

O M A N
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D A I L Y

Observer



VOL. 44, NO. 309
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ARSENAL, REAL
WIN OPENERS,
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DRAMATIC DRAW

SHORTTAKES

HM’S GREETINGS TO
PRESIDENT OF CHILE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Gabriel Boric of the Republic of Chile on the occasion of his country’s Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to President Gabriel in realising his people’s aspirations of further progress and growth.

TRUMP WELCOMED
WITH POMP IN UK

US President Donald Trump was treated to an unprecedented display of military pomp and pageantry as his historic second state visit to the UK began with a spectacular ceremonial welcome on Wednesday. The president and First Lady Melania Trump also received a personal, family-centred greeting from King Charles III and his immediate family — with Trump in turn complimenting the Princess of Wales. Around 1,500 troops were involved in the ceremonial events — almost double those on duty for the recent state visit of French President Emmanuel Macron.

Sayyid Bilarab to attend National
Day celebrations at Expo Osaka

MUSCAT: At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said will leave for Japan today to lead the Sultanate of Oman’s delegation that will take part in the celebration of Oman’s National Day at Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai, Japan, scheduled to begin on Saturday. During the visit, HH Sayyid Bilarab will be accompanied by Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce,



Industry and Investment Promotion, among other officials. It is worth noting that the design of Oman’s pavilion at Expo 2025 is one of the outcomes of the Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design. It reaffirms uninterrupted interest in Omani architecture and the need to reflect this approach through Oman’s participation in global events.

— ONA

Israel launches major ground
offensive in Gaza Strip

CAIRO: The Israeli military said it was opening an additional route for 48 hours that Palestinians could use to leave Gaza City as it stepped up efforts on Wednesday to empty the city of civilians. Hundreds of thousands of people are sheltering in the city and many are reluctant to follow Israel’s orders to move south because of the dangers along the way, dire conditions, a lack of food in the southern area and fear of permanent displacement. “Even if we want to leave Gaza City, is there any guarantee we would be able to come back? Will the war ever end? That’s why I prefer to die here, in Sabra, my neighbourhood,” Ahmed, a teacher, said by phone. At least 50 people were killed by Israeli strikes and gunfire across the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, including 39 in Gaza City, local health



A mourner reacts during the funeral of Palestinians killed in overnight Israeli strikes in Gaza City on Wednesday. — Reuters

authorities said. They said the latest fatalities took the Palestinian death toll from the two-year war between Israel and Hamas past 65,000. Palestinian officials and rescue workers say the true figure is likely to be higher as many people’s remains are trapped under the rubble of

destroyed buildings. Gaza health authorities also reported a drone attack on a specialist children’s hospital, which did not cause casualties but forced young patients and their families outside. Israel estimates about 400,000 people, or 40 per cent of those who were in Gaza City on August 10 — when it announced plans to take control — have already fled. The Gaza media office says 190,000 have headed south and 350,000 have moved to central and western areas of the city. A day after Israel announced the launch of its ground offensive to seize control of Gaza’s main urban centre, tanks had moved short distances towards the city’s central and western areas from three directions, but no major advance was reported. SEE ALSO P6

Oman launches first digital
platform to combat drugs

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

TO enhance community prevention and combat drug use in the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Social Development has launched the National Platform for Awareness of the Dangers of Addiction and Psychotropic Substances (Hayah), as the first digital platform in Oman dedicated to providing integrated awareness and advisory services in the field of prevention and treatment of drugs and psychotropic substances, in addition to providing direct support channels for individuals, their families and segments of society. The platform is a partnership among 7 ministries, including the Ministry of Social Development, the

The Hayah platform is not just a website; it is a safe space for anyone in need of advice, support, or a deeper understanding of the nature of this scourge

Hamoud bin Murdad al Shabibi

OFFICIAL
SPOKESPERSON
FOR MINISTRY
OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT

Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Information, and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The platform is one of the national initiatives that aligns with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in its focus on building a safe, healthy and cohesive society. ‘Hayah’ was launched in response to social challenges linked to the spread of drug use and a surge in the number of addicts. This has been envisaged and realised in the form of an electronic site that gives access to services of prevention of addiction, support, awareness, guidance, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts. The platform seeks to develop

a vigilant and responsible community and to furnish a safe, drug-free environment, notably by accommodating recovering addicts who have experienced addiction and who require support and motivation. The platform enables users to communicate directly with specialists via the toll-free consultation number ‘1110’ that operates in complete confidentiality. Speaking on the occasion, Hamoud bin Murdad al Shabibi, the official spokesperson for the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), said that this platform represents a qualitative shift in digital prevention and awareness-raising efforts in Oman, saying: “The Hayah platform is not just a website; it is a safe space for anyone in need of advice, support, or a deeper understanding of the nature of this scourge. TURN TO P2



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SHORT TAKES

OMAN LAUNCHES
FIRST DIGITAL
PLATFORM TO
COMBAT DRUG USE

FROM PAGE 1

The platform was built and designed with complete privacy, ease of access, and partnerships with specialised entities, to be an integrated and influential platform.”

Al Shabibi added that the platform is expected to have a positive impact at the societal level by enhancing public awareness of the dangers of drugs and providing early support to target groups, thus contributing to reducing negative effects and enhancing opportunities for preventive intervention.

The platform offers confidential and free counselling services in psychological, medical, social and religious aspects, delivered by a number of qualified specialists.

The platform provides psychological and social support via the instant chat website www.hayah.om. It features a host of awareness services, educational articles, and live visual and audio materials about real-life experiences that would help motivate recovering addicts.

CYBERSECURITY
COMPETITION HELD
IN AL DAKHILIYAH

MANAH: Al Dakhiliyah Governorate organised a cybersecurity competition titled ‘Soor’ (barrier).

Held at the Oman Across Ages Museum in the Wilayat of Manah, the competition brought together 120 contestants from various governorates across the Sultanate of Oman.

The competition was aimed to enhance awareness about cybersecurity and hone the skills of participants in dealing with modern digital challenges. Participants in the competition represented two segments: ‘Employees and freelancers’ and ‘students of universities and technical colleges’. —ONA

CLIMATE CHANGE
COMMITTEE HOLDS
MEETING



The meeting discussed key themes on the COP30 agenda, including just transition, climate action finance mechanisms. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Steering Committee on Climate Change held its fourth preparatory meeting in preparation for the 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30), scheduled to take place in Belém, Brazil.

The meeting discussed key themes on the COP30 agenda, including just transition, climate action finance mechanisms, and strategies for adaptation and mitigation of climate change impacts.

The session also focused on defining national priorities and formulating Oman’s negotiation position, with an emphasis on enhancing coordination with international negotiation blocs, particularly the Group of 77 and China (G77 + China) and the Arab Group, to effectively represent Oman’s interests and ensure its voice is heard. —ONA

MOH
MARKS
WORLD
PATIENT
SAFETY
DAY

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) observed World Patient Safety Day on Wednesday. This year’s event was held under the theme ‘Safe Care for Every Newborn and Every Child’, as designated by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The celebration programme included scientific lectures and discussion sessions addressing this year’s theme, along with an exhibition showcasing research papers and development projects in the field of patient safety.

The World Patient Safety Day celebrations will include intensive awareness campaigns across governorates and hospitals, featuring educational campaigns, visual displays,



This year’s event was held under the theme ‘Safe Care for Every Newborn and Every Child’.

exhibitions, and informational messages for both the public and healthcare workers. These are being organised by the Ministry’s Quality Assurance Centre in collaboration with the relevant central directorates throughout September.

This year’s theme aligns with both international and national efforts to improve maternal and child health, ensuring that every newborn and child receives safe healthcare from birth through early childhood.

The adoption of this theme also reflects a collective commitment to collaborative action aimed at reducing mortality and injury rates among newborns and children, and to supporting programmes and policies that ensure a safer, healthier future for coming generations.

The occasion was held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs. — ONA

Community participation
crucial in development

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

HILAL bin Abdullah al Hinai, General Supervisor of the National Platform for Suggestions, Complaints and Reports ‘Tajawub’, emphasised that the platform would not have succeeded without the acceptance and active and positive participation of its beneficiaries, as well as the responsiveness and interaction of government agencies with the issues raised by it.

“The relevant authorities have begun taking executive steps to implement the directives of the Council of Ministers by developing the Tajawub platform and upgrading the related institutional framework, including mechanisms and methodologies,” Al Hinai stated.

He noted that the Council of



HILAL AL HINAI

The relevant authorities have begun taking executive steps to implement the directives of the Council of Ministers by developing the Tajawub platform and upgrading the related institutional framework, including mechanisms and methodologies.

Ministers statement emphasised the need for government agencies to improve the timely completion of reports, respond to proposals and complaints and address the most significant observations raised.

It reflects a firm belief that the efficiency of government services is not measured solely by the amount of achievement, but also by the speed of response and the quality of interaction with beneficiaries.

Placing requirements at the core of performance evaluation fosters a culture of commitment and responsibility within institutions, transforming the voices and observations of beneficiaries and citizens into a powerful tool for developing policies and services.

It clearly confirms that the government is dealing with the beneficiaries’ comments with all seriousness and interest, not only from the perspective of follow-up

and achievement, but also from a deeper perspective represented by measuring the level of satisfaction and making it a strategic indicator that guides the government in developing services.

Outstanding achievements are now recognised and celebrated, while shortcomings are viewed as opportunities for improvement and development, ensuring continuous improvement in the quality of services provided.

Al Hinai mentioned that His Majesty the Sultan emphasised the adoption of a clear accountability mechanism.

This mechanism serves as a practical translation of this approach, reinforces the principle of linking results to responsibilities, and motivates all entities to improve their performance and provide services that meet the aspirations of citizens and beneficiaries.

Cancer congress to focus on community

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The World Cancer Congress Summit is set to take place in Muscat during the first week of November.

Dr Wahid al Kharousi, Chairman of the OCA, stated, “Our region is part of the global south, and we have to be self-reliant and able to pay for our own medication. We must be resilient. The important part comes after the conference. Research is crucial and something we must continue to pursue.” The four-day event will focus on the community and explore ways to control cancer, according to Dr Zahid al Mandhari, a board member of OCA. Dr Manal al Zadjali, Secretary-General of OCA, mentioned that the event will primarily focus on the community at large.

“We will start on November 3 with community awareness, and from November 4 to 6, the events will be aimed at doctors and healthcare workers.” Dr Mohammed al Lamki, a board member of OCA, said, “The whole idea of the congress is to bring the three groups together —



The congress aims to explore cutting-edge advancements in cancer care, foster collaboration and enhance public awareness

the doctors, the community and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) — to develop the Muscat Resolution that will empower people affected by cancer. We are also looking into introducing various tools for better communication and care for those affected by cancer, such as patient navigation.”

The congress aims to explore cutting-edge advancements in cancer care, foster global collaboration and enhance

public awareness to address one of the world’s most pressing health challenges. The congress serves as a strategic platform to unite global efforts, focusing on prevention, capacity building, patient empowerment and scientific research to drive tangible progress towards a healthier, more sustainable future.

The event is expected to have a diverse group of professionals and stakeholders, ensuring its

inclusivity and global impact. Attendees include oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, nurses, general practitioners, palliative care specialists, researchers, academics, policymakers, international organisations, civil society groups, cancer survivors, caregivers, and industry representatives from pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, health technologies, artificial intelligence and healthcare financing.

An advertisement for AWASR. On the left, the AWASR logo is displayed in white on a teal background, with the tagline "Experience Better" below it. The central part of the ad has a purple background and features the text "Their future starts today!" in white, followed by "Change to AWASR, Fastest Internet In Oman". Below this, two bullet points are listed: "Get Ashel Educational Platform for free!" and "Unlimited data for all plans". On the right, a young boy is shown sitting at a desk, focused on his laptop. He is wearing a light blue shirt. The background behind him is a stylized illustration of a room with a bed and a desk, overlaid with mathematical formulas like $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$ and a lightbulb icon. To the right of the boy is a QR code and the text "SUBSCRIBE NOW! WhatsApp 80001000 Website: awasr.om".

SHORTTAKES



The forum aims to align local plans, particularly the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), with sustainable development priorities.

MUSANDAM
GOVERNORATE TO
HOST STRATEGIC
FORUM ON SEPT 23

KHASAB: Musandam Governorate will host its First Strategic Forum from September 23 to 25. The event, organised by the Musandam Governor's Office, will see wide participation from senior officials, decision-makers, experts and researchers from across Oman.

The forum will serve as a high-level platform to discuss the governorate's future development trajectory and strengthen its position as a promising economic and tourism hub within the national development framework of Oman Vision 2040.

The forum aims to align local plans, particularly the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), with sustainable development priorities. This will be achieved by showcasing key government projects and investment opportunities, as well as presenting innovative visions and initiatives that will help chart a clear road map for development across various vital sectors.

The forum will be preceded by a series of preparatory workshops held across all the wilayats of the governorate. These workshops will involve representatives from government units, the private sector, entrepreneurs and the local community. It is expected that these sessions will produce practical recommendations to be presented during the forum, reflecting the aspirations of the local community and informing the decision-making process. — ONA

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN BELT AND ROAD YOUTH CAMP

BEIJING: *The Sultanate of Oman is participating in the Belt and Road Teenager Maker Camp and Teacher Workshop, currently hosted by the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) in the People's Republic of China. The camp will run until September 20. This annual summer camp, which includes participation from the Ministry of Education, is a scientific initiative aimed at strengthening exchanges and cooperation between China and countries along the Belt and Road in the fields of science, technology and education. It seeks to inspire students and teachers to innovate and show interest in science through various interactive and educational activities. — ONA*



The camp will run until September 20.

Conference discusses sustainable education

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

A conference titled “Digital Universities in the Arab World” kicked off on Wednesday with the aim of discussing digital innovation for sustainable and resilient higher education.

The event discussed the latest global trends in digital university education, reviewing leading experiences in transitioning towards innovative and sustainable education, and exploring collaboration prospects among Arab universities in educational technology, artificial intelligence and blended learning.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, in the presence of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and Abdulaziz bin Talal al Saud, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Open University.

Hosted by the Sultanate of Oman in Muscat and organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), in collaboration with the Arab Open University, the two-day conference has brought together more than 300 participants, over 80 specialised speakers from 28 countries, more than 100 organisers and nearly 70 higher education institutions.

In his keynote speech, Al Saud stressed the strategic importance of the conference, noting that it focuses on two central pillars shaping the future of Arab universities: digital transformation and sustainability.

“Digital transformation in higher education is not only about expanding access and flexibility for



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students, but also about reducing the environmental footprint of educational institutions, achieving national sustainability goals, and preparing qualified talents capable of contributing effectively to the global digital economy,” he said.

Dr Maryam al Nabhani, Director-General of Universities and Private Colleges at the MoHERI, described the event as a “historic opportunity” to reshape the future of Arab education.

“We are living through a moment to rebuild higher education on the foundations of digitisation, sustainability and openness to the world, while preserving our values and shared identity,” she noted. “This conference represents a strategic platform for launching an Arab knowledge renaissance, capable of competing globally and

contributing effectively to shaping the future.” Echoing this vision, Prof Mohammed bin Hamdan al Badi, Rector of the Arab Open University in Oman, emphasised the transformative role of digital innovation.

“This conference embodies our commitment to supporting innovation and development in higher education,” he said. “It will explore the transformative potential of digital innovation in reshaping learning, teaching and research, ensuring that Arab universities remain at the forefront of the global educational landscape. These efforts align closely with the strategic priorities of Oman Vision 2040, which place higher education, research, innovation and sustainability at the heart of national progress.”

Information ministry hosts meet on Media Law

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information (MoI) on Wednesday organised an introductory meeting on the Media Law, issued by Royal Decree No 58/2024.

The meeting covered the policy foundations that the Ministry of Information relied on in preparing the Media Law. These foundations include the Basic Law of the State, Oman Vision 2040, five-year plans, previous legislative regulations for media activities, and the Basic Law of the State's provisions related to freedom of the press and media.

The meeting also reviewed relevant international human rights conventions and their alignment with the law. It discussed the relationship between the Media Law and its executive regulations and the stages of preparing the draft executive regulations. This process involved forming a committee at the Ministry of Information immediately after the law was issued, coordinating with partners in competent government bodies and civil



The meeting also touched on the most important provisions of the executive regulations for the Media Law.

The meeting covered the policy foundations that the Ministry of Information relied on in preparing the Media Law

society through a mechanism of community participation in drafting the regulations, and securing the necessary approvals from relevant government bodies.

The meeting also touched on the most important provisions of the executive regulations for the Media

Law. These include specifying the procedures for licensing media activities, identifying the types of activities that require a licence, the rights and obligations of media professionals, and regulating publications, artistic works and penalties. — ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The ministry presented important topics related to the organisation of the Haj season 1447 AH. — ONA

MOARA MEETS WITH HAJ AND UMRAH COMPANIES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) on Wednesday held an extensive meeting with owners of licensed Haj and Umrah companies in the Sultanate of Oman. The meeting reviewed the latest updates and initiatives for the upcoming Haj season 1447 AH and discussed key observations and indicators from the previous season.

