

OMAN

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DAILY

Observer

SUNRISE 06:06 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:51 AM

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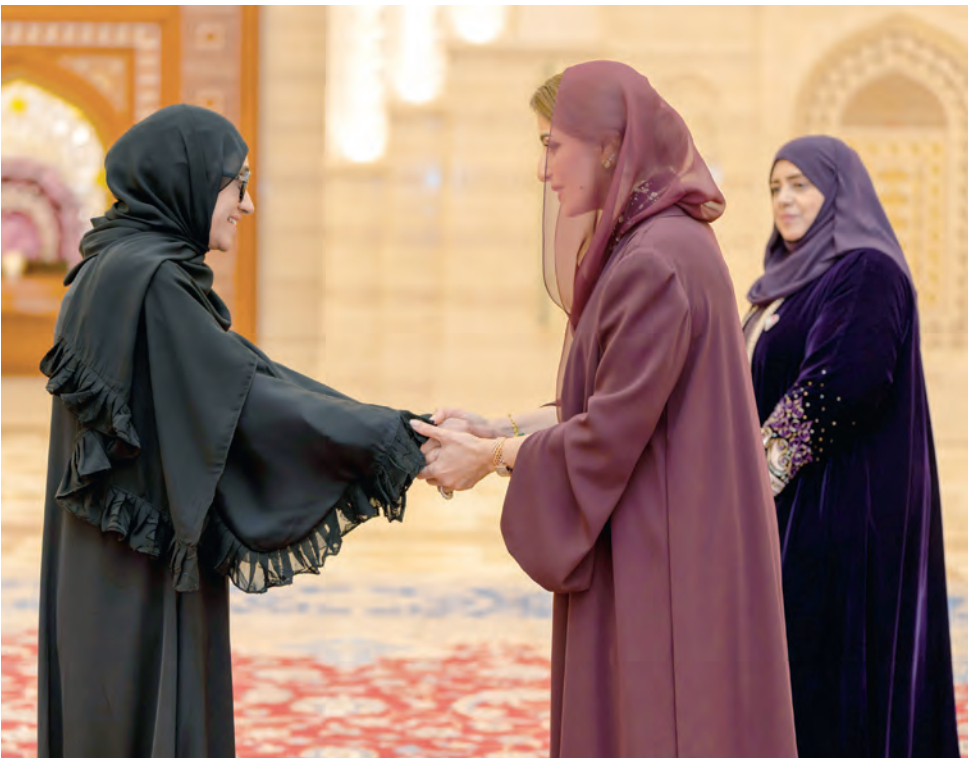
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HIS MAJESTY'S
FOOTBALL
CUP DRAW
REVEALED

HONOURABLE LADY FELICITATES OMANI WOMEN FIGURES

HER Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, felicitated some Omani women from various sectors. The felicitation, which took place at Al Baraka Palace on Sunday, comes within the context of marking the Omani Women's Day.

They were HH Sayyidah Dr Sharifa bint Salim bin Ali al Said, Dr Arwa bint Zakariya bin Yahya al Riyamiyah, Dr Amna bint Saif bin Mohammed al Abdul Salam, Dr Hamda bint Hamad bin Hilal al Saadiyah, Dr Khalisa bint Hamad bin Mohammed al Bahriyah, Khadija bint Nasser bin Jawad al Saatiyah, Khawla bint Zayed bin Sultan al Shehiyah, Dr Khawla bint Said bin Saif al Harthiyah, Razan bint Hamad bin Salim al Kalbaniyah, Eng Ruqaya bint Ahmed bin Hamoud



Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, felicitated some Omani women figures from various sectors.



al Shaithaniyah, Sharifa bint Hussain bin Qasim al Yafeiyah, Shaikha bint Yousuf bin Abdullah al Farsiya, Ghaliya bint Ali bin Mohammed al Masheikhiyah (who was represented by her daughter), Fakhriya bint Saif bin Khalfan al Shibaniyah, Dr Feryal bint Ali bin Khamis al Lawatiyah, Kaltham bint Hamoud bin Ali al Muqbaliyah, Dr Kawthar bint Suleiman bin Ahmed al Busaidiyah, Maryam bint Rashid bin Mohammed al Yazidiyah, Dr Noora bint Salim bin Abdullah al Khaliliyah and Dr Warda bint Abdulrahman bin Salim BalKhair.

This felicitation reaffirms the high status enjoyed by Omani women and the continuous support they receive as key partners in building the nation and shaping its future under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

The event was attended by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development. — ONA

IN BRIEF

HIS MAJESTY SENDS CONDOLENCES TO EMPEROR OF JAPAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Emperor Naruhito of Japan, on the demise of former Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the Emperor and the people of Japan.

BOTSWANA PRESIDENT ARRIVES ON PRIVATE VISIT

President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana arrived here on Sunday evening on a three-day private visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The President of Botswana will meet some officials to discuss a set of aspects of joint interest.



OMAN HAILS CEASEFIRE BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the announcement of the ceasefire signed in Doha between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Afghanistan. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Sunday, the Sultanate of Oman expressed its appreciation and gratitude for the role undertaken by the State of Qatar and the Republic of Türkiye in reaching this agreement, voicing its hope for its sustainability towards achieving a permanent and comprehensive peace between the two countries. Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed to an immediate ceasefire during talks hosted by Doha, Qatar's foreign ministry announced early on Sunday, after the South Asia neighbours extended a ceasefire following a week of fierce border clashes. — ONA

State Audit recovers RO 58m in financial oversight

MUSCAT: The State Audit Institution (SAI) has reported significant financial recoveries totalling approximately RO 58 million for the public treasury, according to its 2024 annual report released on Sunday.

The recovered funds include RO 25 million collected in 2024 and RO 33 million the previous year (2023), representing a substantial recovery through the institution's comprehensive audit activities.

The summary was released following the honour accorded to Shaikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of the State Audit Institution (SAI), of presenting the institution's annual report for the year 2024 to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and copies thereof to the Council of

“This reflects His Majesty's vision for promoting accountability and integrity across all sectors while engaging society in strengthening oversight systems to achieve our national goals

AHMED BIN SALIM AL RUJAIBI

Ministers, the State Council and the Majlis Ash'shura. This comes in implementation of the provision of Article (66) of the Basic Law of the State issued by Royal Decree No 6/2021, and Article (29) of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Law issued by Royal Decree No 111/2011.

Ahmed bin Salim al Rujaibi, SAI Deputy Chairman for Government Units Auditing, emphasised the institution's alignment with national transparency objectives. “This summary reflects His Majesty's vision for promoting accountability and integrity across all sectors while engaging society in strengthening oversight systems to achieve our national goals,” Al Rujaibi stated.

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SHORT TAKES



The applicants will undergo an evaluation process according to the recruitment procedures. — ONA

RAO begins evaluation, acceptance of new recruits

MUSCAT: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) has begun evaluation and acceptance procedures for new recruits holding a General Education Diploma to join the military service in coordination with the Ministry of Labor, on Sunday.

The applicants will undergo an evaluation process according to the recruitment procedures applied by the Royal Army of Oman.

These efforts made by the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) are part of the plans and programmes aimed at recruiting citizens in the Sultan’s Armed Forces and other departments of the Ministry of Defence. This will contribute to serving this proud nation and its leader, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander. — ONA

Khoula Hospital introduces therapeutic techniques



MUSCAT: Khoula Hospital has introduced a range of advanced medical services and therapeutic procedures being implemented for the first time at the hospital, with several among them being applied for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman. This step reflects progress in the quality of specialised healthcare provided.

These advanced procedures include medical techniques being performed for the first time, such as peripheral angioplasty using carbon dioxide gas instead of iodine contrast to reduce risks to kidney function in patients with renal diseases. Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Aufi, Consultant in Vascular and Trauma Surgery, said that these technologies have tangibly contributed to improving the quality of healthcare by reducing the need for traditional surgical interventions and relying on simpler, less risky interventional procedures, which have positively impacted patient recovery speed. — ONA

FAO lauds Oman’s active role in food security

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

THE Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Mission in the Sultanate of Oman has lauded the active role played by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Food Bank in enhancing better production, nutrition, environment, and a better life for the communities in the country.

Speaking on the occasion of the World Food Day organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in the presence of Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs at the Diplomatic Club on Sunday, Dr Thaer Yassin, Head of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) Mission in the Sultanate of Oman said that in the past 80 years of the FAO, despite many successful stories, the world is still facing many challenges.

“Our mission today is more urgent and important than ever. The challenges we face today are more complex and interconnected than ever before. 673 million people still suffer from chronic hunger, and 2.8 billion people cannot afford healthy meals,” he said.

This year’s theme is ‘Hand in Hand’ and the joint work with Oman is a prime example of this principle, according to him.

“The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, our primary partner in organising this event, helps FAO to promote better production practices while the Ministry of Education is key in engaging promising youth, the leaders of tomorrow and bearers of the message of better nutrition.”

The Ministry of Health, on the other hand, which spares no effort in its awareness campaigns to ensure better food and healthy



World Food Day was organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in the presence of Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs.

live while the Oman Food Bank plays a pivotal role in preserving food and reducing food waste, directly contributing to the preservation of our precious resources, according to him.

Hand in hand with the United Nations system, which also celebrates its 80th anniversary on the 24th of this month, especially the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), to ensure an integrated approach that links food security, proper

nutrition for children and youth, and sustainable public health.

“For eight decades, the Organization has harnessed its expertise, data, and knowledge to improve agricultural practices and policies, helping countries and communities produce more and better food.

Together, in partnership with youth, women, farmers, and indigenous peoples, we have achieved historic milestones. For example, today, despite a global population tripling since 1946, the world produces enough food to feed everyone,” Dr Ther said.

SAI recovers RO 58m in financial oversight

FROM PAGE 1

He added that the 2024 audit programme, structured around Oman Vision 2040 targets and international auditing standards, encompassed 225 examination tasks resulting in 172 detailed reports. Key focus areas included performance evaluation of monitored entities, information technology governance, service delivery assessment, and comprehensive review of contracts and financial operations.

He said that the institution addressed 25 cases involving public



Ahmed al Rujaibi

funds under judicial consideration, including matters related to position exploitation, bribery, document forgery, embezzlement and functional duty violations. Additionally, audit professionals reviewed 63 legislative documents concerning financial, accounting and taxation matters, providing substantive technical feedback to enhance regulatory frameworks.

He added that the institution maintained robust public engagement channels, processing 1,378 complaints and reports concerning financial and

administrative irregularities with a 90-per cent resolution rate. These efforts were complemented by extensive awareness programmes including media campaigns, publications and educational seminars, designed to strengthen institutional integrity and public financial protection. Al Rujaibi concluded that the annual summary demonstrates the SAI’s systematic approach to financial governance, combining rigorous examination standards with proactive public engagement to safeguard national resources. — ONA

Oman’s pavilion at Frankfurt Book Fair serves as window to culture

FRANKFURT: The Sultanate of Oman has concluded its participation in Frankfurt International Book Fair 2025, held in the Federal Republic of Germany during October 15-19.

Oman’s pavilion attracted a diverse stream of visitors, serving to introduce the components of Omani culture and showcasing a wide range of publications and materials focusing on Omani cultural, literary, and social affairs, particularly those highlighting Oman’s heritage and its intellectual and literary

contributions. Dr Iyas Nasser, a Palestinian poet and researcher of classical Arabic poetry, praised the diversity of publications included in Oman’s pavilion, describing them as “extremely precious literary and intellectual publications and productions that enrich Arab libraries and culture.”

Meanwhile, Emmanuel Bouvard, a French book editor and publisher, pointed out that Oman possesses a unique characteristic that distinguishes it from other



countries, due to its preservation of its ancient roots and authentic heritage. He noted that the Omani people are always welcoming to others, making a visit to Oman a unique and different experience.

Lisa Marshall, an employee at the International Court of Justice, mentioned that everyone she knows who has visited Oman praised its unique cultural diversity and the positive impression these visits left. She expressed her eagerness to learn about various Omani publications,

believing they would contribute to broadening her perspectives in reading.

Dr Ulysses Lagrimas, an American writer and author, said that his experience visiting Oman’s pavilion left a profound impact on him and a positive impression of Omani culture and the warm reception Omanis extend to others. He expressed his hope to visit Oman and learn about its culture by interacting with people and observing their social life. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



OMANI HAJ MISSION FOR 1447 AH FORMED

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs has issued a ministerial decision to form the Omani Hajj Mission for the year 1447 AH, chaired by Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The decision stipulated that Dr Ahmed bin Ali al Kaabi will serve as Deputy Head of the Mission for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Dr Zahir bin Abdullah al Hosni as Deputy Head of the Mission for Pilgrim Affairs and Haj Campaigns.

It is worth noting that the Omani Haj Mission carries out a number of tasks and services, including providing assistance to pilgrims and guiding them through the procedures for performing the rituals. — ONA

HACKATHON ON INNOVATION STARTS



The participants will develop innovative solutions that address national challenges. — ONA

MUSCAT: A 3-day Gameathon Hackathon kicked off with the participation of 105 talents, divided into 21 teams representing various academic and research establishments in the Sultanate of Oman.

The participants will develop innovative solutions that address national challenges in the fields of education, research, sustainability and entrepreneurship.

The Gemathon Hackathon is an interactive national platform that brings together students, innovators, researchers and entrepreneurs from different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

It furnishes a motivating, competitive environment aimed at contributing to the acceleration of digital transition programmes and the promotion of sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman.

Participants focus on developing technology projects featuring smart education and learning technologies, research, digital analysis, educational sustainability and inclusiveness, as well as entrepreneurship and institutional innovation.

These challenges were identified in terms of actual needs identified by relevant government departments, giving participants the opportunity to present applicable solutions.

— ONA

Women’s Day is celebration of nation’s commitment

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

By being self-centred and solely focusing on one’s own career, one is not helping any organisation or society. Instead, empowering others can bring the fruits of labour, according to Amina al Asmi, HR Assistant Manager at Veolia Oman.

Amina has been in the corporate world for the past 14 years and has climbed the progressive ladder step by step. From a small clerical post to today’s Assistant HR Manager level, she has been learning from every face that she came across.

“As an Omani woman in the corporate world, this day reminds me of the progress we have made



Amina al Asmi

and inspires me to continue breaking barriers while mentoring the next generation of Omani women leaders.”

She has worked on several impactful initiatives, including employee engagement programmes, the implementation of performance management systems, and diversity and inclusion initiatives that align with Oman Vision 2040.

“I am particularly focused on developing local talent and building strong career pathways that empower our people to grow within the environmental sector. My goal is to ensure that our talent development approach not only supports operational excellence but also delivers lasting value to the

communities we serve,” she proudly said. For her, a strong belief in people can make the difference in an organisation or an individual’s life.

“The driving force in my life is the belief that meaningful change begins with people.

Working in HR has taught me that empowering others leads to the success of the whole organisation. I’m driven by ambition, purpose, and the trust my family and colleagues place in me.

To my peers, I say — lead with empathy, stay committed to growth, and never underestimate the impact of your work,” she emphatically delivers her message to her peers.

Al Sharqiyah South shines at DCO Digital Forum

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

OMAN. Represented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), participated in the showcase session of the Digital Market (IMPACT) initiative, organised by the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO). The virtual session brought together representatives from member states to highlight innovative digital initiatives, exchange best practices, and explore strategies to accelerate digital transformation and sustainable development.

During the session, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate presented two of its pioneering digital projects, selected as part of Oman’s national digital government initiatives and nominated by MoTCIT. The recognition highlights the governorate’s proactive role in embracing innovation and aligning with Oman’s national direction toward digital transformation and sustainable regional development.

The showcased projects reflect the governorate’s commitment to the National Digital Transformation Strategy, which seeks to enhance government performance, streamline service delivery and foster a smarter, more connected public sector.

In its presentation, Al Sharqiyah South demonstrated how these initiatives have improved public services, boosted citizen engagement, and supported evidence-based decision-making through real-time data and integrated digital platforms.



The recognition underscores Oman’s progress toward building an inclusive, resilient digital economy

The projects showcased reflect the governorate’s commitment to the National Digital Transformation Strategy

The projects also exemplify strong collaboration between government entities and private-sector partners, echoing the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises innovation, institutional integration and sustainable progress.

According to the presentation, the initiatives have already achieved tangible results — including reduced service processing times, greater operational efficiency, and higher levels of user satisfaction with digital government platforms.

Participants at the DCO session commended Oman’s balanced approach to digital transformation, noting the country’s ability to combine technological innovation with human capital development. Officials from the DCO praised Oman’s participation as a model of strategic clarity and community-centred digital innovation, inspiring other member states to accelerate their own digital agendas.

MoTCIT affirmed that Oman’s engagement in the IMPACT initiative reflects its broader efforts to strengthen the nation’s global digital presence and promote international knowledge exchange. The ministry emphasised that the IMPACT Digital Market serves as a global platform connecting governments, private sectors, and innovators to advance digital economies and foster sustainable growth across DCO member countries.

