

O M A N

دَائِلِي

Observer

SUNRISE 06:07 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:52 AM

DHUHR 11:56 PM

ASR 03:14 PM

MAGHRIB 05:41 PM

ISHA 06:51 PM

2010000387405

SEASONAL HEALTH TIPS FOR CHILDREN

ROYAL DECREE

DECREE RATIFIES AGREEMENT WITH KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued Royal Decree No 91/2025 on the ratification of an agreement signed in New York on September 25, 2025, between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Council of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic on mutual visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports.

Article (1) ratifies the abovementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

HM CONGRATULATES KING OF MOROCCO

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to King Mohammed VI of Morocco on the occasion of the Moroccan national team's victory in the Fifa U-20 World Cup 2025. His Majesty the Sultan commended this well-deserved global sporting achievement by the Kingdom of Morocco, a source of pride for all Arab countries. He wished the Kingdom further successes at various levels.

HM CONGRATULATES NEW PM OF JAPAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Sanae Takaichi on her election as Prime Minister of Japan. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere wishes to the new Japanese Prime Minister, wishing her success in shouldering her responsibilities and achieving further accomplishments and aspirations for her country. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan hoped that ties of cooperation and partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and Japan would continue to grow in various sectors and serve the interests of the Omani and Japanese peoples.

HM'S GREETINGS CONVEYED TO BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT



President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Federative Republic of Brazil received Abdulghaffar bin Abdulkarim al Balushi at the Presidential Palace in Brasília on Tuesday for the formal presentation of his credentials as the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Brazil. During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed the warm greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Lula da Silva, along with His Majesty's sincere wishes for the President's well-being and for the continued progress and prosperity of the Brazilian people. In return, President Lula da Silva asked the ambassador to convey his cordial greetings to His Majesty the Sultan and his best wishes for the advancement and welfare of the Omani people.

Turkish President begins two-day state visit today

B I L A T E R A L R E L A T I O N S A R E B U I L T U P O N H I S T O R I C A L C O N N E C T I O N

PRESIDENT

Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye will arrive today on a two-day state visit to the Sultanate of Oman. A statement to this effect was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court as follows: "In affirmation of the friendship relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Türkiye will pay a two-day state visit to Oman on Wednesday and Thursday." The visit comes within the context of the joint cooperation to achieve further welfare and growth in a manner that serves the two countries and meets their aspirations. The bilateral relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye is distinguished by a strong alignment across multiple domains, including diplomacy, economy, military affairs, investment, trade and culture. The state visit to the Sultanate of Oman by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, undertaken at the invitation of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, marks a significant step in advancing bilateral relations and opening new horizons for economic and investment cooperation. Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari, Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of Türkiye, said that bilateral relations are built upon



a historical connection spanning over three centuries, defined by cooperation and mutual respect. These characteristics have consistently formed the foundation of Omani-Turkish relations in the modern era, which are distinguished by continuous dialogue and consultation on numerous



regional and international issues since the establishment of diplomatic relations on June 28, 1973. The subsequent creation of the Political Consultations Committee between the two foreign ministries on May 4, 1999, further institutionalised this cooperation in the political sphere. — ONA

Oman seeks more investments from UK

LONDON: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry, held the 'Oman Investment Forum 2025' in London on Tuesday, with the aim of strengthening financial, investment and economic cooperation between the two sides.

The forum seeks to boost investor confidence in Oman's financial position by showcasing success stories and the policies and structural reforms implemented to achieve fiscal balance and sustainability. It also outlines the government strategies and policies in the financial, investment and economic sectors, alongside projects and initiatives designed to enhance



Dignitaries at the 'Oman Investment Forum 2025' in London on Tuesday.

Oman's investment attractiveness. In the opening session, Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority and Head of the Omani delegation to the Strategic

Advisory Group (SAG), delivered a presentation titled 'Pathways to Oman's Financial Stability', outlining key fiscal measures and reforms that have underpinned

stability and strengthened investor confidence. He underscored the role of the Oman-UK partnership as a driver of long-term economic stability. Al Jashmi said: "The historical Oman-UK relations stand as a pillar of friendship and shared prosperity. This forum is a testament to the strong and enduring partnership between our two countries within the framework of the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG). The UK is currently the largest foreign investor in Oman's economy, accounting for 51.2% of total FDI, which emphasises the importance of this forum in enhancing the growth of investments between the two countries and global investment collaboration." **TURN TO P2**

Comet 'Lemmon' spotted in Omani skies

MUSCAT: The Oman Society of Astronomy and Space has successfully observed and photographed Comet Lemmon (C/2025 A6) from skies across the Sultanate of Oman, marking a rare celestial event considered among the most significant astronomical phenomena of 2025.

Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Society of Astronomy and Space, clarified that this observation forms part of the society's ongoing efforts to monitor and document notable astronomical occurrences.

He noted that the comet is projected to rank among the brightest this year, reaching an apparent magnitude of 4, which would render it visible through astronomical binoculars and potentially to the naked eye



in areas with minimal light pollution. Comet Lemmon (C/2025 A6) was discovered by astronomers at the Mount Lemmon Survey in Arizona in January. This comet spends most of its time in the very distant outer Solar System, far beyond the orbit of the ice giant planet Neptune.

The best place to look is in the evening sky. As the sky darkens, the comet will first pass the bright star Arcturus over the course of a few days, then continue southwest beneath the stars of the Summer Triangle.

Lemmon (C/2025 A6) is a non-periodic comet discovered by the Mount Lemmon Survey in images obtained on January 3, 2025. It has an inbound orbital period of about 1,350 years and will pass perihelion on 8 November 2025 when it will be 0.53 AU from the Sun. — Agencies

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Shabab Oman II returns to Salalah Port

Shabab Oman II concludes Friendship Voyage at Salalah Port

SALALAH: The Royal Navy of Oman’s vessel Shabab Oman II docked at Salalah Port in Dhofar Governorate on Tuesday, marking its return leg in the seventh international voyage known as ‘Glories of the Seas 2025.’

This international journey served to communicate Oman’s message of fostering friendship and goodwill between the Sultanate of Oman and countries worldwide. Through its various port calls, the mission promoted authentic Omani cultural values while highlighting the nation’s distinguished maritime history and rich heritage. — ONA

Youth Centre emerges as cornerstone of development stratgey



The Youth Centre’s reach has expanded significantly, with 458,606 beneficiaries recorded from 2022 through September 2025. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Youth Centre in the Sultanate of Oman has established itself as a cornerstone of the nation’s development strategy, directly supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 by empowering young citizens and channelling their potential. Its growing impact is particularly recognised as Oman prepares to mark Omani Youth Day on October 26. The centre serves as a dynamic hub that merges intellectual development with practical action, fostering a culture of leadership, responsibility and innovation among the country’s ambitious youth.

The centre’s reach has expanded significantly, with 458,606 beneficiaries recorded from 2022 through September 2025. During this period, it delivered 380 training programmes and partnered with 1,227 small and medium enterprises and individual entrepreneurs. In 2025 alone, 66 programmes engaged more than 8,500 young participants, while the centre’s co-working spaces have been utilised by over 104,800 individuals.

Alia al Shanfari, Executive Director of the Youth Centre, stated, “From its inception, our approach has been built on integrated national roles and collaborative efforts, forging substantive partnerships with both public and private sectors. We are convinced that genuine youth empowerment requires a cohesive system operating with a spirit of partnership and shared responsibility.” She added, “The Youth Centre is now advancing towards a phase of comprehensive strategic expansion across all governorates, supported by an integrated development plan valued at approximately RO 14 million. This initiative aims to strengthen our regional presence and provide holistic environments that support innovation, production and the aspirations of young people.”

Omar al Sawaei, Director of Financial and Administrative Affairs at the Centre, detailed key projects, noting, “Among our prominent developments is the Youth Cultural Complex in Sur, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. This strategic 50,000-square-metre facility, featuring a youth centre and public library, represents a RO 4 million investment. The complex also offers additional investment opportunities, including a conference and exhibition centre and a 4-star hotel, with total investments surpassing RO 6 million.” — ONA

President of Botswana visits ROHM

MUSCAT: President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana visited the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) on Tuesday as part of his visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The President toured the facility and was briefed on its various sections and operational facilities, including its annual programming schedule and performance seasons. He was also shown the technical installations, which feature state-of-the-art equipment for international musical

productions. During his tour, the President appreciated the architectural richness of the edifice’s design, which showcases Omani cultural heritage integrated with architectural influences from different continents.

The guest recorded an entry in the Distinguished Visitors’ Book, expressing his pleasure at visiting the Royal Opera House Muscat and commending both the House’s cultural contributions and its distinctive architectural legacy. — ONA



President Duma Gideon Boko at ROHM on Tuesday

Oman-Türkiye relations making steady progress

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabiyousef](#)

THE RELATIONS between the Sultanate of Oman and the republic of Türkiye have been steadily making headway based on the common interests and mutual benefits, which are also accentuated by the unique geo-strategic positions of the two countries.

“We are truly thankful to the Sultanate of Oman for all the kind gestures, humanitarian aid and their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations,” said Muhammet Hekimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman. “One commendable act of humanity was displayed during the devastating earthquake that affected 23 million people in Southern Türkiye and neighbouring Syria in early 2023,” he said.

According to the ambassador, the significant number of Omani citizens visiting Türkiye every year to explore historical and tourist sites, especially in the Black Sea region, is a testament to this long-standing historical affection.

“Our political, economic and cultural ties have significantly improved and become more visible. Ministerial visits, technical delegations and discussions on potential cooperation opportunities in various fields have been frequent,” the ambassador stated.

The volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and Türkiye is witnessing continuous growth, as statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics



Muhammet Hekimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman.

and Information indicate that it reached more than RO 194 million (\$504 million) by the end of the first six months of 2025, RO 318 million (\$826 million) in 2024.

The Sultanate of Oman has also witnessed a significant increase in the number of Turkish businessmen and companies seeking to invest and work in the Sultanate of Oman, as the number of registered companies with Turkish participation reached 423. The total value of the invested capital amounted to more than RO 100 million (about \$267 million).

The activities of Turkish companies in the Sultanate of Oman include various sectors such as construction, wholesale and retail, industry, and logistics. These companies have been contributing to the implementation of a number of the largest

infrastructure projects in the Sultanate of Oman, including airports, ports, roads, dams, and other projects.

Meanwhile, the number of companies established by Omani citizens in the Republic of Türkiye is about 40, with an investment volume of about RO 1.9 million (\$5 million) until the end of 2024, according to data from the Turkish Ministry of Industry and Technology.

The Joint Committee is the main driver of economic, trade and technical relations between the two countries. Its next meeting is scheduled to be held in Muscat next month, under the chair of Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, from the Omani side, and Dr Mehmet Simsek, Minister of Treasury and Finance, from the Turkish side.

It will follow up on strengthening aspects of economic, trade, technical and investment relations between the two countries in a manner that benefits the Omani and Turkish peoples.

In a joint statement, both countries said the Turkish President’s visit to the Sultanate of Oman will add to what was established during His Majesty the Sultan’s visit to Türkiye and will advance the relationship between the two countries in all economic and commercial fields. “The visit indicates the two countries’ desire to raise the level of relations from traditional relations to a strategic partnership that includes the fields of investment, energy, industry and culture,” the statement said.

Oman seeks more investments from UK

FROM P1

Mahmood bin Abdullah al Aweini, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance and Supervisor of the National Programme for Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Sector Development (Estdimah), delivered a presentation titled ‘Oman’s Economic Transformation

Journey: From Stability to Prosperity’, in which he discussed the impact of structural improvements and economic diversification initiatives on attracting investors.

Al Aweini said: “This forum showcases the renewed international confidence in Oman’s economy and financial strength, with the presence of

leading financial institutions and investment funds.

This event comes after a bold journey of achievements in the public finance reform, which led to milestones in developing its financial system and managed to turn financial challenges into successes. The UK has been and continues to be a key strategic partner in achieving our mutual

investment and economic interests. As we are heading into a diversified, competitive and sustainable future, we look forward to continuing to strengthen this partnership towards the prosperity of both nations.”

He stated that “the public debt-to-GDP ratio fell from 68 per cent in 2020 to 34 per cent in 2024. — ONA

State Council participates in 151st IPU Assembly

GENEVA: The State Council participated in the meetings of the 151st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and its accompanying committees, being held in Geneva, Switzerland, from October 19 to 23. The State Council’s participation in the 151st IPU Assembly reflects its commitment to fostering its presence in international parliamentary forums and exchanging legislative and institutional expertise with national and regional parliaments.

Maha al Lamki and Eng Nahla al Hamdi, members of the State Council, participated in the Women Parliamentarians Forum (2025), held as part of the



Maha al Lamki and Eng Nahla al Hamdi participated in the Women Parliamentarians Forum.

General Assembly’s activities.

The forum discussed a number of vital topics related to empowering women in parliamentary work and enhancing their role in decision-



Khalid al Saadi participated in the activities of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments.

making through a set of topics most notably: strengthening women’s parliamentary leadership, following up on progress towards gender equality in parliamentary work

and contributing to the work of the General Assembly from a gender perspective.

In a dialogue session titled ‘Transformational Leadership, Building a More Equitable World’, Maha delivered a speech in which she highlighted the qualitative gains achieved by Omani women, emphasising that the Sultanate of Oman’s future vision is based on the principle of full partnership between women and men.

Khalid bin Ahmed al Saadi, Secretary-General of the State Council, participated in the activities of the Association of Secretaries-General of National Parliaments, held as part of the activities of the IPU General Assembly. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The exhibition features 20 artworks, ranging from photographs to drawings. — ONA

Seminar highlights Omani women in records of travellers

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Literary Forum, on Tuesday organised a seminar titled ‘The Omani Woman in Foreign Sources.’

The event aimed to highlight the presence and contributions of the Omani woman through the ages as documented in foreign sources, alongside showcasing her role in building civilisation and framing her achievements in various fields.

On the sidelines of the seminar, an art exhibition was held, documenting the image of the Omani woman through the records of travellers and foreign sources, organised by the Cultural Club. — ONA

MoD, SAF HONOUR WOMEN FOR THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) celebrated Omani Women’s Day on Monday, observed annually on October 17.

Her Highness Sayyidah Mian bint Shihab al Said, the event’s host, said the celebration honours women for their pioneering achievements across various fields and their active, honourable contributions to the nation’s progress and renaissance. Held at the Al Shafaq Club of the Sultan’s Armed Forces, the celebration featured a national operetta titled ‘Omani Women in the Parade of Glory’, highlighting women’s role in national development and their achievements, including in the military sector, reflecting loyalty and dedication to the nation. — ONA

Estonia’s Introdunct Group launches Oman operations



TARIQ AL BARWANI

MUSCAT: Introdunct Group, an Estonia-based international integrated technology partner with primary development office in Kyiv, Ukraine and Tallinn, has officially announced the opening of its operations in Oman as part of its strategic expansion across the Middle East.

