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INBRIEF

TOGETHER FORWARD VOTING RESULTS

The Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers announced the results of the recent voting process conducted to select the themes for the fourth edition of the ‘Together Forward’ forum in 2026. The voting, which proceeded smoothly and seamlessly, witnessed the participation of over 5,620 citizens from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The voting results revealed close percentages in the participants’ choice for the main forum theme among the three main proposed themes. The theme ‘Oman 2040 Vision: The Reality of Achievement and Prospects for Progress’ received 35 per cent of the votes. The theme ‘Enhancing Government Services to Boost Productivity and Competitiveness’ came second with 33 per cent, while the theme ‘Investment Aspirations in Priority Economic Sectors’ received 32 per cent of the total votes cast. **DETAILS ON P3**

‘WE ARE OMAN’ AWARD WINNERS HONOURED

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation honoured more than 40 winners in 13 competitions within the ‘We Are Oman’ educational programme in its second edition for the academic year 2024/2025. The programme covers five main fields, including intellectual, literary, artistic, media creativity and electronic innovation. The ceremony was presided over by HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. The award aims to encourage higher education institutions to compete in organising and preparing student events and activities. **DETAILS ON P2**

WHO PRAISES HEALTH SYSTEM

Dr John Jabbour, Representative of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in the Sultanate of Oman, praised the developed health system and the relentless efforts aimed at strengthening primary healthcare. In an interview with Oman Arabic, the WHO representative said that the Sultanate of Oman is among the leading countries in implementing fruitful initiatives, and that the health system is set to see further development and achievements, which will be reflected in the level of joint cooperation to improve its future directions, in addition to focusing on developing strategic plans related to epidemic and pandemic preparedness and digital transformation. **DETAILS ON P2**

IoT market expands by 78.9% as digital connectivity grows

MUSCAT: Oman’s Internet of Things (IoT) sector demonstrated remarkable expansion, with subscriptions surging 78.9 per cent to reach 1.57 million by the end of August 2025. The latest figures from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) reveal substantial progress across Oman’s telecommunications landscape.

Mobile broadband services

showed strong performance with active subscriptions reaching 5.58 million, while fixed broadband connections grew 3.1 per cent to 593,262 subscriptions. The overall mobile services market expanded by 13.2 per cent year-over-year, totalling 8.13 million subscriptions.

The subscription breakdown shows postpaid mobile services increasing 2.6 per cent to 1.25 million, while

prepaid services grew 4.3 per cent to 5.31 million. Fibre optic technology continued its upward trajectory with an 11.9-per cent increase to 347,199 subscriptions, and fixed 5G services saw modest growth of 0.7 per cent to 217,660 subscriptions.

Contrasting these gains, fixed 4G technology subscriptions declined significantly by 44.1 per cent to 15,885, while Digital

Subscriber Line (DSL) services fell 43.3 per cent to 10,942 subscriptions. Satellite subscriptions bucked the downward trend in traditional technologies, rising 23.7 per cent to 825 connections. Other subscription categories, including Internet over power lines, Ethernet and leased lines, decreased by 12.3 per cent to 751 subscriptions compared to the same period last year. — ONA

KUWAIT EMIR ARRIVES TODAY ON PRIVATE VISIT

Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmed Al Jabir al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, will arrive in the Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday on a private visit to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The two leaders will hold a fraternal meeting at Al Barakah Palace, in the presence of some Omani and Kuwaiti officials. May the Almighty Allah grant His Majesty and the Emir success to realise the joint achievements that meet aspirations of both nations. — ONA

New era of peace and stability for Middle East

ASSIGNED BY HIS MAJESTY, SAYYID BADR ATTENDS SUMMIT

ASSIGNED by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, headed the Sultanate of Oman’s delegation participating in the Sharm El Sheikh Peace Summit, hosted by the Arab Republic of Egypt on Monday. The summit was attended by a number of heads of state and representatives of regional and international organisations, to discuss efforts aimed at consolidating the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and supporting the path of just and comprehensive peace in the region.

During the summit, the ‘Peace Document’ was signed by the mediating countries — the United States of America, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of Türkiye, and the State of Qatar — in the presence of leaders and heads of delegations. This step reflects growing international consensus towards a political solution and de-escalation.

In a statement on this occasion, Sayyid Badr expressed the Sultanate of Oman’s

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, with US President Donald Trump during a summit on Gaza in Sharm El Sheikh.

appreciation to President Abdel Fattah el Sisi and President Donald Trump for chairing this historic summit. He noted that the past two years have witnessed horrific humanitarian tragedies, and that the ceasefire has saved hundreds of lives and restored hope to thousands of Palestinian families. He emphasised that this moment represents a real opportunity to

launch a serious path towards achieving comprehensive and lasting justice for this beloved region of the world.

Sayyid Badr added that the road ahead is still long and fraught with challenges, but that sincere cooperation and joint action enhance the chances of achieving a future of lasting peace and shared prosperity. He emphasised that the Sultanate

of Oman will remain a loyal champion of peace and an effective factor in supporting every effort that consolidates the values of understanding, coexistence and the rule of law.

The Sultanate of Oman’s participation in the summit comes within the framework of its firm positions calling for the adoption of dialogue and peaceful means to resolve conflicts, and strengthening international and regional efforts aimed at consolidating security and stability and achieving just and lasting peace in the region and the world.

US President Donald Trump hailed a “tremendous day for the Middle East” as he and regional leaders signed a declaration on Monday meant to cement a ceasefire in Gaza, hours after Israel and Hamas exchanged captives and prisoners.

Trump made a lightning visit to Israel, where he addressed the parliament, before flying to Egypt for a Gaza summit where he and the leaders of Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye signed the declaration as guarantors to the Gaza deal. **TURN TO P6**

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HEALTHACHIEVEMENTS



WHO PRAISES OMAN’S DEVELOPED HEALTH SYSTEM

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Dr John Jabbour, Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Sultanate of Oman, praised the developed health system and the relentless efforts aimed at strengthening primary health care.

In an interview with Oman Arabic, the WHO representative said that the Sultanate of Oman is among the leading countries in implementing fruitful initiatives, and that the health system is set to see further development and achievements, which will be reflected in the level of joint cooperation to improve its future directions, in addition to focusing on developing strategic plans related to epidemic and pandemic preparedness and digital transformation.

He added: “What distinguishes the Sultanate of Oman is its clear political commitment of the leadership, government and various sectors to developing the healthcare system. This commitment is reflected in strengthening primary health care, universal health coverage, and the high success the health programmes

What distinguishes the Sultanate of Oman is its clear political commitment of the leadership, government and various sectors to developing the healthcare system

DR JOHN JABBOUR

have achieved, strategic plans as well as the Oman Vision 2040 plans. It also includes the training of leaders at all levels, preparedness for all public health risks, and efforts to expand the scope of health units. It also aims to move toward health decentralisation by granting greater powers to governorates. Cooperation with governors has also contributed to the expansion of public health programmes, most notably the Healthy Cities and Villages programme,

one of the Sultanate of Oman’s major health achievements. The number has increased to 12 healthy cities, eight of which have been announced with the rest to be announced soon.” Regarding the most prominent strategies and future directions planned by the WHO to improve public health in the Sultanate of Oman, he emphasised that the Sultanate of Oman is a leading country in developing and implementing health initiatives, particularly those related to epidemic and pandemic preparedness and digital transformation, such as virtual medicine, restructuring the health system, and strengthening primary health care being the foundation for building effective health leaders especially in the public health sector. These are among the most important current strategic development phases that the organisation is supporting in the Sultanate of Oman.

“We are also proud to name the Sultanate of Oman the ‘Land of Health Initiatives’ due to its leading projects such as the ‘Health for Peace’ initiative, in partnership with the Swiss government. This is one of the strategies adopted by the Sultanate of Oman with a comprehensive vision to provide significant support to promote public health regionally and internationally. The WHO is making efforts to strengthen the Sultanate of Oman’s positions on public health, which are constantly evolving and have an advanced position compared to countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

‘WE ARE OMAN’ AWARD WINNERS FELICITATED

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

THE Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation held a ceremony on Monday to honour the winners of the second edition of the ‘We Are Oman’ educational programme award for the 2024/2025 academic year. The event also marked the launch of the third edition of the award, held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, at Al Bustan Palace Hotel and attended by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

In her speech, Dr Maryam bint Belarab al Nabhaniyah, Director-General of Private Universities and Colleges and Chairperson of the programme’s supervisory committee, emphasised that the ‘We Are Oman’ initiative reflects the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik aimed at empowering Omani youth and strengthening their sense of belonging and national identity. She noted that over the past two years, the programme has evolved into a national model that links Omani identity with knowledge and creativity, promoting teamwork and innovation in line with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040. She called on students to translate Omani identity into meaningful contributions to society, highlighting that ‘true belonging is reflected through responsible work and active participation in national development’. She also announced that the upcoming third edition will feature a more comprehensive and innovative vision, focusing on entrepreneurship, digital transformation and international partnerships.

WINNERS

Saeed bin Ahmed al Rawahi from the University of Nizwa claimed first place, followed by a joint research team from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences — Atheer bint Nasser al



The event marked the launch of the third edition of the award, held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said. — ONA

Sulaimaniyah and Taqwa bint Ahmed al Farsiyyah — in second place, while Oday bin Abdullah al Farai from the University of Nizwa took third.

In the literary category, Ahmed bin Mohammed al Shueili from Middle East College won first place in Classical Arabic Poetry, followed by Aalaa bint Mohammed al Atbiyah from Muscat University in second, and Tahani bint Said al Siyabiyah from UTAS in third. In Nabati (vernacular) poetry, Sultan bin Saif al Saidi from the Global College of Engineering and Technology ranked first, Thuraya bint Nasser al Hinaiyah from UTAS came second, and Mohammed bin Saif al Zaabi, a student at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in the USA, placed third. In the short story competition, Zainab bint Salem al Shukiliyah from UTAS secured first place, followed by Walaa bint Musllam al Hajriyah from the University of Glasgow (UK), and Nasra bint Abdullah al Amriyah from the University of Al Sharqiya.

The artistic category showcased a variety of talents. Majid bin Ismail al Numani from UTAS won first place in Arabic calligraphy, while Mohammed bin Hamood al Riyami from the National University of Science and Technology earned first place in photography.

In short films, Fatma bint Mohammed al Shariqiyah from UTAS received first place, followed by Mohammed bin Hilal al Ghafri

from the same university in second, and Yasir bin Khalfan al Hasani from Majan University College as joint second.

The digital arts category saw Fatma bint Said al Ajmiah from Oman College of Management and Technology take first place in digital painting, and the animated work “Sultana” from UTAS win first place in motion graphics. In media creativity, Osama bin Fahad al Mughairi from UTAS won first place in media articles, followed by Samira bint Saleh al Busaidiyah from the Scientific College of Design, and Issam bin Rashid al Mughizawi from the National University.

The podcast competition was topped by “Rawaa Podcast” from Sohar University, followed by “Ala Al Tawla Podcast” from the same university, and Amina bint Talib al Shiadiya from Oman College of Management and Technology in third place.

In volunteer work, the initiative “Mad - The Community Fridge” from Sohar University won first place, while Jalandi bin Salem al Hinaí from the Military Technological College came second, and “Rawaa - Mango Hybridization” initiative from Sohar University placed third.

The University of Sohar was named Best Higher Education Institution for its outstanding implementation of the “We Are Oman” programme this year, recognising its leadership in promoting extracurricular and cultural initiatives.

National risk register community version launched

MUSCAT: The National Risk Register unveiled its community version during a ceremony at the Royal Academy of Management (RAM) on Monday under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The new version identifies potential risks across natural disasters, service disruptions, health emergencies and major accidents while clarifying governmental roles and public awareness responsibilities.

In his address, Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Head of the Register’s Media Sector, emphasised that comprehensive risk management has become fundamental to sustainable development and protecting national achievements. “Global experience demonstrates that integrated risk management systems enhance institutional efficiency, mitigate crisis impacts, and strengthen national resilience,” Al Balushi stated. “This represents not



Mohammed bin Said al Balushi

merely a supplementary measure but a strategic imperative for modern governance.”

The community version launch coincides with the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, observed annually on October 13. “Oman seeks not only institutional preparedness but an informed, engaged citizenry understanding their vital role in national security,” Al Balushi emphasised, describing the initiative as combining strategic vision with practical planning

to empower residents with essential risk knowledge and foster collaborative prevention efforts.

Jalila al Akhzami, Director of the Ministry of Information’s Research and Studies Center and Assistant Media Coordinator for the Register, detailed the version’s structure encompassing 13 principal risks categorised across four domains: natural hazards, service disruptions, health emergencies and major accidents.

The Register’s methodology prioritises prevention, with studies indicating that each dollar invested in risk reduction saves fifteen dollars in post-disaster recovery costs while preserving irreplaceable human lives. Strategically, the platform supports Oman Vision 2040 implementation by providing predictive analytics and risk intelligence for emerging challenges over the coming two decades.

The community version of Oman’s National Risk Register

represents a vital component in mitigating potential threats to public safety and national infrastructure, according to Major Mukhtar bin Juma al Alawi, Assistant Head of the National Center for Emergency Management. He emphasised that the register provides citizens with essential emergency protocols and response procedures, significantly strengthening national risk reduction capabilities.

Saif bin Ali al Yarubi, Managing Editor of Oman News Agency and Media Coordinator for the National Risk Register, noted the version’s launch coincides with the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction observed annually on 13 October. “Oman’s comprehensive risk management framework has established clear foresight capabilities and enhanced coordination between government institutions and relevant sectors,” Al Yarubi stated. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The ceremony featured multiple segments. — ONA

OMAN AT CLOSING CEREMONY OF EXPO OSAKA 2025 IN JAPAN

OSAKA: The Sultanate of Oman participated on Monday in the closing ceremony of Expo 2025 Osaka – Kansai, Japan, concluding six months of international events that brought the world together under the theme ‘Designing Future Society for Our Lives’.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of His Imperial Highness Prince Akishino, Crown Prince of Japan and Honorary President of the Expo’s Supreme Organising Committee.

The Omani delegation to the ceremony was headed by Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture.

The ceremony featured multiple segments, including a video presentation titled ‘Countdown to the Future’, welcome speeches by Hiroyuki Ishige, Secretary-General of the Expo Association and Masakazu Tokura, President of the Expo Organising Committee, in addition to a performance of the Japanese national anthem and artistic theatrical performances. — ONA

OMAN MARKS WORLD STANDARDS DAY



MUSCAT: Represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Sultanate of Oman will join the international community in observing World Standards Day on Tuesday. The event will be celebrated under the theme “A Shared Vision for a Better World”.

The occasion embodies the importance of standards and partnerships as pillars for the realisation of sustainable development goals (SDGs), notably SDG17 that focuses on enhancing cooperation among government and the private sector establishments to achieve industrial and economic progress.

World Standards Day seeks to affirm the vital role of standards, not only as technical documents, but also as a global discourse that builds bridges of confidence and enhances the environment of industrial and economic integration among countries. This contributes to developing the quality infrastructure, streamlining trade. — ONA

SQU TO HOST QS ARAB FORUM ON OCT 15



MUSCAT: For the first time in its academic march, the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) will host the ‘QS Arab Forum 2025’ on October 15.

The forum offers an opportunity to showcase the rankings of Arab academic institutions, identify the challenges posed to the higher education sector in the Arab region and highlight the quality of education, academic innovation and research in the region. — ONA

‘Together Forward’ voting process results announced

MUSCAT: The Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers on Monday announced the results of the recent voting process conducted to select the themes for the fourth edition of the ‘Together Forward’ forum in 2026.

The voting, which proceeded smoothly and seamlessly, witnessed the participation of over 5,620 citizens from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The voting results revealed close percentages in the participants’ choice for the main forum theme among the three main proposed themes. The theme ‘Oman 2040 Vision: The Reality of Achievement and Prospects for Progress’ received 35 per cent of the votes. The theme ‘Enhancing Government Services to Boost Productivity and Competitiveness’ came in second



The voting results revealed close percentages in the participants’ choice for the main forum theme. - ONA

with 33 per cent, while the theme ‘Investment Aspirations in Priority Economic Sectors’ received 32 per cent of the total participants’ votes.

Given the close voting percentages for the three aforementioned themes, it was indicated that the possibility of including all these

themes for discussion in the forum sessions will be considered.

Within the framework of providing an opportunity for participating citizens to choose another topic of interest beyond those presented for voting, the results showed that the largest

number of voters selected ‘Labour Market and Employment’ as an additional theme to be discussed alongside the main forum theme, garnering over 1,260 votes.

The Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers will announce at a later date the forum’s schedule and the registration period for citizens to attend its sessions and events. This annual forum, which receives the esteemed attention of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, aims to serve as a shared communication channel between the government and society. Through it, transparency, credibility and partnership between decision-makers and citizens are achieved, alongside enhancing mutual trust and providing an opportunity for all segments of society to express their opinions. — ONA

Bonding of individuals, endowments sought

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

A Stronger bond between people and endowments is crucial in today’s society to support the less privileged and financially disadvantaged segments. It is a general responsibility to participate in such initiatives for a sustainable society, according to Saif bin Salim al Busaidy, CEO of the Imam Jabir bin Zaid Endowment Foundation.

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the Third Endowment Forum under the theme ‘Towards Innovative Endowments and Sustainable Giving’, which began with the opening speech of Shaikh Khalil bin Ahmed al Khalili, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Imam Jabir bin Zaid Endowment Foundation at the Grand Millennium Hotel, Al Busaidy stated that such support from society is necessary for various individuals and communities.

“Endowments are strategic partners in development, and this forum aims to strengthen integration and cooperation between endowment partners, both institutions and individuals. It also highlights the contributions of the public and private sectors to achieve sustainability and expand societal impact,” Al Busaidy said.

“We need relationships between endowments, private companies and charitable institutions to fulfil the aims of endowments. We invite people,



Endowments are strategic partners in development, and the forum aimed to strengthen integration and cooperation.

companies, NGOs, and others to donate more in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 towards sustainability, building schools and mosques through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP).”

The forum, held under the auspices of Shaikh Salem bin Mustahail al Maashani, Adviser at the Diwan of the Royal Court, was attended by over 400 experts from the public and private sectors.

This year’s forum focuses on enhancing the developmental role of endowments in the country. Various ideas and initiatives for integrating endowments with charitable work will be shared at the end of the forum, according to the organisers.

Sayyid Dr Munthir bin Hilal al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, delivered a keynote address followed by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Sohar Islamic and the Shaikh Mustahail bin Ahmed Al Maashani Endowment Foundation.

The first theme of the forum was ‘Innovation and Digital Technologies in Maximising the Impact of Endowment and Charitable Initiatives’, followed by the second theme ‘The Integrated Framework between Endowment and Social Responsibility to Promote Development.’

Charter season takes off with strong arrivals

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH @patkaushal

The winter charter season in Salalah is witnessing a strong tourist outlook from European countries with the arrival of charters from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Italy. While the Italian charter carrying 66 tourists landed in Salalah on Sunday, the charters from the Czech Republic and Slovakia arrived on September 28 and October 4, respectively.

The early arrivals from the Czech Republic were 180, while tourists from Slovakia were 182. Many more charters are likely from Russia, Belarus, and many other parts of Europe.

“We are optimistic about this season’s momentum,” said Mehmet Tunc Mustecaplioglu, Area General Manager of Orascom Hotels Management. “With several hundred charters scheduled over the next seven



Charter tourists given a warm welcome at Hawana Salalah.

months, we anticipate a steady stream of travellers not just from Europe but also from the Gulf region. The demand reflects Salalah’s growing reputation as the Arabian Peninsula’s winter escape.” “We’re expecting around 400 charter flights this season, some direct and others connecting via Muscat and Doha. This could translate to over 80,000 visitors — a clear

indicator of Salalah’s expanding international appeal,” he said. The new season promises an influx of European visitors drawn to Salalah’s distinctive blend of warm winter weather, pristine beaches and cultural charm. Hotels across Dhofar — particularly those within the Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) — are already witnessing a surge in occupancy. Prominent

beachfront resorts such as Rotana, Al Fanar, Juweira, and the Club by Fanar are projected to reach nearly 90 to 95 per cent occupancy by mid-October.

Industry analysts attribute this strong start to renewed marketing efforts in Central and Southern Europe, as well as increased air connectivity and upgraded hospitality infrastructure.

“Visitors are not just coming for relaxation; they’re seeking authentic experiences that connect them with Dhofar’s culture and nature,” added a tour operator from Milan who arrived with the season’s first Italian charter. “Every year, more travellers return with friends and family. That says a lot about Salalah’s charm.” With a strong start and encouraging projections, the 2025–26 charter season looks set to reaffirm Salalah’s position as promising winter tourism destinations.

SPOTLIGHT

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IDEAS

YOUTH
TURN
CAFES INTO
CREATIVE
HUBS



BALQEES AL ORAIMI

MUSCAT’S COFFEE SHOPS has quietly evolved — from a social hangout into a hybrid workspace for a new generation of Omani youth redefining how and where they work or study.

What began as a casual habit has transformed into a lifestyle trend. Across the city, students, freelancers and young professionals are claiming their favourite cafe tables, sipping iced lattes as they draft reports, design projects, or attend virtual meetings. The line between ‘coffee time’ and ‘working hours’ has blurred — and many say they prefer it that way. For Sara Mohammed, a design student, a cafe isn’t just a place to relax — it’s her creative studio. “I can’t focus at home or in the university library,” she says with a smile. “The cafe energy motivates me. I love the background noise — it keeps me alert.”

That “background noise”, or what psychologists call white noise, is what makes cafes perfect for concentration, explains Dr Amal al Maqbali, a behavioural specialist.

“Soft ambient sounds help the brain maintain focus,” she says. “That’s why some people are more productive in a cafe than in total silence.”

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMFORT

It’s psychological comfort wrapped in the scent of freshly ground coffee.

From Mint & Coco in Al Qurum to Shagar Cafe in Al Seeb, many local spots now proudly display ‘Laptop Friendly’ signs. With fast Wi-Fi, charging outlets under every seat, and playlists designed for focus, these cafes have become the city’s unofficial co-working spaces.

“We’ve adapted to our customers,” says Abdullah al Rawahi, owner of a popular cafe in Al Khuwair. “Most of our guests are students or freelancers. They spend hours here — so we made sure to create a calm, creative environment.”

The growing number of Omani freelancers and remote employees has given rise to what experts call a third space — a comfortable middle ground between home and office. For Laila Abdullah, a freelance graphic designer, this balance is crucial.

“I call cafes my second office,” she says. “I answer emails, work on client designs and take short breaks to talk with other creatives.

It’s motivating — and it feels less lonely.”

Recent surveys show that Oman’s youth are increasingly drawn to flexible work environments. The country’s digital transformation, combined with its youthful workforce, has made such spaces more relevant than ever.

But the trend isn’t just about work. Many young people see cafes as micro-communities — social spaces where friendships, collaborations and even business ideas are born.

Universities are catching on too. Some campuses have opened student cafes designed not just for refreshment, but to encourage informal learning and open discussion.

The cafe industry in Oman is thriving. According to cafe owners, around 30 per cent of regular customers today are students or remote workers. To meet this demand, many shops are evolving — adding soundproof pods, ergonomic furniture and curated menus for long study hours.

“Competition isn’t just about who serves the best espresso anymore,” says Al Rawahi. “It’s about who offers the best atmosphere to create, think and connect.”

Still, experts advise moderation. Spending too much time in cafes can blur personal boundaries and increase screen fatigue.

The scent of ground coffee makes a calm, creative environment



‘Soft ambient sounds help the brain maintain focus. That’s why some people are more productive in a cafe than in total silence’

DR AMAL AL MAQBALI,
Behavioural specialist

SHORT TAKES



SPAIN MARKS NATIONAL DAY

MUSCAT: The Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain in Muscat held a reception to mark the Kingdom's National Day. The ceremony, hosted at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, was attended by ministers, Omani officials, heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, and officials from the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

KERALA CM TO ATTEND COMMUNITY FESTIVAL IN MUSCAT

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will be the guest of honour at the Indian Community Festival (ICF) — the largest cultural and art gathering of the Indian diaspora in Oman — taking place from October 23 to 25 at Al Ameerat Park.

Prominent dignitaries including MA Yusuff Ali, Chairman of Lulu Group, and Dr P Mohammed Ali, founder of Galfar Engineering, along with leading figures from both the Omani and Indian communities, will join the distinguished guest panel.

Organised by the Kerala Wing of the Indian Social Club Oman, the event — formerly known as Keralotsavam — will feature nearly 700 artists from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The festival will showcase a fusion of traditional Omani dance forms and Indian art performances, under the theme 'Be Humane, Let Peace Prevail,' promoting the message of global harmony.

A highlight of the festival will be a musical concert by 'Kanal', a popular Kerala-based band. The event is sponsored by Shahi Foods and Spices.

To ensure smooth organisation, a 60-member committee has been formed, with Wilson George, Loka Kerala Sabha member and Director of the Pravasi Welfare Fund, serving as Chairman, Ajayan Poyyara as Convenor, and K K Sunil Kumar as Vice-Chairman.

In conjunction with the festival, a Science Exhibition and Competition, Muscat Science Fest (MSF), will be held to encourage scientific curiosity among students from Indian and international schools across Oman.

Renowned scientist and science communicator Ratheesh Krishna will be the chief guest at the MSF, where attractive prizes will be awarded to winners.

AL DAKHILIYAH AWARDS SEVERAL KEY MUNICIPAL PROJECTS



Governor of Al Dakhiliyah reviews progress of ongoing projects in wilayats

NIZWA: The Tender Committee at the office of the Governor of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate awarded several municipal development projects aimed at enhancing infrastructure and improving public services across the wilayats.

Chairing the meeting, Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, reviewed the progress of ongoing projects and stressed the importance of adhering to quality standards.

Awarded projects include road design and implementation in Samayil and Izki, maintenance projects in Samayil, Bidbid, Izki, Adam, Al Hamra, Nizwa and Bahla, consultancy for the 'Authenticity of Bahla' project, and annual gardening and irrigation maintenance for 2026–2027. — ONA

National programme to identify gifted students launched

NIZWA: The second edition of the National Programme for Identifying Gifted Students began in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Implemented by the Ministry of Education through the Department of Diagnosis and Gifted Care, the programme targets sixth-grade students in local schools.

A total of 107 students are participating over two days — 54 taking exams on Sunday and 53 next Wednesday — in a specially prepared environment that nurtures creativity and accommodates



107 students are taking part in a specially prepared environment that nurtures creativity

individual differences. The programme assesses intellectual fluency, originality, flexibility, and creative problem-solving skills to identify students with high mental abilities and innovative potential.

The initiative aligns with national efforts to support gifted students early in their education, equipping schools with resources to foster creativity and innovation, ultimately contributing to building a well-informed generation capable of advancing national development. — ONA

Karwa Motors defends safety of school buses

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

KARWA Motors has issued a clarification regarding a video circulating on social media containing allegations about the company's school buses, including claims of excessive diesel consumption.

In response, the company emphasised its commitment to professional and social responsibility, explaining that Karwa school buses are built with a highly durable, integrated steel structure that ensures maximum passenger protection and prevents collapse in the event of accidents. The buses are also equipped with a central air conditioning system mounted on the roof to provide optimal ventilation and comfort.

Karwa Motors noted that while the robust safety frame and integrated air conditioning system may result in slightly higher fuel consumption compared to lighter buses, these features are essential for safety and comfort.

Addressing concerns about tightly sealed windows, the company clarified that this is an internationally approved safety standard designed to protect



Karwa buses are designed in line with the highest international safety and quality benchmarks

All Karwa school buses comply with international ventilation standards and are equipped with an integrated air conditioning system, internal air circulation and emergency roof vents

students from external objects, side collisions, or accidental falls. All Karwa school buses comply with international ventilation standards (ASHRAE) and are equipped with an integrated air conditioning system, continuous internal air circulation and emergency roof vents. The company added that opening bus windows, as suggested in the viral video, is not a healthy or safe alternative and often reflects cost-cutting practices that compromise student safety and well-being.

Designed in line with the highest international safety and quality benchmarks, Karwa

school buses feature advanced braking and emergency response systems, ergonomic seating and real-time tracking technology. These features ensure a safe, reliable and comfortable travel experience for students across Oman's varying climates.

Karwa Motors reaffirmed its commitment to continuous improvement in the school transportation sector, investing in technology, safety enhancements, and sustainable practices aimed at reducing the carbon footprint while meeting the growing needs of schools and students.

Copper legacy reveals 5,000-year-old civilisation

AL RUSTAQ: The ancient copper industry in Oman stands as compelling evidence of a sophisticated civilisation that became a leading industrial power nearly five millennia ago.

Historical records from Sumerian and Assyrian civilisations document copper exports from Oman to Mesopotamia, while archaeological sites across the country reveal extensive smelting remnants testifying to the industry's scale and ingenuity.



Copper production in Oman began around 5,000 years ago

The village of Al Manaqi in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, Al Batinah South Governorate, is among Oman's most significant copper production sites.

Nestled amid valleys, it houses numerous ancient mines and smelting facilities, with thousands of tonnes of processing remnants still visible.

Harith bin Saif al Kharousi, a researcher in rock inscriptions and Omani history, said Al Manaqi was studied as a

representative site among hundreds of ancient copper smelting locations in Oman.

"Other notable sites include the Salut site in Wadi Nam, Wilayat of Al Qabil, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, which similarly showcases Oman's enduring copper production heritage," he noted.

Al Kharousi explained that Omanis built smelting operations adjacent to copper mines to maximise efficiency.

Near Wadi Mafaal in Al Manaqi, mine remnants are

still visible. The sophisticated process involved transporting ore to nearby furnaces, purifying it and smelting using Samr wood, chosen for its high resin content that produced the intense heat required for extraction, alongside specially designed furnace structures.

"Workers used bellows to maintain furnace temperatures and manage carbon dioxide levels," he said.

"Given that copper content in the ore averaged only 7 per cent, ancient smelters

obtained less than 70 grammes of copper from each kilogramme of processed ore under ideal conditions."

Molten copper was poured into clay molds, with copper-adhered pottery fragments still identifiable at the Salut site after thousands of years.

Al Kharousi noted that pure copper is a malleable yellow metal, roughly half as dense as gold, naturally occurring in igneous rock formations. Copper production in Oman began around 5,000 years ago, processing ores such as malachite and azurite, with chrysocolla deposits serving as indicators of copper-bearing formations.

He emphasised that Oman's rich ophiolite rock formations contain mineral deposits including chromium, gold, copper, manganese and iron — a geological advantage that underpinned the ancient industry and earned Oman the name 'Magan' among Assyrian and Sumerian civilisations, meaning 'the land of copper.' — ONA

GAZA

FROMPAGE 1



A Palestinian released from Israeli prisons under the deal, greets a relative as he arrives on a bus outside the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Monday. — AFP

NEW ERA OF PEACE AND STABILITY FOR MIDDLE EAST

“This is a tremendous day for the world, it’s a tremendous day for the Middle East,” Trump said as more than two dozen world leaders sat down to talk in the resort of Sharm El Sheikh. “The document is going to spell out rules and regulations and lots of other things,” Trump said before signing, repeating twice that “it’s going to hold up.” As part of Trump’s plan to end the Gaza war, Hamas on Monday freed the last 20 surviving captives after two years of captivity in Gaza.

In exchange, Israel released 1,968 mostly Palestinian prisoners held in its jails, its prison service said.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi that the Gaza deal “closes a painful chapter in human history and opens a new era of peace and stability” for the Middle East. Sisi, who signed a declaration with his fellow guarantors of the deal on Monday, said it marked a “historic day” for peace that set the stage for a two-state solution.

“Not only for Israelis, but also for Palestinians and for many others, the long and painful nightmare is finally over,” Trump said.

In the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, huge crowds gathered to welcome home the first buses carrying prisoners.

And at a similar gathering in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis, residents climbed the sides of slow-moving Red Cross buses carrying the prisoners to welcome home their loved ones with a hug or kiss.

In Gaza, too, the ceasefire has brought relief, but with much of the territory flattened by war, the road to recovery remains long.

“The greatest joy is seeing my whole family gathered to welcome me,” Yusef Afana, a 25-year-old released prisoner from north Gaza, said in Khan Yunis. “I spent 10 months in prison - some of the hardest days I’ve ever lived.” In the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, meanwhile, Palestinian prisoners released by Israel were met by a cheering crowd so dense that they struggled to get off the bus that delivered them from jail. “It’s an indescribable feeling, a new birth,” newly released Mahdi Ramadan said, flanked by his parents. — Agencies



A freed Palestinian is carried upon arrival by bus at Ramallah Cultural Centre. — AFP

IS GAZA WAR OVER?

Swap was pivotal to the first phase of Gaza accord



Freed Palestinian prisoners gesture, in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

HAMAS freed the last living Israeli hostages on Monday under a ceasefire deal, a big step towards ending two years of ruinous war in Gaza as US President Donald Trump addressed Israel’s parliament, urging it to turn military success into peace. The Israeli military said it had received all hostages confirmed to be alive after their transfer from Gaza by the Red Cross, prompting cheering, hugging and weeping among thousands waiting at “Hostage Square” in Tel Aviv. Some of the nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees freed by Israel as part of the accord, ahead of a summit in Egypt to cement the ceasefire, began arriving in the Gaza Strip and the Israeli-occupied West Bank, some hoisted on the shoulders of delighted relatives.

