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SUNRISE 05:56 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:41 AM

DHUHR 12:04 PM

ASR 03:29 PM

MAGHRIB 06:07 PM

ISHA 07:17 PM

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DON'T FLICK IT, BIN BUTTS



4.5

REPORTER'S COMMENT

CIGARETTE

...the cigarette industry has been a major contributor to the global health crisis, with smoking being the leading cause of preventable death and disability. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that tobacco use causes about 8 million deaths each year. In Oman, the health authorities have been working to reduce the prevalence of smoking, but the challenge remains significant. The industry's marketing strategies, often targeting young people, make it difficult to curb consumption. The 'Don't Flick It, Bin Butts' campaign is a step in the right direction, but more comprehensive measures are needed to protect public health and the environment.

SHORT TAKES

HM’S CONDOLENCES
TO SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the death of Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al Shaikh, Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Head of the Council of Senior Scholars. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to the Saudi government and people. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased soul in peace in paradise and to grant his family the fortitude to bear the loss.

HM’S CONDOLENCES
TO SHARJAH RULER

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Ruler of Sharjah, on the death of Shaikh Sultan bin Khaliid bin Mohammed al Qasimi. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased soul in peace in paradise and to grant Shaikh Dr Sultan and all members of his family the fortitude to bear the loss.

HM’S GREETINGS
TO PRESIDENT OF
GUINEA-BISSAU

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Umaro Sissoco Embaló of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau on the occasion of his country’s Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Umaro and the people of his country.

CELEBRATING SAUDI NATIONAL DAY



*The Sultanate of Oman joined the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in celebrating its 95th National Day in a ceremony organised by the General Secretariat for National Celebrations in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police at the Empty Quarter border crossing in Al Dhahirah Governorate, which connects Oman with the land borders of Saudi Arabia. The program featured a number of artistic performances reflecting the deep, distinguished relations between the two countries. **DETAILS ON P2***

Palestinian state is a
right, not a reward: UN

Oman welcomes French President’s announcement on Palestine

THE Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the announcement by the President of the French Republic regarding his country’s recognition of the State of Palestine, made during the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, held in New York.

In a statement issued on Tuesday by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman emphasised that this development represents an additional and encouraging step on the path to realising right and justice for the Palestinian people. It expressed its hope that all countries of the world would follow the lead of the vast majority of the international community in upholding the two-state solution in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions.

Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Oman participated in the deliberations of the United Nations, held as part of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The Omani delegation was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

Speaking on the occasion, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has voiced strong support for international efforts to revive the two-state solution, emphasising that the establishment of a Palestinian



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, during the deliberations of the United Nations in New York.

state is “not a reward, but a right”.

Guterres welcomed recent moves by several countries to mobilise support for the two-state solution, including pledges to recognise the State of Palestine.

In a powerful address, the UN chief described the situation in Gaza and the West Bank as “collective punishment” of the Palestinian people and a systematic destruction of Gaza. He also expressed deep

disappointment over the absence of the Palestinian delegation from the conference, calling it a missed opportunity for dialogue and representation.

Guterres reiterated his call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and stressed the urgent need for safe, full and unhindered access to humanitarian aid.

He warned that the continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and escalating

settler violence are striking at the heart of the two-state solution and must come to an end. He described the current situation as “morally, legally and politically untenable”.

The Secretary-General underscored the critical need to preserve the prospect of a two-state solution before it is too late, cautioning that the alternative — a one-state reality — would deny Palestinians their basic rights, forcibly displace them from their land. — ONA

Oman’s spending on health sector up by 14%

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

Health indicators in the Sultanate of Oman have seen a notable advancement in recent years, as the period between 2020 and 2024 witnessed a significant increase in revenues by 66.2 per cent, in addition to a record increase in the Omanisation rate among doctors

in Ministry of Health institutions, reaching 44 per cent.

The 2025 Health Statistics Report issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed a 50-per cent increase in the number of health facilities compared to 2020, reaching 2,384, including 94 government and private hospitals, marking a 12-per cent increase.

There has been an increase in the number of private pharmacies from 794 in 2020 to 1,177 in 2024, while the number of health centres and clinics in the public sector increased by 9 per cent. Al Dakhiliyah Governorate recorded the highest rate of change in the number of health facilities in both the public and private sectors, with a 77-per cent increase, while

Al Buraimi Governorate had the lowest rate at 15 per cent.

The report indicated that investment expenditures for the Ministry of Health made up 14.4 per cent of total government investment expenditures in civil ministries in 2024, compared to only 2 per cent in 2020. Government spending on the health sector increased by 14 per cent.

Cities face risk of water shortages in coming decades: study

PARIS: Hotspots of water scarcity could emerge by the 2020s and 2030s across the Mediterranean, southern Africa and North America, as climate change intensifies droughts, a new study said on Tuesday.

Scientists have established that climate change is making droughts longer, stronger and more frequent, but less well understood is when and where these extreme dry conditions could trigger acute shortages of drinking water.

South Africa’s Cape Town faced the threat of a “Day Zero Drought”, where the taps nearly ran dry for millions of people in 2018. India’s Chennai faced a similar crisis the following year. In new peer-reviewed research in the journal Nature Communications, researchers warned that the frequency of “Day Zero” episodes could increase much sooner than previously anticipated.

To study how global warming might impact these events in future,



researchers used the latest climate models to estimate when water demands would exceed supply from rainfall, rivers and reservoirs.

DAY ZERO

The simulations showed that “Day Zero” hotspots are likely to emerge in 35 per cent of drought-prone regions within the next 15 years, with the Mediterranean, southern Africa and parts of North America most affected.

By 2100, such conditions could

threaten 750 million people globally - roughly two-thirds in cities and the rest in rural areas - under a high emissions scenario, the study said.

Urban populations in the Mediterranean are most exposed, with 196 million city dwellers at risk, while rural areas in Asia and northern and southern Africa are disproportionately impacted.

Human-induced climate change and increased water consumption were both factors driving “Day Zero” events, the study said. — AFP

OMAN

SHORTTAKES

OMAN COULD BE
A SOUGHT-AFTER
WELLNESS
DESTINATION



Oman, with its beautiful landscape, has the potential to attract health tourists.

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

Oman could potentially become a sought-after destination for wellness tourism, according to Majid Zangoeei, Secretary-General of the Health Tourism Development Centre of Islamic Countries. He made the statement at the 14th Oman Health Exhibition and Conference held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Zangoeei mentioned that countries like Türkiye, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia, Malaysia, and others have been actively developing medical tourism.

Speaking to the Observer, he emphasised that Oman, with its beautiful landscape, has the potential to attract health tourists seeking both wellness and medical services. Zangoeei expressed readiness to facilitate connections between Oman and other countries and stakeholders in the healthcare industry.

During a panel discussion at the Oman Health Exhibition and Conference on Strategic Investment in Oman's Health Sector, Dr Yousuf al Balushi, the chief economist of 2040, identified two unique areas in Oman for investment. He suggested that Al Jabal Al Akhdhar could be ideal for rehabilitation and wellness, while Salalah is a popular destination known for its exceptional seasonal offerings.

Balqees al Makhmari, Senior Investment Associate at the Ministry of Health, highlighted Oman's focus on education, training and expertise exchange in the healthcare sector. She emphasised the importance of career development in this field.

OMAN INKS AIR
SERVICES AGREEMENTS



The agreements and MoU were signed on behalf of Oman by Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority. — ONA

MONTREAL: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), signed three bilateral air transport agreements with the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. The agreements were signed on the sidelines of the 42nd session of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly, held in Montreal, Canada.

A memorandum of understanding was also signed with the Arab Republic of Egypt, aimed at enhancing cooperation in civil aviation and expanding operating rights for national airlines.

The agreements and MoU were signed on behalf of Oman by Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, who emphasised that these initiatives reflect Oman's ongoing efforts to reinforce its position as a regional logistics hub, in support of national objectives and in furtherance of economic and trade ties with partner states.

He clarified that the bilateral agreements will enhance the overall framework governing air transport relations between Oman and the respective countries, incorporating technical and regulatory provisions as well as detailed schedules of air routes available to carriers operating flights between the parties. — ONA

Sayyid Badr, counterparts
discuss bilateral relations

SAYYID Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a series of bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Arab and friendly countries on the sidelines of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Sayyid Badr met with Andrii Sybiha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. During the meeting, they discussed opportunities for bilateral cooperation, particularly in the economic and cultural fields. The two ministers exchanged views on regional and international developments, emphasising that international dialogue and cooperation are essential for addressing common challenges and achieving regional and global security and peace.

The Foreign Minister also met with Dr Shaya Mohsin Zindani, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Republic of Yemen.

During this meeting, the two sides affirmed the deep fraternal relations and historical ties between the two countries, expressing support for bilateral cooperation. They stressed the importance of supporting dialogue and diplomacy to achieve a lasting peace in Yemen.

Moreover, the Foreign Minister met with Dr Badr Abdelatty, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs. The two ministers reaffirmed the strong fraternal relations between the two countries and the continuous cooperation and coordination in all fields. They stressed the need for Arab and international solidarity to take a firm stance against the ongoing Israeli escalation that threatens the region's security and stability, calling for the activation of international mechanisms to enforce international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Sayyid Badr also met with Hadja Lahbib, European Union Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management. The two sides highlighted the importance of upholding international law, justice and equality on all issues, especially the Palestinian cause. They also emphasised ensuring unimpeded humanitarian aid access to the Gaza Strip. Both sides affirmed



Sayyid Badr with Andrii Sybiha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. — ONA

their shared desire to enhance cooperation and coordination between Oman and the EU, exchange expertise in humanitarian and other fields, and continue supporting international efforts to achieve peace and stability in the region.

Furthermore, the Foreign Minister met with Yván Eduardo Gil Pinto, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. They highlighted the importance of exploring new partnership opportunities in the energy, agriculture, mining and investment sectors.

The two ministers exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest, underscoring the need for coordination in multilateral forums and fostering dialogue to support international peace and security and address challenges related to food security, climate change and sustainable development. Both sides confirmed their shared position on respecting state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, considering this a fundamental pillar for promoting stability and mutual respect-based international cooperation.

Moreover, the Foreign Minister met with Touthid Hossain, Adviser for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

The two ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding on diplomatic training during their meeting.

They affirmed the importance of enhancing diplomatic cooperation through the exchange of expertise, visits and joint training programmes. They also reviewed bilateral relations and promising partnership areas, confirming the mutual desire to develop them to serve common interests.

Further, the Foreign Minister met with Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This meeting focused on the existing relations and their shared commitment to developing cooperation and partnerships to serve the mutual interests of their friendly peoples. The meeting also addressed the latest developments in the regional arena. Both sides stressed the importance of coordination and consultation on various current issues and supporting all efforts aimed at resolving conflicts through dialogue and peaceful means, thereby contributing to establishing security, stability, and a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The meetings were attended by officials from both sides. — ONA

Oman joins Saudi in celebrating National Day

IBRI: The Sultanate of Oman joined the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in celebrating its 95th National Day in a ceremony organised by the Secretariat-General of National Celebrations in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police at the Empty Quarter border crossing in Al Dhahirah Governorate, which connects Oman with the land borders of Saudi Arabia.

The event programme featured a number of artistic performances reflecting the deep, distinguished relations between the two countries. The ceremony began with musical performances by the Royal Oman Police Band, accompanied by a visual presentation highlighting the historical ties, followed by a patriotic song and a traditional Ayyala folk art performance. The celebration also included participation from a Saudi folk arts troupe, a paragliding display, and a series of traditional performances such as the enthusiastic 'Al Razfa' and 'Al Aazi' arts.

Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, emphasised the importance of the land border crossing that links the two nations, enhancing cooperation, trade, investment exchange and social ties. He noted the upcoming preparations for import and export operations between the two countries in the Economic Zone of Al Dhahirah Governorate, which is currently under development near the Empty Quarter border crossing.

The celebration of Saudi National Day reflects the deep fraternal bonds and strong ties between the two countries and their peoples, highlighting their cooperative relations across various fields.

The event was attended by a number of officials from both the Omani and Saudi sides. — ONA



The event featured artistic performances reflecting the deep relations between the two countries. - ONA

SHORT TAKES



Gen Al Numani received Maartje Peters, Ambassador-designate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. — ONA

Oman, Netherlands discuss bilateral ties

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received Maartje Peters, Ambassador-designate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Sultanate of Oman, at his office on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Al Numani wished the ambassador success in carrying out her duties. The two sides discussed ways to enhance existing bilateral relations and joint cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands to fulfil the aspirations of the leaderships of both countries. — ONA

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Haj registration begins

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

THE Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs has announced that online registration for the 1447 AH Haj season has begun on Tuesday and will continue until October 8.

There has been an overwhelming response to the online electronic registration system on [www.hajj.om](#) when it opened to citizens and residents of Oman aged 18 and above. Applicants can register using their civil number, or mobile number if linked to the electronic authentication system (PKI), according to the ministry.

Those who are entitled to the first allocation will be notified from October 14 to 30, and the details of the second allocation will be notified between November 2-6, followed by the third allocation between November 9-11, 2025, a spokesperson from the ministry said.

Speaking to the Observer, Hamoud al Amri, Head of Haj Mission for the Affairs of Pilgrims and Haj Campaigns, said that each year, an Omani Haj Mission is formed to extend support to pilgrims and assist them before, during, and after performing Haj rituals and clarify the doubts that the pilgrims may come across. “Each year, we make sure that preference for Haj is given to cancer patients, people with chronic diseases and aged people who have not done Haj before,” Al Amri said.

The online system is transparent and fast in showing the results and sending messages to the eligible ones. This step facilitates early preparation and selection for the citizens and residents who intend to perform Haj and to choose companies specialised in operating Haj missions.



The electronic registration system is characterised by transparency and speed in showing the results.

HAJ AND UMRAH CONFERENCE

The second Haj and Umrah conference and exhibition, organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, will be held from October 22 to 23 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, according to the ministry.

The conference represents a realistic platform that brings together all partners who provide services to the pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman, both locally and internationally, from governmental and private institutions.

“This is a unique platform for all those who are ambitious to perform Haj and Umrah and to get themselves prepared for

the same, and this offers a rare opportunity for various stakeholders to come and connect with each other towards the flawless implementation of the procedures,” said a spokesperson from the ministry.

Attendees can expect lively discussions about new ideas and projects to enhance the pilgrimage journey. The exhibition features innovative products and services from participating companies.

The conference is expected to bring together government officials, travel agencies, pilgrimage companies, and businesses from various sectors like healthcare, transportation and technology from across the world.

Mubashir Signs Strategic Agreements and Underscores Commitment to Innovation at COMEX 2025



Mubashir, the largest Digital Out-of-Home (DOOH) network in Oman, made a strong impact at the 34th edition of COMEX 2025, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The company's participation underscored its leadership in the DOOH industry, with a showcase of innovative technology solutions designed to simplify campaign planning and booking while enhancing the client experience across Oman.

As part of its participation at COMEX 2025, Mubashir signed a Memorandum of Understanding with three key partners, highlighting its drive to advance Oman's digital ecosystem. The agreements included a collaboration with Thawani, which introduced flexible and seamless payment solutions for advertisers. The partnership with the Oman Football Association (OFA), which utilized Mubashir's nationwide network to revitalize football fan engagement across Oman and a third agreement with

Zamakan, which positioned Mubashir as a catalyst for innovation, expanding client opportunities and advancing the scope of DOOH advertising across the Sultanate.

Commenting on the occasion, Ali Al Raisi, CEO of Mubashir, said “Our presence at COMEX 2025 highlighted the technologies and collaborations that will help our clients engage audiences in richer, more dynamic ways. The agreements we signed with Thawani, the OFA, and Zamakan reflect our growth strategy: building partnerships that

enhance the customer journey and expand the horizons of DOOH in Oman.”

