views them as a means to diversify its fossil-fuel-

dependent economy and counter Moroccan influence in its backyard.

Both countries are also hoping to play a central role in the emerging clean-energy economy by developing green hydrogen. By 2030, Morocco aims to generate 52 per cent of its electricity from renewables, supporting its green-hydrogen plans. Algeria, with vast solar potential estimated at 180 terawatt-hours per year, is pursuing a strategy to meet up to 10 per cent of Europe’s green-hydrogen demand by 2040. The country plans to export it through the “SouthH2 Corridor” pipeline project, which will connect Algeria and Tunisia to Italy, Austria, and Germany. Whoever controls the Sahel – which also holds huge untapped solar potential – could gain significant leverage over Europe’s green transition.

To be sure, Algeria and Morocco are not the only countries competing for economic and security influence in the Sahel. The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries are also investing in ports, agriculture, and telecommunications across the region. Their involvement may be driven more by a desire to project global power than by the immediate strategic interests that motivate their North African counterparts, but it will nonetheless shape the region’s future.

Where does that leave Europe and the United States? For too long, both have viewed the Sahel as a region beset by terrorism and at risk of capture by other great powers, leading to major policy blunders that have alienated local populations and created the very instability that their interventions were meant to prevent. To remain relevant, Western governments must shift their focus: The Sahel’s future stability and alignment will be determined not by the number of foreign troops on the ground, but by the success of the economic visions offered by its North African neighbours. Only by engaging with the complexities of this new reality can the West forge a sustainable and effective policy for one of the world’s most critical regions.

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SPORTS

NARROW DEFEAT



Oman and UAE players in action during the U17 Gulf Cup in Qatar.

OMAN U17S FALL TO UAE IN GULF CUP OPENING MATCH

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

The Oman national under-17 football team lost its opening match in the Gulf Cup of Nations, currently being held in Qatar, falling 1-0 to the UAE in the Group A opener at Suhaim bin Hamad Stadium.

The early minutes saw both sides play cautiously, exchanging possession without posing any real threats on goal. Oman’s first chance came in the seventh minute through Bashar al Shamsi, who dribbled past defenders and unleashed a strong shot that hit the side netting. Three minutes later, Saad al Maamari fired a powerful strike that rattled the crossbar.

Oman created more attempts, including a corner in the 32nd minute and a free-kick from Mohammed al Jabri that was ruled offside. Toward the end of the first half, Abdullah al Saadi almost broke the deadlock in stoppage time, but the Emirati defence intervened, leaving the score 0-0 at halftime.

Oman entered the second half strongly and almost opened the scoring in the 48th minute through Bashar al Shamsi, but UAE goalkeeper Jassim al Hammadi made a brilliant save. Oman continued their attempts, with Mohammed al Jabri missing a clear chance with a header that went wide in the 68th minute.

Meanwhile, the UAE relied on crosses and corner kicks until they finally opened the scoring in the 74th minute through Hamad Freij, who capitalised on a perfect cross from Butti al Junaibi and slotted the ball home from close range. The UAE almost added a second goal through Mohammed Balari in the 88th minute, but his shot went over the bar.

Oman pressed hard in the final minutes in search of an equaliser, and their most notable chance came from substitute Sultan al Jadidi in the second minute of stoppage time, but goalkeeper Jassim al Hammadi made a firm save. The UAE goalkeeper also made a last-ditch save before the final whistle, allowing the UAE to emerge victorious 1-0.

In the same group, Qatar defeated Yemen 1-0 at Hamad Al Kabir Stadium, thanks to a goal from Faisal Arhabin. This result left both the UAE and Qatar with three points each, while Oman and Yemen remained without points.

In Group B, Saudi Arabia cruised past Bahrain 4-0, while Kuwait and Iraq played out a 1-1 draw.



The UAE goalkeeper made a last-ditch save before the final whistle as UAE emerge victorious 1-0.

Al Zubair, Klingmann end series with second spot

Al Manar Racing by Team WRT’s Al Faisal al Zubair and Jens Klingmann completed their programme of Sprint series races in the GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS with fourth and second place-finishes at the Circuit Ricardo Tormo Valencia in Valencia, Spain.

The BMW M4 GT3 EVO pair qualified fourth for both of the races and a particularly strong performance in the second of the Sprints on Sunday saw them take the runner-up spot in the Gold Cup section behind the newly-crowned Sprint series champions, Thierry Vermeulen and Chis Lulham, in the Emil Frey Racing Ferrari 296 GT3.

The two results enabled the Al Manar Racing duo to finish the season fourth in both the Sprint Teams’ and Drivers’ Championships.

A delighted Oman-based Al Zubair said: “This was an amazing way to finish the season with second place in the second Sprint race, despite a five-second penalty. This was a good way to end a strong Sprint season, my best ever. I think on a personal level this has been my best performance. I am very happy. Personally, it has been getting better and better and that is the most important thing. I have been racing 12 years and improving every year and that is something I strive for. Hopefully, we can have a good finale in Barcelona and bring back the win.

“Unfortunately, qualifying today was very tough with a red flag and we had already used our push lap and we used our peak. After that, it was just a case of managing it but the pace was solid after that and that brought us P2 in the last race.”

After a brief shakedown



The two results enabled the Al Manar Racing duo to finish the season fourth in both the Sprint Teams’ and Drivers’ Championships.

in the initial private test session on Thursday, the Al Manar Racing by Team WRT operation ran the BMW M4 strongly in free practice on Friday morning. Al Zubair and Klingmann carded a best lap of 1min 32.420sec and that was the third quickest tour of the Gold Cup entrants behind the Emil Frey Racing Ferrari and the Garage 59 McLaren.

They were classified fifth of the Gold Cup crews in Friday afternoon’s pre-qualifying stint and then attention turned to the first qualifying session for Sprint race one on Saturday morning. Thomas Fleming and Louis Prette earned Gold Cup pole with a lap of 1min 31.387sec in the Garage 59 McLaren with Emil Frey Racing qualifying second

ahead of CSA Racing.

A lap of 1min 31.811sec was sufficient to give Al Manar Racing fourth on the Gold Cup grid ahead of Sainteloc Racing. Tresor Attempto Racing was not classified.

The Garage 59 McLaren stole the show in the first 36-lap Sprint race and finished second in the overall results, in addition to winning the Gold Cup section. The Emil Frey Racing Ferrari and the CSA Racing McLaren rounded off the podium with Al Zubair and Klingmann coming home in a close fourth in the Gold Cup and seventh overall. Penalties were applied to several crews who had improved their sector times during a mid-race yellow flag.

Qualifying for Sprint race

two took place on Sunday morning with Gold Cup pole falling to Fleming and Prette in the Garage 59 car. Emil Frey Racing and Sainteloc Racing lined up in second and third of the Gold Cup runners and Al Zubair and Klingmann were again in fourth place after a red flag.

Vermeulen and Lulham went on to top the standings in the second 38-lap Sprint race but a superb performance from Al Zubair and Klingmann saw them climb to second place to round off the Sprint season with yet another podium finish. They were also 10th overall from 37 finishers. Gilles Magnus and Paul Evrard of Sainteloc Racing rounded off the race podium.

Al Manar Racing by Team WRT rounds off its successful season in the GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS with the final endurance round of the season in Barcelona on October 10-12.

- SPRINT SERIES**
- TEAMS – final Gold Cup standings**
1. Emil Frey Racing 118.5 pts
 2. Garage 59 106 pts
 3. Sainteloc Racing 101.5 pts
 4. Al Manar Racing by Team WRT 88 pts
 5. Tresor Attempto Racing 85 pts
 6. CSA Racing 23 pts
 7. Barwell Motorsport 15 pts
- DRIVERS – final Gold Cup standings**
1. Chris Lulham/Thierry Vermeulen 118.5 pts
 2. Louis Prette 106 pts
 3. Gilles Magnus/Paul Evrard 101.5 pts
 4. Al Faisal al Zubair/Jens Klingmann 88 pts
 5. Sebastian Ogaard/Leonardo Moncini 85 pts
 6. Thomas Fleming 80.5 pts
 7. Adam Smalley 25.5 pts
 8. Bijoy Garg/Ricky Collard 15 pts

Oman submit bid to host 2028 Beach Handball Worlds

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

The Oman Handball Association (OHA) has officially submitted a comprehensive bid to host the 2028 IHF Men’s and Women’s Beach Handball World Championship, building on the success of the 10th Asian Beach Handball Championship 2025 took place in Muscat from May 6 to 15.

The Asian Championship concluded with Oman’s men’s team crowned champions after defeating regional powerhouse Iran 2-0 in the final. This triumph not only secured Oman the continental title for the second time but also booked the team’s place at the 2026 IHF World Championship in Croatia.

Oman has prior experience on the global stage as they had successfully hosted the IHF Men’s and Women’s Beach Handball World Championship in Al Musannah in 2012.

“One of the Association’s key strategic objectives is to once again host the IHF Men’s and Women’s Beach Handball World Championship. The team’s recent success is only the beginning of a brighter future for Omani handball on the global stage,” said Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, Chairman of OHA.