During the meeting, the ministry presented important topics related to the organisation of the Haj season 1447 AH, including new updates and procedural mechanisms to ensure the successful performance of the Haj pilgrimage.

The ministry also implemented a “Haj Lab” in cooperation with the “Takatuf” Foundation. The lab’s goal is to improve the experience of Omani pilgrims by collecting and analysing data from the Haj season. It organised joint workshops to discuss challenges and new developments and prepared a final report with key improvement opportunities, recommendations and a road map of priorities. This will contribute to developing the management and implementation mechanisms of the Haj season and enhancing the quality of services provided to pilgrims.

It is worth noting that registration for the Haj pilgrimage for the 1447 AH season will open on September 23 through the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs’ electronic system. — ONA

AL JARDAA HEALTH CENTRE OPENS IN AL MUDHAIBI

ALI BIN KHALFAN AL HABSI
AL MUDHAIBI, SEPT 17

The Al Jardaa Health Centre in the Niyabat of Samad Al Shan in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, has begun receiving patients.

The health centre provides comprehensive treatment and preventive services to residents of the area and neighbouring villages.

Dr Ahmed bin Said al Saidi, Director-General of the Directorate-

General of Health Services in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, said that the establishment of the centre comes within the framework of the Ministry of Health’s strategy to improve the health system through integrated institutions with high-quality standards. He noted that the centre has a treatment and observation hall, a dental clinic, a radiology and laboratory department, registration, examination and sterilisation rooms in addition to a pharmacy and medical store.

Shaikh Nasser bin Sultan al Habsi, representative of the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi in Majlis Ash’shura, said that the Al Jardaa Health Centre project is a new achievement that adds to the health accomplishments the wilayat has witnessed. He stressed that it represents a qualitative shift that directly addresses the needs of citizens. He explained that the centre will alleviate the burden on residents who previously had to travel long distances to reach distant hospitals for treatment or medical checkups.

Adventurer to share his story in Muscat next week

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

THE Sultanate of Oman will welcome Mitchell Hutchcraft, who took a 12,000 km expedition to Mount Everest, the world’s longest ever ascent from sea to summit. As part of his ‘Limitless’ project, it involved 10,500 km cycling from France to India, swimming the English Channel, and a 1,300 km run, hike and climb across India from sea level to the summit of Everest.

British expats as well as his Omani well wishers will host Mitch, who will be back in Oman next week, who will share his experiences with the mountaneering fans. “We will be hosting Mitch for the accomplishment on his arrival from his expedition. The whole saga of his expedition is truly inspirational and we hope the interactions will help and support many enthusiasts,” said Maggie Jeans.

“As a former British Royal Marine, Mitch is a truly inspirational character and is keen to share his experiences. His motivation on this visit is to help and inspire young Omanis and reveal the secrets of unblocking their full potential,” she



Mitchell Hutchcraft undertook a 12,000 km expedition to Mount Everest, the world’s longest ever ascent from sea to summit.

Conquering the heights is not new to Mitch. At just 16 years old, he became the first British youth to summit Mount Kilimanjaro. Now, nearly 15 years later, he embarked on a mission to conquer what he has dubbed ‘The Longest Triathlon’.

adds.

He’s now a motivational speaker and will be speaking to the students at UTAS and explaining his theme - Limitless. He has a YouTube Channel with over 35,000 fans and 271,000 Instagram followers.

Mitch will also be hosted by the British Business Forum at the Mumtaz Mahal Hotel on September 21, supported by Europcar. He’ll be attending this event with the British Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. Mitchell, known to his friends as Mitch, had made a brief stop in Muscat before embarking on the next phase of his grand adventure in December last year

and was excited to experience the Omani hospitality along and appreciated its unique blend of modernity and tradition.

Conquering the heights is not new to Mitch. At just 16 years old, he became the first British youth to summit Mount Kilimanjaro. Now, nearly 15 years later, he embarked on a mission to conquer what he has dubbed ‘The Longest Triathlon’ — a remarkable journey that spanned nearly 15,000 km from the shores of Dover to the lofty heights of the Himalayas. His eight-month-long journey, aptly named ‘Limitless’, incorporates all three modes of travel: land, sea, and air.

Accompanied by his travel partner, Ben Cook, they shared tales of their adventure while awaiting a cargo boat that carried them onwards to Pakistan, enroute to India, during their recent stopover in Muscat. “It has always been a dream we’ve chased since childhood to become the world’s greatest Triathlon champions.

“Beyond inspiring others to embrace a sporty lifestyle, Limitless serves as a platform for us to uplift millions and showcase the transformative power of positivity and the human spirit,” Mitch told the Observer.

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3.990 OMR

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Pena Branca Whole Chicken 10x900Gm

7.990 OMR

كاجو محمص بالكيلو
Cashew Nut Roasted W320 Per kg

3.990 OMR

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Nescafe Coffee Classic 95gm

1.000 OMR

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Omela Evaporated Milk 45x169ml

6.490 OMR

مسحوق غسيل بحر ٤٠٥ كغم
Bahar Washing Powder 4.05Kg

1.890 OMR

صابون سانتور ١٢٥ x ٤٠ جم
Santoor Soap Asstd 4X125Gm

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KNOWLEDGE OMAN TO HOST FIRST ‘KO TALKS’ ON OCT 15



KO Talks is designed to bring together leaders, professionals and innovators from across sectors to share transformative stories.

MUSCAT: Following Knowledge Oman’s recent announcement of its new initiative ‘KO Talks’, the leadership team confirmed details of its first session, scheduled to take place on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Bausher.

Themed ‘Ideas for Change, Together We Can,’ this inaugural session marks the official beginning of KO Talks as Oman’s premier platform for knowledge-sharing and inspiration.

“This first KO Talks session represents the beginning of a platform that we believe will grow into a national stage for knowledge, innovation and collaboration. Our focus is on enabling individuals to gain insights that inspire action and drive meaningful impact,” commented on the milestone, Balqees al Hassani, President of Knowledge Oman.

KO Talks is designed to bring together leaders, professionals and innovators from across sectors to share transformative stories that empower individuals and foster community development. The initiative reinforces Knowledge Oman’s mission to cultivate a culture of learning, collaboration and growth while aligning with Oman’s long-term vision for innovation and social progress.

وزارة الإعلام

Ministry of Information

INTERNATIONAL TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at Ministry of Information announces its Tender for the following works:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
2/2025 (323/2025) at E-Tendering	Upgrade of Outside Broadcasting Van (HD1) including Vision Mixer, Router, Monitors and Accessories	Excellent First	30/9/2025	26/10/2025	25/-
3/2025 (322/2025) at E-Tendering	Upgrade of Outside Broadcasting Van (HD2) including Vision Mixer, Router and Accessories	Excellent First	30/9/2025	26/10/2025	40/-
4/2025 (321/2025) at E-Tendering	Supply, Delivery and Commissioning of Outside Broadcasting Racing Vehicle with Gyro-stabilized 4K UHD IP Camera System and Accessories	Excellent First	30/9/2025	26/10/2025	25/-

- All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Companies and institutions are exempted from providing a temporary insurance of 1% when submitting their bid, provided that they sign a document committing themselves to the submitted bid for a period determined when the bidding strategy is approved in accordance with the document attached to the Isnad platform. As for international companies that do not have a headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman, they are required to provide temporary insurance of 1%.

(For more information, please see the original circular issued by the Tender Board on the Isnad platform.)

Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am. Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically.

You are requested to provide 2 hard copies for your offer after the submission in Projects Department at Ministry of Information.

- The Ministry has the right to:
 - Add or Cancell some works in the tender if necessary.
 - Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:
Telephone : 24943785, 24943177, Email: (Moi.Tenders@omaninfo.om)

SHORT TAKES



This significant investment follows a period of remarkable development for Rihal since its seed round in 2021.

RIHAL ANNOUNCES FIRST CLOSE OF ITS ‘SERIES A’ FUNDING

MUSCAT: Rihal, a leader in the region’s technology and data services sector, on Tuesday announced the successful first close of its ‘Series A’ funding round, targeting a total raise of \$15 million. ITHCA Group led this initial close with an investment of \$7.5 million, reaffirming their confidence in Rihal’s strategic direction and exceptional growth trajectory.

This significant investment follows a period of remarkable development for Rihal since its seed round in 2021. Rihal has demonstrated an impressive CAGR of 119% since its launch, expanding its operations and making a substantial impact across key industries, including government, logistics, telecom and oil and gas.

“This investment is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team,” said Azzan al Kindi, CEO of Rihal.

Said Al Mandhari, CEO of ITHCA Group, commented, “Rihal’s performance has been nothing short of exceptional. Their ability to rapidly scale, innovate and penetrate diverse, high-value sectors is why we are proud to lead their Series A round. We are confident that this investment will propel Rihal to new heights, and we are excited to be a part of their journey as they expand internationally.”

SYMPOSIUM HIGHLIGHTS DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

MUSCAT: A symposium on “Leadership and Management Development,” organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), affirmed that developing these skills is a fundamental pillar for enhancing the efficiency of the national workforce.

The event emphasised the importance of improving leadership and management capabilities for business owners, CEOs, decision-makers and human resources specialists



The symposium featured an interactive session designed to stimulate innovation. — ONA

through training, education on new strategies and techniques, and exploring the latest trends in the field.

The symposium was held at the W Hotel Muscat under the auspices of HH Sayyid Loai bin Ghalib al Said. It was attended by Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry .

The symposium’s programme, which included papers, a panel discussion and an interactive session, aimed to develop leadership skills, stimulate innovation and strengthen economic ties across various sectors. — ONA

Oman achieves significant progress in health sector

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

THE Sultanate of Oman has made significant strides in the field of sustainable health by prioritising prevention, enhancing the quality of health services, supporting research and involving the community.

Recent times have seen the implementation of various programmes and initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life. The Council of Ministers previously approved the establishment of a National Centre for Women’s and Children’s Health in Sultan Haitham City, a new central public health laboratory, the creation of the National Genome and Human Data Programme (Oman Genome), a National Centre for Ophthalmology, and the introduction of a national programme for early screening of common cancers among women.

This programme includes the establishment of seven early detection units across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the expansion of nuclear medicine services. These initiatives and programmes underscore the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to promoting

Recent times have seen the implementation of various programmes and initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life. The Council of Ministers previously approved the establishment of a National Centre for Women’s and Children’s Health in Sultan Haitham City, a new central public health laboratory.



The Ministry of Health is dedicated to establishing a leading healthcare system that adheres to international standards.

community well-being and ensuring a sustainable and dignified life for all.

In line with Oman Vision 2040, the achievements observed at Khoula Hospital demonstrate the efforts being made. The qualitative initiatives for 2025 encompassed 100 arthroscopic surgeries for the shoulder, knee and ankle, 600 spine surgeries, and 500 bariatric surgeries.

Noteworthy accomplishments for 2024 included 13,566 MRI scans with a waiting time of less than three days, 1,114 knee replacement surgeries with a reduced waiting time from 23 months to two months and 2,198 cataract surgeries resulting in a 50% decrease in waiting time.

The Ministry of Health is dedicated to establishing a leading healthcare system that adheres to international standards. It aims to deliver a decentralised, high-quality healthcare system, cultivate skilled national professionals in scientific research and innovation, and provide exceptional preventive and therapeutic healthcare. The ministry also strives to promote a culture of “health is everyone’s responsibility” and secure diverse and sustainable funding sources for the healthcare system. Strategic approaches to enhancing the health system include bolstering infrastructure through the development of hospitals and health centres, increasing their capacity and investing in cutting-edge medical technology.

Moreover, digital transformation in the health sector is a key focus, with the goal of enhancing the quality and efficiency of health services through modern technologies. This transformation involves enhancing the quality of health services by streamlining health transactions and facilitating access to services through digital applications. It also includes an electronic appointment system project aimed at optimising the management of health resources.

Summer internship boosts youths talent

MUSCAT: Oman Refreshment Company (REFCO), one of the country’s leading beverage and manufacturing companies, has successfully concluded its annual summer internship programme conducted in partnership with Sultan Qaboos University, reaffirming the company’s long-term commitment to empowering Omani youth and enabling career pathways in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Now in its 10th year, the internship offers university students practical, hands-on experience across multiple business functions, including Supply, Planning and Logistics, Finance and Digitalisation, and Plant Industrial. Participants work under the guidance of experienced managers, gaining exposure to the full business cycle and insights into one of Oman’s oldest manufacturing companies.

“Empowering the next generation of Omani talent is essential to REFCO’s growth and the nation’s long-term prosperity,” said Suleiman al Salmi, Director of People, Culture and Corporate Services at REFCO. “Our



Empowering the next generation of Omani talent is essential to long-term prosperity.

internship programme is part of a wider effort to localise skills and create sustainable career opportunities for local youth, while supporting the Oman Vision 2040 ambitions in workforce development and industrial innovation.”

The programme is designed to provide practical workplace skills as well as identify and nurture future talent.

“I gained many things from this internship, most importantly exposure to the practical and applied side of finance,” said Marwa al Barashdi, an intern and student at Sultan Qaboos University.

“The team encouraged

me to train and learn new things.”

The internship represents one of the many ways REFCO invests in Oman’s economic and social development. Over the past decade, the company has invested more than RO 50 million locally, introduced state-of-the-art manufacturing lines, supported SMEs through acquisitions and partnered with local community initiatives to equip local youth with practical life skills.

With 53 per cent of its workforce made up of Omanis and 15 nationalities across the organisation, REFCO continues to champion diversity and inclusion,

while offering leadership training and development opportunities for Omani employees through programmes such as ETIMAD and more.

Looking ahead, REFCO remains committed to expanding opportunities for young Omanis to develop their skills and contribute to the nation’s progress. With 10 sites across Oman, the company continues to align its talent development programmes with Oman Vision 2040, aiming to shape a local workforce that is equipped to drive innovation, support economic diversification and advance the country’s sustainable growth.

وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Announcement of an Internal Tender

Tender No.	134/2025/MHT/HQ-31	Tender Name	Providing Technical Support Services to business development at tourism promote directorate.
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)	25 R.O		
Tender Document Sales End Date	6/10/2025		
Last Date for Bid Submission	27/10/2025		
Grade	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth		
E-Tendering Portal	https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om		

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.
- The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.
- All companies submitting bids for this tender are required to attach a valid and recently issued Omanization Compliance Certificate from the Ministry of Labour, provided that the certificate is not older than 30 days from the date of issuance.
- This certificate is considered a mandatory document, and failure to submit it — for any reason — shall result in the outright disqualification of the bid, without being evaluated technically or financially.
- The certificate must also demonstrate the company's compliance with the Omanization percentage required by the Ministry of Labour. If the required percentage is not met, the bid shall be automatically disqualified.
- The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : sotlc@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

WORLD

DIPLOMATICPROCESS



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi

IRAN AND EUROPEAN MINISTERS MAKE LITTLE PROGRESS IN NUCLEAR TALKS

PARIS: Iranian and European ministers made little progress in talks aimed at averting international sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear programme, two European and one Iranian diplomat said. Britain, France and Germany, the so-called E3, launched a 30-day process at the end of August to reimpose UN sanctions. They set conditions for Tehran to meet during September to convince them to extend the “snapback mechanism”. The offer by the E3 to extend the snapback for as much as six months to enable serious negotiations is conditional on Iran restoring access for UN nuclear inspectors - who would also seek to account for Iran’s large stock of enriched uranium - and engaging in talks with the US. The status of Iran’s enriched uranium stocks has been unknown since Israel and the US bombed Iranian nuclear sites in June. Wednesday’s phone call between the E3 foreign ministers, the European Union foreign policy chief and their Iranian counterpart followed an agreement reached by Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency last week on resuming cooperation between Tehran and the UN nuclear watchdog, including in principle the inspection of nuclear sites. Several Western diplomats have said, however, that the accord is not detailed enough, sets no timeframe for Iran and leaves the door open for Iran to continue stonewalling. There has also been no indication of a willingness from Iran to resume talks with Washington. Iran says it is still working to refine how it will work with the IAEA. Germany’s foreign ministry spokesperson said on X after the call that the E3 had “underscored that Iran has yet to take the reasonable and precise actions necessary to reach an extension of resolution 2231”, adding on X that sanctions would be reimposed “absent concrete actions in the coming days”. The reimposed sanctions would hit Iran’s financial, banking, hydrocarbons and defence sectors. Four European diplomats and an Iranian official said prior to the call that the most likely scenario would be that the E3 would go ahead with the reimposition of sanctions. Two of the diplomats also said that even with a last-minute agreement, it was unlikely Washington would support it. An Iranian diplomat said Tehran had reiterated in Wednesday’s call that Iran would take measures in response if the decision to restore UN sanctions was made. “The understanding in Tehran is that the UN sanctions will be reimposed. That is why Tehran refuses to give concessions,” an Iranian official said. The West says the advancement of Iran’s nuclear programme goes beyond civilian needs, while Tehran says it wants nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes. — Reuters

HRW ACCUSES ISRAELI FORCES OF DISPLACING SOUTH SYRIA RESIDENTS

BEIRUT: Human Rights Watch accused Israeli forces of forcibly displacing residents of southern Syria, which Israel has demanded be demilitarised in a new security deal Syria is seeking with its neighbour. The statement quoted the Israeli military as saying it is operating in southern Syria “to protect the citizens of the State of Israel” and that its activities are “in accordance with international law”. The report came as Syrian state media said Israeli forces seized

several people in the south, and a day after Damascus said it was working with Washington to reach mutual “security understandings” with Israel. “Israeli forces occupying parts of southern Syria since December 2024 have carried out a range of abuses against residents, including forced displacement, which is a war crime,” HRW said in a statement. HRW said that “Israeli forces have seized and demolished homes, blocked residents from

their property and livelihoods, and arbitrarily detained residents and transferred them to Israel”. The New York-based watchdog said it interviewed residents, reviewed images and analysed satellite imagery to corroborate accounts. Early on Wednesday, Syrian state television said Israeli forces seized four men from villages in and near the buffer zone in the southern province of Quneitra “during a raid and search operation... that targeted a number of homes”. — AFP

Europe proposes curbing Israel trade ties over Gaza

THE European Union on Wednesday proposed curbing trade ties with Israel and sanctioning ministers in its strongest action over the war in Gaza, though reluctance from key member states risks blocking the measures’ adoption. The bloc’s executive, however, said it would take immediate action by itself by freezing some 20 million euros (\$23.7 million) in bilateral support for Israel.