Held under the patronage of H.H. Sayyid Shihab Bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defense Affairs, COMEX 2025 reaffirmed its position as the Sultanate's premier annual technology exhibition. Mubashir's active participation and new collaborations highlight its pivotal role in shaping the future of digital advertising and enhancing customer experiences in Oman.

SPOTLIGHT

DON'T FLICK IT, BIN BUTTS



AN ESTIMATED
4.5
TRILLION
CIGARETTE BUTTS
ARE DISCARDED
WORLDWIDE
EVERY YEAR

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

CIGARETTE BUTTS are the most littered item in the world, including in Oman, and are a major source of toxic plastic pollution, with harmful chemicals such as cadmium, lead, arsenic and microplastics, which spill into soil and water. Made of cellulose acetate, they degrade into harmful microplastics that infiltrate soil and water. They threaten not only the fragile ecosystems but also the health of those who consume seafood contaminated through the food chain.

According to environmental reports, an estimated 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are discarded worldwide every year, with a significant portion ending up in oceans and coastal areas. This makes them the second-largest contributor to marine litter after plastics.

The careless dumping of these stubs is not just eyesore on our beautiful beaches and green spaces. They are a threat to public health and safety. For young children who play on the sand, cigarette butts can pose serious health risks if touched or ingested.

Another alarming consequence is the risk of fires. A smouldering cigarette butt discarded on dry sand or near dry vegetation can ignite flames that may quickly spread. Such incidents, while rare, highlight the hidden dangers that arise from what may appear to be a simple act of negligence.

Muscat Municipality continues to emphasise its commitment to protecting the environment, ensuring clean and sustainable beaches, and safeguarding the well-being of visitors. Through awareness campaigns, public reminders and dedicated clean-up initiatives,

CIGARETTE ENDS ARE A MAJOR SOURCE OF TOXIC PLASTIC POLLUTION, WITH HARMFUL CHEMICALS SUCH AS CADMIUM, LEAD, ARSENIC AND MICROPLASTICS, WHICH SPILL INTO SOIL AND WATER

the municipality seeks to educate beachgoers about the dangers of discarding cigarette butts. To complement these efforts, waste bins and cigarette disposal points have been installed at popular beaches. The municipality has also signalled the possibility of enforcing stricter penalties on offenders, underscoring that collective responsibility is key to sustaining Oman's natural coastal heritage.

While municipal authorities play a crucial role, environmental experts stress that safeguarding the beaches cannot be achieved through regulations alone. Every individual

has a responsibility to ensure that their behaviour contributes to a cleaner and healthier environment. Simple actions — such as carrying portable ashtrays, disposing of cigarette butts in designated bins, and raising awareness among friends and family — can make a significant difference.

Community organisations and environmental groups in Oman have also taken the lead in organising beach clean-ups and workshops. These initiatives not only help remove litter but also inspire a culture of responsibility and respect for nature among younger generations.

Internationally, governments and environmental agencies are exploring innovative solutions to address this growing challenge. Some countries have introduced biodegradable filters, while others have launched recycling programmes that convert cigarette waste into useful materials. By acting locally — through awareness, enforcement and community participation — Oman contributes to a worldwide effort to reduce marine pollution and preserve coastal environments.

Protecting the coastline is more than an environmental necessity; it is a cultural and economic priority. Pristine beaches enhance Oman's tourism appeal, support local communities and reflect the nation's reputation as a country that values its natural heritage.

The message is clear: every cigarette butt discarded carelessly is a direct threat to the sand, the sea, and the safety of beachgoers. Achieving clean and safe shores requires collaboration — between authorities, residents, and visitors alike. As Muscat Municipality reminds the public, a simple choice not to litter can go a long way in preserving the charm of Oman's beaches for generations to come.

SHORT TAKES



The event was graced by the presence of Ambassador G V Srinivas, who praised the cultural significance of the gathering.

‘MUSHAIRA’ BRINGS TOGETHER POETS

MUSCAT: The Urdu Wing of the Indian Social Club (ISC), Oman, hosted a memorable International Mushaira 2025 in Muscat, bringing together a distinguished lineup of poets from India and abroad along with a large, appreciative audience.

The event was graced by the presence of Ambassador G V Srinivas, who praised the cultural significance of the gathering.

“Events like these highlight the cultural depth of our community and the timeless appeal of Urdu poetry,” he said, expressing his delight at the enthusiastic participation in Muscat.

Aftab Patel (Safer-e-Urdu), a long-time supporter of the Mushaira, reiterated his commitment to literary endeavours.

“Since the inception of this Mushaira, I have had the privilege to support it. My joy lies in witnessing Urdu flourish and poets finding a platform to engage with the community,” he remarked.

In his opening remarks, Tufail Ahmad, Convener of the ISC Urdu Wing, emphasised the importance of poetry in preserving the language. “Poetry and Mushaira are not just performances, but a lifeline for the growth and preservation of the Urdu language,” he stated.

4 ARRESTED FOR DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

MUSCAT: A daring daylight robbery of a gold shop in Muscat by four Asian nationals resulted in a loss of around RO 150,000.

The robbery, which was carried out at gunpoint, was unravelled by the Royal Oman Police.

According to the Royal Oman Police (ROP), the police commands of Muscat and Al Batinah North governorates, in cooperation with the General-Directorate of Criminal Investigation, arrested four Asian nationals on charges of robbery after they stormed a gold shop in Al Seeb, threatened and assaulted the employees, and stole gold jewellery valued at RO 150,000, as well as cash.

After committing the crime, the perpetrators left the scene in an attempt to escape, but they didn’t realise that every trace they left was evidence against them.

The relevant authorities immediately launched an investigation and began gathering evidence.

Students represent Oman at World Robot Olympiad finale in Singapore

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

Two student teams will represent Oman at the World Robot Olympiad (WRO) international final, which brings together students from over 95 countries, to showcase innovative solutions in science, technology and engineering through robotics. The event will take place from November 26 to 28 at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Singapore.

In the RoboMission senior category, Arnab Jaykrishnan and Parsa Khalili from the British School Muscat are competing, while in the junior category, Joel Ginson from the Indian School Al Maabela is taking part.

Each year, thousands of



Joel Ginson

young talents from around the globe compete across different categories and age groups, making WRO a true celebration of STEM, creativity, collaboration and problem-solving.

In Oman, Roboticktick Institute organised the national qualifier, where more than 50 local teams from schools across the country competed for the chance to represent Oman



Arnab Jaykrishnan and Parsa Khalili

on the world stage.

All students demonstrated outstanding skill, creativity and teamwork during the national qualifier, securing first place in their respective categories. Their achievement highlights the growing strength of robotics education in Oman and the dedication of students who are eager to compete on a global level.

“As they prepare for the finals in Singapore, these young innovators carry not only their robots but also the pride of Oman, aiming to raise the nation’s flag high in this prestigious international competition. We hope many more students will be motivated to contribute to the development of the country,” said Vahid, one of the organisers of the event.

‘ITLAQ’ ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME CONCLUDES TODAY

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation, the ‘Itlaq’ accelerator programme will conclude on Wednesday, with the participation of several officials, investors, innovators and entrepreneurs.

The organisation of this event marks the culmination of a six-month work journey during which the ministry, in collaboration with Sultan



Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi

Qaboos University, implemented the ‘Itlaq’, a programme to support Omani innovators and empower them to transform their ideas into innovative business models capable of growth in local and global markets.

The event will feature presentations by participating teams showcasing their innovative projects to a group of investors, entrepreneurs and experts in the field of innovation, during dedicated sessions for demonstrating

business models and presenting the results achieved during the programme.

The ‘Itlaq’ programme is one of the national initiatives aimed at enhancing the environment for innovation and entrepreneurship in the Sultanate of Oman, by providing practical training, specialised and interactive workshops, contributing to the development of a generation of entrepreneurs capable of contributing to economic and intellectual development.

Oversight of training seeks to ensure quality

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

ON Monday, the Ministry of Labour announced a decision to ban all training activities conducted without a licence.

Fatma bint Abdullah al Isriyyah, Head of the Evaluation and Compliance Follow-up Section, MoL, said the decision seeks not only to regulate the training market, but also to protect the interests of trainees. “Institutions that operate without licences undermine the very trust that trainees place in the training system,” she said. “Our objective is to ensure that every training course or programme delivered in Oman meets recognised standards, provides value and prepares participants for the demands of the labour market.” She explained that unlicensed activities constitute a legal violation and are subject to strict measures. These include administrative penalties such as fines, suspension of activities, and, when warranted, referral to the competent authorities. “By ensuring compliance, we safeguard both institutions and individuals, making sure that the training landscape in Oman is one of credibility and professionalism.”

She further pointed out that regulating the sector produces outcomes that extend well beyond



Our objective is to ensure that every training course or programme delivered in Oman meets recognised standards, provides value and prepares participants for the demands of the labour market.

FATMA BINT
ABDULLAH
AL ISRIYYAH



Institutions that operate without licences undermine the very trust that trainees place in the training system.

enforcement.

A well-organised training market helps streamline opportunities, raises the overall quality of programmes, and ensures that institutions contribute effectively to national development priorities. “This is about embedding a culture of excellence,” she said. “When trainees know that their chosen institution is licensed and monitored, their confidence grows, and the wider community benefits from the credibility that comes with it.”

The ministry has also underlined its commitment to supporting institutions that wish to comply. It has invited aspiring trainers to submit applications

for licensing through the official channels of the Directorate-General of Private Training Institutions.

This process is designed to be transparent and accessible, encouraging institutions to align themselves with the standards expected of a modern training sector.

By clarifying the rules, enforcing compliance and engaging with stakeholders, the ministry seeks to create a balanced and sustainable training ecosystem.

The initiative ensures that every participant in the sector — from institutions to trainees — benefits from a framework built on legality, quality and accountability.



مستطع ط للمقاصة و الابداع
Muscat Clearing & Depository

TENDER NOTICE

Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (S.A.O.G) would like to invite qualified businesses to participate in the tender below:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Eligibility	Doc Fee (OMR)	Last Date for DOC's Distribution	Bid Submission Date
CSD/ 2025/ C002	Data Monetization Consulting Services for Muscat Clearing and Depository Company	Vendors specialized in this field	25 (Non-refundable)	30 September, 2025	8 October, 2025 by 12:00 noon

Tender Documents (RFP) shall be obtained from Procurement & Services Department email: (Yahya Al Salmi - alsalmi@mcd.om), Muscat Clearing & Depository, First Floor, MBD, RUWI, Sultanate of Oman (Tel: +968-24822207) during office hours after paying the participation charges mentioned above, to be paid into MCD Bank account details provided below.

All Vendors who are bidding must provide an irrevocable, unconditional and payable on demand bank guarantee from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (2%) of the tender value on behalf of MUSCAT CLEARING & DEPOSITORY COMPANY, valid for 90 days from the date of submission of the proposal in response to the RFP.

Riyada card holders from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) must attach a valid copy of the card in order to be exempted from tender fees and submission of bid bond.

MCD 's Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract Agreement shall be applicable.

MCD is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Tender.

MCD Bank Account details: -
Account Name : Muscat Clearing & Depository Company
Bank Name & Branch : Bank Dhofar, MBD Branch
Account Number : 01010010875001
SWIFT/BIC Code : BDOFOMRXXXX

WORLD

SHORTTAKES



Indonesian Minister of Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto (L) and EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic (R) react after signing a joint announcement, in Bali. — AFP

INDONESIA, EUROPE SIGN LONG-AWAITED TRADE DEAL

DENPASAR: Indonesia and the European Union finalised negotiations on a trade agreement after nearly a decade of talks, a senior minister said. The Indonesia-European Union Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is the third deal Brussels has signed with Southeast Asian countries, after Singapore and Vietnam. The pact was signed by EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic and Indonesian Minister of Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto in Bali and will open investment in strategic sectors such as electric vehicles, electronics and pharmaceuticals. “By finalising this agreement, the EU and Indonesia are sending a powerful message to the world that we stand united in our commitment to open rules-based and mutually beneficial international trade,” Sefcovic said after the signing. “In all, EU exporters will save some 600 million euros (\$708 million) a year in duties paid on their goods entering the Indonesian market, and European products will be more affordable and available to Indonesian consumers,” EU President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement.

Indonesia has been in talks with the EU since 2016, but negotiations for a trade deal initially saw little progress. Issues such as palm oil and deforestation posed stumbling blocks, but US President Donald Trump’s sweeping tariff policy “created the urgency” to expedite an agreement, said Deni Friawan, researcher at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. The trade deal also included a protocol on palm oil, the EU said in a statement, without providing details. “This is a ten-year journey that has resulted in a milestone that reflects our commitment and the commitment of stakeholders to an open, fair and sustainable economic assistance,” Airlangga told a news conference. The agreement is expected to be implemented by 2027, Airlangga added. Around 80 per cent of Indonesian exports to the EU will be tariff-free after the deal comes into force, Airlangga said in June.

It is expected to benefit the country’s top shipments to the bloc, including palm oil, footwear, textiles and fisheries, he added. The EU is Indonesia’s fifth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$30.1 billion last year. The agreement would further open up EU access to the Indonesian market of around 280 million people, Deni said.

Ties had been frayed by issues, including a proposed import ban by Brussels on products linked to deforestation that has angered Indonesia, a major palm oil exporter. Under the EU deforestation regulation, exports of a vast range of goods — including soy, timber, palm oil, cattle, printing paper and rubber — are prohibited if produced on land deforested after December 2020. The EU has postponed the rule’s implementation to the end of this year after a backlash. However, activists are concerned that the trade agreement will lead to more deforestation driven by increased demand for Indonesian palm oil. — AFP

EXPELLED ABROAD

Ghana departs six west Africans to Togo



Ghana has deported at least six west Africans to Togo after they were expelled to Accra as part of an immigration crackdown by US President Donald Trump, their lawyers said. The deportees had been sent to Ghana in early September. Lawyers sued last week to free their clients, alleging they were being held without charge and were expelled to Ghana despite having deportation protection orders from US immigration authorities. — AFP

MINING ACCIDENT

Colombia gold mine collapse traps 25



Colombian rescuers were trying to reach 25 workers trapped 80 metres underground following the collapse of a gold mine in northwest Colombia. “Contact has already been made with the miners, who indicated that they are safe and sound,” Catalina Escobar, a spokesperson for the Antioquia department where the mine is situated, said. The official said the mine in the town of Segovia is operated by Canada’s Aris Mining Corporation. — AFP

HEAVY RAINS

Monsoon floods impact central Thailand



Four people were killed in flooding in central Thailand with more heavy rain forecast this week during the annual monsoon. More than 250,000 people across several provinces on the Chao Praya River basin were impacted by the floods this week, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said in a statement. The meteorological department forecast more heavy rain in Thailand’s north, central and eastern provinces, until Friday. — AFP

DR CONGO LEADER ACCUSES RWANDA OF DELAYING PEACE

UNITED NATIONS: The leader of the Democratic Republic of Congo accused Rwanda of delaying implementation of a peace deal that Kinshasa and Kigali signed in Washington in June. “Rwanda pretends to have withdrawn its troops, but in reality, Rwanda troops continue to be present on Congolese soil and to support the M23,” President Felix Tshisekedi

said, referring to a Rwandan-backed armed group that made rapid gains in the eastern DRC earlier this year. Kigali “is trying to gain time for the crisis to worsen,” Tshisekedi told journalists on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. “We, from our side, are ready to make peace.” He hinted that his country is looking for greater security cooperation from Washington in return for

a stable supply of metals used in electronic devices and batteries, such as cobalt. The eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has suffered extreme violence for more than three decades. Since taking up arms again at the end of 2021, the M23 armed group has seized swathes of land in the restive region with Rwanda’s backing, triggering a spiralling

humanitarian crisis. The Congolese government and the M23 signed a declaration of principles on July 19 in Qatar that included a “permanent ceasefire” aimed at halting the conflict. Rwanda slammed Human Rights Watch over a report that used satellite data to show how a military graveyard had seemingly expanded in DR Congo. — AFP

Gazans see no relief as Israel intensifies assault

ISRAEL’S military pushed deeper towards the most populated areas of Gaza City on Tuesday, a stark reminder for Gazans that Western powers’ recognition of a Palestinian state does not mean an end to the horrors of war as tanks approach. Israel pressed on with its Gaza offensive a day after dozens of world leaders gathered at the United Nations to embrace a Palestinian state, a landmark diplomatic shift after nearly two years of war that faces fierce resistance from Israel and its close ally, the United States.