Al Balushi’s remarks came during a



The chief guest presented awards to the national team players, coaching staff and officials in recognition of their efforts.

special ceremony organised to felicitate the national team players for their continental achievement. The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Ahmed bin Nasser al Nuaimi, Chairman of Al Nahda Club and Al Buraimi University College, with the attendance of senior sports officials and club representatives.

“This achievement is not just a sporting triumph but the result of collective effort, teamwork, and determination. Winning both the Gulf Beach Games in April and the Asian Championship in May has made 2025 a historic year for Omani beach handball. Our players and coaching staff showed

remarkable commitment, and their success reflects the growth of the sport in the Sultanate of Oman,” Al Balushi added.

The OHA chairman also extended appreciation to head coach Hamood al Hasani and his technical staff, alongside the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) and all supporting partners who contributed to the successful hosting of the Asian Championship in Oman.

Team captain Said al Hasani expressed gratitude on behalf of the players, noting: “This recognition will serve as strong motivation for the upcoming competitions. Our focus is now to perform even better at the 2026 IHF World Championship in Croatia.”

The ceremony also featured a documentary film highlighting the journey of organising the Asian Championship and the national team’s path to victory. The continental tournament witnessed the participation of nine men’s teams including: Oman, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Maldives, Iran, Philippines, Jordan, Pakistan and India besides four women’s teams including: Vietnam, Philippines, Hong Kong and India.

The evening concluded with the chief guest presenting awards to the national team players, coaching staff and officials in recognition of their efforts.

CYCLINGWORLDS



Gold medallist Belgium's Remco Evenepoel celebrates on the podium after winning the men's elite Individual Time Trial. — Reuters

EVENEPOEL WINS
THIRD STRAIGHT
TIME-TRIAL TITLE

KIGALI: Imperious Belgian Remco Evenepoel claimed a third consecutive time-trial title at the Road Cycling World Championships in Rwanda on Sunday, as Tadej Pogacar agonisingly missed out on a medal by less than two seconds. Despite starting the 40.6km race against the clock two and a half minutes after Pogacar, Evenepoel overtook the fading Tour de France winner in the closing stages to secure a dominant victory.

Australia's Jay Vine took silver at 1min 14sec with Belgian Ilan Van Wilder snatching third at 2min 36sec, just 1.6sec faster than Pogacar. Evenepoel described the race conditions as the hardest he had ever faced in a time-trial and admitted that he had gone close to his limit in overtaking Pogacar.

"Once I saw him (Pogacar) I wanted to go as close as possible. Maybe I went too close to the limit to catch him," he admitted. "The cobbles were really painful on a time-trial bike but I'm delighted. It's a really special win," he said. Slovenian four time Tour de France winner Pogacar admitted he had given everything. "It's hard to swallow," he said of being overtaken. "It's incredible how fast he was, how good he is at this discipline. Really what a ride from him. I feel bitter about missing a medal by one second. But tomorrow is a new day," Pogacar said. For Evenepoel this was further confirmation that he is the best time-trial racer of his generation. He won the 2023 time-trial in Glasgow and defended it in Zurich a year later, having also won the road race world title in Australia in 2022. The 25-year-old's latest success came a year after pulling off a spectacular double at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, winning both the road race and the time-trial. He will be aiming to emulate that achievement in next Sunday's 267km road race, where Pogacar is the hot favourite. "I was on great form today, I hope I feel like this again next Sunday," Evenepoel said. — AFP

PHOTOJOURNALIST
HONOURED WITH
ARPS AWARD

LONDON: Indian sports photojournalist Mohammad Shamsuddin was awarded the prestigious Associateship of the Royal Photographic Society (ARPS) in London recently. The honour is one of the oldest and most respected distinctions in global photography, shared by only a few hundred photographers worldwide.



The award presentation took place on September 19, 2025 at the Photography Centre, Victoria & Albert Museum, London. The Centre, which houses the RPS Collection and Library, was opened in October 2018 by Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales, Patron of both the Royal Photographic Society and the Victoria & Albert Museum. Mohammad Shamsuddin, Editor of Snaps India, described this as "the happiest moment of my life." He was conferred the ARPS for his outstanding sports photography, especially his internationally acclaimed coverage of the Fifa World Cup, Doha, Qatar (2022). During the ceremony, Simon Hill, President and Chair of Trustees of the Royal Photographic Society, praised Shamsuddin's portfolio for its ability to capture intensity, humanity and decisive moments., qualities that define world-class photojournalism.



India's Abhishek Sharma watches the ball after playing a shot during the Asia Cup 2025 Super Four Twenty20 match against Pakistan in Dubai. — AFP

Abhishek blitz lifts India to
Super 4 win over Pakistan

OPENER Abhishek Sharma hit a blazing 74 as India beat Pakistan by six wickets and again refused to shake hands with their opponents in the Super Four clash of the Asia Cup on Sunday. Chasing 172 for victory, India rode on a 105-run opening stand between the left-handed Abhishek and Shubman Gill, who made 47, to achieve their target with seven balls to spare in Dubai. The rivals came into the contest of the regional tournament with tensions high after India angered Pakistan by also refusing to shake hands when the pair met in the group stage. Tempers flared on the field when Gill and Shaheen Afridi exchanged simmering glances after the batter hit the pace bowler for a boundary. Both Abhishek and Gill came out roaring with a flurry of boundaries to unsettle the Pakistan attack as they raced to 101-0 in 9 overs. Abhishek and Haris Rauf kept up the spice with a fiery exchange.

"Today was pretty simple, the way they were coming out to us without any reason, I did not like it at all," Abhishek said after being named player of the match. "That's why I went after them. I wanted to deliver for the team." Medium-pace bowler Faheen Ashraf bowled Gill, and Rauf in the next over took down skipper Suryakumar Yadav for a duck to check India's surge. Abhishek fell to Abrar Ahmed's leg spin after his 35-ball blitz laced with six fours and five sixes. Rauf took one more wicket but Tilak Varma, with his unbeaten 30 off 19 balls, steered the team home off a six and a four. The Indian batters quickly left the field while Pakistan players shook hands amongst themselves. "We are yet to play a perfect game, but we are getting there," said Pakistan captain Salman Agha. "A great game but in the powerplay (first six overs) they took the game away from us." India won the toss and fielded first, but Pakistan came out attacking as Sahibzada

Farhan, who hit 58, and Saim Ayub, who made 21, put on 72 runs for the second wicket, to help their team reach 171-5. Fakhar Zaman opened with Farhan and started aggressively in his nine-ball 15 before being caught behind. Farhan kept up the charge as he hit five fours and three sixes in his 45-ball knock as he reached his fifty with a six and celebrated by using his bat to mimick a gun. India hit back with three wickets, including Farhan who was dismissed by medium-pace bowler Shivam Dube, as Pakistan slipped to 115-4. Mohammad Nawaz made 21 before he was run out. Agha, on 17, and Faheem Ashraf, with 20 off eight balls, struck 22 between them to boost the total. Dube stood out with figures of 2-33, but Indian fielders had a day to forget as they dropped four catches. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are the other teams in the Super Four. The top two will move into the final on September 28. —AFP

Torres double helps Barca down listless Getafe

BARCELONA: Ferran Torres struck twice for champions Barcelona as they beat Getafe 3-0 on Sunday to stay on Real Madrid's tails at the top of La Liga. Dani Olmo was also on target for the Catalans, who trail leaders Madrid by two points after Xabi Alonso's side beat Espanyol on Saturday to maintain their 100 percent record. Playing at the 6,000 capacity Johan Cruyff stadium besides their training ground again as the club waits for licences to reopen their renovated Camp Nou home, Barcelona dominated an unambitious Getafe team. Despite his brace against Newcastle in the Champions League, German coach Hansi Flick left Marcus Rashford on the bench, with Spanish media reporting that it was because the England international was late for a morning meeting.



FC Barcelona's Ferran Torres scores their second goal. — Reuters

Flick has dropped other players from the line-up for the same offence in the past, including defender Jules Kounde. Rashford's replacement as the stand-in for injured teenage superstar Lamine Yamal, Torres, took his chance with both hands. The Spaniard opened the scoring with a powerful finish at the end of a slick move, with Olmo backheeling the ball into his path in the box. Torres's second finish was even better, guided into the bottom left corner from outside the box after Raphinha sent him through on goal. The forward crashed a shot off the bar as a first half hat-trick beckoned.

Barca players lost their temper before the break as Getafe put in several hard and late tackles, with Kounde the victim of many of them. Flick sent on Rashford for Raphinha at half-time, perhaps in order to save the Brazilian from a potential red card. "A lot of the time, they don't try to do anything apart from too many fouls, in my opinion, but we managed it well... and the important thing is we got the three points," Torres said. Javi Munoz lashed a volley inches wide early in the second half as Getafe threatened for the first time. Rashford created Barcelona's third, zipping inside from the right flank and unselfishly cutting the ball back for Olmo to finish. Barcelona travel to face promoted side Real Oviedo on Thursday, with Real Madrid visiting Levante on Tuesday. — AFP

SPORTS

TENNIS



Team World player Taylor Fritz celebrates after winning a point against Team Europe player Carlos Alcaraz in the Laver Cup at Chase Center. —Imagn Images

FRITZ SIZZLES ON FINAL DAY AS TEAM WORLD LAND THIRD LAVER CUP TITLE

SAN FRANCISCO, United States: Taylor Fritz held off Alexander Zverev 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) to seal Team World’s triumph in the Laver Cup on Sunday as two wins for Carlos Alcaraz on the final day proved too little for Team Europe.