The move from the EU’s executive comes as pressure has mounted on the 27-nation bloc to take action against Israel over its devastating, nearly two-year-long offensive in Gaza. “The horrific events taking place in Gaza on a daily basis must stop,” EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said. “There needs to be an immediate ceasefire, unrestrained access for all humanitarian aid, and the release of all hostages held by Hamas,” she said.

Under its new proposals, Brussels is pressing to suspend parts of a cooperation deal with Israel that allow for reduced tariffs on goods coming from the country. Officials say that would hit more than a third of Israel’s exports to the EU, worth around six billion euros, including key agricultural produce such as dates and nuts.

The commission also called for asset freezes and visa bans on far-right Israeli government ministers Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, whose “extremist” rhetoric is blamed for fuelling the violence. Those measures — initially floated by von der Leyen in a keynote speech last week —



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

“The horrific events taking place in Gaza on a daily basis must stop. There needs to be an immediate ceasefire, unrestrained access for all humanitarian aid, and the release of all hostages held by Hamas.

URSULA VON DER LEYEN

represent the firmest attempt by the EU chief to pressure Israel. “Today marks a critical turning point in holding Israel accountable,” said Irish foreign minister Simon Harris. But opposition from key member states, especially von der Leyen’s own homeland Germany and Italy, means they will struggle to get the backing of enough EU countries to go through. That reluctance has already stalled a softer proposal to cut funding to Israeli tech start-ups, much to the ire of the raft of EU countries demanding action. Von der Leyen’s commission can, however, decide on its own to freeze bilateral support. That step will not include funds going to help civil society groups. Israel has already urged Brussels against pushing on with the proposals. “Pressure through sanctions will not work,” Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar wrote in a letter to von der Leyen.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas insisted “the aim is not to punish Israel”, but to try to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza. The push for action within the EU comes as Israel has drawn fresh international condemnation by launching a major ground assault against Gaza City. The army unleashed a massive bombardment of Gaza City before dawn on Tuesday and pushed its troops deeper into the Gaza Strip’s largest urban hub. It came as a United Nations probe accused Israel of committing genocide in the Palestinian territory, saying Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior officials had incited the crime. Separately, Pope Leo XVI expressed solidarity with the population of Gaza, saying that civilians had been “once again” forced from their land and were living in “unacceptable conditions”. — AFP

MALAWI COUNTS VOTES IN TIGHT RACE

LILONGWE: Malawi counted votes after a general election dominated by economic hardships in the largely poor country, that could knock outgoing president Lazarus Chakwera’s chances of winning a second term. Observers said preliminary results from Tuesday’s vote indicated a strong showing for his predecessor and main rival Peter Mutharika, though Chakwera’s party voiced confidence in a victory. The cost of living has soared after months of inflation topping 27 per cent in a largely rural country where the World Bank says more than 70 per cent live in poverty. A chronic shortage of foreign currency has restricted imports of fuel, food and fertiliser, hitting an economy dependent on rain-fed agriculture. — AFP

TRAGIC INCIDENT

About 50 Sudanese dead in Libya shipwreck



At least 50 Sudanese refugees have died off the coast of eastern Libya after their boat caught fire, an International Organization for Migration spokesperson said on Wednesday. “The tragic incident took place when a rubber boat carrying 75 Sudanese refugees caught fire off the coast of Tobruk, Libya, while en route to Greece,” the spokesperson said. “At least 50 lives were lost.” There were no details of the ages and genders. — AFP

CLEAR CONSCIENCE

Philippine lawmaker quits job over graft



The speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives tendered on Wednesday his resignation after his name surfaced in a mounting corruption scandal, less than two weeks after the country’s Senate president suffered the same fate. Martin Romualdez told lawmakers he was leaving the post with a “clear conscience” so that a newly established investigatory body could do its job without “undue influence”. — AFP

SIGNIFICANT ESCALATION

Thai police fire tear gas at border village



Thai police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at Cambodian civilians in a disputed border area, authorities in both countries said, the most significant escalation since they declared a ceasefire to end a deadly five-day conflict in July. At least 23 Cambodians were injured in the incident, while Thailand’s military said an unspecified number of Thai officials had also sustained injuries. The clash took place at a disputed frontier settlement. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz speaks at the Bundestag, in Berlin. — AFP

MERZ VOWS ‘AUTUMN OF REFORMS’ IN TURBULENT TIMES

BERLIN: Germany will need sweeping change to remain free and prosperous, Chancellor Friedrich Merz warned, calling on the country to unite in the face of Russian aggression, economic woes and rising extremism. “We all have to agree on where our country stands and where our country wants to go in coming years,” the conservative Merz told parliament, promising an “autumn of reforms”. Addressing Russia’s war in Ukraine and Moscow’s hostility towards Nato and the European Union, Merz, who has vastly stepped up German defence spending, said that “our freedom is being threatened”. Days after drones from Russia violated Polish airspace, Merz said that Russian President Vladimir Putin had long been “testing” Europe’s and Nato’s resilience. “Russia wants to surreptitiously undermine our free democracy,” he said. “We have to strengthen our capacity to resist and to defend ourselves.” Merz then turned to the “economic model under pressure” as Europe’s export powerhouse has suffered in recent years, hit by higher energy prices following Russia’s full-scale attack of Ukraine. “Political forces at home and abroad are making our democracy contemptible and sowing discord,” Merz said. “Our cohesion is openly being called into question.” — AFP

GOLD WORTH 600,000 EUROS STOLEN



Thieves have broken into Paris’s Natural History Museum, making off with gold samples worth 600,000 euros (\$700,000) in the latest of a series of robberies from cultural institutions, according to the museum. A break-in was detected on Tuesday morning, with the intruders reportedly using an angle grinder and a blow torch to force their way into the riverside complex that is popular with Parisians and tourists. “The theft concerns several specimens of native gold from the national collections held by the museum,” the museum’s press office said. — AFP

POISON KILLED PUTIN CRITIC NAVALNY, SAYS WIFE

WARSAW: The wife of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said on Wednesday that laboratory analysis of smuggled biological samples found he was killed by poisoning while incarcerated at an Arctic prison in February 2024. Navalny, President Vladimir Putin’s most formidable critic for years, died in mysterious circumstances while serving a 19-year prison sentence on a string of charges widely seen as retribution for his opposition.

The charismatic anti-corruption campaigner had rallied hundreds of thousands across Russia in anti-Kremlin protests as he exposed the alleged ill-gotten gains of Putin’s inner circle. His allies allege he was murdered in prison, and Moscow has never fully explained the causes of his death, saying only that he fell ill while walking in the prison yard on February 16, 2024. His wife Yulia Navalnaya said his allies “were able to obtain and

securely transfer biological samples of Alexei abroad”. “Laboratories in two countries came to the conclusion that Alexei was killed. Specifically: poisoned,” she said. She urged the labs to independently release their results and to specify which poison they believe was used. Navalnaya published unverified photos she said were of his prison cell after his body was removed and claimed that testimony from prison officials said he had been convulsing on the floor. — AFP

King gives Trump royal welcome on UK state visit

DONALD Trump was welcomed by King Charles III to Windsor Castle with a royal spectacle featuring gun salutes, mounted horses and bagpipes as the US president’s historic second state visit got into full swing. The pair laughed and joked as Trump inspected troops at the castle west of London, in an elaborate welcome designed to play into the mercurial American leader’s love of pomp and pageantry. Some 120 horses, and 1,300 members of the British military — some in red tunics and gold plumed helmets — feted Trump during a ceremonial guard of honour that UK officials called the largest for a state visit to Britain in living memory. Heir-to-the-throne Prince William and his wife Catherine warmly greeted Trump and First Lady Melania Trump after the Marine One helicopter touched down in the grounds of Windsor at 12:15 pm.

Inside a ring of steel, under grey skies and out of sight from protesters, William and Catherine then walked Trump and his wife a short distance to meet the waiting Charles and Queen Camilla. As the president shook hands with the king, a 41-gun salute was fired simultaneously from six World War One-era guns on the castle’s east lawn, as a similar display occurred at the Tower of London, in the centre of the capital. The Trumps and the royals enjoyed a carriage procession featuring mounted cavalry through the Windsor estate towards the nearly 1,000-year-old castle, where Trump and Charles inspected the guard of honour. The pair could be seen laughing and joking, and the president saluted as the US national anthem played out before the royals and their guests headed inside for lunch. Britain is going the extra mile to dazzle and flatter the unpredictable Trump as it tries to keep him onside during a host of international crises. The 79-year-old Republican is, however, being kept far away from Britons among whom polls indicate Trump remains unpopular, with the entire visit happening behind closed doors. “It’s quite sad that the public cannot see the president,” 40-year-old Charlene Bryan, who



US President Donald Trump, Britain’s King Charles, Queen Camilla and first lady Melania Trump with Britain’s Catherine, Princess of Wales, and Britain’s William, Prince of Wales watch soldiers marching past at Windsor Castle. — Reuters

had travelled from London hoping to see Trump, said. Trump is the first US president to receive two state visits, after his previous one with Queen Elizabeth II in 2019. He will also be the first to get a joint flypast by US and UK fighter jets at an event of its kind. It will feature US and British F-35 military jets and the Royal Air Force’s Red Arrows display team. The Trumps will lay a wreath on the tomb of Queen Elizabeth II, who died in 2022, and the president and Charles will wrap up on Wednesday with a white-tie state banquet, where they are due to make speeches. Trump’s unpredictability on everything from tariffs to Ukraine and Gaza has caused global turmoil and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will be hoping the president leaves on Thursday feeling the warm glow of royal soft power — but there are no guarantees. Trump appeared to be feeling the love as he arrived at the US ambassador’s official residence in London late on Tuesday

with the first lady following his flight from Washington on Air Force One. “A lot of things here warm my heart,” said the president, whose mother hailed from Scotland and who owns two golf resorts in the country. He described Charles, 76, who is undergoing treatment for cancer, as “my friend”. The US leader may also relish a chance to escape a turbulent period at home, where the killing of right-wing activist Charlie Kirk has caused deep turmoil. Starmer will host Trump on the second day of the visit on Thursday at his country residence, Chequers. The pair will be buoyed by British pharmaceutical group GSK’s announcement that it will invest \$30 billion in the United States over the next five years but talks could turn awkward on several fronts. Starmer in particular faces political troubles at home, after sacking his UK ambassador to Washington, Peter Mandelson, over a furore involving the diplomat’s connection to the late Epstein. — AFP

UK government defends France migrants deal after court block

LONDON: The UK government insisted its one-for-one migrants deal with France would go ahead after the High Court in London blocked the planned deportation of an Eritrean migrant. The court’s decision poses another setback to plans to stem the flow of irregular migrants crossing the Channel on small boats, as charities warn the UK-France deal will likely face several legal challenges. “This is one person, it is not going to undermine the fundamental basis of this deal,” government minister Liz Kendall told Times Radio, after the Eritrean, who was scheduled to be flown to France on Wednesday morning, won an 11th-hour reprieve. “This decision is disappointing but it won’t prevent the rest of that deal going ahead,” added Kendall. Lawyers for the man, who cannot be named for legal reasons, said he faces a “real risk of destitution” if he is sent back to France and brought

the case under a scheme which assesses victims of slavery and human trafficking. A judge granted a 14-day pause to the deportation plans in order for more information to be sought. Under the “one-in, one-out” deal, the UK can detain and return migrants coming to Britain on small boats if they are deemed ineligible for asylum, including those who have passed through a “safe country” to reach UK shores. In return, London will accept an equal number of migrants from France who can apply for a UK visa via an online platform under the pilot scheme which came into force in August and is set to run until June 2026. More than 90 migrants who recently arrived to the UK on small boats have been detained for deportation to France, according to charities. France will make its first repatriations from Saturday, its interior ministry said.



Britain’s PM Keir Starmer (C) and France’s President Emmanuel Macron (L) pose for a family photo with delegates during the UK-France Summit at 10 Downing Street in London. — AFP file photo

The British returns, which were set to begin early this week, have already seen multiple delays.

Migrants scheduled to be flown from Heathrow Airport to Paris on Air France flights on Monday and

Tuesday had their deportations delayed after filing legal claims, according to various charities working with them. “There’s going to be all sorts of challenges that will be testing the new agreement and where the ground lies,” Pierre Makhoul from the Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) charity said. “If the government presumed that the removals would actually take place this week, then they might be premature,” he added. Under the agreement, those who come to the UK via small boats and are removed to France will be barred from applying for legal routes to re-enter Britain. “That does mean that those who are here will fight very hard,” said Makhoul. Like previous administrations, Starmer’s Labour government has struggled to deter thousands of migrants arriving to UK shores, with more than 31,000 crossing in small boats this year. — AFP

OPINION

Routes, ribbons and the race for time



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

spent last week in Hong Kong at the Belt and Road Summit, a gathering that feels like a living map. You can hear trade routes in the hallway, see ports and rail lines in a speaker’s hand gesture, and feel supply chains tilt policy.

On the margins, I witnessed the launch of Oman’s first Energy Transition Fund, a partnership that signals long-term confidence in clean energy. For a country anchoring the Indian Ocean’s crossroads, it felt like a milestone that speaks.

On stage, I drew a line between Muscat and Victoria Harbour, showing how a city built for deal-making can bridge green capital to projects. The conversation was practical. What does it take to move money with purpose? What proof gives investors courage? How do we thread climate goals through the fabric of trade?

From that warm harbour on the South China Sea, my thoughts drifted north to a colder threshold. The Arctic is loosening, and with it a century of cartography. A northern corridor now promises a China–Northern Europe passage in about eighteen days. Time is shaved, and time is the coin every ship spends.

Trade has always chased the clock. A faster lane moves more than containers; it moves power and attention. It invites new calculations in boardrooms and ministries far from the ice. If a captain can save a week, a financier will rewrite a model, and a minister will weigh a different map.

Where does that leave us, here in the cradle of old currents? Oman knows its seas intimately: routes carved by wind and memory, ports shaped for service, and hands tuned to tide. But the clock ticks louder now. A vessel that slices through the Arctic in record time redraws not just maps but also expectations. The value will follow the velocity. We pivot with precision, not in panic, by utilising faster turnarounds, smoother permits, and molecules that whisper proof. Our corridors were always a bet on alignment, and they must also satisfy arithmetic, so if transit time narrows margins, we lean on what cannot be copied, on verified emissions and safety at every gate, and on partners who grow with us, not despite us. I hold this work close because it lives through people and through jobs and skills that span scientists and welders and negotiators and dreamers, and as the map

Routes are choices traced on water. Ribbons are choices tied to people. In the race for time, the finish line keeps moving, which is another way of saying the work continues.

shifts beneath our feet, the model inhales and widens, with electrons alongside bunkering fuel, with service yards where ships depart better than they arrived, with data that traces each tonne from sun to socket, and with policy as choreography that keeps each step aware of the next.

The launch in Hong Kong and the ice in the High North feel far apart until you hold them in the same palm: a ribbon and a route. One speaks of intention, and the other speaks of speed. Together, they pose a simple question. How do we spend our time advantage? Do we spend it by shaving minutes from a form, reducing grams from a footprint, or alleviating doubts from an investor’s mind? All three are within reach. I left the summit with sea salt on my face and a head full of maps. I think of cranes moving like herons at dawn. I think of a bow pushing through floes. I think of Muscat mornings where the air tastes of cardamom and tide. Routes are choices traced on water. Ribbons are choices tied to people. In the race for time, the finish line keeps moving, which is another way of saying the work continues. We will match pace with purpose, and let the results speak in their own clear voice.