The ministry also noted that the selection of Al Sharqiyah South illustrates Oman’s decentralised approach to digital transformation — empowering governorates to design localised, context-driven solutions that address community needs and contribute to national development. The recognition of Al Sharqiyah South’s digital initiatives underscores Oman’s steady progress toward building an inclusive, resilient digital economy, one that supports innovation, entrepreneurship and improved quality of life across all regions. It also positions the governorate as a model of local digital innovation, contributing meaningfully to the nation’s overarching transformation journey. As Oman continues its partnership with the DCO, new opportunities are expected to emerge for joint projects, technical collaborations, and capacity-building programmes that will strengthen digital integration and sustainable growth.

The experience of Al Sharqiyah South demonstrates that digital transformation extends beyond technology — it represents a holistic framework of innovation, good governance and human-centred development.

Omani researchers map genetic blueprint of Arabian Gazelle

MUSCAT: A pioneering research initiative in the Sultanate of Oman has successfully documented the complete genetic architecture of the Arabian Gazelle (*Gazella arabica*), marking a significant advancement in wildlife conservation science. The comprehensive study, published in the international journal “Zoology in the Middle East”, provides crucial insights into the genetic diversity of gazelle populations across Oman’s breeding centres.

This landmark research represents a transformative development in Oman’s wildlife conservation and genetic resource management strategies. The findings establish a precise

genetic database that will inform conservation programmes for vulnerable species, particularly those facing extinction threats.

Conducted through collaboration between the Environment Authority, Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Center (under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation), and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the study employed cutting-edge genetic analysis methodologies. The research team performed mitochondrial DNA sequencing and utilised nuclear microsatellite markers to examine 65 gazelle specimens from three key conservation sites: Al Saleel



This landmark research represents a transformative development in Oman’s wildlife conservation and genetic resource management strategies. — ONA

National Park, the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Propagation Centre in the Wilayat of Barka

and the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary. Analysis revealed substantial genetic diversity within the three gazelle populations, with evidence of healthy genetic exchange between groups. This genetic richness enhances the species’ resilience against environmental challenges and disease threats. The study further identified only low to moderate genetic differentiation between populations, indicating their suitability for combined reintroduction programmes without significant inbreeding risks.

According to researcher Zahir bin Salim al Alawi from the Environment Authority, “This research provides the scientific

foundation for developing effective conservation strategies that maintain genetic diversity - our primary defence against environmental threats and disease outbreaks.” The genetic data enables authorities to track the origins of both wild and confiscated animals, strengthening efforts against illegal wildlife trafficking.

Dr Alia al Ansari from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) highlighted the importance of institutional collaboration, noting that “the Environment Authority has immediately applied these genetic insights to refine its conservation and reintroduction protocols.

— ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The ceremony was held under the auspices of the Minister of Heritage and Tourism

AL NOOR FORUM
CELEBRATES
BLIND CREATIVITY

MUSCAT: The Al Noor Cultural Forum, organised by the Al Noor Association for the Blind, opened in Muscat on Sunday with the participation of 14 Arab countries. The event, held at Azzan Bin Qais International School, will run until October 23, offering a vibrant platform for cultural and artistic exchange among the visually impaired.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, and attended by representatives from government and private institutions supporting the visually impaired community.

Dr Raed bin Abdul Hafeez al Farsi, Chairman of the Al Noor Association for the Blind, said the forum aims to empower the blind to express their cultural and artistic creativity, establish a network of knowledge and artistic communication across the Arab world, and host training workshops in culture and arts.

He noted that the event gathers a distinguished group of writers, poets, visual artists, craftspeople, theatre professionals and musicians from various Arab countries, showcasing the creative potential and cultural contributions of blind individuals in the Arab world.

The forum's opening day featured a theatrical operetta performed by blind participants, along with a tribute to artist Ghanem al Sulaiti, the forum's guest of honour. Institutions supporting the visually impaired in culture and arts were also recognised.

Running through October 23, the forum's agenda features Arabic musical evenings by bands such as Angham Al Sharq from Cairo and Doniatna from Alexandria, alongside performances by blind musicians from participating countries. — ONA

JUDICIARY
COUNCIL
DY CHIEF
RECEIVES
SWISS
ATTORNEY
GENERAL

MUSCAT: Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, on Sunday received Stefan Blättler, Attorney General of the Swiss Confederation, who is currently on an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting, which took place at the premises of the Judiciary Council in Muscat, dealt with various matters of mutual interest in judicial and legal fields, as well as ways to enhance cooperation



Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy holds talks with Stefan Blättler

between the Sultanate of Oman and the Swiss Confederation. The meeting was attended by

Attorney General Nasr bin Khamis al Sawa'ee. In addition to bilateral meetings with Omani officials, the Swiss Attorney General will deliver two lectures on cybercrime and economic crime.

The visit of the Swiss Attorney General seeks to consolidate judicial and legal cooperation. It will discuss means of exchanging expertise, success experiences and best practices that would contribute to the realisation of prompt justice and the rule of law. — ONA

Third Al Batinah Film
Festival unveils 62 films

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 19

A total of 62 feature, short and animated films from around the world will be showcased at the 3rd Al Batinah International Film Festival, set to take place from October 27 to 30 under the theme ‘Cinema and the Sea’, according to the Oman Film Society, the festival's main organiser.

Speaking at a media briefing, Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Oman Film Society and Festival Chair, said the event builds on the Society’s initiatives started with Expo 2020 Dubai.

“Region-wise film festivals aim to stimulate cinematic activity across Oman, promote film culture among youth and support creative talent,” he added.

Organised in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Al Batinah North, the festival also aims to showcase creative talents, promote tourism and highlight Oman’s cultural heritage. Special categories include short documentaries, AI-generated films and films from Omani institutions. Awards will be given for Best Omani Feature Film, Best International Feature Film,



Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Oman Film Society, at the media briefing

The festival received 319 submissions from 33 countries and 15 films from Omani institutions

Best Omani Documentary, Best International Documentary, Best AI Film and Best Omani Institutional Film.

The festival received 319 submissions from 33 countries, including 198 feature films, 88 documentaries, 18 AI films and 15 films from Omani institutions. Of these, 62 films were selected to compete across the various award

categories. A distinguished jury of Omani and international film-makers will preside over the awards, including experts from Egypt, Germany, Syria, Russia and Oman, covering categories such as short narratives, documentaries and AI films.

Ali bin Abdul Mohsen al Ajmi, General Manager of Votge Creative Labs and festival partner, highlighted that venues in Suhar, Shinas, Saham and Liwa have been prepared to host screenings and events at world-class standards, ensuring a unique experience for guests and participants.

The festival will open at Liwa Fort under the theme ‘Al Batinah: Destination for Film Production’.

Key partners include the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and the Al Batinah North Governorate Office. The festival also contributes to Oman Vision 2040, aiming to preserve Omani identity, develop national competencies and promote balanced development across the governorates.

Avicen Pharmacy Launches
Oman’s First-Ever Wellness App



Avicen, Oman's most trusted and leading healthcare brand, has announced the grand launch of the country's first-ever Wellness e-commerce app. The launch was held on October 19, 2025, by H.E Hilal Alsarmi, CEO, Athar Health Endowment Foundation, in the presence of Ibrahim Ahmed Mohammed Ali Al Ghafri, Chairman, Avicen Group and the senior management, staff and well-wishers.

Recognized as the second-largest retail pharmacy chain in the country, Avicen has marked a historic step in redefining healthcare accessibility and convenience across the Sultanate with the launch of this new wellness app.

The Avicen app helps customers experience a fast and reliable way to shop for their wellness, right at their fingertips. Through this app, customers gain access to safe, verified, ethically operated services. The app offers customers easy access to skincare, baby care, personal care, women care, nutritional drink and supplements, OTC products, as well as vitamins and daily essentials, all delivered right at their doorstep.

On this occasion, Hilal Alsarmi extended his congratulations to the team at Avicen for their proactive and customer focused approach in developing the app and its remarkable user experience and hoped that this will mark the beginning of a new era in blending convenience with affordability.

Speaking at the launch Nissar Edathum chalil, Managing Director, Avicen Group stated, “Our goal is to be our customers’ trusted partner at every stage of their

healthcare journey. This is a proud moment for us as we have launched the first-ever Wellness e-commerce app in the Sultanate. Through this initiative, we hope to not only support consumers in their wellness needs but also promote a culture of preventive health and well-being. We have a team of experienced pharmacists who are always available to provide expert guidance on medication safety and health management.”

“We have a very strong quality assurance system in place to foster a culture of safety across all our pharmacies. The entire process of sourcing, importing, and distributing medicines is conducted under strict supervision of regulatory authorities, ensuring that only high-quality healthcare products reach the market safely, efficiently, and in full compliance with both international standards and Oman's regulatory requirements. With more than 3500 products and 40+ product categories, we ensure timely and reliable delivery of high-quality medicines and healthcare products through our robust distribution network,” he added.

The new easy-to-use app, which will be available for download from the Apple App and Google Play stores (iOS & Android) and website (shopify), possesses key features that include on-demand delivery of products, Live order update and secure payments (Online and COD), as well as fast delivery from selected Avicen pharmacies within 20 km radius of the location.

Forging ahead with a focus on envisioning wellness through quality products, services, innovation and technology, Avicen is dedicated to empowering individuals to lead healthier lives by delivering accessible and personalized services.

Target LLC Highlights BINA Program
at GUtech Career & Training Event



Target, one of Oman's leading contracting and construction companies, stood out as a key participant at the GUtech Career and Training Fair held on 13 October 2025. With a strong focus on empowering national talent, Target’s presence highlighted its flagship youth development program, *BINA – Building Impactful National Ambitions*, which has quickly positioned the company as a frontrunner in preparing Omani graduates for meaningful/aspiring careers in the construction sector.

As part of its engagement, Target presented a visual showcase highlighting the company's legacy, service portfolio, and the BINA program's objectives. Students were briefed on the program's structure, learning pathways, and the competencies it aims to develop, bridging academic knowledge with real-world industry exposure.

Mr. Ghassan Shammas, General Manager of Target, commented:

“Our participation in the GUtech Career and Training Fair is part of our broader commitment towards building future-ready Omani talent. At Target, we don't just hire – we invest in potential, we mentor, and we prepare young Omanis to become leaders of

tomorrow. The *BINA* program reflects this vision by equipping graduates with the confidence, skills, and real-world experience required to thrive in the industry and contribute to Oman's national development goals.”

Adding to this, Mr. Adil Al Rahbi, Head of HR & Administration at Target, highlighted the strategic value of the initiative: “At Target, we view youth development as a strategic imperative. The GUtech fair allowed us to connect directly with students and present BINA as a holistic journey—one that blends technical learning with soft skills, safety culture, and mentorships from seasoned professionals. We remain committed to supporting Oman's young talent with purpose and professionalism.”

Target's presence at the fair underscored its role as a people-centric organization focused on sustainable growth and national capacity building. By aligning its employer brand with the aspirations of Omani youth, the company continues to qualitatively contribute to the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Since its establishment in 1976, Target has delivered landmark projects that shaped Oman's infrastructure across civil works, water and wastewater systems, buildings, and specialized fabrication services. Today, alongside its engineering excellence, the company continues to invest in building the nation's human capital – empowering young Omanis to transform ambition into achievement.



EYECARE



Speakers covered diverse ophthalmology sub-specialties at the conference.

OPHTHALMOLOGY
CONFERENCE
SHOWCASES ADVANCES

IBRA: The National Ophthalmology Conference 2025 was held in the Wilayat of Ibra under the theme ‘Updates and Challenges’, organised by the Ministry of Health through Ibra Hospital’s Ophthalmology Department in collaboration with the Ministry’s Ophthalmology Programme.

The conference aims to raise public awareness and provide a platform to discuss the latest developments, challenges, and research breakthroughs in ophthalmology and eye surgery.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Mahmoud bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North. Around 200 specialised medical, nursing and allied health professionals from government health institutions attended the event.

Expert consultants and specialists from the Ministry of Health, the Medical City Hospital for Military and Security Services, and the University Medical City delivered a series of lectures spanning six scientific sessions. Twelve speakers covered diverse ophthalmology sub-specialties, including advances in optometry, corneal diseases, paediatric ophthalmology, cosmetic eye procedures, glaucoma diagnosis and treatment, and emerging challenges in retinal care.

The conference highlighted innovative approaches, knowledge-sharing and best practices, reinforcing Oman’s commitment to advancing eye care and supporting healthcare professionals with the latest expertise in the field. — ONA

OMANI
CULTURAL
DAYS KICK
OFF IN
JORDAN

AMMAN: The Omani Cultural Days kicked off on Sunday in Amman, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The event is organised by the Omani Studies Unit at Al Al Bayt University, Jordan, in cooperation with the Ifta Office at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Sultanate of Oman.

The programme focuses on the Omani role in architecture and its jurisprudence. It is carried out in a number of Jordanian universities, with the participation of academics and researchers from Oman and



The programme focuses on the Omani role in architecture and its jurisprudence

Jordan.

An exhibition titled ‘Oman: The Identity and the Civilisation’ will be held on the sidelines of the ‘Cultural

Days’ programme.

The exhibition comprises four galleries focusing on ‘Rights in Omani society’, ‘Omani values in urban jurisprudence’, ‘Ethics advocated by Omani merchants who spread Islam’ and ‘Talents and innovations of Omanis in the field of human sciences’.

The exhibition seeks to open up vistas for showcasing Oman’s timeless civilisation and preserving its legacies that stem from the Islamic faith.

— ONA

SQU marks White Cane
Day with ‘Obour’ expo

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

IBDA 'A Al Basira group at the College of Arts and Social Sciences, in cooperation with the Student Affairs Department for Students with Disabilities at Sultan Qaboos University, organised a two-day exhibition titled ‘Obour’ at Al Andalus Garden recently, coinciding with the International White Cane Day, under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Alawi.

This year’s exhibition carried a humanistic message highlighting the role of the white cane in enabling the visually impaired to move with confidence and independence while continuing their journey of growth and progress.

The exhibition’s theme, ‘We cross the darkness to see the light’, reflected the essence of overcoming challenges



This year’s exhibition carried a humanistic message highlighting the role of the white cane in enabling the visually impaired.

and transforming them into steps towards creativity and empowerment.

The exhibition featured five main pavilions, each offering unique educational and interactive experiences. These included the Basira Village, which showcased the group’s achievements; the Student Affairs booth, highlighting services for students with disabilities; and the Technology

Village, which displayed innovative applications used in the daily lives of the visually impaired.

The programme also included a Sports Village and an Entertainment Village that hosted a talent stage and “Basira Market”, adding vibrancy and inspiration to the event.

Ali bin Hamood al Amri, a student at the College of Education majoring in Arabic

Language and one of the visually impaired, explained that the unit offers various services for students with visual, hearing and mobility impairments. He noted that the unit serves as a support centre for current students as well as former ones.

He added that the unit provides advanced devices used by the visually impaired, such as “Braille Sense” devices and “Clover” magnifiers for students with low vision, in addition to converting PDF files into Word documents that can be studied through audio.

He explained that this global six-dot method was developed by Louis Braille for the blind, and that its usage at the university has declined with the availability of more advanced electronic devices that offer greater conveniences. The booth also featured practical demonstrations on how to write letters in Braille, with practical participation from several students.

300 youth empowered at
Skeet Shooting Championship



The competition offered an arena for youth to sharpen skills and experience camaraderie

MUSCAT: Oman Refreshment Company (REFCO) successfully concluded the Oman REFCO Skeet Shooting Competition recently at the Action Point arena, drawing nearly 300 participants from across the Sultanate of Oman.

Held under the auspices of Brigadier General Mohammed bin Nasser al Kindi, Director-General of Operations at the Royal Oman Police, the tournament was organised in collaboration with Action Point.

The championship underscored REFCO’s commitment to youth development, community engagement and Oman Vision 2040, providing a platform for young Omanis to compete, grow and strengthen teamwork skills.

“We are proud to

bring together Omani youth in a dynamic and competitive environment that celebrates sporting excellence and community spirit,” said Sulaiman al Salmi, Director of People, Culture and Corporate Services at REFCO.

“Through partnerships like this, we empower the next generation and contribute to the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.”

Open to participants aged 16 and above, the competition offered an arena for youth to challenge themselves, sharpen skills and experience camaraderie.

The top three winners in the general category were: Faisal al Jabri (First Place), Amer al Shebli (Second Place) and Ahmed al Toubi (Third Place). In the special-needs category, Abdullah al Ajmi (First Place), Ali

al Ghedani (Second Place) and Amer al Shamli (Third Place) were honoured.

The tournament forms part of REFCO’s broader portfolio of youth and community initiatives, including skills development programmes, social engagement and sporting events.

These efforts aim to encourage a culture of participation, confidence and inclusive growth, empowering young Omanis to actively contribute to the nation’s long-term development goals.

Through such initiatives, Oman REFCO continues to strengthen its role as a partner in national development, combining sporting excellence with community impact and reinforcing its commitment to nurturing the leaders of tomorrow.