Fritz fired a backhand volley winner on his first match point to give Team World a 15-9 victory over Europe in the global tennis event, sparking jubilant celebrations from his teammates and World captain Andre Agassi at Chase Center — home of the NBA’s Golden State Warriors.

“The energy from the team, it just feels the moments of winning feel so much better, the moments of losing feel so much worse because you’re doing it for all these guys,” Fritz said.

Fritz battles past Zverev in final match to seal 15-9 win

“It just fires me up so much,” added the fifth-ranked American, who had beaten Alcaraz on Saturday when Team World swept all four matches to seize a 9-3 lead.

Team Europe fight back on last day but come up short

Fritz had raced through the opening set against a weary-looking Zverev.

Alcaraz sparkles in singles and doubles

The German stepped it up in the second set, but he was down a break and trailing 4-3 before he finally mustered his first break points of the night.

Yannick Noah. A quick hold from Zverev left Fritz serving to stay in the set.

He held to love and they battled to the tiebreaker, where Fritz took a 3-0 lead only for Zverev to win three straight points before Fritz won four of the final five.

Alcaraz, fresh off his sixth Grand Slam title at the US Open, had kept Europe’s title defense alive with a blistering 6-2, 6-1 victory over Argentina’s Francisco Cerundolo.

Alcaraz and Casper Ruud had sliced Europe’s deficit with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 doubles victory over Reilly Opelka and Alex Michelsen to open Sunday’s action.

But Australian world number eight Alex De Minaur then beat Czech Jakub Mensik 6-3, 6-4 to push Team World’s lead to 12-6, with 13 points needed to claim the Cup and each match on Sunday worth three points. — AFP



Team World’s Alex de Minaur, captain Andre Agassi, players Jenson Brooksby, Reilly Opelka, Taylor Fritz, Alex Michelsen, Joao Fonseca, vice-captain Patrick Rafter and player Francisco Cerundulo celebrate with the Laver Cup trophy after defeating Team Europe at the Laver Cup. — Imagn Images



Arsenal’s Gabriel Martinelli celebrates scoring their first goal against Manchester City. — Reuters

Arsenal late show denies Man City, Villa still winless

GABRIEL Martinelli’s 93rd minute equaliser saved Arsenal’s Premier League title bid from a damaging defeat to Manchester City, while Aston Villa remain winless after a limp 1-1 draw at 10-man Sunderland.

The Gunners were heading to a second defeat in five Premier League games due to Erling Haaland’s early strike on the counter-attack for City.

Martinelli came off the bench to score for the second time in a week to salvage a 1-1 draw, but both sides lost more ground to Premier League leaders Liverpool.

Arsenal went second, five points behind the champions, while City are eight points off the top in ninth.

“Very disappointed not to win,” said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta said. “I think we played better than last year when we beat them (5-1).”

Arteta’s men had not conceded from open play in their first five Premier League and Champions League games this season, but were opened up on nine minutes by the scintillating form of arguably the world’s best striker.

Haaland started the move deep inside his own half with a lay-off to Tijjani Reijnders and then sprinted upfield to receive the Dutch international’s pass before coolly slotting beyond David Raya.

The Norwegian already has 13 goals for club and country in just eight games this season.

At the other end, City are reaping immediate dividends from the signing of giant Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Noni Madueke’s powerful near post strike was repelled by Donnarumma in what was Arsenal’s best attempt in a flat first-half performance.

Mikel Arteta threw on the creative talents of Bukayo Saka and Eberechi Eze at the start



Aston Villa’s Matty Cash in action as Sunderland’s Wilson Isidor scores their first goal. — Reuters

of the second period.

Eze tested Donnarumma once more but the Gunners struggled to break down City’s massed ranks of defence, with Guardiola even sacrificing Haaland and Phil Foden in the second half to bolster his back line.

However, that gamble backfired when Martinelli galloped onto Eze’s ball over the top and looped a fantastic finish over Donnarumma.

“We don’t try to be like this but when the opponent is better we defend deeper and counter-attack,” said Guardiola.

VILLA LOSE ‘IDENTITY’ Villa’s rise over recent years under the tutelage of Unai Emery has ground to a halt as they remain in the bottom three with just three points from their opening five games.

Emery’s men could barely have asked for a better opportunity to end their wait for victory after Sunderland defender Reinildo Mandava was shown a red card on 33 minutes for kicking out at Matty Cash.

Villa had failed to score in their previous four league games but did finally break that drought when Cash tried his luck from long range and Sunderland goalkeeper Robin Roefs was deceived by the power and swerve on the full-back’s strike.

The lead lasted just eight minutes, though,

as Wilson Isidor pounced on Granit Xhaka’s header forwards for his third goal in as many games at the Stadium of Light in the Premier League.

“It should have been easier to take advantage (against 10 men) but we were not playing with our identity, with the ideas we have been building in the last three years,” said Emery.

Sunderland have made a great start to their quest to end the run of promoted sides being relegated straight back to the Championship.

The Black Cats sit seventh after losing only one of their opening five fixtures.

Newcastle are also struggling for goals in the absence of the departed Alexander Isak.

Eddie Howe’s men have drawn all three of their away games this season 0-0 and would have been happy just to come away from Bournemouth with a point after a short turnaround from their 2-1 Champions League defeat to Barcelona on Thursday. — AFP

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS ON SUNDAY:	
Bournemouth 0	Newcastle 0
Sunderland 1 (Isidor 75)	Aston Villa 1 (Cash 67)
Arsenal 1 (Martinelli 90+3)	Manchester City 1 (Haaland 9)
Played Saturday	
Brighton 2 (Minteh 8, Ayari 31)	Tottenham 2 (Richarlison 43, Van Hecke 82-og)
Burnley 1 (Anthony 20)	Nottingham Forest 1 (Williams 2)
Fulham 3 (Iwobi 38, Wilson 40, Pinnock 50-og)	Brentford 1 (Damsgaard 20)
Liverpool 2 (Gravenbergh 10, Ekitike 29)	Everton 1 (Gueye 58)
Manchester United 2 (Fernandes 14, Casemiro 37)	Chelsea 1 (Chalobah 80)
West Ham 1 (Bowen 49)	Crystal Palace 2 (Mateta 37, Mitchell 68)
Wolves 1 (Krejci 8)	Leeds 3 (Calvert-Lewin 31, Stach 39, Okafor 45)



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
5,098.805

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$68.93
BRENT \$66.20
LIGHT \$62.37



SHORTTAKES



Deposits in commercial banks across all GCC countries rose by the end of 2024 compared to the previous year. — ONA

GCC BANKS’ ASSETS REACH \$3.5 TRILLION

MUSCAT: The total assets of commercial banks operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries rose by 10% by the end of 2024, reaching approximately \$3.5 trillion, compared to the asset size at the end of 2023, according to the latest statistics released by the Gulf Statistical Centre.

The statistics indicate that the total deposits in the commercial banks operating within the GCC reached \$2.1 trillion by the end of 2024, reflecting a growth rate of 9.6% compared to the end of 2023.

Deposits in commercial banks across all GCC countries rose by the end of 2024 compared to the previous year. Similarly, the total value of loans extended by the commercial banks in the GCC countries reached \$2.1 trillion by the end of 2024, reflecting a growth rate of 9.9% compared to 2023.

The proportion of loans granted to the private sector from total loans in the GCC region reached 80.7%.

The percentage of non-performing loans (NPLs) from the total loans decreased in most GCC countries during the period from 2020 to 2024, although this varied from one country to another.

Additionally, the loan-to-deposit ratio varied significantly across the GCC countries, ranging between 125% and 66%.

Meanwhile, the capital adequacy ratios in the GCC countries continued to exceed the minimum regulatory requirements set by Basel III by a significant margin. In 2024, these ratios ranged between 32% and 17.8%. According to Basel III guidelines, the minimum regulatory capital adequacy ratio banks must maintain is 8%.

Furthermore, the net profits of the commercial banks operating in the GCC countries experienced significant growth over the past four years, surpassing pre-COVID-19 levels. — ONA

Youth Development Forum 2025 concludes in Taqah

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 22

THE 2nd Youth Development Forum in the Wilayat of Taqah concluded on Monday, September 22, 2025, under the auspices of Shaikh Tariq bin Khalid al Hinai, Wali of Taqah. The forum was organised by the Office of the Wali in partnership with a number of public and private entities under the theme, “Empower Today... Lead Tomorrow”, as part of an institutional pathway to support Omani youth and develop their skills in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

More than 160 participants — including jobseekers, entrepreneurs and employees — took part in the forum, which featured accredited training programmes focusing on artificial intelligence and its applications in business and services, cybersecurity and the creation of secure digital environments, as well as aligning youth skills with national economic priorities under Oman Vision 2040. The event also hosted a youth exhibition showcasing innovative projects and visual presentations that highlighted young people's capabilities and their contributions to modern business and sustainable development.