Top music body says AI firms guilty of ‘wilful’ copyright theft

FANNY LATTACH

AI companies have sucked up the world’s entire music catalogue and are guilty of “wilful, commercial-scale copyright infringement”, a major music industry group said.

“The world’s largest tech companies, as well as AI-specific companies, such as OpenAI, Suno, and Udio, Mistral, etc. are engaged in the largest copyright infringement exercise that has been seen,” John Phelan, Director-General of the International Confederation of Music Publishers (ICMP), said.

For nearly two years, the Brussels-based body, which brings together major record labels and other music industry professionals, investigated how generative artificial intelligence (AI) companies used material to enrich their services.

The ICMP is one of a number of industry bodies spanning the news media and publishing to target the booming artificial intelligence sector over its use of content without paying royalties.

AI music generators such as Suno and Udio can produce tracks with voices, melodies and musical styles that echo those of original artists such as the Beatles, Mariah Carey, Depeche Mode, or the Beach Boys.

“What we see is they are engaged in wilful, commercial-scale copyright infringement.”

One exception was Eleven Music, an AI-generated music service provider, which signed a deal with the Kobalt record label in August, Phelan said.

Contacted by AFP, OpenAI declined to comment. Google, Mistral, Suno and Udio did not respond.

Tech giants often invoke “fair use”, a copyright exception that allows, under certain circumstances, the use of a work without permission.

Research by the ICMP, first published in music outlet Billboard on September 9, claimed that AI companies had engaged in widespread “scraping”, a practice that uses programmes known as “crawlers” which explore the Internet for content.

Lyrics can be harvested to feed some models, which then use them for inspiration or reproduce them without permission, according to the ICMP.

In the United States, AI start-up Anthropic, creator of Claude, announced on September 6 that it had agreed to pay at least \$1.5 billion into a compensation fund for authors, rights holders and publishers who sued the firm for illegally downloading millions of books.

AI-generated music accounts for 28 per cent of content uploaded daily on Deezer, the French music platform, which has reported “a surge” over the past year in uploads. — AFP

The GCC’s defence move

A recent event has brought new attention to the security of our Gulf region. On September 15, 2025, leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) met in Doha. This followed an Israeli attack in Qatar on September 9. At the meeting, Qatar’s leaders called for a “concrete” response. As a result, the GCC announced it will consider activating its joint defence mechanism. This important decision requires careful thought. It is necessary to understand what this step means for the future of our region’s stability and for the Sultanate of Oman.

First, we should understand the joint defence agreement. The Gulf Cooperation Council is a political and economic union of six member states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In the year 2000, these countries signed a Joint Defence Agreement. This agreement states that an attack on one member is an attack on all members. The military part of the GCC is called the Peninsula Shield Force, which was created in 1984. Activating the defence agreement means this force, and other national forces, could be used to defend a member state that is under attack.

The discussion to activate this mechanism now is a direct result of the Israeli attack in Doha. The GCC called the attack a “brutal Israeli aggression” and a “direct threat to joint Gulf security”. This is the first time in many years that the GCC has so seriously considered using its joint defence powers. The goal is to show a united front and to deter any future attacks on a member state. This shows a strong message of solidarity among the Gulf countries at a time of high tension in the wider Middle East.

For Oman, this development has special importance. Our country has always followed a path of peace and dialogue in foreign policy. We believe in diplomacy to solve conflicts. Activating a military agreement must be balanced with our tradition of de-escalation. However, the security of our region is also a top priority. A stronger,



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman with Emir of Qatar Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani and GCC representatives in Doha. — AFP



BADR AL DHAFRI

The writer is head of proofreading and translation at Oman Daily Observer

more unified GCC defence posture could help protect important maritime routes in the Gulf, which are vital for our economy and for global energy markets. In my view, Oman can play a role in shaping how the defence mechanism is used, making sure it is for deterrence and not for starting new conflicts.

A collective defence system in the Gulf has wider effects. For our allies, like the United States, it could mean a stronger regional partner. For our rivals, it sends a clear message that the GCC states will protect each other. However, there are also risks. Any military action could lead to a bigger conflict, which would be bad for everyone. There is a danger of miscalculation. This is why it is very important for the GCC to create clear rules of engagement. The use of force must be a last resort, and it must follow international law.

Of course, some people may worry that activating this defence agreement will pull the GCC into conflicts that are not its own. They might argue that it is better to focus only on diplomacy. This is a reasonable concern. A military alliance can sometimes create more tension. However, diplomacy is always stronger when it is supported

by a credible defence. The goal is not to seek war, but to create a security situation so strong that no country would dare to attack a GCC member. A strong defence can be the best way to keep the peace.

Looking ahead, the GCC states must move forward with calm and careful planning. The decision to activate the joint defence mechanism should be part of a larger strategy. This strategy must include continued investment in diplomacy and conflict resolution. It is important that the member states agree on the exact situations where the mechanism will be used. They must coordinate closely and keep channels for dialogue open with all parties in the region.

The move towards activating the GCC’s joint defence is a serious and necessary response to a changing security situation. It is a step towards greater self-reliance for our region. For Oman, it is a moment to combine our traditional wisdom of peace with the practical need for strong deterrence. If managed with care and foresight, a united GCC defence will not lead to war. Instead, it can be a foundation for a more stable and secure future for all the people of the Gulf.

If you want to test a man’s character, give him power



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

THE pursuit and display of power among world leaders have led to global instability. Power is a game-changer that affects the fate of nations and people. It is about influence, money, and consequently, corruption. Hypocrisy wears expensive shoes.

As geopolitics shake the international arena, a look into the dismantling of the long-standing international order is worth reading. As the world stands at a crossroads with regional crises and power rivalries, the stage is set to establish whether diplomacy or conflict will shape our future.

The definition of power varies depending on the discipline, including sociology, psychology, economics, political science and philosophy.

It is simply the capacity to influence, lead, dominate and have an impact on the lives and actions of society.

Power is contextual, but it is also a resource. As a resource, power can be used as a threat or revenge against individuals, organisations, or nations that defy the powerholder.

For instance, Donald Trump's Liberation Day tariffs, which impose inflated tariff levels on international trade partners to address a long-standing US trade deficit, are stretching presidential authority. Another example was the withholding of funds to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an autonomous organ of the Organisation of

American States, to obtain specific objectives.

The use of intimidating tactics, which include shaming heads of state, using tariffs, and coercion against organisations and nations that disagree with Trump's objectives, raises questions about the boundaries of his position as President of the United States.

With manufactured narratives and a belligerent style, Trump revisits the how-to procedures of authoritarian power. Trump is not alone in this; there is a defiant Vladimir Putin, and there is Benjamin Netanyahu. From South and Central America to Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, there is no shortage of players ready to architect peace or conflict based on their interests.

In terms of context, China's display of military power clearly indicates its desire for a new global order.

The attendance of Russian, North Korean, Indian, and Iranian leaders at the China Victory Day military parade represented a diplomatically choreographed spectacle that may test the US-led global order. We witness the development of an alliance without allegiance.

The BRICS countries are posing challenges to the world's leadership. With Brazil as a key founder, the group of nations aims to decrease their dependence on the US dollar and build a collaborative financial system.

European observers view BRICS as a geopolitical strategy orchestrated by China and Russia, aimed at transforming global

The definition of power varies depending on the discipline, including sociology, psychology, economics, political science and philosophy. It is simply the capacity to influence, lead, dominate and have an impact on the lives and actions of society

governance through a Sino-Russian axis.

These shifting dynamics have put Brazil under Trump's ire. His administration has launched unparalleled political and financial attacks against Brazil's government and judiciary.

The attacks on Brazil are partly connected to Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) agenda. They are also a response to the global movement towards reforming the international system.

Trump is using Brazil to issue a warning to other nations, particularly those within the BRICS group, regarding issues such as the regulation of digital communications, the adoption of alternative currencies to the US dollar for trade transactions, and their diplomatic ties with China.

The world is descending into a state of emergency with threats and militarised and punitive actions. The escalation of tensions between nations can echo across different regions in multiple ways.

Regardless of who it harms, the power game is an essential part of business and politics. The goal is to form a geopolitical sphere of influence, with the in-between countries serving as pawns on a chessboard.

Power is more addictive than drugs. It is a corrupting force. It makes powerholders feel invincible and above the law.

In accountable societies, mechanisms exist to prevent the adverse effects of unchecked authority.

FILIPINOS BATTLE RISING SEA ON SINKING ISLAND

PAM CASTRO

On the Philippine island of Pugad, street food vendor Maria Tamayo wakes before her grandchildren to begin the backbreaking work of removing seawater from her home scoop by scoop with a plastic dustpan.

The routine has been the same ever since the rising tides of Manila Bay began swallowing the island - a seven-hectare speck of land in danger of sinking completely underwater.

"Scooping water takes a long time. That's why my feet have started aching," the 65-year-old said, adding that she can spend up to three hours a day at the task. "I have to scoop out the water before my grandchildren wake up, or else they'll slip on the floor. But it's no use ... there's still water."

Tamayo is one of 2,500 people living in Pugad's only village.

The island is not the only one at risk in coastal Bulacan. Parts of the province are sinking at a rate of almost 11 centimetres a year, the fastest in the Philippines, according to a study led by geologist Mahar Lagmay. The gradual sinking, known as land subsidence, is an "alarming" phenomenon caused by the overextraction of groundwater, and exacerbated by rising sea levels due to global warming, Lagmay said.

"The rates of subsidence (on Pugad Island) are quite high," he said, adding that while studies specific to the tiny island were lacking, existing data on surrounding areas told the story clearly.

With high tides flooding the streets at least three times a week, the sea already dictates the rhythm of daily life on Pugad.

Class schedules are adjusted daily based on tide charts to prevent children from contracting flood-borne diseases.

Homes have been raised on stilts to keep floors dry, while small business owners use high tables to keep their wares above murky water that can rise to 1.5 metres on heavy flooding days.

Sea levels across the Philippines are already rising three times faster than the global average of 3.6 millimetres per year, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has said this could accelerate to 13 millimetres annually.

"Sea level rise is being experienced in many parts of the country," DENR geosciences chief Karlo Queano said, warning coastal areas could disappear without large-scale intervention.

While piecemeal efforts are in place in some areas - groundwater extraction has been banned in parts of Bulacan since 2004 - a broad national strategy has yet to take shape.

A government study on the path forward was not expected until 2028, Queano said.

"I think it's already impossible for our lives in the village to go back to normal because of climate change," said Pugad village captain Jaime Gregorio. — AFP

Redrawing the map of vulnerability in ME

ON September 9, a missile slammed into Doha. Israel claimed it was targeting Hamas figures. But the implications go far beyond a single strike. For the first time in decades, a Gulf capital — long considered politically sacrosanct even amid wars in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen — was pulled directly into the conflict.

The shock was immediate: an Arab-Islamic emergency summit convened, the UN scheduled a special debate, and markets began to price in new risks.

History turns on moments when the rules change. The Israeli strike in Doha was such a moment. It shattered the tacit understanding that Gulf capitals are off-limits, redrawing the map of vulnerability in the Middle East. What happens next will reverberate not only through the Gulf, but across energy markets, global trade and the fragile web of normalisation efforts linking Israel and its neighbours.

The Doha strike is more than a tactical episode in Israel's long war with Hamas. It is a strategic inflexion point. It forces us to ask: what does this mean for the Gulf, for Oman, and for the wider world? Who stands to gain, and who stands to lose? And how should policymakers chart a course through what looks like an era of mounting instability?

The strike represents a new phase in the Middle Eastern conflict. Until now, Gulf capitals were treated as off-limits, even when regional wars escalated. By hitting Doha, Israel has expanded the battlefield. This shift forces GCC states to rethink the vulnerability of their own diplomatic, financial, and aviation hubs. The cost of protecting these hubs against drones, missiles, and cyberattacks — will only grow.

The attack also undermines one of the region's most fragile political projects: normalisation with Israel. While diplomatic channels may remain open, the political space for economic, technological, and security cooperation has narrowed. Quiet partnerships — already



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

The GCC states should quietly coordinate on air and missile defence, focusing on integrated interoperability, counter-drone systems around diplomatic and mediation sites. Maritime security arrangements at Bab al Mandeb and Hormuz should be reinforced, ideally with international naval partners

sensitive — have become politically costlier to sustain.

The economic consequences are immediate and global. The Middle East controls three maritime chokepoints — the Suez Canal, Bab Al Mandeb, and the Strait of Hormuz — that carry a significant portion of global energy and trade. These routes were already strained by Ansar Allah-linked disruptions in the Red Sea. The strike on Doha adds another layer of geopolitical fragility. Insurers are repricing risk. Some shippers are rerouting vessels around the Cape of Good Hope, extending transit times and increasing costs. Even minor disruptions can add a risk premium of two to five dollars per barrel of oil. For Europe, this means higher imported inflation at a time when energy costs are already politically toxic. For Asia, it means delays and surcharges in supply chains that fuel its manufacturing economies. For emerging markets, it means capital outflows and tighter financial conditions as investors retreat at the first sign of Middle East volatility.

Oman, like its neighbours, sits at the centre of this shifting geography. Its neutrality and reputation as a convening power may increase in value. Salalah, Duqm, and Sohar ports could serve as alternative gateways if Red Sea or Gulf routes are further disrupted. But Oman must also invest heavily in infrastructure resilience and narrative discipline to maintain confidence among investors, shippers, and partners. Three layers of action are needed for the region, and Oman in particular, to respond.

In the short term, the priority is de-escalation and protection. GCC states should quietly coordinate on air and missile defence, focusing on integrated interoperability, counter-drone systems around diplomatic and mediation sites. Maritime security arrangements at Bab al-Mandeb and Hormuz should be reinforced, ideally with international naval partners. Governments must also be ready for cyber and disinformation campaigns designed to exploit the

fog of strategic ambiguity.

In the medium term, the task is to insulate essential economic functions from political volatility. Commercial and technology deals should be structured with escrow arrangements, arbitration in neutral jurisdictions, and automatic adjustment clauses tied to conflict-risk indices. Energy planners should assume temporary chokepoint disruptions and prepare alternative supply and storage routes. Oman and Qatar could lead efforts to codify a GCC Mediation Charter, protecting neutral venues and humanitarian corridors from being targeted in future conflicts.

In the long term, resilience must be institutionalised. The Gulf needs integrated missile defence and maritime domain awareness systems. Governments should adopt data-driven dashboards tracking shipping incidents, insurance premia, and capital flows to guide real-time responses. Financial stability tools-liquidity lines, FX swap arrangements, and macro-prudential buffers — must be kept ready for shocks.

Not all actors are harmed equally by this new instability.

Winners include non-state actors and regional networks that benefit from increased Gulf vulnerability without bearing the direct costs of confrontation. They gain narrative traction and strategic leverage by highlighting the limitations of regional defence and deterrence. Meanwhile, maritime insurers, security contractors, and alternative logistics corridors stand to profit from heightened demand, as businesses seek to hedge against new and expanding risks across trade and transit routes.

Paradoxically, Gulf mediators such as Oman and Qatar may find their diplomatic role elevated — if they can safeguard their neutrality while withstanding intensified strategic pressures. This is not merely a geopolitical opportunity; it is a call to serve the greater good — to anchor de-escalation, preserve humanitarian space, and restore diplomacy.

SPORTS

BJK CUP



Ukraine's Elina Svitolina celebrates winning her BJK Cup singles match against Spain's Paula Badosa in Shenzhen. — Reuters

SVITOLINA SENDS UKRAINE PAST SPAIN INTO SEMIFINALS

SHENZHEN, China: Elina Svitolina sent Ukraine into the semifinals of the Billie Jean King Cup for the first time as she battled back to beat Spain's Paula Badosa 5-7, 6-2, 7-5 in Shenzhen on Wednesday.

Marta Kostyuk had put Ukraine ahead in the quarterfinal tie against the five-time champions by beating Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 7-6(3), 6-2 in the opening singles.

Badosa looked on course to drag Spain back into contention as she took a tight first set but 31-year-old Svitolina seized control to win the second.

Svitolina was racing towards victory at 4-1 in the decider but Badosa launched a spirited fightback with some heavy hitting as the rallies grew more intense.

Badosa even had a break point to lead 6-5 but could not convert it and Svitolina then used all her experience to clinch the match on the Spaniard's serve in the next game.

Ukraine will face reigning champions Italy in the semifinals on Friday after they beat China 2-0 on Tuesday. — Reuters

HOLDERS ITALY TO FACE AUSTRIA IN DAVIS CUP QUARTERS



Spain's captain David Ferrer, Pedro Martinez, Roberto Carballes Baena, Jaime Munar and Pablo Carreno-Busta celebrate after their win against Denmark. — Reuters

BERLIN: Title holders Italy with world number one Jannik Sinner were on Wednesday drawn to face Austria in the quarterfinals of the Davis Cup.

Should the champions prevail the winner of France v Belgium would await them next at the November 18-23 Finals in the Italian city of Bologna. In the other half of the draw, Carlos Alcaraz' Spain play the Czech Republic and second seeds Germany are up against Argentina.