The move underscores the company’s commitment to supporting national capacity building, job creation and innovation-driven growth in Oman’s technology sector.

To spearhead its strategic entry into the Omani market, Introdunct Group has appointed Tariq bin Hilal al Barwani as the company’s Strategic Business and Innovation Adviser. Tariq, a renowned technologist and public figure known for his contributions to innovation, youth empowerment and digital transformation, will support Introdunct’s Group effort in establishing local presence, partnerships and capacity-building initiatives. “Oman is rapidly emerging as a hub for innovation and technology in the region. Our expansion here aligns with our mission to empower local talent and build sustainable digital ecosystems,” said Viktor Larionov, Group CEO of Introdunct.

“Tariq’s rich experiences, leadership and deep understanding of the local innovation landscape make him the ideal partner to guide our growth and impact in the Sultanate of Oman,” he added.

Al Barwani said he was honoured to join Introdunct in bringing meaningful development to Oman’s technology sector. “Our shared vision is to strengthen local capacities, open new pathways for youth employment and contribute to the country’s digital transformation agenda,” he said.

Swiss Attorney General speaks on economic crimes

MUSCAT: Stefan Blättler, Attorney General of the Swiss Confederation, delivered two lectures on cybercrimes and economic crimes on Tuesday as part of his current official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the lectures, which he delivered at the Public Prosecution Department’s premises in Muscat, Blättler gave an overview of the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland (Swiss Public Prosecutor’s Federal Office), its



Stefan Blättler delivering the lecture.

powers and the special nature of the Swiss legal system.

He elaborated on the concept of cybercrimes and economic crimes, mechanisms for detecting them, reporting them and adjudicating them. He also reviewed related challenges and future prospects.

In the lectures, Blättler laid emphasis on the importance of enhancing international cooperation to combat such crimes.

The lectures were organised within the context of cooperation

between the Public Prosecution Department (Oman) and the Office of the Attorney General of the Swiss Confederation, with the aim of exchanging expertise and reviewing standard practices in combating transnational organised crime.

The lectures were attended by judges, representatives of government departments concerned and members of the Public Prosecution Department. — ONA

Workshop helps to turn ideas into viable projects

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, OCT 21

THE Two-day workshop titled ‘Innovation: Inspiring Ideas and Sustaining Impact’ under the theme ‘From Initiation to Success’ concluded on Monday.

The workshop was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The workshop aimed to equip healthcare professionals with the tools to turn innovative ideas into real projects that can enhance the health sector and support sustainable development.

Participants learned to think creatively, protect their ideas and understand the role of intellectual property in developing effective solutions.

The first day featured practical sessions on healthcare innovation, digital tools, design thinking and project presentation, led by experts including Dr Said al Rawahi, Dr Fatma al Rawahi, Dr Mona al Alawi, Dr Issam al Lawati and Nibras al Mahrami.

In his opening remarks, Dr Said al Rawahi, Head of the Research and Community Service Department, Oman College of Health Sciences, emphasised that fostering innovation aligns with Oman Vision 2040’s goals of building a creative and skilled health workforce.

He added that innovation and intellectual property are central to achieving sustainable healthcare solutions.

The second day focused on



The workshop was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah.

The workshop equipped healthcare professionals with the tools to turn innovative ideas into real projects

intellectual property rights and patents, covering protection of inventions, patent applications and funding options, including crowdfunding through the Wadea platform.

Participants also learned about support from the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprise Development in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

Dr Badria al Rahbi, Senior Lecturer, Oman College of Health Sciences, encouraged participants to pursue their ideas and collaborate with experts to bring them to fruition.

Ibtisam al Shidhani, Lean

Management Manager at the Directorate-General of Health Services, highlighted the synergy between lean management and innovation in improving healthcare services.

The workshop concluded with discussions on measuring innovation in Oman and strategies to strengthen the national system of creativity and research.

The event underscored the importance of collaboration between educational and healthcare institutions in building a knowledge-based, sustainable healthcare system for Oman’s future.

Women leaders forum to champion empowerment

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, OCT 21

Under the theme ‘Women Leaders: Pioneering and Empowering’, the Omani Women’s Association in Al Khabourah is set to host an inspiring forum on Thursday, celebrating women’s leadership and growing influence in community and national development.

Held under the auspices of Dr Hanifa bint Ahmed al Qasmiyah, the event will bring together prominent female leaders, including directors of government departments, school principals,

entrepreneurs and community initiative pioneers. The forum aims to highlight women’s contributions to leadership, promote participation in decision-making and strengthen their role in achieving the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.

In a creative and forward-looking opening, the event will feature a welcome address delivered by an AI-powered virtual speaker, symbolising the integration of technology and innovation in modern leadership.

The programme includes working papers and panel



DR HANIFA BINT AHMED AL QASMIYAH

discussions on key topics such as self-awareness and leadership growth, communication and decision-making skills, teamwork and strategic planning, and empowering women with effective management tools.

Dr Yasmin al Balushi,

Senior Adviser at the Royal Academy of Management, will deliver the keynote address, sharing insights on leadership excellence and how women can create meaningful impact within their organisations and communities.

Two additional papers will explore how women can empower themselves in society and lead change through community-driven initiatives.

Commenting on the event, Moza al Hosni, Head of the Omani Women’s Association in Al Khabourah, said: “This forum is not just a gathering

of women leaders; it is a movement of empowerment, dialogue and collaboration.

Through this platform, we aim to strengthen women’s confidence in their leadership potential and encourage them to take an active role in shaping the future of their communities.”

The Women Leaders: Pioneering and Empowering Forum promises to be a landmark event that celebrates ambition, inspires growth, and reinforces the pivotal role of Omani women in driving sustainable development and innovation.

SPOTLIGHT

SEASONAL
HEALTH
TIPS FOR
CHILDREN

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

AS COOLER mornings replace the heat of late summer, Oman's schools once again echo with the cheerful sounds of returning students. Yet, amid the excitement of a new academic year, many parents face a familiar concern — the seasonal wave of respiratory illnesses that spreads quickly through classrooms. Health experts warn that sudden temperature changes and close contact among students create ideal conditions for the spread of colds, flu, and other respiratory infections. For young children, whose immune systems are still developing, the risks are even higher. “Children spend hours indoors in air-conditioned spaces, often sharing supplies and food,” explains Dr Mohammed al Balushi, paediatric specialist. “Simple habits like not washing hands or covering a cough can easily lead to infection. When weather fluctuates between hot afternoons and cool evenings, we see a rise in respiratory cases.” Teachers and school health coordinators across Oman have already noticed a spike in mild illnesses as students adjust to the new term. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, continues to emphasise hygiene routines and clear policies to keep unwell students at home. According to Wafa al Mukhaini, a school health supervisor, prevention begins inside the classroom. “We monitor students’ health every morning and encourage parents not to send their children to school if they have flu symptoms. Proper handwashing, good ventilation, and personal hygiene are key to keeping classrooms safe,” she says. Many schools have introduced awareness sessions and posters promoting hygiene habits — small efforts that can make a big difference in reducing infection rates. Doctors stress that families play the most critical role in prevention. “Strong immunity starts at home,” adds Dr Al Balushi. “A balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, enough sleep and weather-appropriate clothing help children resist infections.” Parents are also advised to maintain good ventilation at home, avoid crowded places during peak illness seasons, and teach children to use tissues when sneezing or coughing.

The annual flu vaccine remains one of the most effective shields against seasonal illness.

Fatima al Araiimi, a nurse at a local health centre, notes: “Vaccination doesn’t guarantee full protection, but it significantly reduces the severity and complications of flu cases.”

She adds that awareness campaigns have improved vaccination rates, but hesitation persists due to misinformation — a challenge health professionals continue to address.

One of the most common mistakes parents make, experts say, is sending sick children to school too soon. Health professionals emphasise that keeping a child home when they show symptoms like fever, cough or sore throat protects not only classmates but also teachers and families.

Protecting children’s health is not solely the responsibility of schools or parents — it’s a community effort.

Through national initiatives such as Healthy Schools and the National Immunisation Campaign, Oman continues to strengthen its preventive health framework.

Awareness, cooperation, and consistency are the key ingredients to success. As Oman embraces a season of change, ensuring the well-being of its youngest citizens remains a shared mission — one rooted in knowledge, care, and daily vigilance.

We cannot control the weather or stop viruses from existing — but we can control our habits. By teaching children good hygiene, encouraging healthy lifestyles and keeping them home when they’re ill, we build the strongest shield of all: awareness.

Because a healthy child is not just ready to learn — they’re ready to thrive.

Vaccination doesn’t guarantee full protection, but it significantly reduces the severity and complications of flu cases.

FATIMA AL ARAIMI
A local health centre nurse

Promote financial literacy among kids

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 21

THE inaugural Gulf Forum for Financial Innovation for Public School Students (Grades 10-12) kicked off yesterday, organised by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) in cooperation with the Ministry of Education through the Khazna Project for Instilling Cultural Principles in School Students.

Held under the theme 'Financial Innovation: An Investment in the Future', the three-day event features sessions, workshops, student competitions and excursions.

The opening ceremony was officiated by Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs. The forum brought together educators, creative students from GCC countries, and experts in financial and technical fields to exchange knowledge and ideas.

The event aims to promote financial literacy, equip students with essential economic skills, and identify and nurture talent in financial innovation. It also encourages partnerships between educational and financial institutions to develop teachers and foster an innovative financial culture that supports knowledge economies and national development goals.



The event features sessions, workshops, student competitions and excursions

Dr Haifa al Maamari, Director of the Khazna Project, highlighted the forum as an interactive platform connecting experts and students, reinforcing GCC countries' aspirations to cultivate financially conscious generations capable of creative problem-solving.

She emphasised that financial literacy is an urgent necessity and that the forum seeks to instil a culture of financial innovation among participants.

Dr Abdulaziz al Ruwais, Programme Director at ABEGS, added that the forum facilitates collective action to study financial innovation in public education, develop student potential and share international best practices. He stressed that integrating financial innovation programmes into public education is an essential

response to evolving economic and technological challenges.

The forum's activities include dialogue sessions, enrichment lectures, workshops, competitions and recreational trips. Competing projects from across the Gulf will be evaluated, with three winning countries announced on the final day.

Participants expressed excitement over the hands-on activities, noting that the forum not only deepens their understanding of financial concepts, but also inspires entrepreneurial thinking. Many students highlighted the value of interacting with experts and peers from across the GCC, saying that such exchanges broaden their perspectives and motivate them to apply innovative ideas in real-world scenarios.

SQU eyes academic ties with China delegation

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) welcomed a delegation from the China Association of Higher Education (CAHE) on Tuesday, led by Prof Li Jiajun, Vice-President of the Association.

The delegation was received by Prof Salim bin Hamoud al Harthy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Community Service, at the University Council Hall, in the presence of several academics.

During the meeting, the Chinese delegation outlined the Association's



The Chinese delegation outlined CAHE's mission and areas of work with SQU

mission and areas of work.

Established in Beijing in 1983, CAHE is a national, non-profit academic organisation supervised by China's Ministry of Education. It unites universities, research institutions and

educational experts across the country, playing a pivotal role in shaping education policies and advancing academic development.

Focusing on areas such as digital transformation and the future of

education, CAHE maintains strong international ties, particularly with Arab and African nations. Within the China-Arab alliance, collaboration emphasises fields such as aerospace, information and communications technology, and investment, fostering innovation and knowledge exchange.

Prof Al Harthy presented an overview of SQU's colleges, research centres and international initiatives, including the Afaaq programme for international students.

Symposium honours Dr Ghuloum's legacy

MUSCAT: The Omani Society for Writers and Literati (OSWL) hosted a symposium titled 'Oman and the Gulf in the Thought of Dr Ibrahim Ghuloum', celebrating the life and contributions of the late Bahraini critic and thinker. The event brought together 15 critics and researchers from Oman and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The symposium was attended by writers, intellectuals and cultural enthusiasts. Said bin Mohammed al Saqlawi, Chairman of OSWL Board of Directors, highlighted Dr Ghuloum's profound impact on Gulf literary criticism, storytelling, folk literature and theatre, noting his close ties with Omani intellectuals.

Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed al Khalifa, Chairperson of the Shaikh Ebrahim bin Mohammed



OSWL hosted a symposium titled 'Oman and the Gulf in the Thought of Dr Ibrahim Ghuloum'

Al Khalifa Centre for Culture and Research, praised the initiative for strengthening cultural ties between the two countries and honouring pioneering intellectual contributions.

Dr Fawzia Said al Saleh, widow of Dr Ghuloum, expressed gratitude for the symposium, noting his humility and lifelong dedication to literature, theatre and research.

The event featured two sessions exploring Dr

Ghuloum's critical and creative thought. In the first session, Dr Mohammed Abdullah Boudi (Saudi Arabia) examined his work documenting early Gulf literary criticism, while Dr Mubarak bin Issa al Jabri analysed 'The Death of the Intellectual: Culture as a Footnote.' Other presentations focused on cultural sociology, early short story criticism and his contributions to theatre, including critical readings

of plays such as 'The Sufferings of Ahmed bin Majid' and 'Horses.'

The second session included discussions on establishing critical beginnings in Ghuloum's thought, his personal and social reflections in literature, and his efforts to promote theatre for children.

Dr Khalifa Yassin bin Arabi (Bahrain), Dr Abdul Karim bin Ali Jawad, and Dr Abbas Hassan al Qassab (Bahrain) delivered key papers. The symposium also featured personal testimonials from colleagues and poets reflecting on their experiences with Dr Ghuloum.

An open dialogue concluded the event, focusing on his role in shaping critical awareness in the Gulf and documenting the region's literary heritage. — ONA

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TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
023/2025	Building works – Masirah	Excellent	06 November 2025	08 December 2025	951/- R.O
029/2025	Building works – MAM	Excellent	06 November 2025	08 December 2025	404/- R.O
035/2025	Electrical works – Raysoot	First & Above Specialized In Electrical Works	06 November 2025	08 December 2025	124/- R.O
037/2025	Building works – Nizwa	Excellent	06 November 2025	15 December 2025	1,375/- R.O
041/2025	Building works – Masirah	Excellent	06 November 2025	15 December 2025	1,500/- R.O
042/2025	Building works – Rustaq	Excellent	06 November 2025	15 December 2025	1,500/- R.O
046/2025	Building works – UM Al-Ghawarif	First & Above	06 November 2025	08 December 2025	248/- R.O
047/2025	Building works – Nojoor Sahlanut	Excellent	06 November 2025	15 December 2025	1,500/- R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY** (USB) in two separate files:
 - Financial (**bill 1&2 separated file from bill3**)
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

WORLD

DEVASTATEDINFRASTRUCTURE



A general view of a damaged street filled with debris in Homs. — Reuters file photo

WB ESTIMATES SYRIA RECONSTRUCTION COSTS AT \$216 BN

DAMASCUS: Syria's post-civil war reconstruction could cost up to \$216 billion, the World Bank said in a report on Tuesday that follows over 13 years of conflict in the country. Reconstruction is one of the most significant challenges facing Syria's new authorities after the overthrow of longtime ruler Bashar al Assad in December. "Syria's reconstruction costs are estimated at \$216 billion after more than thirteen years of conflict," the World Bank said in its latest report, which it said assessed "infrastructure and building assets, covering the period from 2011 to 2024".