TENDERS

Manah Power Company (MPC) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tenders below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fees OMR + VAT 5%
MPC/2025/13	Plant-on-call Maintenance Service for Manah Power Plant	26 October 2025	9 November 2025	OMR 500/- (including VAT)
MPC/2025/14	Supply, Installation, Calibration, and Certification of Remote Online Natural Gas Measuring System Chromatograph	26 October 2025	9 November 2025	OMR 25/- (including VAT)

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax addressed to the “Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee” and the envelope shall be marked with the tender name & number. No indication or reference about the bidder is permitted on the envelope.
- Bidders are required to submit the original hard copy of their bid to the Manah Power Company office located in Manah.
- Three separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these three envelopes must be marked with the tenderer name and number as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Bid Bond
 - Organization Certificate
 - Tawteen Certificate
- Each bid should be accompanied by bid bond, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers, addressed to the “Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee of MPC.
- Interested party must deposit the tender fee to the following account:

Bank Name: Bank Muscat

Account Name: Manah Power Company LLC

Account No: 0423011069510017
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person’s name and the company details.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.

Manah Power Company - Member of Nama Group -
Manah IZZ, Sultanate of Oman
E-Mail: Mithun.Rajappan@holding.nama.om
Phone Number: +968 93382832

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



South Korean soldiers patrol near the demilitarized zone, in Goseong. — Reuters

N KOREAN SOLDIER HELD BY SEOUL AFTER CROSSING BORDER

SEOUL: A North Korean soldier was taken into custody by the South after he voluntarily crossed the heavily fortified land border separating the two Koreas on Sunday, Seoul’s military said. The soldier was seeking “to defect to the South”, a defence ministry official said.

“Our military secured the custody of one North Korean soldier who crossed the military demarcation line (MDL) in the central front on Sunday,” South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. “The military identified the individual near the MDL, tracked and monitored him, and conducted a standard guidance operation to take him into custody,” it said.

The MDL runs through the middle of the Demilitarised Zone — the border area separating the two Koreas, which is one of the most heavily mined places on earth. “The soldier’s likely familiarity with the area may have helped him navigate the heavily mined terrain,” Hong Min, a senior analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification, said. “The latest crossing will not be received positively by Pyongyang, as he could provide the South with information on its troop movements and operations in the border area,” added the analyst. — AFP

BANGLADESH PROBES CAUSE OF MASSIVE, COSTLY AIRPORT FIRE



Firefighters inspect the damaged terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. — AFP

DHAKA: Bangladeshi traders assessed heavy losses after a devastating fire tore through the cargo complex of the country’s main international airport, as the government opened an investigation into possible arson. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) gave an initial assessment of “devastating” direct and indirect costs of as much as \$1 billion.

Firefighters had brought the blaze under control and flight operations resumed late on Saturday, airport executive director S M Ragib Samad said, after thick black smoke swept across the runway, forcing authorities to briefly suspend flights. But Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport’s cargo complex — which stores fabrics, garment accessories, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and other imports — was left in ruins. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) also said it was assessing the damage.

“We have witnessed a devastating scene inside. The entire import section has been reduced to ashes,” said Faisal Samad, director of the BGMEA. “The entire import section has been reduced to ashes. We fear the losses might well exceed \$1 billion.” He said around 200 to 250 factories export products by air every day. — AFP

PERSONNEL DETENTION

20 staff detained in Yemen, says UN



The UN’s office in Yemen said that 20 of its staff were still being detained, following a raid on a building in Sanaa the day before. The UN office had said Ansar Allah security forces had made an “unauthorised entry” into their compound, adding the staff there were “safe and accounted for”.

“Five national staff and fifteen international staff remain detained within the compound,” UN spokesman Jean Alam said. — AFP

JAPAN’S LDP, ISHIN AGREE TO FORM COALITION GOVERNMENT

TOKYO: Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party and the Japan Innovation Party have broadly agreed to form a coalition government, setting the stage for the country’s first female prime minister, Kyodo news agency reported on Sunday. Sanae Takaichi, leader of the conservative LDP, and Hirofumi Yoshimura, head of the smaller right-leaning group known as Ishin, are set to sign an agreement sealing their alliance on Monday, Kyodo said. Calls to the LDP and Ishin headquarters to seek

comment went unanswered outside business hours.

Ishin’s co-head, Fumitake Fujita, raised expectations for a deal on Friday, saying the two parties had made “big progress” in coalition talks. Ishin lawmakers will vote for Takaichi in an election to choose the prime minister in parliament on Tuesday, but the party does not plan to send ministers to Takaichi’s cabinet, at least initially, Kyodo said.

That would fall short of the full-

fledged alliance the LDP maintained with the Komeito party until the junior partner quit the coalition this month, raising concern over the stability of the forthcoming government. Ishin’s Fujita told reporters on Sunday evening that negotiations were in the final stages and his fellow lawmakers entrusted Yoshimura to make a final decision on the matter for the party. He said their decision will be announced on Monday, but declined to go into details. — Reuters

Israel attacks Gaza again, fragile truce under strain

THE Israeli military said it launched air strikes and artillery fire at targets in southern Gaza on Sunday, dimming hopes that a US-mediated ceasefire would lead to lasting peace as Israel traded blame with Palestinian group Hamas. Israel’s attacks on Sunday were the most serious test of an already fragile ceasefire, which took effect on October 11. Israel’s military said in a statement that the strikes targeted gunmen in the Rafah area who had opened fire on its soldiers. It said the attacks destroyed tunnels and military buildings. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would retaliate forcefully to Hamas attacks on its soldiers.

Hamas’ armed wing said in a statement that it remained committed to the ceasefire agreement in all of Gaza, adding that it was unaware of clashes in Rafah and that it has not been in contact with groups there since March. “We affirm our full commitment to implementing all agreements, foremost among them the ceasefire across all areas of the Gaza Strip,” the Al Qassam Brigades said. Palestinians in Gaza said they heard explosions in Rafah, tank fire in the southern town of Abassan near Khan Yunis, an air strike in the central town of Zawayda, and explosions in the centre of Deir Al Balah, which killed at least five people, according to medics at Al Aqsa Hospital.

Gaza’s health ministry said on Sunday that Israeli attacks had killed at least eight people in the last 24 hours. An Israeli military



Palestinians walk past a tent amid the rubble in a destroyed area, in Gaza City. — Reuters

Palestinians in Gaza said they heard explosions in Rafah, tank fire in the southern town of Abassan near Khan Yunis, an air strike in the central town of Zawayda, and explosions in the centre of Deir Al Balah, which killed at least five people.

official said earlier on Sunday that Hamas had carried out multiple attacks against Israeli forces inside Gaza, including a rocket-propelled grenade attack and a sniper attack against Israeli soldiers. “Both of the incidents happened in an Israeli-controlled area... This is a bold violation of the ceasefire,” the official said. Defence Minister Israel Katz said the “yellow line” to where Israeli forces had pulled back under the ceasefire agreement would be physically marked and that any violation of the ceasefire or attempt to cross the line would be met with fire.

Senior Hamas official Izzat Al

Risheq said on Sunday that the group remained committed to the ceasefire, which he accused Israel of repeatedly violating.

The government media office in Gaza said on Saturday that Israel had committed 47 violations after the ceasefire deal, leaving 38 dead and 143 wounded. “These violations have ranged from direct shooting at civilians, to deliberate shelling and targeting operations, as well as the arrest of several civilians,” the media office statement said.

The Israeli government and Hamas have been accusing each other of violations of the ceasefire for days, with Israel saying the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt will remain closed until further notice. Rafah has largely been shut since May 2024. The ceasefire deal also includes the ramping up of aid to Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of people were determined in August to be affected by famine, according to the IPC global hunger monitor.

The crossing has in previous ceasefires functioned as a key conduit for humanitarian aid to flow into the enclave. Israel and Hamas have been engaged in a dispute over the return of the bodies of deceased hostages.

Israel demanded that Hamas fulfil its obligations in turning over the remaining bodies of all 28 hostages. Hamas has returned all 20 live hostages and 12 of the deceased and has said it has no interest in keeping the bodies of remaining hostages. The group said the process needs effort and special equipment to recover corpses buried under rubble. — Reuters

PAKISTAN, AFGHANISTAN AGREE TO CEASEFIRE

DOHA: Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to an immediate ceasefire during talks in Doha, both sides said on Sunday, after a week of fierce border clashes, the worst violence between the South Asian neighbours since the Taliban seized power in Kabul in 2021. The ceasefire “has been finalised”, Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif posted on X on Sunday, saying both sides would meet again on October 25 in Istanbul to discuss “detailed matters”.

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement the parties agreed on a complete and meaningful ceasefire. Qatar’s foreign ministry, which mediated Saturday’s talks along with Türkiye, said the follow-up meetings were meant “to ensure the sustainability of the ceasefire and verify its implementation in a reliable and sustainable manner”. — Reuters

CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATION

Zimbabwe plans to extend president’s term



Zimbabwe’s ruling ZANU-PF party plans to amend the constitution to extend President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s term by two years to 2030. The proposal would prolong the president’s second five-year term. “The party and government are therefore directed to initiate the requisite legislative amendments to give full effect to this resolution to ensure continuity, stability and the sustained transformation of the nation,” Ziyambi Ziyambi, ZANU-PF secretary for legal affairs and Minister of Justice, said. — Reuters

COASTAL FLOODING

Tropical storm kills family in Philippines



Tropical Storm Fengshen headed out to sea after killing a family of five on the Philippines’ main island, Luzon, officials and state weather forecasters said on Sunday. With flooding and landslides, the family, including children, was crushed to death in their sleep when a giant palm tree fell on their house near Pitogo. “The entire family was asleep in a house made of light materials,” Governor Angelina Tan of Quezon province said. — AFP

CONVICTEDLEADER



France's ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy arrives at the courthouse, in Paris. — AFP file photo

FRANCE’S FORMER PRESIDENT SARKOZY GOES TO JAIL

PARIS: France’s ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy is to be jailed on Tuesday over a scheme to acquire Libyan funding for his 2007 presidential run, becoming the first former head of an EU country to serve time behind bars. Sarkozy, France’s right-wing leader from 2007 to 2012, was convicted in late September of criminal conspiracy over a plan for late Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi to fund his electoral campaign.

The former state leader, who has appealed the verdict and denounced an “injustice”, is to be incarcerated in the Parisian prison La Sante. “If they absolutely want me to sleep in prison, I will sleep in prison — but with my head held high”, he told the press after his September 25 verdict.

Sarkozy is to be the first French leader to be incarcerated since Philippe Petain, the Nazi collaborationist head of state of France’s Vichy regime, who was jailed after World War II. He is likely to be held in one of the cells of nine square metres in the prison’s solitary confinement wing, prison staff have said.

This would avoid Sarkozy having to interact with other prisoners or them taking pictures of him with one of the many mobile phones that are smuggled inside, they said, requesting anonymity because they are not allowed to talk to the press.

Presiding judge Nathalie Gavarino said during Sarkozy’s sentencing that the offences were of “exceptional gravity” and therefore ordered him to be incarcerated even if he filed an appeal.

But Sarkozy’s lawyers are expected to request his release as soon as he sets foot inside the jail and the appeals trial has two months to examine it.

In theory, the court can decide against letting the former president out of prison if, for example, it deems it the only way to prevent evidence tampering or witness intimidation.

If not, it could order his release under judicial supervision or home arrest with an ankle tag. Until the court makes a decision, Sarkozy is expected to spend a considerable amount of time alone.

Under solitary confinement, prisoners are allowed out of their cells for one walk a day, alone, in a yard of several square metres. In the so-called “Libyan case” that ended in a prison sentence, prosecutors argued that his aides, acting with his authority and in his name, struck a deal with Gaddafi in 2005 to illegally fund his victorious presidential election bid two years later. — AFP

GERMANY RECALLS AMBASSADOR TO GEORGIA OVER ANTI-EU ‘AGITATION’

BERLIN: Germany said on Sunday it has temporarily recalled its ambassador to Georgia, marking a step-up in the spat between the Caucasus country and the European Union. “Georgia’s leadership has for months been agitating against the EU, Germany and the German ambassador personally”, Germany’s foreign ministry said in a post on the X platform. “The foreign minister has therefore decided to recall ambassador Fischer for consultations to discuss further

steps”, it added. Germany’s ambassador Peter Fischer has come under fire from Georgian politicians including Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, who in September accused Fischer of interfering in Georgian affairs and publicly floated the possibility of expelling him. Fischer has been accused of interfering in Georgian politics after attending court hearings of opposition figures and has slammed the Georgian government and some media for

what he says are inappropriate references to Germany’s dark Nazi past. “Germany objects to use of terms and comparison related to Nazi Germany that are historically, politically and morally wrong because they demean the victims and raise false implications”, he said in a recent X post. The post followed Kobakhidze calling a statement from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe “Gobbelsian propaganda”. — AFP

‘No Kings’ protests draw large crowds in US cities

PROTESTERS

spanning all age groups took to the streets en masse for “No Kings” rallies across the United States, denouncing what they view as authoritarian tendencies and unbridled corruption of US President Donald Trump. Organisers expected millions of people to turn out by day’s end at more than 2,600 planned rallies in major cities, small towns and suburbs, challenging a Trump-led agenda that has reshaped the government and upended democratic norms with unprecedented speed since he took office in January.

By all accounts, the demonstrations were largely festive, often featuring inflatable characters and marchers dressed in costumes. The demographically mixed crowds included parents pushing youngsters in strollers alongside retirees and people with pets in tow. Little, if any, lawlessness was reported. “There is nothing more American than saying, ‘We don’t have kings’ and exercising our right to peacefully protest”, said Leah Greenberg, co-founder of Indivisible, a progressive organisation that led planning of Saturday’s events.

Demonstrators filled Times Square in New York City, where police said they made “zero protest-related arrests” even as more than 100,000 people rallied peacefully across all five boroughs. Events in Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Denver, Chicago and Seattle also drew crowds that each appeared to encompass thousands, if not tens of thousands, of people.

On the West Coast, more than a dozen rallies occurred around the Los Angeles area, including the primary site downtown. In Seattle, demonstrators filled a parade route that stretched for more than a mile from downtown through the Seattle Centre plaza around the city’s landmark Space Needle. More than 25,000 protested peacefully in San Diego, police said. The protests reflected growing unease among many Americans, mainly on the ideological left, with developments such as the criminal prosecution of Trump’s perceived political enemies, his militarised immigration



Demonstrators gather near the US Capitol building during a “No Kings” protest, in Washington. — Reuters

crackdown and the sending of National Guard troops into US cities — a move Trump has said was aimed at fighting crime and protecting immigration agents.

As his administration has tried to rapidly implement its policies, Trump has installed inexperienced loyalists throughout the ranks of his administration and sought to apply pressure on the news media, law firms and universities. Saturday’s rallies were boisterous but orderly, with police largely keeping a low profile. Demonstrators filled a street in Washington, DC, to march towards the US Capitol, chanting and carrying signs, US flags and balloons, as a carnival-like atmosphere prevailed. Aliston Elliot, wearing a Statue of Liberty headpiece and holding a “No Wannabe Dictators” sign, said: “We want to show our support for democracy and fighting for what is right. I’m against the overreach of power”.

In downtown Houston, US Marine Corps veteran Daniel Aboyte Gamez, 30, joined a crowd that officials said numbered about 5,000 at city hall. “I don’t understand what’s going on in this nation right now”, said Gamez, who served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. Kevin Brice, 70, a military veteran among thousands of protesters streaming into the riverfront of Portland, Oregon, wore

a black sweatshirt emblazoned with the slogan “No Kings since 1776” — referring to the year of the Declaration of Independence. “Everything that I thought that I stood for while I was serving in the military seems to be at risk”, Brice said. “So even though I’m a lifelong Republican, I don’t support the direction the party is going”.

Trump has said little about Saturday’s protests. But in an interview with Fox Business aired on Friday he said that “they’re referring to me as a king — I’m not a king”. While the Democratic Party has coped with internal divisions since Trump won re-election last year, party establishment figures such as Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and progressive firebrands like US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez both voiced support for the “No Kings” movement. Saturday’s protests were aimed at building on momentum gained from more than 2,000 “No Kings” protests that were staged on June 14, coinciding with Trump’s 79th birthday and a rare military parade in Washington.

House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican, on Friday echoed a common refrain among his party, labelling the “No Kings” protests “the hate America rally”. — Reuters

Zelensky urges allies against appeasing Russia after US trip

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday urged allies against appeasing Russia, in a statement after he returned from a trip to the United States where he failed to secure long-range Tomahawk missile supplies. Zelensky came to Washington after weeks of calls for Tomahawks, hoping to capitalise on US President Donald Trump’s growing frustration with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin after a summit in Alaska failed to produce a breakthrough.

But the Ukrainian leader left empty-handed as Trump eyes a fresh diplomatic breakthrough on the back of last week’s Gaza peace deal. “Ukraine will never grant terrorists any bounty for their crimes and we count on our partners to uphold this very position”, Zelensky wrote on social media on his return from Washington. He called “for decisive steps” from European and American allies, adding that it was



A resident removes broken glass damaged by a Russian drone strike, in the town of Shakhtarske in Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine. — Reuters

time for another meeting between the European-led “coalition of the willing”.