Israel says the moves will undermine the prospects of a peaceful ending to the war in the Palestinian enclave, much of it devastated by Israeli air strikes and a humanitarian crisis, including widespread hunger. Local health authorities said Israeli fire on Tuesday killed at least 22 people across the Gaza Strip, 18 of them in Gaza City, and the Gaza health ministry said hospitals in the enclave would run out of fuel in the coming few days, endangering lives. “We are not steadfast, we are helpless. We don’t have money to leave to the south,” Huda, a mother of two from Gaza City, said. “The children tremble all the time from the sounds of explosions, we do too, they are wiping out a city that is thousands of years old, and the world is celebrating a symbolic recognition of a state that won’t stop our killing.” Israeli forces detonated explosive-laden vehicles in the suburbs of Sabra and Tel Al Hawa as tanks made a big push towards the



A displaced woman with a child rests after fleeing strikes in Gaza, Palestine. — Reuters

Israel pressed on with its Gaza offensive a day after dozens of world leaders gathered at the United Nations to embrace a Palestinian state, a landmark diplomatic shift after nearly two years of war that faces fierce resistance from Israel

western side of Gaza City. Residents said the explosions destroyed dozens of homes and roads. President Emmanuel Macron announced that France recognised Palestinian statehood at a meeting he convened with Saudi Arabia on Monday - a milestone that appeared unlikely to change much on the ground. Israel’s ambassador to France, Joshua L Zarka, said that France’s move was perceived in Israel as a hostile decision and that trust would need to be rebuilt between Macron and Israel’s government. Israel has drawn global condemnation over its military conduct in Gaza, where more than 65,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to local health authorities. Despite this, Israel has begun a ground assault on Gaza City with few prospects for a ceasefire, and wants Hamas to hand over the

last hostages it seized in the 2023 attack on Israel. Gaza City is the Gaza Strip’s capital and once housed Hamas’ most powerful battalions. “Are we now being killed as the citizens of the state of Palestine? Is that what happened?” said Abu Mustafa, after fleeing his Gaza City home because Israeli tanks were close. “We want the war to end, we want our slaughter to end, that’s what we need now, not declarations.” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dismissed the criticism of his military campaign and said the war will not stop until Hamas is eliminated. But he has not produced a plan for shattered Gaza after the war ends. Gazans are not thinking about the symbolic recognition of a Palestinian state. They want the strikes and shortages of food, fuel and medicine to end now. — Reuters

SCHOOLS SHUT AS TYPHOON NEARS SOUTHERN CHINA

HONG KONG: Hong Kong and parts of southern China ground to a halt on Tuesday evening as Super Typhoon Ragasa approached with high winds and lashing rain, forcing Chinese authorities to shut down schools and businesses in at least 10 cities. Ragasa had already toppled trees, torn the roofs off buildings and killed at least two people while ripping through the northern Philippines, where thousands sought shelter in schools and evacuation centres. The Hong Kong Observatory earlier issued its third-highest typhoon warning, T8, adding it would consider upgrading the warning as early as 11:00 pm on Tuesday. “The weather is expected to deteriorate rapidly overnight, with winds strengthening quickly,” the observatory said. A reporter saw waves nearly five metres high smash into the seaside promenade of Hong Kong’s Heng Fa Chuen residential district around nightfall. — AFP

RENEWED SCRUTINY



European Union flags flutter outside the EU Commission headquarters, Belgium. — Reuters

EU PROPOSES NEW RULES DELAY TO ANTI-DEFORESTATION

BRUSSELS: The EU said that it will seek a new one-year delay to sweeping anti-deforestation rules cheered by green groups but assailed by key trading partners from the United States to Indonesia. The bill, which bans imports of products driving deforestation, is currently set to take effect at the end this year, but the European Commission said the supporting system was not ready.

It would be the second postponement on implementing the law, which was passed in 2023 and was originally due to take effect in late 2024, before being delayed to late 2025.

“We have concluded that we cannot meet the original deadline without causing disruptions to our businesses and supply chains,” commission spokesman Olof Gill told a press conference in Brussels.

The European Union executive will as a result push to delay the law’s entry into force by one more year, to late 2026, he added. The postponement has to be approved by member states and the European Parliament.

The move is set to bring renewed scrutiny to the EU’s commitment to a greener future, which has come under increased pressure from governments and industry over the past year.

It came hours after the commission struck a free-trade deal with Indonesia, a prominent critic of the law — although environment commissioner Jessika Roswall said the two developments were “not linked at all”.

Firms importing the merchandise in question to the 27-nation EU will be responsible for tracking their supply chains to prove goods did not originate from deforested zones, relying on geolocation and satellite data. But the ban has faced opposition from trading partners, including Brazil and the United States, and some EU capitals, amid concerns over red tape, costs and lack of clarity over some aspects of the law. Partially because of this, its entry into force was pushed back by 12 months a first time in 2024.

The commission said the new delay had to do with “serious capacity concerns regarding the IT system” designed to support implementation of the rules, saying more time was needed to get it running smoothly.

“Given the projected load, the Commission will therefore seek a postponement... in order to avoid uncertainty for authorities and to avoid operational difficulties for companies,” Gill said. The push comes as climate has increasingly taken a back seat in Brussels, with global trade tensions and the war in Ukraine shifting the focus to industry and defence. — AFP

PETITION TO FREE HUNGER-STRIKING SERBIAN STUDENT REACHES 60,000

BELGRADE: A petition to free a Serbian anti-government protester passed 60,000 signatures on Tuesday, days after the 22-year old student was moved to a hospital while on a hunger strike. Bogdan Jovicic has been held since mid-August, suspected of vandalising an office of the governing Serbian Progressive Party during violent protests in the northern city of Novi Sad last month.

Almost daily protests have gripped Serbia since November after

a railway station roof collapse killed 16 people in Novi Sad, the country’s second-largest city. The tragedy at the newly renovated station became a symbol of entrenched corruption, with demands for a transparent investigation escalating into calls for early elections.

But the largely peaceful demonstrations turned violent last month when loyalists, police and anti-government protesters clashed across several nights — in one incident protesters attempted to set

the party offices ablaze. A public outcry over Jovicic’s detention grew after images shared on social media showed him in leg cuffs and under police guard at his father’s funeral. Anger deepened when his detention was extended by 30 days on September 12, despite not being formally charged. “After the extension of his detention, Bogdan went on a hunger strike,” the petition text said, adding that he was hospitalised six days later.

— AFP

Cease air violations over members: Nato to Russia

NATO on Tuesday warned Russia to stop an “escalatory” pattern of airspace violations along its eastern flank, after the alliance held urgent talks about a jet incursion over Estonia last week. “Russia bears full responsibility for these actions, which are escalatory, risk miscalculation and endanger lives. They must stop,” Nato’s 32 member states said in a statement.

“Russia should be in no doubt: Nato and allies will employ, in accordance with international law, all necessary military and non-military tools to defend ourselves and deter all threats from all directions.” It added that Nato would “continue to respond in the manner, timing, and domain of our choosing” and that the alliance’s commitment to its collective defence pact remained “ironclad”.

Estonia convened emergency consultations under Article 4 of Nato’s founding treaty after armed Russian fighter jets violated its airspace for some 12 minutes on Friday. That incident — which saw Nato scramble jets — came just over a week after the alliance shot down Russian drones over Poland and led Warsaw to demand similar talks.

Nato chief Mark Rutte said alliance forces would decide whether to fire upon Russian aircraft breaching its airspace “based on available intelligence regarding the threat posed by the aircraft.” Rutte said that “in Estonia, Nato forces promptly intercepted and escorted the aircraft without escalation, as no immediate threat was assessed”. “Our message to the Russians is clear, we will defend every inch of allied territory,” he said. In response to the drone intrusion in Poland, Nato announced it was bolstering its eastern defences to help to counter the threat from Moscow.

Besides Poland and Romania, other eastern flank countries including Romania, Lithuania, Latvia and Finland have seen recent violations of their airspace. Rutte said it was “too early to say” if drones over Copenhagen that disrupted flights overnight were linked to Russia. The spike in tensions has spurred fears that the Russia war in Ukraine could be spilling across Nato’s border.



An officer walks next to vehicles after drones were observed in Danish airspace, in Copenhagen. — AFP

In their statement the Nato countries vowed that “allies will not be deterred by these and other irresponsible acts by Russia from their enduring commitments to support Ukraine”. Under Nato’s Article 4, any member can call emergency discussions when it feels its “territorial integrity, political independence or security” are at risk.

Tuesday’s talks were the third time Article 4 has been invoked since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and the ninth time it has been triggered in the alliance’s 76-year history. Nato’s collective security is based on its Article 5 principle: if one member is attacked, the entire alliance comes to its defence. That article has only been invoked once in the history of Nato, following the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

Large drones that flew over Copenhagen airport for hours and caused it to shut down constituted the “most serious attack on Danish critical infrastructure” to date, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said on Tuesday. Airports in Copenhagen and Oslo reopened early on Tuesday, hours after unidentified drones in their airspace caused dozens of flights to be diverted or cancelled, disrupting travel for thousands of passengers.

“This is part of the development we have recently observed with other drone

attacks, airspace violations, and cyberattacks targeting European airports,” Frederiksen said in a statement. She referred to similar drone incidents in Poland and Romania and the violation by Russian fighter jets of Estonia’s airspace. The governments of Poland, Estonia and Romania have pointed the finger at Moscow, which has brushed off the allegations. Frederiksen told Danish broadcaster DR she could “not rule out” that Russia was behind the drone activity.

Moscow denied involvement, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissing her remarks as “unfounded accusations”. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky denounced what he called a Russian violation of Denmark’s airspace, in a message on X. Danish police meanwhile said they had been unable to identify the drone operator. “The number, size, flight patterns, time over the airport. All this together ... indicates that it is a capable actor. Which capable actor, I do not know,” Copenhagen police inspector Jens Jespersen told reporters.

“It was an actor that had the capacity, the will and the tools to make their presence known,” he said. Nato said it was “too early to say” whether Russia was responsible, but warned Moscow to stop an “escalatory” pattern of airspace violations along its eastern flank. — AFP

EU, WHO counter Trump’s warnings on autism and pregnancy

GENEVA: European Union and British health agencies confirmed on Tuesday the safety of paracetamol during pregnancy, disputing a warning from US President Donald Trump linking the popular pain medication to autism. The World Health Organization said that evidence of a link remained inconsistent and urged caution in drawing conclusions. On Monday, Trump linked autism to childhood vaccine use and the taking of Tylenol by women when pregnant, elevating claims not backed by scientific evidence to the forefront of US health policy.

The European Medicines Agency said on Tuesday that there was no new evidence that would require changes to the region’s current recommendations for the use of paracetamol, known as Tylenol in the United States, during pregnancy. “Available evidence has found no

link between the use of paracetamol during pregnancy and autism,” the EMA said in a statement, adding paracetamol could be used during pregnancy when needed, though at the lowest effective dose and frequency.

On Monday, Britain’s health regulator said it was safe to use. “The evidence remains inconsistent,” WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic told a Geneva press briefing when asked about a possible link between paracetamol use in pregnancy and autism. He cited unspecified studies that pointed to a possible link but said this was not confirmed by subsequent research. “This lack of replicability really calls for caution in drawing casual conclusions,” he said.

Viktor Ahlqvist, lead author of the largest scientific study into possible links between paracetamol



US President Donald Trump makes an announcement on autism, at the White House in Washington. — Reuters

use during pregnancy and autism, said the Trump administration “seemed to have misunderstood the available evidence”. “We do not find support that paracetamol in pregnancy would cause autism,” Ahlqvist said, referring to their study, which looked at 2.5 million

pregnancies in Sweden. Ahlqvist said exposure to any type of medication during pregnancy correlates with adverse outcomes in children, typically not because of the drug but the underlying health problems for which they might need it.

In a highly unusual press conference at the White House on Monday, Trump delivered medical advice to pregnant women and parents of young children, repeatedly telling them not to use or administer the painkiller and suggesting that common vaccines not be taken together or so early in a child’s life. The advice from Trump goes against that of medical societies, which have cited data from numerous studies showing that acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol, plays a safe role in the well-being of pregnant women.

Asked to elaborate further on Trump’s remarks, Jasarevic said vaccines did not cause autism and affirmed their life-saving qualities. “This is something that science has proven, and these things should not be really questioned,” he added. — Reuters

OPINION

Are you over-giving or just avoiding guilt?



HYESHA BARETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

WE often wear our generosity like a badge of honour. We tell ourselves we are being kind, selfless and loving - the kind of person everyone can count on. However, are you giving because you genuinely want to, or are you giving to avoid the heavy ache of guilt? Over-giving can feel noble at first. We say yes when we’re exhausted, we take on more than we can manage, we put everyone’s needs ahead of our own. It feels easier to keep giving than to sit with the discomfort of saying no. Guilt is an emotion designed to keep us connected to others, which acts like an inner alarm, warning us that we might have hurt someone or let them down. Hence, why guilt can feel almost physical, like a knot in your stomach or a weight pressing on your chest, because your brain is nudging you to “fix” the situation and restore harmony. Nonetheless, not all guilt is healthy. Sometimes we feel guilty simply for

prioritising ourselves, for setting boundaries, for resting, or for saying no. This is often learned early in life. Many of us were praised for being “good” when we were helpful and compliant, but made to feel shame when we asserted our needs. As adults, we carry those lessons with us, so over-giving becomes our way of earning love and staying “safe” in relationships. Think about a time when you said yes to something you didn’t want to do. At first, you might have felt relief as you avoided letting anyone down. However, later, a quiet resentment may have crept in, leaving you drained and frustrated. This is the hidden cost of over-giving to silence guilt, rather than giving from genuine desire. When we give to avoid guilt, we are not truly connecting. We are trying to keep the peace, manage other people’s emotions, and control how we are perceived. This is not generosity; it is emotional bargaining. It keeps everyone else happy while leaving us

The more you choose to honour your truth, the more space you create for authentic, wholehearted yeses. True generosity is never born from fear or guilt

running on empty. Healthy giving feels very different. It comes from a place of fullness, not fear. When we give because we truly want to, there is a sense of warmth and expansion. We feel connected to ourselves and to the other person. When we give because we feel we have to, we often feel tight, small, or resentful and our body knows the difference long before our mind catches up. This is where self-awareness becomes our ally. The next time you are about to say yes, pause. Notice what your body is telling you. Does your chest feel open or constricted? Do you feel grounded or tense? Those signals are your inner compass. You are not selfish for protecting your energy, as saying no is an act of self-respect. The more you choose to honour your truth, the more space you create for authentic, wholehearted yeses. True generosity is never born from fear or guilt. It is born from love, and that love must include you first.