The Syrian civil war killed over half a million people and devastated the country's infrastructure. "The conflict has damaged nearly one-third of Syria's pre-conflict gross capital stock, with direct physical damages to infrastructure, residential buildings, and non-residential buildings estimated at \$108 billion," the report said.

Among the categories assessed, infrastructure was the hardest hit, accounting for 48 per cent of total damage, equivalent to \$52 billion. The report estimates costs of physical assets to range between \$140 billion and \$345 billion, "with a conservative best estimate" of \$216 billion.

Aleppo province and the Damascus countryside, major rebel strongholds subjected to heavy bombardment during the early years of the war, bore the brunt of the most of the destruction.

"The challenges ahead are immense, but the World Bank stands ready to work alongside the Syrian people and the international community to support recovery and reconstruction," said Jean-Christophe Carret, World Bank Middle East division director. The World Bank estimates reconstruction costs to be ten times greater than Syria's projected 2024 GDP.

Syrian Finance Minister Mohammed Barnieh said the report "provides a critical baseline of the massive scale of the destruction and of the reconstruction costs ahead". "Now, more than ever, it is imperative for the international community to mobilise support and partnership to help Syria restore essential infrastructure, revitalise communities, and lay the foundation for a more resilient future for its people," he added.

Separately, the Syrian interior ministry said that it seized about 12 million captagon stimulant pills in a raid on a drug smuggling network operating near Damascus. The seizure marks one of the largest drug busts since the transitional authority assumed power in late 2024. Following "precise monitoring and tracking of a smuggling network attempting to traffic large quantities of narcotics abroad", security forces seized "around 12 million captagon pills in the Al Dumayr area", Brigadier General Khaled Eid, director of the Anti-Narcotics Department, said in a ministry statement. The leader of the network was arrested during the operation, according to Eid.

The confiscated drugs will be destroyed. The operation reflects the department's "determined approach to combating smuggling, cutting off its sources, and prosecuting" those involved in drug trafficking. — AFP

DRONE ATTACK HITS KHARTOUM AIRPORT AREA AHEAD OF REOPENING

KHARTOUM: A drone attack struck the vicinity of Khartoum International Airport early on Tuesday, one day before Sudanese authorities were due to reopen the facility for domestic flights for the first time in over two years. Eyewitnesses said that they heard the sounds of drones over central and southern Khartoum and multiple explosions in the airport area between 4:00 and 6:00 am. The airport has been shut since fighting erupted in April 2023

between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), leaving vital infrastructure across the capital heavily damaged. On Monday, Sudan's Civil Aviation Authority had said the airport would reopen as planned on Wednesday, with domestic flights resuming gradually after technical and operational preparations were completed. While Khartoum has remained relatively calm since the army reclaimed control earlier this year,

drone attacks have continued, with the RSF repeatedly accused of targeting military and civilian infrastructure from afar. One eyewitness also said that drones hit northern Omdurman, an area known to host some of Sudan's largest military installations. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the strikes and no information on casualties or damage was released. Tuesday's strike marks the third drone attack on the capital in a week. — AFP

Food flows into Gaza still far below targets, says WFP

THE UN World Food Programme said on Tuesday that supplies into Gaza were ramping up after the US-brokered ceasefire but were still far short of its daily target of 2,000 tonnes because only two crossings are open, and none to the famine-hit north of the enclave. Around 750 metric tonnes of food are now entering the Gaza Strip daily, according to the WFP, but this was still well below the scale of needs after two years of conflict between Israel and Hamas that has reduced much of Gaza to ruins. "To be able to get to this scale-up, we have to use every border crossing point right now," WFP spokesperson Abeer Etefa told a Geneva press briefing.

She said only two of the Israeli-controlled crossings into Gaza were operational - Kerem Shalom in the south and Kissufim in the centre. The ceasefire plan brokered by US President Donald Trump envisages "full aid" being sent into Gaza. An Israeli security official said that humanitarian aid continues to enter through the Kerem Shalom crossing and additional crossings in accordance with the plan, without naming them. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt will remain closed until further notice, with its reopening dependent on Hamas handing over the bodies of deceased hostages.

The UN children's agency spokesperson, Ricardo Pires, said on Tuesday the humanitarian response was still far below the required scale and called for all entry points to reopen. Some nutrition supplies for



Civil defence team searches for bodies trapped under the rubble in Gaza City. — Reuters

The humanitarian response was still far below the required scale and called for all entry points to reopen. Some nutrition supplies for children and pregnant women have reached the north via the south, Etefa said, but far short of the level required. "We haven't had large-scale convoys into Gaza City or to the north of Gaza," she said, adding that WFP had not been granted permission to use the main north-south Salah al Din road.

Food supplies delivered so far are enough to feed around half a million people for two weeks, she said. Many Gazans were storing the food they are receiving because they are afraid that supplies might again dry up. "They eat part of it, and they ration and keep some of the supplies for an emergency, because they are not very confident how long the ceasefire will last and what will happen next," she said. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump threatened Hamas on Tuesday with "FAST, FURIOUS & BRUTAL" force if it does not "do what is right" as he pushes for the next, more complex, stage of a Gaza

ceasefire that has already been repeatedly tested. Increasing the pressure on the Palestinian group, Trump said in a social media post that numerous US allies had said they would welcome the chance to go into Gaza and hit Hamas but he had told them and Israel "not yet". Israel and Hamas have accused each other of repeated breaches of the truce since it was signed eight days ago, with flashes of violence and recriminations over the pace of returning hostage bodies, bringing in aid and opening borders. Trump's plan called for the establishment of a technocratic Palestinian committee overseen by an international board, with Hamas taking no role in governance. A Palestinian official close to the talks said Hamas encouraged the formation of such a committee to run Gaza without any of its representatives, but with the consent of the group as well as the Palestinian Authority and other factions. — Reuters

DATA PROTECTION

Dutch watchdog warns against using AI



The Dutch data regulator warned voters against using AI chatbots ahead of the national election, saying the platforms give unreliable advice and push them towards two major parties on opposite ends of the political spectrum. "Chatbots may seem like clever tools, but as a voting aid, they consistently fail," the Dutch data protection watchdog's vice-chair Monique Verdier said, describing their operation as "unclear and difficult to verify". — Reuters

HEIST INVESTIGATION

France intensifies hunt for Louvre raiders



French police on Tuesday stepped up the hunt for thieves who stole priceless royal jewels from the Louvre museum, as scrutiny mounted over security at the country's cultural institutions. Scores of investigators were still looking for culprits, working on the theory that it was an organised crime group. Detectives were scouring footage from around the Louvre as well as of main highways out of Paris for signs of the four robbers. — AFP

FINANCIALLY MOTIVATED

Trial opens for Italian migrant rescuers



Six members of an Italian charity which rescues migrants went on trial in Sicily, accused of aiding illegal immigration. The case centres around the Mare Jonio, a ship operated by Mediterranean Saving Humans (MSH), which took 27 migrants off a giant tanker in 2020 and brought them to Italy. Prosecutors allege the rescue was financially motivated, pointing to a 125,000-euro payment from Maersk to MSH months after the event. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Juraj Cintula attends his trial at the Specialised Criminal Court in Banska Bystrica. — Reuters

SLOVAK PM FICO’S ATTACKER CONVICTED OF TERRORISM

BANSKA BYSTRICA: A Slovak court ruled that a man who shot and wounded Prime Minister Robert Fico last year was guilty of terrorism charges and handed him a 21-year jail sentence. Juraj Cintula, 72, shot at Fico five times from just over a one-metre distance as the prime minister greeted people in the central Slovak town of Handlova in May 2024.

The verdict of the Specialised Criminal Court in the city of Banska Bystrica closes a trial that began in July and whose main question was whether Cintula, who admitted shooting Fico, was guilty of terrorism or less serious crimes of murder or attack. Fico, 61, was struck four times and was seriously injured in his abdomen, and also suffered injuries to his hip, hand and foot. He made his first public appearance in July last year.

Judge Igor Kralik cited Cintula’s own reasoning for the attack when reading his justification for the terrorism count. “The court considers proven that the defendant did not attack a citizen but specifically the prime minister”, Kralik said. The sentence was less than the maximum of life in prison. — Reuters

HUNDREDS PROTEST BOLIVIA POLL



Hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Bolivia to denounce alleged election fraud and call for an audit after the country’s new centre-right president was announced. Rodrigo Paz, a 58-year-old economist, won the second round of voting with 54.5 per cent of the votes against former right-wing president Jorge Quiroga. Protesters shouted “fraud” and attempted to march on the square in La Paz where the president and parliamentary offices are located, before being dispersed by police without any reported clashes. — AFP

UN RIGHTS WORK FACING ‘EXISTENTIAL THREAT’ AMIDST TARGETED CUTS

GENEVA: United Nations rights work is being disproportionately targeted for cuts amidst a deep UN funding crisis, posing an “existential threat” to vital investigations and accountability efforts, a report warned on Tuesday. Washington’s failure to pay UN membership fees, coupled with Chinese and Russian efforts to defund rights bodies, could deal a death-blow to the UN battle against rights abuses, the NGO report said.

“At a moment of sweeping UN reform and financial crisis, these efforts... pose an existential threat to the UN’s human rights system”, the

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) cautioned. Already, a high-level war crimes investigation ordered by the UN Human Rights Council into violence sweeping the Democratic Republic of Congo has failed to launch due to lacking funds. And other investigations warn cuts could leave them severely crippled.

The UN is mulling reforms including a 15-per cent cut across its 2026 budget to tackle chronic liquidity problems exacerbated by US President Donald Trump’s policies. The United States paused funding after Trump returned to

power in January. As of September 30, Washington owed \$1.5 billion in unpaid UN membership fees, including \$300 million in arrears from previous years, according to the ISHR report.

UN chief Antonio Guterres’ UN80 reform proposal aims to spread cuts across the body’s three pillars: peace and security; human rights; and sustainable development. But ISHR warned the cuts would “disproportionately hit the human rights pillar due to years of underfunding”. The human rights segment receives less than one percent of the UN budget. — AFP

EU leaders back Trump’s Ukraine fresh peace push

EUROPEAN

LEADERS on Tuesday threw their support behind President Donald Trump’s peace push for Ukraine, while reaffirming their red lines, as the Kremlin cast doubt on chances of an imminent summit between the US leader and Vladimir Putin. Fresh from his Gaza peace deal, Trump has resumed the search for an elusive breakthrough in Ukraine, as the war grinds into its fourth year since Russia’s war, through contacts with both Kyiv and Moscow.

The likelihood of a Trump-Putin summit taking place in Budapest within two weeks, as promised by the US leader, appeared to recede Tuesday as Moscow warned laying the groundwork “could take time”. But the mooted sit-down has revived the prospect of Washington and Moscow cutting a deal that could disadvantage Kyiv and threaten broader European security interests. The US leader asserted, after hosting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last Friday, that peace talks should begin based on the current frontline with Russia — but multiple reports said US officials had in private pushed Kyiv to concede territory.

In a joint statement on Tuesday, leaders including Zelensky, France’s Emmanuel Macron and Germany’s Friedrich Merz threw their weight behind Trump’s peace effort — while appearing to seek to hold him to his public comments. “We strongly support President Trump’s position that the fighting should stop immediately and that the current line of contact should be the starting point of negotiations”, said a statement signed by Zelensky, EU chiefs Antonio Costa and Ursula von der Leyen, Macron, Merz, Britain’s Keir Starmer and Italy’s Giorgia Meloni. “We remain committed to the principle that international borders must not be changed by force”, said the leaders, who also included those of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Poland.

In comments made on board Air Force One on Sunday, Trump made no references



People shelter inside an invincibility centre, in Chernihiv, Ukraine. — Reuters

to Kyiv ceding territory. “What I say is they should stop right now at the battle lines”, Trump told reporters, adding: “They can negotiate something later on down the line”. Zelensky, who is pushing to attend any summit in Budapest after being shut out of Trump’s last meeting with Putin, in Alaska, has ruled out territorial concessions.

France’s Macron said on Tuesday Ukraine’s Western allies were ready to provide security guarantees in the event of a ceasefire, but that Kyiv alone would decide on any territorial negotiations. “No one else can do this. Therefore, it is up to Ukraine to decide for itself and its territory”, Macron said in Slovenia.

EU leaders are set to close ranks in support of Ukraine at a Brussels summit on Thursday — followed a day later by a “coalition of the willing” meeting of European leaders in London to discuss the next steps to help Kyiv. Their statement on Tuesday was about “clearly” reiterating Europe’s position, expressed during a visit by the leaders to Washington following the US president’s talks with Putin in August, an EU official said. In the text, European leaders slammed “Russia’s stalling tactics” which “have shown time and time again that Ukraine is the only party serious about peace”. “Therefore we are clear that Ukraine

must be in the strongest possible position — before, during and after any ceasefire”, they said. The European Union is considering a new 140-billion-euro (\$163-billion) loan for Ukraine funded by frozen Russian central bank assets, which will be discussed at Thursday’s summit in Brussels. Officials are hoping the summit will produce a green light to move ahead with a detailed legal proposal on the loan. “We must ramp up the pressure on Russia’s economy and its defence industry, until Putin is ready to make peace”, the leaders said. Meanwhile, Russian strikes caused widespread blackouts and cut off phone networks in the northern Ukrainian city of Chernigiv, with repairs stalled by ongoing drone attacks on Tuesday. Ukraine has restricted electricity consumption across the country in recent weeks following systematic Russian strikes on energy sites and the rail network.

“Critical infrastructure like hospitals have had to turn to autonomous power supply”, a spokesman for the regional authorities said, adding the severe outages began late Monday. “There are also water problems for those living on the upper floors. The whole city and the surrounding area in the north is blacked out”, Andriy Podorvan, the representative of Chernigiv regional military administration said. — AFP

Conservative Takaichi named Japan’s first woman Prime Minister

TOKYO: Sanae Takaichi was named Japan’s first woman prime minister on Tuesday, with the social conservative naming just two other women to her cabinet. Japan’s fifth premier in as many years also leads a minority government and has a bulging in-tray, not least a scheduled visit by US President Donald Trump next week. Takaichi said on Tuesday that she wanted to have “candid discussions” with US leaders. In her first remarks as premier, Takaichi said she hoped to discuss topics including Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, Ukraine and bilateral issues.

The former heavy metal drummer and Margaret Thatcher admirer became head of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on October 4, but its coalition collapsed days later. This forced Takaichi to form an alliance with the reformist, right-leaning Japan Innovation Party (JIP), which was signed on Monday. She was approved by parliament

as prime minister on Tuesday and was due formally to take office later in the day when she meets the emperor.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen congratulated Takaichi for “making history” as Japan’s first woman premier. Takaichi had promised a cabinet with “Nordic” levels of women, up from two under predecessor Shigeru Ishiba. The record for Japan is five. But she named only two other women in her 19-strong cabinet, with Satsuki Katayama in charge of finances and the Japanese-American Kimi Onoda taking on the economic security portfolio.