Trump has appeared far more upbeat about the prospects of a deal since a lengthy call Thursday with Putin, in which they agreed to meet soon in Budapest. After meeting with Zelensky at the White House, Trump said on social media the talks were “very interesting and cordial, but I told him, as I likewise strongly

suggested to President Putin, that it is time to stop the killing and make a DEAL!”.

Meanwhile, Moscow has stepped up attacks on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure in recent weeks, leaving thousands without heating and light as the cold winter draws nearer. “This week alone, Russia has used more than 3,270 attack drones, 1,370 guided aerial bombs and nearly 50 missiles of various types against Ukraine”, Zelensky said.

Most recently on Sunday, two people were killed and more than a dozen wounded across Ukraine’s east, Kyiv said. In return, Ukraine intensified its strikes on Russian western border regions, as well as its oil and gas facilities.

On Sunday, a drone strike forced a Gazprom gas plant in Russia’s Orenburg region to stop refining gas from neighbouring Kazakhstan’s large oil and gas field, Kazakh authorities said. Western oil and gas

companies such as Shell, Eni and Chevron own a majority stake in the Karachaganak field, gas from which is mostly refined at the Russian plant. The Russian army on Sunday claimed to have captured two villages in Ukraine’s Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions, as it slowly grinds through in costly metre-for-metre battles. Orenburg regional governor Yevgeny Solntsev had said earlier on Sunday that the plant had been partially damaged and that the drone strike had caused a fire to break out at a workshop at the plant. The fire was later put out, Russian media outlet Kommersant reported, citing the operator. Ukraine, which confirmed it hit a gas processing plant in the Orenburg region and an oil refinery in the Samara region, has stepped up its attacks on Russian refineries and other energy facilities since August to try to disrupt petrol supplies and deprive Moscow of funding. — Agencies

OPINION

Women drive academic excellence, research innovation



DR SANDHYA
RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

MUCH has been written about Omani women entrepreneurs, leaders and institutional trendsetters. Another aspect to celebrate this Omani women's day is the leading role that they are playing in academic research and publication. The rise in women participating and achieving leadership positions in Humanities and Education has been well documented. But Omani women are now increasingly visible in scientific research and technology development, across fields like medicine, renewable energy, environmental science and biotechnology. Unesco data shows that female shares in research roles in Oman are significant compared with some global averages. Their findings show almost a 125 per cent increase in publishing by women in Oman from 2010 to 2020. A 2022 study conducted on female-led research in the MENA region showed that women accounted for 47 per cent of all published research in Oman between 2016-2020. This includes research publishing in all academic areas. There are a number of ways in which research output can be classified in terms of gender. These could be inclusive studies

on journal metrics based on area of focus, research interest and authorship. The impact of research is also measured in terms of the quality of the journals, their citations over a period of time, and their potential for future collaboration. There is no dearth of examples which showcase the way in which women are translating opportunity into high-impact research. Sultan Qaboos University routinely honours female students and faculty members who are engaged in research and making a global impact. Other colleges and universities in Oman follow suit. For example, in medicine, female Omani researchers have been researching stem-cell and fertility-preservation, moving from laboratory experiments to implementation on the ground. This has aided in women-led labs and an increase in research output in health sciences. Academic publications by women in Oman have also showcased a variety of fields including education, law, international relations, as well as linguistics and literature. An important consideration is that such research is based on community needs and changing concerns. For example, there is now more focus on research which aims to study patterns of social media engagement

Academic publications by women in Oman have also showcased a variety of fields including education, law, international relations, as well as linguistics and literature

and the influence of Artificial Intelligence in different disciplines. Preliminary data on these publications show increased output by women researchers in Oman. This rise in female participation in research is driven by expanded higher-education access, targeted scholarships and a growing policy emphasis on research and innovation. The combination of strong female participation in higher education, specific national programmes in keeping with Oman Vision 2040, and strong individual performance shows how Omani women are using every possible opportunity to engage with academic research and publication which links with community interests and with Oman's future. In spite of these encouraging trends, there is some progress to be made. For example, there is a need to document data on female-led research across institutions in Oman, and its impact. Sustained bibliometric analyses based on quantitative data remain to be provided. Such data will not only help in the accreditation processes which most institutions of higher education are involved with, but also help to improve global rankings.

EU LAWMAKERS PUSH FOR SOCIAL MEDIA BAN FOR UNDER-16S

European lawmakers called for stricter rules to protect minors online, including a bloc-wide minimum age of 16 to access social media and AI companions without parental consent. In a report adopted by the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, lawmakers recommended that no child under 13 be allowed to access social media, with or without parental permission. They also called for fines and bans on platforms that flout the bloc's rules on protecting minors under the Digital Services Act (DSA), as concerns soar over the impact of online technologies on children's mental health and safety. To curb access to harmful content, lawmakers backed banning engagement-based algorithms for minors, disabling addictive design features and prohibiting gambling-like mechanisms such as loot boxes in games accessible to children. The report also calls for: Stricter age verification systems to ensure platforms comply with the new age restrictions. Greater accountability for tech companies in moderating harmful content and protecting minors' data privacy. Mandatory digital literacy programs in schools to help children and parents understand online safety. Transparent algorithms to reduce addictive design features and prevent manipulative content feeds. Enhanced parental control tools and mental health support for young users affected by online pressure or abuse. The motion is not yet law but signals a significant policy shift within the EU toward greater digital child protection. It also aligns with the bloc's broader DSA framework, which places stricter obligations on social media companies operating in Europe. The report said platforms should also be barred from monetising or incentivising so-called 'kidfluencing' — minors acting as influencers, the report said. Adopted in committee by a wide majority, the proposal will be put to a vote by the full parliament during its plenary session between November 24 and 27. The lawmaker push adds to growing momentum for EU-wide action to ban social media use for children — going beyond the bloc's already stringent rules regulating the digital space. — AFP

Women in the age of Artificial Intelligence

THE Remarkable advances in artificial intelligence and its many applications represent a technological leap with far-reaching implications— not only at national and developmental levels but also for individuals and their participation in this new world. In an increasingly automated age, there is a pressing need to shape the ethics of artificial intelligence in ways that meet social requirements and uphold equality among all people. Artificial intelligence helps nations overcome economic challenges by offering opportunities for development, innovation and growth. It strengthens talent-based economies, creates new jobs and raises productivity. Making good use of these opportunities ensures a better future for coming generations, particularly in education and industry. Yet, the world today examines how AI is influencing gender dynamics and the changing roles of women in the labour market. This raises essential questions: how does artificial intelligence affect women? To what extent are they benefiting from and contributing to this transformation? And do existing policies protect their participation and integrate gender equity into AI ethics? The growing attention of global institutions working on gender equality highlights the challenge of enabling women to keep pace with rapid technological change and ensuring their meaningful inclusion. Artificial intelligence is reshaping industries, employment and career paths. Although opportunities are theoretically available to all, the report Gender Equality in the Intelligent Era, published by the World Economic Forum with



The national strategy for Omani women should focus on meeting the modern needs that shape both their future and the nation's



AISHA
AL DARMAKI

The writer is a researcher specialising in semiotics and a member of the State Council

In Oman, rapid progress in digital readiness and efforts to strengthen the AI ecosystem have encouraged women's participation in technology

LinkedIn, notes that women are more likely to lose jobs and less likely to gain new positions arising from AI-driven change. This may stem from the nature of certain jobs commonly held by women, especially in small enterprises. Yet, the same report also shows that women are increasingly active in technology, proving that digital transformation can also serve as a means of empowerment and creativity. The report further indicates that female talent in AI has expanded considerably between 2018 and 2025, narrowing the gender gap in 74 out of 75 talent-based economies. This growth reflects the increasing number of women entering technical education and training, supported by national strategies that promote innovation and youth development, especially in generative AI. Such progress has enhanced women's global presence in technology, improved career growth and reduced gender bias. Ethical frameworks in AI have encouraged creativity and fair competition, paving the way for equitable development and wider participation in the workforce. Women's contribution to AI today

is evident in their involvement in designing programmes, developing applications and creating digital tools. Education, training and public awareness have strengthened women's presence in the technology sector and improved economic flexibility, social welfare and self-development—factors that reinforce their active role in society. Generative AI has also helped overcome productivity challenges and opened new creative employment opportunities for women and girls. These emerging roles have expanded spaces for innovation and entrepreneurship, leading to new products and business models. Female entrepreneurs have used AI tools to improve product design, support decision-making and achieve sustainable business growth. In Oman, rapid progress in digital readiness and efforts to strengthen the AI ecosystem have encouraged women's participation in technology. Omani women have launched and led numerous technological projects and research initiatives in areas such as aircraft maintenance, the Internet of Things, data governance, advanced manufacturing and cultural industries. Many are now leading tech start-ups that develop innovative solutions and contribute to national development. The National Plan for Omani Women reflects the importance of empowerment in technical and creative fields, as such progress influences all aspects of life — from education itself to opening new opportunities in the creative economy and promoting innovation as a source of sustainable growth. Translated by Badr al Dhafari and the original version of this article was published in the print edition of Oman Arabic newspaper on October 19.

Where she walks, the nation blooms



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

The heart of the Arabian Peninsula, where the sea kisses the desert and the mountains whisper ancient tales, rises a force as calm as tides and shining as the morning sun... the Omani woman.

Every year, on October 17, Oman pauses for a moment of national reflection. Omani Women's Day is not merely a celebration — it is a mirror held up to the soul of the nation. It is not a day to bestow honour, but to recognise and reflect the honour that has always existed.

Look closely, and you will find her everywhere. She is the architect drafting Oman's horizons, the minister shaping its future, the wife nurturing new life. She is the girl studying by lamplight in a quiet village, the entrepreneur building an empire from handmade dreams. She is the poet, the pilot, the scientist — she is, in truth, the soul of Oman.

The Omani woman has always been here. Her legacy is older than any map. She is not a new chapter in our national story — she is the ink that writes it. Long before ships carried frankincense across oceans, she carried wisdom across generations. Before laws protected her rights, she embodied them through action, resilience, and grace.

When the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos

declared October 17 as a national day for women in 2009, it was not to hand her a spotlight, but to shine one where it had always belonged. Under the forward-looking vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, that light grows brighter.

She walks through barriers, not around them. She enters rooms never built for her — not to ask for space, but to make it. She does not shrink herself to fit traditions; she expands traditions to embrace her dreams. She carries heritage in one hand and the future in the other — balancing both with the elegance only an Omani woman can. She wears the past like a shawl — not as a weight, but as a crown.

Omani women are not merely contributing to progress — they are boosting it. They lead universities in academic excellence. They serve in parliament and head businesses. They innovate in laboratories, heal in hospitals and nurture in homes. They lead in silence and in storms alike. What makes her extraordinary is not that she does it all — it is that she does it with grace, strength and unshakable faith.

To every Omani woman, you are always seen. You are the quiet courage in our past and the loud hope in our future. Wherever you walk, the nation blooms. You are the

The Omani Women's Day is not about a single story — it is a thousand voices, rising in harmony. It is a celebration of what she has accomplished, and an invitation to all that she is yet to achieve

daughters of legacy and the architects of tomorrow. You follow in the footsteps of remarkable women who tilled the land, ruled the seas, and preserved our traditions even as you carve your own path, future-ready and profoundly Omani.

The Omani Women's Day is not about a single story — it is a thousand voices, rising in harmony. It is a celebration of what she has accomplished, and an invitation to all that she is yet to achieve. This day is for the young girl who dreams with open eyes, for the woman who quietly builds the future, and for the countless others who have broken barriers in silence.

Today, we do more than mark a date. We answer a call to action and express gratitude. And we celebrate a spirit that has never dimmed. As the country strides forward under Oman Vision 2040, the empowerment of women remains at the core of national development. The focus now is not only on participation, but on leadership, innovation and meaningful impact.

With the support, and freedom to thrive, Omani women are shaping a future defined by resilience, equality and prosperity. October 17 not simply a date, but a drumbeat — echoing through mountains, across shores, and into every heart that beats for Oman.

BOLIVIANS VOTE FOR ECONOMIC SALVATION

SANDRA FERRER

Bolivians headed to the polls on Sunday to choose between two pro-business candidates in presidential elections, ending two decades of socialist rule that have left the beleaguered South American nation deep in economic crisis.

With dollars and fuel in short supply and annual inflation at more than 20 per cent, weary voters snubbed the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party founded by former president Evo Morales in a first electoral round in August.

Polling stations began opening at 8:00 am local time (1200 GMT), according to journalists on the ground. They will close at 4:00 pm. Nearly eight million voters are eligible to cast ballots and voting is mandatory. The election pits economist and senator Rodrigo Paz, 58, against former interim president Jorge Quiroga, 65, an engineer by training. Either way, the election will close out an economic experiment marked by initial prosperity funded by Morales's nationalisation of gas reserves. The boom was followed by bust, notably critical shortages of fuel and foreign currency under outgoing leader Luis Arce.

Successive governments under-invested in the country's hydrocarbons sector, once the backbone of the economy.

Later, production plummeted and Bolivia almost depleted its dollar reserves to sustain a universal subsidy for fuel that it cannot afford to import. The country of 11.3 million people is facing its worst economic crisis in four decades.

Long queues have become a common sight at gas stations. "The situation is terrible, we don't know what's going to happen. Everything is very expensive... I hope it doesn't go up more," Felicidad Flores, a 67-year-old street vendor of incense, said in La Paz. "We are worse off than before, the lines are longer," driver Javier Quispe, 40, said at the wheel of his stationary truck in a kilometre-long fuel queue in La Paz. "There isn't much hope that things will change," he shrugged.

Analyst Daniela Osorio of the German Institute for Global and Area Studies said that Bolivians' patience was "running out."

Once the election is over, she warned, "if the winner does not take measures to help the most vulnerable, this could lead to a social uprising."

Future economic decisions "will have a high social cost," she added. Whoever emerges victorious on Sunday faces an uphill task, inheriting an economy in recession, according to the World Bank. To fix the economy, Quiroga has proposed opening to international investment and foreign loans, while Paz supports a "capitalism for all" approach with decentralisation, lower taxes and fiscal discipline. Both say they want to maintain social programmes while stabilising the economy, but economists have said the two things are not possible at the same time. Quiroga and Paz have both proposed cutting the universal fuel subsidy, keeping it only for public transportation.

Neither man would have a party majority in Congress, meaning they would need to make concessions to have laws passed, said Bolivian sociologist Maria Teresa Zegada. — AFP

Affordability a central theme of campaigns

DEMOCRATIC

Candidates Zohran Mamdani of New York City and Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey are separated by a river, but the gulf between them would appear to be larger than that. Mamdani, favoured to become New York's mayor, is a self-described democratic socialist. Sherrill, who aspires to be her state's next governor, is a former Navy helicopter pilot and centrist trying to woo moderates back to her party.

Sherrill, along with another centrist candidate, Abigail Spanberger, who is running for Virginia governor, are pitching themselves as the Democrats' best hope in the November elections for flipping the page after President Donald Trump's victory. While they are advocating pragmatism and consensus-driven solutions, Mamdani is pushing for a set of left-wing policies that would take the party in a new direction. Despite their differences, all three have zeroed in on what Democrats hope will be a winning strategy that carries over to the 2026 midterm elections: the high cost of living for everyday Americans. Each campaign is channelling the same voter frustration - that everything from energy to healthcare to groceries feels increasingly unaffordable.

"That is the pain point right now with voters," said Mark Riddle, president of Future Majority, a Democratic firm that conducts voter research. "And they're blaming Trump."

Since Democrats lost both the White House and Congress last year, the party has been searching for a policy framework and fresh voices. Success in the key November 4 mayoral and gubernatorial elections could help translate into victories next year, when control of both chambers of Congress will be up for grabs, strategists say.

One reason Trump won last year was that same economic anxiety. But Democrats argue that Trump slapping high tariffs on imports and his "Big Beautiful" tax bill have only made things worse.

While inflation overall has cooled during Trump's presidency, staples such as food, housing and power remain significantly more expensive



New Jersey Democratic candidate for Governor Mikie Sherrill speaks during a campaign event at Kean University in Union, New Jersey.



JAMES
OLIPHANT

The writer is National Correspondent for Reuters

Since Democrats lost both the White House and Congress last year, the party has been searching for a policy framework and fresh voices

than just a few years ago. Grocery prices are up 2.7 per cent over a year ago, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, while home electricity costs have jumped 6.2 per cent and home gas prices have shot up 13.8 per cent over a year ago.

After record-breaking price increases in 2021 and 2022, home values have continued to rise, though at a slower pace - now closer to 3 per cent annually. But rent and shelter costs, which factor heavily into the Consumer Price Index, haven't meaningfully cooled. The cost of medical services excluding prescription drugs has increased 4.2 per cent in the last year.