REGULATION NEEDED TO MANAGE CONTENT IN NEW MEDIA

After new media, the world of creativity has been unlocked. Never before has it been so easy for a young artist to share a painting with millions, for a teacher to turn lessons into engaging videos, or for a storyteller to find an audience beyond borders. Content creation has become the heartbeat of the digital age — shaping culture, spreading knowledge and even driving economies. Not everyone who posts online can be called a “content creator” in the true sense. There is a difference between those who build value — through art, education, entertainment, or social commentary — and those who simply chase attention with harmful, misleading, or shallow material. In the noise of the digital world, this difference often gets lost. This is why governments are beginning to think about executive regulations for new media, not just to control what goes online, but to protect and nurture the creative industries that depend on it. There are individuals who invest time, skills and imagination into producing material that informs, inspires or entertains. Others exploit the system. They fill timelines with clickbait, recycle low-quality content or spread misinformation for quick money. The danger is that without a thoughtful framework, both groups are treated the same. Genuine creators get buried under sensational noise, and audiences lose trust in new media altogether. Why regulation matters for creativity? An executive regulatory system ought not to be a muffler of voices; it should be one that brings up the right ones. By just regulations, governments can maintain originality to stop creators from being copied and their work taken and get rid of toxic content through distinguishing between genuine creative effort and content that spreads hatred, misinformation, or exploitation. At its essence, regulation must be about people. It must be realised that behind every podcast, song or video is someone — someone who is late at night editing, someone who gives their all to their work, someone who hopes their voice will matter. These are not “influencers” on the hunt for the next big viral hit. They are culture creators, memory makers and identity formers. If governments can enact laws that protect them, the outcome will not be censorship, but a healthier, more robust creative space. The advantage is that the digital landscape will be less about empty content and more about meaningful stories that bring people together.



IMAN QASIM AL SHARQI

The writer is a trainer and researcher

Beyond appearances: The cost of false leadership

INVISIBLE leaders rarely step into the spotlight but whose loyalty and commitment sustain institutions in ways that often go unrecognised. They remind us that leadership is not always about visibility. Sometimes, it is about devotion to the mission, carried out faithfully and silently in the background. But there is another kind of leader, very different in nature. Unlike the invisible leader who serves without expectation of recognition, this leader thrives on visibility. They stand at the front, polished and confident, carrying an aura of authority. They appear to embody leadership, yet once you look beneath the surface, what you find is not service but self-interest. These leaders present the image of strength while quietly prioritising their own advancement. Their presence fills the stage, but their impact rarely extends beyond themselves. When the institution’s needs conflict with their personal ambitions, the institution almost always loses. At first glance, they may look effective. They are often the faces chosen to represent success, the voices we hear at conferences, the names we see tied to achievements. Their words are fluent in the language of progress, and their public persona can be compelling. But if you study the substance of their work, the patterns emerge. Credit is absorbed but seldom shared. Teams under them stop moving forward because opportunities are kept tightly in their own hands. Decisions are shaped less by long-term vision and more by personal gain. What distinguishes them is not their talent but their loyalty. Their loyalty is to their own career, not to the institution they serve. And in moments of conflict, when choices must be made between reputation and responsibility, they protect themselves first. The danger is not immediate.



In the end, leadership is not about being seen. It is about seeing clearly what the institution requires and standing for it, even when it demands personal sacrifice.



DR ASMA AL YAHYAEI

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True leadership is revealed not by how brightly one person shines, but by how many others are lifted into the light alongside them

In fact, institutions may even flourish for a time under such leadership, carried along by the momentum of appearances. The leader is visible, their presence reassuring, and from the outside, the organisation may look strong. But beneath that surface, a slow weakening takes place. Trust begins to fade as people recognise the gap between image and intent. Creativity dies when individuals feel treated as competition rather than collaborators. And the most capable members of the team, sensing no room to grow, quietly withdraw or walk away. Over time, the cost becomes undeniable. What looked like progress was only performance. The institution that seemed solid begins to feel fragile, because the foundation of trust and shared purpose has been undermined. Leadership that serves itself leaves organisations hollow. This raises a crucial question: how do we recognise the difference between genuine leadership and its illusion? The answer lies not in the confidence of the leader’s voice but in the conditions they create for others. True leadership is revealed not by how brightly one person shines, but by how many others

are lifted into the light alongside them. Do people around them grow, succeed, and find opportunities? Or does all recognition and progress circle back to the leader alone? The test also comes in moments of strain. When the interests of the individual clash with the needs of the institution, does the leader make sacrifices for the greater good? Or do they retreat to protect themselves? A leader’s true nature is often revealed not in times of celebration but in times of challenge. For organisations, the lesson is clear. Success cannot be measured only by outward appearances. Institutions must look deeper, beyond polished speeches and public profiles, to the quieter evidence of loyalty. Who are the leaders building capacity, empowering others, and leaving the organisation stronger than they found it? And who are the leaders who consume opportunities for themselves, leaving little behind once they move on? Cultivating genuine leadership requires deliberate cultural choices. It means celebrating those who share recognition rather than keeping it. It means rewarding loyalty to mission, not just personal achievement. And it means building systems of accountability that ensure leadership is measured not only by results but by how those results were achieved. Invisible leaders remind us that greatness can thrive without applause. Self-serving leaders remind us that applause alone can be hollow. The real measure of leadership is not visibility but loyalty, loyalty to the mission, to the people, and to the institution as a whole. In the end, leadership is not about being seen. It is about seeing clearly what the institution requires and standing for it, even when it demands personal sacrifice. The choice for every leader is whether they will chase the illusion of visibility or embrace the responsibility of service. One leaves only an image behind. The other leaves a legacy.

It’s your responsibility alone if you are scammed!



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

NOT a day goes by without headlines about someone getting scammed online. Every day, a fresh report emerges regarding yet another method fraudsters have attempted to deceive us into giving up our personal details or our cash.

Cybercriminals employ psychological manipulation to deceive victims into surrendering their funds, and their methods are becoming increasingly advanced. They publish fraudulent advertisements on social media sites, dispatch emails containing phishing links or malicious software.

Your vulnerability to them isn’t determined by your intellect or level of education. In some ways, smarter individuals are vulnerable precisely because they think it won’t happen to them. They assert, “I’m too smart; I could never fall for that,” but they do, possibly due to having a tough day.

The issue is that the digital realm has permeated the details of our daily lives — settling bills, purchasing groceries, and reserving tickets. In contrast to earlier hardware-focused technologies, where excitement came from adapting to the newest device, people must now fundamentally alter their way of life.

Undoubtedly, advancements in technology have enhanced our safety like never before. Yet, in tandem with this digital expansion, “nameless” offenders have emerged and

are taking advantage of human emotional vulnerabilities.

Scammers use effective tactics to achieve their goals. A scammer might build your trust and pretend to be your friend before betraying you. Alternatively, they may use psychological tactics to intimidate you into compliance. In either case, realising that you have been deceived can be very emotional.

In the end, these scams leave their victims drained financially and emotionally shattered! Social media often acts as the main venue for conversations about scam tactics and ways to prevent fraud. Like all captivating ghost stories, they serve a social purpose, creating a shared vocabulary for our collective fears.

As stated in the 2024 Global State of Scams report by the Global Anti-Scam Alliance (GASA) in partnership with Feedzai, fraudsters have stolen more than \$1.03 trillion worldwide within the last year.

“This amount competes with the GDP of certain countries,” says the report. However, within the statistics, the report provides optimism, highlighting a rise in consumer awareness and resistance to scams.

Online and digital fraud takes place when scammers exploit platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to trick people into revealing personal information or sending money. These frauds usually appear as phishing messages, fake websites, or misleading online purchasing schemes and

Online and digital fraud takes place when scammers exploit platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to trick people into revealing personal information or sending money

their promotions.

It would be great if Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram could keep an eye on fake advertisements. Although they implement measures to remove deceptive or rule-breaking ads and impose ad restrictions, an outright ban would eradicate their main revenue stream, requiring a total overhaul of their business operations.

Deceptive ads generate the same revenue as authentic ones, and they are even more profitable! Additionally, concerning the responsibility of social media platforms, it is important to acknowledge that Facebook’s customers are its advertisers. The people who utilise Facebook are the product.

The reality is that Facebook and Google earn money by tracking your behaviour. They take advantage of your personal data to manipulate you and sell the means to affect you to marketing companies. That is an inadequate business model.

Falling prey to a scam isn’t your fault, but you can also take measures to recognise possible scams in the future and safeguard yourself. Stay aware of updates regarding new strategies employed by scammers and remain vigilant.

Avoid sharing personal details over the phone, even if the caller states they represent an organisation you’re connected to, and take the time needed to verify their claims. And remember, it’s your responsibility alone if you are scammed!

UKRAINE EXPECTS NO MIRACLES AS ZELENSKY VISITS US

TOM BALMFORTH

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky will seek more support from allies when he addresses the UN and meets Donald Trump this week, but behind the scenes, Kyiv is quietly preparing for a new phase of the war in which it relies more on itself.

Kyiv’s hopes of winning tough new US sanctions on Russia are fading, and a new pragmatism in Ukraine makes Zelensky’s trip less fraught than some earlier visits to the United States, with lessons learnt from February’s White House bust-up.

Frenetic European diplomacy and a Ukrainian expression of regret after February’s disastrous meeting paved the way for a resumption of crucial US intelligence sharing and weapons supplies authorised by the US president’s predecessor.

Yet intense lobbying has failed to persuade Trump to impose sanctions that would hurt Russia’s war economy sufficiently to bring President Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table, and Ukrainians are sceptical that the war will soon end. Only 18 per cent of Ukrainians think hostilities can end this year, and a feeling of uncertainty for the future is pervasive in Ukraine, said Anton Grushetskyi, head of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.

Putin has secured some recent diplomatic wins, including getting a red-carpet welcome at a summit with Trump in Alaska, and there are signs that Ukraine has been switching gears for a new stage of the war in which foreign support is diminished. A Ukrainian think-tank that used to study Russia to find targets for government sanctions now does analytics to help the military select targets for drone strikes, said a senior staff member. The source said Ukraine not only faced setbacks on sanctions and reduced US assistance, but could also lose some other allied support in Europe.

In a sign of how Kyiv is trying to turn the screw on Russia itself, Ukrainian long-range drones have hit ports and refineries, prompting a Russian warning of looming output cuts for its oil producers.

Zelensky is likely to ask Trump for new US sanctions on Russia on Tuesday, a day before addressing the UN General Assembly.

Kyiv has also been promoting plans for a summit dedicated to Ukraine’s Russian-held Crimea peninsula, an event that appears designed to push back against discussion of any peace deal involving Crimea being recognised as Russian territory. Putin says more than 700,000 Russian soldiers are now deployed on the front line in Ukraine, and Russia occupies roughly 20 per cent of Ukrainian territory. Moscow is demanding all of that territory, and more, before it considers talks to end its war in Ukraine. This is anathema to most Ukrainians. Ukrainian officials portrayed their work before Zelensky’s arrival on Monday as pragmatic diplomacy rather than preparations for a make-or-break trip. — Reuters

Violence against health workers must end

THIS summer, a male patient at Specialist Hospital Damaturu in Nigeria’s Yobe State physically assaulted a female healthcare worker following a dispute over the provision of medical attention. Sadly, this is a relatively common experience for healthcare workers in Nigeria, especially women. Surveys conducted in hospitals in Kaduna state and Abia state found that 64 per cent and 88 per cent of health workers, respectively, had experienced workplace violence. During my own first year of clinical practice in Nigeria, when I was just 24 years old, I was attacked by a parent in the children’s ward where I worked.

Nigeria is not alone. Reports of violence against healthcare workers have been on the rise over the last five years in a wide range of countries, including Australia, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States. A 2019 study showed that 11 per cent of nurses in Italy had endured physical violence at work in the previous year, and 4 per cent were threatened with a firearm. About half of all nurses reported experiencing verbal aggression.

Such reporting tells only part of the story. The belief that violence is “part of the job,” together with the lack of protocols for handling attacks and the empathy of many in the healthcare field, discourages reporting.

When I was attacked in 2004 – narrowly avoiding a severe head injury, thanks only to the swift intervention of another patient’s relative – I eschewed legal prosecution out of sympathy for the perpetrator’s family, which was, after all, grappling with a child’s illness and subsequent death. It is likely that fewer than half of all victims of violence in healthcare settings report the incidents.

With this in mind, the World Health Organization estimates that as many as 38 per cent of healthcare workers suffer some form of physical violence, perpetrated



Reports of violence against healthcare workers have been on the rise over the last five years.



ADAEZE OREH

The writer is Commissioner for Health in Rivers State, Nigeria, a Kofi Annan Global Health Leadership fellow, and an Aspen Global Innovators senior fellow

mostly by patients and visitors, at some point in their careers. This figure does not cover the verbal threats and intimidation many workers face as they carry out life-saving work, often under high-stress, low-resource conditions.

Several factors contribute to the violence. Healthcare workers are often younger women. They must work both day and night shifts in environments that are accessible to the general public, including people who have consumed drugs and people suffering from psychiatric illnesses. Moreover, staff and resource shortages mean that healthcare workers are often overworked, underpaid and lack access to the tools they need to deliver quality or timely care. Long wait times increase stress and frustration among patients (and their relatives), who often expect miracles, even when they present late for treatment. Add to that poor communication and weak workplace protections and violence becomes a constant peril.

Risks to healthcare workers are particularly acute in disasters, conflicts and other humanitarian settings, where they may also become the targets of political or communal violence. During the Covid-19 pandemic, social isolation, misinformation about the virus and the “dehumanisation” of healthcare workers – who were often viewed as

resources, not people – contributed to a sharp uptick in violence.

As a result of these experiences, healthcare workers often deal with anxiety, depression, job burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental-health conditions. One study found that some 76 per cent of psychiatric nurses who suffered from workplace violence subsequently experienced depressive symptoms.

As health workers’ well-being declines, so does the care that patients receive. Increased absenteeism and turnover compound the problem, especially as fewer people choose to enter the healthcare field.

At a time when the world is facing a shortage of healthcare workers – projected to reach ten million by 2030 – this poses a direct threat to public health. Protecting healthcare workers will require a variety of interventions. For starters, violence prevention and response should be integrated into workers’ education and training.

They should be taught communication strategies for de-escalating tense situations and self-defence techniques to use if violence erupts. Team-based training can strengthen coordinated responses, enabling other workers to intervene when their colleagues are targeted.

Meanwhile, a concerted effort must be made to address health-worker shortages, such as through task-shifting or -sharing – the partial or complete redistribution of certain responsibilities to less qualified personnel, so that highly qualified workers can focus on tasks that require their expertise. Already, this approach has improved service delivery in a number of areas – including HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes, mental health, eyecare, maternal and child health and reproductive health and emergency care – in 23 Sub-Saharan African countries.

All people have a right to safety in their workplace. When we fail to uphold this right for healthcare workers, we hurt not only them but also the health of the public they serve. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

14TEAMS



The closing ceremony will take place at the 'Fun Zone' in Qurum at 7:30 pm.

WOMEN’S BOWLING CHAMPIONSHIP 2025 FINALS TONIGHT

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

The 17th Women’s Bowling Championship for Government and Private Institutions 2025, organised by the Women’s Sports Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), concludes on Wednesday evening with the teams’ final. Fourteen teams that qualified from the preliminary rounds will compete for the title. The closing ceremony will take place at the ‘Fun Zone’ in Qurum, under the auspices of Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Chairperson of the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED), at 7:30 pm.