The activities concluded with a dialogue session titled “Empowerment and Entrepreneurship: A Dialogue for Tomorrow”. Representatives from the Directorate General of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in Dhofar, Oman Development Bank and the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development joined local entrepreneurs to discuss practical challenges to market entry, financing opportunities, fostering a culture of innovation and the role of entrepreneurial



Shaikh Tariq Al-Hinai, Wali of Taqah, presided over the conclusion of the 2nd Youth Development Forum on Monday

A representative of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dhofar Governorate underlined that youth represent the true wealth and the foundation of both the present and the future, noting that the government attaches great importance to nurturing their potential and meeting their aspirations.

initiatives in diversifying the economy and creating quality opportunities for youth.

Asma al Maashani, from the Department of Planning and Wilayat Development and one of the forum organisers, said the determination and persistence shown by young people to develop skills and build capacity for the benefit of society and the nation provides strong motivation to continue delivering impactful initiatives. She affirmed that sustaining this approach will contribute to achieving Oman Vision 2040 and enable the Sultanate of Oman to advance confidently into the ranks of developed nations through the efforts of its conscious and proactive youth.

A representative of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dhofar underlined that youth represent the true wealth and the foundation of both the present and the future, noting that the government attaches great importance to nurturing their potential and meeting their aspirations.

He added that the forum addressed key themes such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and the integration of national efforts to reinforce Oman Vision 2040, while also providing a platform for knowledge exchange and the launch of future initiatives that strengthen youth presence in vital sectors. The Chamber, he stressed, is keen to remain an active partner in investing in youth capabilities by supporting initiatives, implementing advanced training programmes, linking youth with the labour market, creating enabling environments for entrepreneurship and empowering small and medium enterprises, which form a cornerstone of the national economy.

The Chamber's representative concluded by stressing the importance of turning ideas into tangible projects that contribute to building a knowledge- and innovation-based economy, expressing appreciation to the organisers and participants for the success of the forum.

Dutch hydrogen alliance advances Oman demo project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

Holland Hydrogen Hub (H3), an alliance of Dutch businesses active across the hydrogen value chain, has announced the launch of a pilot initiative in partnership with SOHAR Port and Freezone to assess the feasibility of producing green hydrogen using alternative technologies.

According to Marcel Kooter, Co-Founder of H3, the demonstration project is being implemented in collaboration with Hydrom, the orchestrator of Oman's green hydrogen sector and OQ, the state-owned integrated energy group.

The initiative is designed to showcase how a suite of advanced technologies can produce, store and transport hydrogen more efficiently and sustainably.

An update on the project — first announced during the State Visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Netherlands in April — was outlined in an interview hosted by Dr Nasser al Rizeiqi,

Sustainability Expert at the Oman Net Zero Centre.

The interview formed part of The Energy Talks series leading up to the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman in December.

Kooter explained that the project is centred on the deployment of novel solid oxide electrolyser, which operate at high temperatures and thereby enhance efficiency by drawing heat from alternative sources rather than electricity.

For the transport of hydrogen, the initiative employs liquid organic hydrogen carriers (LOHC), which enable safe storage and transportation through an additional thermal process.

He noted that electrolysis at temperatures of around 1,000°C allows waste heat to be utilised, reducing electricity consumption by about 30 per cent for the same hydrogen output. This, in turn, lowers overall production costs by reducing the scale of renewable infrastructure required. Furthermore, by integrating



Marcel Kooter, Co-founder of the Holland Hydrogen Alliance, speaking to Dr Nasser al Rizeiqi of the Oman Net Zero Centre

different technologies, the project can also channel waste heat into water desalination, creating a highly efficient ecosystem for hydrogen production and transportation.

He added: “In May, we signed an MOU with Hydrom to take the project to the next stage, which basically is completing a feasibility

study, which we have now started and which we hope to complete by the end of the year.

We are quite confident that we will be able to demonstrate the economics of the project before we go to the next stage”.

SOHAR Port and Freezone, with Port of Rotterdam as a joint-venture partner, plays a pivotal

role in the initiative. Green hydrogen produced in Suhar will be shipped as LOHC to the Netherlands and wider Europe through Rotterdam. If progress stays on track, the first shipments are expected by 2028.

A number of technology pioneers are involved in the demonstration. They include: Desolenator, a Dutch startup behind the world's first solar thermal desalination solution for producing drinking or ultrapure water sustainably; Elestor BV, showcasing its advanced hydrogen flow battery for optimised energy storage; Bosal and SolydEra Group, highlighting high-efficiency SOEC electrolysis for superior hydrogen production; HyET Hydrogen BV, presenting its efficient electrochemical hydrogen compression solution; Voyex, developer of proprietary LOHC technology for safe, scalable transport; and SoluForce, offering high-pressure Flexible Composite Pipe (FCP/RTP) systems for hydrogen transport.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Through this partnership, Asyad Group will help Lahunna Oman launch Wijdan’s inaugural cohort across the Sultanate of Oman, providing participants with real-world career perspectives and development opportunities.

LAHUNNA OMAN AND ASYAD LAUNCH WIJDAN FOR OMANI WOMEN

MUSCAT: Lahunna Oman and Asyad Group have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to sponsor Wijdan, a pioneering programme supporting young Omani women in self-discovery and professional growth. Through this partnership, Asyad Group will help Lahunna Oman launch Wijdan’s inaugural cohort across the Sultanate of Oman, providing participants with real-world career perspectives and development opportunities.

“At Asyad Group, we are proud to sponsor initiatives that invest in Omani talent and empower the next generation of leaders”, said Leyan al Maawali, Group Chief Legal Officer at Asyad Group.

“By supporting Wijdan, we are nurturing women’s potential and creating capable individuals who can thrive across diverse fields, reinforcing Oman’s position as a leading logistics hub”. Wijdan offers a three-phase journey combining online courses, short videos, weekly assignments, group coaching, peer-to-peer learning and community engagement. The programme equips women with practical tools to develop clarity, resilience and direction, enabling them to navigate their paths with confidence and purpose.

“Wijdan is about building skills and creating space for women to discover their potential and excel in life”, said Shatha al Maskiry, Founder of Lahunna Oman.

“Asyad’s support allows us to expand this transformative experience to young women across Oman in its first year”. The partnership supports national priorities under Oman Vision 2040, promoting human capital development, inclusive growth and women’s active contribution to the nation’s progress.

Meaning “deep awareness” in Arabic, Wijdan embodies clarity and confidence that emerge when women are given space to reflect, grow and move forward with purpose.

The programme meets participants at all stages, whether entering the workforce or navigating a career shift.

Founded in 2020, Lahunna is an independent initiative aimed at inspiring women locally, regionally and internationally. Lahunna Oman has delivered multiple women-centric initiatives, including Sidrah, Wijdan, Rialy and Ma7al’ha, in partnership with Outward Bound Oman, City Centre Muscat, Mubashir, Visa and Bank Muscat.

Save today, secure tomorrow with BankDhofar’s retirement plan

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second-largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman by branch network, is empowering individuals to secure their financial future with its Retirement Saving Plan. Designed for Omani nationals and expatriate residents, this flexible plan allows customers to build a substantial retirement fund with confidence and ease.

Offering interest rates of up to 5% on deposits, the plan provides a reliable way to create a sustainable safety net for life after retirement. Customers can start saving with a minimum monthly deposit of just RO 10, making it accessible to a broad range of savers, regardless of their current financial situation.

Flexibility is a key feature of the



Offering interest rates of up to 5% on deposits, the plan provides a reliable way to create a sustainable safety net for life after retirement.

YANGWANG U9 Xtreme sets world speed record

YANGWANG, the luxury sub-brand of global new-energy vehicle leader BYD, has set a new global production-car top-speed record of 496.22 km/h at the ATP Automotive Testing Papenburg track in Germany.

The record was achieved on September 14, 2025 with the U9 Xtreme hypercar, surpassing both its previous EV benchmark and the 490.484 km/h of the fastest petrol-powered model, establishing the U9 Xtreme as the world’s fastest production car. This milestone combines unmatched power and speed with zero emissions, showcasing the future of electric mobility.

Originally known as the U9 Track/Special Edition, the U9 Xtreme (U9X) builds on the U9’s existing architecture with several key upgrades: a 1200V ultra-high-voltage powertrain (up from 800V), a Blade Battery with a 30C discharge rate, four ultra-high-speed motors producing over 3000PS, track-level semi-slick tyres and a revised DiSus-X suspension tuned for extreme circuit performance.

BYD Executive Vice President Stella Li said, “YANGWANG is a brand that does not recognise the impossible. The U9X is a result of our relentless focus on innovation. My thanks go to the entire team and to Marc Basseng for his skill in making this record possible.

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It is remarkable that the fastest production car in the world is now electric”. The record-setting run was driven by Marc Basseng, a German track specialist with extensive sports-car and endurance racing experience.

He said, “The U9 Xtreme’s performance is incredible. Unlike a combustion engine, the electric motors provide consistent power with no load changes, allowing me to focus completely on the track”. The U9 Xtreme is available in a limited series of 30 units, embodying YANGWANG’s ethos of

pushing limits and exploring the unknown. Its name reflects extreme performance and innovation.