Japan ranked 118 out of 148 in the World Economic Forum’s 2025 Global Gender Gap Report. Around 15 per cent of lower house MPs are women. Takaichi has said she hopes to raise awareness about women’s health struggles and has spoken candidly about her own experience



Japan’s new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi poses for photos, at the prime minister’s office in Tokyo. — AFP

with menopause. But she is seen as socially conservative, opposing revising a 19th-century law requiring married couples to share the same surname and wants the imperial family to stick to male-only succession.

The new premier handed the

foreign minister role to Toshimitsu Motegi, who was credited with handling trade ties with Trump’s first administration.

The US president wants Tokyo to stop Russian energy imports and boost defence spending. Details of Japan’s mooted \$550 billion in

investments in the US, as part of its latest trade deal with Washington, remain unclear.

Takaichi previously said that “Japan is completely looked down on by China” and that Tokyo must “address the security threat” posed by Beijing. But she has since toned down her rhetoric and last week stayed away from the Yasukuni shrine that honours Japan’s war dead, long a flashpoint in Tokyo’s regional ties. China’s foreign ministry on Tuesday urged Tokyo to “honour its political commitments on major issues including history and Taiwan”.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also congratulated Takaichi, saying that “our deepening ties are vital for peace, stability and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific and beyond”. Takaichi will be under pressure to restore the fortunes of the LDP after a string of poor election results. — AFP

OPINION

Oman-Türkiye relations poised for further growth



OMAN-Türkiye relations are set to significantly expand with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's two-day state visit to Oman starting on Wednesday. This visit, following His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's visit to Ankara in November 2024, highlights a mutual commitment to deepening cooperation across various sectors.

During his visit to Türkiye, His Majesty the Sultan praised Türkiye's supportive stances on Arab and regional issues, emphasising the strong fraternal relations between the two countries and their shared dedication to enhancing cooperation in politics, economy, military and defence, science and technology, education, culture, energy and tourism. Türkiye-Omani relations continue to flourish in multiple fields such as politics, economy, higher education, energy and culture. Bilateral cooperation, especially in the last decade or so, has seen significant progress driven by common interests between the two parties.

The state visit of Türkiye President is a testament to the depth of bilateral relations and the shared desire to maintain the positive momentum in the relationship between the two countries. This visit showcases the level of relations and the strategic significance of the longstanding ties between Türkiye and Oman. The historical ties between Oman and Türkiye

date back over many centuries, with formal diplomatic relations established in 1973. Recent high-level exchanges, including HM's 2024 visit, have resulted in several important agreements covering entrepreneurship, employment, health, agriculture and banking cooperation.

A key outcome was the creation of a \$500 million joint investment fund, expected to stimulate new ventures and enhance trade and investment flows between the two nations. Economic relations have shown strong growth, with Türkiye ranking 11th among recipients of Omani non-oil exports in 2024, a significant jump from 17th in 2023. The number of registered Turkish companies in Oman increased by 55 per cent to 597 by the end of 2024, with Turkish capital invested rising from RO41 million in 2023 to RO56 million in 2024. These companies are active in construction, trade, manufacturing, and logistics.

Total trade between Oman and Türkiye reached RO196.8 million during the first seven months of 2025, with Omani exports mainly consisting of chemicals, food products, machinery, plastics, and rubber, while imports from Türkiye largely included electrical appliances, optical equipment, and industrial tools. Turkish firms have also completed \$6 billion worth of infrastructure projects in Oman.

In addition to economic ties, cultural and educational exchanges are expanding.

This visit, following His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's visit to Ankara in November 2024, highlights a mutual commitment to deepening cooperation across various sectors

Efforts are underway to open a Turkish school in Oman, complementing the Turkish language programme launched at Sultan Qaboos University in 2019, which continues to gain interest. Mutual tourist numbers have also surpassed 100,000.

President Erdogan's current Gulf tour, which also includes Kuwait and Qatar, will also address regional and international developments, particularly the situation in Gaza. Türkiye has been a strong advocate for the Palestinian people, providing extensive humanitarian aid, diplomatic mediation and calls for accountability.

Discussions during the visit are expected to focus on humanitarian conditions in Gaza, aid coordination, and support for a ceasefire. This aligns with Oman's balanced diplomacy and its role as a mediator in regional crises.

Oman emerges as a leading actor in upholding regional stability, owing to its balanced and constructive approach, its neutral stance, and its role as a mediator, particularly in regional crises, where it advances solutions through dialogue and diplomacy, embodying a sophisticated model of constructive diplomacy.

In this context, the balanced positions maintained by the Sultanate of Oman on numerous issues—from the Yemeni crisis to its role in US negotiations with Iran—are largely consistent with Türkiye's diplomatic approach.

IN SUDAN’S CONFLICT, VOLUNTEERS STEP IN WHERE GOVT FAILS

In Sudan, volunteers risk death and arrest daily to serve a starving and uprooted population, vital work that made their network one of the top contenders for this year’s Nobel Peace Prize.

Known as Emergency Response Rooms (ERR), the group tirelessly distributes food, rebuilds homes and organises evacuations in the country ravaged by more than two years of war that has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions.

“We are part of the population, we come from wherever we operate,” said Dia Al Deen al Malek, a volunteer coordinator with the emergency response unit in the capital Khartoum. “We are doctors, engineers, students, unemployed people, accountants.” The network is located in all regions of the country and brings together thousands of volunteers, mostly young people.

The teams operate outside of administrative constraints, often acting as relays for international agencies which, unable to deploy their teams on site, entrust them with the management of food and medical supplies.

“They are determined and brave people and organisations who know the context, know the language and understand what’s needed,” Denise Brown, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Sudan, said.

“Since day one of the war, the Emergency Response Rooms and countless local responders have been the beating heart of the humanitarian response in Sudan,” said Shashwat Saraf, country director for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), one of the NGOs working with the grassroots network. Their work is to respond to emergencies, from managing hospitals to repairing water and electricity networks, running canteens, caring for the wounded, supporting victims of violence and rebuilding schools. “When the war started, there were corpses in the streets and a complete lack of action,” Malek said.

Volunteers were thrust onto the front lines to support the crumbling government when, in April 2023, the country descended into a power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The ERR evolved from Sudan’s resistance committees, local networks that emerged during protests against former president Omar al Bashir and played a key role in the 2018-2019 revolution. During Covid-19, they led prevention campaigns and vaccination efforts. — AFP

Nations that protect their data protect their destiny

HAVE You noticed that “national sovereignty” has never been under attack like it is today, in all parts around the world. It gives a nation purpose, identity, and control over its destiny. In the digital age, this control extends beyond borders and armies, it lies in data. Data sovereignty refers to the principle that information is subject to the laws and governance of the nation where it is collected, stored, or processed. It is the digital equivalent of territorial sovereignty, ensuring that a country’s citizens and institutions retain ownership, privacy, and agency over their digital footprint.

Data has become the world’s most valuable resource, fuelling innovation, economic growth, and national competitiveness. When the personal, financial, or strategic information of citizens and institutions is hosted on foreign servers, it becomes vulnerable to foreign jurisdictions, surveillance, or even manipulation.

This is not a theoretical concern. The US CLOUD Act (2018), for instance, allows American authorities to access data stored overseas by US-based companies, even if that data belongs to foreign citizens.

The European Union responded with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Governance Act, aiming to protect citizens’ rights and set clear rules for cross-border data use. China, India, and the Gulf nations, including the Sultanate of Oman, are also developing national frameworks to localise and protect their data ecosystems, such as the Personal Data Law.



KHALID AL HURAIBI

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The future of sovereignty will be written not only in constitutions but in code, algorithms, and cloud architectures. For Oman and the wider region, data sovereignty is not merely a technical issue but an existential one, determining who shapes our economy, our knowledge and our freedom

DIGITAL FEUDALISM THREAT

Today’s digital economy is dominated by a handful of corporations, commonly referred to as FANGAM (Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, Google, Apple, Microsoft) to which we may now add Oracle and Palantir. These giants have built empires not on natural resources, but on the extraction of personal and behavioural data. They determine what we see, read, buy, and believe, reshaping how we know as democracies, markets, and societies. This overreach is creating a new form of digital feudalism, where nations and citizens depend on foreign “data landlords” for storage, computing, and artificial intelligence.

RISKS ARE SEVERE

National security: Sensitive defence or infrastructure data stored abroad could be accessed by adversaries.

Economic dependence: Local startups and public institutions pay foreign corporations for data storage and cloud access, diverting value away from domestic economies.

Cultural manipulation: Evident in the recent TikTok and other social media deals, social media platforms controlled by non-local actors can shape public opinion and social behaviour, eroding cultural identity and political stability.

Sustainability: Outsourced cloud services increase global carbon emissions through high-energy data centres operating outside national oversight.

OMAN’S OPPORTUNITY

Oman, like many nations, stands at a crossroads. With Oman Vision

2040 guiding its transformation, the Sultanate can assert leadership in digital sovereignty through strategic, sustainable steps:

- National data infrastructure:* Establish sovereign cloud data centres within Oman to ensure that critical government and private sector data remain under national jurisdiction.
- Robust legal frameworks:* Develop comprehensive data protection and cybersecurity laws aligned with international best practices such as the EU’s GDPR, but tailored to Omani values and culture.
- Regional cooperation:* Collaborate with GCC partners to create a shared Arab Data Cloud that strengthens digital independence while fostering economic integration.
- Green data strategy:* Promote renewable-powered data centres to balance innovation with environmental responsibility.
- AI and local talent development:* Invest in AI research, coding academies, and digital literacy programmes to ensure that Oman’s data is managed by Omanis.

DIGITAL INDEPENDENCE

In the same way nations once guarded their borders, ports, and oil reserves, they must now safeguard their data reserves. The future of sovereignty will be written not only in constitutions but in code, algorithms, and cloud architectures. For Oman and the wider region, data sovereignty is not merely a technical issue but an existential one, determining who shapes our economy, our knowledge and our freedom. The path forward is clear: nations that protect their data protect their destiny.

AI is changing how people interact with news



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

OVER The past few years, artificial intelligence (AI) has quickly progressed, leading to notable successes in multiple sectors. Newsrooms are no exception. AI-generated news has transitioned from a mere fantasy to a current reality. And those publishers are now using AI-driven tools to automate news reporting, behind-the-scenes activities like tracking trending subjects online, transcribing discussions, and tailoring suggestions for audiences and even produce spot commentaries. Reporters use AI to improve their efficiency in ways that may not be obvious to the audience. While many are uncomfortable with it, in some cases, they continue to be open to using AI for delivering news. Significantly, the UN General Assembly has decided to celebrate Media and Information Literacy Week this year from October 24 to 31, with the theme ‘Minds Over AI,’ to ensure that human judgement, ethics, and critical awareness guide the use and interpretation of AI in our media landscapes. “As AI technologies become more integrated into everyday communication, shaping news feeds, search results, and even content creation, the need for strong media and information literacy has become increasingly urgent”, stresses a UN statement. A Thomson Reuters Foundation survey of more than 200 journalists worldwide regarding current narratives on AI adoption found that 79.3 per cent of the newsrooms

interviewed lacked a formal policy on AI. Although more than 80 per cent of the journalists surveyed used AI in their work, nearly 8 out of 10 lacked a formal policy governing AI use in their newsrooms. Additionally, 52.4 per cent indicated that AI had a significant impact on their jobs. “Despite concerns about AI’s impact on creativity, originality, and the risk of increased misinformation, journalists expressed a cautious optimism towards this new technology, recognising its capability to support a diverse range of tasks”, the foundation said in the survey report. Simultaneously, the “Digital News Report 2025” from the Reuters Institute highlights worldwide patterns in news consumption. Spanning 48 countries and involving almost 100,000 individuals, it illustrates a portrayal of a media landscape shaped by scepticism, technological disruption, and reduced engagement with traditional journalism. The report highlights the significant transformation of the media landscape. For independent media, the dangers are significant, but the chances are equally notable. Individuals who are ready to adjust to the swiftly evolving circumstances will be most positioned to stay pertinent and viable. “Newsrooms are utilising AI for summarising content, translation, and personalisation.” The report notes that although numerous users are receptive to AI-generated suggestions, they still appreciate the editorial discernment and trustworthiness that human insight offers.

Reporters use AI to improve their efficiency in ways that may not be obvious to the audience. While many are uncomfortable with it, in some cases, they continue to be open to using AI for delivering news

The report indicates that a significant percentage of youths confirm their information through AI chatbots instead of conventional news sources. Being a relatively recent development, “this could either disrupt publishers by monopolising traffic or benefit audiences by enhancing content personalisation to address selective news avoidance and news fatigue.” According to the report, news organisations are optimistic that AI could enhance the worth of news created by humans, as it shows that reputable news brands remain the primary source people turn to for verifying online information.” From the US to India, the Reuters survey noticed declining trust, rising video, and an audience nudged by algorithms, not editorial judgement. At the heart of the report, it records a change in authority. Interaction with conventional media outlets like television, newspapers, and news websites continues to decline, whereas reliance on social media, video services, and online aggregators is increasing, referencing the United States where “polling coincided with the initial weeks of the new Trump administration.” Even though it has been marked by low trust for a long time, the overall trust in the news has stayed at 40 per cent for the third consecutive year. “The overwhelming volume of news has led individuals to prioritise impartiality, accuracy, and transparency in reporting — factors still associated with journalists instead of AI,” said the report.