“The skies are calm, the guns are silent, the sirens are still and the sun rises on a Holy Land that is finally at peace,” Trump told the Knesset, Israel’s parliament, saying a “long nightmare” for both Israelis and Palestinians

was over. “Now it is time to translate these victories on the battlefield into the ultimate prize of peace and prosperity for the entire Middle East,” he said before his planned trip to Egypt for the summit. However, formidable obstacles remain even to a resolution of the Gaza conflagration, let alone to the wider, generations-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict or other longstanding schisms running through the Middle East.

The release of hostages and Palestinian detainees was pivotal to the first phase of the Gaza accord concluded last week in the Egyptian seaside resort of Sharm el Sheikh, where Monday’s summit will take place. Over 20 world leaders will weigh how to carry out the next steps under Trump’s 20-point blueprint for an end to the war.

The deal came two years after the October 7, 2023, cross-border Hamas assault that killed 1,200 people with 251 taken hostage. Israeli air strikes, bombardments and ground offensives have since killed over 67,000 Palestinians, the enclave’s health

officials say, and laid waste to much of the enclave.

A global hunger monitor said Gaza City and surrounding areas are suffering from a famine afflicting over half a million Palestinians, and most of Gaza’s 2.2 million people are homeless.

Beaming with relief and joy, two hostages waved to cheering crowds from vans on the way to an Israeli hospital, one hoisting a large Israeli flag then forming a heart with his hands. Video footage captured emotional scenes of families receiving phone messages from their loved ones as they were being released, their faces lighting up with disbelief and hope after months of anguish.

Most of the freed Palestinians were detained during the war, but the group included 250 prisoners convicted of involvement in deadly attacks or held under suspicion of security offences. Palestinians rushed to embrace prisoners freed by Israel. Several thousand gathered inside and around Nasser Hospital. — Reuters

Freed Palestinians return to loved ones

RAMALLAH: With huge crowds waiting to welcome them home, Palestinian prisoners released by Israel on Monday under a Gaza ceasefire deal were overwhelmed with joy as they returned to their loved ones. Some threw peace signs while others struggled to walk without assistance as they got off the bus and were met by a crowd cheering their return from Israel’s jails to the West Bank city of Ramallah. “It’s an indescribable feeling, a new birth,” Mahdi Ramadan, newly released, said, flanked by his parents with whom he said he would spend his first evening out of jail. Nearby, relatives exchanged hugs, young men in tears pressed their foreheads against each other — some even fainting from the emotion of seeing loved ones again after years, and sometimes decades, in jail. The crowd chanted in celebration, “Allahu akbar”, meaning God is the greatest. Among the Palestinians to be released under a US-brokered Gaza ceasefire deal,

250 are security detainees, including many convicted of killing Israelis, as well as about 1,700 Palestinians detained by the Israeli army in Gaza during the war.

Nour Soufan, now 27 years old, was due to meet his father, Moussa, who was jailed a few months after his birth, outside of jail for the first time. Soufan and half a dozen relatives came to Ramallah from Nablus, in the north of the West Bank, and spent the night in their vehicle. “I have never seen my father, and this is the first time I will see him. This is a very beautiful moment,” Soufan said.

Like him, many had defied the travel restrictions that punctured daily life in the Palestinian territory, with Israeli army checkpoints proliferating in two years of war. Palestinian media reported that families of detainees had been contacted by Israeli authorities, asking them not to organise mass celebrations. “No reception is allowed, no celebration is allowed,

no gatherings,” said Alaa Bani Odeh, who came from the northern town of Tammun to find his 20-year-old son who had been jailed for four years. Media spoke to several prisoners who said that in their first hours of freedom, they would go home and stay with their families. During previous releases, mass gatherings had flooded entire streets in Ramallah, with people waving Palestinian flags.

Dressed in the grey tracksuits of Israeli prisons, many prisoners also wore a black-and-white kuffiyeh around their necks — the traditional scarf that has become synonymous with the Palestinian cause. Some of the newly released prisoners happily let themselves be carried away on relatives’ shoulders. “Prisoners live on hope... Coming home, to our land, is worth all the gold in the world,” said one freed detainee, Samer al Halabiyeh. “God willing, peace will prevail, and the war in Gaza will stop,” Halabiyeh added. “Now I just want to live my life.” — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Deported Afghan refugees beside halted passenger trucks at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border town of Torkham. — Reuters

PAKISTANI TROOPS ON HIGH ALERT ON AFGHAN BORDER

PESHAWAR: Pakistani troops were on high alert on the border with Afghanistan on Monday after fierce fighting between the two sides at the weekend left dozens dead and drew the attention of US President Donald Trump, who said he could help end the conflict. Border trade between the neighbours came to a halt as Pakistan closed crossings along the 2,600-km frontier, stranding scores of loaded goods vehicles on either side, a Pakistani industry representative said.

Fighting between the two sides, who were once allies, erupted after Islamabad demanded the Taliban take action against militants who have stepped up attacks in Pakistan, saying they operate from havens in Afghanistan. The Taliban denies that Pakistani militants are present in Afghanistan. The Pakistan military said that 23 of its soldiers were killed in the weekend clashes.

“All entry points are closed since Saturday following unprovoked attacks by the Afghan Taliban forces”, a senior Pakistani security official said. A second security official said there were a few incidents of exchange of small arms fire on Sunday night, but the overall situation was calm. The Pakistani military spokesperson’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

— Reuters

MADAGASCAR’S PRESIDENT HAS LEFT THE COUNTRY

ANTANANARIVO: Madagascar’s president has fled the African nation, the head of the opposition and other officials said on Monday, the second time that young protesters have toppled a government in weeks of worldwide Gen Z unrest. Siteny Randrianasoloniaiko, leader of the opposition in parliament, said that Rajoelina left Madagascar on Sunday after units of the army defected and joined the protesters.

“We called the staff of the presidency and they confirmed that he left the country”, he said, adding that Rajoelina’s current whereabouts were unknown.

The president’s office, which had earlier said Rajoelina would address the nation at 7:00 pm (16:00 GMT) on Monday, did not reply to requests for comment.

A military source said that Rajoelina flew out of the country on a French military aircraft. French radio RFI said he had struck a deal with President Emmanuel Macron. The source said that a French Army Casa aircraft landed in Madagascar’s Sainte Marie airport on Sunday.

— Reuters

MOLDOVA’S PM TO HAND OVER REINS IN NEXT PRO-EU GOVERNMENT

CHISINAU: Moldova’s pro-EU Prime Minister Dorin Recean said on Monday that he would not lead the next government, despite a decisive victory by his ruling party in last month’s parliamentary elections. The announcement came after the Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) won the September 28 election with 50.20 per cent of the vote, keeping the ex-Soviet nation of 2.4 million on a path to one day joining the European Union.

The vote was seen as crucial for the future of the small country bordering Ukraine. The election itself was marred by widespread allegations of Russian interference, a claim Moscow has denied. The country’s constitutional court is due to meet on Thursday to decide the validation of the ballot’s results, contested by the pro-Russian opposition which got 24.18 per cent of the vote. President Maia Sandu is expected to nominate a new premier after holding consultations.

PAS has 55 seats in a 101-seat parliament, enough to form a new government on its own. Recean said on Monday he will stay on as head of the government until a new cabinet is formed, adding he would then quit “public and political life”. He said he accepted the leadership post in February 2023 in order to strengthen Moldova’s institutions. “Now that we have a new parliament, a new pro-European majority of PAS, we need to move on to another stage”, he said.

— AFP

Russia halts Trump call after Tomahawks warning

MOSCOW: Russia said on Monday that there were currently no plans for a call between presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, after the US leader warned he might send Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine. Trump has been mulling potential supplies of the long-range missiles to Kyiv via European allies since his meeting with Putin in Alaska in August failed to produce a peace deal. He said that he might warn Putin about the possible deliveries if Russia does not halt its offensive.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters: “There are no clear agreements on a phone conversation yet. “There are many opportunities for promptly organising such a conversation”, if it was needed, he added. Russia has repeatedly said it would see supplying the weapon as a significant escalation.



Infantry recruits protect against a simulated drone attack, in eastern Ukraine. — AFP

The missiles have a range of 2,500 kilometres, putting much of western Russia, including the capital Moscow, within striking distance. They are also technically capable of carrying nuclear warheads and Moscow said it would treat any launches of the missile as if they were loaded with a nuclear weapon.

Former president Dmitry Medvedev, now a deputy chair of Russia’s security council, said on Monday that if the United States opted to supply the weapons, it could backfire on Trump directly. “The delivery of these missiles could end badly for everyone. And above all, for Trump himself”, he said on Telegram.

In August, Trump and Medvedev, known for his hawkish and provocative anti-Western comments, clashed after the US leader upped his pressure on Moscow to halt its offensive on Ukraine. Trump responded by redeploying military submarines and warning that Medvedev’s statements could “lead to unintended consequences”.

Meanwhile, the European Union’s top diplomat Kaja Kallas said on Monday that Russia was “gambling with war”, after a spate of Russian drones and military jets crossing into the bloc’s airspace. Nato has boosted its defences along its eastern borders as it accused Moscow of testing the alliance’s air defences with drone incursions into several

members and by flying military jets in Estonian airspace.

“Every time a Russian drone or plane violates our airspace, there is a risk of escalation, unintended or not. Russia is gambling with war”, Kallas said during a visit to Kyiv. “To keep war at bay, we must translate the economic power of Europe into military deterrence”, she added. Kallas was in Kyiv for talks on military and financial support for Ukraine and especially its energy infrastructure, as Russia has resumed attacks on power plants ahead of winter.

Ukraine on Monday was forced to introduce power cuts across seven central and eastern regions as a result of the attacks, which Kyiv has called “cynical”.

“The enemy wants to affect the spirit and mood of our population”, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga said during a joint press conference with Kallas. “This is especially cynical on the eve of winter”, he added.

Ukraine retaliates by targeting Russian oil refineries, aiming to hamper funding of its war machine. It has launched more than 30 strikes on Russian energy sites since the beginning of August, also triggering a spike

in petrol prices inside Russia. An oil depot was struck overnight in Russian-occupied Crimea, sparking a large fire, according to the region’s Moscow-installed governor and a source in Ukraine’s security services.

A Russian drone struck a car carrying a married couple in Ukraine’s southern Zaporizhzhia region, killing them both, local authorities said. Kallas also indicated that Brussels backed the delivery of US long-range Tomahawk missile supplies to Ukraine. “We welcome all tools that make Ukraine stronger and Russia weaker”, she said.

Ukraine said on Monday it was introducing restrictions on energy consumption in at least seven regions following a series of recent Russian aerial attacks on power facilities.

“Due to the complicated situation in Ukraine’s Unified Energy System caused by previous Russian strikes, emergency power outages were implemented” across seven regions, the energy ministry said on social media. It mainly listed territories in the centre and east of the country, including the Donetsk region where officials have urged civilians to leave over targeted attacks on the grid.

— AFP

Macron rejects to resign, as no-confidence votes threaten new govt

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron rejected calls to resign and blasted his opponents on Monday, as his latest government was threatened by two no-confidence motions that could bring it down by the end of the week. France is in the midst of its worst political crisis in decades as a succession of minority governments seek to push deficit-reducing budgets through a truculent legislature split into three distinct ideological blocs. Macron has burned through five prime ministers in less than two years and many of his rivals have said the only way out of the crisis is for the president to call fresh legislative elections or resign, both of which he has refused to do.

Shortly after arriving in Egypt on Monday to attend a meeting to end the war in Gaza, Macron was defiant, blaming his rivals for destabilising France and saying he had no plans to step down before his second and

final term ends in 2027. “I ensure continuity and stability; and I will continue to do so”, he said, urging people not to forget that the mandate given to the president means “to serve, to serve, and to serve”.

On Friday, Macron reappointed Sebastien Lecornu, who had resigned as prime minister earlier in the week. Macron’s office announced Lecornu’s new cabinet late on Sunday, with many of the top jobs remaining unchanged, despite the prime minister’s pledge to name ministers who embody “renewal and diversity”.

Both the hard-left “France Unbowed” (LFI) party and the far-right National Rally (RN) filed no-confidence motions on Monday. Lecornu will face a no-confidence vote most likely on Thursday. It’s unclear if he has the votes needed to survive, as the Socialists — whose support he will almost certainly need to fight on — are keeping their



President Emmanuel Macron speaks to the media, in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. — Reuters

options open.

The Socialists want Lecornu to repeal Macron’s pension reform and roll out a billionaires tax, measures the right outright rejects. “There will

be no censure if the prime minister commits to abandoning Article 49.3 and suspending the pension reform”, Socialist lawmaker Philippe Brun said, referring to the constitutional

tool used to ram legislation through parliament without a vote and echoing remarks by the party’s secretary Olivier Faure on Sunday.

The newly appointed cabinet meets for a first time on Monday afternoon and must present a budget by Wednesday. France has the euro zone’s largest deficit, and Macron has tasked a string of prime ministers with passing slimmed-down budgets. Michel Barnier was the first to try, but he was toppled by parliament last December for his proposed budget cuts to the 2025 budget. His successor, Francois Bayrou managed to get the 2025 legislation over the line, but he was ousted last month over his proposals for the 2026 budget. “The political forces that decided to vote against Francois Bayrou and the political forces that sought to destabilise Sebastien Lecornu are solely responsible for this mess”, Macron said.

— Reuters

OPINION

Peace in Gaza, finally. Is it long lasting?



THE ISRAELI aggression in Gaza and the conflicts resulting from its continuous occupation of Palestinian territories are not new, but the violence that started on October 7, 2023, reached extreme levels. This violence even crossed the sovereign borders of Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, Syria, and recently Qatar.

Over 70,000 Palestinians, including newborns, children and women, have been killed in this aggression. Millions have been left homeless and are starving to death.

The summit that took place in Egypt on Monday has raised high hopes for a long-lasting solution to these age-old conflicts. However, people around the world, especially those in Gaza and Palestine, are rightfully sceptical due to past experiences where things only worsened after temporary truces or ceasefires.

The US president declared the war over in Gaza ahead of the summit of world leaders to finalise an agreement aimed at ending the conflict. If investments follow for rebuilding efforts, a brighter future for Gaza and Palestine in the coming decades can be expected.

The Sultanate of Oman welcomed the

agreement on terms and mechanisms for implementing the first phase of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip. It emphasised that the agreement will contribute to ending the war, releasing prisoners and detainees on both sides, and ensuring the flow of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

The Foreign Ministry stressed the importance of continuing regional and international efforts to consolidate the ceasefire and prepare the ground for a just and comprehensive political solution that guarantees the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and achieves security and stability in the region.

The Sultanate of Oman expressed hope that the peace deal will pave the way for a full withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from the Gaza Strip, create conditions for reconstruction, prevent the displacement of the Palestinian people, and support efforts for a just and comprehensive peace.

As we support the deal and look at it with hope, we must ask why it took the loss of 70,000 lives to reach this agreement. The conflict benefited no one except for some politicians, including Benjamin Netanyahu.

Looking towards the future, we must finally reach a peace deal. The United Nations

The Sultanate of Oman welcomed the agreement on terms and mechanisms for implementing the first phase of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip

Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) reported that as of October 1, 2025, 543 aid workers have been confirmed killed in Gaza.

Among these, over 370 workers have been killed since the war began. Children are facing extreme food deprivation, and acute malnutrition among children under five has more than doubled in the last year, with 132,000 expected to suffer through mid-2026.

Malnutrition was 27.9 per cent in Gaza City in the first half of September — nearly one in three young children is now malnourished, and the overall prevalence of malnutrition across the Gaza Strip is around 11.9 per cent.

Formal education is on hold in the Gaza Strip, with 660,000 children deprived of education due to the war. The education of children must be a part of any agreement to end the conflict in Gaza. The proposed plan must offer hope to more than 660,000 children out of school for the third year, and bringing them back to learning should be a collective priority to promote lasting peace and stability. Education in Gaza is limited to distance learning programmes, amid severe challenges due to ongoing hostilities, displacement, and regular disruptions to telecommunications and Internet services.

SCIENTISTS PROBE TAJIK GLACIER FOR CLUES TO CLIMATE RESISTANCE

PRAKASH MATHEMA

Greenland is melting, the Alps are melting and the Himalayas are melting - yet in one vast mountain region, huge glaciers have remained stable, or even gained mass, in recent decades. Can it last?

To find out, a dozen scientists, accompanied exclusively by a photographer, trekked high over one glacier in eastern Tajikistan to drill for ice cores - ancient, deep samples that can shed precious light on climate change.