It remains to be seen whether world number three Alexander Zverev will play for the Germans who last lifted the trophy in 1993. Zverev last featured in the team event in February 2023.

Germany have reached the semifinals and the quarterfinals twice each in the past years. They are very well looking forward to reaching the last-four stage this time. "Argentina as a big tennis nation are of course a difficult opponent. They are well placed but not unbeatable. I expect a close tie," German captain Michael Kohlmann said. — dpa

Dhofar bag First Division League championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

DHOFAR

Club were crowned champions of the 2025 First Division Hockey League after a deserved 3-0 victory over Sohar Club in the final match held at the Hockey Oman Stadium in Al Amerat. The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, Chairman of the Oman Basketball Association (OBA).

In the third-place playoff, Masirah Club clinched the bronze medal with a 2-1 win over Nizwa Club, confirming their strong presence in this season's competition.

The individual awards added further excitement to the conclusion of the 2025 First Division Hockey League. Sohar's Omar al Maamari emerged as the league's top scorer after netting seven goals. Dhofar's goalkeeper Idris al Balushi was honoured with the best goalkeeper award. The best rising player award went to Masirah's Al Abbas al Noufali. Meanwhile, Dhofar's Bassem Rajab was deservedly named best player of the league.

DHOFAR DOMINATE

The match began cautiously, with both teams focusing on probing each other's play and closing down spaces. Despite a few attempts, the first quarter ended goalless.

After half an hour, Akram Ashoor broke the deadlock with a well-executed penalty corner in the 30th minute. The goal boosted Dhofar's morale, increasing their attacking pressure. Sohar, led by Said al Noufali, tried counterattacks, but goalkeeper Ahmed Thabit made decisive saves to keep his team ahead, ending the first half 1-0.

In the third quarter, Dhofar maintained their organisation and dominance, with Omar al Adham adding a second goal in the 44th minute after a well-coordinated move. Sohar attempted to fight back, but poor finishing hindered their efforts.

As the pressure mounted, Anas al Wahaibi sealed Dhofar's triumph with a third goal from another penalty corner in the 54th minute, crushing Sohar's hopes of a comeback. Despite late attempts,



Dhofar completed a strong tournament to emerge champions. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

Dhofar's defence and goalkeeper stood firm until the final whistle, confirming their title.

MASIRAH TAKE THIRD PLACE

In an exciting battle for third place, Masirah struck in the sixth minute through Nasser al Nofali from a penalty corner but Majid al Saraiddi equalised for Nizwa in the 18th minute. Quickly regaining the lead, Juma al Nofali scored in the 25th minute, ending the first half 2-1 for Masirah.

Despite continuous attempts from Nizwa in the later quarters, Masirah's defence and goalkeeper Murtadha al Nofali held strong to secure third place.

Following the final, chief guest Eng Khalfan al Naabi congratulated Dhofar on their well-deserved triumph, praising their performance against Sohar in the final, which reflected a competitive spirit and closely matched levels. He stressed that the success of the league's

organisation reflects the Oman Hockey Association's commitment, under the leadership of Dr Marwan al Juma, to developing the sport through diverse competitions targeting all age categories.

He said the final showcased high technical standards, proving that clear plans and effective strategies are in place to elevate Oman hockey at both club and national team levels.

For his part, Dhofar player Akram Ashoor expressed his delight with the title, describing it as the fruit of collective effort and proper planning since the start of preparations. He noted that the final against Sohar was tough and exciting, but the team's discipline and the coach's guidance enabled them to impose their style and secure a 3-0 win while keeping a clean sheet. He added that the championship serves as strong motivation to continue intense training and deliver better performances in upcoming competitions.

Oman go through their paces ahead of decisive clashes

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The Red Warriors kicked off their training sessions in the domestic preparatory camp on Tuesday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex under the direct supervision of head coach Carlos Queiroz. The six-day gathering will serve as a vital step in the team's build-up to the decisive stage of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 2026 – where Oman will face Qatar on October 8 and UAE on October 11 in Doha.

The camp began with an intensive training session in which the coaching staff placed emphasis on both technical and tactical aspects of the game. Players worked through drills that focused on fitness, ball control, short passing and attacking movements, alongside special sessions designed to sharpen their readiness for the upcoming challenge.

Speaking to the media ahead of the training session, Queiroz



The camp began with an intensive training session.

highlighted the significance of this stage in the national team's journey. "We are raising the level of our training sessions as we approach the deciding matches against Qatar and UAE. We need to be more focused for these games. I am fully aware that the upcoming fixtures will be the most important matches in Oman's team history, and that is why our full attention is on this camp and the preparations that

follow," the coach said.

Responding to the absence of Al Mundher al Alawi, Queiroz clarified that his decision was tactical. "There are a lot of players who were selected for different positions, and the focus was to give chances to new faces. This does not mean Al Mundher is out of my plans. He remains one of the pillars of the team and is performing at a high level. The final starting line-up is not yet settled as

there is still much work to do," he explained.

COACH'S PHILOSOPHY

Team captain Ali al Busaidy underlined the importance of adapting to the coach's philosophy during this period. "As players, we need to gradually adapt to the coach's style and ideas. These two matches are the most important of our careers, and we must be mentally and physically ready to give everything," he said.

Veteran goalkeeper Faiz al Rushaidi affirmed the necessity of this local camp, despite on its brief duration. "It may seem unusual to hold a camp over such a short period but with a coach like Queiroz, we are assured on his technical works. The matches against Qatar and UAE will not be easy, and we need to work hard to come out of this camp with maximum benefit. The Central Asian Championship was a useful test for us, and now we know better what the coach expects."

TENSE TIE



Bangladesh's Jaker Ali (L) and Towhid Hridoy run between the wickets during the Asia Cup 2025 Twenty20 match against Afghanistan at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

BANGLADESH BEAT AFGHANISTAN TO KEEP HOPES ALIVE IN ASIA CUP

ABU DHABI: Spinner Nasum Ahmed produced a miserly spell to help Bangladesh beat Afghanistan by eight runs on Tuesday and keep their Asia Cup hopes alive.

Bangladesh posted 154-5 batting first as opener Tanzid Hasan starred with his 52 off 31 balls in Abu Dhabi.

Nasum and fellow spinner Rishad Hossain then took two wickets each before pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman returned figures of 3-28 to help bowl out Afghanistan for 146.

Taskin Ahmed also claimed two wickets as he wrapped up the innings with the final ball of the match.

Bangladesh ended Group B with two wins and one defeat in their three outings.

Their chances of reaching the Super Four stage will depend on the final match of the group between Afghanistan and Sri Lanka on Thursday.

Bangladesh will go through if Sri Lanka win, but an Afghan victory would see them progress and leave the Sri Lankans and Bangladesh to be split on net run-rate.

Left-arm spinner Nasum rocked the Afghanistan chase early when he struck with the first ball of the innings to trap Sediqullah Atal lbw and then grabbed the key wicket of Ibrahim Zadran, for five, in the fifth over.

He returned figures of 2-11 from his four overs.

Rishad dismissed Gulbadin Naib caught and bowled for 16 with his leg-spin and then sent back the dangerous Rahmanullah Gurbaz for 35 to dent Afghanistan.

Azmatullah Omarzai attempted to revive the chase with three sixes in his 16-ball 30 but holed out off Taskin.

Skipper Rashid Khan made one final push with a quickfire 20 but fell to Mustafizur, who struck again to be on a hat-trick which was avoided by Fazalhaq Farooqi.

Earlier Tanzid put on an opening stand of 63 with Saif Hasan, who made 30, as the two racked up 59 in the powerplay.

Rashid broke the stand as he struck in his first over by bowling Saif and Afghanistan's spinners soon took control.

Left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad trapped skipper Litton Das lbw for nine to further peg back Bangladesh.

Tanzid raised his fifty off 28 deliveries but fell to Noor in the next over.

Towhid Hridoy added a 20-ball 26 but although Bangladesh managed just 67 runs in the final 10 overs, it proved enough for the win. — AFP

Bangladesh's wicketkeeper and captain Litton Das (R) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Afghanistan's Karim Janat during the Asia Cup 2025 Twenty20 match at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi. — AFP



Portugal's Isaac Nader (L) reacts after winning as Kenya's Reynold Cheruiyot and Britain's Jake Wightman fall while crossing the finish line in the men's 1,500m final during the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo on Wednesday. — AFP

Nader pulls off shock in 1,500 metres, Moon rises to pole vault challenge

THE beauty of sport is its ability to surprise and Isaac Nader produced one of the biggest ever in international 1,500 metres finals as he won the world title on Wednesday while Katie Moon was a more predictable winner of a third successive pole vault crown.

Portugal had never had a medallist in the 1,500m but Nader's storming run in the home straight was enough for the 24-year-old to deny Jake Wightman of Britain a second title.

"Some people criticised me and said I would never achieve this but here I am — world champion and the first Portuguese athlete to win a global gold in the 1,500m," said a beaming Nader.

While Wightman celebrated his silver after an injury-plagued three years since he won the title in 2022, there was misery for reigning champion Josh Kerr after the Briton was left hopping along midway through the race, apparently with an injury.

Even at 34, Moon is pretty much unbeatable in an event that has failed to match the heights of the men's event in which Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis broke the world record for the 14th time in Tokyo.

Moon triumphed with a best vault of 4.90 metres, a considerable 16 centimetres shy of the world record set by Yelena Isinbayeva 16 years ago.

"It feels fun watching girls getting in shape in real life," said Moon. "I am 34 now and I have seen several athletes come in young and blossom.

"All my medals are special but this one is the one. The older you get, it gets harder."

The men's long jump went to Italian Mattia Furlani, 20, who confirmed his Olympic bronze last year was no fluke with a winning effort of 8.39m.

Defending champion and two-time Olympic gold medallist Miltiadis Tentoglou of Greece was totally out of sorts and finished 11th.

One lesson to be learned is beware Kenyan women distance athletes called Faith.

Faith Kipyegon romped to the 1500m title on Tuesday and on Wednesday it was the turn of Faith Cherotich to triumph in the 3,000m steeplechase.

Femke Bol has had the misfortune to compete in the 400m hurdles at a time when the phenomenon that is Sydney



Italy's Mattia Furlani competes in the men's long jump final during the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo. — AFP



Katie Moon of the US celebrates winning gold in the women's pole vault, with her medal and national flag at the Japan National Stadium. — Reuters

McLaughlin-Levrone has been around. McLaughlin-Levrone, though, has turned her attention to the 400m flat and is favourite to add that world title to her tally on Thursday.

Bol, three times a minor medallist behind the American, can take advantage of her absence to retain her world crown, just as she did in the 2023 championships.

Bol had far too much pace in her semifinal for former Olympic and world champion Dalilah Muhammad, who at 35 is 10 years older than the Dutchwoman.

'BIG DOGS'

The climax to the men's event is a rematch of the three medallists from the 2021 Olympic final in Tokyo.

Karsten Warholm, who set a memorable world record on that scorching day, takes on runner-up Rai Benjamin, who avenged that defeat in winning Olympic gold in Paris last year, with bronze medallist, 2022 world champion Alison dos Santos, completing the trio.

The stage is set for perhaps the most keenly awaited clash in the field events, the men's javelin final on Thursday, between Olympic gold medallist Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan and the man he deposed in Paris last year India's Neeraj Chopra.

However, the script came close to being torn up by Nadeem until he saved face in qualifying with his third and final throw.

Chopra feels right at home in the stadium where he won Olympic gold four years ago, albeit with empty stands owing to Covid restrictions. "That Olympic gold medal changed everything for me," he said. "After winning it, I started to believe in myself."

Nadeem may have pulled it out of the fire but it was not the case for another Olympic champion, Spanish triple jumper Jordan Diaz.

The 24-year-old's dream of a full house of titles, he is also European champion, ended, as he pulled up with a quadriceps injury in qualifying.

All the favourites in the men's and women's 200m — in which Melissa Jefferson-Wooden is bidding to become the first to achieve the individual sprint double since Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce in 2013 — eased into Thursday's semifinals.

Joining them is 17-year-old Australian Gout Gout, of whom great things are expected.

The Australia-born son of South Sudanese parents took his first experience of a global championships in his long stride. "It's a great experience for me, running against the big dogs," said Gout.

After the action was followed by big crowds early in the event, Wednesday's action attracted just shy of 36,000, leaving thousands of empty seats. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Inter Miami CF forward Lionel Messi (10) dribbles the ball against Seattle Sounders defender Jackson Ragen (25) at Chase Stadium. — **Imagn Images**

MESSI, ALBA SHINE AS INTER MIAMI DEFEAT SOUNDERS

MIAMI: Lionel Messi scored one goal and set up another to spark Inter Miami over the Seattle Sounders 3-1 on Tuesday in an MLS rematch of a melee-capped Leagues Cup final.

The 38-year old Argentine striker who starred for Barcelona and led his homeland to the 2022 World Cup set up Spaniard Jordi Alba's goal in the 12th minute and scored in the 41st to give Miami a 2-0 halftime lead in the grudge-match contest.

American Ian Fray added a Miami goal in the 52nd minute for a 3-0 edge before Mexican midfielder Obed Vargas pulled one back for Seattle in the 69th.

The Sounders had routed Miami 3-0 on August 31 in Seattle in a Leagues Cup final that ended with a benches-clearing brawl and Inter striker Luis Suarez spitting on a Sounders staff member.

"It was important, beyond having good feelings, to find ourselves with the victory against a great rival that took away the possibility of winning a competition a couple of weeks ago," Miami coach Javier Mascherano said. "We understood it in the best way. We played the game we had to play."

Suarez, who apologised two weeks ago, was banned from the 2026 Leagues Cup and issued a three-match ban by MLS for his actions. The Uruguayan served his second match of the suspension in the home rematch with Seattle.

Inter Miami had slid to eighth place in the Eastern Conference with a 3-0 loss at Charlotte on Saturday but by beating Seattle improved to 14-6 with seven drawn for 49 points, leaping into fifth in the East and only eight points adrift of pace-setter Philadelphia with three matches in hand.

The Sounders fell to 12-8 with nine drawn for 45 points to stand fourth in the Western Conference, just one point ahead of Los Angeles FC. — **AFP**

BENFICA SET TO 'APPOINT' MOURINHO AS MANAGER

LISBON: Portuguese club Benfica are set to name Jose Mourinho as their manager following the sacking of Bruno Lage after their shock 3-2 Champions League defeat by Qarabag, Portuguese TV station RTP reported on Wednesday.

Benfica said in a statement on Wednesday they had reached an agreement to part ways with Lage following the home loss to the Azerbaijani side.

Benfica President Rui Costa said the club would quickly name Lage's successor before their league game against AVS Futebol SAD on Saturday.



JOSE MOURINHO

"I would like to thank Bruno for everything he tried to do, everything he did for Benfica, and all the commitment he showed throughout this year representing our club," he told a press conference. "But, unfortunately, the time has come, and we believe it was time for a change. As for the next coach: we obviously hope that on Saturday, in Vila das Aves, we will already have the new coach on the bench."

Former Chelsea, Real Madrid, Manchester United and Inter Milan manager Mourinho left Turkish club Fenerbahce in August, two days after his side lost in the Champions League playoffs to Benfica. A move to Benfica would bring Mourinho's remarkable career full circle, with the 62-year-old having started out at the club before moving to Porto and guiding them to Champions League glory in 2004.

He moved on to Chelsea, famously describing himself as "the Special One". — **Reuters**



Real Madrid's French forward #10 Kylian Mbappe scores his team's first goal from the penalty spot during the Uefa Champions League first round match between Real Madrid CF and Olympique de Marseille. — **AFP**

Arsenal, Real win openers, Juve snatch dramatic draw

ARSENAL won 2-0 away to Athletic Bilbao as the league phase of this season's Champions League kicked off on Tuesday, with two Kylian Mbappe penalties giving Real Madrid a narrow win over Marseille while Juventus and Borussia Dortmund drew an eight-goal thriller.

Tottenham Hotspur also won on the tournament's opening night which saw outsiders Union Saint-Gilloise and Qarabag claim first ever victories in the Champions League proper.

Arsenal are eager to make a big impression again in Europe's elite club competition, following their defeat by eventual champions Paris Saint-Germain in the semi-finals last season.

They got off to an ideal start in the Basque Country, with Gabriel Martinelli and Leandro Trossard scoring late goals to settle the game.

The Brazilian had only just come on when he ran through to open the scoring in the 72nd minute at San Mames. Arsenal then went on to seal the victory late on as Trossard — another substitute — scored with the aid of a deflection.

"We started to grow throughout the game. In the second half we were more fluent, dominant, and the finishers made the impact for us to win the game," said Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta.

HALF CENTURY FOR MBAPPE

Real Madrid came from behind to beat Marseille 2-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu, despite playing the closing stages of the game down to 10 men.

Marseille, winners of the inaugural Champions League in 1993, stunned the home crowd by taking the lead through Timothy Weah midway through the first half.