About half of Americans polled in a June Reuters/Ipsos poll said they were "very concerned" about the cost of living. The issue is something of a thorn in Trump's side: In another Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted this month, just 27 per cent of respondents said they approved of his performance on the cost of living. Meanwhile, the price of imported goods has shot up 4 per cent during Trump's time in office, with the cost of domestic goods increasing 2 per cent, according to a Reuters' analysis this month. But while polls show voters are increasingly unhappy with Trump's handling of the economy, they continue to trust Republicans more than Democrats to fix it. A Reuters/Ipsos poll in September found Americans were more likely to trust the Republican Party over the Democratic Party (34 per cent to 24 per cent) on managing economic policy. Trump has repeatedly boasted about his economic record,

arguing he's lowered prices and inflation and that his tariffs regime is a success.

"We've had the best economy we've ever had," he said at a Cabinet meeting this month.

The Democratic Party has spent much of 2025 trying to figure out what went wrong last year. Tim Walz, Kamala Harris' vice-presidential nominee, has toured states speaking to party officials about his ticket's failure to reassure voters about their everyday concerns. Mamdani, Sherrill and Spanberger, the three most high-profile candidates running this year, have responded by promoting affordability as a central campaign theme.

Spanberger's "Affordable Virginia" plan focuses on lowering healthcare, housing and energy costs. Part of the plan would seek to force tech data centres to pay "their fair share" of electricity costs.

Sherrill's "Affordability Agenda" targets similar cost-of-living concerns.

She has pledged to declare a statewide energy emergency and freeze rates. "Housing, healthcare and utility costs - I'll tackle them immediately," Sherrill said during a debate with Republican opponent Jack Ciattarelli this month.

Ciattarelli is also promoting his "affordability agenda" - one that cuts taxes and regulations and argues that Sherrill's plans are anti-growth.

Recent polls show that Sherrill's lead over Ciattarelli is hovering around 6 percentage points. Spanberger's lead over her opponent, Lieutenant Governor Winsome Earle-Sears, has fluctuated between 3 and 10 points, depending on the poll.

Mamdani's agenda includes a rent freeze, free bus service, universal childcare and city-run grocery stores.

He has drawn fire from Republicans, who cast him as a radical, and from some Democrats, including his rival for mayor, Andrew Cuomo, who argues that Mamdani's policies are unworkable and would lead to large tax increases. A Quinnipiac University poll released last week showed Mamdani with a 13-point lead over Cuomo.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Sur and Saham players in action.

SAMAYIL EARN 1ST VICTORY; SAHAM STAGE DRAMATIC COMEBACK IN JL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Samayil Club earned its first victory in the Jindal Football League after defeating Al Rustaq 2-1 in a match held at the main stadium of Nizwa Sports Complex as part of the fourth round of the competition.

Both teams entered the match seeking their first win after a slow start to the season. From the opening minutes, Samayil showed clear intent to score early through quick movements on the wings and central penetrations that unsettled Al Rustaq's defence. In the 12th minute, the referee awarded a penalty after one of Samayil's forwards was fouled inside the box. Dawood bin Suleiman al Jabri stepped up and converted it perfectly to the left of goalkeeper Bilal al Balushi, giving his team the lead.

Al Rustaq tried to respond through several attacks led by Mohammed al Ajmi and Abdullah al Ghassani, but Samayil's solid defence preserved their advantage until halftime. At the start of the second half, Samayil maintained its dominance and doubled the score in the 48th minute when Osama al Zaabi followed up a free-kick cross and fired powerfully into the centre of the net. After the second goal, Samayil dropped slightly deeper to protect its lead, while Al Rustaq intensified its attacks in search of a way back. Goalkeeper Salem al Jabri produced several fine saves, but in the 82nd minute, Mohammed al Adawi capitalised on a corner kick to head the ball home, reducing the deficit. Despite the late pressure, Samayil held firm until the final whistle to secure a valuable win that lifted them to five points in eighth place, while Al Rustaq remained at the bottom with no points.

SAHAM STAGE STUNNING COMEBACK TO BEAT SUR

In the other match, Saham pulled off a thrilling comeback to defeat Sur 3-2 at the Sohar Sports Complex in the final game of Round 4.

Sur started strong, scoring twice through Sameh al Hasani and Ayman al Mukhaini, showing good control and organisation in the first half. But the second half saw a remarkable turnaround as Saham's coach made effective attacking substitutions. Mohsin Jowhar reduced the deficit from the penalty spot, then equalised with a powerful long-range strike.

In the closing minutes, Zuhair al Hasani capitalised on defensive confusion to net the third goal, sealing Saham's first victory of the season amid huge celebrations from their supporters. With this result, Saham climbed to 11th place with 4 points, while Sur dropped to 13th place with just 1 point, continuing their winless run in the league.



Oman crowned Arab Beach Volleyball Champions

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

OMAN beach volleyball team, comprising Hood al Jalboobi and Ahmed al Hosni, emerged champions of the 30th edition of Arab Beach Volleyball Championship as they captured the title following a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Tunisia in the final clash on Saturday night at the sands court of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The first half ended for Oman team by 18-16 before Tunisia registered a comeback by winning the set by 35-37 after tight half. In the deciding half, Oman players managed to confirm the victory by recording 21-18 to clinch the title.

In the women's category, Morocco emerged victorious in the 20th edition of Arab Women's Beach Volleyball Championship after they defeated Lebanon in straight sets (2-0) to claim the gold medal.

Oman's second team, represented by duo Nooh al Jalboobi and Yousuf al Abri, finished in fourth place after they suffered to a 2-0 loss against Algeria in the bronze medal match. The Algerian team thus secured the men's bronze medal, while Algeria's women's team also claimed third place after defeating Saudi Arabia (2-0) in the third and fourth playoff.

Speaking after the victory, Hood al Jalboobi expressed his pride and gratitude for the team's achievement. "This achievement did not come in an easy way but it was managed through hard work, teamwork and determination. This victory is a triumph and dedicated for our fans and for everyone who supported us throughout our preparation and during the championship." He added

Al Jalboobi thanked Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) and the coaching staff for their constant guidance and motivation, emphasising that this win will serve as a strong motivation to continue improving and representing Oman with honour in future regional and



In men's category Oman clinched the first place with gold medal, Tunisia came second with silver, while Algeria came third with bronze. In the women's category Morocco took first place with gold medal, while Lebanon came second with silver, and Algeria came third with bronze.

international tournaments especially at the next assignment which began on Sunday at West Asian Beach Volleyball tour.

The championship, organised by the Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) in coordination with Arab Volleyball Federation during October 15 to 18, concluded under auspices of Mohammed bin Issa al Fairouz, Chairman of International Tent Pegging Federation, in presence of Eng Ibrahim al Maqbali, chairman of Oman Volleyball Association (OVA). At the conclusion of the final match, the guest of honour, alongside Chairman of OVA and Vice-President of the Arab Volleyball Federation, and members of the tournament's committee, awarded the gold, silver, and bronze medals to the top three teams in both categories.

The championship featured 18 teams from seven Arab countries including: Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Tunisia,

Algeria, Morocco and Sudan. Oman, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Each participated took part in the event with two men's and two women's teams, while Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Sudan fielded one men's team each.

WAVA BEACH VOLLEYBALL TOUR
After a successful hosting of the Arab Beach Volleyball Championship, OVA began actions of West Asian Volleyball tour in Muscat on Sunday in presence of 11 teams for the Men's while 10 teams for the women category. Oman teams in the Men's competitions will be represented by team A comprised from the champions Hood al Jalboobi and Ahmed al Hosni while team B featured from Dawood and Al Buraiki beside team C comprised from Nooh and Yousef and team D featured from Khalfan and Saleh. At women's category, Maryam and Liqaa will represent Oman team A while Fatma and Amna will comprise team B and Al Shaima and Furat in team C.

GOATS, Juventus claim women's football titles

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

GOATS team claimed the Women's General Category Championship in the 2025 Women's Football League, while Juventus Academy secured the Junior Category title, in the league organised by the Oman Football Association (OFA), represented by the Women's Football Committee, in cooperation with Oman Refco Company.

In the individual awards, Rameen from Juventus Academy won the Top Scorer Award, while her team-mate Rateel al Busaidy received the Best Goalkeeper Award, and Noor al Siyabi from Hail Al Awamer School was named the Best Player of the League.

The closing ceremony was attended by Dr Badriya bint Ibrahim al Shehhiyah, Saada bint Salim al Ismailiyah, Women's Sports Expert at the Office of the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Hajar al Mazaini, Member of the OFA Board, and Lujaina al Hinai, representative of Oman Refco.

The event featured the honouring of winning teams



GOATS team celebrate with the Women's Football League trophy.

and players in a festive atmosphere that reflected the league's success in supporting women's football and promoting girls' participation in sports.

A total of nine teams from academies, private and public schools, and community clubs took part in the league, divided into two age categories: Under 13-16 years and General Category. The matches were played at Goal One pitches in Al Athaiba. The league was held in celebration of Omani Women's Day, reinforcing the efforts to strengthen women's participation in sports and

develop women's football across the Sultanate of Oman.

PLAN TO DEVELOP WOMEN'S FOOTBALL
Hajar al Mazini, OFA Board Member and Chair of the Women's Committee, stated that the first edition of the league witnessed a high level of performance and enthusiasm, exceeding expectations. She praised the players' discipline and competitive spirit, noting that the matches revealed diverse young talents capable of representing Oman in the future.

Al Mazini added that the league aimed not only to foster competition but also to raise awareness and provide entertainment, spreading football culture among girls through cooperation with schools, academies, parents, and community clubs.

She explained that the OFA plans to expand participation in future editions to include all governorates, while also strengthening cooperation with educational and sports institutions to ensure a competitive environment.

Al Mazini concluded by emphasising that the OFA has developed a comprehensive strategy for women's football, including training and refereeing courses to qualify Omani female cadres, and launching new tournaments at school, academy, university, and club levels.

She affirmed that the ultimate goal is to build a sustainable football ecosystem that enhances women's presence in the sport and enables girls to play in a safe and motivating environment that develops their skills and showcases their talent in local and international arenas.

SHORT TAKES



Competitors will contest up to 12 races in each class, with trophies awarded for overall, junior and girls categories, as well as team racing honours.

YOUNG SAILORS SHINE AT MUSANNAH RACE

RIYADH ALBALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

The 14th edition of Musannah Race Week kicked off with outstanding performances, perfect sailing conditions and strong international participation, setting the stage for a thrilling week of competition. Over 120 young sailors from seven countries Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, India, China and Singapore took part in the opening races across Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7 and Para Inclusive classes.

In the Optimist fleet, UAE Jean Luc Soaren leads overall, followed by Singapore Anya Zahedi the top ranked girl and Indias Shreya Krishna Lakshminarayanan in third, China’s Yuxuan Li and Yi Jia Ni complete the top five, while Singapore’s Zeph Wan and Ethan Chia remain close contenders among the boys, with only four races completed, the standings remain tight, promising intense battles ahead.

The ILCA 4 category saw UAE’s Abdulla al Zoubaidi dominate early, with Omani sailors Tamim al Balushi and Aws al Busaidy close behind, Oman’s strength was also evident in the ILCA 6, where Al Moatsem al Farsi took the early lead with three wins and a second place finish, followed by UAE’s CA Mohammad al Hammadi, while Kuwait’s Amina Shah is the highest ranked female in third.

Oman’s sailors swept the ILCA 7 podium on day one, led by Hussain al Jabri with four consecutive wins, Team-mates Al Salim al Hamdani and Ali al Saadi follow closely after consistent top three finishes. In Para Inclusive racing, Zahir al Atabi and Abdulrahman al Hamdani claimed all three wins in the Hansa 303 class, ahead of Malik al Qartoubi and Ahmed Zaal Nabout in second and Hassan al Lawati with Adil al Siyabi in third.

Competitors will contest up to 12 races in each class, with trophies awarded for overall, junior and girls categories, as well as team racing honours.

Musannah Race Week also continues its leadership in sustainability, building on its Gold Level Clean Regatta certification, Partnering with Barcelo Mussanah Resort, this year’s edition emphasises eco friendly practices such as biodegradable materials, local sourcing and a food waste recycling system that produces organic fertiliser. The week includes environmental workshops and a beach cleanup, reinforcing Oman Sail’s mission to protect marine life and promote responsible sportsmanship.



In the quarterfinals, Al Mousawi maintained his impressive form and defeated Iraq’s Hassan Mohammed 7–6 in a dramatic encounter to reach the semifinals among the tournament’s elite.

Al Mousawi wins bronze at Arab Billiards championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

OMAN’S national junior billiards player, Hassan al Mousawi, achieved an impressive milestone by winning the bronze medal in the 10-ball billiards event at the Arab Combined Billiards and Snooker Championship, held in Alexandria, Egypt, from October 15 to 22, 2025, with the participation of top Arab national teams.

This accomplishment marks an important step in the young player’s promising career and reflects the remarkable development of billiards in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the continuous efforts of the Oman Billiards and Snooker Committee to nurture a new generation of talented players capable of representing the nation at regional and international levels.

JOURNEY TO THE PODIUM

Al Mousawi began his campaign with a strong 6–3 victory over Bahrain’s Faisal al Maliki, showing great focus and precision.

Despite losing his next match 0–6 to the UAE’s Mohammed Nasser, he bounced back with determination, edging out his Syrian opponent 6–5 in a thrilling, closely contested game.

In the quarterfinals, Al Mousawi maintained his impressive form and defeated Iraq’s Hassan Mohammed 7–6 in a dramatic encounter to reach the semifinals among the tournament’s elite. There, he faced Egypt’s Mohammed Ahmed representing the host nation, and despite a 2–8 defeat, his performance earned admiration from both fans and officials for his courage and composure.

PLAYER’S REMARKS

Following his bronze medal win, Hassan al Mousawi expressed his joy, saying this achievement I consider the result of hard work and long preparation over the past period, both in training and in pre-tournament camps.

The competition was very tough, especially against players from Egypt, the UAE, and Iraq who have vast experience, but I believed in my ability to compete and represent Oman in the best way possible. I thank the technical and administrative

staff for their continuous support, as well as my teammates who were always by my side. I dedicate this medal to everyone who has supported me since the beginning, and I promise that this will be the first step toward many future podium finishes.

The head of the Omani delegation, Captain Khalid al Shabibi, praised the young player’s outstanding performance, stressing that this achievement reflects the committee’s ongoing efforts to train and prepare young athletes for continental and global competitions.

He added that the Oman Billiards and Snooker Committee is following a clear vision aimed at empowering Omani talents, highlighting the valuable support of Ras Al Hamra Company, which played a crucial role in creating the right conditions for participation and success.

Hassan al Mousawi’s bronze medal represents another proud addition to Oman’s achievements in Arab championships, a message that Omani talent can compete at the highest levels when given proper support and opportunities. Everyone hopes that this medal will be the beginning of more success in future events.

Al Ittihad win, Sohar and Qurayat extend leads in HM hockey cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

Al Ittihad Club achieved a resounding 5–0 victory over Fanja in a match played at the Sultan Qaboos Youth, Culture and Entertainment Complex in Salalah. The game concluded the second round of the preliminary stages for Group C in the HM Cup Hockey Championship.

The match began evenly between Al Ittihad and Fanja, but Al Ittihad took control in the second quarter, opening the scoring through Fouad bin Ali Rabee in the 23rd minute. In the third and fourth quarters, Al Ittihad maintained dominance and added four more goals by Mohammed bin Ahmed Hadeed (37’), Osama bin Rajab (38’), Al Mutasim bin Shakeeb Marzouq (42’), and Salem bin Raed al Rawahi (55’), sealing a well-deserved 5–0 win.

In Group A action at the Sohar Sports Complex, the round was full of excitement. Al Salam overturned a deficit to defeat Majees 2–1, with goals from Nawaf al Raisi and Yahya

bin Badr Al-Hinai.

The second match was one-sided as Sohar imposed its attacking rhythm from the start, netting five beautiful goals scored by Ahmed Al-Amri (8’), Shabeeb Khamis Al-Shibli (9’), Sultan al Shibli (24’), Muhannad al Maamari (34’), and Omar al Maamari (38’), confirming Sohar’s readiness to compete for the group’s top spot.

At the Oman Hockey Stadium in Al Amerat, Oman Club drew 3–3 with Nizwa in Group B.

Nizwa began strongly, opening the scoring in the 9th minute through Haitham al Riyami, and then doubled their lead via Aslam Hussein from a penalty corner in the 24th minute. Before the end of the second quarter, Oman Club reduced the deficit through Mahmoud al Battashi from a penalty corner, ending the half 2–1 for Nizwa.

In the third quarter, both sides held firm defensively until Aslam al Shaiki added Nizwa’s third from another penalty corner in the 51st minute.



Nizwa and Oman Club players in action.

However, Oman Club refused to give up, and Mahmoud al Battashi shone in the final minutes, scoring twice from penalty corners in the 56th and 60th minutes to secure a

valuable 3–3 draw for his team.

Following the completion of the second round, the standings of the four groups became clear. In Group A, Sohar leads with 6 points

and a +9 goal difference after two straight wins, followed by Saham and Al Salam with 3 points each, while Majees remains without points. While Qurayat tops the group B with 6 points and a +16 goal difference, followed by Oman Club with 3 points, ahead of Nizwa on goal difference, while Muscat is bottom without points. Dhofar continues to lead with 6 points and a +4 goal difference in Group C, followed by Al Ittihad with 3 points (ahead of Mirbat on goal difference), while Fanja sits last with no points. In Group D, Masirah tops the group with 6 points, tied with Al Nahda on points and wins but ahead on goal difference (+6), while Al Rustaq is third with 3 points and Ibri remains last with none.