In September and October, they first spent four days crossing the country from west to east in four-wheel drives, then climbed on foot to over 5,800 metres altitude on the Kon-Chukurbashi ice cap, near the Chinese border.

Camping for a week at the summit, in freezing temperatures and despite a day-long blizzard, the scientists from Switzerland, Japan, the US and Tajikistan drilled the glacier to extract two 105-metre-long ice cores, in sections.

These layers of ice, compacted over centuries, perhaps millennia, form an archive of climate indicators, yielding data on past snowfall, temperatures, atmosphere and dust.

They must now be analysed in a laboratory to reveal their dates, said the leader of the team, Evan Miles, a glaciologist affiliated with the universities of Fribourg and Zurich. “We’re hopeful for a truly unique core, not just for the region, but for the broader region actually, probably extending back 20 to 25 or 30,000 years.”

The apparently resistant glaciers are spread over thousands of kilometres of high mountain ranges in Central Asia, including Karakoram, Tian Shan, Kun Lun and the Pamir mountains of Tajikistan.

By delving back in time in the ice there, researchers hope to find out why these glaciers have resisted the general planetary warming of recent decades - and whether this so-called “Karakoram anomaly” could be ending.

“This whole region is globally unique because over the last 25 years, these glaciers have shown very, very limited mass loss and even mass gain,” said Miles. The glaciers have shown some limited signs of loss in recent years, but scientists want to determine whether this is a natural variation or the beginning of a real decline. “In order to understand that, we really, really need to have a longer time period of records of both temperature and precipitation at the glacier sites,” said Miles. “That’s the type of information that an ice core can tell us.” One core will be sent to Japan for analysis and another stored in an underground sanctuary in Antarctica at minus 50C.— AFP

Oman’s next export might be its way of thinking

FOR DECADES, Oman’s story was defined by its natural wealth — copper, gas and fisheries — the tangible resources that built its early prosperity. Yet as the global economy moves towards knowledge, creativity and innovation, the Sultanate of Oman’s most promising export may be something far less visible but infinitely more powerful: its way of thinking.

In today’s world, competitiveness is no longer determined by what a nation produces, but by how it thinks — how it learns, innovates, collaborates and adapts. Oman’s quiet transformation over the past two decades reveals a country preparing to compete not through scale, but through intellect, ethics and a distinct cultural mindset.

A CHANGING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

Across the world, the balance between natural and intellectual resources has shifted dramatically. According to the World Bank’s Human Capital Index (2023), education and skills now account for over 70 per cent of global wealth, up from around 40 per cent in the 1990s. Meanwhile, Unesco’s Global Education Monitoring Report notes that nations investing in creativity and knowledge exchange generate higher innovation output per capita. Oman has anticipated this shift. The Oman Vision 2040 identifies “Knowledge, Innovation and National Capabilities” as a cornerstone for sustainable progress, calling for a transition “from a natural-resource-based economy to a knowledge-based and innovation-driven one.” This policy direction signals a clear conviction: the most valuable resource of the future is not found underground, but within people’s minds.

THE OMANI WAY OF THINKING

What distinguishes Oman’s approach to development is not just its pursuit



IMAD EDDINE OUBIRI,

The writer is a specialist in public policy and international investment strategy

of knowledge, but the character of its intellectual evolution.

Where some countries chase acceleration at all costs, Oman advances deliberately, ensuring that economic transformation is matched by social cohesion. Its governance model is built on consultation (Shura), its diplomacy on mediation, and its education policies on ethics and sustainability. These are not abstract values — they are strategic assets, forming the foundation of an intellectual resource that the world increasingly needs: measured, human-centred wisdom.

FROM MINERALS TO MINDSETS

This shift from material to intellectual capital is already visible across Oman’s economy. Initiatives such as the Oman Technology Fund, Knowledge Oasis Muscat, and innovation programmes under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation are nurturing a generation of thinkers and entrepreneurs. In 2024, Omani startups attracted growing regional investment — especially in green technologies, logistics and digital services. Data from Ithraa indicates that SMEs exports grew by nearly 18 per cent year-on-year, while the Global Innovation Index 2023 ranked Oman among the top 10 countries worldwide in terms of improvement in innovation output.

Intellectual Diplomacy

Oman’s intellectual resources are not limited to technology and education — they extend to diplomacy and soft power. The Sultanate of Oman’s global reputation for neutrality and constructive dialogue is, in itself, an intellectual export. In an era of geopolitical tension, Oman’s approach to negotiation — grounded in respect, balance and listening — offers lessons far beyond the region.

Looking ahead, Oman has the potential to turn its centuries-old

culture of dialogue into a global learning model — sharing expertise in mediation, sustainability and cultural intelligence. This would represent a new form of international cooperation: exporting not just goods or services, but values and frameworks for coexistence.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the energy transition accelerates, nations that once relied on minerals are redefining themselves as exporters of ideas, systems and thought. Oman’s opportunity lies precisely here — in converting its values into intellectual capital, and its experience into globally relevant know-how. The future will not belong to the fastest, but to the most thoughtful. Oman’s strength lies in its ability to think deeply, act deliberately and grow sustainably — qualities that the world increasingly seeks but rarely finds.

FIVE TAKEAWAYS

- Oman’s next great export may be intellectual, not material. The country’s human capital and mindset are emerging as core assets in the global knowledge economy.
- The world’s wealth is now primarily human-made. With over 70 per cent of global value derived from education and skills, Oman’s investment in talent is timely and strategic.
- Vision 2040 anchors knowledge and innovation at the heart of national growth. This shift reflects a future-oriented economic and social model.
- Oman’s diplomacy and development ethos are part of its intellectual capital. Its reputation for balance and dialogue has real global value.
- The future belongs to nations that think before they move. Oman’s deliberate pace is not caution — it is quiet confidence, grounded in wisdom and cultural intelligence.

Don't feel ashamed to talk about mental health



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

THE WORLD has just celebrated World Mental Health Day on October 10. This day is a result of a global advocacy and awareness programme started by the World Federation for Mental Health way back in 1992.

We have come a long way. The goal is clear - to raise awareness about mental health around the world and to mobilise efforts to support those experiencing mental health issues. This year's theme is 'Access to Services - Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies.'

Even after marking the day for more than three decades, many of us are still shy of being judged and would never think of actually seeking help. The impact is huge because it affects our daily life, relationships, and professional path.

A physical ailment gets immediate attention, but the invisible mental health issues are addressed much later, especially when signs are more visible.

Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, influencing how we think, feel, and act.

On one end of the scale is the different variety of stresses that tend to come at us unexpectedly, and on the other side is our urge to be successful and meaningful in life.

While some step out to seek help, others

tend to suffer silently.

Will mental healthcare be a reality for people worldwide?

Each year, different topics have been addressed, such as this year, mental health in humanitarian crises, mental health at work, mental health as a universal human right, making mental health and well-being for all a global priority, etc. In 2019, the theme was 'focus on suicide prevention.' There have been incidences of suicide cases amongst expatriates where no one had even noticed signs of depression in them.

Oceans Healthcare shared some tips to stay healthy mentally by making exercise part of our routine, as research shows exercise can improve symptoms of depression and anxiety. Most importantly, set realistic expectations. For individuals who are struggling with low energy and motivation, consider starting slow with a 5-minute daily walk because apparently this is a good way to get your body moving, and it is easy to slowly increase the activity level as confidence builds.

They also recommend meditation to reduce stress. Studies suggest meditation can help with stress and anxiety.

Taking social media breaks is a must because social media use has been linked to depression and anxiety. 'From comparison culture leading to lower self-esteem to the constant stream of negative news, social

Even after marking the day for more than three decades, many of us are still shy of being judged and would never think of actually seeking help. The impact is huge because it affects our daily life, relationships, and professional path

media may have a bigger effect on your daily mental health than you think. Try taking regular breaks, even if it's just for a couple of days at a time,' noted the organisation. The most important part is to ask for help.

According to Oceans Healthcare, mental health challenges increase the urge to isolate, but this will only worsen these feelings in the long term. They added that talking about your feelings can be a great way to understand and address the root cause.

According to the WHO, nearly one in seven people in the world lives with a mental disorder. If not treated, life can be disrupted. But the reality is that not everyone has access to care. We might be familiar with depression and anxiety, but there are other disorders such as bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, disruptive behaviour and dissocial disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, etc. Eating disorders are also part of mental disorders, namely, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. According to the WHO, although most people are resilient, "People who are exposed to adverse circumstances such as poverty, violence, disability, and inequality are at higher risk." With so much to know and understand, people with friends who are good listeners tend to be better off. Maybe we all should learn to recognise the signs of depression in each other.

At least, they are not lonely.

BRAZIL HOPES COP30 CAN UNITE WORLD FOR CLIMATE ACTION

ANNA PELEGRI AND NICK PERRY

Brazil is betting its much-hyped climate summit in the Amazon next month can deliver something increasingly rare in a fractured world: proof that nations can still unite to confront a global crisis.

It faces tough odds, with a hostile United States unlikely to show up, political appetite for climate action at a low ebb, and eye-watering prices for accommodation threatening turnout.

Some 50,000 attendees are expected at the two-week COP30 conference starting November 10 in Belem, a city in one of Brazil's poorer states best known as a gateway to the Amazon rainforest.

On Monday, climate ministers meet in Brasilia ahead of the marathon UN negotiations that bring together nearly every nation for the most important climate talks of the year.

Belem is a symbolic yet fraught setting and a personal choice of Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who wants to spotlight the rainforest's role in absorbing carbon dioxide.

But pressure is mounting on COP30 to provide more than just a scenic backdrop as the world approaches the 1.5 °C warming target agreed under the Paris climate accord a decade ago.

The last two years were the hottest ever recorded, and major polluters are not cutting emissions fast enough to avoid destructive and potentially irreversible changes to the planet.

Lula - whose own environmental record is mixed, having slowed Amazon deforestation but approved new oil exploration - has promised a "COP of truth".

"It will be the moment for world leaders to prove the seriousness of their commitment to the planet," Lula told the United Nations General Assembly on September 23. A likely candidate for re-election next year, Lula is determined to burnish Brazil's global standing after hosting recent major summits of BRICS and G20 nations.

He has invited dozens of leaders to Belem ahead of the negotiations, but numbers are not yet confirmed. Prince William will represent Britain's King Charles and the leaders of South Africa and Colombia are expected, but Austria's president has already declined, citing high hotel prices.

Officials in Gambia, Cape Verde and Japan also said they expected to reduce the size of their delegations. US President Donald Trump, who declared climate change a "con job" during his own UN address last month, is not expected to attend, nor is anyone else from his administration.

The United States intends to withdraw from the Paris Agreement for a second time as it promotes fossil fuels at home and abroad.

Brazil is adamant that COP30 shows global climate solidarity is alive even as wars, tariffs and populist politics shake the international order.

The US absence has underscored the lack of an obvious climate leader in Belem, particularly as the European Union deals with internal revolt over its green agenda. — AFP

Will AI pay off the West's debts?

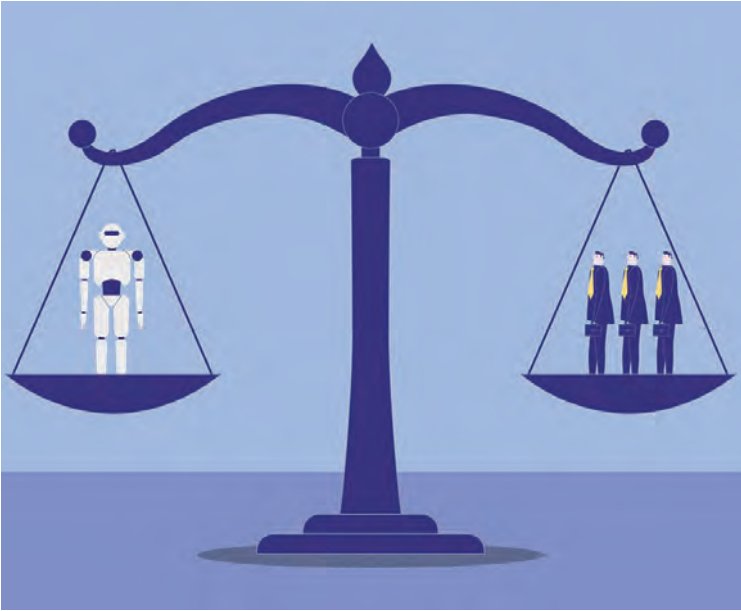
THERE IS no question that AI is changing the global economy at unprecedented speed. But will it rescue rich countries from intensifying debt pressures, particularly as rapidly ageing populations increase pressure on benefit programmes? If so, could these countries safely run even larger deficits, effectively borrowing against ultra-rich future generations?

No one should bet the farm on it. To be sure, a wildly upbeat assessment of AI's potential impact on economic growth has propelled asset markets higher over the last few years. This is especially true for euphoric equity markets, which continue to rally despite political paralysis in France, a government shutdown and an all-out assault on central-bank independence in the United States, and an exodus of high-skilled talent from the United Kingdom.

Although I have long argued that AI will eventually solve the problem of advanced economies' anaemic growth, I have also cautioned that several possible obstacles could slow down the pace of this transformation. Among the many material, legal, economic, and social factors to reckon with are electricity supply; intellectual-property rights; a lack of skilled AI workers; and the need to establish a comprehensive framework governing how chatbots communicate and exchange information, including some kind of price mechanism.

AI companies have invested vast sums in the race to dominate the market (should governments allow it), seemingly willing to haemorrhage money in exchange for users and information. But eventually, probably in the not-too-distant future, these firms will need to develop revenue streams, most likely through advertising, like social-media companies before them.

Although US President Donald Trump's administration has signalled full speed ahead on AI, knotty questions involving how moral judgement is coded into



AI will eventually solve the problem of advanced economies' anaemic growth.



KENNETH ROGOFF

The writer is a former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University and the recipient of the 2011 Deutsche Bank Prize in Financial Economics

these models – currently the remit of a small group of developers – will ultimately be taken up by the US Congress and the courts, as well as by authorities in other countries. But the most pushback will likely come from hundreds of millions of displaced white-collar workers, who are set to become the newest political cause, just as manufacturing workers are today and as farm workers were in the 1960s and 1970s.

Anyone who works with a computer is vulnerable to automation. The idea that a handful of firms can replace a large portion of the workforce without massive political upheaval is sheer fantasy. Barring some dramatic authoritarian turn, unrest is all but guaranteed. This will provide ample fodder for the Zohran Mamdanis of the world (Mamdani, a 33-year-old socialist, is the front-runner to become New York City's next mayor in November), especially because AI seems to be eliminating jobs for younger workers.

Then there is the inconvenient truth that many cutting-edge AI applications are in the military domain, which could trigger a massive arms race and even lead to a proliferation of wars fought with drone armies and other AI-backed weapons systems. Geopolitical

fracturing and conflict are harmful to long-term growth and are as likely to drain tax revenues as boost them. AI could also empower smaller states and terrorist groups by effectively giving them access to leading physicists and biologists at the press of a button.

Finally, just because Trump, an unrepentant climate-change denier, is back in the White House does not mean that the threats posed by global warming have disappeared. The costs of unfettered climate change are set to rise sharply over the coming decades – unless, that is, our AI overlords manage to solve the problem (although they may conclude that the solution involves having far fewer people).

The idea that, following a long and painful transition, the arrival of artificial general intelligence will solve all the rich world's problems is hyperbole. Even if AGI supercharges growth, it will almost certainly lead to a much higher share of capital in output, and a correspondingly lower share for labour. Indeed, the stock market is booming precisely because firms expect labour costs to shrink. Given this, the high profit expectations embedded in soaring equity prices cannot be understood as translating one-for-one into overall growth.

That brings us back to government debt. There is no reason to suppose that AI-driven growth will lead to an equivalent increase in government tax revenues, even though that might have been a reasonable assumption to make in the past. After all, capital is much harder to tax than labour, partly because it tends to be more concentrated and politically powerful, and partly because it can move freely across borders.

Of course, higher tariff walls could prevent this capital flight, but any such strategy would ultimately be self-defeating. So yes, the AI transformation is coming, and has already contributed to a new arms race between the US and China. But it would be reckless to assume that advanced economies can rely on AI to resolve budget problems that human politicians cannot.

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SPORTS

SCORING SPREE



In a standout match, Aria Academy dominated Afifa Al Yaaribi School with a 10–0 victory.

BIG WINS MARK SECOND ROUND OF GIRLS’ FOOTBALL LEAGUE

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

The second round of the 2025 Girls’ Football League witnessed a remarkable scoring spree, as academies and schools continued to deliver strong performances and showcase the rapid growth of women’s football in the Sultanate of Oman.