By setting this new speed record, YANGWANG redefines the sustainable hypercar, combining BYD’s innovation and commitment to sustainability with unmatched driving performance and safety.

In Oman, YANGWANG vehicles are distributed by World Auto Business LLC. Follow Yangwang Oman on LinkedIn @Yangwang-oman and Instagram @Yangwang_oman. For availability or test-drive inquiries, call 72225925.

Renaissance Services supports ESO’s charity run

MUSCAT: Renaissance Services has proudly announced the participation of its employees and volunteers in the Environment Society of Oman’s (ESO) 4km charity run, held on September 20, 2025, at Al Qurum Beach, Muscat.

Organised in collaboration with Guinness World Record holder Fahad al Abri and under the theme “Strides for Nature”, the event raised funds to support ESO’s conservation and awareness programmes across Oman. Several Renaissance employees and their families joined the run, which attracted a strong turnout. The company’s involvement highlights its continued commitment to sustainability, community engagement and environmental stewardship. “ESO’s Charity Run reflects the values of



The company’s involvement highlights its continued commitment to sustainability, community engagement and environmental stewardship.

collaboration, wellbeing and environmental responsibility that Renaissance champions. We are proud to support this initiative and it was inspiring to see our employees volunteer and contribute their energy to such an important cause”, said Andrew Dawson, Chief Executive Officer, Renaissance Services.

Listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange, Renaissance Services is a leading provider of integrated facilities management and accommodation solutions in Oman, with a growing presence across the GCC. The company maintains high standards of governance, health, safety and social responsibility, aligning its activities with Oman Vision 2040 and international ESG best practices.

plan, allowing customers to choose a duration from one to ten years to suit their retirement goals and life stage.

This adaptability ensures the plan can be tailored to meet a variety of needs, providing a clear pathway to a more secure and comfortable post-retirement life.

The plan is available to individuals aged 18 and above, helping both young professionals and those closer to retirement take control of their financial planning.

Commenting on the plan, Amjad Iqbal al Lawati, Chief Retail Banking Officer at BankDhofar, said: “We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to build a financially secure future.

With competitive interest rates

and flexible terms, our retirement plan makes it easier than ever for Omani nationals and expatriates to take control of their savings and plan for the future they deserve. Our goal is to provide a stress-free, practical solution for long-term financial security”.

The BankDhofar Retirement Saving Plan continues to be a reliable, high-yield option for individuals seeking financial stability after retirement.

It reinforces the bank’s mission to deliver comprehensive financial solutions that meet the evolving needs of its diverse customer base.

For more information about the Retirement Saving Plan, visit your nearest BankDhofar branch or go to [www.bankdhofar.com](#).

BUSINESS

SELECTIVEGROWTH



The greenback hovered near levels seen before last week's Fed decision. — Reuters

DOLLAR EDGES UP
AHEAD OF DELUGE
OF FED SPEAKERS

The dollar rose slightly on Monday as traders looked ahead to a series of speeches from Federal Reserve officials this week that could provide further clues on the US rate outlook, following the central bank's resumption of its easing cycle last week.

The greenback hovered near levels seen before last week's Fed decision. Analysts said current pricing reflects the central bank's focus on the labour market as the key driver of policy.

Last week's US economic data showed a decline in new applications for unemployment benefits, reversing the prior week's increase. "The lack of significant data until Friday's core Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation release leaves investors reassessing Fed rate cuts and the path ahead", said Bob Savage, head of markets macro strategy at BNY Mellon.

Over 18 Fed events are planned this week, including speeches by Chair Jerome Powell, Cleveland Fed's Beth Hammack and St Louis Fed's Alberto Musalem, noted for their hawkish views. New Fed Governor Stephen Miran defended his dissent for a steeper 50-basis-point rate cut, promising a detailed argument later on Monday. Analysts suggested Miran's move aimed to reinforce Fed unity and institutional independence.

US President Donald Trump criticised the Fed, urging more aggressive rate cuts. The dollar was up 0.05% at 97.66 against a basket of currencies, while the euro was flat at \$1.1748. The yen slipped 0.10% to 148.06 per dollar. Sterling fell to a two-week low of \$1.3453, pressured by UK fiscal concerns. The Australian dollar dropped to \$0.6575, its lowest since September 8, while the yuan strengthened slightly to 7.1136 per dollar, supported by easing Sino-US trade tensions and unchanged Chinese benchmark lending rates. — Reuters

EURO ZONE
CONSUMERS
CUT
SPENDING
ON TARIFF
FEARS

FRANKFURT: Euro zone consumers have changed their spending habits in anticipation of US tariffs, moving away from American products and reducing discretionary spending, a European Central Bank (ECB) study published on Monday found.

Consumers, supported by savings accumulated since the pandemic, have been cautious in making purchases as uncertainty over tariffs affected key parts of the bloc's economy.

"In response to tariff-related concerns, consumers are altering their



The ECB noted that high-income households were more likely to avoid US goods, while lower-income households were more inclined to cut overall spending. — Reuters

spending habits in notable ways", the ECB said in its Economic Bulletin. Around 26% of survey respondents reported switching away from US products, while 16% said they had reduced overall spending.

The ECB noted that high-income households were more likely to avoid US goods, while lower-income households were more inclined to cut overall spending. Financial literacy also influenced these decisions. Most spending cuts affected discretionary items — Reuters

Oil rises as tensions flicker
in Europe and Middle East

OIL prices gained on Monday, supported by geopolitical tensions in Europe and the Middle East, although prospects of increased supply and concerns over trade tariffs on global fuel demand weighed on markets.

Brent crude futures rose 45 cents, or 0.67%, to \$67.13 a barrel by 07:01 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for October was at \$63.15 a barrel, up 47 cents, or 0.75%. The October WTI contract expires on Monday; the more active November contract rose 43 cents, or 0.69%, to \$62.83 a barrel.

"Reports over the weekend that Russia was threatening over the Polish border have reminded traders of ongoing risks to European energy security from the northeast", said Michael McCarthy, CEO of investment platform Moomoo Australia and New Zealand.

Polish and allied aircraft were deployed on Saturday to ensure the safety of Polish airspace after Russia launched air strikes targeting western Ukraine near the border with Poland, the Nato-member country's armed forces said. The deployment followed three Russian military jets violating Estonia's airspace on Friday and a Russian plane entering neutral airspace over the Baltic Sea on Sunday, according to Germany's air force. The United Nations Security Council is due to meet on Monday over Estonia's accusations.

Meanwhile, Ukraine stepped up drone attacks on Russian energy infrastructure, while US President



Reports over the weekend that Russia was threatening over the Polish border have reminded traders of ongoing risks to European energy security from the northeast

MICHAEL MCCARTHY
CEO of Moomoo Australia and New Zealand.



Brent and WTI settled down more than 1% on Friday as worries about large supplies and declining demand outweighed expectations that the US Federal Reserve's first interest-rate cut of the year would boost consumption. — Reuters

Donald Trump urged the European Union to halt Russian oil and gas purchases. In the Middle East, four Western nations recognised a Palestinian state, prompting a furious response from Israel and adding to regional jitters.

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Iraq increased oil exports following the gradual unwinding

of voluntary production cuts under an OPEC+ agreement, the country's state oil marketer SOMO said. Iraq's oil exports averaged 3.38 million barrels per day in August, with September expected between 3.4 million and 3.45 million bpd.

"Rising inventories over the past six months confirm that supply has been outpacing demand", said Tim Evans in the newsletter Evans on Energy. "Strategic reserves accumulated by China and the US have helped absorb the surplus, but added inventories still limit near-term upside for prices". — Reuters

EPSA extended after hydrocarbons found in Oman's Block 47

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 22

The partnership of Italian-based energy giant ENI and OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP) of the Sultanate of Oman has been granted a further extension of Phase 1 of its Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) covering Block 47 in Oman's Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The six-month extension — the second such consecutive action —

comes in the wake of hydrocarbons encountered during the drilling of a key well in the 8,524 km² licence.

Publicly-traded OQEP, which has a 10% participating interest in the licence, said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Monday that the latest six-month extension extends Phase 1 to March 24, 2025. Under an earlier extension, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals extended the validity of Phase 1 from March 24, 2025, when it was set to originally expire.



The Najid-1 exploratory well encountered 'good gas shows', underscoring the Block's prospectivity (Picture for illustration only)

The extension enables operator ENI, with a 90% interest, to "conclude post-well technical studies and formulate a firm strategy for Block 47", Mahmoud al Hashmi, Acting CEO — OQEP, noted in the disclosure.

It follows the drilling of the Najid-1 exploration well that reached a depth of 4,788 metres by late July, yielding "good gas shows" in the Natih reservoir interval. An extensive post-well analysis of well data is now progressing, he added.

IT SECTOR

Visa fee hike rattles India's IT Sector



India's \$283 billion IT sector faces an overhaul after Trump imposed a \$100,000 fee on new H-1B visas.

With 57% of industry revenue tied to the US, firms may shift delivery offshore, expand global capability centres and reprice deals.

Economists warn of higher costs, margin pressure and ripple effects across innovation and services trade.

— Reuters

TRADE TALKS

Türkiye ends retaliatory US tariffs



Türkiye has lifted retaliatory tariffs on US imports, imposed in 2018, as President Erdogan prepares to meet Donald Trump in Washington.