The championship continues with third-round matches scheduled for Friday and Saturday, October 24 and 25, 2025, as teams aim for positive results to strengthen their chances of advancing to the next stage of Oman’s most prestigious hockey tournament.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with a racket after winning the final against Spain's Carlos Alcaraz.
— Reuters

SINNER EASES PAST
ALCARAZ TO WIN
SIX KINGS SLAM

LONDON: Jannik Sinner blasted his way past world number one Carlos Alcaraz to claim victory in the final of the lucrative Six Kings Slam in Saudi Arabia.

The Wimbledon champion was simply too strong for the Spaniard as he cruised to a 6-2, 6-4 win in Riyadh.

World number two Sinner took an early grip on the first set when he broke in the opening game before holding serve in the second, and although the US Open champion got himself on the scoreboard in the next, the respite proved temporary.

The Italian held to love and then forced two break points in the fifth game, and when Alcaraz found the net with his backhand, Sinner led 4-1, an advantage he converted to take the opening set 6-2 in emphatic style.

Alcaraz re-grouped at the start of the second, holding comfortably in the opening game and, after Sinner had levelled with the minimum of fuss, repeated the feat to lead 2-1.

Serving at 2-2, the Spaniard found himself 15-40 down and had to save four break points before eventually emerging victorious, but he was not so fortunate in his next service game as his opponent broke once again to lead 4-3. — **dpa**



Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina celebrates with the trophy.
— Reuters

RYBAKINA
WINS NINGBO
OPEN TITLE

NINGBO: Former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina stormed back from a set down to capture the 10th title of her career with a 3-6, 6-0, 6-2 victory over Ekaterina Alexandrova in the Ningbo Open final in China on Sunday.

Rybakina fired 39 winners, including 11 aces, and won 88 per cent of her first-serve points against Russia's Alexandrova to clinch her second trophy of the season.

The world number nine from Kazakhstan strengthened her chances of securing a WTA Finals qualification spot. But she will need to reach the semi-finals at next week's Pan-Pacific Open in Tokyo to move past Russia's Mirra Andreeva in the race for a place in Riyadh next month.

"I would like to congratulate Ekaterina for the great week and the great season so far and wish her good luck in the next season," said Rybakina after accepting the trophy.

"Thank you so much to my team who are always pushing me to be better, especially at the end of the season, it's not easy.

"But without you I will not be here. Hopefully we can push a little more next week."

Rybakina responded to dropping the opening set by winning nine games in a row, as she levelled the match and surged to a 3-0 advantage in the decider. She was nearly unplayable in the second and third sets and sealed the victory in just under two hours.

"I want to congratulate Elena on the amazing week and the amazing game that she played today," said Alexandrova, who at the age of 30 was making her top-10 debut this week. — **AFP**

HIS MAJESTY’S FOOTBALL
CUP DRAW REVEALED



During the ceremony the Oman Football Association Chairman delivered a speech.



The ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, in the presence of club representatives, officials from the Oman Football Association.

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

THE official draw for the His Majesty's Football Cup 2025/2026 took place on Sunday evening at the JW Marriott Muscat Conference Hall, under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, in the presence of club representatives, officials from the Oman Football Association 'OFA' and members of the media.

The ceremony marked the beginning of the country's most prestigious football competition, setting the stage for intense rivalries and exciting encounters among Oman's top clubs vying for the nation's most coveted trophy.

The tournament will officially kick off this Thursday with the preliminary round matches, featuring the following fixtures: Nizwa vs Dhofar (winner to face Al Shabab) Al Mudhaibi vs Al Wuhda (winner to face Oman Club) Jaalan vs Salalah (winner to face Al Seeb) Samayil vs Muscat (winner to face Sohar) Ibri vs Sur (winner to face Bahla) Al Musannah vs Fanja (winner to face

Al Nahdha) The preliminary round will be played in a knockout format consisting of a single match. In the event of a draw, extra time of 15 minutes per half will be played, followed if necessary by penalty shootouts to determine the winner.

The six winners from this round will advance to the Round of 16, joining the ten clubs that qualified directly: Oman, Al Seeb, Al Shabab, Al Khabourah, Sohar, Saham, Al Nahda, Bahla, Al Nasr and Al Rustaq.

The same knockout system will continue through to the final.

Following the draw, Jihad bin Abdullah al Shaikh, Chairman of Oman Club, commented: "The draw looks relatively balanced and all teams have equal opportunities to progress, our preparations are going well and we aim to perform at a level that reflects Oman Club's proud history and ambition." Said bin Ahmed al Rawas, Chairman of Dhofar Club, expressed optimism about his team's readiness, saying: "The Cup has a special meaning for Dhofar fans, and we are determined to compete strongly for the title this year. The squad is well prepared and we have confidence in our technical staff and players." Meanwhile,

Ahmed al Owisi, Chairman of Al Shabab Club the reigning champions and Super Cup winners said: "Retaining the title will not be easy, but we're fully motivated and ready to defend our crown the draw is fair and every match will require full focus and determination." Former Oman national team player Ismail al Ajmi shared his perspective on the competition, stating: "I expect the winner to be one of the clubs that have lifted the Cup before, unless we see another surprise similar to Al Shabab's triumph last season."

In his remarks, Saif al Jabri, OFA's official spokesperson, announced the tournament's financial rewards, revealing that clubs reaching the Round of 16 will each receive RO 3,000, quarterfinalists RO 6,000, and semifinalists RO 9,000. The champion will earn RO 80,000 from the OFA plus an additional RO 75,000 from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, bringing the total prize to RO 155,000.

Al Jabri emphasised that these incentives aim to encourage stronger competition and elevate the overall quality and professionalism of the Sultanate's domestic football tournaments.

Oman Horse Racing season kicks off

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
BARKA, OCT 19

The opening race of the 2025/2026 Oman Horse Racing Season kicked off today at the Al Rahba racecourse in the Wilayat of Barka, organised by the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation OERF, the event witnessed a vibrant turnout of fans and a strong participation from leading stables, trainers and jockeys across the Sultanate of Oman.

Marking the official start of the new racing calendar, the event featured eight competitive races covering distances of 1200 and 1600 metres , the programme included races for Purebred Arabian horses, locally bred Arabians and Thoroughbreds, with each category displaying impressive performances and close finishes.

In the first race for locally bred Purebred Arabians over 1,600 metres , Atlal Al Saif, trained by Mohammed bin Hamad al Hajri ridden by Saleh bin Salim al Marri, claimed first place, Kasab GM, trained by Hisham bin Zaid al Rasbi, finished second, followed by S S R Shaklan, trained by Yahya bin Hamad al Busaidy, in third.

The second race for Purebred Arabians over 1,600



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metres saw Sarih Manlou, trained by Hamad bin Saleh al Hajri ridden by Issa bin Mohammed al Balushi, secure the top spot, while Rabi N S and RB Jefdad came in second and third respectively.

In the third race for Thoroughbreds over 1,600 metres, Thunder Doro, trained by Musa bin Mohammed al Balushi and ridden by Issa bin Mohammed al Balushi, took first place, followed by Prima Summer in second and Future Vision in third.

The fourth race for Purebred Arabians over 1,600 metres was



won by RB Bestif trained by Nasser bin Hamad al Qatiti and ridden by Ahmed bin Salim al Siyabi, Basha and Al Areeq followed in second and third places respectively.

In the fifth race, reserved for three year old Purebred Arabians over 1,200 metres, Al Muqdam, representing the Royal Cavalry of Oman, claimed victory under the training of Mohammed bin Issa al Balushi and the riding of Moanes bin Salim al Siyabi, Ramz Ibra and Moajizat Izki finished second and third respectively.

The final races of the day concluded with Hadajah winning the sixth race, Cross the Ocean taking the seventh, and Saad sealing victory in the eighth and final race.

Speaking after the event, trainer Mohammed bin Issa al Balushi expressed his pride at achieving success in his first official race representing the Royal Cavalry, stating "It was an exciting debut filled with strong competition among the stables, this win motivates us for a promising season ahead." The second race of the season is scheduled to take place on Friday, October 24, at Al Rahba racecourse in Barka, continuing the federation's rich calendar of equestrian events.

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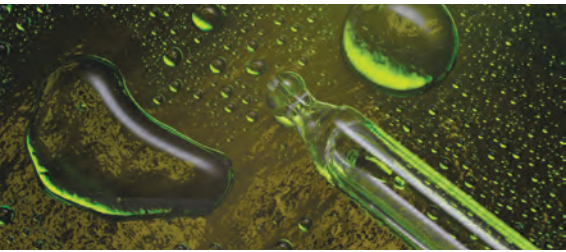
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SHORTTAKES



The new advancement is based on innovative catalysts made from nickel, cobalt and rare metals.

NEW CATALYSTS BOOST GH2 PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY IN SQU BREAKTHROUGH

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

AMIDST global efforts to shift towards clean energy and reduce carbon emissions, a research team from the College of Engineering at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), led by Dr Rashid al Hajri, has announced the development of innovative chemical catalysts that mark a breakthrough in the production of green hydrogen (GH2) through water electrolysis.

Green hydrogen is considered one of the most promising sustainable alternatives to fossil fuel, as it can be produced from one of the simplest and most abundant resources on Earth: water. The process relies on passing renewable electricity through water to split it into its basic elements — oxygen and hydrogen. However, the main challenge has been reducing costs and improving efficiency.

The new advancement is based on innovative catalysts made from nickel, cobalt, and rare metals, which can significantly accelerate the chemical reaction while reducing energy consumption. Laboratory tests have shown that these catalysts enhance performance by more than 30% compared to traditional methods, paving the way for large-scale commercial application, according to the SQU team.

This development represents an important step in supporting the transition to a green economy, as it contributes to producing clean fuel that reduces climate-changing emissions and enables sustainable solutions for the transport, industrial and energy sectors.

PDO’s ICV generates over \$4.3 billion impact

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 19

PETROLEUM Development Oman (PDO), the country’s largest oil and gas producer, has reaffirmed its role as one of the key drivers of Oman’s economic diversification, with its In-Country Value (ICV) initiatives delivering an estimated \$4.3 billion in economic impact to date.

According to PDO, the company’s ICV programme has become a cornerstone of national industrial growth, helping strengthen domestic supply chains, boost employment and expand local manufacturing capabilities in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

Since the inception of its ICV framework, PDO has implemented seven major national projects designed to retain value within the Sultanate of Oman and reduce dependence on imports.

These projects have played a vital role in developing local industries, enhancing workforce skills and promoting entrepreneurship across the energy ecosystem.

The ICV strategy, PDO noted, has led to the establishment of 83 manufacturing facilities in Oman, helping to expand the country’s industrial base.

Around 42 per cent of PDO’s total supply chain spending is now retained locally, while 14 per cent of contracts are awarded to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and Local Community Contractors (LCCs). Collectively, these



The ICV strategy has led to the establishment of 83 manufacturing facilities in Oman, helping to expand the country’s industrial base.

initiatives have created more than 17,500 job opportunities for Omani nationals across various sectors. PDO’s latest ICV partnerships further underscore this commitment.

The company recently signed two key contracts aimed at reinforcing Oman’s industrial base — a five-year agreement with Oman Cables Industry for the local supply of high-voltage and instrumentation cables and an extended partnership with Flowline Valves LLC, a subsidiary of Technofit Trading LLC, for the local manufacture of ball valves.

Under these agreements, Omanisation levels are set to increase, with Oman Cables Industry expected to add eight new Omani employees and Flowline Valves expanding its national workforce from 22 to 55 employees. Both partnerships are designed to accelerate local production and raise the competitiveness of Omani-made products in regional markets.

PDO’s ICV Development Manager, Saoud al Jabri, said the company’s achievements reflect a deep-rooted commitment to national value creation. “Our ICV journey is a national mission.

Every contract awarded, every job created and every factory established represents a step towards achieving Oman Vision 2040 and building a diversified, competitive and self-reliant economy”, he said.

To ensure sustainable impact, PDO continues to collaborate with key institutions such as the Ministry of Labour and the Oman Energy Association

Around 42 per cent of PDO’s total supply chain spending is now retained locally, while 14 per cent of contracts are awarded to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and Local Community Contractors (LCCs). Collectively, these initiatives have created more than 17,500 job opportunities for Omani nationals across various sectors. PDO’s latest ICV partnerships further underscore this commitment.

(OPAL) to deliver workforce training and development programmes for Omani engineers and technicians.

It has also launched 15 Vendor Development Programmes to help local companies meet international quality and performance standards.

Looking ahead, PDO said its next phase of ICV transformation will focus on strengthening governance, enhancing collaboration and improving supply chain resilience. A new transparent framework will align with shareholder expectations and national priorities while supporting public-private partnerships to bolster Oman’s competitiveness in global energy markets.

Through these efforts, PDO’s ICV programme continues to demonstrate how targeted investment and local empowerment can generate lasting value for Oman’s economy and its people.

Third cybersecurity centre launched at Middle East College

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 19

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology launched on Sunday the third Hadatha Cybersecurity Industry Centre, at the Middle East College in Muscat. The launch took place 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 new Centre is a result of a collaborative arrangement between the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), represented by the National Centre for Information Security and the Middle East College.

In her keynote address, Aziza bint Sultan al Rashdiyyah, Assistant Director General for Cybersecurity Programmes at the MoTCIT, said: “This centre is the third of the Hadatha Cybersecurity Industry Centres inaugurated so far. It is not merely a technological project but an intellectual and scientific space that nurtures creativity and accelerates entrepreneurial ideas in the field of cybersecurity.

In a time when digital threats are accelerating



The new Centre is a result of a collaborative arrangement between the MoTCIT, represented by the National Centre for Information Security and the Middle East College.

and cyber challenges are intensifying, local innovation in this field has become a necessity, not a luxury”.

The official further added: “This gap between need and capability underscores the importance of establishing national specialised centres such as the Hadatha Centre — to serve as platforms that inspire technological ideas and solutions, transfer research from laboratories to markets and enhance national competitiveness in one of the world’s fastest-growing industries. From this standpoint, collaboration was established with Middle East College, the first

private higher education institution in the Sultanate of Oman, to host the Hadatha Cybersecurity Industry Centre”.

The Assistant Director General explained that the Middle East College was deemed qualified to host the centre because of its advanced readiness assessment scores.

“The college achieved advanced readiness assessment scores and demonstrated the right capabilities to activate a strategic partnership and foster an academic environment that encourages innovation in cybersecurity — contributing to the knowledge-based economy, opening new horizons for entrepreneurship and creating quality opportunities for researchers and innovators alike. This, in turn, strengthens Oman’s position as a leading regional hub for cybersecurity innovation”, she added.

During the inauguration event, the Ministry also announced the launch of the Cybersecurity Challenges Portal, which aims to collect, study and address real-world cybersecurity challenges.

The Hadatha Centre for the Cybersecurity Industry is an initiative of the National Cybersecurity Programme (Hadatha), which itself falls under Oman’s Digital Economy Framework.

ADVERTORIALS

TRAININGCOURSE



The agreement was signed by Dr Khalid bin Salem al Hamedani and Dr Raed bin Abdul Hafidh al Farsi.

BANKDHOFAR PARTNERS WITH AL NOOR ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

MUSCAT: In line with its steadfast commitment to social responsibility and empowerment, BankDhofar has signed an agreement with the Al Noor Association for the Blind to sponsor a specialised ten-day entrepreneurship training course designed to professionally empower individuals with visual disabilities.

The agreement was signed on behalf of Bank Dhofar by Dr Khalid bin Salem al Hamedani, Chief Human Resources Officer and on behalf of Al Noor Association for the Blind by Dr Raed bin Abdul Hafidh al Farsi, Chairman of the Association’s Board of Director

This initiative reflects BankDhofar’s broader sustainability strategy, which focuses on supporting impactful community programmes that enhance quality of life. The bank firmly believes in the importance of empowering people with special needs by offering training and rehabilitation opportunities that help them realise their ambitions and contribute to Oman’s comprehensive development.

The programme blends theoretical instruction with interactive workshops and field visits, equipping participants with essential skills in market analysis, competitor research, marketing, financial management; and cost and risk assessment. The course aims to strengthen personal capabilities, foster self-reliance and enable participants to successfully integrate into society and the labour market.

The Al Noor Association for the Blind expressed appreciation for this initiative, noting that BankDhofar’s support underscores its genuine community commitment and plays a key role in enhancing the capabilities of the blind and expanding opportunities for their inclusion and entrepreneurship.

BankDhofar has long prioritised accessibility and inclusion. Branches and ATMs across the Sultanate of Oman have been upgraded to better serve individuals with special needs through improved facilities, adaptive service platforms and modern assistive technologies, including Braille keyboards.

Recently, the Bank also introduced the Braille debit card, reaffirming its dedication to equal opportunity and independent banking access. The card’s tactile features allow customers with visual disabilities to identify key details such as the card number, verification code and expiry date — helping preserve privacy and independence.