In the standout matches, Aria Academy dominated Afifa Al Yaaribi School with a 10–0 victory, while Juventus Academy triumphed over Hail Al Awamer School with a score of 8–2. Juventus then reaffirmed their superiority with a second win against Afifa Al Yaaribi School, finishing 6–0. The round concluded with Hail Al Awamer School defeating Al Salam School 6–0.

The league is organised by the Oman Football Association (OFA), represented by its Women’s Football Committee, in cooperation with Oman Refco Company, and the matches are held at Goal One pitches in Al Athaiba. The second round featured a high technical level and great enthusiasm from the players, reflecting the growing attention to women’s football development. The tournament also coincides with the celebration of Omani Women’s Day, which highlights the vital role of women in various fields, including sports.

Farah al Ghafri, a player from Hail Al Awamer School, said that some teams in the league possess greater experience and receive more professional training compared to school teams, making the competition stronger and more challenging. However, she emphasised that these technical differences do not diminish her team’s determination, affirming that she and her teammates will give their utmost to perform better in the upcoming matches and achieve positive results.

She added that participating in the league provided her with a valuable opportunity to enhance her technical and physical skills while learning from other well-trained teams. She noted that such competitions help players gain self-confidence and discipline within the team. Farah al Ghafri expressed her hope that women’s football in Oman will continue to develop in the coming years through more tournaments and improved training programmes.

Meanwhile, Tala Qarnqout, a player from Juventus Academy, expressed her happiness to take part in the league, noting that the competition is filled with enthusiasm, encouragement and support from coaches and fans alike. She said: “We are having a special experience that helps us improve our skills and refine our technical abilities. The team prepared well before the start of the league with intensive training focused on tactical and physical aspects.”

She added that understanding and team spirit among the players were key factors behind their success, emphasising that such tournaments give them more confidence on the field and fuel their passion for football. Qarnqout expressed her ambition, along with her teammates, to continue achieving victories and competing for the league title, praising the efforts of the OFA and the Women’s Committee for providing an inspiring sporting environment for girls.

Qatar-UAE clash to decide Oman chances for playoff

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

ALL EYES IN OMAN will turn to Doha on Tuesday night for the decisive clash between hosts Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 2026 Playoffs (Group A) which will determine the Red Warriors’ fate in their historic bid to qualify for the Fifa World Cup for the first time. The crucial encounter will kick off at 9:15 pm (Oman time) at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium with high stakes for all three teams in the group. Oman’s dream of reaching the global stage now rests entirely on the result of this final Group A fixture to compete for the playoff spot.

Following their 2-1 defeat to UAE on Saturday, Oman finished their group campaign with one point, after a goalless draw with Qatar in the opening match. The second-placed team from the group will advance to a playoff against the Group B runners-up, with the winner securing a final berth in the 2026 Fifa World Cup which will be co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

UAE will be eyeing for a second appearance at the finals after having made their debut in 1990 while Qatar will look to present in this edition for the second straight attendance after the successful hosting of Fifa World Cup in 2022.

Coach Cosmin Olariu side will enter Tuesday’s encounter with full confidence after their strong comeback against Oman on Saturday by 2-1. They will play with two chances as the victory and draw will secure them the direct ticket to Fifa World Cup in 2026. Qatar, on the other side, will utilise the fans and home advantages in order to achieve the triumph and book ticket to World Cup.

DISAPPOINTMENT

Oman head coach Carlos Queiroz expressed his disappointment with the result but deep pride in his players following the 2-1 defeat to the United Arab Emirates in their second and final match of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 2026 Playoffs (Group A) which took place on Saturday night at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha.

“I am not happy with the result but I am very proud of my players and what they presented on the field despite all the



Oman’s Issam al Subhi in action against the UAE. — Reuters

challenges,” Queiroz said in the post match press conference.

“The players created many scoring opportunities but unfortunately we failed to convert them into goals. The performance deserved a better result.”

The hard-fought loss left Oman with one point from two matches after an opening goalless draw against Qatar. Their hopes of advancing now rest on the outcome of Tuesday’s final group match between Qatar and the UAE. The group winners will qualify directly for the next stage, while the second-placed team will proceed to a playoff against the Group B runners-up — with that winner earning a spot in the Fifa Intercontinental Playoff Tournament.

The Portuguese coach praised his players’ resilience and attitude under difficult conditions.

“We faced major challenges including limited rest time and little opportunity to prepare for this decisive phase,” he said.

“Our players needed more rhythm but

that was difficult to achieve. Some of them joined the team just one day before the playoff began.”

Queiroz thanked his squad for their commitment and praised their determination. “I want to thank all the players for their top-level commitment and fighting spirit in every minute of the match. They showed true character and represented Oman with pride. Despite the disappointment, we will keep believing.”

The veteran tactician also congratulated the UAE on their victory. “Congratulations once again to the UAE. They made a strong comeback and we respect that. Oman’s chances are still alive we now look to the UAE’s match against Qatar. If the result goes our way, our dream continues.” Oman had taken the lead through a Kouame Kouadio own goal before the UAE turned the game around in the final stages with goals from Marcus Meloni and Caio Lucas, securing the comeback win and moving to the top of the group with three points.

Oman handball squad for Asian tourney announced

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

The Oman Handball Association (OHA) has announced the preliminary squad of the national men’s handball team in preparation for the 22nd Asian Men’s Handball Championship, scheduled to take place in Kuwait from January 15 to 29, 20226.

The tournament will serve as a qualifier for the 2027 IHF World Men’s Handball Championship in Germany.

The official draw for the championship will be held on October 15 at the headquarters of the Asian Handball Federation in Kuwait at 8:30 pm (Oman time), where participating nations will learn their group placements and match schedules.

The national team will be led by head coach Nabil al Balushi and assistant coach Ahmed Ambusaidi, both of whom are highly regarded



The tournament will serve as a qualifier for the 2027 IHF World Men’s Handball Championship in Germany.

Omani tacticians. The first phase of preparations is set to begin on October 28, with a focus on physical conditioning and tactical development ahead of the continental competition.

The 26 player preliminary roster features a mix of experience and youth, representing various domestic clubs and one professional abroad.

Nabil al Balushi emphasised that the team is undergoing a rebuilding phase aimed at

forming a competitive and balanced squad capable of achieving strong results at the continental level,

added that the upcoming training camps will include intensive physical and technical sessions, as well as friendly matches against regional opponents to fine tune performance before the tournament.

This will be the fourth time Kuwait hosts the Asian Championship, following the editions of 1995, 2000 and 2010.

The matches will take place at the Sheikh Saad al Abdullah Sports Complex with the participation of 16 national teams, divided into four groups, the top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals, while others will compete for ranking positions from ninth to 16th.

The top four teams of the championship will earn direct qualification to the 2027 World Championship in Germany, adding extra intensity and prestige to this highly anticipated continental tournament.

Oman Squad: Abdulhakim al Siyabi, Bashar al Hinai, Mohammed al Araimi, Sameeh al Azani, Abdulaziz al Majrafi, Mohammed al Daghaishi, Said al Hasani, Qais al Hasani, Qusai al Battashi, al Azhar al Hadeedi, Nawaf al Hasani, Saud al Hasani, Khalid al Jabri, Azzan al Maashari, Muhanad al Zarafi, Al Waleed al Hinai, Omar al Daghaishi and Hassan al Balushi from Shabab Al Ahli Dubai.

SHORTTAKES



ACTIVE OMAN HALF MARATHON 2025 TO KICK OFF AT OAA

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

In a vibrant and energetic atmosphere, Active Oman is gearing up to host the Active Oman Half Marathon 2025 on October 23 at the Oman Automobile Association Arena, featuring two main race distances: 21 km and 5 km.

This sporting event aims to promote a culture of fitness and physical activity across different segments of society by providing a motivating environment that combines challenge, fun, and health. The race welcomes runners from companies, institutions, and the general public, representing a wide range of age groups – from under 18 years old to over 50 years old.

The event is organised in conjunction with Omani Youth Day, which highlights the importance of empowering young people, supporting their talents, and encouraging their athletic initiatives.

Active Oman serves as an integrated destination dedicated to sports, fitness, and recreation. The venue includes a wide range of facilities and activities such as VR Golf, the Shooting Club, Karting Track, billiards and snooker halls and modern fitness gyms at Strike, making it an ideal hub that combines entertainment and physical well-being in one place. The race is expected to achieve great success thanks to the organisation and dynamic participation, marking a valuable addition to the sports events calendar in Oman.

PENGE WINS SPANISH OPEN TITLE



MADRID: England’s Marco Penge held his nerve to seal his third European Tour title of the season with a playoff victory over Daniel Brown at the Spanish Open in Madrid on Sunday.

Penge sealed victory on the first sudden-death hole, after his fellow countryman Brown had come back from five shots behind heading into the last round. “It felt like I was really up against it, but I feel like I managed myself really well and managed to stay solid,” said world number 55 Penge. “I felt good. I was just trying to stick to the same stuff I’ve been doing for the last six months.”

Penge also won the Hainan Classic and the Danish Golf Championship earlier this year in a breakthrough campaign. — AFP



Oman celebrate after key UAE wicket of Mohammed Waseem in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia/EAP Qualifier.

Nadeem blitz seals 5-wicket win for Oman over UAE

IN A PULSATING Super Six encounter, Oman inched closer to T20 World Cup qualification with a thrilling five-wicket victory over the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at the Oman Cricket Academy ground on Monday.

The win marked Oman's fourth successive victory in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia/EAP Qualifier and also avenged their Asia Cup defeat to the UAE last month.

The match boiled down to a spectacular finish, with Oman needing 29 runs from the last three overs. It was 25-year-old Nadeem Khan who emerged as the hero, producing a blistering 30 off 16 balls, including three towering sixes and two boundaries. He dramatically shifted the momentum with two massive sixes off Zahid Ali in the 18th over, reducing the equation to 17 runs from 12 balls.

In the penultimate over, Junaid Siddique of UAE conceded just five runs, leaving 12 needed off the final over. Muhammad Arfan was entrusted to defend, but Nadeem delivered a masterclass under pressure. After a wide and a dot from Arfan, Nadeem struck a crisp four, followed by a booming six over mid-off, before stealing a single to fine leg, completing a sensational victory as the hosts crossed the line at 113/5 in 19.4 overs. With a wicket to his credit and invaluable unbeaten 30, he was deservedly named the player of the match.

Oman's chase was anchored by a strong start from Jatinder Singh (33 off 23) and Aamir Kaleem (14 off 21), who shared a



Oman's Nadeem Khan plays a shot against the UAE at the OCA grounds in Al Amerat.

43-run opening stand in the powerplay. Wickets fell at regular intervals once the duo departed, including Mohammad Nadeem (14 off 28) and Hammad Mirza (14 off 20), but Nadeem Khan's late blitz ensured Oman held their nerve.

Batting first, the UAE posted a below-

par 112/7 in 20 overs. Disaster struck early when Jonathan Figy was dismissed first ball by Shah Faisal, caught by Aryan Bisht. Skipper Muhammad Waseem (22 off 35) tried to steady the innings but fell to Sufyan Mehmood, leaving UAE struggling. Contributions from Alishan Sharafu (8 off 6) and Muhammad Arfan (17 off 15) offered fleeting momentum, while Harshit Kaushik (19 off 18) and Dhruv Parashar (17 off 20) fell to sharp fielding — Kaushik run out from a throw by Aamir Kaleem, Parashar run out from keeper Vinayak Shukla. Zahid Ali's unbeaten 18 off 12 balls pushed UAE past 110.

Oman's bowlers were consistently effective. Shakeel Ahmed (1/13) was the pick of the attack for his economy, while Sufyan Mehmood (1/20), Nadeem Khan (1/21), Jiten Ramanandi (1/19) and Shah Faisal (1/28) all struck at key moments to stifle UAE's progress.

With two Super Six matches remaining — against Nepal on Wednesday and Japan on Friday — Oman continue to inch closer to World Cup qualification, riding a wave of confidence, composure, and a team capable of delivering in high-pressure moments.

Brief scores: UAE 112/7 (Muhammad Waseem 22, Harshit Kaushik 19, Zahid Ali 18*; Shakeel Ahmed 1/13, Nadeem Khan 1/21, Jitenkumar Ramanandi 1/19, Shah Faisal 1/28, Sufyan Mehmood 1/20) lost to Oman 113/5 in 19.4 overs (Jatinder Singh 33, Nadeem Khan 30*; Harshit Kaushik 1/15, Zahid Ali 1/15).

India close in on Test series sweep despite West Indies fightback

NEW DELHI: India closed in on a 2-0 series sweep in the second Test despite some spirited West Indies batting led by centuries from John Campbell and Shai Hope on Monday. Needing 121 for victory after bowling out the West Indies for 390, the hosts reached 63-1 at stumps on day four at Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium.

KL Rahul, on 25, and Sai Sudharsan, on 30, were batting in a stand of 54 at close of an absorbing day's play. Yashasvi Jaiswal fell early for eight after left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican had the Indian opener caught at long-on while attempting an ambitious heave. Rahul and the left-handed Sudharsan steadied the ship and the pair kept up the scoring with singles and occasional boundaries against a persistent West Indies spin attack.

Earlier, Justin Greaves with an unbeaten 50 and Jayden Seales (32) put on 79 runs for the final wicket to frustrate India after the West Indies slipped to 311-9 in the second session.

Greaves and the left-handed number 10 defied the bowlers for 133 deliveries with straight-bat shots before Jasprit Bumrah dismissed Seales in the final session for his third wicket. Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav also took three wickets to add to his five-wicket haul in the West Indies' first innings.

Campbell (115) and Hope (103) had steered the West Indies into the lead after the tourists resumed the day on 173-2 while following on.

"I think it's a big positive for us," Campbell said of their fightback. "Having not gotten the best first



innings, we came out second innings and batted over 100 overs, so that's a big plus for us." The left-right batting pair of Campbell and Hope put on 177 runs for the third wicket.

KULDEEP STRIKES

Opener Campbell reached his first Test ton with a six off Ravindra Jadeja before the left-arm spinner trapped him lbw in the morning session.

Hope kept up the charge after lunch and reached his first Test hundred in eight years with a boundary off pace bowler Mohammed Siraj.

Siraj had his revenge soon after when the batter dragged his delivery onto his stumps.

Kuldeep then took over to send back wicketkeeper Tevin Imlach, trapped lbw for two. The left-arm

wrist spinner then struck twice in three balls including skipper Roston Chase for 40 before Greaves and Seales put on a defiant partnership.

India bowled more than 200 overs on a slow pitch that made life tough for bowlers. The visitors had waged a fightback after being reduced to 35-2 in their second innings on day three, but the batters made sure the game will go the distance to day five.

"Good to be bowling long spells and heartening to have taken 20 West Indies wickets," Indian spinner Washington Sundar told reporters.

"We got to be really fit and on top of our game. In Test cricket you honestly expect most of the Test matches to go till the fifth day and challenge you in every way possible," the off-spinner said. — AFP

SPORTS

WOMEN’S WORLD CUP



HEALY CENTURY POWERS AUSTRALIA TO RECORD CHASE

VISAKHAPATNAM, INDIA: Australia completed a record women’s one-day international chase as Alyssa Healy’s commanding 142 runs powered the defending champions to a three-wicket win over India on Sunday.

Set 331 for victory, Australia reached their target with six balls to spare after Ellyse Perry guided her side home with an unbeaten 47 alongside Kim Garth.

The victory, their third in four matches, lifted Australia to the top of the standings while hosts India are third after suffering a second straight defeat, having lost to South Africa earlier.

Healy set the tone for the chase, sharing a brisk opening stand with Phoebe Litchfield and later a crucial partnership with Ashleigh Gardner (45) before falling with Australia still needing 66 from 68 balls.

Perry, who had earlier retired hurt with cramps, returned late in the innings to guide Australia over the line.

“Really proud of the group. A little bit tight at the back end. We have been preaching about the depth in our line-up, the fact that we could chase 330 (proved it),” Healy said.

“Full credit to our bowlers for pulling it back; we could have been chasing 360-plus. I was trying to lock in for a big day. To contribute heavily was great, would have liked to stay a bit longer but the girls got the job done.”

The ODI chase eclipsed the 302 made by Sri Lanka to beat South Africa at Potchefstroom in April 2024.

Earlier, Smriti Mandhana (80) and Pratika Rawal (75) shared a 155-run opening stand to put India on course for a huge total before a collapse saw them lose nine wickets for 138 runs to finish on 330. Annabel Sutherland’s five-wicket haul had triggered their slide.

Left-arm spinner N Shree Charani impressed for India with 3-41, but Healy’s blistering hundred — her first as captain and third in a World Cup — proved decisive as Australia extended their dominance in the tournament. — Reuters

GHANA QUALIFY FOR 2026 WORLD CUP



Mohammed Kudus celebrates after scoring a goal.