The record 15-time European champions grabbed an equaliser before the interval when Mbappe converted from the spot for the first time after Rodrygo was fouled in the area.

Xabi Alonso's side lost Trent Alexander-Arnold to injury early on and were reduced to 10 men in the second half when his replacement, Dani Carvajal, was sent off following a VAR check for a headbutt on Marseille goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli.

But the home side still snatched all three points thanks to another Mbappe penalty late on after Facundo Medina was harshly penalised for handball.

"For me it's a penalty, but I understand there are people who don't (think so), we're



Arsenal's Jurrien Timber in action with Athletic Bilbao's Mikel Vesga. — **Reuters**

all lost with this rule," Mbappe, who reached 50 goals for the club, told broadcaster Movistar. Thomas Frank's Spurs, who qualified for the Champions League after winning last season's Europa League, edged Villarreal 1-0 in North London.

The match was decided by a farcical early own goal from Villarreal goalkeeper Luiz Junior, who contrived to let Lucas Bergvall's cross trickle into the net.

The victory maintained Tottenham's impressive form under new boss Frank. "It was a very even game that we just edged," he told broadcaster Amazon Prime.

EIGHT-GOAL THRILLER

Juventus against Dortmund in Turin was a repeat of the 1997 final won by the Germans, and the fixture more than lived up to its billing, finishing in a spectacular 4-4 draw.

Remarkably the first half ended goalless, with the breakthrough coming seven minutes after half-time when Karim Adeyemi put the visitors ahead from a fine low strike.

Kenan Yildiz equalised with a stunning effort high into the top corner just after the hour mark, only for Felix Nmecha to put Dortmund back in front in style.

Dusan Vlahovic made it 2-2, but Yan Couto restored the Bundesliga side's advantage and they appeared to have sewn up the points when Ramy Bensebaini converted a penalty in the 86th minute.

However, Vlahovic pulled one back in the 94th minute and then crossed for Lloyd Kelly to head home in the sixth minute of stoppage time, rounding off an extraordinary evening.

There was similar drama in Lisbon, where Benfica seemed to be cruising at home to Qarabag after Enzo Barrenechea and Vangelis Pavlidis scored early goals.

However, Leandro Andrade pulled one back for the club from Azerbaijan before Camilo Duran equalised and Oleksiy Kashchuk turned and fired in from inside the area four minutes from time to make it 3-2.

It is the first time Qarabag have ever won a match in the Champions League proper.

Union Saint-Gilloise qualified after winning a first Belgian title in 90 years and they recorded a 3-1 victory away to PSV Eindhoven.

Promise David, Anouar Ait El Hadj and Kevin Mac Allister scored their goals in the Netherlands before Ruben van Bommel pulled one back. — **AFP**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
5,118.066

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$70.98
BRENT \$67.85
LIGHT \$63.89



SHORTTAKES



MSX LISTS RO73 M DEBUT BOND OF SEA GLIDER

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has announced the listing of the debut bond of Sea Glider LLC on its Bonds and Sukuk Market earlier this week.

According to Oman Investment Bank (OIB), the Issue Manager and Collecting Bank for the offering, the four-year amortising guaranteed bond, priced at a yield of 7%, raised RO 73 million (approximately \$190 million).

Describing the transaction as the “largest debut RO bond issuance by an Omani corporate”, OIB said the deal was upsized from its original maximum target of RO 50 million on the back of strong demand from a broad range of investors, including leading Omani institutions and prominent private investors.

The issuance extended Sea Glider’s debt maturity profile while lowering its overall financing costs, the bank noted.

Sea Glider is a subsidiary of Oman-based Sindbad Overseas, which is engaged in chartering commercial cargo vessels and other assets worldwide. As of end-March 2025, the Sindbad Group’s portfolio comprised 45 vessels, with an aggregate value exceeding RO 400 million based on international broker estimates, according to the bond prospectus.

The prospectus further revealed: “Based on the audited consolidated financial statements of the Group for FY2024 (consolidated at the Guarantor level), total assets stood at RO 308 million. Based on information provided by the management of the Guarantor, total assets as of end-March 2025 reached RO 355 million”.

Commenting on the successful completion of the offering, OIB stated: “Oman Investment Bank is proud to have acted as Issue Manager and Collecting Bank for this landmark transaction, which also marked the first issuance under Sindbad Overseas’ medium-term note programme.

This milestone reflects our commitment to delivering tailored and innovative financing solutions while advancing Oman’s position as a dynamic hub for capital market activity”.

Jindal Steel Duqm buys second DRI plant for HBI

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

JINDAL Steel Duqm, which is constructing the first-ever green steel complex at Duqm Special Economic Zone in the Sultanate of Oman, is procuring a second hydrogen-ready direct reduction (DRI) plant for the production of hot-briquetted iron (HBI) — a move that will bolster the Duqm complex’s output to a targeted 5 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) at full capacity.

The partnership of Italian steel engineering powerhouses Tenova and Danieli will supply the second DRI plant, replicating a similar order for the supply of the first DRI plant made in late 2023.

Each plant, based on their Energiron technology and sized at 2.5 mtpa of HBI, will contribute to a world-scale capacity of 5 mtpa when both phases of the steel mill complex are completed and brought into operation by around 2030.

Announcing the confirmation of the order for the second DRI plant, Danieli said in a post on Wednesday: “The direct reduction plant will be installed in Al Duqm, in the Al Wusta Governorate of the Sultanate of Oman, where the first Energiron DRI plant is under construction and scheduled to start operation in 2026”.

The Italian firm further added: “This new DRI plant will feature Zero-Reformer Energiron Direct Reduction technology, jointly developed by Tenova and Danieli, and will produce 2.5 million tonnes per year (mtpa) of direct reduced iron (DRI), achieving an average metallisation rate of 94%.

The hot DRI will be briquetted



Illustrative image of the hydrogen-ready DRI plant, based on Tenova and Danieli’s Energiron technology, procured by Jindal Steel Duqm

Each plant, based on their Energiron technology and sized at 2.5 mtpa of HBI, will contribute to a world-scale capacity of 5 mtpa when both phases of the steel mill complex are completed and brought into operation by around 2030.

to produce Hot Briquetted Iron (HBI), suitable for storage or export”.

Wholly owned by Indian power and steel conglomerate Jindal Group, Jindal Steel Duqm (previously known as Vulcan Green Steel) broke ground on its \$3 billion project at Duqm SEZ in November 2023. The plant’s Energiron DRI technology — hybrid by design — will enable operation with natural gas and up to 80% hydrogen, or any mix of the two, without requiring modifications to the plant.

“This project will leverage Oman’s natural gas and renewable-energy potential, converted into hydrogen.

Carbon capture facilities — a naturally embedded feature of the technology — will allow for the reuse of the captured carbon and will be integrated seamlessly into Jindal Steel Duqm’s larger green steel complex”, Danieli noted in its post. Significantly, Al

Duqm is shaping up to be a hub for international investments in green steel that seek to leverage the availability of low-carbon hydrogen in the area starting from 2030.

Kobe Steel, in partnership with Mitsui & Co, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Oman’s authorities to explore a Green-carbon iron metallics facility in the SEZ. The project aims to produce 5 mtpa of direct reduced iron (DRI), starting with natural gas and transitioning to hydrogen in the future.

Similarly, Brazilian mining giant Vale has announced plans to invest in a Green Metallic Mega Hub in Al Duqm, intended to produce low-carbon DRI as feedstock for steel mills across the wider Middle East region.

Singapore-headquartered Meranti Green Steel (MGS) has also outlined plans for a 2.5 mtpa Hot Briquetted Iron (HBI) plant in its first phase in Al Duqm.

FSA launches new platform for auditing and accounting licence renewals

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) formally launched a new integrated electronic system for licensing and renewing accounting and auditing firms. The system allows applications to be submitted and tracked fully online, providing greater transparency, reducing processing time and enhancing the efficiency of regulatory services. It also represents a major step forward in the FSA’s digital transformation strategy.

The launch took place during a seminar hosted by the Authority on the theme, ‘Accounting and Auditing, Reality and Development Opportunities’, at Al Irfan Hall, FSA headquarters.

The event brought together representatives of accounting and auditing firms along with experts in the field to discuss regulatory updates, share experiences and explore opportunities for advancing

The seminar featured presentations on key topics, including the requirements for practicing the profession, the role of auditors, the FSA’s regulatory role as well as the work of the Professional Conduct Committee and most notable violations.

the profession.

Ahmed bin Ali al Maamari, Executive Vice President of the FSA, highlighted the significance of this stage in the development of the profession in a statement.

“The accounting and auditing sector in Oman has undergone an important institutional shift with the issuance of Royal Decree 20/2024, which transferred the mandate for regulating the profession to the Financial Services Authority.

The FSA has moved quickly and strategically in response, guided by a clear vision to modernise the legislative and regulatory framework, strengthen oversight and support sound professional practices”, Al Maamari said.

“The FSA has embarked on preparing the regulation governing the practice of the profession, forming a specialised team to review the legislative frameworks of accounting and auditing.

The team is tasked with laying down the regulatory and legislative foundations



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that will govern the profession in the upcoming phase, in a way that enhances efficiency and quality of performance and strengthens confidence in financial reports issued by accounting and auditing firms”, he added.

In addition, the seminar

featured presentations on key topics, including the requirements for practicing the profession, the role of auditors, the FSA’s regulatory role as well as the work of the Professional Conduct Committee and most notable violations. The floor was also

opened for participants to propose their inquiries and share suggestions, aimed at strengthening the integration of roles between the FSA and professional firms and further developing the supervisory environment in the Sultanate of Oman.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The US central bank is widely expected to reduce borrowing costs by at least 25 basis points at 2 pm ET, a move priced in by investors after a series of economic indicators pointed to a weakening jobs market. — Reuters

US FUTURES STEADY AHEAD OF FED RATE DECISION

US stock index futures were little changed on Wednesday as investors held back on big bets while awaiting an announcement after the Federal Reserve’s two-day meeting to assess the monetary policy path.

The US central bank is widely expected to reduce borrowing costs by at least 25 basis points at 2 pm ET, a move priced in by investors after a series of economic indicators pointed to a weakening jobs market. Markets will closely watch Chair Jerome Powell’s speech as well as the “dot plot” projections to gauge the extent of interest-rate cuts that could be delivered this year and next.

Market participants are expecting a rate reduction totalling about 68 bps by the end of the year, according to data compiled by LSEG.

“Investors will be watching whether Fed officials push back against market expectations for a series of rate cuts extending into next year”, analysts at UBS Global Wealth Management said. “Any hawkish element could challenge the currently positive investor sentiment and trigger market volatility”.

Meanwhile, Nvidia dipped 1% in premarket trading after the Financial Times reported that China’s internet regulator had instructed the country’s biggest tech companies to stop buying all of the AI leader’s chips.

At 05:26 am ET, Dow E-minis were up 22 points, or 0.05%, S&P 500 E-minis were up 1 point, or 0.02% and Nasdaq 100 E-minis were up 0.75 points, or flat.

The Fed meeting will be a test of Wall Street’s recent rally, with the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq hitting record highs in the last six sessions, boosted by rate-cut expectations and revived enthusiasm around AI-stock-linked trading.

Wall Street’s main indexes have gained so far in September, a month deemed historically bad for US equities. The benchmark S&P 500 has shed 1.5% on average since 2000, data compiled by LSEG showed.

New Fortress Energy soared 48% before the bell after the company reached an agreement to supply liquefied natural gas to the Puerto Rican government. — Reuters

BankDhofar, Mastercard announce partnership

BANKDHOFAR, one of Oman’s leading financial institutions, has announced a strategic collaboration with Mastercard to advance payment solutions across the Sultanate of Oman. This partnership represents a significant step in BankDhofar’s mission to provide innovative, secure and world-class financial services tailored to evolving customer needs.

Under the agreement, Mastercard brings global expertise, advanced technologies and an international network to enhance the Bank’s card offerings. The collaboration also extends to Dhofar Islamic, BankDhofar’s Sharia-compliant division, ensuring that customers across both conventional and Islamic banking segments benefit from a comprehensive suite of card services and digital solutions.

Commenting on the partnership, K Gopakumar, ACEO of BankDhofar, said: “This collaboration with Mastercard is more than a strategic alliance — it is a transformative step in redefining the payment experience for our customers.

By introducing world-class innovations in Oman, we are reinforcing our commitment to delivering secure, seamless and future-ready financial solutions that cater to the diverse needs of our customers”. Dr Dimitrios Dosis, President, EEMEA, Mastercard, added: “At Mastercard, we are committed to leveraging collaboration with leading ecosystem partners to drive Oman’s economic growth and empower its people.

In line with Oman Vision 2040,

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Through this collaboration, BankDhofar strengthens its role in advancing Oman’s digital transformation agenda, aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

this partnership with BankDhofar marks a key milestone in advancing payment innovation, supporting digital transformation and enhancing financial inclusion.

We look forward to jointly enriching the bank’s customer experience and supporting its growth ambitions”. For BankDhofar customers, the collaboration promises an enhanced experience across the entire payment journey.

Mastercard’s global acceptance network enables seamless transactions in-store, online, or while travelling abroad. Cardholders will enjoy a portfolio of privileges, including airport lounge access, travel insurance, lifestyle rewards and dining offers.

Security remains central to the partnership. Mastercard’s industry-leading technologies in fraud prevention, tokenisation and biometric authentication ensure peace of mind for customers. Integration with Mastercard’s digital solutions will also expand mobile wallet services, contactless payments and fintech-driven innovations, positioning BankDhofar at the forefront of Oman’s digital banking sector.

Through this collaboration, BankDhofar strengthens its role in advancing Oman’s digital transformation agenda, aligned with Oman Vision 2040. Access to Mastercard’s global innovation ecosystem — including AI, cybersecurity, open banking and cross-border payment developments — will accelerate product innovation and support financial inclusion, offering tailored debit, credit and prepaid card solutions to youth, small businesses and underserved communities.

NBO launches second Fintech Accelerator

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO), in collaboration with Al Jahr, has launched the second edition of its Fintech Accelerator Programme, starting with the opening of registrations for the NBO Hackathon.

Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, the programme underscores NBO’s commitment to empowering youth, fostering entrepreneurship and advancing the banking sector.

It provides a platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing, enabling young talents, developers and entrepreneurs to transform innovative ideas into



Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, the programme underscores NBO’s commitment to empowering youth, fostering entrepreneurship and advancing the banking sector.

market-ready solutions shaping the future of digital banking in Oman and beyond.

The NBO Hackathon, the first phase of the programme, aims to fast-track digital solutions addressing real-world challenges in the financial sector.

Participants will explore opportunities in open banking, cross-border payments, SME finance, regulatory technology (RegTech), insurance technology (InsurTech) and ESG-driven fintech.

By incorporating sustainability themes such as carbon footprint calculators

and blockchain-based reporting systems, the Hackathon highlights the importance of transparency and responsible innovation.

Through mentorship from industry leaders and a final pitch before a distinguished panel, participants will enhance their skills, expand their networks and contribute to Oman’s growing knowledge economy.

With strong participation in previous editions, the NBO Hackathon continues to position the Bank as a national catalyst for digital transformation and an innovation-driven economy.

UK and US strike tech deal as Trump arrives for state visit

LONDON: Britain and the US have struck a tech deal that could bring billions of pounds of investment to the UK as President Donald Trump arrives for his state visit.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer described the “tech prosperity deal” as “a generational step change” in Britain’s relationship with the US, promising “growth, security and opportunity across the country”.

The agreement covers cooperation in artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing and nuclear power.

The deal is accompanied by £31 billion (\$42.3 billion) in investment from US tech companies, including \$30 billion from Microsoft, the largest ever in the UK. Microsoft’s investment will expand Britain’s AI infrastructure and build the



Technology Secretary Liz Kendall called the agreement “a vote of confidence in Britain’s booming AI sector” that will “deliver good jobs, life-saving treatments and faster medical breakthroughs.

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country’s largest AI supercomputer. Officials said the partnership could accelerate the development of new medicines and foster research collaboration in space and defence.

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Tech leaders also praised the deal.

Jensen Huang, founder of Nvidia, which will deploy 120,000 advanced processors in the UK, said: “We are at the Big Bang of the AI era — and the UK stands in a Goldilocks position, where world-class talent, research and industry converge”.

Salesforce plans a £1.4 billion investment to make its UK business an AI hub for Europe, while AI Pathfinder and CoreWeave will also contribute over £2.5 billion to expand data and compute capacity.

OpenAI has partnered with Nscale to launch its Stargate data centre in northeast England. CEO Sam Altman said: “The UK has long been a pioneer of AI... Stargate UK builds on this foundation to accelerate scientific breakthroughs, improve productivity and drive economic growth”. — dpa

SELECTIVEGROWTH



Gold has risen about 40% year-to-date and hit a record high of \$3,702.95 on Tuesday. — Reuters

DEUTSCHE BANK
RAISES 2026 GOLD
FORECAST TO \$4,000

Deutsche Bank raised its gold price forecast by \$300 for next year to an average of \$4,000 per ounce on Wednesday, citing strong central bank demand, potential US dollar weakness and a resumed Federal Reserve rate-easing cycle.