The doubles category witnessed fierce competition, with teams delivering close performances until the final frames. The Royal Air Force of Oman’s duo, Sheikha al Shibli and Siham al Abri, secured first place with 889 points the highest score in the category.

In second place came Occidental (A)’s pair, Alia al Marjabi and Maryam al Ghafri, with 850 points. Third place went to the Royal Court Affairs duo, Janan al Numani and Zainab al Balushi, who scored 808 points. Bank Sohar International’s pair, Fatma al Balushi and Samar al Maashari, finished fourth with 804 points, just four points shy of third place. Oman Oil Development Company’s duo, Aisha al Siybani and Sharifa al Alawi, came fifth with 734 points.

The Royal Air Force of Oman continued their strong showing, as the pair Sabrah al Sulti and Isamah al Farisi claimed sixth with 728 points. The Oman Electricity Transmission Company’s Bima al Alawi and Aziza al Buraiki ranked seventh with 716 points, followed by Worley Engineering’s pair, Jossel Ispaldon and Sabrin al Badi, in eighth with 690 points. Ninth place went to Asyad Group’s team, represented by Fai al Jardani and Asilah al Harrasi, with 673 points. Completing the top 10 were Shamsa al Shukri and Tasneem al Dawadi of MB Holding, with 670 points. These results reflect a remarkable closeness in performance, with point differences often being just a handful, underscoring the intensity and balance of the competition.

SINGLES COMPETITION

The singles category proved even more thrilling, with the top places decided by very slim margins. Isamah al Farisi from the Royal Air Force of Oman clinched first place with 414 points, followed closely by her teammate, Siham al Abri, in second with 409 points. Occidental (A)’s Alia al Marjabi took third with 398 points, edging out the Royal Air Force’s Sheikha al Shibli, who registered the same score but settled for fourth. Fifth place went to Occidental (A)’s Maryam al Ghafri with 397 points. Bank Sohar International’s Fatma al Balushi placed sixth with 380 points, while the Royal Air Force’s Sabrah al Sulti followed in seventh with 379 points. Oman Oil Development’s Aisha al Siybani secured eighth with 376 points, just ahead of Bank Sohar International’s Samar al Maashari, who scored 372 for ninth. Completing the top 10 was Occidental (A)’s Hiba al Dughaishi with 364 points.

10 athletes gain Olympic Solidarity Scholarships



The 10 athletes were chosen from a pool of 36 nominees across various sports, with the International Olympic Solidarity Programme approving their candidacy.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

THE Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) has signed agreements with 10 promising Omani athletes to receive Olympic Solidarity Scholarships, marking a significant step in preparations for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. The signing ceremony was held at the OOC headquarters on Tuesday under the patronage of HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, OCC Chairman, in the presence of officials, board members, athletes and media representatives.

The 10 athletes were chosen from a pool of 36 nominees across various sports disciplines, with the International Olympic Solidarity Programme approving their candidacy. The list included three members from taekwondo: Fidaa bint Fuad al Barwaniyah, Dawood bin Fahd al Yousfi and Al Muhannad bin Tawfiq al Balushi. Three players were selected from fencing team including: Ahmed Anwar Kaskas, Israa bint Saif al Siyabiyah and Jana bint Mohammed al Sharjiyah. The athletics representatives were Ali bin

Anwar al Balushi, Mulhem bin Darwish al Balushi, Fatik bin Abdulghafour Sanjour and Alya bint Faiq al Mughairiyah.

INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENCE

HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said emphasised that securing 10 scholarships, well above the usual allocation, reflects growing global trust in Oman’s ability to manage Olympic programmes. “This initiative represents a vital step towards building a comprehensive national project to develop Olympic champions. It is a shared responsibility that also invites private sector partnerships to enhance training, education, medical, and logistical support for our athletes,” he said.

Taekwondo hopeful Al Muhannad bin Tawfiq al Balushi described the scholarship as vital step:

“My dream is to compete at the Olympic Games against the world’s best. Through this support, I can achieve my dream with enhanced preparation, internal and external training camps, and participation in international competitions.”

Athletics representative Alya bint Faiq al Mughairiyah said: “I feel deeply honoured by this opportunity. The scholarship

will help me grow both individually and within the team, and I am determined to maximise its benefits.”

OOC’S COMMITMENT

Abdullah Bamakhalaf, OOC Secretary-General, reiterated the committee’s dedication to providing every possible resource to help athletes achieve the performance levels required for Olympic competition. He highlighted that the scholarships are part of the IOC’s Olympic Solidarity Programme, designed to improve training environments and boost technical readiness.

The scholarships cover training expenses at home and abroad, access to elite coaching, technical and medical support, and participation in international training camps. They are aimed at raising the standard of domestic competition, broadening Oman’s pool of elite athletes, and developing a new generation capable of representing the Sultanate of Oman at major global events. The OOC confirmed its ongoing collaboration with national sports associations to ensure the scholarship recipients receive full support on their journey to Los Angeles 2028.

Oman U17 seek redemption against Qatar in Gulf Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

The Oman U17 national football team faces a decisive clash this evening against their Qatari counterparts at 9:00 pm Muscat time, at Hamad Al Kabir Stadium, in the second round of the group stage of the ongoing Gulf Cup in Doha. In the other match of the same group, the UAE will meet Yemen at 7 pm at Suheim Bin Hamad Stadium.

The young Reds know that tonight’s match is a turning point in their tournament journey. Only a win can revive their hopes of competing for one of the two semifinal spots, while any further slip could severely weaken their chances. The players are determined to bounce back from their opening-round defeat to the UAE by delivering a stronger performance and securing a positive result. However, the task will not be easy against a Qatari side that opened their campaign with a valuable 1-0 victory over Yemen.

The Omani squad got into preparation mode early, holding



The young Reds know that tonight’s match is a turning point in their tournament journey.

a recovery session for the players who featured against the UAE, while the rest went through regular training. On Tuesday, the team held their main training session under head coach Ahmed bin Salem Bait Said, who focused on tactical aspects and finalised the starting lineup. The team relies on a core of promising talents, led by standout goalkeeper

Abdullah al Zuabi, along with Abdullah al Saadi, Saad al Maamari, Bashar al Shamsi, and Mohammed al Jabri, all expected to show their real potential.

At the same time, the UAE national team is aiming to secure its second consecutive victory when it faces Yemen, in order to guarantee an early qualification to the semifinals

with six points. As for Yemen, they go into the match with no option but to win if they wish to keep their hopes of competing alive, despite the difficulty of the challenge against the Emirati Whites.

QUALIFICATION SCENARIOS

The outcomes of this second round will largely shape the qualification picture in Group A. A win for Oman over Qatar would throw them back into contention, especially if the UAE stumble against Yemen, setting up a fiery final round. A loss, however, would leave Oman with zero points, forcing them to beat Yemen and rely on other results. On the other hand, a win today for Qatar or the UAE would all but secure a semifinal spot for one of them, and if both sides win, they would guarantee qualification together.

Ahead of round two, Qatar and the UAE share the top spot with three points each and identical goal records. Oman and Yemen, meanwhile, sit at the bottom without points, making tonight’s games crucial as gateways to the semifinals.

SHORTTAKES



Harold 'Dickie' Bird

FORMER UMPIRE
‘DICKIE’ BIRD DIES
AGED 92

LONDON: Former Test umpire Harold ‘Dickie’ Bird, one of the most famous officials of his era, has died at the age of 92, Yorkshire County Cricket Club announced on Tuesday. Bird stood in 66 Tests between 1973 and 1996 as well as 69 men’s one-day internationals, including three World Cup finals.

His home county, Yorkshire, issued a statement saying Bird, “one of cricket’s most beloved figures”, had died peacefully at home.

“Dickie Bird enjoyed an illustrious career as an international umpire, writing his name into history as the most famous and popular official in the game’s history,” the club said. Yorkshire said he had become a “national treasure, known not only for his umpiring excellence but also for his “eccentricities and warmth”.

“He leaves behind a legacy of sportsmanship, humility, and joy — and a legion of admirers across generations,” the statement added.

Bird had a modest playing career as a batter for Yorkshire and Leicestershire but made his name as an international umpire, wearing his trademark white cap. He was given a guard of honour at Lord’s by England and India players before his final Test.

Bird, who sold more than a million copies of his autobiography, was named Yorkshire president in 2014.

Colin Graves, chairman of Yorkshire, told TalkSport: “It’s a sad day.

“He was a brilliant guy who loved being part of the Yorkshire set-up and everything we do here. He will be sadly missed at Headingley.” — **AFP**

ZUBAIR CT, TOWELL
PROPERTY REGISTER
CONTRASTING WINS

MUSCAT: Zubair CT beat NRB Sporting by two runs in the J Division of the Oman Cricket League 2025-26.

Shankar Gayathri scored 48 of 34 balls while Mohammed Jane Alam picked two wickets allowing Zubair CT to score 184.

In response, half century by Moinuddin helped their chase but fell short by two runs. Ratheesh PP picked two wickets for Zubair CT.

Brief scores: Zubair CT 184/6 in 20 overs (Shankar Gayathri 48 (34); Mohd Jane Alam 2/37) beat NRB Sporting 182/7 in 20 overs (Mainuddin 51 (29); Ratheesh PP 2/10) by 2 runs.

In H Division, Towell Property beat OCT Al Nahdha by 48 runs. Suneel Menezes top-scored with 59 of 42 balls while Akhtar Abbas also scored a half-century, 52 of 29 balls taking Towell to 184.

In response, OCT Al Nahdha could only manage 136 after Ram SP took three wickets while Akhtar Abbas claimed two.

Brief scores: Towell Property 184/4 in 20 overs (Suneel Menezes 59 (42); Nathar Al Balushi 1/22) beat OCT Al Nahdha 136 all out in 20 overs (Nathar al Balushi 37 (25); Ram SP 3/8) by 48 runs.



Shankar Gayathri and Ratheesh PP of Zubair CT.



This year’s visit to Japan marks only the third of the Omani racer’s career, and on each occasion he has performed superbly.

Al Harthy aims to continue
charge at Fuji Speedway

AHMAD HIGH IN CONFIDENCE
AS WEC RETURNS TO JAPAN
FOR ROUND 7

MUSCAT: World-famous Fuji Speedway in Japan is the destination for Ahmad Al Harthy this week for the penultimate round of the FIA World Endurance Championship season, where the Omani hopes to build on the outstanding podium finish achieved just over a fortnight ago in the USA.

Taking place this weekend, September 27/28, the seventh event of the FIA WEC campaign marks a great opportunity for Al Harthy and his Team WRT team-mates Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde – Fuji having also been the scene for a rostrum finish last season for Al Harthy and Rossi.

This year’s visit to Japan marks only the third of the Omani’s career, and on each occasion he has performed superbly. On his Fuji debut in 2023, Al Harthy climbed from 12th on the grid into podium contention within the first hour of racing, last year he, Rossi and then team-mate Maxime Martin stormed to a third place result for BMW and now the focus is to challenge for yet more silverware.

There is certainly a buzz among the team ahead of round seven after a remarkable performance at the Circuit of the Americas in Texas, USA, a little over two weeks ago. In an absolutely rain-lashed six-hour race, which began behind the Safety Car and was actually red flagged due to the conditions after just an hour, Al Harthy, Rossi and van der Linde combined to deliver a sensational

TEAM WRT’S AL HARTHY, ROSSI,
VAN DER LINDE AIM TO CONTINUE
PODIUM FORM



showing. Van der Linde, especially, starred during the final half hour at COTA where a decision to switch onto slick Goodyear tyres paid dividends. Scything through from 10th position to second place at the finish, the No 46 BMW M4 LMGT3 was just 0.2 seconds shy of a victory.

As a result, the squad’s second podium finish of the campaign elevated them back into the top 10 of the championship in both the driver and team standings – just six points shy of eighth place and 16 points outside the top six.

With 25 points available for a race win, 18 points for second place and 15 points for third, another rostrum visit in Japan could have a major impact. Notably, this year’s 6 Hours of Fuji carries extra prestige as it will be the 100th race in the history of the FIA World Endurance Championship.

Going into the penultimate race meeting

NO 46 BMW SQUAD SEEKING TO
ADD TO P2 FROM CIRCUIT OF
THE AMERICAS

of the 2025 season, Al Harthy – supported as always by major partners OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Experience Oman – is certainly feeling confident.

Ahmad al Harthy:

“We’re all still buzzing from the second place at COTA. It was an incredible race, very unpredictable with the weather, the red flag, and that last half hour where Kelvin did such a fantastic job. We want to keep that momentum going this weekend in Japan and to try and challenge for another podium, especially in the 100th race of the World Endurance Championship – that would be very special. Fuji is an amazing circuit, I love driving there and it’s always a real highlight of the season. We’ve performed well there in both 2023 and 2024, and last year’s podium was a great result from 12th on the grid. As always, we’ll give maximum effort and work as hard as possible to try and deliver the best result for the team and for all of our amazing partners and supporters back home in Oman.”

Two free practice sessions will take place at Fuji Speedway on Friday, September 26, with a third practice following on Saturday, ahead of LMGT3 qualifying at 14.20 local time – the Hyperpole session begins at 14.40. The 6 Hours of Fuji race will get underway at 11.00 local time on Sunday, September 28.

Napoli beat battling Pisa to keep perfect start

NAPLES, Italy: Napoli maintained their lead at the top of Serie A with Monday’s 3-2 win over promoted Pisa which continued the champions’ perfect start to their domestic campaign.

Lorenzo Lucca’s first goal for his new club, thumped home in the 82nd minute, ended up being the winning goal in a narrow win for Napoli who have 12 points from four league matches. That put Napoli two points ahead of second-placed Juventus following their great rivals’ draw at Verona on Saturday, and three ahead of Roma and AC Milan who complete the top four in Italy.

Napoli head to the San Siro next weekend to take on Milan who have an Italian Cup fixture against Lecce on Tuesday night.

“Obviously we’re happy for four wins out of four in a league where there are six or seven teams at a really good level,”



Napoli’s Lorenzo Lucca (R) celebrates with Giovanni Di Lorenzo after scoring his team’s third goal. — **AFP**

said Conte to Sky.

“We’ve got a lot of new players who have come here and have the Scudetto (for winning last season’s title) on their shirt. And that carries pressure.”

Conte has a reputation for struggling with the rhythm of playing European and domestic football and it was an underwhelming performance from Napoli in the wake of

Thursday night’s 2-0 defeat at Manchester City in the Champions League.

“The teams that play European football every year are settled in, we’re not. That’s why playing every three days can create physical and mental stress,” added Conte.

“We need to have patience.”

Lucca’s late strike saved Antonio Conte’s team from a draw which looked on the cards when M’Bala Nzola calmly levelled the scores from the penalty spot in the 60 minute.

Nzola’s strike cancelled out Billy Gilmour’s first ever goal in professional club football, deflected home in the 39th minute at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona.

Leonardo Spinazzola scored his first goal since February out of nowhere in the 73rd minute with a long-range drive, and then Lucca lashed home to give Napoli the points.

Lucca’s strike against his former club turned out to be the key as Lorrán tapped home for Pisa in the 90th minute after Giovanni Di Lorenzo gave the ball away cheaply in his own penalty area. That capped a poor week for Di Lorenzo who was also sent off at City for chopping down Erling Haaland.