As part of its wider community engagement, BankDhofar has also contributed to the “Al Atta” neighbourhood housing project in Al Khabourah, supporting families affected by adverse climatic conditions.

Special financing offer for Omani women entrepreneurs

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to empowering entrepreneurs with tailored financing solutions to accelerate business growth, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, has launched a special offer exclusively for women entrepreneurs in celebration of Omani Women’s Day.

The offer, which commenced on October 15, 2025, extends a 1% discount on the published flat



financing rates for Q4 2025 to SME customers with 100% Omani women ownership or shareholding

The offer is valid until November 30, 2025. It is designed to recognise and reward women-led enterprises that play a pivotal role in driving the nation’s economic diversification and entrepreneurial progress.

Tariq Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, stated, “At National Finance, we believe that empowering women is synonymous with empowering communities.”

38 more chances to drive home a new Toyota Yaris

SAUD Bahwan Automotive, the exclusive distributor for Toyota in Oman, has revealed six more lucky winners of its historic 50th Anniversary Campaign. In total, 50 customers will win the keys to a brand-new Toyota Yaris, making this one of the most exciting giveaways ever, in Oman.

Marking five decades of partnership between Saud Bahwan Automotive and Toyota, the campaign is one of its kind. Along with the chance to win a Yaris through raffle draws, customers also enjoy exceptional purchase benefits such as 50% VAT covered, 5 years / 50,000 km service, 50% insurance and RO 50 worth Thiqah Loyalty Points.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for families and individuals to take part in the golden jubilee celebrations and drive home their favourite Toyota.

The announcement of six more winners has sparked huge excitement, with each winner sharing heartfelt emotions about their journey with Toyota and what this incredible milestone means to them. Ali Ahmed Salim Bakhit Hardan who purchased a Land Cruiser pick-up said, “Toyota has been my trusted companion for

Marking five decades of partnership between Saud Bahwan Automotive and Toyota, the campaign is one of its kind. Along with the chance to win a Yaris through raffle draws, customers also enjoy exceptional purchase benefits such as 50% VAT covered, 5 years / 50,000 km service, 50% insurance and RO 50 worth Thiqah Loyalty Points.



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decades. I never imagined I would win, but today with this Yaris, I feel like Toyota has gifted me back for all the love I have had for this brand”.

Hamed Said Ali Rouyashad al Zidi who purchased a Hilux said, “As a small business owner, every decision matters. Choosing Toyota has always given me peace of mind and now this Yaris win feels like a reward for believing in the brand”.

Al Murtaja Khalaf Mohammed Rashid al Abri who purchased a Land Cruiser pick-up shared his thoughts saying, “My father always trusted Toyota and I am no different. Winning the Yaris is more than luck. It is a continuation of a family bond with a brand that has been part of our lives for generations”.

The owner of Kathiya, Salim Mohammed al Abadi who bought the Hilux said, “I bought my first Corolla after university and since then Toyota has been part of every milestone.”

UNIMONI EXCHANGE HONoured WITH ELITE COMPANY TITLE

MUSCAT: Unimoni Exchange Oman has been honoured with the esteemed Elite Company title by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

This accolade is part of the Elite Companies initiative, launched by MoCIIP in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, the Tax Authority, the Royal Oman Police and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Unimoni Oman proudly stands among the top companies in the Sultanate of Oman, distinguished in the



The initiative aims to recognise and bolster companies that make significant contributions to the national economy.

Elite Category. The initiative aims to recognise and bolster companies that make significant contributions to the national economy. The criteria for this prestigious recognition are grounded in several vital factors, including innovation, operational efficiency, competitiveness, Omanisation, the delivery of high-quality products and services, active participation in import/export activities, the expansion framework evidenced by the number of branches and the length of service within the

Sultanate of Oman.

The recognition ceremony was held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, under the esteemed auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The event was attended by various dignitaries, including Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, alongside other ministers, investors and distinguished officials from both the public and private sectors.

Bank Muscat: A leading journey in empowering Omani women

MUSCAT: Omani Women’s Day, celebrated annually on October 17, is a national occasion that highlights the remarkable achievements of Omani women and their growing contributions to building the nation across economic, cultural, political and social spheres.

The celebration of this day stands as a recognition of women’s active participation and success in driving the Sultanate of Oman’s sustainable development.

Omani women play an integral role in the banking sector in general and in the continued growth and performance of Bank Muscat in particular. Women currently represent over 46% of the Bank’s total workforce of more than 4,000 employees across various departments and branches throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

Notably, Omani women hold 20% of



Wafa bint Ibrahim al Ajmiyah, Assistant General Manager — Government Banking



Aisha bint Kamel al Hootiyah, Acting Branch Manager — Royal Hospital Branch

executive management positions, underscoring the Bank’s commitment to investing in talent and empowering young female professionals to assume leadership roles.

On this occasion, Wafa bint Ibrahim al

Ajmiyah, Assistant General Manager — Government Banking, expressed her pride and appreciation for the achievements of Omani women, saying: “We extend our sincere appreciation and pride to every Omani woman who has proven her capabilities across all fields and contributed with dedication and excellence to the nation’s growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

At Bank Muscat, we firmly believe in women’s vital role as key partners in institutional progress and sustainability. Women have always been and continue to be a driving force behind our success — demonstrating creativity, leadership and commitment to achieving the Bank’s goals.

Empowering Omani women remains one of our top priorities through providing a

supportive work environment that promotes professional growth, equal opportunities and active participation in decision-making.

We are proud of the remarkable achievements of our female employees, which reflect determination and an unwavering spirit of excellence”.

Several of Bank Muscat’s female employees also shared their pride and reflections on this special occasion. Aisha bint Kamel al Hootiyah, Acting Branch Manager — Royal Hospital Branch, said: We celebrate Omani Women’s Day with deep pride and gratitude.

It is a day that honours women’s achievements and leadership in building our nation. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to every Omani woman for her accomplishments, as we continue our journey of giving and excellence”.

SHORTTAKES



The strategy aims to strengthen institutional frameworks and enhance the competitiveness of Omani products.

OMAN ADVANCES NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in collaboration with Imtiaz Development and Investment Company, has launched a two-day workshop titled “Quality and Standardisation: From Concept to National Impact” at the Ministry’s headquarters.

The event brought together specialists, experts and representatives from government, private and academic sectors, as well as entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to discuss how quality and standardisation can drive national competitiveness and innovation.

Imad bin Khamis al Shukaili, Director General of Standards and Metrology at MoCIIP, said the Ministry is developing a national strategy for quality and standardisation to act as a road map towards a knowledge-based, competitive economy built on quality and innovation.

He explained that the strategy aims to strengthen institutional frameworks, enhance the competitiveness of Omani products, support exports and import substitution; and empower national talent to lead transformation in this vital sector.

Al Shukaili stressed the Ministry’s goal of embedding a culture of quality and standardisation across all sectors, saying that “quality must become a way of life and standardisation a language of progress”, helping elevate Oman’s global standing.

The workshop featured interactive sessions and practical exercises exploring the pillars of quality infrastructure — including specifications, metrology, accreditation, conformity and market surveillance. It also tackled misconceptions about quality and highlighted how standards directly impact public health, safety and consumer trust.

CEOTALK

Building institutions that outlast leadership

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 19

WITH more than three decades of experience in public service, Khalid Said al Shuaibi has witnessed and shaped some of Oman’s most defining economic transformations. In an exclusive interview with Observer, the President of the National Programme for Private Sector and Foreign Trade Development (Nazdaher) shared insights on leadership, perseverance and his enduring commitment to advancing Oman’s economic vision.

Al Shuaibi’s journey began 32 years ago at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, where he served as an officer in the Directorate General of Commerce. His early experiences ignited a lifelong passion for strengthening Oman’s trade and investment landscape.

“Public service is a badge of honour”, he said. “It gives me immense joy to make a meaningful impact on Oman’s economy, contribute to its progress and serve its citizens”.

Over the years, Al Shuaibi has held several key positions that honed his expertise in international negotiation, investment promotion and economic diplomacy.

He was among the founding members of the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development (Ithraa) and established Oman’s first overseas trade office in Dubai, marking a milestone in the nation’s international commercial outreach.

His leadership journey also took him to the world stage. Serving as



A leader, without a dedicated and capable team, cannot accomplish meaningful success. My focus has always been on building trust, setting clear goals and empowering my team to excel.

KHALID SAID AL SHUAIBI

President of the National Programme for Private Sector and Foreign Trade Development (Nazdaher)

a diplomat at Oman’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, he represented the Sultanate of Oman on the Second Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs. “That experience was transformative”, he reflected. “It allowed me to learn from one of the greatest institutions in the world and to understand global diplomacy and economics from the inside”.

Returning home, Al Shuaibi brought this international experience to bear in national development efforts.

At Nazdaher, he leads initiatives designed to attract foreign investment, empower the private sector and align economic activities with Oman Vision 2040.

“Through this programme, numerous goals aligned with Vision 2040 have been realised”, he noted with pride. “Seeing the tangible results of these initiatives fills me with immense gratitude”. For Al Shuaibi, effective leadership is not defined by position but by the ability to inspire and empower others.

“A leader, without a dedicated and capable team, cannot accomplish meaningful success”, he explained. “My focus has always been on building trust, setting clear goals and empowering my team to excel”. He emphasised that success in leadership comes from collaboration, trust and leading by example.

Despite the challenges that come with leadership, Al Shuaibi believes obstacles can always be overcome with discipline and purpose. “What truly matters is maintaining professionalism, focus and objectivity — ensuring that decisions are guided by reason and purpose, not emotion”, he said.

His proudest professional milestone remains the establishment of Nazdaher, an institution he sees as a cornerstone of Oman’s modern economic development. “Building Nazdaher and its exceptional team stands as one of my greatest achievements”, he said. “It embodies our collective effort to create lasting impact on the national economy”.

Al Shuaibi’s vision extends beyond short-term goals — it is about building enduring institutions that can sustain growth independently.

“My vision is to build institutions that continue to thrive even in my absence”, he stated. “True leadership is about creating systems that are sustainable, resilient and capable of being led seamlessly by others”.

When asked about his advice for aspiring leaders, Al Shuaibi was clear: continuous learning is essential. “They must never stop building their knowledge and expertise”, he urged. “What truly distinguishes any individual is the spirit of genuine initiative — the drive to take action, to learn and to lead with purpose”.

Balancing professional ambition with personal wellbeing, he added, is equally vital.

“Leadership can be demanding, but one must learn to delegate effectively”, he said. “True success lies in sustaining balance between professional excellence and personal growth”.

Through his decades of service, Khalid Said al Shuaibi has exemplified a philosophy rooted in dedication, humility and long-term vision — one that continues to guide Oman’s journey towards sustainable economic prosperity.

Personal Income Tax levy to preserve Oman’s capital market edge: MoF

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 19

PERSONAL Income Tax (PIT), set to be levied on high-earning individuals in the Sultanate of Oman from 2028, has been thoughtfully conceived to ensure its introduction does not undermine the competitive edge of the country’s capital market, a senior government official has affirmed.

Mahmood al Aweini, Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance, said the new levy — the first of its kind in the Gulf region — has been carefully studied by the authorities and will continue to be evaluated for any potential negative impacts.

Should any such impacts arise, “we have the tools to make sure we return things to the right competitive edge to make the

market attractive again”, he stated.

The official made these remarks during the 2025 Annual Conference of the Middle East Investor Relations Association, held recently.

He was responding to a question from the session moderator, Azza al Habsi, Assistant Vice President — Economic Research & Emerging Trends at Ominvest, who asked how the government planned to ensure that including capital market gains under the proposed PIT regime would not erode progress made in developing Oman’s capital market and enhancing its regional competitiveness.

Al Aweini clarified that the introduction of PIT was not an arbitrary move but the outcome of extensive studies assessing its



Mahmood al Aweini, Secretary General of Oman’s Ministry of Finance.

potential impact and the overall value it could add to the market.

He noted that Oman had shown leadership by being the first in the region to pursue this reform and emphasised that there would be ample time for the market to adjust before the tax takes effect in 2028.

He stressed that the government’s objective is to make the capital market more attractive and competitive, assuring investors that no measures would be taken that contradict this goal.

Citing the successful rollout of Value Added Tax (VAT) during the Covid-19 pandemic — when inflation fears were effectively contained — Al Aweini expressed confidence that similar agility and policy responsiveness would mitigate any potential impact of PIT on investors or the market.

Commenting later on the official’s remarks, Ominvest’s Azza al Habsi observed: “The key takeaway for me was Al Aweini’s emphasis that the government is closely monitoring market signals and remains firmly committed to capital market development”.

She added: “To be fair, the fact that implementation has already been delayed to 2028 is itself a sign of a thoughtful, measured approach. It gives policymakers time to observe, learn and refine the execution if needed”.

The new tax will be levied at a flat rate of 5 per cent on annual incomes exceeding the threshold of RO 42,000 (approximately \$109,000). However, deductions will be permitted for education and healthcare expenses, zakat contributions, charitable donations and other eligible items.

STRATEGIC MINERAL

China’s rare earth exports decline



China’s rare earth exports declined in September, as Beijing’s stricter controls on strategic minerals impact global supply chains and heighten tensions with Washington. Bloomberg News reported that shipments of materials used in electric vehicles, weapons and high-tech manufacturing reached 6,538 tonnes, according to customs data released on Sunday, compared to 7,338 tonnes in August. — ONA

INFLATION RISKS

Fed leans towards supporting rate cut



Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis President Alberto Musalem suggested he will support a central bank interest rate cut at the end of the month, while warning it’s important for the Fed not to go too far with easing the cost of credit amidst still unsettled inflation risks. “I could support a path with an additional reduction in the policy rate if there are further risks to the labour market that emerge and provided that inflation is expected to remain anchored”. — Reuters

PRESSURE CAMPAIGN

Trump: India will stop buying Russian oil



US President Donald Trump reiterated on Friday that India will stop purchasing crude oil from Russia as part of a pressure campaign on Moscow to end the war with Ukraine.

Earlier in the week, Trump said Prime Minister Narendra Modi told him India would stop buying oil from Russia, prompting India officials to say they were unaware of any conversation.

— Reuters

OPINION

Insights on the new 24-hour economy



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies.

WITH the increase in competitiveness and indelible imprints of innovation and technology, there is a simultaneous rise in the growth, resilience and inclusivity among global economies. There is an emerging school of thought that is reevaluating how and when urban communities and areas should function and perform. The concept of a 24-hour economy is based on the belief that “cities do not sleep”. This new thinking questions the existing patterns and functioning of work and time, yet opens doors to possibilities for inclusion, innovation and equity across the 24-hour cycle. For the 24-hour economy to thrive and grow sustainably, city planning authorities and governments must prioritise safety, mobility and cultural vigilance after the sun sets on the world. For some years, this emerging society has been gaining limelight; the pandemic has reshaped perceptions, altered schedules, redefined people movement and accelerated the societal preference for flexibility and decentralisation. Some people perceive the 24-hour economy as being all about nightlife, but this is a hollow and limited view. We all know time is valuable and now “Time” is branded as a strategic resource that can be leveraged to create inclusive, dynamic and vibrant economies serving diverse sections of communities. The Pandemic exposed the inflexibility and rigidity of urban

systems and infrastructure, and shifted global perceptions and perspectives of work, life and well-being. In the UK, the 24-hour economy contributed an estimated 4.1% to GDP in 2022, supporting 1,000,000 jobs. In the US, it has contributed 2.5% to 3% of the local GDP of New York State and created 300,000 jobs. In Australia, Brisbane has experienced the fastest growth in terms of significant value, reaching \$6.2 billion. This growth is not only in the Global North but also in Global South countries, like Ghana, which has seen a 31% real GDP increase. International night or nocturnal tourism is projected to increase from \$9.4 billion in 2024 to \$24.8 billion in 2035 at an annual growth rate of roughly 9.2% CAGR. The Global North is enhancing its revenue, while the Global South is accelerating economic growth with active participation in the 24-hour Economy. With the emergence of this new economy, 80 cities worldwide have also established governance and control to ensure the sustainable growth of the 24-hour economy. Amsterdam in the Netherlands has introduced the world’s first night mayor to ensure residents’ safety and economic development. Tokyo, Japan, has a 24-hour transit and entertainment district. In Vietnam, there is a night economy project to promote tourism, culture and shopping activities till 6:00 AM. According

This new thinking questions the existing patterns and functioning of work and time, yet opens doors to possibilities for inclusion, innovation and equity across the 24-hour cycle. For the 24-hour economy to thrive and grow sustainably, city planning authorities and governments must prioritise safety, mobility and cultural vigilance after the sun sets on the world.

to the World Economic Forum (WEF), Argentina, Spain, Poland and Germany have participated actively in the 2025 Night Time Economy Summit in the UK. Today, 80 cities across 60 countries have a Night Mayor or Night Director to oversee safety, policy, security and cultural programming. New York in the US created an Office of Nightlife (ONL) in 2017 to secure and protect the city that never sleeps. There is a significant shift in the concept of leisure, as well as in in-person health consumption and well-being awareness. Barge, Italy, was the first to introduce a 24-hour childcare service, reshaping knowledge-based roles. The nighttime economy is primarily driven by the hospitality, logistics, healthcare and retail sectors. Technological tools are not replacing these industries; instead, they are benefitting from them, ushering in a new era of possibilities in the 24-hour economy. Disruptions to traditional 9:00 to 5:00 work schedules and technological advancements are recalibrating the urban clock. The 24-hour economy presents a strategic growth opportunity for many businesses, enabling them to cater to diverse communities and explore new markets. However, this shift also presents challenges related to operational models, resource utilisation, staffing, pricing and logistics, which must be managed for the sustainable growth of the 24-hour economy.