AIRLINES DROP VAGUE PROMISES ON CARBON OFFSETS

TANGI QUEMENER

European airlines are starting to become prudent when promoting flight carbon-offset measures, such as reforestation, following courtroom losses and stepped-up pressure by regulators. Dutch airline KLM, in March last year, lost a case about greenwashing - a practice in which companies are regarded as claiming to be more environmentally responsible than they really are. An Amsterdam court ruled it misled consumers with “vague and general” adverts about efforts to reduce the environmental impact of flying, including painting “an overly rosy picture” about the impact of measures such as adopting sustainable aviation fuel. In March, a German court banned airline giant Lufthansa from saying in its advertisements that passengers could “compensate” for carbon emissions from flights, finding that the claims were “misleading”. Lufthansa had already received a red card from British regulators over its ads in 2023, as well as from Belgian regulators in prior years. In 2023, the European consumer rights umbrella group BEUC filed a complaint with the European Commission, accusing European airlines of greenwashing and unfair commercial practices for inflating their green credentials. A year later, the commission opened a probe, which is still ongoing, into 20 firms over misleading green claims. BEUC said earlier this year that some airlines have since removed or changed their climate-related marketing claims. For example, Norwegian Air Shuttle dropped climate claims from its reservation process, while Hungarian low-cost airline Wizz Air stopped offering passengers the possibility of offsetting their CO2 emissions. “However, these improvements should not hide that greenwashing is still widespread,” said BEUC’s director general, Agustin Reyna. “There is room to change” in airlines’ communications, said Diane Vitry, who heads up the aviation section of the NGO Transport & Environment. She said the ideal would be that ads for flights mention the climate impact they have. “I haven’t seen a big improvement” from transport companies, said Garance Bazin, an environment researcher who co-authored a Greenpeace report criticising overt greenwashing in airline ads. She noted, however, that “legal precedents are ‘starting’ to take hold” and companies were “making less bold statements about certain things that are objectively false”. Airlines were “likely paying more attention” to their public communications, said Laurent Timsit, general delegate at the French aviation sector representative body FNAM. — AFP

EU takes aim at plastic pellets to cut pollution

ANGÉLINA BOULESTEIX

AT First glance, the tiny plastic pellets appear relatively harmless. No bigger than a lentil, these “nurdles” are destined to be melted down to make everything from car bumpers to salad bowls. But when tens of millions of them spill from trucks or cargo ships they are devilish to clean up, blighting landscapes and washing up around the world for years to come. On Thursday, the European Parliament could approve tougher new rules aimed at preventing such disastrous spills and reducing their pollution impact. If approved, they will require companies in the European Union to adopt safeguards in handling and transporting nurdles, which are produced by petrochemical giants from fossil fuels. Anywhere between 52,140 tonnes and 184,290 tonnes of pellets entered the environment in the EU in 2019, according to the European Commission, which proposed the regulations. “This is equivalent to between 2,100 and 7,300 trucks full of pellets per year,” the Commission said. Light, buoyant and insoluble, these tiny pellets present an almost insurmountable challenge once scattered in nature. Recovery is “a physically intense and time-consuming task” mostly done by hand, said Kevin Tallec from Cedre, a French non-profit organisation that specialises in water contamination and cleanup. “We can be 100 per cent sure that if there’s pellet pollution, we won’t be able to recover all of them,” Tallec, a marine biologist, said in Brest, where Cedre is headquartered. One of the worst spills occurred off Sri Lanka in 2021 when thousands of tonnes of plastic pellets were lost from a stricken cargo ship. Nurdles coated an 80-km stretch of beach on the island’s western coast, and fishing was prohibited for months.



Industrial plastic pellets washed up on a Catalanian beach in 2024.

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In northwest Spain, volunteers used strainers to sift nurdles from sand along the Atlantic coast after containers full of pellets fell off a cargo vessel in late 2023. “When I was little, I used to pick them up on the beaches, just a few at the time. But the pollution has become chronic,” said Amandine Le Moan, co-founder of the French coastal conservation group Ystopia. They are ingested by marine life, particularly sea birds and turtles, while the chemicals in microplastics also present a potential risk to human health, the Commission said. The spills also hurt tourism and fishing, it added. Nurdle spills often occur when an ill-placed shipping container tumbles overboard, and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has issued non-binding recommendations to try to prevent this from happening. Major industry players that have adopted these recommendations include Armateurs de France, which represents French maritime transport and services companies. “These containers must be identified, declared, and treated in a specific way, like chemicals and hazardous materials placed below deck,” Laurent Martens, general delegate of Armateurs de France, said.

But transportation is not the only source of spills, Cedre’s Tallec said, with nurdles also lost through operational channels. “It’s also a broader issue involving the value chain, which handles these pellets in a way that doesn’t prevent their loss into the environment,” said Lucie Padovani from Surfrider Foundation Europe, an ocean conservation group. For example, in Ecaussinnes, an industrial town in Belgium that hosts large petrochemical operators, plastic pellets have been found scattered throughout the landscape and in local rivers. French petrochemical giants Arkema, and the American companies Dow and ExxonMobil, declined to comment when reached by AFP. Chemical trade groups, such as Plastics Europe and France Chimie, did not respond to AFP’s requests for comment. Plastics manufacturers insist they are not the weak link. “We are well aware of all the issues, and obviously plastic pollution is something we need to get rid of,” said Caroline Chaussard, director of sustainable development at Polyvia, an industry group for French plastics manufacturers. “The biggest leaks are not at the processor level -- that’s where they are easiest to contain, since they are in a limited area,” she said. Joseph Tayefeh, Secretary-General of Plastalliance, which represents European plastics makers, said, “This is an expensive raw material that no one wants to waste”. “A kilo costs between 1 euro (\$1.17) and 1.3 euros,” he said. Major oil- and gas-producing nations have resisted efforts to limit the amount of new plastic manufactured every year, a figure estimated at 400 million tonnes. In August, the latest round of negotiations on a global treaty to combat plastic pollution collapsed without agreement. Philippe Bolo, a French MP who lobbied for a tough treaty, said the scourge of nurdles “revealed the ubiquity of plastic” in modern life. — AFP

SPORTS

KEYMATCH



Al Nahda began their campaign with a 1-1 draw against Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab in Riyadh.

AL NAHDA EYE FIRST WIN IN GULF CUP CL AGAINST AL RAYYAN

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 21

Oman's Al Nahda will target to secure their first win in the 2025-2026 AGCFF Gulf Cup Champions League when they will face Qatar's Al Rayyan on Wednesday at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat in Group B matches. The encounter will kick off at 7:30 pm.

Al Nahda began their campaign with a 1-1 draw against Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab in Riyadh earlier of this month while Al Rayyan made a powerful start after defeating Yemen's Tadhamon Hadhramout Club 5-0. In the other match of the same group, Al Shabab will meet Tadhamon Hadhramout in Doha.

The Al Buraimi-based club will enter the encounter in strong domestic form as they recently defeated Al Khabourah 3-0 in the Jindal League in a result that keeps them joint top of the league table alongside Seeb with 10 points.

Al Nahda's lineup will feature several key players including national team goalkeeper Fayez al Rushaidi, experienced midfielder Harib al Saadi, attacking talents Mohammed al Ghafri, Ahed al Mashakheyi and striker Abdulrahman al Ghassani. The team will also rely on their professional foreign players.

The Tunisian coach's tactical preparations in the last few days focused on strengthening the team's coordination between midfield and attack as well as improving finishing efficiency in the final third. It is a crucial aspect against the Qatari powerhouse Al Rayyan who are known for their fast-paced offensive style.

Following this match, Al Nahda will host Yemen's Tadhamon Hadhramout on November 5 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The return-leg fixtures will see them travel to Yemen on December 24 as they will meet Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab on February 11 and conclude their group stage matches against Al Rayyan on February 17 in Doha.

Group A featured Zakho Club (Iraq), Al Ain (UAE), Sitra Club (Bahrain), and Al Qadsia Club (Kuwait) with the top two teams from each group advancing to the semifinals. Bahrain's Sitra Club will host Iraq's Zakho Club while Kuwait's Al Qadsia Club will face Al Ain club in Kuwait.

For Al Nahda, this campaign represents a major opportunity to showcase Omani football quality at the regional level. With their strong domestic record and balanced squad, the team will eye to continue their impressive form and make a deep run in the competition.

Masirah crowned 2025 Women's Games champs

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 21

MASIRAH Club claimed first place in the overall standings of the 2025 Women's Sports Games in its third edition, after achieving the highest total points across various competitions, affirming its dominance in women's sports at the national level.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, in the main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The event was attended by Khawla al Rawahi, Director of the Women's Sports Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, along with several female board members from sports associations and committees. The festive ceremony included the honouring of winners from all disciplines.

Nine clubs took part in the Games: Salalah, Saham, Qurayat, Ahli Sidab, Al Kamil W'al Wafi, Al Amerat, Masirah, Ibri and Samayil.

The athletes competed in team sports such as basketball, handball, hockey 5s, and volleyball, as well as individual sports including chess, badminton, athletics, table tennis, and e-sports, reflecting the growing participation base and advancement of women's sports in Oman.

The competitions witnessed fierce rivalry among the participating clubs across all sports. In basketball, Salalah emerged victorious, securing first place ahead of Masirah in second and Saham in third. Volleyball saw Masirah shine by clinching the top spot, followed by Samayil and Saham.

In handball, Qurayat captured the title after an exceptional performance, with Salalah finishing second and Masirah third. Salalah also dominated the e-sports category, winning both Tekken and FC 26, while Ibri, Saham, Masirah, and Ahli Sidab followed in the subsequent ranks.

Masirah's supremacy continued in badminton, where their players swept the top three positions in both singles and doubles, as Qurayat settled for second place in each category.

In hockey 5s, Salalah claimed the championship after defeating Ahli Sidab 2-0, while Masirah secured third place by edging Qurayat 4-3. The table tennis event crowned Salma al Nasserri from Ibri as the singles champion, followed by Shamsa al Arawi from Masirah and Samah al Wahilbi from Salalah, while Masirah captured the team title ahead of Al Amerat and Ibri.

In chess, Annat al Isae from Salalah triumphed in the open category, with Yumna al Nadabi from Masirah and Maria al Balushi from Ahli Sidab taking second and third, respectively. Meanwhile, in the



In handball, Qurayat captured the title.



In athletics, Masirah finished first overall, with Salalah in second and Ahli Sidab in third.

under-16 category, Fatma al Ghafri from Qurayat won first place, followed by Noor al Ghafri from Masirah. Finally, in athletics, Masirah continued their dominance by finishing first overall, with Salalah in second and Ahli Sidab in third, further cementing Masirah's leading position in the Games.

Masirah's badminton duo, Sarah al Abri and Aisha al Abri, expressed immense joy after winning the doubles title, emphasising that the victory was the result of long teamwork and intense training. Sarah described the win as "an indescribable feeling" after a series of tough matches that required focus and

stamina, while Aisha highlighted the strong coordination between them as the key to success, praising the club's technical and administrative support and affirming their determination to keep improving for future events.

From Qurayat Club, Muzna al Balushi, a member of the championship-winning handball team, expressed her happiness with the achievement, describing it as a milestone in her sporting career. She said the title was achieved through teamwork, unity and determination despite strong competition, adding that this success will be a motivation to keep striving in future editions.

Royal Cavalry rider claims fifth spot at 2026 World Endurance Race

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 21

The Royal Cavalry of Oman has continued its impressive run in international endurance racing, as rider Ahmed bin Salem al Hamdani, aboard AlJaz, secured qualification for the 2026 FEI World Endurance Championship, set to take place in Al Ula, Saudi Arabia.

Al Hamdani earned his qualification after successfully completing the 160 km Compiègne International Endurance Ride held in France, organised by the Federation Equestre Internationale FEI, the competition featured 50

riders from various countries, showcasing high levels of skill, stamina and strategy in challenging weather conditions.

The race comprised six stages, with distances of 32 km for the first stage, 30 km for the second, 28 km for the third, 21 km for the fourth, 28 km for the fifth and 21 km for the sixth and final stage, the demanding terrain and stringent veterinary checks tested both the horses endurance and the riders tactical precision throughout the event.

With Al Hamdani's success, the Royal Cavalry now has five riders qualified for the upcoming World Endurance Championship, a remarkable milestone that



Ahmed al Hamdani in action during the 160 km Compiègne International Endurance Ride held in France.

reinforces Oman's growing presence on the global endurance scene.

The qualified riders are: Mahmood bin Marhoon al Foori on Electra, Hisham bin Saleh al Farsi on Blexima, Saleh bin Salem al Balushi on Estiq, Hussain bin Ali al Farsi on Fanchador, Ahmed bin Salem al Hamdani on AlJaz.

The Royal Cavalry of Oman achieved another remarkable triumph as rider Hisham bin Saleh al Farsi, aboard Kara, claimed first place in the French Endurance Marathon, under the supervision of trainer Menon.

The race featured elite international riders, with Al Farsi maintaining a strong

lead throughout to secure a commanding victory. This success adds to his impressive record in France, including winning the Florac International Endurance Ride 2023 and finishing second in the Compiègne Race 2024, reaffirming the Royal Cavalry's continued excellence in global endurance competitions.

This latest achievement highlights the continued excellence of the Royal Cavalry in international equestrian competitions and reflects the advanced training systems and professional standards that have become hallmarks of Oman endurance racing.

FIRSTMEDAL



Demonstrating exceptional skill, teamwork and determination, the ISWK girls topped their pool to enter the semifinals.

ISWK U17 GIRLS WIN HANDBALL BRONZE AT CBSE NATIONALS

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 21

The under-17 girls’ handball team of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (ISWK) has clinched the first-ever CBSE Nationals medal in team games from the GCC region.

The CBSE National Handball Championship, hosted by JS Public School, Varanasi, concluded with high energy and fierce competition, featuring top schools from across India, who had qualified through regional clusters.

Demonstrating exceptional skill, teamwork and determination, the ISWK girls topped their pool to enter the semifinals. In a tense sudden-death shootout, they narrowly missed a spot in the finals but secured a well-deserved bronze medal, marking a proud moment for the school and the entire Gulf region.

The team was trained under the expert guidance of coach Shifas, a World Masters Games handball bronze medallist, who represented India at the World Masters Games in Taiwan. His mentorship and dedication were instrumental in shaping the team’s success.

This remarkable feat not only highlights the team’s perseverance and sportsmanship but also signifies a historic milestone for Gulf-based CBSE schools, underscoring the growing excellence of international participation in Indian school sports.

A rousing welcome was accorded by the parents of the school to the team of handball national medallists led by the captain and the coach at Ananthapuri Restaurant.

The event also honoured coach Shifas for his exceptional mentorship and pivotal role in the team’s success.

Shifas shared his inspiring journey and expressed heartfelt gratitude to the parents and students for their unwavering support. The evening featured lively performances followed by a celebratory dinner — creating a memorable gathering filled with pride, joy, and community spirit.

Parents noted that this proud moment marks a new milestone for the school and the Gulf’s sporting community, motivating young athletes to aim higher and dream bigger.



Group photo of teams and the mission director upon arrival at Bahrain Airport. — Nawaf al Busaidy

Oman set for good show at Asian Youth Games

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 21

THE SULTANATE of Oman will take part in the official opening ceremony of the third Asian Youth Games in Bahrain from October 22 to 31. The Omani flag will be raised by Abdulaziz bin Fahad al Busaidy, a member of the equestrian team, and Fida al Barwani from the taekwondo team.

This edition is one of the continent’s major sporting events, featuring more than 5,000 athletes from 45 Asian Olympic committees, competing across 24 sports, 31 categories and 253 events held at several venues, including Isa Sports City, Khalifa Sports City, the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre, the Endurance Village and Sama Bay.

The official Omani delegation is headed by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education. The delegation also includes Brigadier (Retd) Said bin Mohammed al Hajri, Deputy Head of the Mission and Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakhalaf, Secretary-General of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC).

TRAINING SESSIONS

The Omani national teams began their training sessions immediately upon arrival in Bahrain, in a spirited and enthusiastic atmosphere. The taekwondo, athletics, equestrian and golf teams trained at their designated venues.