But Pisa, managed by Alberto Gilardino, couldn’t snatch a late draw and remain second from bottom with just a single point to their name. — **AFP**

Italian Serie A results on Monday: Napoli 3 (Gilmour 39, Spinazzola 73, Lucca 82) Pisa 2 (Nzola 60-pen, Lorrán 90)

Cremonese 0 Parma 0 Fiorentina 1 (Mandragora 6) Como 2 (Kempf 65, Addai 90+4)

Inter Milan 2 (Dimarco 14, Carlos Augusto 81) Sassuolo 1 (Cheddira 84)

Lazio 0 Roma 1 (Pellegrini 38) Torino 0 Atalanta 3 (Krstovic 30, 38, Sulemana 35)

SPORTS

PSG CLAIM MULTIPLE AWARDS, INCLUDING TEAM OF THE SEASON



Manchester City's Gianluigi Donnarumma makes a speech after winning the men's Yashin Trophy. — Reuters

DEMBELE PRAISES PSG, COACH ENRIQUE, AND TEAMMATES FOR SUPPORT



Paris St Germain's Ousmane Dembele celebrates after winning the men's Ballon d'Or award at the Theatre du Chatelet in central Paris. — Reuters

BARCA'S BONMATI CLINCHES THIRD CONSECUTIVE WOMEN'S BALLON D'OR



Barcelona's Aitana Bonmati celebrates after winning the women's Ballon d'Or award in Paris. — Reuters



Arsenal's Swedish striker Viktor Gyokeres speaks after receiving the Gerd Muller Trophy for the best male striker. — AFP



FC Barcelona's Lamine Yamal makes a speech after winning the men's Kopa Trophy. — Reuters



England's goalkeeper Hannah Hampton speaks after receiving the Yashin Trophy for the best female goalkeeper. — AFP



Poland's striker Ewa Pajor speaks after receiving the Gerd Muller Trophy for the best female striker. — AFP

Dembele wins Ballon d'Or as Bonmati retains women's award

PARIS Saint-Germain winger Ousmane Dembele won the Ballon d'Or on Monday as a reward for his starring role in the club's Champions League triumph last season, while Spain's Aitana Bonmati claimed the women's prize for the third year in a row.

Dembele, 28, edged out Barcelona sensation Lamine Yamal to succeed Manchester City and Spain midfielder Rodri, who took the trophy in 2024, as the winner of the most prestigious individual prize in football — an award that for many years had been dominated by Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Former Borussia Dortmund and Barcelona forward Dembele, who was part of the France team that won the World Cup in 2018, scored 35 goals in all competitions as PSG claimed a French league and cup double as well as winning the Champions League.

With Dembele converted into a centre-forward following Kylian Mbappe's departure for Real Madrid, PSG went on to hammer Inter Milan 5-0 in the final in Munich to win the

European Cup for the first time in their history.

"I really don't have the words. It was an incredible season with PSG," an emotional Dembele said on the stage at the Theatre du Chatelet in central Paris.

He added that his boss Luis Enrique — who won the award for club coach of the year — had been "like a father" to him.

"It is an individual trophy but it was really the collective that won it," insisted Dembele, who was one of nine members of the triumphant PSG team from last season to be nominated for the prize.

"The Ballon d'Or has not really been an objective for me in my career but I worked hard for the team to win the Champions League."

The 18-year-old Yamal, who was a teammate of Dembele's at Barcelona when he first broke through in 2023, did earlier win the Kopa Trophy for the best player aged under 21 — the second year running he has taken that award.

Dembele was at the ceremony to pick up his prize while his PSG teammates were losing 1-0 in a Ligue 1 game in Marseille at the same time



England manager Sarina Wiegman after winning the women's Johan Cruyff Trophy. — Reuters

— that match had been scheduled for Sunday but was put back 24 hours due to bad weather in the south of France.

THREE IN A ROW Barcelona and Spain midfielder Bonmati won the women's prize by edging out her international teammate Mariona Caldentey, with whom she played in the Spain side who were beaten on penalties by England in the Women's Euro 2025 final.

Bonmati, 27, also lost the Women's Champions League final with her club last season, at the hands of Caldentey's Arsenal.

Bonmati was named player of the tournament at the Euros, despite not starting either of Spain's first two matches as she recovered from a bout of viral meningitis.

"I am very proud," said Bonmati, who credited her teammates for their role in her personal triumph.

"I think I am here for the third consecutive time because of the teams I play in, so all of this is because of them."

Alessia Russo, one of the nominees from the triumphant

England European Championship team and also of Arsenal, came third.

Bonmati's run of three in a row follows back-to-back victories for her Barcelona and Spain teammate Alexia Putellas.

Norway's Ada Hegerberg and USA star Megan Rapinoe are the only other players to have won the Women's Ballon d'Or since it was introduced in 2018.

The Ballon d'Or is voted for by a panel of journalists, one from each of the top 100 countries in the Fifa world rankings for the men, and from the top 50 for the women.

Vicky Lopez, the 19-year-old forward who is a teammate of Bonmati's with Barcelona and Spain, was named best young women's player. Gianluigi Donnarumma, who excelled in the PSG team that swept all aside last season before moving to Manchester City, claimed the Yashin trophy for best goalkeeper. England's Euro winner Hannah Hampton claimed the best women's goalkeeper award, while her international manager Sarina Wiegman was named best women's coach. — AFP

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SHORTTAKES



Hydrogen Utopia’s systems enable the processing of virtually any type of waste — including hazardous and composite materials — and its conversion into clean hydrogen and other reusable outputs

UK-OMAN PARTNERSHIP EYES ‘WASTE-TO-HYDROGEN’ DEPLOYMENT

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

A UK-based startup acclaimed for its pioneering ‘plastic waste-to-hydrogen’ technology has announced a partnership with an Omani firm to support the rollout of its innovative solution in the Sultanate of Oman.

London-based Hydrogen Utopia International (HUI) said its agreement with Shahab Ahmed and Mohamed al Mir — who have a presence in Oman’s renewable energy, environmental solutions and data services sectors — will help international companies and industries decarbonise their operations through the deployment of this technology.

At the heart of Hydrogen Utopia’s solution is plasma-enhanced gasification technology developed and patented by InEnTec, a US-based company. InEnTec’s technology enables the processing of virtually any type of waste — including hazardous and composite materials — and its conversion into clean hydrogen and other reusable outputs.

Hydrogen Utopia says its plants, based on InEnTec’s technology, can transform non-recyclable mixed plastic waste and complex waste streams (such as used tyres, PFAS-contaminated materials and wind turbine blades) into carbon-free fuels, new materials, or distributed renewable heat. The company also operates across the full value chain, from producing energy for local communities from non-recyclable waste to selling syngas, hydrogen, electricity and heat to end users.

In particular, the ‘waste-to-hydrogen’ solutions will be targeted at steel and cement producers, among other industries, in Oman. These solutions are designed to reduce waste, deliver low-carbon energy and enable on-site hydrogen production at scale — thereby supporting Oman’s broader sustainability agenda.

Welcoming the partnership in Oman, Aleksandra Binkowska, CEO of Hydrogen Utopia, commented: “We’ve secured another strong partner in the GCC region, giving HUI a trusted local ally with deep government ties and hands-on experience in energy, waste and industry.

Oman is a great fit for InEnTec’s Plasma Enhanced Melter technology, especially in steel and cement, where there is strong demand for solutions that cut waste and emissions. This MoU marks a significant step forward in our global growth and environmental mission”.

Agri-tourism project taps Dhofar’s natural wealth

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

THE agri-tourism development company, ‘Janaen’ — an Omran Group subsidiary, has signed a strategic partnership with Oman Agriculture Development to deliver agricultural works for the landmark Janaen Salalah Project. The agreement marks an important step in harnessing Dhofar Governorate natural resources and advancing Oman’s position as a distinctive destination for agri-tourism.

Janaen Salalah is a pioneering initiative that integrates large-scale agricultural farms with tourism experiences and offerings, creating a unique model that blends farming, tourism and economic development.

The agricultural works will span more than 786,000 square metres in Salalah and include the cultivation of approximately 16,730 coconut trees, 1,000 papaya trees and 625 cashew trees — with cashew being grown on a commercial scale in Oman for the first time. The project also encompasses a range of supporting initiatives to ensure water sustainability and develop modern agricultural infrastructure, including advanced irrigation systems and related sustainable facilities.

Commenting on the agreement, Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, Chairman of the Board of Managers in Janaen, said: “This project represents an innovative

At Oman Agriculture Development, we place great importance on advancing the food security ecosystem through projects that diversify agricultural output

ALI BIN SAID AL URAIMI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AT OMAN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT



As a flagship initiative, Janaen Salalah aims to position Dhofar Governorate as a hub for both agriculture and tourism.

model of cross-sector integration, reflecting our shared vision to harness Oman’s natural assets and translate them into new tourism concepts such as agri-tourism.

The initiative contributes to the sustainable use of natural resources and creates added value for the Omani economy”.

Ali bin Said al Uraimi, Chief Executive Officer at Oman Agriculture Development, said: “At Oman Agriculture Development, we place great importance on advancing the food security ecosystem through projects that diversify agricultural output and expand high-value crops. Our partnership with Janaen enables us to apply our expertise in sustainable farming practices, ensuring efficient use of natural resources while introducing new crops such as cashew on a commercial scale for the first time in Oman, in addition to the Coconut and Papayas that form

largest part of the project.

This initiative reinforces the role of modern agriculture as a driver of economic growth, job creation and value chain development”.

As a flagship initiative, Janaen Salalah aims to position Dhofar Governorate as a hub for both agriculture and tourism.

Beyond delivering high-quality agricultural products, the project will provide interactive visitor experiences that combine learning and leisure, from exploring modern farming techniques to participating in family-friendly activities in a unique natural setting.

The project is also expected to generate significant economic impact by creating employment opportunities and opening pathways for SMEs and entrepreneurs to participate in agricultural and tourism value chains.

Oman explores investments with Russia

MOSCOW: A delegation from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) participated in the Moscow—Sultanate of Oman business forum, which is underway in the Russian Federation. Members of the delegation held a series of official visits and meetings aimed at enhancing economic and investment cooperation between the two friendly countries.

The delegation, led by Eng Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Hosni, Board Member and Chairman of the Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence Committee, visited the Skolkovo Innovation Centre — Russia’s main innovation hub — where they were briefed on several technological projects and startups hosted at the centre.

The delegation also visited a number of Russian companies and factories



OCCI representatives participating in a forum in the Russian Federation. — ONA

working in advanced technology, mining and logistics services.

The delegation also participated in several workshops at the BRICS Urban Future Forum (Cloud Cities Forum) held in Moscow, including discussions on “The Power of Algorithms: Strategies Towards an AI World” and “Robot Consciousness: AI, Data and Ethics”.

They also participated in a general working session titled “From Moscow to the Middle East: A Pure Partnership” and organised bilateral meetings with Russian companies to discuss collaboration and investment opportunities.

Also during the visit to Russia, the delegation met with members of the Omani Embassy in Moscow. In attendance were Counselor Mohamed al Habsi, Deputy Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation and several embassy advisors.

The meeting reviewed the key outcomes of the bilateral meetings and discussions held with Russian companies, focusing on future cooperation opportunities, particularly in the software and advanced digital technologies sectors. The delegation also held a joint meeting with the Moscow Chamber of Commerce,

chaired by Platonov Vladimir, where they praised Omani-Russian economic relations, spanning 40 years.

Both sides emphasised the importance of holding regular meetings between the two chambers to enhance cooperation between business owners.

Russian companies presented introductory offers about their activities, operations and areas for potential collaboration with Omani companies.

Al Hosni emphasised that the participation of the chamber’s delegation in these events and meetings represented a significant step towards building new economic and investment partnerships between the Sultanate of Oman and the Russian Federation. He explained that the positive outcomes of this visit would contribute to strengthening trade relations — ONA

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Established in 2022, Himaya Insurance Services LLC has quickly built a reputation for ethical standards, client-focused service and long-term relationships. By delivering tailored solutions and full claims management, the company continues to help clients protect what matters most while optimising future insurance strategies.

Toyota launches all-new
Land Cruiser HEV

TOYOTA has announced the arrival of the all-new Land Cruiser HEV in Oman, marking the debut of the first hybrid electric model in the legendary Land Cruiser series. Blending seven decades of heritage with advanced hybrid technology, the Land Cruiser HEV sets a new benchmark for electrified off-road performance while retaining the durability, reliability and all-terrain capability that have defined the model since 1951.

Debuting first in the Middle East, the launch underscores the region’s longstanding connection with the Land Cruiser. For generations, the model has been an indispensable companion across some of the world’s harshest terrains, supporting lives and livelihoods with unmatched dependability.

The Land Cruiser HEV reflects Toyota’s multi-pathway approach towards carbon neutrality, offering customers a sustainable choice without compromise. Leveraging 28 years of leadership in hybrid technology, Toyota has engineered an off-roader that delivers superior power, refinement and environmental performance. The hybrid system enhances torque by 20% and improves accelerator response by 40%, providing a more powerful and responsive driving experience across all terrains.

Masaya Uchiyama, Chief Engineer, commented, “The remodelled Land Cruiser introduced in 2021 was embraced globally and

The Land Cruiser HEV reflects Toyota’s multi-pathway approach towards carbon neutrality, offering customers a sustainable choice without compromise.



Developed through extensive testing across deserts, mudflats and mountains, including real-world trials in the Middle East, the Land Cruiser HEV incorporates lessons from Toyota’s off-road rally participation.

we are grateful for the continued support of our customers. Introducing the Land Cruiser Hybrid first to the Middle East is an honour, as feedback from this region has shaped its evolution. This HEV marks a significant milestone in our journey to create the ultimate electric off-roader while staying true to the Land Cruiser spirit”. Developed through extensive testing across deserts, mudflats and mountains, including real-world trials in the Middle East, the Land Cruiser HEV incorporates lessons from Toyota’s off-road rally participation, including Dakar. Even in the rare event of hybrid unit failure, the vehicle can operate on its combustion engine alone, ensuring peace of mind in remote

areas. Its hybrid battery system has been waterproofed to maintain the Land Cruiser’s renowned fording ability, while a redesigned interior layout preserves third-row seating and cargo versatility. The launch of the Land Cruiser HEV represents more than the evolution of an icon. It reflects Toyota’s commitment to innovation rooted in tradition, delivering vehicles that meet modern sustainability goals while inspiring trust and adventure. Customers in Oman can now experience the Land Cruiser HEV at Toyota showrooms across the Sultanate of Oman. For details, visit [www.toyotaoman.com](#) or contact your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom.

NBO concludes summer internships

The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has successfully concluded its annual Summer Internship Programme, highlighting its commitment to nurturing local talent and developing the next generation of Omani professionals.

The programme welcomed final-year students and recent graduates, placing them across various bank divisions to gain practical experience and insight into NBO’s operations.

Interns participated in real projects under the guidance of experienced professionals and structured mentorship, acquiring hands-on skills in



Through the programme, NBO reinforces its dedication to building a pipeline of skilled Omani professionals, supporting Oman Vision 2040.

key banking areas. This exposure enabled them to understand industry practices, develop professional competencies and prepare for future careers in the financial sector. Through the programme, NBO reinforces its dedication to building a pipeline of skilled Omani professionals, supporting Oman Vision 2040. By equipping young talent with practical experience, industry knowledge and a strong work ethic, the bank contributes to the development of a diversified, knowledge-based economy and strengthens the country’s financial sector.