The bank had previously expected \$3,700/oz in April and noted downside risks to the Fed’s base case of holding rates steady in 2026 following three anticipated rate cuts in 2025.

It flagged uncertainty stemming from changes in the Federal Open Market Committee’s composition and ongoing challenges to Fed independence as supportive for gold prices.

The Fed is set to announce its policy decision later on Wednesday amidst legal disputes over its leadership and US President Donald Trump’s efforts to exert greater control over rate policy.

Deutsche Bank highlighted that official gold demand continues at twice the pace of the 2011–2021 average, largely driven by China, while recycled gold supply is running 4% below expected levels this year, easing limits on gold’s upside.

However, risks include strong equity market performance, seasonal weakness in gold prices during the fourth quarter based on historical trends and US economic conditions that may prompt the Fed to hold rates steady in 2026.

Positive developments in US trade negotiations could reduce uncertainty for business investment, though gold’s sensitivity to such events is limited.

Non-yielding bullion, often considered a safe-haven asset during times of uncertainty, performs well in a low-interest-rate environment.

Gold has risen about 40% year-to-date and hit a record high of \$3,702.95 on Tuesday.

Deutsche Bank also raised its silver price forecast for 2026 to an average of \$45 per ounce, up from \$40. — Reuters

EUROZONE
INFLATION
REVISED
DOWN
TO 2%

BRUSSELS: Eurozone consumer prices rose slightly less than initially estimated in August, final data published by Eurostat showed on Wednesday.

Consumer prices advanced 2.0% year-on-year, unchanged from July’s rate. However, the figure was revised down from the 2.1% estimated on September 2. The European Central Bank aims to keep inflation at 2% over the medium term.

Excluding prices of energy,



Excluding prices of energy, food and tobacco, core inflation remained unchanged at 2.3%

food and tobacco, core inflation remained unchanged at 2.3%, matching the preliminary estimate.

The highest contribution to annual inflation came from services, which advanced 3.1%. The cost of food and tobacco rose 3.2%, while non-energy industrial goods gained 0.8%.

Meanwhile, energy prices continued to fall, though the pace of decline eased further, sliding 2.0% after a 2.4% decrease. — dpa

Fed expected to cut rates, revise economic outlook

THE US Federal Reserve is set to conclude its most politically charged meeting in years on Wednesday, with broad expectations for a quarter-percentage-point interest rate cut.

Some policymakers may dissent, arguing the move is either too small and too late or not warranted at all.

Just as important will be updated projections showing where policymakers see the economy and monetary policy heading eight months into President Donald Trump’s economic policy revisions and ongoing pressure on the central bank to lower borrowing costs.

One likely critic of the outcome is Trump himself, who wants deeper rate cuts despite a still-healthy economy. Governor Stephen Miran, formerly chair of Trump’s Council of Economic Advisers, was sworn in as a Fed board member on Tuesday, while the administration continues its effort to remove Governor Lisa Cook, who is litigating to keep her position.

Cook denies any wrongdoing and has not been charged. Amidst this backdrop, Fed officials will review the latest economic data, update their assessment of Trump’s impact on the economy and release a new policy statement and projections at 2 pm EDT, followed by a press conference by Chair Jerome Powell at 2:30 pm EDT. A quarter-point cut has been widely expected after softening job market data over

The projections released with the rate decision will extend through the end of 2028, spanning Trump’s full term. While long-term forecasts focus on trend growth, near-term projections will reflect updated views on inflation, unemployment and interest rates. June projections showed concerns about inflation from Trump’s import taxes, but recent data suggests slower employment growth than expected.



Powell has noted that the impact of tariffs on inflation may be temporary, warranting a rate adjustment. — Reuters

the summer. After a July meeting produced two dissents advocating a rate cut, this week’s session could see even more disagreement.

Analysts anticipate Miran may push for a larger cut, potentially joined by Trump-appointed governors Christopher Waller and Michelle Bowman, while at least one Reserve Bank president may maintain a hawkish stance.

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from Trump’s import taxes, but recent data suggests slower employment growth than expected.

Powell has noted that the impact of tariffs on inflation may be temporary, warranting a rate adjustment.

Investors anticipate rate reductions of a quarter percentage point in September, October and December, with slower cuts next year. The rate has been held at 4.25%-4.50% since December after three reductions totalling a full percentage point in late 2024.

Policymakers will need to weigh labour market risks against inflationary pressures, which may rise for the remainder of the year. — Reuters

OIL RETREATS BUT GEOPOLITICAL JITTERS LIMIT DECLINES

LONDON: Oil prices eased on Wednesday after rising more than 1% in the previous session, though ongoing geopolitical concerns provided a floor for the market.

Traders were also awaiting an expected interest rate cut from the US Federal Reserve later in the day.

Brent crude futures fell 41 cents, or 0.6%, to \$68.06 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude dropped 37 cents, or 0.6%, to \$64.15 a barrel.

Benchmarks had gained more than 1% in the previous session due to fears that Russian supplies might be disrupted by Ukrainian attacks.

Three industry sources said Russia’s pipeline monopoly Transneft had warned producers



Benchmarks had gained more than 1% in the previous session due to fears that Russian supplies might be disrupted by Ukrainian attacks. — Reuters

Market sources citing American Petroleum Institute figures reported that US crude and gasoline stocks fell last week, while distillate stocks rose.

they might need to cut output following drone attacks on export ports and refineries.

Analyst John Evans of PVM Oil Associates said, “If the drone damage proves short-lived, the recent range of say, \$5 per barrel, will resume. Given the impasse in sanctions and the arrival of more OPEC barrels, the only hope for an oil rally has been through the lack of distillate stock as we approach winter”.

Investors were also watching the outcome of the Federal Reserve’s September 16–17 meeting. While markets largely priced in a 25-basis-point rate cut, traders were monitoring comments from Fed Chair Jerome Powell. Market sources citing American Petroleum Institute figures reported that US crude and gasoline stocks fell last week, while distillate stocks rose.

Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at IG Group, said: “Reports of large funds piling in with bearish bets show that glut fears remain, making gains hard to sustain.

While Russia has tested Nato’s resolve, tensions seem contained, which could make a test of recent lows more likely”. — Reuters

INFLATION

UK inflation steady at 3.8%



UK inflation remained at 3.8% in August, unchanged from July, the Office for National Statistics reported.

Falling airfares helped offset rising petrol and diesel costs, while restaurants and hotels added upward pressure on prices.

Food and drink inflation rose to 5.1% from 4.9%, marking the fifth consecutive monthly increase and the highest level since January 2024. — dpa

BUSINESS ETHICS

Ben & Jerry’s co-founder quits over Gaza



Ben & Jerry’s co-founder Jerry Greenfield has resigned, citing Unilever’s curtailing of the brand’s social activism amidst the Gaza conflict. He said he could no longer work in “good conscience” for a company silenced by its parent.

The dispute risks affecting brand value, investor confidence and future revenue, as tensions over West Bank sales and Gaza labelling persist. — Reuters

TARIFF TALKS

UK shelves push for 0% steel tariffs



The UK has paused efforts to cut US tariffs on British steel, leaving the levy at 25% despite earlier agreements.

Trump suggested possible relief during his visit, but Downing Street provided no details.

Opposition parties criticised the government, calling Trump unreliable and warned that the UK now trades with its largest partner on terms worse than previously expected. — dpa

OPINION

The role of standardisation agencies in facilitating trade



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

STANDARDISATION bodies around the world play a significant and vital role in developing local economies and protecting consumers from any risks related to the use of products and the services. The importance of standardisation bodies lies in meeting specific product standards in terms of quality, safety and efficiency; and helping companies reduce health or environmental risks resulting from non-conforming products. These bodies also remove technical barriers to global trade and help facilitate trade between countries through standardisation. They also encourage innovation and industrial development, providing the technical foundations that help companies improve their products and services, thus enhancing competitiveness. These bodies also help support sustainability and environmental protection by providing standard specifications that include requirements related to environmental sustainability and energy efficiency. They facilitate industrial and technological integration through standardisation so that different products and components can integrate and operate together easily. The GCC Standardisation Organisation plays a major role in providing these requirements and standards for products arriving in the Gulf states. This organisation is a regional body established to promote

cooperation and has numerous roles in carrying out these activities. It works to establish unified specifications for products and services that are applied across all GCC states. It also coordinates between national standardisation bodies in each member state to achieve integration and unification of efforts. It also supports the safety of goods and products in the Gulf market by issuing technical regulations that specify the basic requirements that products must meet before they enter the markets. These measures facilitate intra- and regional trade and support efforts to unify specifications and the movement of goods between GCC states without the need for additional inspection or testing. It also enhances technical and scientific capabilities in the field of standardisation by providing training for employees in these institutions and exchanging expertise among them, which helps develop specialised Gulf technical cadres in these fields. The GCC Standardisation Organisation also encourages mutual recognition of conformity certificates among GCC states, which reduces costs and increases efficiency. Recently, a delegation from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, represented by the General Directorate of Standards and Metrology, participated in the meetings of the Gulf Standardisation Strategies Team in Riyadh. The meeting discussed the GSO's strategic plan (2026–2030) and related performance

The GCC Standardisation Organisation plays a major role in providing these requirements and standards for products arriving in the Gulf states. This organisation is a regional body established to promote cooperation and has numerous roles in carrying out these activities.

indicators. The goal is to keep pace with rapid economic and technological changes and contribute to the development of an integrated Gulf quality infrastructure system. Today, there are several economic challenges resulting from global technological transformations, particularly in the fields of artificial intelligence, smart cities and innovation. This requires unifying Gulf efforts to develop standard specifications, ensure the quality of products and services in these vital sectors; and unify visions and policies related to standardisation among member states. Officials at the General Organisation for Standardisation (GOSI) indicate that work is underway to achieve these strategic objectives. A number of initiatives have been developed, which are considered a key lever to enable the organisation to address challenges and bridge the gaps between the current situation and strategic aspirations. This will reduce obstacles and achieve a sustainable impact on national standardisation bodies and the Gulf industrial sector. In conclusion, standardisation is not merely a technical procedure; it is an essential element in building a strong, secure and integrated economy. This is why the Gulf Standardisation Organisation (GSO) plays a strategic role in unifying efforts and standards among GCC countries to achieve economic integration, protect consumers and promote sustainable development.

THE CASE FOR DIVERSIFIED INCOME INVESTING

MARTY FRIDSON

At a time when inflation remains elevated and interest rates seem poised to start falling, generating income is likely to be high on investors' priorities. Achieving that goal in a sustainable way, however, may require casting a wide net. Suppose you are an investor primarily interested in generating income, while also hoping to preserve — or even increase — your principal. Which types of income investments should you choose? Judging by the most recent month's performance, you might pick Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs): the MSCI US REIT Index rose 4.26% in August. By the same logic, you would avoid Master Limited Partnerships (MLPs), which fell 1.83%. Yet over the past year, REITs declined 4.08% while MLPs gained 6.96%. So which income category should an investor own? The answer appears to be: several. Looking back at 2006–2024, dividend growth stocks were the steadiest performers, with only five years of negative price changes. Closed-end funds fared worst, recording losses in the majority of those years. But dividend growth stocks offered the lowest yield, while closed-end funds provided the highest. This highlights a central challenge: generating high income while maintaining stable principal requires tradeoffs.

One approach is to build an equally weighted portfolio across seven income-oriented asset classes. This strategy had just six down years in the period, nearly matching dividend growth stocks' five, while producing a 5.63% yield — more than double the 2.48% of dividend growth stocks and close to the overall median of 5.95%. This combination of moderate volatility and solid yield shows how diversification can deliver acceptable returns with manageable risk. There are logical reasons to expect such diversification benefits to persist. Different economic forces drive the various asset classes. Investment grade corporate bonds move mainly with interest rates, while high yield bonds react more to changes in the economic outlook. In 2024, the ICE BofA US High Yield Index rose 1.41% as Moody's default rate forecast fell from 4.1% to 2.7%. Over the same period, the more interest-rate-sensitive ICE BofA US Corporate Index fell 1.73% as the 10-year US Treasury yield climbed from 3.89% to 4.58%. — Reuters

Fund managers dumping UK stocks at fast rate

THE scale of investor doubts over the UK economy is after fresh data found fund managers were pulling out of UK stocks at the fastest in more than two decades. Average equity allocations to the UK dropped from a net 2 per cent underweight in August to a net 20 per cent underweight in September, according to Bank of America's global fund manager survey, marking the biggest monthly rotation away from UK equities since 2004. Allocation into UK stocks, which is now at its lowest in 18 months, is now considered a contrarian trade, Bank of America analysis suggested, in signs investors were unclear from Britain's sluggish growth and the prospect of major tax hikes to be unveiled in the Chancellor's budget in November.

Hugh Sergeant, a fund manager at River Global Investors, said: "Investors are currently terrified of this Government and particularly the next Budget". The analysis adds to a growing number of warnings on UK's economy, alongside stagnant GDP growth and a decline in payrolled employment. Businesses are bracing for huge tax rises in the autumn, as chancellor Rachel Reeves puts more pressure on employers in a bid to shore up the public finances and fund Labour's increased spending commitments. Shadow Business Secretary, Andrew Griffith MP, said: "This is incredibly serious. Investors are selling out of Britain at the same time as wealth creators are leaving. "Under Rachel Reeves, the tide is going out and leaving the economy parched of investment and skills. Our formidable strengths remain but they can't outrun the headwinds from Labour's policies". The Bank of America survey also found that investor sentiment on expectations for global growth rose to the highest level since February — but a net 16 per cent of fund managers continue to expect the global economy to weaken.



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

Fund managers are expecting inflation to rise over the next year as the mood towards the global economy worsens. Over 40 per cent of fund managers believe the global economy is set to weaken over the next 12 months, with US economic policy and weaker consumer demand seen as the largest forces dragging it down, according to the latest Bank of America European fund manager survey.



Average equity allocations to the UK dropped from a net 2 per cent underweight in August to a net 20 per cent underweight in September, according to Bank of America's global fund manager survey, marking the biggest monthly rotation away from UK equities since 2004.

The survey showed as many as half of fund managers believe that adoption of AI was already leading to productivity increases, with another 15 per cent believing the productivity improvements would happen in 2026. However, investors were divided over whether AI stocks were in a bubble, with 42 per cent believing there was an AI bubble, an uptick from last month and 48 per cent believing there was no bubble. Fund managers are expecting inflation to rise over the next year as the mood towards the global economy worsens. Over 40 per cent of fund managers believe the global economy is set to weaken over the next 12 months, with US economic policy and weaker consumer demand seen as the largest forces dragging it down, according to the latest Bank of America European fund manager survey. Just over a month ago, only 31 per cent thought the global economy would diminish, but Trump's sweeping and erratic tariffs policies and their disruption to the global trade order, have caused sentiment to sour. Now, 58 per cent

see the US administration's policies as having a negative impact on growth while also causing inflation to rise, up from 52 per cent last month, showing growing worries of "stagflation", a troublesome economic situation in which high inflation and unemployment coupled with a stagnant economy stifles growth. Expectations for inflation to rise hit 18 per cent, its highest since May when the market was dealing with the fallout of Trump's announcement of tariffs. A trade war triggering a global recession remains the biggest risk for causing significant losses in the market for investors, but a growing number are also concerned stubborn inflation could thwart a cut to interest rates by the Federal Reserve. While the attitude towards global markets worsen, 35 per cent of respondents are expecting to see stronger European growth over the coming year. Similarly, 23 per cent see scope for European inflation to decline over that period, showing hope for the market amid global turmoil.