JOHANNESBURG: Mohammed Kudus scored as Ghana beat Comoros 1-0 in Accra on Sunday to win Group I and become the fifth African qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup after Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

Cheered on by a capacity 40,000 crowd, Ghana dominated first half possession and territory, but slow, predictable attacks meant Comoros goalkeeper Adel Anzimati-Aboudou was seldom troubled. However, the home side wasted little time after the interval in taking the lead as Tottenham midfielder Kudus struck on 47 minutes.

Comoros only partially cleared a goalmouth scramble and when the ball was crossed low into the six-yard box, Kudus tapped it into the net from point-blank range. Success against Comoros was particularly sweet as the Indian Ocean islanders shocked Ghana at the 2022 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) and beat them again in the second round of World Cup qualifying two years ago. Ghana top the group with 25 points from 10 matches. Madagascar finished second with 19 points despite a 4-1 loss to third-placed Mali in Bamako. — AFP



Al Manar Racing by Team WRT’s Al Faisal al Zubair, Jens Klingmann and Ben Tuck won the combined GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Teams’ Sprint and Endurance Teams’ title in the Gold Cup category.

Al Manar Racing finish 2nd overall, confirm team title

AL MANAR Racing by Team WRT’s Al Faisal al Zubair, Jens Klingmann and Ben Tuck won the combined GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Teams’ Sprint and Endurance Teams’ title in the Gold Cup category at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya on Sunday afternoon.

By rounding off their 2025 campaign with a magnificent second position in the overall standings at the final endurance round, they also finished as runners-up to the Verstappen Racing.com trio of Thierry Vermeulen, Chris Lulham and Harry King in the Gold Cup Endurance Drivers’ and Teams’ standings.

The BMW M4 GT3 EVO trio finished the race as runners-up to the triumphant Garage 59 McLaren team of Louise Prette, Dean Macdonald and Adam Smalley.

Oman-based Al Zubair said: “This was an amazing way to end the season with second overall and second in class as well. That goes to show how strong the Gold Cup has been this year. I am extremely happy with how the whole season went. I think the Verstappen car deserved to win the championship. They were very strong throughout.

“To take my first overall podium in the GT World Challenge and to be second is amazing with the best drivers in the world in this championship. Qualifying was a bit difficult but in the race the strategy worked well and the track temperatures were better. That suited our engine. It all worked perfectly. It was a great way to end the season. The strategy was the key today. This is something I have always aimed for and, to do it today,

was icing on the cake.”

The three-hour race started under a second formation lap but the action was stopped around the half-hour mark following a heavy collision between the Kessel Racing Ferrari and the Winward Racing Mercedes.

The yellow flag and the safety car controlled the next 17-18 minutes of the race and several teams, including Al Manar Racing, opted to make a premature driver change under the safety car around the 45-minute mark. Al Zubair had slipped to sixth before climbing back to fifth in the Gold Cup standings.

Al Zubair handed over to Tuck with 20 laps on the clock and 12 minutes left of the first stint. Initially, they slipped to seventh in the Gold Cup standings but the pit stop proved to be a master stroke and Tuck duly climbed to fourth and then third in the Gold Cup standings behind the Optimum Motorsport and Garage 59 McLarens.

Racing resumed with 2hr 01min on the clock and Tuck maintained third in the Gold Cup standings and climbed to fifth in the overall classification. The Briton settled into a comfortable pace as the second stint unfolded and retained third in the Gold Cup. He then overtook Leonardo Moncini in the Tresor Attempto Audi to snatch fourth overall just before the halfway mark of the race.

Tuck then passed Oliver Soderstrom in the Walkenhorst Motorsport Aston Martin to snatch third. It meant that Gold Cup cars held the three overall leading positions in the race after 44 laps.

A stranded BMW forced a short full course yellow with 1hr 22min on the clock with light drizzle starting to fall on the circuit. Tuck managed to climb to second after the restart behind the Garage 59 McLaren when the Optimum Motorsport car made its final pit stop and lifted the Verstappen.com Aston Martin into third in the Gold standings.

A heavy crash into the wall that involved one of the Tresor Attempto Racing Audis then brought out another yellow flag with 68 minutes remaining and teams frantically began to make their final pit stops.

Klingmann replaced Tuck and Prette took the wheel of the race-leading Garage 59 McLaren with speeds restricted to 80km/h by the Delta pace ruling. Racing resumed with 53 minutes remaining and Klingmann managed to stay in second position, despite having to pass a couple of back markers and coming under initial pressure from Arthur Le Clerc in the AF Corse Ferrari in the tussle for second overall. By lap 64, with 45 minutes on the clock, the German continued to shadow the race-leading McLaren and he kept his cool to stay in second place.

Rowe Racing’s Raffaele Marciello began to apply the pressure on Klingman in the closing laps after passing the AF Corse Ferrari and the Swiss racer reduced the gap to less than a second before passing the German with less than three minutes to run. But Klingmann was not to be denied and he re-passed the Pro class-winning BMW on the 91st and final lap to confirm a sensational second overall in a gripping season’s finale.

Royal Cavalry secure top spots in French races

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

The Royal Cavalry of Oman continued their impressive run on European racecourses, claiming both first and second places at the Tarbes Racecourse in France, as part of the ongoing series of purebred Arabian horse races.

In the sixth race, an open class event for purebred Arabian horses over 1,600 metres, the mare Sawarem clinched first place under jockey Michael Forest and trainer Fredric Sanchez, showcasing remarkable speed and composure in the final stretch.

Meanwhile, the mare Al



Sawarem clinched first place under jockey Michael Forest.

Safanat finished second in the fourth race, also an open class contest for purebred Arabians over 1,500 metres, ridden by

Michael Forest and trained by Elisabeth Bernard.

This latest triumph adds to a series of strong

performances by the Royal Cavalry throughout the current European season.

Earlier this year, Al Safinat won at Chantilly Racecourse in June, while the mare Al Nahda impressed with a third place finish at Deauville in August, these consistent results highlight the steady progress and competitive strength of Omani horses on the international stage.

The Royal Cavalry are preparing for their next appearance at Toulouse Racecourse in mid of November, marking the final leg of the European racing season, the upcoming event is expected to attract top class Arabian horses.

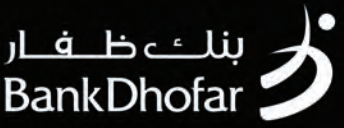


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SHORTTAKES

OQAE LAUNCHES OMAN’S FIRST LARGE-SCALE SuperESCO PROJECT



OQ officials at the launch of the SuperESCO project at OQ Refineries & Petroleum Industries facilities.

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, OCT 13

OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE), a subsidiary of OQ, Oman’s global energy investment group, announced on Monday, October 13, 2025, the launch of Oman’s first large-scale SuperESCO project.

Through the SuperESCO model, OQAE will implement comprehensive energy efficiency upgrades at OQ Refineries & Petroleum Industries (OQRPI) facilities, including equipment replacement, system optimisation and operational improvements. The initiative will generate annual savings of 22.5 GWh and reduce CO₂ emissions by 9.4 kilotonnes, delivering long-term value through optimised operating costs and improved asset performance. In doing so, SuperESCO model supports Oman’s decarbonisation and sustainability objectives under Oman’s Net Zero 2050.

Ghalib al Maamari, Acting CEO of OQAE stated: “This project is a turning point for energy efficiency in Oman. By introducing a scalable SuperESCO model that funds itself through guaranteed performance, we are setting a national benchmark for industrial decarbonisation. We are leveraging our in-house expertise to lay the foundation for a national pipeline of such initiatives, firmly positioning Oman as a regional leader in sustainable energy”.

As the sole developer, investor and project manager, OQAE oversees the full project lifecycle. From feasibility studies and tendering to contractor selection, implementation and verification, OQAE ensures best-in-class technical delivery and guaranteed performance outcomes.

FORUM EXPLORES OMAN’S ECONOMIC READINESS FOR GLOBAL SHOCKS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Economy on Monday organised a forum titled “Economic Readiness to Face Global Shocks: Opportunities and Challenges” to mark the International Day for Disaster Reduction. The event, held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, focused on strengthening economic resilience and systematic preparedness to navigate global uncertainties.

In his address, Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy and Head of the Economic Sector, highlighted the growing complexity and interconnection of the global economy. He stressed that assessing the readiness and resilience of Oman’s economic system is vital to sustain growth and development while anticipating emerging challenges and opportunities.

Dr Al Maawali noted that early identification of economic risks, accurate evaluation and proactive strategies are key to maintaining economic stability and business continuity. — ONA

Indian company looks at Oman for green iron plant

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 13

OMAN is one of two global destinations — the other being India — under consideration for the establishment of a new low-carbon green iron production project that will capitalise on green hydrogen expected to be locally produced starting in 2030.

Mulling this strategic investment is ACME Group, one of India’s foremost renewable energy and green ammonia developers. A wholly owned subsidiary of the Indian energy powerhouse is currently developing the first phase of a major green hydrogen and green ammonia project at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) in the southeast of the Sultanate of Oman.

Another potential venue for the green iron investment is Odisha, in eastern India, where ACME Group is planning a similar green hydrogen venture.

If Oman ultimately wins the location contest, this prospective investment will further reinforce the Sultanate of Oman’s positioning as a global green iron and steel production hub.

The greenfield project under consideration by ACME Group is designed for a capacity of around 1.2 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) of Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) — a low-



Representatives of ACME Group and Stavian Industrial Metal signing the binding term sheet recently.

Underpinning hopes for a potential fifth low-carbon iron production facility in Oman is a binding term-sheet agreement signed recently by ACME Group with Stavian Industrial Metal covering the long-term sale and purchase of 0.8 Mtpa of green iron feedstock (HBI and DRI) on a take-or-pay / supply-or-pay basis for a period of 10 years

Jindal Duqm Steel (formerly Vulcan Green Steel), which is investing \$3 billion in a 5 Mtpa green hydrogen-ready steel plant.

Brazilian mining conglomerate Vale is also planning an integrated industrial complex (Mega Hub) to produce Hot Briquetted Iron (HBI) and other low-carbon iron products using green hydrogen and clean energy sources.

Earlier, Kobe Steel and Mitsui & Co signed MoUs with Omani authorities to develop a low-CO₂ iron metalics project in Al Duqm. More recently, Thailand-headquartered Meranti Green Steel announced plans for a 2.5 Mtpa HBI plant in Phase 1 at Al Duqm.

Underpinning hopes for a potential fifth low-carbon iron production facility in

Oman is a binding term-sheet agreement signed recently by ACME Group with Stavian Industrial Metal — part of a prominent Vietnam-based business group — covering the long-term sale and purchase of 0.8 Mtpa of green iron feedstock (HBI and DRI) on a take-or-pay / supply-or-pay basis for a period of 10 years.

ACME said the term sheet will be followed by an offtake agreement under which it will supply low-carbon feedstock from a greenfield, low-emission, renewable and hydrogen-ready plant currently under planning.

Commenting on the pact with Stavian Industrial Metal, Manoj Kumar Upadhyay, Chairman of ACME Group, said: “Our green HBI and DRI project underscores ACME’s unwavering commitment as a leader of clean technology solutions in India.

We take pride in spearheading innovation within the clean energy sector, including green hydrogen and its derivatives. We are delighted to establish a long-term partnership with Stavian Industrial Metal to deliver sustainable solutions to hard-to-abate sectors such as steel manufacturing. Our greenfield facility will produce some of the lowest-carbon-emission green HBI and DRI products.

This collaboration marks a significant milestone in ACME’s integration of green steel into our portfolio as part of our strategic business expansion”.

Development Bank widens green lending: CEO

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

The Development Bank (DB) — Oman’s state-owned development finance institution — will expand concessional lending for climate-aligned projects, offering below-market interest rates and loan tenors of up to 25 years, its chief executive office said in a radio interview.

Hussein bin Ali al Lawati told Oman Radio’s Economic Forum programme that the bank is shifting from passively receiving loan applications to a proactive model that seeks out credible investors and builds awareness of development-finance options, with priority for renewable energy and other “green” investments.

“If financing is the obstacle today, the solution is simple”, Al Lawati said. “The national



Oman’s Development Bank is also working with a newly established centre to verify ‘green’ projects: CEO

development bank stands ready to support renewable and green projects on attractive terms”.

Al Lawati said DB has completed the first step towards accreditation with a global green-finance fund supported by major governments, positioning the bank to channel long-tenor, climate-linked finance into projects in the Sultanate of

Oman. He added that part of these resources is intended for Oman given its exposure to climate-related challenges.

To standardise eligibility, DB is working with a newly established centre to verify ‘green’ projects, he noted. Projects that demonstrably reduce carbon emissions or raise resource efficiency — including water-efficient agriculture — would qualify

for additional incentives, such as interest rates “significantly below” commercial benchmarks and extended repayment profiles.

The push, he said, aligns with Oman Vision 2040. DB is stepping up outreach through local and international conferences to deliver a clear signal to domestic and foreign investors that bankable climate projects will find responsive, concessional funding in Oman.

Al Lawati framed the initiative as part of a broader effort to lower the cost of capital for productive, high-impact ventures. “We do not just sit and wait for applications; we go to the investors”, he said, underscoring the bank’s intent to catalyse private investment alongside public development goals.

ADVERTORIALS

SPIRITED DINING



Muscat welcomed COYA with genuine curiosity and high expectations.

COYA MUSCAT CELEBRATES ONE YEAR OF LATIN AMERICAN FLAIR

MUSCAT: COYA Muscat celebrates its first anniversary at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort after a year that introduced Muscat’s waterfront to contemporary inspired Latin American flavours, disciplined technique and a spirited dining experience.

For 365 days, the culinary team focused on ingredient integrity and precision in execution, from bright, citrus-forward ceviches and open flame anticuchos to signature mains.

Service was shaped to feel calm and attentive so each guest experience flowed with a considered rhythm from arrival to the final course. Live performers, resident DJs and a lifestyle driven programme invited guests to “find their inner Inca” in Muscat, reinforcing the restaurant’s status among the city’s top dining destinations.

“Muscat welcomed COYA with genuine curiosity and high expectations”, said Mohammed “Simo” Bennani, General Manager, COYA Muscat.

“Our first year was about earning trust through focus. We trained with intent, sourced with care and let the plate speak. Guests tell us they taste finesse in the ceviches, depth in the marinades and a style of service that anticipates without intruding. That is the standard we set for ourselves every night”.

Behind the scenes, the culinary team introduced 9 seasonal dishes, invested 100+ hours in skills development and established 80% more local supplier relationships so seasonality and consistency are felt on the plate. House classics were refined and measured updates were introduced through the year, guided by clean technique and respect for Latin American foundations.

Since opening, the restaurant has welcomed more than 50,000 diners. The first year also earned a nomination for Middle East’s Best New Restaurant at the World Culinary Awards and inclusion on BBC Good Food Middle East’s 2025 nominee slate for the Americas and Caribbean category.

“COYA stands for culinary precision and hospitality with character”, said Stefano Pizzini, COYA Middle East’s Director of Operations. “The experience begins with flavour and continues with atmosphere.

The team has built a restaurant that feels international in standard and distinctly local in welcome. As we move into the second year, we will refine with care, evolve our classics and curate moments where music, service and cuisine align, with confidence in every bite”.

COYA offers an experience that feels effortlessly right throughout the year, a place where hospitality is warm, thoughtful and consistent, no matter the season.

NBO LEADS EDO’S LANDMARK RO 50 MILLION SUKUK ISSUANCE

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman acted as the Sole Issue Manager responsible for the establishment of the RO Sukuk Programme and the issuance of RO 50 million Series 1 Sukuk Certificates by Energy Development Oman (EDO), listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

This milestone marks the first domestic Sukuk issuance by an Omani government-related entity, representing a significant step in the ongoing development of Oman’s local capital market and



the diversification of investment opportunities for investors. From its end, NBO Muzn Islamic Banking served as the Sharia Advisor and developed the innovative hybrid Islamic Sukuk structure.

The three-year Sukuk comes through a private placement with a profit rate of 4.40% and an average yield of 4.41% through a competitive bidding process. The issuance attracted strong investor interest, with total demand exceeding RO 80 million, further reinforcing investor confidence in Oman’s Sukuk market.

The successful completion of this issuance underscores NBO’s leadership in capital market advisory and Islamic structuring services.

Pact to transform wealth management in Oman

MARKING a milestone in Oman’s banking and financial sector, BankDhofar — the second largest bank by network size—has announced it has partnered with BlackRock, one of the world’s largest asset manager. This collaboration, the first of its kind in Oman, will redefine wealth management by offering customers exclusive access to world-class investment strategies and advisory services.