HOW CREDIT SUISSE’S COCOS COULD RISE FROM THE DEAD

LIAM PROUD

There’s a zombie lurking in bank credit markets and it could in theory bite the Swiss government and UBS. In March 2023 the pair jointly agreed an emergency rescue of Credit Suisse, which involved cancelling “contingent convertible” securities to the tune of 16.5 billion Swiss francs, or \$17.8 billion using contemporary exchange rates. On Tuesday, a Swiss court ruled the write-off unlawful. The country’s Supreme Court will ultimately decide what happens next, but few of the plausible scenarios look pretty for Swiss Finance Minister Karin Keller-Sutter and UBS Chair Colm Kelleher. Writing off Credit Suisse’s CoCos, also known as additional Tier 1 (AT1) debt, created a slug of equity for UBS. That allowed it to absorb asset markdowns and legal charges during the integration. The decision, taken by Swiss regulator FINMA, was controversial. Aggrieved AT1 holders, with help from law firm Quinn Emanuel, argued that the legal condition for cancelling the securities was not met. On Tuesday the Federal Administrative Court agreed, stating in a judgment that the “contractual viability event” was not triggered: Credit Suisse was well capitalised when FINMA imposed the write-off. Traded claims on the defunct instruments surged to a third of face value, in expectation of compensation. What happens next is unclear. That’s partly because FINMA is appealing the decision, meaning the Swiss Supreme Court will ultimately decide. That involves thorny questions like how much the AT1 investors should get, who should cough up and whether holders who didn’t sue should get paid. There are at least three possible answers, according to a person familiar with the case. First, Credit Suisse’s AT1s could simply be reinstated. That would mean no one has to fork out any compensation, though unwinding the 2023 write-off could potentially force UBS to raise capital. One obstacle is that the securities don’t really exist any more. Second, the court could order the government to compensate investors in cash. One debate would be whether AT1 holders should get back anything close to face value, which might seem odd since the market value of bonds was tumbling in March 2023. This scenario would also be bad for UBS, indirectly, because politicians might feel like the government was belatedly picking up the tab for the rescue deal. — Reuters

IMF shows concern on runaway sovereign debt

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged governments to bear down on profligate spending after it found government debt was on course to reach 100 per cent of global GDP within the next five years. In its latest Fiscal Monitor report, the world’s pre-eminent financial institution sounded the alarm on developed and developing nations over-reliance on borrowing, warning it threatened “financial stability” if governments do not urgently curb their huge deficits. “The persistence of spending above tax revenues will push debt to ever higher heights threatening sustainability and financial stability”, the report said. “Prioritising fiscal policy is essential to support debt sustainability and prepare fiscal buffers to use in case of severe adverse shocks including financial crisis. But while we do recognise that the fiscal equation is very hard to square politically, the time to prepare is now”. Global government debt is on track to shoot past 100 per cent of the sum total of economic activity across the world by as soon as 2029, the IMF projected. It put a five per cent likelihood that global debt could top 120 per cent of global income in the same period, given the current trend is towards “debt accumulating even faster”. The report namechecked the UK as one of several countries whose debt to GDP ratio — the difference between a nation’s annual economic output and total sovereign debt — would break the 100 per cent mark in the next five years. In doing so, the country would join the likes of Japan, France, Canada and the US whose debt levels have already eclipsed the unwanted milestone. UK policymakers have struggled to stop runaway borrowing since the coronavirus pandemic caused all Western governments to run record deficits in a bid to keep their economies afloat. In 2024, the public sector spent



ANDY JALIL

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

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UK policymakers have struggled to stop runaway borrowing since the coronavirus pandemic caused all Western governments to run record deficits in a bid to keep their economies afloat. 4.8 per cent more than it earned via taxes, leaving its fiscal policy beholden to volatile global debt markets that currently levy interest of more than five per cent on 10-year government bonds, known as gilts. The country’s sharply rising debt pile — which now stands at more than £3 trillion — means the government now spends twice as much on interest payments to bondholders as it does on defence, making it effectively the third largest government department. Excluding debt interest payments, the IMF added the UK economy was on track to operate at a budget surplus in three years, time, which would peak at 0.7 per cent of GDP by 2030. Despite that, the IMF’s deputy director for monetary and capital markets, Athanasios Vamvakidis, said that debt markets felt uneasy about the UK’s fiscal path. “Clearly markets are concerned about the UK economy and we have seen more volatility in the UK compared to other advanced economies”, he said. Speculation over the contents of next month’s UK autumn Budget has reached fever pitch and it’s only going to keep increasing. This is not idle curiosity, with businesses still adapting to the confidence-sapping and job-smothering fallout from last year’s Budget, there is now a genuine fear that what remains of UK’s economic resistance could be broken by the government’s need to fill a huge hole in the public finances. A fresh report by economists at Barclays and the Institute of fiscal studies points out that while the chancellor Rachel Reeves is busy blaming Brexit, Liz Truss and “austerity” for the present mess, the situation is in fact largely “of her own making”. Last week, Reeves conceded for the first time that tax rises are on the cards (making her look like the last person to realise) telling Sky News “we’re looking at tax and spending” while a prime minister’s office spokesperson refused to rule out increasing income tax or VAT, hikes to either of which would breach Labour government’s manifesto.

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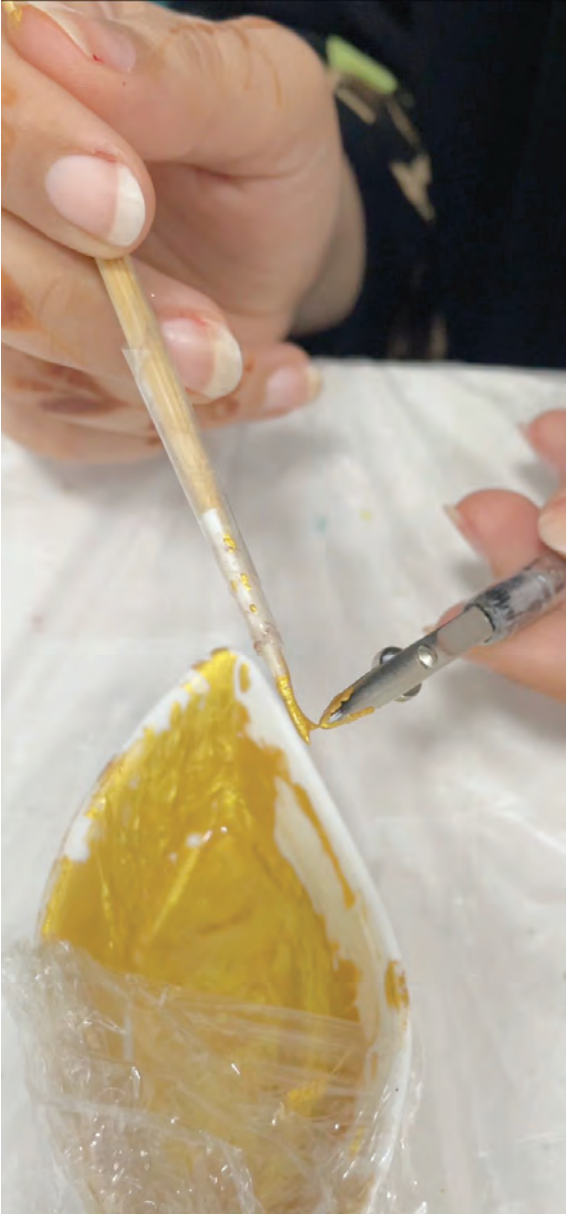
FROM SCALPEL TO SUMMIT



A SURGEON 'S LEAP INTO OMAN 'S WILDS > 20

ART

PRESERVING HERITAGE THROUGH ISLAMIC ART



THE Omani Society for Fine Arts is advancing its mission to preserve artistic heritage and foster young talent through its Islamic Art Programme, which showcases the aesthetics of Islamic and Arab identity via Arabic calligraphy and traditional ornamentation.

The programme features two main tracks. The first, the Diwani Calligraphy Pathway, focuses on the beauty, precision and rich history of Diwani script, a cornerstone of Arab and Islamic cultural identity.

Calligrapher and trainer Anwar bint Khalifa al Hasaniyah described it as an intensive year-long programme that enhances technical skills, cultivates patience and focus; and preserves heritage.

The course includes theoretical lectures, practical workshops, artwork production and training in sentence, paragraph and panel design for 20 male and female trainees.

The second track covers the technical basics of Islamic ornamentation and advanced technical analysis, offering participants the knowledge and skills to create and critically interpret Islamic decorative arts.

This year-long programme targets 20 trainees for the basic programme and 9 female trainees for the advanced track. Participants study the history of Islamic ornamentation, explore various artistic schools, attend practical workshops and benefit from field visits to museums and the Omani Manuscripts House.

Through these initiatives, the Islamic Art Programme combines authenticity with contemporary approaches, empowering young artists to read, create and appreciate artworks with both critical insight and aesthetic sensibility. — ONA

QUICK FEATURES

TOURISM



Tourists visit Oishi park in the town of Fujikawaguchiko, Yamanashi prefecture. — AFP

LIVESTOCK



Madrid's city centre during the annual parade on the streets of the Spanish capital, as shepherds demand to exercise their right to use traditional migration routes for their livestock in southern Spain. — Reuters

FESTIVAL



A flower vendor prepares a marigold garland ahead of the Diwali celebrations, the Hindu festival of lights at KR Market in Bengaluru. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Java-loving NY confronts soaring coffee costs



A cup of coffee is served at a coffee shop in New York City. — AFP

RAPHAELLE PELTIER

NEW YORKERS run on coffee. From high-end experimental boutique cafes to the humble sidewalk cart, millions of cups of java are sold everyday. But coffee-lovers are facing increasing pain as they pay for their simple espresso shots and elaborate pumpkin spiced lattes as the cost of beans has jumped 21 per cent between August 2024 and August 2025 in the United States — the world’s largest market for coffee. Climate shocks drove the cost of arabica soaring, with the beans hitting an all-time high in February 2025. That has been compounded by elevated transport costs and the 50 per cent tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump since August 6 on many products from Brazil. Brazil, the largest coffee producer, has been sanctioned by the Trump administration for its prosecution of former

president Jair Bolsonaro for a coup attempt. It supplies 30 per cent of the United States’s unroasted beans. “It’s having a major impact on us, on small business owners, on farmers, across the board,” Jeremy Lyman, co-founder of the New York-based chain Birch Coffee, said. Founded in 2009, the brand has 14 outlets citywide, roasting its own specialty coffee in Queens since 2015. “The price of coffee on the market has just been on a steady incline over the last probably year. I think it’s gone up about 55 per cent from this time last year...it’s impacting the prices that we charge,” Lyman said. He said that Brazil’s production had become “unaffordable” forcing Birch to look elsewhere for beans with its importer “pushing pause” on its orders unless specially requested. — AFP



Swiss architect Jacques Herzog shows architectural renderings in front of the Museum of the 20th Century at Berlin’s Kulturforum, on the occasion of a topping-out ceremony at the site. — AFP

GERMANY’S new museum of 20th century art will open later than planned, in 2029, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (SPK) said, as Berlin marked the building’s topping-out ceremony. Construction was originally scheduled for completion in 2028, the foundation said at the event, held six years after the groundbreaking. Under current estimates, construction is set to cost \$591 million, with a downward trend emerging, according to the foundation. This includes projected risk costs and possible increases in construction prices. A recent report to the Bundestag’s budget committee had estimated the cost at around €526.5 million. Initial estimates had been around €200million, rising to around €450 million. The Berlin Modern museum is currently being constructed at the Kulturforum (Culture Forum) near the city’s Potsdamer Platz and is intended to be an expansion of the nearby Neue Nationalgalerie (New National Gallery) in the future. Parts of the building are to be freely accessible. Government Culture Commissioner Wolfram Weimer spoke of the “most important new cultural building of the federal government” and one of the “most spectacular buildings in the European cultural landscape”. The building is linked to the hope and plan for the unique collection of the New National Gallery to find a “new, magnificent and transparent second home”, he said. Currently, only about 3 per cent of the collection can be displayed due to lack of space, said director Klaus Biesenbach. He added that it is important to exhibit art from the century that saw two world wars and other catastrophic events. The 20th century must be exhibited and lessons learned from it, he said. When complete, the museum is set to show works by Gerhard Richter, Joseph Beuys, Katharina Sieverding, Pipilotti Rist and others. Performances are to be

BERLIN’S NEW MODERN ART MUSEUM TO OPEN IN 2029

The building is linked to the hope and plan for the unique collection of the New National Gallery to find a ‘new, magnificent and transparent second home.’ Currently, only about 3 per cent of the collection can be displayed due to lack of space



Dancers display mirrors as they perform US artist Joan Jonas’ ‘Mirror Piece’ in the entrance hall of the Museum of the 20th Century at Berlin’s Kulturforum, on the occasion of a topping-out ceremony at the site. — AFP

held in an atrium with a ceiling height of 22 metres. The building is also due to feature a cinema, a café and a spirit garden. The museum is being built according to plans by the Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, which also designed Hamburg’s striking new concert hall, the Elb philharmonie. Many important cultural buildings were controversial at first, Weimer said, pointing to the Berlin Philharmonic, the Elb philharmonie and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. “All these cultural buildings now inspire

the public and impress with their outstanding architecture and programme”, Weimer said, adding that this also applies to the Berlin Modern. The new museum achieves “the seemingly impossible”, said SPK President Marion Ackermann, saying the Berlin Kultur forum finally has a unified sound. The building stands for its unifying power, for architecture that is open and inviting, unobtrusive on the outside, but offering an art experience inside that Berlin has never seen before, she said. — dpa

FEATURES

LIJU CHERIAN
@lijucherianoman

AS A retired surgeon, Dr Khaled Abdul Malak never imagined he would one day trade his scalpel for a harness and rope, but life often has a way of surprises. For Dr Khaled that surprise unfolded in Oman the country he moved to from his native Lebanon in 1996.

What began as a new chapter of belonging eventually became a journey of discovery that shaped his life in the most unexpected ways.

In the early years, Dr Khaled was far from an adventurer. In fact, he was crippled by a fear of heights that kept him from fully embracing the rugged landscapes around him.

That all changed in 2000, when he met Patrick and Nathalie Cabiro, a French climbing couple whose encouragement helped him confront and gradually overcome his phobia.

By the time they left Oman in 2004, his fear had transformed into passion. With their guidance, he not only conquered fears but also fell in love with the thrill of exploration.

Over the years, Dr Khaled has explored and opened more than 30 canyons across Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Al Jabal Al Abyad, often accompanied by family and close friends.

These adventures have tested his courage, deepened his love for nature and brought him closer to the people he shared them with.

Among these feats, one stands out most vividly: abseiling 385 metres down Jabal Shams, Oman's highest peak. It was a moment of sheer exhilaration, one so unforgettable that his Omani friend Abou Hmeid fondly named it the 'Shaikh Al Majaneen drop' – a tribute to the daring spirit that had replaced the man once paralysed by fear.

Photography, another lifelong passion, became the natural companion to his adventures.

In 2010, he began contributing regularly to the Oman Observer, documenting the hidden gems he encountered.

Since then, Dr Khaled has written over 200 articles, each an attempt to capture and share the beauty of Oman's landscapes. His work reached international audiences through collaborations with global TV channels such as National Geographic, BBC and Discovery, further fuelling his mission to spotlight Oman's natural heritage.

This journey also led him to author two books – 'In Search of the Sublime: A Journey Through Oman' and 'Canyoning in Oman: 12 Exceptional Wadis' – which stand as records of his explorations and his dedication to telling Oman's story to the world.

After hanging up his surgical gloves, Dr Khaled ventured into tourism, establishing his own company to create customised tours across Oman. These journeys are not just about showcasing spectacular canyons, mountains and wadis, but about weaving in the human perspective – reminding travellers that nature is best experienced when shared.

Looking back, Dr Khaled remains deeply grateful for the 25 years Oman has given him.

From facing fears to uncovering hidden wonders, his journey in Oman has been more than an adventure; it has been a testament to resilience, discovery and the enduring power of the human spirit.



A SURGEON 'S LEAP INTO OMAN 'S WILDS

BLURB: Once a surgeon, now an explorer — Dr Khaled Abdul Malak traded his scalpel for ropes and ridges. From conquering his fear of heights to uncovering Oman's hidden canyons, his journey is a thrilling tale of reinvention, courage and the boundless pull of adventure