Kareena Kapoor to inaugurate Malabar Gold & Diamonds show

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the world’s fifth-largest jewellery retailer with over 410 showrooms across 14 countries, has launched its exclusive Artistry Show series, officially inaugurated by Bollywood actress and brand ambassador Kareena Kapoor Khan. The series will debut in Oman at the Oman Avenues Mall, Bausher and Ruwi West Gate Mall from September 25 to October 4, 2025, before touring other international showrooms over the coming months, offering jewellery enthusiasts an unmissable experience. The Artistry Show celebrates Malabar Gold & Diamonds’ unmatched craftsmanship, intricate design and commitment to quality. The limited-time exhibitions will feature an extensive collection of



The series will debut in Oman at the Oman Avenues Mall, Bausher and Ruwi West Gate Mall from September 25 to October 4, 2025.

handcrafted jewellery, spanning classic traditional pieces to contemporary designs, allowing customers to fully immerse themselves in the artistry, innovation and heritage of the brand. Future shows are planned across GCC countries and key Western markets throughout the year, reflecting the company’s global reach and dedication to bringing exceptional jewellery experiences to its customers worldwide. Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, said: “The Artistry Shows represent the pinnacle of design mastery and jewellery craftsmanship that our brand is renowned for. We are extremely excited to present this exceptional showcase to jewellery

enthusiasts and invite all customers in Oman to explore these exclusive pieces firsthand. The show is designed to create an immersive experience where every visitor can witness the creativity, dedication and skill that go into each unique piece”. Highlighted collections at the Artistry Show include Mine-Diamond jewellery, Era-Uncut diamond jewellery, Ethnix handcrafted designer jewellery and Viraaz Royal polki jewellery, among others. Customers can also take advantage of exclusive offers, including diamond jewellery exchanges at the best value, free cash vouchers on diamond and gemstone purchases; and zero deduction on 22K gold exchanges, all available for a limited period until October 4.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, presided over the opening of the 3-day conference and exhibition

PDO HOSTS 2025 SPE HYDRAULIC FRACTURING TECH FORUM

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 23

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) is the exclusive host of the SPE International Hydraulic Fracturing Technology Conference and Exhibition (IHFTC 2025), which officially opened at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, under the auspices of Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. The three-day conference brings together leading experts, researchers and executives from across the global energy sector, along with senior officials and industry leaders from Oman.

Held under the theme “Fracturing for a Resilient Energy Future — Innovation, Sustainability and Global Collaboration”, the conference highlights the latest advances in hydraulic fracturing technologies and practices. Its sessions delve into how these innovations are driving greater efficiency, lowering costs and carbon emissions; and strengthening the security of affordable, sustainable energy supplies worldwide.

In its fourth edition in the Middle East, IHFTC underscores Oman’s growing role as a hub for energy dialogue, knowledge exchange and global collaboration. Organised by the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) and hosted exclusively by PDO, the event reinvests its proceeds into educational and professional development initiatives worldwide, including scholarships, certification, training and outreach programmes, featuring contributions from more than 50 international experts, who are presenting technical papers and case studies across 14 sessions, alongside executive panel discussions with senior leaders from major global operators and service companies.

An accompanying exhibition with over 20 international and regional organisations is also showcasing the latest innovations and equipment in hydraulic fracturing.

OIL EDGES UP AS MARKETS EYE STOCK LEVELS

LONDON: Oil prices rose slightly on Tuesday as investors assessed the global supply outlook following a preliminary agreement between Iraq and the Kurdish regional government to restart an oil pipeline. Brent crude futures gained 14 cents to \$66.71 a barrel by 09:19 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose 21 cents to \$62.49 a barrel, recovering modest earlier losses. Both benchmarks had fallen around 3% over

the previous four sessions. “Supportive elements are still low OECD oil inventories”, said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo. “However, higher crude exports from OPEC+ and the lack of new sanctions on Russian oil are headwinds for prices”. The deal between Iraq’s federal and Kurdish governments allows approximately 230,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude exports via Türkiye to resume, suspended since

March 2023. The agreement is pending Iraqi cabinet approval. The global oil market faces elevated supply and slowing demand, driven by the rapid adoption of electric vehicles and economic concerns, including US tariffs. The International Energy Agency noted that world oil supply is expected to rise rapidly this year, with a potential surplus in 2026 as OPEC+ increases output and non-OPEC supply grows. — Reuters

CBO report affirms Oman’s stability and resilience



THE Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has issued the 2025 Financial Stability Report, offering a comprehensive and forward-looking assessment of the financial system in the Sultanate of Oman. The report reflects the Bank’s commitment to transparency and accountability, going beyond merely identifying potential risks to highlight the resilience, adaptability and development capacity of the financial sector.

The report emphasises the strength of Oman’s financial foundations, the trust in its institutions and the country’s ability to prosper amidst both local and global changes. It confirms Oman’s steady progress towards long-term stability, sustainable growth and shared prosperity. Despite continued global uncertainty, Oman’s financial stability has remained largely firm, the report noted.

The Omani banking sector is in a strong position, supported by adequate capital reserves, high-quality assets and sufficient liquidity. Stress tests for financial solvency confirmed that the sector is capable of withstanding severe financial shocks, with all banks able to absorb potential liquidity pressures while maintaining liquidity coverage ratios above the regulatory minimum.

The banking sector has remained profitable, while non-banking financial institutions have continued to expand gradually, highlighting their growing role in delivering financial services.

The composite financial stability index showed positive trends, supported by factors such as higher oil prices, enhanced debt sustainability and improvements in systemic risk indicators.

The report highlighted increasing global confidence in Oman’s economic performance, reflected in the upgrade of Oman’s sovereign credit rating to investment



The Omani banking sector is in a strong position, supported by adequate capital reserves, high-quality assets and sufficient liquidity: CBO Report

grade by both Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s. This upgrade is largely attributed to prudent financial and economic management and improvements in public debt indicators.

The Systemic Risk Survey confirmed continued confidence in Oman’s financial system, while the Credit Conditions Survey showed overall stability in lending trends, despite slight easing in credit availability. These findings reinforce positive sentiment among stakeholders and continued trust in the sector’s stability.

The Central Bank conducted a survey to evaluate public financial awareness. Results showed relatively high levels of financial literacy, with respondents generally demonstrating cautious money management behaviours.

Key legal reforms included the new Banking Law, the revised Central Bank Law and updates to the Deposit Protection Law. These steps aim to strengthen the legal and supervisory framework in line with

the evolving financial sector and ensure effective responses to modern financial system demands.

The amended deposit protection law aims to support a more inclusive and flexible financial system, aligned with international standards.

The report reaffirmed the Central Bank of Oman’s continued commitment to strengthening the resilience of the national financial system through proactive monitoring, sound regulatory reforms and sustainable finance initiatives. The Bank will continue to safeguard financial stability and support sustainable economic growth by closely monitoring emerging risks and adjusting monetary policy tools as needed.

Since its first release in 2013, the Financial Stability Report has served as a key reference for stakeholders and professionals in the financial and economic sectors, providing in-depth analysis of potential vulnerabilities and outlining the strategic measures taken to address them. — ONA

Raysut Cement eyes Libya, North Africa markets

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 23

Raysut Cement, the Sultanate of Oman’s biggest cement producer, has signed a memorandum of understanding with Libya Energy and Mining Bank (LEMB), a specialised developmental bank, to study opportunities for marketing its products in Libya and neighbouring markets, as part of its strategy to strengthen regional presence and explore new markets.

The agreement was signed at the company’s headquarters in Muscat in the presence of senior officials from both sides. The two parties



High-level representatives of Raysut Cement and Libya’s Energy and Mining Bank signing the MoU in Muscat

said the move aims to enhance trade cooperation, support exports of Omani cement and open new investment channels, particularly in North Africa.

Eng Ali bin Abdullah al Zadjali, Chairman of Raysut Cement, said the deal reflects the company’s long-term strategy for international growth. “Through this partnership, we see promising opportunities for expansion and will work to ensure the quality of our products reaches new markets. This will also contribute to supporting economic diversification and raising Oman’s profile in the global cement

industry”, he noted. Both sides stressed that the agreement underlines their shared commitment to developing strategic partnerships that drive economic growth and create fresh opportunities for cooperation. Raysut Cement has been pursuing an ambitious expansion plan in regional and international markets. The company said its focus remains on delivering high-quality cement products that meet the requirements of global markets while paving the way for broader and more sustainable collaborations in the cement sector.

LEGAL MATTERS

Amazon faces FTC trial



Amazon is on trial for allegedly enrolling tens of millions of Prime customers without consent and using complex cancellation methods, the FTC says. The case could cost the company hundreds of millions in damages.

Amazon denies wrongdoing, claiming clear disclosure of Prime’s terms. A nine-member jury will decide liability and any penalties. — Reuters

ENERGY DEALS

Serbia to sign Russian gas deal



Serbia will sign a three-year deal with Russia to secure 2.5 billion cubic metres of natural gas annually, supplementing daily imports from Azerbaijan and Russia. Its main storage holds 780 million cubic metres, with an additional 200 million from Hungary if needed. The deal reinforces Serbia’s energy ties with Russia amidst EU accession and Western pressure over sanctions. — Reuters

AVIATION SECTOR

Türkiye plans Boeing, Lockheed purchases



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan plans to buy hundreds of Boeing airliners and Lockheed Martin jets, while seeking over \$10 billion in local production deals, Bloomberg News reported on Tuesday citing people familiar with the matter. The deals are subject to approval by US President Donald Trump, the report added. Talks are expected to continue in the coming weeks, people familiar with the discussions said. — Reuters

OPINION

Travel in transition: technology’s journey beyond 2025



YUGESH KRISHNAN

The author is a lecturer at Oman Tourism College.

THE travel industry is undergoing rapid and wide-reaching transformations, largely driven by new technological innovations. By the end of 2025, these shifts have proven that they are not just evolving how people travel but fundamentally redefining the entire experience — from planning and booking to the journey itself. This transformation is fuelled by the growing demand for smarter, more personalised and sustainable travel solutions.

One of the most significant developments is the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). AI is increasingly being used to design custom itineraries, generate travel content and enhance customer service across platforms. Alongside AI, Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are becoming powerful tools that allow travellers to explore destinations virtually before even setting foot there.

In airports and hotels, biometric and facial recognition technologies are streamlining procedures like check-ins and security checks, reducing waiting times while improving security. Organisations like the International Air Transport Association (IATA) are actively pushing initiatives such as the One ID Programme, which aims to create

a seamless and secure travel experience using digital identity and biometric data. Some airports have already begun trialing facial recognition for boarding, with the goal of global implementation by 2028.

According to IATA’s 2024 Global passenger survey (GPS), 46% of passengers used biometrics to complete immigration at the airport and 36% would check in before arriving at the airport. The survey also states that 72% of passengers booked online or via apps out of which 53% favouring the airline’s website or app. The survey mentions that 16% of passengers opting for a method that includes any human interaction and 36% of the passengers would check in before arriving at the airport.

The Internet of Things (IoT) is also making its mark, enabling passengers to track their baggage in real time or control in-flight entertainment from personal devices. Blockchain technology is being explored for secure booking systems and transparent data management, potentially reducing fraud and improving trust between travellers and providers. Meanwhile, the focus on sustainable travel has become stronger than ever. Many platforms now provide tools to calculate carbon footprints, suggest eco-conscious accommodations and plan fuel-efficient routes. This growing trend reflects

AI is increasingly being used to design custom itineraries, generate travel content and enhance customer service across platforms. Alongside AI, Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are becoming powerful tools that allow travellers to explore destinations virtually before even setting foot there.

a broader awareness of the environmental impact of tourism and a push for responsible travel choices.

For travellers, these advancements offer more customised, efficient and informed experiences. Instant access to real-time updates, local insights and crowd-sourced reviews make decision-making easier and more accurate than ever before. For businesses in the travel sector, the implications are even more significant. From increasing operational efficiency to enhancing customer loyalty through personalised engagement, technology opens new avenues for growth and competitiveness. However, keeping up with these changes requires continual investment — not only in digital infrastructure but also in workforce skills and cybersecurity to protect sensitive user data.

In essence, travel technology is no longer a glimpse into the future, it’s already reshaping the present. Looking ahead, innovation will continue to accelerate, unlocking new ways to make travel more seamless, sustainable and fulfilling. Whether it’s discovering hidden spots through AI-powered recommendations or experiencing cultural landmarks through virtual reality, technology is now an essential part of how we explore the world.

TRUMP VISIT BRINGS RECORD US DEALS TO UK

ANDREW MACASKILL, PAUL SANDLE AND MUVIJA M

For Keir Starmer, securing record levels of US investment into Britain has validated his unprecedented offer of a second state visit to Donald Trump, a high-risk gamble designed to keep the unpredictable president on side.

Trump marked his historic visit by announcing 150 billion pounds (\$203 billion) of corporate investment in the UK’s technology, finance and energy sectors. Public opinion was divided on whether Starmer was right to court Trump, but the agreements provided a much-needed political and economic boost after some of the toughest weeks of his premiership.

Unlike past state visits focused on cultural exchange or symbolic diplomacy, Trump, the most transactional of presidents, arrived flanked by billionaires and business leaders. The two governments unveiled a wave of investments, with Blackstone pledging 100 billion pounds over 10 years and Microsoft committing 22 billion pounds to expand Britain’s AI and cloud capacity. Other US firms also outlined plans to build data centres and expand energy projects.

Trump has repeatedly said he wants the US to win the global AI race, with China the only real challenger. Britain has chosen to align with Washington to secure access to supercomputers and advanced digital infrastructure. Trump and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella stressed that Britain must rely on US technology for future growth.

The investment aims to combine American infrastructure and capital with British innovation from universities, start-ups and companies. But critics warned it risks making Britain little more than an outpost of Silicon Valley. Former UK deputy prime minister Nick Clegg said the deal showed Britain “holding on to Uncle Sam’s coattails”. Lawyer Alex Kirkhope added that reliance on US systems compromises the UK’s political leverage and independence in technology policy.

Analysts also cautioned that moving closer to Washington could complicate trade with the European Union, Britain’s largest market. Peter Holmes of the UK Trade Policy Observatory said the country’s fortunes now depend heavily on Trump’s personal whims.

Starmer, a liberal technocrat and former human rights lawyer, has nonetheless forged a solid relationship with Trump, flattering him publicly and deploying the royal invitation as his trump card. David Dunn, professor of international politics at the University of Birmingham, said Trump’s decision to bring cabinet members and business chiefs to London created “huge opportunities”, while other countries had faced tariffs for showing insufficient loyalty.

Earlier this year Britain became the first country to secure tariff reductions from Trump, though Starmer failed to win relief for the steel sector, which still faces 25% duties. — Reuters

Tips and tricks: how to live with rising prices

THE world has shifted in many ways since the Covid-19 pandemic and one challenge felt across households is the higher cost of living. Price pressures — shaped by global supply chains, energy markets and local conditions — have filtered into daily life. For someone like me on a modest income, the change is felt in small, careful decisions that keep the family budget on track.

A routine supermarket trip tells the story: the basket fills quickly, but the bill rises faster. Essentials such as vegetables, rice, cooking oil and snacks now take a larger share of the monthly allowance, so choices are planned more deliberately. At the checkout, I sometimes pause. Should I put something back so the budget lasts until month-end? These moments of hesitation are now familiar to many families across Oman. To cope, I plan.

At the start of each month, I list the non-negotiables: rent, electricity, water and my children’s school needs. Whatever remains is divided between food and other essentials. Eating out, buying new clothes and small luxuries have been reduced. It is not about living without joy — it is about living within our means, with dignity. Around me, I see quiet ingenuity. A neighbour prepares traditional Omani dishes in her spare time and sells them through social media. A friend bakes cakes from home and takes orders online.

These are small enterprises, but the extra income makes a real difference. What I admire most is the refusal to give in to despair; people are using their time and skills to support their families. I also try to buy smart. Choosing Omani products often stretches the rials further and supports local producers. I look for discounts, seasonal offers and bulk buys for items we use often. We avoid waste: cook what we need, store leftovers properly and turn yesterday’s rice into today’s



Essentials such as vegetables, rice, cooking oil and snacks now take a larger share of the monthly allowance, so choices are planned more deliberately



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The author is an Omani journalist and media editor based in Salalah, covering cultural and economic affairs.

lunch. Small habits add up.