Earlier, the Omani delegation attended the welcome ceremony for participating nations at the Bahrain International Conference Centre, where Adam bin Masoud al Barwani from the golf team raised the Sultanate of Oman’s flag.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi emphasised that Oman’s participation demonstrates the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) and the OOC’s commitment to nurturing sports and supporting young talent.

He stated: “We are proud to see six national teams representing the Sultanate



Mahir Sampat, Adam Barwani and Pransh Jagwani with coach Jonathan Bartlett.

U18 GOLFERS SET FOR BAHRAIN CHALLENGE

MUSCAT: Oman’s Under-18 golf team which created history by winning the team Gold at the GCC Championships in Saudi Arabia earlier this year is now set to participate in the Asian Youth Games in Bahrain.

Mahir Sampat, Adam Barwani and Pransh Jagwani are the three players who are looking forward to participating in the tournament against other nations. It is to be held from October 23-25 at the Royal Golf Club in Bahrain. Mahir Sampat who is studying at a University in the UK, has flown in specially for this tournament. “I’m really looking forward to participating in the tournament with the same team mates who won the Golf Medal in Saudi Arabia earlier this year,” says Mahir.

Adam al Barwani who has flown in from Scotland said, “We are three solid players and I’m very excited to participate in Bahrain. Pransh Jagwani who is in his last year at school in Muscat was quoted as saying, “I’m going to give it my very best to put up a solid performance for the team.

The players are accompanied by head coach Jonathan Bartlett. He said, “this is the best Under-18 team we have ever had and we have been working hard over the last few months to prepare for this big tournament.”

of Oman in this prestigious continental event. These teams were selected based on strict technical criteria to ensure honourable representation that reflects the progress of Omani sports and its growing competitiveness.”

Dr Ambusaidi added that this participation provides valuable field experience for young athletes as they compete with Asia’s elite, boosting their confidence and skills. He also extended his gratitude to the Bahraini organising committee for their excellent organisation and warm hospitality.

For his part, Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakhalaf affirmed that this participation continues the committee’s efforts to support Omani youth sports and strengthen Oman’s presence in Asian and international arenas.

He praised the efforts of the sports associations and the technical and administrative teams that prepared the athletes despite the short preparation period. “We ensured that selection was based on precise technical standards to guarantee participation by teams capable of competing strongly fulfilling the Olympic Committee’s vision to develop a generation of athletes who can represent the Sultanate of Oman with distinction,” he said. Bamakhalaf concluded by thanking the Bahraini organising committee for their outstanding organisation and generous hospitality.

GOLF TEAM READY

Ahmed bin Faisal al Jahdhami, Secretary-General of the Oman Golf Association (OGA), confirmed the national golf team’s readiness following an intensive preparation phase, which included a domestic training camp in Muscat and a short external camp in Bahrain.

He noted that the players underwent continuous training to raise their technical and physical levels, expressing appreciation for the strong support received from the OOC and the OGA. Al Jahdhami concluded that the team aims to compete strongly and deliver a performance worthy of Omani golf in this major Asian event.

Fiba Level 2 specialist course to enhance skills of local coaches

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 21

The Level 2 Sports Performance Specialist Course kicked off on Tuesday, organised by the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) in collaboration with the International Basketball Federation (Fiba). The course runs from October 21 to 23, featuring 15 coaches (male and female) from various clubs and sports institutions. International expert Amir Eid is conducting the sessions, which are being held at Seeb Sports Club and Wawan Hall in Al Hail.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, OBA Chairman,



in the presence of Abu Bakr bin Ahmed al Jahouri, Vice-Chairman, and Saeed bin Ahmed al Habsi, Acting Secretary-General.

In his opening remarks, Eng Khalfan al Naabi welcomed the participants, noting that the programme is part of the OBA’s strategic plan developed in collaboration with Fiba under the Fiba Plus Project. He emphasised that the initiative aims to enhance the skills and knowledge of national cadres in both technical

and physical aspects. Investing in Omani talent is a fundamental pillar in building a sustainable technical system,” he said. “The association continues to implement its development programmes in collaboration with clubs and sports institutions across the Sultanate.”

For his part, Abu Bakr al Jahwari, Chairman of the Technical Development Committee, explained that the course is a continuation of the successful Level 1 programme previously conducted. It represents a significant step forward in qualifying national coaches in the field of strength and conditioning, providing them with advanced scientific knowledge to improve athletes’ physical performance and

reduce common injuries in the game. He added that the programme is organised in partnership with national institutions such as Seeb Sports Club and Wawan Hall an example of successful collaboration between the sports and private sectors. Al Jahwari said the OBA seeks to build a qualified base of coaches and specialists capable of elevating the technical and physical level of basketball in Oman. The course includes both theoretical lectures and practical sessions, covering advanced topics such as physical training methods, load management, injury prevention, and the design of specialised training programmes for basketball teams.

SPORTS

PREMIERLEAGUE



Brentford’s Kevin Schade in action with West Ham United’s Jean-Clair Todibo. — Reuters

BRENTFORD CRUISE TO VICTORY AT HAPLESS WEST HAM

LONDON: Igor Thiago and Mathias Jensen scored as Brentford secured a 2-0 Premier League victory over West Ham United on Monday, inflicting a club record fourth successive home league loss at the start of the season on their hosts.

Brentford moved up to 13th in the table with 10 points from eight games, while West Ham, booed off by their fans, are 19th with four points.

New West Ham manager Nuno Espirito Santo will have seen the size of the job at hand as his side were second to everything and only the woodwork and wasteful Brentford finishing prevented a rout.

“It’s very nice to get the three points and get away from the relegation zone,” Brentford midfielder Mikkel Damsgaard said.

“We missed a lot of chances, on set-pieces we could have had more (goals), but we are happy with the three points. We are finding a rhythm as a team and connecting a bit more.”

EMPTY WEST HAM SEATS

There were empty seats at kickoff as what seemed like several thousand West Ham fans staged a stay-away in protest against chairman David Sullivan and vice-chair Karren Brady. “It was 2-0 but probably could have been more to them,” West Ham captain Jarrod Bowen said. “We started well and had some corners and set-piece, but the goals were poor (to concede) on our part.

“We will only get better by watching back the things we have not done well. We are not doing anything well this season.”

Brentford came into the game having lost all three of their away league matches this season but had 22 attempts on goal, the most they have managed away from home in the Premier League.

The goal that had been coming for Brentford arrived on 43 minutes as a long ball was collected by Kevin Schade on the edge of the box and he held off three defenders before feeding Thiago.

The striker’s shot was half-blocked by West Ham goalkeeper Alphonse Areola, but the ball dribbled into the corner of the net.

It was more of the same in the second half as Brentford dominated possession and Schade struck the crossbar with a header on the hour-mark.

West Ham never looked like finding an equaliser, and Brentford made it 2-0 with virtually the last kick of the game when Jensen was picked out in the box in space and drilled the ball into the net from 15 yards. — AFP



The second day races of Musannah Race Week 2025.

Top prospects show class on Day 2 in Musannah

DAY two of Musannah Race Week came to a close with the top prospects showing their skills in excellent conditions. Four races were completed in Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, and ILCA 7, and three in the Para Inclusive Hansa 303 class, and several Omani sailors in particular excelled to remain top of the leaderboard.

Al Moatsem al Farsi of Oman was flawless on day two with four wins from four races to extend his lead in the ILCA 6 competition. Mohammad al Hammadi of the UAE remains second but the gap is now seven points, and Oman’s Jihad al Hassani is third – another seven points back.

Amina Shah of Kuwait again showed her consistency with two third place finishes to stay the highest ranked girl in the competition and third overall. Oman’s Ibtisam al Salmi ended the day as the second placed girl and fifth overall.

Hussain al Jabri also put in another perfect display with four wins from four races on day two to extend his lead over teammate Ali al Saadi in second and Al Salim al Hamdani in third. Yaqoob Shah and Salim Qali of Kuwait are fourth and fifth respectively.

The Hansa 303 competition also saw another perfect display. After the team of Zahir al Atabi and Abdulrahman al Hamdani won all three races on day one it was the turn of Malik al Qartubi and Ahmed Zaal Nabout who took first place in similar fashion. Hassan al Lawati and Adil al Siyabi remain in third at the halfway point.

Jean-Luc Soaren of the UAE still leads the Optimist fleet by recording another win, two second places and a fourth. Anya Zahedi of Singapore is now level on points after four podium finishes, which included two wins to remain the highest ranked girl in the competition. Yuxuan Li from China moved up a place to second in the girls competition and third overall while Khalifa al Romaithi from the UAE moved to second in the boys competition and fourth overall.

Shreya Krishna Lakshminarayanan from India had a tough day but remains in contention, sitting fifth overall and third in the girls competition. Singaporean Ethan Chia remains third in the boys competition but is now sixth overall. The Singaporean sailor expressed her happiness with the strong performance she delivered during the races and for leading the women’s category. She added that she aims to maintain her momentum, climb to the top of the overall standings. ILCA 4 leader after the first day, Abdulla al Zoubaidi of the UAE, continued his strong performances on day two with three second places and a win in the last race of the day.

SIX OMANIS IN TOP 10

Oman’s Tamim al Balushi, winner of race six, remains a close second, and Oman’s Abdulatif al Qasimi moved up to third after enjoying a solid finish with a third and second place in the last two races. Just as there were at the end of day one, there are six Omani sailors in the top 10 and nine in the top 20. Hussain

al Jabri, the current leader in the ILCA 7 competition, said, “I am very pleased with my performance so far. Training before the event was tough but was good preparation for the races. This is a great experience, and being able to meet and sail with athletes of my age from around the world is an excellent opportunity. We are only halfway through the races and a lot of sailing still to go, but I will do my best to keep improving and finish strongly.”

Ahmed al Wahaibi, Oman’s ILCA coach, added, “The main thing we as coaches look for is improvement. A positive result is always a great achievement, but the young sailors are on a journey and learning with each race, so we want to see progress more than anything. The training camps and sailing programmes at the sailing schools help to develop their tactical, technical, physical and mental skills, and these races are about implementing those lessons. We have a very good group of young athletes and have high hopes for the future of sailing in Oman.”

There are over 120 young sailors and coaches from eight nations including Oman, China, India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Macau, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates showing the global appeal of Musannah Race Week and sailing in Oman.

Racing will continue each day until Tuesday 21 October when the prizes will be awarded for the overall top three in each class, as well as the junior top three for sailors under the age of 12, and the girls top three, as well as the overall team racing competition.

England hammer New Zealand after Brook and Salt onslaught

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand:

A ruthless England led by skipper Harry Brook’s brutal 78 punished some lax New Zealand fielding to win the second T20 international by 65 runs in Christchurch on Monday. The visitors raced to a mammoth 236-4 from their 20 overs after Black Caps captain Mitchell Santner won the toss and elected to field at Hagley Oval.

Brook and opener Phil Salt (85) blasted New Zealand to all parts while the hosts didn’t help themselves with misfields, errant throwing and dropped catches.

Wicketkeeper Tim Seifert dropped Jacob Bethell after a top edge swirled high in the strong northwest wind, and later James Neesham put down Brook. The Brook drop was crucial, with the 26-year old blasting 78 from

just 35 deliveries as part of a 129-run partnership with Salt.

Brook showed his intent just two balls after he was dropped, smacking a powerful pull shot more than 100 metres over midwicket, the ball landing outside the ground.

“It felt good,” Brook said, after the opening match of the series on Saturday was washed out. “It’s always nice to contribute. It was just nice to get some runs out there and hit a couple out of the park.”

He hit six fours and five sixes during his stay, finally falling after mistiming a lofted drive to long-on.

Salt played second fiddle for much of his innings — scoring 85 from 56 balls — rotating the strike before seizing on any loose bowling.

Brook said the pair tried to keep



England’s Harry Brook (R) plays a shot in front of New Zealand’s wicketkeeper Tim Seifert during the second Twenty20 match at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. — AFP

one another “calm and composed” during their century stand, while “looking to manipulate the field and put them under as much pressure as possible”. Tom Banton blasted 29 from only 12 balls to end the innings, helping England to the highest T20 total scored in Christchurch.

New Zealand’s chase started poorly, losing both Tim Robinson and Rachin Ravindra in the second over. It found life with Seifert and Mark Chapman, who combined for a 69-run partnership in quick time, but when both fell either side of the 10-over mark New Zealand’s pursuit had all but ended. England’s spinners, Adil Rashid (4-32) and Liam Dawson (2-38), and seamer Brydon Carse (2-27) gave away little as New Zealand were bowled out for 171. — AFP

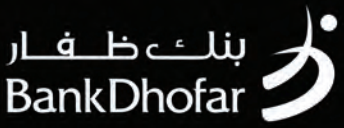


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CHRISTOPHE FARNAUD
Ambassador of the EU to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of Bahrain and Sultanate of Oman.

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 21

OMAN’S youth is a catalyst for green entrepreneurship, said EU Ambassador Christophe Farnaud during his keynote speech at the second edition of the Oman Climate Dialogue in Muscat. Addressing participants virtually from Riyadh, Farnaud said young innovators

have the creativity and environmental awareness to turn climate challenges into viable business opportunities. “This year, we are moving from green jobs to green entrepreneurship”, he said. “We are exploring how young people can create green jobs, how they can turn their ideas into concrete solutions and how they can build businesses that are not only profitable but also sustainable and socially responsible”.

Farnaud noted that the long-held perception that profitability and sustainability cannot coexist is outdated. “For too long, people considered that green and profit were not compatible, which is a mistake”, he said. “What you are going to show is precisely that the two can go together”.

The initiative, organised by the Environmental Society of Oman (ESO) in collaboration with Muscat University, builds on the first edition of the dialogue, which gathered students, experts and entrepreneurs to explore opportunities in the green transition.

“The European Union firmly believes in this approach”, Farnaud said. “By creating circular business models, turning waste into resources and developing technologies that reduce emissions and preserve biodiversity, young innovators can become powerful drivers of the green transition”.

He added that many successful environmental initiatives begin within universities and incubators — settings that connect students, researchers and entrepreneurs.

Botswana seeks energy,
mining deals with Oman

PRESIDENT

Duma Gideon Boko of the

Republic of Botswana visited the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) on Tuesday to explore new investment partnerships as part of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

President Boko was welcomed by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), who presented an overview of the Authority’s global investment portfolio, governance model and sectoral allocations both inside and outside Oman.

During the visit, several OIA-affiliated companies presented key investment opportunities in sectors such as clean energy (wind, solar and green hydrogen), mining, logistics and food production — areas that hold strong potential for mutual cooperation between Oman and Botswana.

The discussions also explored how Botswana



Botswana President Duma Gideon Boko was welcomed by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

could benefit from Oman’s experience in establishing and managing a sovereign wealth fund with robust governance and sustainable investment practices, aimed at strengthening Botswana’s institutional capacity in this domain.

President Boko highlighted that Botswana is one of Africa’s most promising economies and the world’s leading diamond producer

by value, with a high credit rating and strong economic fundamentals. He said the visit builds on talks held in July, which led to a Memorandum of Understanding now being activated across several sectors.