The move signals improved relations and supports Ankara's goal of boosting annual trade with the US to \$100 billion.

Trump said he expects new trade and military agreements during Erdogan's visit this week. — Reuters

AI SECTOR

Nvidia, Abu Dhabi launch AI & robotics lab



Abu Dhabi's Technology Innovation Institute and Nvidia have opened a joint AI and robotics lab, the first of its kind in the Middle East.

The hub will deploy Nvidia's Thor chip for advanced robotics and explore applications in energy, climate and genomics. The initiative underscores the UAE's multi-billion-dollar push into artificial intelligence and technological leadership. — Reuters

OPINION

Protect your privacy online



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is
the founder of
Knowledge Oman

LAST week my article revolved around the idea that your privacy is on sale (for free) on the information superhighway. I shared a real-world story as example from a victim/user who had, on an evening, searched for an item to buy using a mobile phone and then was surprised the next day to find offers from a number of suppliers with special promotions on the same. I shared the reasons behind the scenario and explained how data brokers sell our privacy. We unknowingly sell our data for free while they make millions if not billions of Omani rials out of our data. Unfortunately, there is not much one can do as that is the basis of attaining a better customised and personalised user experience per se. Let me focus today on sharing practical steps that you could follow in order to protect your privacy online. The world is getting smaller, thanks to the connected world we are living in. You can communicate, see and almost experience (but not yet feel) everything around you via a smart mobile phone. The microphones, cameras, sensors and sheer volume of specialised apps work together to spy and alternatively provide you a personalised experience. Convenience is incomparable, yet our privacy remains at stake, from the corporations that store, has access and sell our data. It has been reported that over

442 million people were impacted by data breaches worldwide. Pew research, an American think tank centre in Washington, reported that 79% of adults feel concerned about how companies use their data. Furthermore, the centre reported that most of the adults admit they do not take consistent action to protect their data as well. Clearly due to many not knowing the consequences, while others do not care due the benefits attained from the same (eg customisation, personalisation etc). While data privacy regulation exist today, GDPR in Europe and CCPA in California, yet these law do not really offer comprehensive protection for the companies continue to find ways to break the law (and/or push the boundaries) because attaining our personal data is too important for it is too profitable for their business engagements (and of course shareholders value). There are a number of activities that one does that makes them lose their privacy. Two of the most common ways are the oversharing of personal data via social media, from birthdays, holiday, travel plans, family photos, etc. And secondly, the kind of permission people allow mobile applications to have ie access to camera, microphone and/or contacts. People share their data without realising the impact of the same. The good is that one does not need to be a tech expert in order to protect their privacy. Simple yet consistent steps along with being

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vigilant is all that is required to protect ones privacy. First, ensure that your social media settings are intact (by tightening on what is shared and who can see/view). This can be done by reviewing who can see your posts, turn off location sharing unless it is necessary and think twice before sharing personal information as shared above. Furthermore, be very selective on the kind of apps that you are installing. Also, delete those you don't use and specifically that require permissions from your device (as mentioned above). Protect your browsing with privacy-focused browsers or tracker-blocking extensions and consider a VPN when using public Wi-Fi. Last but not least, do a search online for your name and see what is being said and is available; and then look for tools to remove your information from data broker sites. I will try and dedicate an article in the future on some of these tools. To conclude my article this week, let me emphasise that unless you take proactive steps to protect your privacy, it will always be tagged and available for sale. Every website visit or app use, click or views, word said and messages exchanged so as places visited, are stored and leveraged as data for data brokers to make money out of you. You need to take control on what data is shared in order to decide what kind of information you have no worry of it being used (ie not a privacy concern).

Anchoring foreign direct investment by empowering the private sector

THE private sector is not a spectator in national development; it is the lead actor. Foreign direct investment delivers its full value when it meets capable local firms and turns into everyday orders, new skills and better jobs. That is the difference between a ribbon-cutting and a resilient economy. When investors find suppliers who are ready — on quality, delivery and safety — capital stays, reinvests and spreads good practice across the market. In Oman, the private sector's performance has historically been linked to government spending, but future growth requires stronger private-sector leadership supported by modern laws (such as PPP frameworks, FDI laws and dispute-resolution mechanisms) and a dynamic investment climate. Our task as a business community is practical: empower firms to deliver, make the rules and pathways clear and FDI will raise productivity, grow exports and create attractive careers for young people. The values are traditional — reliability, fair dealing, pride in workmanship — while the tools are modern: standards, data and structured finance. The global backdrop makes this focus urgent. UNCTAD estimates the headline figure for global FDI in 2024 at about \$1.51 trillion, but the real picture is softer: if you strip out volatile conduit flows through a few European hubs, FDI actually fell by roughly 11% — a second year of decline. One component, international project finance for big infrastructure, dropped a further 26% in 2024 and between 2021 and 2024 its value fell by more than 40%. While cross-border M&A recovered 14% to \$443 billion, companies also announced about \$1.3 trillion in greenfield projects — the second-highest level on record — and the number of announcements in industry edged up to more than 19,000. The signal is mixed but useful: capital is cautious, yet still active where value chains make sense and sites are ready. Regions like Africa and Southeast Asia saw gains, while Europe, China and South America faced declines. In short, competition



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A clear, pro-enterprise agenda can turn foreign investment from ceremonies into steady orders, export capacity and quality jobs — if we put private firms at the centre of delivery.

for investment is real and readiness wins. For Oman, readiness means lowering market entry barriers, improving competitiveness, ensuring contract enforcement and providing accurate, accessible investment data — factors repeatedly highlighted in investor confidence surveys. SMEs are the backbone of that readiness. The World Bank notes that small and medium enterprises account for around 90% of businesses and over half of global employment. When these firms connect to anchor investors — meeting standards, securing certifications and learning better routines — the whole economy lifts. Local suppliers shorten delivery times, reduce currency risk for buyers and keep more value circulating at home. For entrepreneurs, the prize is not a slogan; it is a first purchase order, a repeat contract and eventually an export client. That is why supplier development is not a side project. It is the main road from FDI headlines to steady revenue. Oman's In-Country Value (ICV) strategy is a good example: it mandates local content in contracts, supports SMEs, drives diversification and builds Omani workforce skills — making FDI more impactful for the domestic economy. Global examples show how empowerment works. Morocco's automotive build-out paired a clear industrial plan with hands-on supplier support, lifting exports to record levels and drawing further capacity commitments. Costa Rica has shown the power of aftercare: reinvestments expand when investors can deepen local sourcing and resolve bottlenecks quickly. Different settings, same lesson: when government and industry focus on supplier readiness, predictable rules and speed, investment grows and stays. This is not theory; it is a repeatable operating model. For Oman, supplier readiness will also depend on lowering the cost of capital for SMEs, improving access to finance and addressing gaps such as limited bank participation in projects — issues that currently constrain entrepreneurship. So what should

we do now? Start with transparent opportunity maps. For each anchor sector — energy, metals, logistics, food processing and tourism — publish ranked lists of the most purchased components and services, with plain-language specifications, expected volumes and contact points. Clarity lowers search costs for buyers and lets SMEs choose realistic targets. Then fund what matters: co-finance certifications, testing and calibration, safety and quality systems; and simple digital tools to track orders and defects. Match this with purchase-order and working-capital finance so qualified firms can accept larger jobs without cash-flow strain. Beyond these immediate measures, Oman should also channel investment into high-potential sectors such as renewable energy, creative industries, logistics and digital services — sectors with the highest international market potential. This requires forward-looking policies, stable public finances and credible development strategies that build investor trust. Next, make the interface routine. Hold regular meet-the-buyer events, keep a live supplier registry, and standardise the path from expression of interest to a pilot order. Assign aftercare teams to own these touchpoints and measure them by conversion — pilots issued, pilots becoming contracts, on-time delivery and defect rates. Put mentors on the field by asking anchors to second experienced engineers and procurement specialists to coach supplier cohorts with named mentors and clear hours. Use zones as cluster accelerators: co-locate supplier parks and shared labs; and facilitate fast customs and logistics. Close proximity shortens learning cycles, reduces defects and builds trust. Economic and industrial zones in Oman already provide this foundation and scaling them with better infrastructure and shared services can accelerate diversification while reducing dependency on oil-driven public spending. Govern for speed and measure what matters. Establish a cross-agency task force—investment

and zone authorities, labour, SME bodies and anchor firms — with a single dashboard and the mandate to clear bottlenecks weekly. Publish a simple monthly scoreboard: local procurement as a share of spend, certified suppliers, order volumes, on-time delivery, defect rates and export milestones. Tie selected incentives to outcomes — certification achieved, pilot delivered, defect rate reduced, export order secured — so funds reward diffusion, not ceremony. Then run a ninety-day pilot: three anchors, twenty high-potential suppliers, opportunity maps, a handful of co-funded certifications and pilot orders with clear quality gates. Report results and replicate quickly; momentum is a competitive advantage. At the same time, Oman must improve governance by cutting bureaucracy, strengthening e-government and revising private-sector structures to make them more competitive. Coupled with investment in skills, research and entrepreneurship, this will create a long-term attractive business climate. If we act with discipline, the gains will arrive quickly: deeper local sourcing, stronger SME revenues, more young people in good private-sector jobs, and steady growth in non-oil exports. Most importantly, investors will see a reliable machine that turns capital into capability and capability into commerce — the hallmark of a confident private-sector economy. This approach looks forward while honouring familiar values: build, certify, deliver, improve and repeat. Our grandparents traded on trust and performance; today we add data and standards to scale that ethic for a global market. The private sector is ready to lead and the public sector is ready to enable. On that basis, we invite investors to partner for the long term — and we commit, together, to deliver. This is not only about FDI — it is about building a sustainable economy where innovation, entrepreneurship and private-sector dynamism drive long-term prosperity. This is the moment to act with confidence.