With \$11.6 trillion in assets under management (AUM), BlackRock is a global leader in investment strategies, risk management and technology-driven financial solutions.

Through this partnership, BankDhofar is enhancing its wealth management offerings, providing high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), affluent families and corporate clients with innovative financial solutions tailored to their unique investment needs.

Clients will gain access to a globally diversified portfolio across asset classes — all backed by BlackRock’s industry-leading expertise. Operating in over 30 countries and serving clients across more than 100 markets, BlackRock plays a pivotal role



This collaboration will redefine wealth management by offering customers exclusive access to world-class investment strategies and advisory services.

With \$11.6 trillion in assets under management (AUM), BlackRock is a global leader in investment strategies, risk management and technology-driven financial solutions.

in global financial markets. Its investment solutions span multiple asset classes, including real estate and infrastructure, while its market-leading iShares ETF suite ensures broad market access.

As a leader in both active and index investing, BlackRock empowers investors with sophisticated, data-driven strategies that optimise returns and mitigate risk. K Gopakumar of BankDhofar, commented: “By bringing together BankDhofar’s trusted leadership in Oman with BlackRock’s global strength, we will offer the best of

local and international expertise. Through global diversification, wealth growth and preservation; and a premium investment experience, we provide our Institutional as well as the retail clients with unparalleled access to world-class investment opportunities. Managed by a globally recognised firm with a proven track record — brought to you by Oman’s most trusted bank”.

Keith Saldanha, Managing Director, Middle East — BlackRock, added: “We are proud to be working with BankDhofar to deliver innovative, diversified and sustainable wealth solutions tailored to the needs of investors in the region.

By combining BankDhofar’s deep local insights with BlackRock’s global expertise, we are creating a powerful platform to help Omani clients achieve their long-term financial goals with confidence”.

By combining BlackRock’s global strength with BankDhofar’s deep local knowledge and trusted relationships, the partnership delivers a comprehensive wealth management experience.

Clients will benefit from customised portfolio strategies, sustainable investment options and long-term wealth preservation solutions.

Nama Supply sponsors ‘Reading Star’ competition

MUSCAT: Nama Electricity Supply Company signed a cooperation agreement with the Directorate General of Education in Al Batinah North Governorate to sponsor the 7th edition of the “Reading Star” competition for the academic year 2025/2026.

This initiative is part of the company’s ongoing programme to support educational and community initiatives that can support their role in raising awareness about energy conservation. The agreement



was signed by Ghada al Yousef, Chief Executive Officer of Communication, Sustainability and Marketing; and Dr Waleed al Hashmi, Director General of the Directorate General of Education in Al Batinah North Governorate.

The signing ceremony was

attended by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and Salim bin Said al Kamyani, Chief Executive Officer of the company. As part of the competition, the Directorate will implement “Nama Ambassadors” programme in both public and private schools across the governorate.

The programme aims to instil a culture of electricity conservation and raise awareness among students

and their families through lifestyle behavioural changes and utilisation of electrical appliances, amongst other initiatives.

Ahmed bin Said al Shaaaili, General Manager of Communication and Marketing at Nama Electricity Supply Company, emphasised that this partnership reflects the company’s commitment to supporting educational and social initiatives aligned with sustainability goals and environmental awareness.

National Finance enhances positive environmental impact

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its leadership in responsible financing, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, is redefining the landscape with its comprehensive sustainable finance solutions.

Purposefully designed to accelerate the nation’s transition to a low-carbon, inclusive economy, this forward-looking suite of solutions empowers individuals, businesses and communities to take tangible, high-impact steps towards a more sustainable future.

The sustainable finance solutions include thoughtfully curated products tailored to the distinct



The sustainable finance solutions include thoughtfully curated products tailored to the distinct needs of diverse customer segments.

needs of diverse customer segments. For individual customers, it

includes competitive auto financing for electric and hybrid vehicles, promoting the transition towards future-ready, low-emission mobility solutions.

To support the adoption of sustainable living practices, financing is also available for solar panel installations, water recycling systems and energy-efficient smart home technologies, making eco-conscious choices more accessible while delivering long-term cost efficiencies.

For corporate clientele and SMEs, the Sustainable Finance solutions extend to working capital for sustainability-linked businesses,

as well as project financing for renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure and environmental conservation initiatives. By embedding clear sustainability metrics into its lending framework, National Finance not only encourages responsible business conduct but also supports alignment with global ESG standards, cultivating a stronger culture of environmental accountability and stewardship across the economic landscape.

Speaking on the impact the company aims to catalyse through the initiative, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer

at National Finance, said, “Our Sustainable Finance solutions exemplify our commitment to shaping a better future for the Sultanate of Oman. This approach reflects our belief that real change begins when people and businesses are given the tools and support to make informed, responsible choices. Through Sustainable Finance, we are investing in a cleaner environment, empowering resilient communities and building a foundation for a more sustainable future”.

To encourage the adoption of Sustainable Finance, National Finance offers a range of compelling benefits across its portfolio.

GREATERPARTICIPATION



The 2nd Suhar Investment Forum is scheduled to take place from February 4 to 5, 2026, under the theme “Suhar — The Destination for Industrial Investment”.

OCCI INTRODUCTORY MEETING FOCUSES ON 2026 SUHAR INVESTMENT FORUM

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) organised yesterday, October 13, 2025, an introductory meeting for the Suhar Investment Forum 2026 at its headquarters in Muscat. The second edition of the forum is scheduled to take place from February 4 to 5, 2026, in the Wilayat of Suhar, under the theme “Suhar — The Destination for Industrial Investment”.

The introductory meeting aimed to highlight the role of the forum in encouraging greater participation from the private sector and showcasing promising investment opportunities across key industrial sectors. These include industries supporting heavy industries, recycling and the circular economy, as well as iron, aluminium, plastics, food and medical industries. The forum also aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to diversify income sources and enhance national added value.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), emphasised that the Suhar Investment Forum 2026 represents one of the most significant national initiatives undertaken by the Chamber to boost Oman’s economic competitiveness and attract quality investments to the governorates.

He noted that organising the second edition builds on the success of the first forum in promoting promising opportunities in the industrial, logistics and other sectors that support economic diversification.

Eng Saeed bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of OCCI’s Al Batinah North branch, stated that the meeting marked the official launch of the promotional phase of the forum.

Oman ports resilient amidst shipping shifts

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 13

GLOBAL container traffic continues to demonstrate steady growth despite the challenges of fluctuating trade patterns, port congestion and economic uncertainty. According to the latest Economic Analysis Series (September 2025) prepared by Omani logistics pioneer Dr Mahmood Sakhi al Balushi, total containers handled by global ports reached 928 million TEUs in 2024 and are forecast to rise by a further 2 per cent in 2025. Shanghai Port remains the world’s leading maritime hub, projected to handle over 54 million TEUs this year — equivalent to around 5.8 per cent of the global volume.

In a post by Dr Al Balushi, Group Chief Executive Officer at Al Madina Logistics Company and Bayanat Technology, he noted that the global Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) continues to underline efficiency as a key competitive advantage for major ports.

The index, which measures the time vessels spend in port completing cargo exchanges, has consistently recognised Oman’s Port of Salalah among the world’s most efficient. Between 2020 and 2024, Salalah ranked 5th, 1st, 2nd, 2nd and 15th respectively; and although its position dipped slightly last year, it remains one of the top-performing ports globally.

The analysis highlights that Suhar and Salalah remain the cornerstones of Oman’s maritime trade strategy, each serving distinct yet complementary roles. SOHAR Port and Freezone — with its Container Terminal (operated by



SOHAR Port and Freezone is described as Oman’s main commercial and industrial gateway.

Between 2020 and 2024, Salalah ranked 5th, 1st, 2nd, 2nd and 15th respectively; and although its position dipped slightly last year, it remains one of the top-performing ports globally.

Hutchison Ports), General Cargo Terminal, (operated by Steinweg) and Liquid Terminal by Advario — is described as Oman’s main commercial and industrial gateway.

Following the 2014 transfer of container handling operations from Sultan Qaboos Port in Muscat, Suhar experienced rapid growth. Its performance, however, saw a temporary slowdown after 2017, with gradual recovery post-2021 as global trade rebounded from the pandemic shock.

Data from Dr Al Balushi’s report show that SOHAR Port and Freezone’s throughput peaked in 2024, with total container and TEU volumes nearing 900,000 before a projected softening in 2025 based on first-half figures.

The decline reflects a broader moderation in international trade, though analysts expect stability to return as infrastructure and digital optimisation efforts continue. SOHAR Port and Freezone remains central to Oman’s export and re-export activities, benefiting from industrial clustering in the adjacent freezone.

Meanwhile, Port of Salalah — operated by APM Terminals — continues to play a pivotal transshipment role for Oman and the wider region. Handling nearly 90 per cent of containers as transshipment cargo, Salalah processed just under 4.5 million

TEUs in 2024, representing a 20 per cent year-on-year decline. Despite the dip, the port is forecast to rebound by 14 per cent in 2025 with new capacity enhancements and operational upgrades.

The report also draws attention to evolving global maritime routes, notably the emerging China–Europe passage through the Arctic via the Northern Sea Route. Although currently navigable only during summer months, the 18-day transit time offers significant advantages for high-value sectors such as electronics, fashion and e-commerce — potentially reshaping trade dynamics in the years ahead.

Dr Al Balushi emphasised that investment in port infrastructure, digital transformation and operational efficiency remain the main factors driving performance improvements worldwide.

IEEE PowerTalks 2025: Engineering Oman’s energy transition

NAJAH AL RIYAMI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

As Oman’s energy sector stands at a crossroads between legacy infrastructure and renewable ambition, IEEE PowerTalks 2025 opened in Muscat this week with a message that blended urgency with optimism: the energy transition is no longer a distant goal, but an engineering and policy challenge unfolding in real time.

The opening ceremony, held under the theme “Accelerating Energy Transition in Oman”, set a clear direction for the three-day forum, one that resonates deeply with the country’s current crossroads. For Oman, the call to accelerate is not just rhetorical but structural: rising domestic demand, fluctuating hydrocarbon revenues



Held under the theme “Accelerating Energy Transition in Oman”, the forum resonates deeply with the Sultanate’s current crossroads.

and mounting climate pressures are reshaping the energy equation.

Dr Carole Nakhle, CEO of Crystal Energy, addressed this tension head-on in her keynote, underscoring that a successful transition demands more than technology alone. “Energy transition is not just

about replacing fuels. It is about building systems that are efficient, resilient and inclusive”, she said. Her remarks underscored that Oman’s path forward lies in aligning policy, investment and innovation into a coherent framework — one capable of balancing diversification with long-term energy security.

She was joined by Eng Ala Moosa, CEO of Nama Electricity Distribution, who reaffirmed the company’s role in shaping a cleaner and more connected future. “Oman’s electricity sector stands at the forefront of change”, he said. “Through partnerships like IEEE PowerTalks, we continue to invest in digital solutions and smarter grids that serve our communities better”.

Eng Abdullah al Wahaibi, Chairman of IEEE Power & Energy Society Oman Chapter, welcomed

participants and highlighted the importance of local expertise.

“The power sector’s transformation will depend on the talent we nurture here in Oman”, he said, urging greater participation from young professionals and researchers.

The morning session, Power Market Updates, examined regulatory reform, diversification of the energy mix, regional power trade and the financial frameworks driving future projects. Discussions emphasised the urgency of aligning investment and innovation with Oman Vision 2040 goals.

In the afternoon, Power Systems and Grid Solutions explored how AI and advanced analytics are strengthening grid resilience under higher renewable penetration. Speakers outlined pathways

for integrating hybrid storage, modernising transmission and designing adaptive demand-response mechanisms.

The final session, Distribution Systems, focused on decarbonising local networks and improving operational efficiency.

Experts discussed predictive maintenance, outage prevention and the digital tools that can reduce system losses while increasing reliability.

As the day came to a close, Eng Abdullah al Wahaibi delivered a unifying message. “Technology is only part of the equation”, he said. “Real progress comes from collaboration, shared knowledge and the will to act. Let this forum inspire the change we want to see across our industries and institutions”.

ANOTHER RECORD

BofA hikes gold price forecast to \$5,000/oz



Bank of America Global Research on Monday raised its price forecasts for precious metals, lifting its 2026 outlook for gold to \$5,000 an ounce, with an average of around \$4,400. Gold surged above \$4,000 an ounce for the first time ever on October 8.

Gold prices scaled to another record high at \$4,079.62 on Monday as investors revved up their safe-haven bets after US President Donald Trump renewed tariff threats against China. — Reuters

NEAR TREND

Economists see stronger US growth



Surging business investment is expected to offset weaker growth in consumption and global trade; and keep the US economy growing near trend, according to a National Association for Business Economics survey, though slow job growth, higher unemployment and stickier inflation will mar the outlook.

Trump’s new import taxes remain a drag on the US’ performance with economists estimating tariffs would knock up to half a percentage point from economic growth. — Reuters

EASING TENSIONS

Oil recoups after hitting five-month lows



Oil prices rose on Monday after hitting five-month lows in the previous session, as investors focused on potential talks between the presidents of the United States and China that could ease trade tensions between the world’s two largest economies and oil consumers.

Brent crude futures rose 94 cents, or 1.5%, to \$63.75 a barrel by 08:24 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$59.98 a barrel, up 89 cents, or 1.54%. — Reuters

OPINION

Your smart TV is watching you



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is
the founder of
Knowledge Oman

AIDA asked me to find and recommend for her a new TV to buy for her use with family at home. She requested that it must be smart (in tech) and large (in size). Obviously, most TVs today come with smart technology, ie, connected to the information superhighway (the Internet) and in many sizes to choose from. Aida then asked me whether it was safe, especially since some TVs come with in-built cameras too. The answer to her question is the focus of my article this week. Are you aware that your smart TV may be watching you as well? So after a long working week and over the weekend, you decide to get some snacks, popcorn and drinks to chill and relax with your family in your living room. Catching up about life and school, making family plans, playing games and/or finding a nice movie to watch over the same weekend together. That is probably the typical lifestyle of the majority. What you or they may not be aware of is that the smart TV you have in your living room may be watching you back. A scary joke or a scene from a horror movie? No, that is the unfortunate reality. Unlike

the past dumb TVs, today’s TVs are smart. They have mini-computers inside of them. These mini-computers have network ports that allow them to connect to the internet. Like other smart devices, they are capable of listening (via microphones), tracking (via the sheer volume of apps) and even profiling us without us noticing. Every brand comes with an operating system and the majority are Androids too (like your regular smartphones today). I shared articles in the past about how smartphones can spy on you. Well, the same applies to smart TVs too, except that they also can wander in your home and across every connected device inside your home network (via Wifi or network cable). Did you notice that most smart TVs ask you to create a profile when you first unbox them, plug them into the power outlet, switch them on and connect them to the home network? Did you also notice that streaming apps such as Netflix, Hulu, Apple TV, Shahid, YouTube, etc, know what kind of movies or shows you like? What about the ability to command your TV without a remote control but directly through your voice? These all are possible thanks to the

Unlike the past dumb TVs, today’s TVs are smart. They have mini-computers inside of them. These mini-computers have network ports that allow them to connect to the internet.

evolving TV technologies, yet truth be told, while you watch, these TVs also watch back, from the things you watch, say and the amount (duration) of time you spend using them too. Everything in the form of data is collected silently, stored and sent out of your TV, via network cables or airwaves, to the Internet. That data is, of course, available for sale (read my past articles to learn more on this specific point). Companies pay a lot of money to know what you watch, for how long, what time you sleep, or what kind of ads you might click on. It may sound harmless. Hackers see a big opportunity in the smart TV market, as many of these TVs remain unpatched and updated for a long time (if not forever). Unlike smartphones and laptops, which get frequent security updates, smart TVs aren’t built with the same level of protection. That makes them easier targets for cybercriminals looking for a back door into your home network. Once they’re in, it’s not just your TV at risk but everything else that is connected on your home network. What you should do is what I hope to share next week. Until then, stay safe, look and be good as the TV watches you back.