“The visit seeks to deepen cooperation in energy, mining, infrastructure, investment and financial services”, Boko said. He added that Botswana plans to open an embassy in Oman

During the visit, several OIA-affiliated companies presented key investment opportunities in sectors such as clean energy, mining, logistics and food production — areas that hold strong potential for mutual cooperation between Oman and Botswana.

soon and is coordinating with Omani authorities to introduce mutual visa exemptions to enhance tourism and business mobility.

For his part, Al Murshidi said both sides share a genuine interest in economic integration, particularly in food security, where Oman could import red meat from Botswana and export fish and fish-based products in return.

He added that discussions also covered energy and logistics cooperation, noting that both nations are keen to establish sustainable and diversified economic links that benefit their respective development goals. — ONA

OMAN’S
INFLATION
RATE RISES 1.1%
IN SEPTEMBER

MUSCAT: Oman’s inflation rate edged up by 1.1 per cent in September 2025 compared with the same month last year, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NC SI).

The average inflation rate from January to September 2025 stood at 0.8 per cent.

The miscellaneous goods and services group recorded the highest rise at 7.6 per cent, followed by transportation (4.5

per cent) and restaurants and hotels (2.6 per cent). Smaller increases were seen in health (0.8 per cent), clothing and footwear (0.4 per cent) and education (0.1 per cent).

Meanwhile, food and beverages declined by 0.5 per cent, driven by a 7.5 per cent drop in vegetable prices and a 1.6 per cent decrease in fruits. Prices for housing, communications and tobacco remained stable.

Among food items, sugar, jam, honey and sweets rose 3.4 per cent, while oils and fats increased 1.9 per cent.

By governorates, Al Dhahirah Governorate posted the highest inflation at 1.9 per cent, followed by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (1.6 per cent) and Al Buraimi Governorate (1.3 per cent). Muscat and Al Batinah South Governorates both recorded 1.1 per cent inflation. — ONA

Work begins on PDO’s Rawafid renewable energy projects

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 21

CONSTRUCTION has commenced on a trio of renewable energy projects being developed for Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) by a partnership between OQ Alternative Energy (part of the OQ Group) and France-based TotalEnergies Renewables.

Collectively known as the Rawafid Projects, they comprise the Riyah-1 and Riyah-2 wind farms located at PDO’s Amin and West Nimr fields in the south and the North Solar plant at Saih Nahaydah in northern Oman.

Renewable energy from the 234 MW capacity wind farms and the 105 MWAC solar plant will be supplied to PDO under long-term Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with the OQAE-TotalEnergies partnership, in which OQAE holds a 51% stake and TotalEnergies 49%.

Announcing the start of construction on the Riyah-1 and Riyah-2 projects, Almoatasem al Ismaili, Project Manager at OQ Alternative Energy, said: “Our teams



The base of a wind turbine being prepared at one of the wind farms under construction within PDO’s Block 6 licence.

on site have now started wind turbine foundation works — from excavation and reinforcement to the first layer of concrete pours. Each foundation marks the base of a turbine that will soon contribute clean power to PDO’s grid”.

Referencing the North Oman Solar project, Al Ismaili added in a post: “The site is advancing with pile installations for the solar trackers — the first visible step towards rows of solar panels that will soon cover the

desert landscape”.

These updates follow a visit by officials representing PDO, OQAE and EPC contractor Huadong Engineering Corporation (a subsidiary of PowerChina) to the facilities of Chinese firms contracted to manufacture hardware for the Rawafid Projects. The delegation witnessed Factory Acceptance Tests (FATs) of key wind turbine components produced at multiple facilities in China.

The itinerary included a visit to the hub and nacelle manufacturing facility of leading Chinese wind turbine maker Goldwind in Yancheng, Jiangsu Province.

The hub is the central part of the rotor that connects the blades to the main shaft, transferring their rotational energy to the drivetrain, while the nacelle, located on top of the tower, houses the main mechanical and electrical components, including the gearbox, generator and control systems.

“Within the facility sits a dedicated R&D centre featuring advanced test benches for pitch and yaw systems, blade endurance and drivetrain performance — ensuring each turbine meets the highest standards of

quality and reliability”, said Mohammed al Lawati, Head of Renewable Energy at PDO and a member of the delegation.

Also covered in the FATs were the rotor assembly, drivetrain at a facility in Fuyang (Anhui Province), gearbox, wind blades and other key components and performance parameters.

“Every component undergoes thorough inspection and testing before approval, reflecting the meticulous attention to detail behind each turbine that will soon contribute to Oman’s growing wind energy portfolio”, Al Lawati added.

While in China, the delegation also toured the facilities of Sineng Electric, a power electronics company specialising in PV inverter manufacturing; LONGi Solar, a leading global supplier of solar PV modules; and Nextracker Inc, a US-based provider of solar tracking systems for utility-scale solar projects.

The North Oman Solar project is slated for commercial operation in Q2 2026, while the wind farms are scheduled to launch in Q4 2026.

ADVERTORIALS

CLOUDSINDULGENCE



The mountaintop retreat revisits the timeless allure of 1001 nights through a bespoke escape that celebrates the House’s artistry.

AMOUAGE CAFÉ RETURNS TO ALILA JABAL AKHDAR

MUSCAT: Amouage, the independent Omani High Perfumery House, unveils the fall 2025 edition of its seasonal Amouage Café at Alila Jabal Akhdar. Perched at two thousand metres overlooking views of Al Hajar Mountains, the mountaintop retreat revisits the timeless allure of 1001 nights through a bespoke escape that celebrates the House’s artistry.

AFTERNOON INDULGENCE IN THE CLOUDS
Guests are invited to begin their journey with a High Tea service, available daily until 6:00pm. Set against panoramic vistas of the rugged Al Jabal Al Akhdhar range, the service presents a delicate selection of pastries and savouries infused with floral, citrus and spice accords inspired by The Essences collection including creations that weave together rose, bergamot and cardamom in refined harmony.

The mountaintop breeze and the quiet beauty of the plateau turn a simple tea into a meditative moment of serenity above the clouds.

EVENINGS SUSPENDED IN TIME
As the sun dips behind the mountains, an immersive expression unfolds, capturing the stillness between light and scent. Evenings unfold beneath a canopy of suspended candlelight, evoking constellations adrift in the night air. Within this otherworldly setting, fragrance and flavour move in quiet harmony, each unfolding with the patience and precision that define Amouage’s Essences collection — Reasons, Lustre and Outlands.

Echoing this philosophy, the menu traces an olfactory journey through taste, where the warmth of saffron meets the brightness of pink pepper, rose and jasmine bring floral nuance and the depth of frankincense and vanilla lingers like memory.

Each course is shaped by contrast and balance, translating perfumery’s raw materials into textures and tones that evolve with time. The Café becomes a living reflection of the Essences’ making, where time is slowed, elements are suspended and beauty is revealed layer by layer.

JOURNEYS OF AROMATIC BLISS
Beyond the Café, Amouage extends its philosophy of High Perfumery into new dimensions of ritual and reflection. Each journey brings scent into dialogue with wellbeing, inviting guests to experience balance through stillness, intention and care. The Celestial Wellness Journey offers a moment of pause beneath the Omani night sky.

OMAN OFFERS RO 80 MILLION IN NEW FIVE-YEAR GDBS

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO), acting on behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Ministry of Finance, has announced the launch of the 77th issue of Government Development Bonds (GDBs), valued at RO 80 million, with the possibility of an increase of up to RO 20 million. The bonds carry a five-year maturity and offer a base annual interest rate of 4.1 per cent. Subscription opens today



(Wednesday) and closes on October 27, 2025, followed by a competitive

auCTION on October 28, 2025. The bonds will be issued and settled on October 30, 2025, with interest payments made semi-annually on April 30 and October 30, until maturity on October 30, 2030. The offering is open to all investors, both local and international, regardless of nationality, through a competitive bidding process. Bids must be submitted via commercial banks operating in Oman during the subscription period.

Sohar International launches ‘Be Zahiya’

MARKING a bold step in redefining women’s banking in Oman, Sohar International introduced ‘Be Zahiya’, a holistic financial proposition crafted to meet the evolving aspirations of women.

The launch, held under the auspices of Sayyidah Maani bint Abdullah bin Hamad al Busaidy, Director-General of the Family Growth Department at the Ministry of Social Development, took place at a dedicated “Be Zahiya” stall in Mall of Oman, designed to engage visitors and raise awareness about the proposition’s unique offerings.

Representing Sohar International at the event, Eng Aisha al Saifi ,Chief Transformation Officer, underscored the Bank’s commitment to creating impactful solutions that empower women across all walks of life. The event marks a significant milestone in the Bank’s journey to empower women through innovative financial solutions that combine practicality, empowerment and



The event marks a significant milestone in the bank’s journey to empower women.

lifestyle value. It brought together government representatives, distinguished guests and senior executives from Sohar International, celebrating a shared commitment to progress, inclusion and empowerment. Commenting on the launch, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer, said: “Be Zahiya represents a strategic step in

empowering women across Oman — not only providing modern financial tools and lifestyle benefits but also creating opportunities for leadership, entrepreneurship and economic participation. Every aspect of the proposition has been designed with the Omani woman in mind, blending seamless digital solutions, personalised experiences and inclusive

banking services. By enabling women to thrive financially, we are contributing to stronger families, more resilient communities and a diversified, knowledge-driven economy — fully aligned with Oman Vision 2040. Be Zahiya embodies our belief that true transformation occurs when innovation, empathy and strategic foresight come together to create meaningful impact for individuals and for the nation as a whole”. Positioned as Oman’s most comprehensive women’s banking solution, Be Zahiya has been thoughtfully curated to address every aspect of the modern woman’s financial and lifestyle journey. The proposition includes dedicated savings accounts designed to help women build financial security, lifetime free Platinum and Signature credit cards with premium benefits and lifestyle rewards; and exclusive “Zahiya Zones” in select branches offering privacy and personalised relationship management by female banking professionals.

NBO MUZN ISLAMIC BANKING CELEBRATES OMANI WOMEN’S DAY

MUSCAT: As part of the nationwide Omani Women’s Day celebrations, the National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) Muzn Islamic Banking has announced offering its female customers across the Sultanate of Oman an exclusive annual fee waiver on their first year of holding a Muzn Islamic Banking Credit Card. Valid until October 30, 2025, the offer reinforces Muzn Islamic Banking’s commitment to empower women through its inclusive financial solutions that align with Sharia principles. Commenting on the initiative,



The offer reinforces Muzn Islamic Banking’s commitment to empower women.

Salima bint Obaid Issa al Marzoqiyah, Assistant General Manager and Chief Islamic Banking Officer, said, “At Muzn Islamic Banking, we recognise the vital role Omani women take in shaping communities, families and the nation’s progress. Therefore and to honour Omani Women’s Day, the offer is our way of celebrating their achievements and encouraging greater financial empowerment. At Muzn Islamic Banking, we remain committed to provide Sharia-compliant products that support women

in managing their financial goals with ease, confidence and security”. The annual fee waiver applies to women who apply for a Muzn Islamic Banking Credit Card between October 16-30, 2025, activate their card and make at least one transaction within one month of issuance. Muzn Islamic Banking’s range of Gold, Platinum and Signature Credit Cards is designed to provide convenience and flexibility, combining everyday benefits with responsible, Sharia-compliant financial management.

Bank Muscat extends sustainable support to families

MUSCAT: In line with its CSR strategy towards supporting sustainable national development, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, remains dedicated to advancing social responsibility and community service through various programmes and initiatives. These contributions aim to deliver long-term benefits to various segments of the community across the Sultanate of Oman’s governorates. In this context, the Bank continues its collaboration with the Ministry of Social



This year, about 162 families across various governorates in the Sultanate of Oman are set to benefit from the initiative.

Development to launch “Tadhamun” programme 2025, one of the Bank’s annual and sustainable community-driven initiatives. The Bank has been keen to continue executing the programme by studying and meeting the evolving needs of eligible families, in line with the ongoing social and life-style developments. As a result, this year’s distribution included household furniture handed to families with homes under the social housing programme, alongside essential household appliances like air conditioners and

refrigerators. This year, about 162 families across various governorates in the Sultanate of Oman are set to benefit from the initiative, increasing the total number of beneficiary families since the programme’s inception in 2013 to over 3600. “Tadhamun” is run through a structured approach that combines the concerted efforts contributed by the programme partners. The Ministry of Social Development reviews applications, evaluates eligibility, ensures that the basic needs of target families are satisfied. On

this occasion, Talib bin Saif al Makhmari, Head of Community and Media Relations at Bank Muscat, emphasised the Bank’s commitment to CSR & Sustainability programmes, stating: “We are devoted to enhancing community partnership and supporting community members by collaborating with relevant authorities to reach targeted groups. The “Tadhamun” programme is just one of many sustainable initiatives we implement annually to reinforce our leadership in social responsibility and community service.

PREPARATIONSTAGE



The first phase covers an area of five million square metres, featuring the construction of internal roads, water, electricity and sewage networks; and other essential facilities and services.

MADAYN INVITES BIDS FOR PHASE ONE OF AL SUWAIQ INDUSTRIAL CITY

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has announced a tender for the first phase of infrastructure and utilities works at Al Suwaiq Industrial City in the Al Batinah North Governorate.

The first phase covers an area of five million square metres, featuring the construction of internal roads, water, electricity and sewage networks; and other essential facilities and services. The tender also includes the development of greenhouse units to introduce modern hydroponic farming technologies, enhancing food security and supporting agricultural investments and related industries.

Hamoud bin Abdullah al Balushi, Assistant Director General of Al Suwaiq Industrial City, said that while the project is still in the infrastructure preparation stage, more than 12 investment applications were received in the first half of 2025, with two projects already signed.

The first project involves the production of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) from recycled plastics on a 2,394-square-metre plot, with investments exceeding RO 138,500. The second project focuses on industrial oil refining, covering 4,500 square metres with an investment of RO 230,700.

He added that several other proposals are under review, with plots ranging from 2,394 to 100,000 square metres, in fields such as marble processing, bitumen production, starch products, interlocking tiles, substation components, soft drinks, drilling tools, gypsum bricks and logistics facilities.

Madayn offers competitive incentives to attract investors, including a two-year rent exemption and a 50 per cent rent discount for the following three years. — ONA

Oman’s real GDP to reach 2.9% in 2025: IMF

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 21

OMAN’S economy is set for a substantial upswing, with the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) October 2025 World Economic Outlook (WEO) projecting a significant acceleration in real GDP growth, largely driven by an anticipated relaxation of oil production cuts and continued structural reform efforts.

The Fund now expects Oman’s real GDP to expand by 2.9 per cent in 2025, a marked increase from the 1.7 per cent recorded in 2024. This positive momentum is forecast to strengthen further, achieving robust 4.0 per cent growth in 2026.

This strong outlook for Oman contrasts with moderate global projections and is slightly ahead of the expected regional acceleration. Growth in the Middle East and Central Asia is projected to accelerate from 2.6 per cent in 2024 to 3.5 per cent in 2025 and 3.8 per cent in 2026, positioning Oman as a key driver of the region’s stronger performance by 2026.