There is a wider lesson here: awareness. Financial awareness and community awareness are no longer optional. Families benefit from basic budgeting, saving for emergencies and distinguishing needs from wants. Schools, media and community organisations can help by teaching practical money skills to the next generation. Even simple tools — a notebook budget or a basic phone spreadsheet — can reduce stress.

What gives me hope is the spirit of cooperation that runs through Omani society. Families share items, neighbours exchange goods and relatives step in when someone is struggling. These traditions of solidarity lighten the load and remind us that nobody faces challenges alone. The authorities, for

their part, are working through laws, subsidies and consumer-protection measures to help cushion households and maintain market stability.

These efforts matter. At the same time, I have learned that solutions cannot come from policy alone. Each of us has a role: adapting our habits, learning new skills and being disciplined with what we have. For me, that means simple living, a clearer budget and the courage to try small side jobs when possible. For my community, it means supporting local businesses, sharing knowledge and looking out for one another. Rising prices may remain part of our reality, but patience, creativity and unity allow us to protect our families and carry on — with pride — in our beloved Oman.

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L I F E S T Y L E

KUMMA WEAVING IS A METICULOUS, LABOUR-INTENSIVE INDUSTRY THAT NEEDS SAFEGUARD > 20

ENTERTAINMENT

‘I don’t recognise my country’, says Angelina Jolie



AMERICAN actress Angelina Jolie said on Sunday she no longer recognises her country, voicing concern over threats to free expression while presenting her latest film at Spain’s San Sebastián film festival.

Her comments come as worries grow over free speech in the United States, after President Donald Trump’s crackdown on critical media and the recent suspension of late-night host Jimmy Kimmel’s show over comments on the killing of conservative influencer Charlie Kirk.

“I love my country, but I don’t at this time recognise my country”, Jolie said when asked if she feared for freedom of speech in the United States.

“Anything, anywhere, that divides or, of course, limits personal expressions and freedoms and, from anyone, I think is very dangerous”, she added.

“These are very, very heavy times we’re all living in together”. Jolie, 50, was in San Sebastian to promote “Couture”, directed by French filmmaker Alice Winocour, which is competing for the festival’s top prize, the Golden Shell.

She plays Maxine Walker, an American film director facing divorce and a serious illness while navigating Paris Fashion Week and embarking on a romance with a colleague, played by French actor Louis Garrel.

The Oscar-winning actress — honoured in 1999 for her role in “Girl, Interrupted” — said she related personally to the struggles of her latest character.

Jolie underwent a double mastectomy in 2013 and later had her ovaries and fallopian tubes removed to reduce her high genetic risk of cancer, which claimed the lives of her mother and grandmother.

Visibly moved, she said she thought often of her mother while making the film.

“I wish she was able to speak more as openly as I have been and have people respond as graciously as you have and not feel as alone”, Jolie said.

“There’s something very particular to women’s cancers, because obviously it affects us, you know, how we feel as women”, she added. — AFP

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



LIFESTYLE

A man looks at a unicorn head at a shop selling Mid-Autumn Festival decorations and merchandise in the Old Quarter of Hanoi. — AFP



FILM

Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor attends the screening of Indian Hindi-language drama film ‘Homebound’ in Mumbai. — AFP



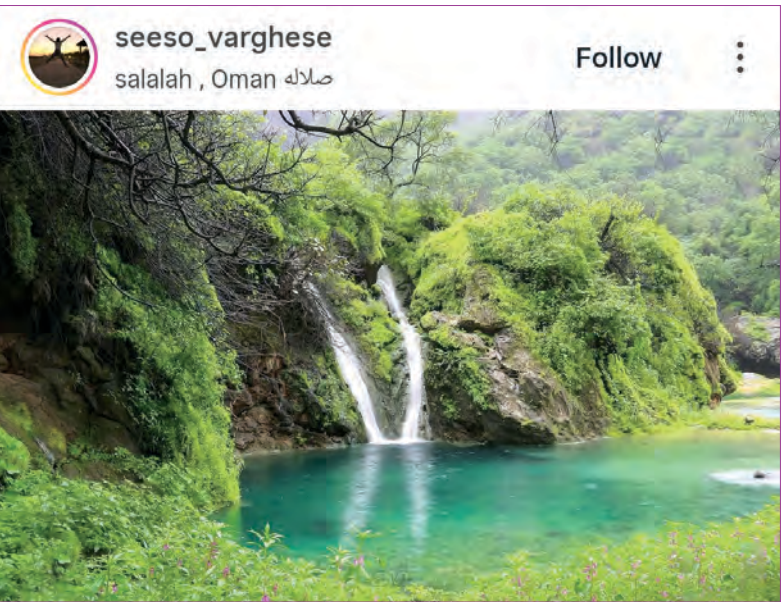
FESTIVAL

Spanish singer and actress Lolita Flores poses during the photocall for the film “Flores para Antonio” during the 73rd San Sebastian International Film Festival. — AFP

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World’s second largest diamond awaits pricing after discovery in Botswana



THE WORLD’S Second largest diamond could soon find a new home in a museum — but first needs to be properly evaluated, the Belgian firm holding it said on Monday.

Unearthed last year in Botswana, the 2,488-carat stone known as Motswedi is currently being analysed by gem dealer HB Antwerp in the namesake port city and global diamond hub.

“At the moment it’s very hard to put a price on it”, Margaux Donckier, HB Antwerp’s public affairs director said.

“We first have to inspect the stone and see what we can yield from it in polished form”. Weighing about half a kilogramme, the Motswedi was discovered last summer at the Karowe mine in northeastern Botswana — Africa’s top diamond producer.

The mine is owned by Canadian company Lucara Diamond, which has partnered with HB Antwerp

to handle the processing and marketing of stones exceeding 10.8 carats.

The firm is showcasing the Motswedi as part of a collection of four gems — including the world’s third largest diamond — which were recently discovered at the same mine.

While difficult to price individually at this stage, collectively the four should fetch at least \$100 million, Donckier said.

Even without a proper price tag, the Motswedi has already received “plenty of interest from all over the world”, she said.

“The size of these stones is so exceptionally rare that they also perfectly could end up in a museum”, Donckier said, adding some had already got in touch.

“But it could also maybe end up in the hands of a shaikh that would like to add it to his collection”, she said of the largest diamond.

— AFP



Oman’s enduring ties celebrated in Sadaaqa

LIJU CHERIAN

LONG BEFORE oil reshaped the Gulf, Oman and India shared enduring connections through trade, migration and cultural exchange. These ties are vividly reflected in Sadaaqa: Partnership & Cultural Kinship by veteran cultural journalist Chaitali Banerjee Roy, a book that captures the spirit of friendship across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The Arabic word Sadaaqa, meaning friendship, is not just a title but a philosophy that Chaitali weaves through her narrative. “In Oman, as in Kuwait, Indian families became trusted partners in trade and social development”, Chaitali explains. “Their stories of trust, adaptation and kinship echo across the region and continue to shape contemporary Gulf societies”.

For centuries, Muscat and Muttrah thrived as hubs for Indian merchants from Gujarat, Kerala and Sindh. They played a pivotal role in the spice trade, textiles and pearls, binding Oman and India in an enduring partnership. Even today, Omani souqs echo this shared legacy, with Indian fabrics, spices and jewellery adorning the stalls much like Kuwait’s historic Mubarakiya market.

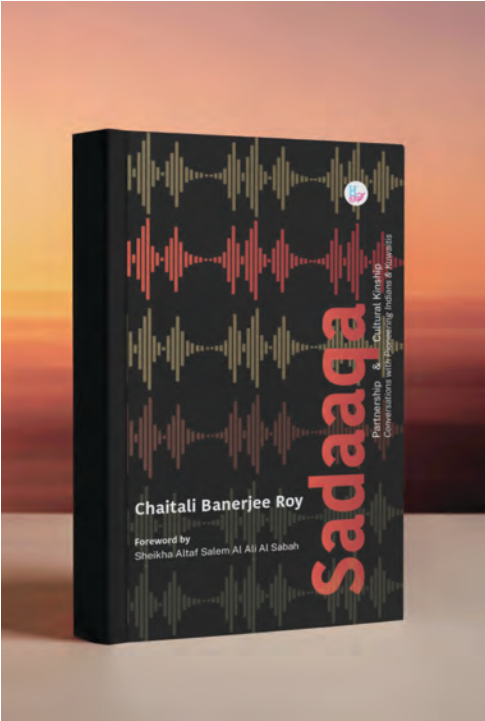
The book draws parallels with Kuwait by profiling pioneering Indian families such as the Jashanmalls, Oberois, Kohlis and Wadhawans, whose enterprises spanned multiple Gulf states, including Oman. The Jashanmal family, for instance, extended its Basra-founded enterprise to Oman, Bahrain and the UAE. “These are not just business stories”, Chaitali emphasises, “but living testimonies of friendship and resilience that knit together communities across the Gulf”. Sadaaqa also highlights cultural bridges that resonate strongly in Oman. Wellbeing practices rooted in Indian traditions are becoming mainstream, while Omani-Indian intermarriages and the presence of Hindu temples in Muttrah stand as



visible reminders of a shared cultural fabric.

Chaitali narrates how, across the Gulf, popular culture has bridged worlds — from Kuwaiti singer Mubarak al Azmi, dubbed ‘Kuwait’s Kishore Kumar’ for his flawless renditions of Hindi classics, to Shaikha Shaikha al Sabah, Kuwait’s first Padma Shri recipient, who pioneered yoga’s integration into society. “Her journey mirrors the growing popularity of yoga in places like Oman, where Indian wellbeing traditions have become part of daily life”, Chaitali observes.

Chaitali’s earlier work, Women of Kuwait: Turning Tides (2016), broke ground by chronicling the lives of Kuwaiti women. With Sadaaqa, she widens the lens to the entire GCC, preserving oral histories, family narratives and personal recollections that might otherwise be lost. “Heritage”, she writes, “is not a relic of the past but a living, evolving partnership”. The foreword by Shaikha Altaf Salem Al Ali al Sabah underscores this vision, situating Sadaaqa within a broader regional movement to celebrate cultural kinship.



Oman’s historic connections with Zanzibar further enrich the narrative. Just as Kuwaiti families recall summers in Bombay, many Omani families remember their ties to Mombasa and Dar es Salaam — a reminder that Gulf identity has always been global, woven through trade routes and human relationships.

As Oman advances its Oman Vision 2040 and the GCC embraces cultural diplomacy and economic diversification, Chaitali’s book resonates powerfully. “In today’s Gulf, friendship is not a sentiment of the past”, she remarks, “but a foundation for the future”. Ultimately, Sadaaqa: Partnership & Cultural Kinship is more than a book about Kuwait. It is a mirror reflecting Oman’s own narratives and a guide for future generations to understand that friendship across cultures is not an exception but the norm.

Beautifully designed by Anupa Dasgupta and published by Har Anand Publications of New Delhi, the book will soon be available on Amazon. For more information, contact chaitalibroy@hotmail.com.

FEATURES



KUMMA WEAVING
IS A METICULOUS,
LABOUR-INTENSIVE
INDUSTRY THAT
NEEDS SAFEGUARD

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

IN THE COASTAL town of Qurayat, Oman, women sit cross-legged in small, bustling rooms, their hands moving expertly as they weave intricate patterns into cotton fabric. The craft they preserve is more than just a tradition; it's a vital piece of Oman's cultural identity. The humble yet striking kumma, a handmade cap worn by men, embodies this heritage, linking generations through threads of history, artistry and pride. For decades, the kumma has adorned the heads of Omani men during both formal occasions and everyday life; and the industry surrounding its creation remains alive and well, despite the relentless march of modernisation.

Asma bint Nasser al Wahaibiyah, a master weaver from Qurayat, is quick to emphasise the importance of the kumma in Oman's cultural fabric. "It's not just a hat", she says, her fingers gently tracing a finished piece. "It's an essential part of our dress, a symbol of our identity that connects us to our ancestors". Her skilled hands have learned the craft from her mother, a tradition passed down through generations of women who have dedicated hours to weaving vibrant, ornate caps that tell stories of Oman's rich history.

prefer cheaper options", explains Al Wahaibi. "But they don't realise that the handmade products are of a different quality — they are more durable and truly represent our heritage". Her words underscore a growing challenge: how to preserve a centuries-old craft in an age of instant access and mass production.

Different styles of kummas vary in craft and price. The most sought-after is the star-stitched kumma, renowned for its intricate patterns, durability and resistance to wear. Other popular varieties include half-star, chain-embroidered and stitched caps, each with its own appeal and price point. Despite technological advances, handmade kummas continue to be prized for their precision and artistry — qualities that machines and foreign imports struggle to replicate.

For women like Al Wahaibi, the craft isn't just a livelihood; it's a cultural calling. "I learned from my mother", she says proudly. "And I want to keep this craft alive because it's part of who we are". While modern embroidery machines have made mass production faster and cheaper, the value of a handwoven kumma remains unmatched. The personal touch, the careful selection of colours and the painstaking embroidery all contribute to a product that is as much a work of art as it is a symbol of tradition.

The origins of the kumma stretch far back before the 1950s, rooted deeply in Oman's history. Today, it continues to be a marker of Oman's national identity, worn with pride by men across generations. It is often paired with the mussar, serving as both a functional and fashionable accessory. Omanis tend to choose their kumma's colours and patterns based on mood, age, or occasion — though many older men still prefer white, a colour that signifies purity and simplicity.

The government has recognised the cultural and economic significance of the kumma, instituting strict regulations to safeguard its authenticity and quality. Under Ministerial Resolution No 21/2022, manufacturers must adhere to standard specifications, with penalties of up to RO 1,000 for violations, a measure aimed at protecting this



The craftsmanship involved in making kumma is meticulous, artisans draw delicate patterns on small pieces of cloth, punching tiny holes to guide the embroidery. They work with threads of varying thickness — some coarse, others fine — employing specialised needles and tools, including silver-tipped fingers to protect from pricks and help tighten threads. Weaving a single kumma takes anywhere from one month for full-time artisans to six months for those supplementing their income. It's a labour-intensive process that demands patience, skill and a deep love for tradition.

Despite the high price tag — locally made kummas can cost up to 50 Omani riyals — many Omanis cherish their handwoven caps as symbols of cultural pride. They're often worn beyond official duties, paired with the mussar or are often just donned during social gatherings, celebrations and special occasions. Their bright colours, intricate patterns and distinctive styles serve as an outward expression of personal and communal identity.

However, as modern markets flood with machine-produced and ready-to-wear alternatives, younger generations often hesitate to invest in authentic handmade kummas. "Many young Omanis see the high cost and long hours of craftsmanship and

unique heritage. The industry remains active across various governorates, especially in Qurayat, where many women continue to practice the craft, passing it down to younger generations.

For visitors, purchasing a kumma isn't merely for souvenirs — these caps are symbols of Oman's deep-rooted traditions and rich history. Tourists often prize them as authentic mementoes, proud to bring home a tangible piece of Oman's cultural soul. It's a craft that has withstood the pressures of modernity while continuing to embody the elegance, history and resilience of Oman itself.

Despite the challenges posed by industry and market competition, the handmade kumma continues to thrive in niches that value quality over quantity. Its bright colours, intricate embroidery and storied history ensure that it remains an iconic part of Oman's national wardrobe. As Oman continues to develop economically and culturally, the art of kumma weaving stands as a proud reminder that some traditions, though centuries old, are simply too precious to let fade away. They are woven into the very fabric of the country's identity, an enduring symbol that Oman's rich history is always present — threaded into the lives and hearts of its people.