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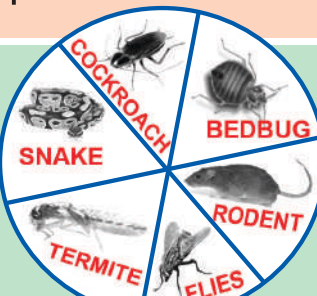
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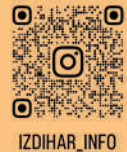
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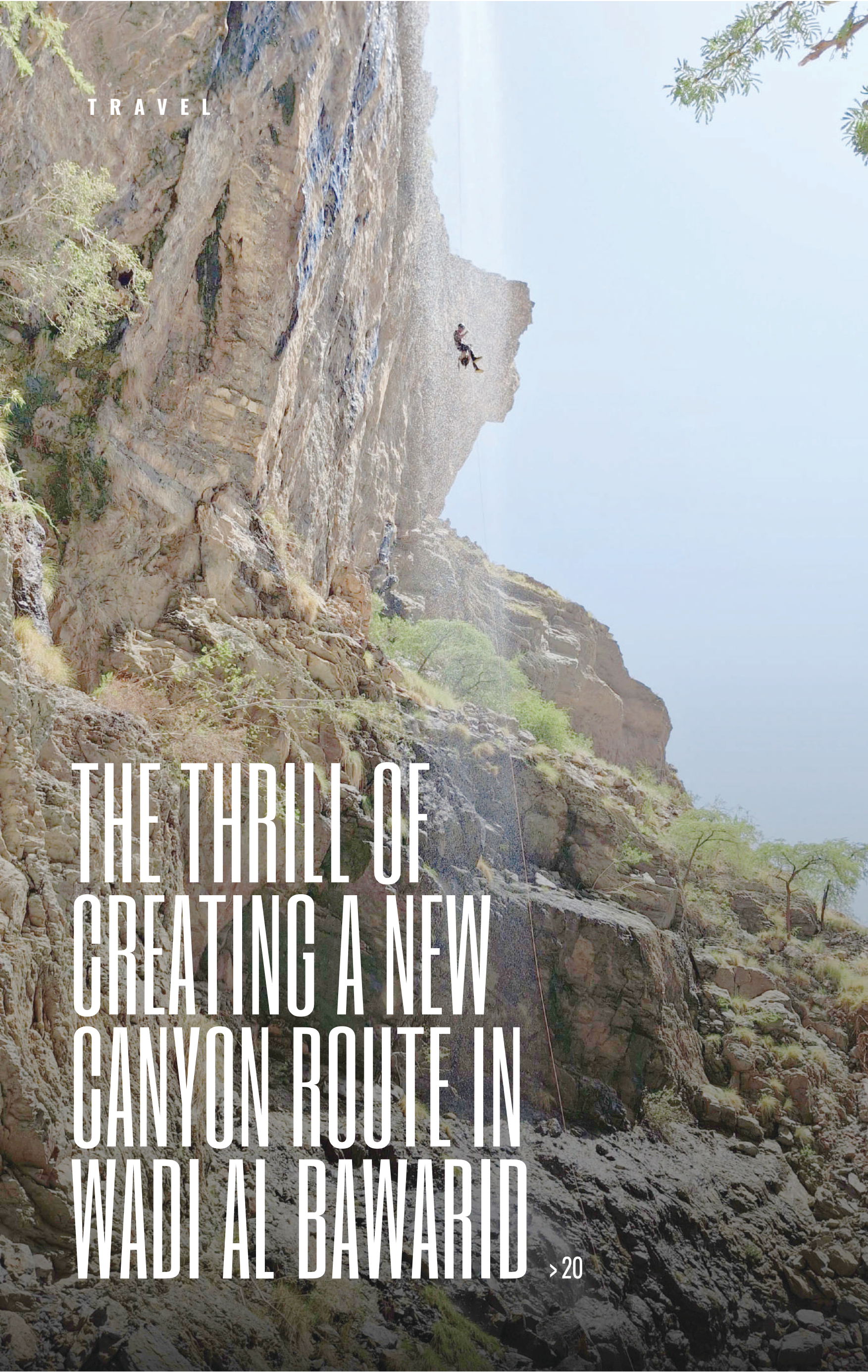
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ART/LIFE



CHANGING WORLD

Young Omanis now have different perspectives on marriage



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

THIS WEEK, the Observer published a comprehensive report on the increasing delay in marriages among Omanis. In my view, this delay results from a complex phenomenon driven by substantial social, economic and cultural transformations within the country. This trend reflects broader changes occurring across the Arab world, shifting away from traditional patterns of early and universal marriage towards later unions.

Omanis are postponing marriage due to a range of factors, including higher levels of education and workforce participation, rising costs associated with marriage and evolving societal norms surrounding individual choice and autonomy. Collectively, these elements contribute to a higher median age at marriage for both men and women in Oman.

According to young women I spoke to, a key driver of delayed marriage is the significant increase in education and their subsequent involvement in paid employment. Historically, women's primary roles centred around childbearing and raising children, but this has changed markedly with their greater participation in higher education and the workforce. The longer women spend in education, the less likely they are to marry early. Education provides women with increased knowledge, opportunities for employment and economic independence, which often leads to later marriage.

For young men, the prohibitive costs associated with marriage are a significant factor in delaying nuptials. These costs include dowries, wedding expenses and household establishment costs. While the dowry is a religious requirement in Islam, cultural norms within Gulf societies have inflated these costs considerably. Additionally, the social stigma attached to being unmarried is diminishing and the ideal of marriage itself is gradually losing its hold.

Oman, like other Arab nations, is undergoing notable social, economic and cultural change. The transition from traditional, collective decision-making in marriage to more individualistic choices plays a role in postponing nuptiality.

In the past, marriages were often arranged by family elders, with a strong preference for consanguineous unions to maintain tribal ties and preserve wealth within the family. However, with increased educational opportunities, higher incomes and greater exposure to global influences, there has been a decline in social control over marriage and a shift towards prioritising personal autonomy in partner selection.

Young Omanis now have different ambitions and aspirations regarding marriage compared to previous generations; they tend to prefer marrying outside their immediate family circle. This desire for personal choice, coupled with the search for compatible partners based on education, personality and shared values, can extend courtship periods and delay marriage.

QUICK FEATURES



CULTURE

An aerial view shows folk dancers adorning traditional clothes as they perform 'Garba' during a rehearsal ahead of the Hindu festival of Navaratri in Ahmedabad. — AFP



FILM

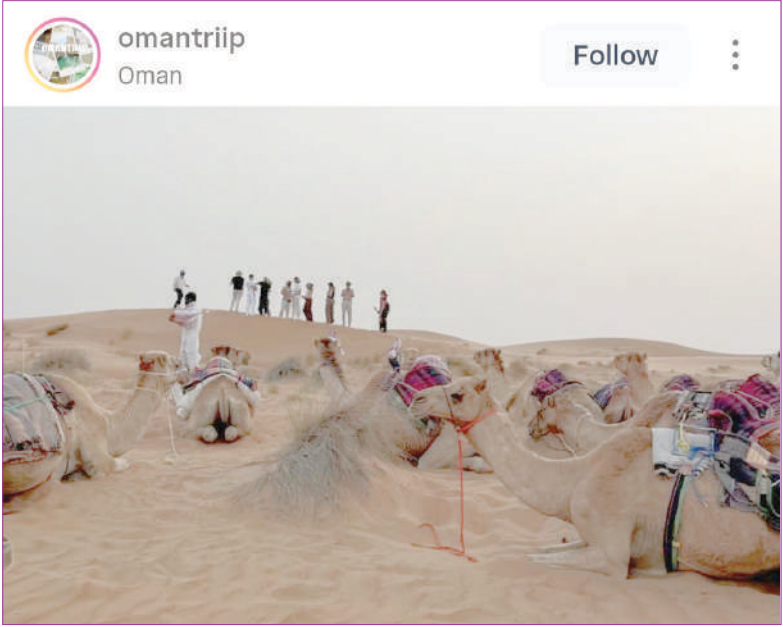
Australian actress Margot Robbie attends the world premiere of "A Big Bold Beautiful Journey" at AMC Lincoln Square in New York City. — AFP



MUSIC

Spanish singer Miguel Bose performs onstage during the Cordillera music festival at Simon Bolivar park in Bogota. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Some Down Time in the Desert

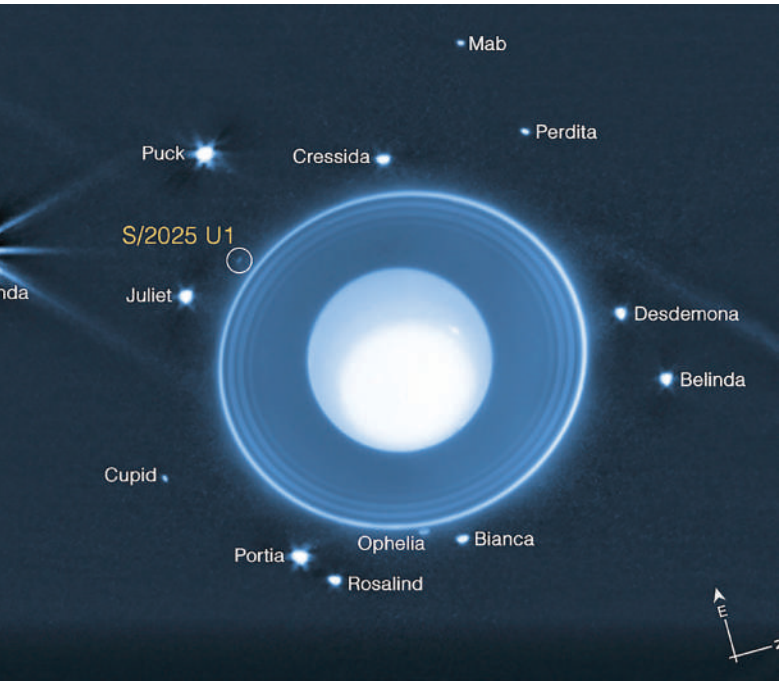


The Charm of an Old Village

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URANUS HIDING A MOON OUTSIDE ITS RINGS



THE SPACE around Uranus just got a bit more crowded. Astronomers using the James Webb Space Telescope recently announced the discovery of a moon orbiting around the pale blue ice giant, bringing its total number of satellites to 29. The latest addition, tentatively known as S/2025 U1, is tinier than any of the planet’s known moons. That is the likely explanation for why it was missed in observations by previous telescopes or spacecraft. “We were very happy to see it”, said Maryame al Moutamid, an astrophysicist at the Southwest Research Institute in Colorado. “It was acting exactly like a moon”. All four of the largest planets in our solar system

have a substantial number of moons of varying sizes. In recent years, scientists have discovered additional objects orbiting Jupiter, Saturn and Neptune that are considered moons. Several of the now 29 moons of Uranus were discovered during a flyby of Nasa’s Voyager 2 spacecraft in 1986. But the icy world also has 13 narrow, sharply defined rings. Some astronomers believe these rings to have been sculpted by the presence of unknown “shepherd” moons on either side, whose gravity prevents the material from spreading outward. — KATRINA MILLER



Anna, Priyanka, and Marino inspect Dior’s newest look



ON THE BUZZING

corner of East 57th Street and Madison Avenue in Manhattan, an owl blinks while a hummingbird flaps its wings. The mechanical birds are part of a woodland fantasy heralding the redesign of Dior’s New York flagship store. On Wednesday night, magazine editors, clients and celebrities including actors Anna Sawai, Priyanka Chopra, Ashley Park, Kate Mara and Sam Nivola gathered there to catch up and clink flutes before rushing off to other New York Fashion Week happenings. Entering this fantasy world, one’s first impression is of the garden, a passion of the brand’s founder, Christian Dior. Customers are invited to wander its three floors of clothes, bags and jewelry at their leisure. They can also climb to the fourth-floor summit, where those not content to wear Dior on their skin can scrub it into their pores at the new Dior Spa. The space was the brainchild of architect Peter Marino, who is known for designing stores for Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Giorgio Armani, among other brands. He has worked with Dior since 1994, when he redid the look of its Paris shop. “I want people to see a garden in the windows”, said Marino, dressed in his signature head-to-toe black leather. “The sun is so strong on

this corner, like the sunniest spot for miles!”. The centrepiece of the refreshed store is a spiral staircase featuring a rainbow display of recognisable Dior designs rendered in miniature, like 1947 “New Look” silhouette and the saddlebag purse by John Galliano, who helmed the brand from 1996 to 2011. At the reopening party, a traffic jam of wide-eyed guests and photo opportunists clogged the staircase most of the evening. Five years in the making, the redesign aligns with the debut of Jonathan Anderson as the brand’s new creative director. “These great houses need fresh blood”, Marino said. The last significant renovation of the Dior’s New York flagship came in 2010. Along with the addition of the spa and a housewares boutique next door, the new facelift brings the various departments into a more unified whole. “Every 10 years or so, I get to renew one of these, though I think they say your cells reproduce every seven years?” Marino said. “I’m trying to get these brands to step it up!”. Park, known for her role on Netflix’s “Emily in Paris”, posed for pictures while her stylist and date, Brad Goreski, held her white handbag just out of frame. Fresh from filming the series’ fifth season, she had popped in earlier for a treatment at the recently opened spa. “It was the most scientific facial I’ve had in a while!”, Park said.

Located at the top of a steep staircase, the Dior Spa is a beige and cream sanctum where a 60-minute facial starts at \$450 and a two-hour Haute Couture Treatment costs \$1,300. Customers are wrapped in sheets embroidered with quotes, in French, from Dior. Below, as servers carried trays of pea-and-sage tarts, the crush of guests became a steamy mob. Sawai, the Emmy-winning star of “Shogun”, was outfitted in a white mod minidress by Anderson. “I’m channelling a doll”, Sawai said. “Pure, innocent”. She mentioned that she met Anderson for the first time last week in Paris, adding that she was excited for the debut of his new ready-to-wear line next month. Actor Will Price, another member of Anderson’s coterie, ducked away from the throng. He was dressed in a white cable knit sweater by the designer with pink flower embroidery. “He’s playing with a new direction of masculinity”, Price said. Dara Allen, fashion director of Interview Magazine, wearing neon green vintage Stephen Sprouse, posed in front of the rainbow staircase. “Dior is the closest thing we have to fashion fairy tale”, Allen said. “I like to walk around uptown and pretend I’m Holly Golightly and just look into windows. I’m glad there are some new windows to look into”. — NYT

FEATURES



THE THRILL OF
CREATING A NEW
CANYON ROUTE IN
WADI AL BAWARID

KHALED ABDUL MALAK

ON FRIDAY, 5 September, four passionate canyoneers embarked on an adventure to open a new canyon in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar — Wadi al Bawarid, a tributary of Wadi Saada.

I had explored the upper section of this wadi approximately a year earlier with my wife, Marta and a good friend of mine, Jeffrey. That trip sparked my curiosity and I was eager to return with my team.

Rami collected me, along with his wife, Francoise, at 16:00 from my home in Al Mawaleh. Nadhira, another friend, met us at Birkat Al Mawz and together we set off towards Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Our destination was a convenient camping spot I'd pinpointed on Google Earth, close to where we would begin our descent early the next morning. Ahmed, another friend, was set to join us at dawn.

By the time we arrived at our camp, the weather was perfect — a comfortable 20 degrees Celsius. We pitched our tents next to a canyon ledge, overlooking a couple of hundred metres below, where the wadi was still flooded from a heavy rainfall just hours earlier. Ahmed was scheduled to arrive at 07:00, ready to join the team, while Francoise would later pick us up from Wadi Saada's exit point by car.

The following morning, we woke early, enjoying coffee as we packed up our tents. Just as Ahmed arrived at 07:00, we loaded our backpacks with all the necessary gear — harnesses, climbing ropes, drills, anchors and more. The descent to the wadi bed was surprisingly straightforward and we reached the bottom in about thirty minutes.

When we arrived at the first drop just before 08:30, the water had already receded. I had measured this descent during my initial trip — the drop was approximately 50 metres. Rami, responsible for the equipment, brought the drill and anchors. Unfortunately, he had the wrong drill bit, which was

While some canyons, like Wadi Bani Khalid and Wadi Al Shab, are popular among tourists, many others remain unexplored or minimally documented, offering exciting opportunities for discovery.

Back to our exploration, my excitement burst out in cheers, calling everyone over. Hearing my shout, Ahmed began to search and soon found another anchor nearby. I decided to climb back up to ensure I wouldn't miss the first abseil. The waterfall was still trickling down, weak but present.

Once everyone had descended the initial drop and we had pulled up our ropes, I fixed the rope for the next, longer abseil — an overhang that would require a



frustrating — we couldn't proceed as planned.

Determined not to be beaten, I inspected the area and discovered a way down to the bottom of the drop. None of my team was keen to join, so I climbed down a scree slope on the right bank of the wadi and reached the next ledge. During my exploration, I found a previously fixed anchor — still in perfect condition. While I was initially disappointed that we wouldn't be the 'first' to open the route, I was thrilled that we could at least traverse it.

I have explored Oman meticulously and can definitely say it is a premier destination for canyoneering, thanks to its stunning and diverse landscape.

Its rugged mountains, deep wadis and dramatic cliffs create the perfect natural playground for adventure seekers.

The country's untouched terrain offers a unique blend of challenging climbs, breathtaking waterfalls and pristine waters, making every expedition an unforgettable experience.

Oman's remote and pristine environments not only provide thrilling routes but also ensure the preservation of unspoiled wilderness, appealing to eco-conscious travellers.

free drop. As I touched the ground, I whistled to signal the next climber to descend. From my vantage point, I saw a powerful resurgence of water pouring from the cliff face.

Rami was the second to abseil, followed by Ahmed and Nadhira. The next stretch of the canyon was characterised by an impressive array of waterfalls, flowing vigorously as we progressed deeper into Wadi Saada.

The final section of Wadi Al Bawarid proved more strenuous, with plenty of bouldering and scrambling. When we finally reached the wadi bed, we paused briefly for a well-earned rest before heading towards the village of Sallut, where Francoise was waiting to drive us back to Muscat.

We concluded our adventure with a late and hearty lunch at a local restaurant, grateful for the unforgettable experience. The entire descent took around seven hours and we returned exhausted but elated, already looking forward to our next expedition.