Oman Vision 2040:
Where tourism meets
sustainability and soul



DR CAROLIN
LUSBY

The writer is
Associate Professor
of Tourism &
Fulbright Scholar

As a tourism researcher who has worked in destinations across the globe, I have often seen the same dilemma: how can countries welcome visitors and economic growth without eroding the very landscapes and traditions that make them special? Through Oman Vision 2040, Oman is addressing that question with a clear and forward-thinking approach. The Sultanate of Oman aims to become a regional model for sustainable

tourism — one that balances growth with conservation, celebrates authenticity and places communities at the centre of development. While many destinations equate success with sheer visitor numbers, Oman is charting a more thoughtful path. It defines progress through preservation, valuing experiences that restore rather than exploit and communities that prosper alongside guests. More than 20 per cent of the nation’s land is protected, from the coral-rich Daymaniyat Islands Marine Reserve to the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary — living examples of how conservation underpins national planning. Adventure and nature-based tourism play a vital role in this vision. Visitors are encouraged to explore wadis, dive among coral reefs, or traverse the vast dunes of Rimal Al Sharqiya — not as passive tourists, but as active participants in conservation. By offering guided, small-scale and educational experiences, Oman fosters a deeper connection with nature and inspires travellers to become advocates for its protection. The country’s geography — from rugged mountains and green highlands to pristine coastlines and biodiverse reserves — provides a natural advantage. The government is enhancing these assets through eco-trails, visitor centres and interpretive initiatives that promote learning and appreciation. This approach aligns with the evolving preferences of global travellers who seek purpose, connection and sustainability over mass luxury. Equally impressive is Oman’s focus on community-based tourism. In heritage villages like Misfat al Abriyeen, residents welcome guests, share traditional meals and guide them through ancient falaj systems. In Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, farmers open their rose gardens and pomegranate orchards to visitors. These interactions sustain livelihoods, preserve heritage and ensure that the benefits of tourism extend well beyond Muscat. Of course, the path to Oman Vision 2040 is not without challenges. Oman must balance expansion with resource management, particularly in water-scarce regions and ensure equitable infrastructure development across governorates. It also faces competition from flashier regional destinations.

Green finance: Investing
in a sustainable Oman

AROUND the world, capital is shifting towards cleaner and more responsible growth. Investors are directing more funds to projects that cut emissions and protect natural resources; and they now expect clear, measurable outcomes for every rial or dollar they commit “Green finance” captures this concept: financing renewable energy, energy-efficient industries and buildings, cleaner transport, better water and waste systems; and climate-resilient infrastructure. The aim is simple yet powerful — to make economic growth and environmental stewardship work hand in hand. For Oman, this vision aligns perfectly with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040. It promises a stronger, more diversified economy built on innovation, skilled jobs and sustainability — a model that preserves Oman’s natural beauty while enhancing its global competitiveness. It also sends a strong signal to international partners that Oman is ready to grow responsibly, sustainably and confidently. The tools are practical and already in use worldwide. Green bonds and loans channel funding into projects such as solar parks, factory retrofits, or energy-efficient desalination plants. Sustainability-linked loans and bonds reward companies with lower borrowing costs when they hit agreed targets, for example a drop in energy use or a rise in recycled water. Carbon markets can provide additional revenue when projects demonstrate verified emissions reductions. When these tools are backed by honest data and good reporting, the benefits are strong: access to new international investors, longer maturities, better pricing, a stronger national image and jobs in engineering, project finance, digital monitoring, maritime services, logistics and the circular economy. Global capital is clearly moving in this direction and Oman is well-positioned to capture its share. Oman’s starting point is strong. The Sultanate of Oman has abundant solar and wind resources, a strategic location, reliable institutions and a growing base of industrial and logistics expertise.



For Oman, this vision aligns perfectly with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.



DR YOUSUF
HAMED
AL BALUSHI

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

These strengths line up perfectly with the next wave of investment in green hydrogen, power grids, storage and cleaner manufacturing. Local banks are building the right capabilities and policy makers are giving helpful signals. The Central Bank of Oman is encouraging the development of sustainable finance practices and transparent disclosures, while capital-market rules now allow green and sustainability bonds and sukuk to be issued with confidence. Within the banking sector, Sohar International has emerged as one of the early movers by building internal teams, engaging clients and exploring climate-aligned lending so that more Omani projects can qualify for green finance on fair terms. Real progress is already visible. In shipping and logistics, an Omani company secured a green loan to finance energy-efficient vessels with international lenders after it presented a clear business case and a credible plan to cut fuel use and emissions. Local retail programmes have supported rooftop solar and efficiency, helping households and small businesses see the benefit in lower bills. In heavy industry and energy, the push around green hydrogen has started to attract global developers who bring both capital and technology. Each example shows the same principle: clarity plus data equals money. When a company can explain how much energy it will save or how many tonnes of carbon it will avoid — and get those numbers independently checked — lenders become more confident and pricing improves. At the enterprise level, preparedness is key. A simple

sustainability plan that explains the project, the expected environmental benefit and how results will be measured is the first step. Next comes a baseline for emissions: Scope 1 (direct), Scope 2 (indirect) and, where it matters, the most important parts of Scope 3 (value chain) — builds credibility. Choose the right instrument: a green loan or bond when the use of proceeds is clearly green and a sustainability-linked structure when the goal is to improve performance over time. Collect the facts early — feasibility studies, permits, contracts and a one-page summary of the impact per rial invested. Get an external review to build trust. Engage your bank at the start and ask what documentation, KPIs and reports it needs so there are no surprises later. Awareness and skills make the whole market move faster. Many Omani businesses, especially SMEs, want to join this wave but are unsure where to start. A national “Green Finance Starter Programme” run with chambers and industry groups would help businesses calculate a basic emissions baseline, select the right financing tool, prepare a short sustainability report and understand assurance requirements. Training should also target bankers, credit officers and FDI professionals, ensuring they speak the same technical language of green finance — eligibility, KPIs, verification and reporting. When everyone aligns on these terms, deals close faster. This is also where the Central Bank and investment authorities can keep nudging the system forward by supporting standard templates, sharing examples and celebrating early successes so that others follow. SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL INTERESTS While global cooperation and financing play a vital role in advancing sustainable development, Oman’s approach to green finance is firmly grounded in national priorities and financial independence. The objective is not to follow external agendas, but to channel capital towards projects that strengthen Oman’s economic base, industrial competitiveness and environmental resilience.

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ART/LIFE



A DHOFARI TEACHER 'S GREEN LESSON >20

IMPACT

HARRY SAYS SOCIAL MEDIA A MAJOR CHILD ISSUE



Britain's Duke of Sussex has warned that the impact of social media on children is "one of the most pressing issues of our time".

Harry and his wife the Duchess of Sussex were speaking at the Project Healthy Minds Gala in New York, where they received an award for their humanitarian work.

Citing that 4,000 families are taking legal action through the Social Media Victims Law Centre, the duke said more needed to be done to protect young people from online dangers.

"Tonight, we are all here together to focus on what remains one of the most pressing issues of our time", Harry said.

"Let me share a number with you: 4,000. That's how many families the Social Media Victims Law Centre is currently representing — families whose children have been harmed or lost forever to social media.

"Four thousand cases at just one firm. And that number represents only those parents who have been able to link their child's circumstance to social media use. He continued: "Parents who have learned legal action is possible, who have the capacity to pursue it while grieving and parents who've found their way to help in the fight back against some of the wealthiest, most powerful corporations in the world.

"And even after this there may be no road to closure for grieving parents because these companies refuse to disclose their child's information and activity on their platforms.

"If these were unintended consequences 10 years ago, what are they now?

"This is a pivotal moment in our collective mission to protect children and support families in the digital age".

Meghan added that the couple often discussed how they would protect their own children, six-year-old Archie and Lili, four, as they grow older.

"Like so many parents, we think constantly about how to embrace technology's benefits while safeguarding against its dangers", the duchess said.

"That hopeful intention of separation is rapidly becoming impossible".

The couple's Archewell Foundation announced that its Parents' Network initiative is joining forces with Parents Together, a non-profit organisation dedicated to family advocacy and online safety.

The move comes as the duke warned of "the explosion of unregulated artificial intelligence".

"As our network grew, we've seen the full scope of what we're facing", Harry added.

"We have witnessed the explosion of unregulated artificial intelligence, heard more and more stories from heartbroken families and watched parents all over the world become increasingly concerned about their children's digital lives. — *dpa*

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



CULTURE

French writer Fabrice Caro, better known as Fabcaro poses for photographs during a presentation of the 41st edition of French comic book series 'Asterix le Gaulois', at a press conference in Paris. — **AFP**



MEMORIAL

A statue of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher stands, during Thatcher Fest, marking the 100th anniversary of Margaret Thatcher's birth in her home town of Grantham Britain. — **Reuters**



FASHION

Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar along with fashion designer Manish Malhotra attend a press conference for the JioHotstar fashion entrepreneurship reality series 'Pitch to Get Rich' in Mumbai. — **AFP**

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Kenyan designers transform used clothes into art



MARY KULUNDU

In a dusty alley in the heart of Kenya’s largest open-air market, fashion models strut down a makeshift runway in bold, upcycled outfits made from waste collected at dumpsites and market cast-offs — proof that even trash can dazzle.

In 2023, Kenya overtook Nigeria to become Africa’s largest importer of second-hand clothing according to a study from the US-based Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Thousands of these bales land in Gikomba market near central Nairobi where tin-roofed stalls stretch across a five-acre labyrinth, one of the city’s major economic hubs.

On a sunny afternoon, a huge crowd gathered to watch models sashay and pivot, showcasing pieces from bales once discarded as unwearable or unsellable.

“What? They’ve upgraded our clothes”, one of the traders said with delight as he watched the show.

Gikomba Runway Edition brought together young, underground Kenyan designers and stylists for the first time, including 25-year-old ‘upcycling’ specialist Morgan Azedy.

“I always see the environment around me dirty... I wanted to control pollution”, he said as he prepared his avant-garde outfits in his single-room home before the show.

His ‘Kenyan Raw’ collection featured streetwear denim and a gothic flair crafted entirely from recycled leather sourced from dumpsites and fashion rejects.

Kenya imported about 197,000 tonnes of second-hand clothes worth \$298 million in 2023, according to the MIT study.

The Environment for Development, a global research network, estimates that around a third are unusable items that end up in landfills — mostly made from plastic-based materials like nylon and polyester that does not biodegrade. — AFP



MYANMAR-CONFLICT-AIRSTRIKES

RARELY A WEEK PASSES WITHOUT CIVILIANS BEING KILLED IN A MASS-CASUALTY BOMBING, OFTEN OF SCHOOLS OR MONASTERIES OCCUPIED BY CHILDREN OR MONKS

BENEATH THE BOMBS, CLASS GOES ON IN MYANMAR

BEFORE A Myanmar student descends into a classroom entombed in a concrete bunker, she prays for compassion and her community’s safety, knowing her appeal will go unanswered. “May the fighter jets not come. May the pilots show kindness to us. May the bombs not explode”, 18-year-old Phyo Phyo said, recalling her unspoken wishes.

She is enrolled in a class of around a dozen at the subterranean academy, founded in June after a junta strike obliterated a nearby school and killed at least 20 pupils and two teachers, according to witnesses.

“Our school days used to be free and full of fun”, said Phyo Phyo. “Ever since the air strikes started, we’ve lost our happiness”, she added. “The students have grown quiet”.

Myanmar’s military has increased air strikes every year since it triggered civil war with a 2021 coup, conflict monitors say — a response to guerrilla factions opposed to junta rule besieging its ground forces.

The deluges and gales of the May to September monsoons typically offer a reprieve.

But partial data from this year’s wet season shows the military conducted more than 1,000 air and drone strikes, killing more than 800 people, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) organisation, which tallies media reports of violence.

A Myanmar junta spokesman



could not be reached for comment.

The junta is waging a campaign to recapture territory ahead of elections it has said will start on December 28.

But rebels have pledged to block the polls in their enclaves and analysts describe the vote as a ploy to disguise the continuation of military

rule. In a rebel-held area, around 110 kilometres north of Mandalay city where junta jets scour the skies, Phyo Phyo and her classmates learn in the dank and dark but relative safety of their underground classroom. It was built in the jungle with donations and resembles a spartan prison cell. “We want education, no matter the obstacles”, Phyo Phyo said.

‘Superior air power’ Bowing her head to study Burmese literature — her favourite subject — the teenager is watched over by a poster of Aung San Suu Kyi, the democratic leader ousted in February 2021.

Democracy activists formed fighter units and found common cause with myriad ethnic minority armed groups, which have long fought the military for self-rule.

Their scattered organisation failed to make much headway until a combined offensive starting in late 2023.

The back-footed military then stepped up its aerial campaign using China- and Russia-supplied jets against rebels who possess neither their own air fleets nor anti-air defences.

“The reason they use air strikes is they feel our revolutionary armed groups have the power to take them down”, said Zaw Tun, a member of the democracy movement’s self-declared National Unity Government in a rebel-held area of northern Sagaing region.

“They can’t win the ground battle, but they have the power to attack us with air strikes”, he said.

Rarely a week passes without civilians being killed in a mass-casualty bombing, often of schools or monasteries occupied by children or monks and sometimes also sheltering people already displaced by fighting.

“The military targets crowds intentionally because they want to incite fear”, said ACLED Asia-Pacific analyst Su Mon Thant.

“When people are more uncertain with their life and desperate, they don’t want to support the resistance cause”.

But while “superior power in the air” allows the military to stave off defeat, she said, it is not enough to secure victory — creating a stalemate where casualties mount but front lines stay largely unchanged. — AFP

FEATURES



A DHOFARI TEACHER'S GREEN LESSON



QASIM AL MAASHANI

In Dhofar's misty highlands, teacher Ahmed al Maashani turns farmer, merging tradition with science to grow a sustainable future. The school bell rings off the Salalah coast and by mid-afternoon, Ahmed bin Saeed al Maashani has exchanged lesson plans for pruning shears. He walks the drip lines of his compact plot, checking valves, brushing dust off a young mango and lifting mulch to feel the soil's moisture.

"I don't farm for volume", he says. "It's about reading this place and matching crops to it".

A teacher by profession and a farmer by passion, Al Maashani represents a quiet shift in Dhofar where household plots are finding renewed purpose. The governorate's unique rhythm — Khareef Dhofar Season's cool mist (June–September) followed by Sarb's clear, mild spell (late September–December) — creates an agricultural cycle unlike anywhere else in the region.

After school, Al Maashani takes a short rest before heading to his field.

His daily routine involves flushing filters, scouting for pests, tightening ties on banana pseudostems and logging growth notes.

During holidays, he doubles his hours — preparing beds, repairing tools and rescheduling plantings to align with Sarb's favourable weather.

His crop mix blends tradition and practicality: cowpea (lobiya) and local maize (Mseybli) for staples, with banana, mango,

orange and jackfruit thriving on the coastal plain's humidity. Vegetables like tomato, cucumber, pepper and aubergine rotate through cooler months. This year, he's trialling turmeric — betting on post-Khareef soil moisture and a rising demand for local spices.

"Success here is less about inputs and more about fit", he says. "Coast, mountain, or inland — each demands its own timing and crops".

Dhofar's farming rhythm is written in its geography. The Salalah coastal plain supports tropical fruits; the Qara mountains capture Khareef's drizzle, refreshing pastures and aquifers; the inland Najd remains drier, favouring hardy crops and disciplined water use. Across these zones, traditional timing — when to plant, when to prune, when to pause — still guides farmers.

Al Maashani's methods reflect this wisdom. He uses short-pulse drip irrigation, organic mulch to retain moisture and modest shade nets for seedlings. "When you manage water well, summer becomes a challenge to plan for — not a wall you can't climb", he says. For Al Maashani, the farm doubles as a teaching tool. He documents leaf symptoms, turns pest scouting into observation exercises and compares irrigation data with Khareef rainfall logs. "It's a school either way", he says with a smile. "In the morning, I grade papers; in the afternoon, the field grades me".

After Khareef, fig stem borers and soil-borne worms can surge. Al Maashani counters them through integrated pest management — clean fields, rotation, pruning and minimal, approved treatments only when needed.

Summer heat and evaporation are constant tests. His solution: tighter schedules, irrigation during cooler hours and thicker mulch around heavy feeders like banana. The seasonal shift from Khareef to Sarb brings another challenge — sudden changes in humidity and temperature. He adapts by staggering sowing dates and choosing hardy varieties.

"You can't fight the season", he says. "You arrange yourself around it".

Small-scale farms like Al Maashani's don't chase export markets. Their value is local — strengthening food security, creating small value chains (dried fruits, spice blends, mountain honey) and offering young people entry points into green entrepreneurship.

"Not everyone needs hectares", he says. "You need a plan, patience and crops that belong to your zone".

For those starting out, he advises a basic soil test, filtered drip irrigation and mulching immediately after transplanting. The late-Khareef to early-Sarb window is the most forgiving — soils are moist, sunlight gentle and pests fewer. Preventive care always beats late cures and simple written records beat memory.

Al Maashani's daily rhythm — from classroom to field, observation to adaptation — captures a deeper Dhofari truth: that climate, geography and tradition can sustain small-scale farming even as water grows scarce. It's not nostalgia, nor novelty — it's resilience rooted in knowledge of place.

As he pauses at the end of a row, the soft tick of a pressure regulator punctuates the silence. "Understand your place", he says, "and your crops will understand you".