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FASHION



Paul Costelloe nods to 1960s, broken dolls inspire Bora Aksu at London Fashion Week

IRISH DESIGNER Paul Costelloe took fashionistas back to 1960s California while Turkish-born Bora Aksu celebrated cracks and imperfections at London Fashion Week on Friday.

Setting the scene on Rodeo Drive in 1967, Costelloe opened his “Boulevard of Dreams” spring-summer 2026 presentation with short feminine creations in pale pink, yellow and blue. There were jackets with pointy collars or bows, embellished minis and shift dresses. All were paired with matching platform shoes. Models wore floral and frilly designs that nodded to 1960s fashion, including plenty of short dresses as well as cut-out gowns.

“It’s a very happy collection. It very much reflects California in the late sixties”, Costelloe said. “The inspiration has been from the ‘Valley of the Dolls’... It’s very much West Coast of America and it’s very chic, very fresh, very exciting”. Aksu said that this season he turned to his own collection of broken dolls for inspiration. Models wore dresses embellished with layers, embroidery and plenty of lace trimmings.

Aksu put frills on sleeves, large shiny sequins on skirts and see-through gloves and intricate florals on frocks.

The looks were layered: tiered dresses or jackets over long blouses that hung over skirts. Models also wore bonnet hats tied under the neck and adorned with bows or sequins.

“I feel like we are like the dolls... we have... our hearts broken or we go through things. But... we still kind of survive and then it becomes part of us”, Aksu told Reuters.

“With the dolls, with all these cracks and defects, I was thinking, I want to keep this and I bring it to... life again. So it’s not about covering their cracks but it’s about embracing them”.

London Fashion Week, which kicked off on Thursday evening and runs until Monday, is the second leg of the spring-summer 2026 catwalk calendar, which began in New York and then heads to Milan and Paris.

On the programme are 157 designers and organisations, including 50 catwalk shows and a mix of emerging as well as established designers like Erdem, Roksanda and fashion giant Burberry. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



FESTIVAL

Participants in traditional Bavarian clothes march during the traditional costume parade during the 190th edition of the Oktoberfest festival in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

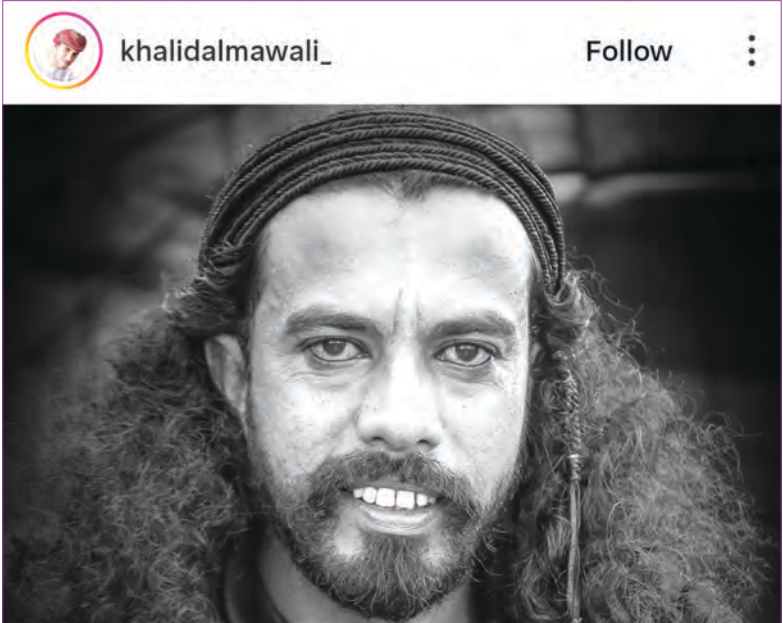
Dexter Holland, lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist for the Offspring, performs during the second day of the iHeartRadio Music Festival at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP



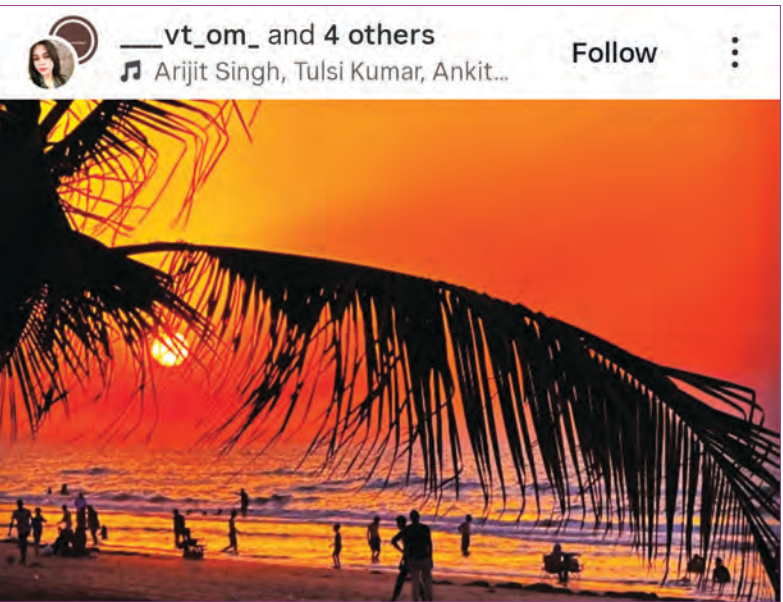
FILM

US actor Arnold Schwarzenegger (L) and comedian Jay Leno chat during the ceremony to unveil the Star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame to honour journalist Chris Wallace in Hollywood. — AFP

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Berlin Film Festival plans 1990s retrospective



THE BERLIN International Film Festival is dedicating its retrospective at the next film festival to the 1990s, the organisers announced on Wednesday.

One of the most influential decades in recent film history will take centre stage in the retrospective named “Lost in the 90s”, the Berlinale organisers said.

According to festival director Tricia Tuttle, the starting point for the retrospective is Berlin after the fall of the Berlin Wall — a time of upheaval and new beginnings, both nationally and internationally.

Directors such as Ulrike Ottinger, Harun Farocki, Werner Herzog, Richard Linklater and John Singleton were named.

The retrospective film series is curated by Heleen Gerritsen, the new artistic

director of the Deutsche Kinemathek, the German film archive and film museum located in Berlin and her team.

The next Berlinale is scheduled to take place from February 12 to 22.

The Berlin International Film Festival, or Berlinale, is renowned for showcasing groundbreaking films and discovering new talent. Highlights include premieres of acclaimed international films and award-winning performances, notably the Golden Bear winners. The festival’s focus on diverse, socially relevant stories often sparks global conversations. Celebrated directors and actors attend, creating buzz and media attention. Recent years saw a surge in environmentally and socially conscious films, reflecting current global issues. — dpa



Apprentices breathe new life into historic Savile Row



BENEATH the old-world exterior of a tailor’s on London’s famed Savile Row, the workshop where the magic happens is more youthful than ever as aspiring coatmakers vie for competitive apprenticeships.

The sartorial street known for dressing the world’s elite, from royalty to spies, is celebrating its trainees at a showcase coinciding with London Fashion Week, which runs until Monday.

“In the last year and a half, we’ve seen a big surge... of people applying for apprenticeships”, said Simon Cundey, managing director and owner of Henry Poole & Co, one of the oldest bespoke tailors on Savile Row.

For years, apprenticeships at the street’s exclusive houses were informal and even unwelcome, with master tailors reluctant to share the tricks of their trade with newcomers.

But with the rise of ready-to-wear fashion, tailors on the Row came together two decades ago to formalise an apprenticeship programme that would ensure the craft gets passed down between generations.

Over 100 people have graduated from the Savile Row Bespoke Association (SRBA) Apprenticeship Scheme since it launched in 2007.

Apprentices spend between two and six years being trained by a Savile Row house to specialise in making coats or jackets, trousers or cutting before being appraised by a panel of master tailors.

While the UK’s heritage crafts are increasingly considered at risk of dying out, Savile Row retailers say

the scheme has reinvigorated the tailors, maintaining the quality and reputation of their craft.

When Jinny Seals, 45, joined Henry Poole in 2002-2003, the average age in the workshop was around 55 and she was only one of three women.

“There was a bit of a drought of apprentices”, the veteran coatmaker said. “However, now ... they’ve got piles of CVs for people wanting apprenticeships”. And “there’s just as many girls as boys”, Seals added. “Things have changed a lot in a relatively short period of time”.

— New lifestyle — In the Henry Poole workshop below the shop floor, hip-hop music blasts on the radio and trainees and mentors work side by side, heads bent over sewing machines and sheaves of cotton and wool.

There are three apprentices at the tailor’s, with two more poised to start.

Wendy Berberi, 22, joined Henry Poole during the pandemic when she was 16 and looking for a career in fashion.

“I didn’t really think it’d be Savile Row because it is mainly menswear. But when I did start here, I really, really enjoyed it”, said Berberi, who completed her apprenticeship this year.

For the newly qualified Savile Row tailor, an apprenticeship makes sense because “you’ve got to be right next to a person to learn it”.

“I do feel like apprenticeships are starting to become the way forward in certain industries”, she said, adding that she enjoyed learning the “old-school methods” and “keeping the tradition going”.

According to Cundey, “there’s a

high demand now for a different way of life” since the Covid-19 pandemic, with people turning away from office jobs and looking for stable careers making things with their hands.

“Learning a craft... it’s a safeguarding job because you only tend to get better as you get older”, said Cundey.

— Slow fashion — A few shops down from Henry Poole, Dege & Skinner has four apprentices, with a fifth starting in September.

It is the “most ever at any one time”, managing director William Skinner said, adding all of them will be women.

The Golden Shears Award, which celebrates tailoring students, marks its 50th anniversary this year, with Savile Row houses displaying the works of past winners in their windows during London Fashion Week.

The London Academy of Bespoke (LAB), located on Savile Row, last year launched a pre-apprenticeship course for budding tailors.

“There was quite a lot of sustainability in mind” and talk about “slow fashion”, said Seals about the courses she has taught at LAB.

A “kickback” against fast fashion and the environmental consequences of the waste it produces also lies behind interest in the LAB course and apprenticeships, added Seals.

“It was interesting to see that people have actually looked at that (fast fashion) and thought, nah, I’d like to learn the old ways”, she added.

“It kind of makes you realise what we are... doing is never going to end”.

— AFP

FEATURES



THE ZEALOUS GUARDIAN OF THE ARABIAN ORYX

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

IN THE RUGGED wilderness of Oman’s Jiddat Al Harasis, a quiet battle unfolds every day — to safeguard one of the desert’s most iconic and endangered inhabitants: the Arabian oryx. Behind this ongoing effort stand the dedicated wardens, whose unwavering commitment weaves a story of resilience, tradition and hope amidst the harshest of landscapes.

Said bin Nasser Saleh al Harsousi has spent 28 years patrolling these desert plains, a legacy that runs deep through his family. Even before formally donning the uniform of the Environment Authority, his instincts have driven him to protect the oryx, alongside myriad other creatures that call the arid wilderness home. “It’s in our blood to guard the wildlife here”, he says, his voice resolute.

Recently, Al Harsousi found himself in Muscat participating in an IUCN workshop, reflecting on a landscape vast and unforgiving — the heart of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, once a Unesco World Heritage site until its status shifted in 2007. Yet, despite political and bureaucratic setbacks, conservationists and wardens relentless in their pursuit continue to fight for its survival.

Their daily patrols are a testament to their dedication. Using GPS collars, camera traps and keen eyes, they monitor the movements and health of the oryx, vigilantly guarding against poaching — once the primary threat to the species. These guardians often work in tandem with law enforcement, their efforts complemented by habitat restoration projects aimed at preserving the fragile desert ecosystem.



Beyond tracking and surveillance, the wardens also play a vital role in data collection, providing crucial information on population dynamics, environmental changes and reproductive rates. Their work extends into community engagement, where education campaigns strive to raise awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation and the cultural significance of the oryx.

Said al Harsousi’s familiarity with the terrain is extraordinary. “Within 80 km, I recognise every tyre track”, he explains. His car, always stocked with essentials, is a familiar sight to the surrounding communities. His phone rings often — stranded travellers, lost hikers, or those in need of rescue. With a spirit of neighbourly duty, he guides them out of danger.

His role as guardian extends beyond the oryx. Jiddat Al Harasis teems with life: wild rabbits, Arabian gazelles, tahr, foxes, wolves and a diverse array of bird species and snakes. Once, he camped under the star-studded desert sky, but wolves and snakes prompted him to switch from open-air bivouacs to tents. The desert, he admits, is not for the faint-hearted.

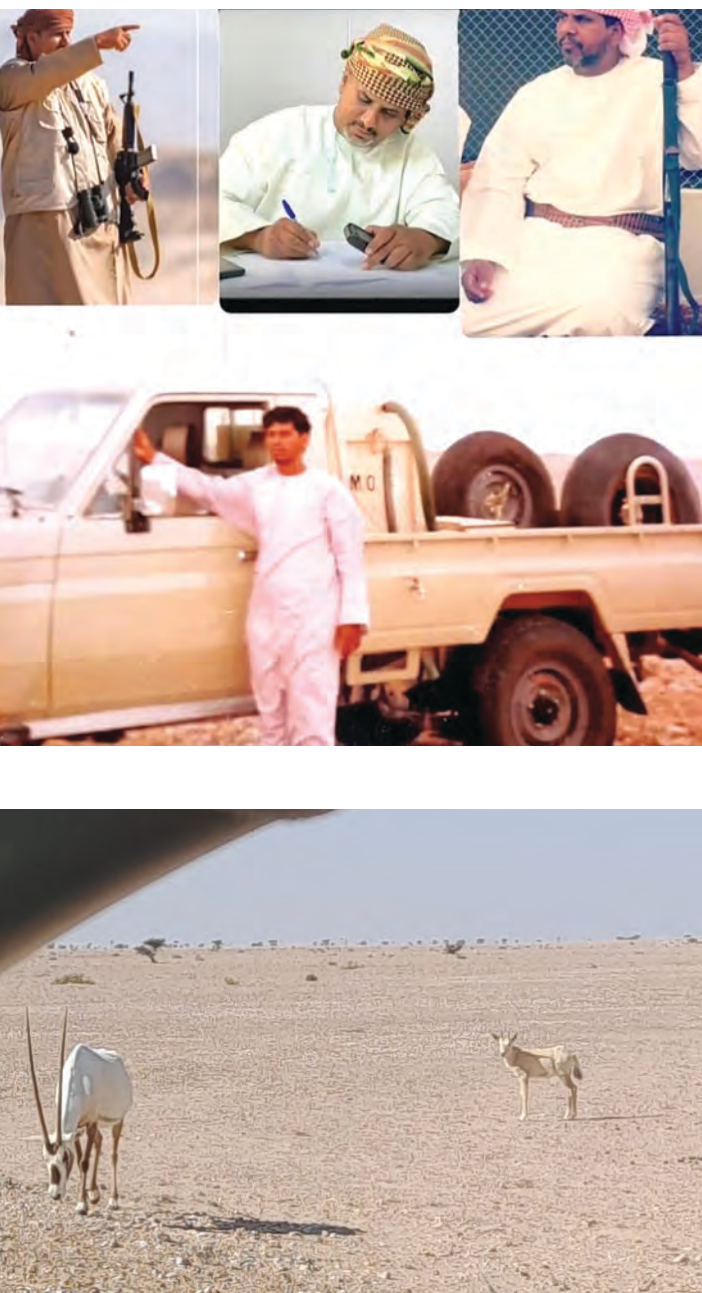
For Al Harsousi, stars are more than celestial bodies — they are navigational beacons and cultural symbols. He speaks of the ‘Al Izaff’ star that signals the camels to feed their calves and the glow of the full moon guiding his night patrols. When clouds obscure the sky, he relies on shifting sand and wind patterns to find his way,

always cautious of hallucinations if he rests his eyes too long under the open sky.

His children, educated in Muscat and Salalah, learn about desert life through him during holidays — lessons that blend traditional medicinal knowledge with survival skills. Among these is the use of camel urine for indigestion and the nourishing role of fenugreek seeds in milk for health.

Standing alongside Al Harsousi is Nasser bin Hamed al Harsousi, known affectionately among conservation circles as ‘Brave Heart’. Together, they once located missing persons lost amidst the wilderness — a testament to their intimate knowledge of this unforgiving terrain and their unwavering dedication.

Yet, challenges remain. Communication blackouts, the threat of poachers and habitat degradation cast



long shadows over their work. Despite these obstacles, their resolve persists.

What of the Arabian oryx’s future? Once thought extinct in the wild by the early 1970s due to relentless hunting, Oman pioneered one of the world’s first reintroduction programmes in the 1980s. Progress was promising, but illegal poaching and habitat loss inflicted setbacks. Today, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reclassified the species from “Extinct in the Wild” to “Vulnerable” — a rare beacon of hope.

In the sandy expanse of Jiddat Al Harasis, these wardens are more than protectors; they are stewards of a cultural and ecological symbol. Their tireless work not only preserves the Arabian oryx but also ignites a reminder of humanity’s role as custodians of the earth’s fragile wonders.

Discover more inspiring stories like *Said al Harsousi’s* by downloading *The Correspondent: 50 People You Have To Meet in Oman*. This captivating collection highlights some of the most fascinating and inspiring individuals across Oman, revealing their remarkable journeys and contributions. Dive into the extraordinary lives shaping the Sultanate of Oman — get your copy today!

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