The optimism is anchored by the government’s sustained commitment to Oman Vision 2040 and a successful track record of fiscal prudence.

The WEO points to several underpinning factors for Oman’s strengthened position.

The primary driver for the accelerated real GDP growth is the expected rebound in hydrocarbon activity following the gradual unwinding of voluntary Opec+ production quotas.

Critically, non-hydrocarbon sectors — supported by investments in logistics,



Critically, non-hydrocarbon sectors — supported by investments in logistics, manufacturing and green energy — are also maintaining positive growth momentum, a necessity for long-term diversification.

manufacturing and green energy — are also maintaining positive growth momentum, a necessity for long-term diversification.

Fiscal discipline has been central to the country’s improved fundamentals.

The IMF highlights the use of hydrocarbon windfalls to drastically reduce public debt, which has fallen from a peak of 68 per cent of GDP in 2020 to an estimated 34 per cent in 2024.

This success has helped the country achieve successive fiscal surpluses since 2022, enhancing financial buffers and strengthening the capacity to absorb external shocks.

Additionally, the fiscal break-even oil price has been substantially lowered to approximately \$57 per barrel, according to IMF estimates.

This environment of stability has directly spurred investment.

Oman’s credit rating was upgraded to investment grade in late 2024, reflecting increased investor confidence and a corresponding acceleration of foreign direct investment (FDI) into strategic non-oil sectors.

Furthermore, the banking sector remains a pillar of strength, described by the IMF as well capitalised, liquid and profitable, with strong asset quality supporting continued credit growth to the private sector.

Despite the robust growth and fiscal improvements, the report highlights a key vulnerability in the external position.

The Current Account Balance, which posted a strong surplus of 2.9 per cent of GDP in 2024, is projected to swing into a deficit of 1.0 per cent in 2025 before slightly recovering to a deficit of 0.7 per cent in 2026.

This shift is primarily

attributed to a projected moderation in oil prices and slower growth in non-oil exports.

On the price front, the inflation outlook remains benign. Consumer Prices are projected to rise modestly from 0.6 per cent in 2024 to 0.9 per cent in 2025 and 1.5 per cent in 2026, remaining well contained.

The IMF stresses that accelerating structural reforms is critical to mitigate the external risks posed by the Current Account deficit and secure long-term stability.

Continued focus on enhancing non-hydrocarbon fiscal revenues — including bolstering tax collection efforts — deepening local capital markets and advancing state-owned enterprise (SOE) reform are seen as essential steps to achieve the diversification goals enshrined in Oman Vision 2040.

Oman-Qatar business forum launches in Muscat to boost trade ties

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, OCT 21

THE Oman-Qatar Business Forum and the accompanying Qatari trade mission to the Sultanate of Oman was launched yesterday at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat, with the participation of more than 45 Qatari companies alongside a wide range of Omani firms.

The two-day event is organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in cooperation with Qatar Exports, the export arm of Qatar Development Bank.

The forum aims to strengthen economic partnerships between the two countries and expand avenues of trade and investment cooperation through direct business-to-business meetings. An exhibition showcasing



The forum aims to strengthen economic partnerships between the two countries.

Qatari companies and their products also accompanied the event, providing a platform to highlight investment opportunities in both markets.

In his opening remarks, Shaikh Mubarak bin Fahad al Thani, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Sultanate of Oman, stressed that relations between the two

countries continue to grow steadily, driven by a shared vision built on mutual trust and complementary interests. He underlined the strong commitment of both leaderships to further enhance economic and trade cooperation.

For her part, Zahra al Siyabi, Head of the Sultanate of Oman’s Commercial Office in Qatar, noted that the event seeks to introduce Omani markets to Qatari companies while exploring new areas of collaboration.

She emphasised that bilateral meetings are instrumental in boosting trade exchange, adding: “We expect to see further growth in trade and investment between Oman and Qatar, reflecting the strategic direction of this partnership”.

The event comes against the backdrop of accelerating growth in

bilateral trade relations. The total volume of trade exchange exceeded QAR 6.3 billion in 2024, marking a 17% increase compared to 2023. Qatari exports to Oman reached around QAR 3 billion, while Qatari private sector exports stood at QAR 109 million, growing by 4%.

These exports included a wide range of products such as aluminium, plastics, electrical equipment and chemicals.

The programme of the forum and the trade mission features bilateral business meetings, the signing of cooperation agreements and field visits to economic sites.

These efforts highlight the strategic vision shared by Oman and Qatar to broaden their economic partnerships, diversify sources of growth and create sustainable opportunities for joint investment.

WAREHOUSE STOCKS

China’s fuel oil imports hit year high



China’s fuel oil imports surged in September to 2.02 million tonnes, the highest monthly level this year, up 39 per cent from August and 1 per cent from a year earlier, according to customs data.

The rise was driven by higher circulation of customs warehouse stocks. Exports also climbed to 2.24 million tonnes, marking a 36 per cent monthly and 17 per cent annual increase. — ONA

MARKET TRENDS

Gold slips after record highs



Gold prices eased as investors took profits following a record high driven by safe-haven demand and expectations of a US Federal Reserve rate cut. Spot gold fell 0.3 per cent to \$4,340.99 per ounce, after touching \$4,381.21. US futures settled at \$4,357.80.

Silver dropped 1.2 per cent to \$51.83, platinum 0.7 per cent to \$1,627.53, while palladium edged up 0.1 per cent to \$1,497.62. — ONA

TRADE OUTLOOK

Korean exports drop 7.8% in October



South Korea’s exports fell 7.8 per cent year-on-year in the first 20 days of October to \$30.15 billion due to fewer working days, data from the Korea Customs Service showed. Imports slipped 2.3 per cent to \$32.9 billion, leaving a \$2.8 billion trade deficit.

Exports to the US dropped 24.7 per cent and to China 9.2 per cent, though semiconductor exports surged 47 per cent to \$8.5 billion. — ONA

OPINION

Stop your smart TV from watching you



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is
the founder of
Knowledge Oman

MY last week's article on how smart TVs are watching us evoked a lot of attention, be it in-person meetups, voice calls or social media messages. The intention was not to scare anyone but to keep you aware of the possibilities and realities of these smart devices that are inside our homes and may even be inside our rooms too.

The article last week focused on how the smart TV might be watching you back. Many of the readers asked me, "What shall we do to stop the smart TV from watching us?"

This week, my article will focus on the actions that you can take in order to protect yourself and your family while still enjoying a large and internet-connected TV.

First things first, let me shed some light on the realities of the matter.

According to one of the industry reports I have come across during one of my business trips, the average home Internet of Things (IoT) environment in 2025 is subject to over 800 thousand hacking attempts per day.

Hackers and mischief users are using scanning tools to find, connect and hack into IoT devices that include smart TVs. Furthermore, it is reported that about 85% to 90% of smart TVs have vulnerabilities that attackers/hackers could exploit (especially because these smart TVs remain unpatched unlike mobile phones, tablets, desktops and laptops).

Many of the smart TVs do not receive software updates in comparison to other

devices (mobile, desktop and tablet).

Ask yourself when was the last time you updated or received an update for your smart TV. Proof is in the pudding. So what shall one do in order to stop and protect oneself from smart TVs watching back?

First, when you turn on the smart TV (first time), it will most probably (unless it was set up by the place you bought the TV) ask you to create a profile, accept terms, and allow data sharing (viewing habits, voice commands and microphone/camera access).

Don't just click accept. Instead, read every possible option for disallowing the TV from sharing your data. Review the privacy or data-sharing section and see if you can reject any data-sharing option.

I know for a fact, especially with those cheap smart TVs, where such options are made by default, the TV unfortunately and quietly sends back data about what you watch, how long you watch and what time you pause or switch off.

I am hoping that these articles and consumer questioning of the same will alert those TV manufacturers to start adding the possibility of stopping this feature (especially when consumers are aware, alert and would contribute to their low sales).

Secondly and most importantly, look for the built-in microphones (for voice commands) and cameras (especially for video-calling or gesture control) if available and disable them (if you are not using them). You may find the ways to do that depending

Hackers and mischief users are using scanning tools to find, connect and hack into IoT devices that include smart TVs. Furthermore, it is reported that about 85% to 90% of smart TVs have vulnerabilities that attackers/hackers could exploit.

on the operating system in question, but mostly they would be under the settings of the smart TV in question.

Thirdly, and something that many people don't know (or actually do), is ensuring the software that runs the smart TV is updated. You do that for your mobile phone, notebook and laptop, then ensure you do that for the smart TV.

This is mostly available under settings, the About section or the Software Update option. If your TV is unsupported, it becomes an entry point for hackers, who may exploit it to get into your home network. Finally, switch off any feature that you don't need or don't use.

For example, screen mirroring or casting, voice assistant/microphone and any apps pre-loaded or you have downloaded over time — ensure you delete them and disable whatever you don't use. Simplifying features means fewer ways for data to leak or for hackers to exploit. Period.

A large smart TV can surely bring your family together but shouldn't bring outsiders and strangers inside your home and into your lives.

A few smart actions as outlined in my article today will help you stop and protect your loved ones from hackers and the like.

Invest little time to get the right smart TV, or if you already have one, to learn about how they work, in order to stay safe. Until we catch up again next week, please continue to enjoy the big screen but be vigilant as well.

US-AUSSIE CRITICAL MINERALS PACT IS WORTHY STRETCH

ANTONY CURRIE

CHINA'S President Xi Jinping won't exactly be quaking in his boots after reading the terms of a critical minerals pact signed by his US and Australian counterparts on Monday.

Donald Trump and Anthony Albanese between them pledged roughly \$4 billion of their taxpayers' money to bulk up mining and processing of rare earths and other ores that are often small but essential elements for making renewables, semiconductors and high-end weapons.

That won't remove the lock China has on the sector any time soon. And there are a number of hurdles to jump. But it's worth doing.

Australia is an obvious place to give it a go. The country is home to the world's fourth-largest reserves of rare earths, per the US Geological Survey and has plenty of other critical minerals like lithium, magnesium and antimony. It boasts a big mining industry and a government that's keen to see the sector expand from mostly extraction into value-added upstream services like refining and processing.

And as a large end-customer and traditionally strong ally for Australia, the US is a sensible partner with which to share the financial burden.

So Washington and Canberra are each willing to invest \$1 billion in various projects. In addition, the US Export-Import Bank is issuing letters of interest worth \$2.2 billion to seven mining companies Down Under.

But it's not going to suddenly result in a flood of new ore, despite Trump's assertion on Monday that in a year's time "we'll have so much critical mineral and rare earths that you won't know what to do with them".

The Australian government's first two equity investments, for example, are for existing projects already in early stages of development: \$200 million is going to support Alcoa's plan for a gallium refinery that could account for 10% of the world's supply; Arafura Rare Earths, whose largest shareholder is the country's richest person, Gina Rinehart, is getting \$100 million — on top of more than \$500 million in government loans and grants it received last year.

Neither will be up and running for a couple of years at least. The other projects still barely on the drawing board will take much longer. Securing environmental approvals will be a hurdle; those rules are currently under review in Australia. Plus there's a relative dearth of talent given most of the post-extraction experts for critical minerals are Chinese.

What's more, government support is no guarantee of a business being able to start up its diggers and factories.

Even if it is successful, future administrations might not be willing to subsidise production at the price floors the current political leaders have committed to set. — Reuters

Oman: Emerging leader for agriculture in Mena

AS Oman looks to the future, agriculture and food security it's about building a resilient economy, ensuring sustainability and positioning Oman as a leader in both the regional and global arenas.

As of 2024, the agricultural market is estimated to be worth approximately \$2.24 billion, with projections indicating growth to \$3.01 billion by 2029. The agricultural sector in Oman is not only crucial for food production but also for the economy, contributing significantly to the gross domestic product

It aligns with Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO's) Four Betters — Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment and a Better Life — leaving no one behind. With ambitious goals to achieve 100 per cent food security by 2040, Oman's agriculture and food production sector is leveraging advanced technologies and strategic investment.

Oman already accounts for over 31 per cent of the region's production. Fisheries products marketed to 84 countries.

Thanks to a favourable climate and over 3,000 kilometres of coastline, however, the government is further increasing its support for the sector by implementing the policy document 'Fisheries and Aquaculture Vision 2040'.

Omani aquaculture products have recently met the European Union's phytosanitary standards, opening significant import opportunities in European countries. Oman is also active in the processing of fishery products, such as lanternfish, which are processed and frozen for subsequent export.

Meanwhile, the domestic demand for products like fishmeal and fish oil is expanding, which are imported for use in animal feed production. In agriculture, innovative and sustainable methods and crops are being studied to reduce the food trade balance deficit, such as the creation of 13 rain seeding stations that have contributed to a 15-18 per cent increase in rainfall.



It is envisioned as a centralised hub for the aggregation and handling of produce from the Najd Agricultural Zone, the largest farming zone in the country.



DR ANCHAN C K
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The writer is an international advisor — Trade, Economy & Investments

Oman has intensified investments and partnerships with private entities to improve productivity and encourage the adoption of new technologies.

Initiatives include the development of hydroponic agriculture, with technological support from the Netherlands, China and India. The countries are particularly interested in investments in new technologies for the cultivation of onions, garlic and potatoes; and there are plans to further develop grape cultivation. The focus is particularly on the development of the Salalah area, where there is an abundance of land with adequate water and infrastructure.

Oman and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) have formalised a ground-breaking partnership with the signing of a Host Country Agreement to establish permanent FAO representation in Oman, marking a new chapter in regional food security cooperation. The partnership also strengthens Oman's emerging role as a regional hub for food security and sustainable agriculture initiatives across the Gulf region.

Oman Agriculture Development Company is developing major agro logistics facility in the Najd region of Dhofar Governorate. The initiative forms part of Oman's broader strategy to enhance food self-sufficiency and modernise its agricultural infrastructure.

Officially titled the Integrated Centre for the Collection, Sorting and Marketing of Agricultural Products, the new facility is being constructed at Saih Al Khairat and

will have an annual capacity of 50,000 tonnes.

It is envisioned as a centralised hub for the aggregation and handling of produce from the Najd Agricultural Zone, the largest farming zone in the country.

Developed in collaboration with the Najd Agricultural Development Office under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the project will offer a range of post-harvest services.

These include collection from farmers, cold storage, sorting, packaging and processing, these services will help reduce post-harvest losses, raise product quality and improve market access for local producers across Oman and the wider region.

Slated for completion by the end of Q2 2026, the agro logistics hub is positioned as a strategic enabler for the Najd zone, which spans more than 54,000 acres. With its ample groundwater reserves, fertile soils and favourable climatic conditions, Najd is increasingly being recognised as Oman's future breadbasket.

It plays a central role in the country's vision to reduce dependency on food imports and bolster domestic food production.

The region has seen a surge in agricultural investment in recent years. As of the end of 2024, agricultural and farm assets in Najd were valued at approximately RO 190 million (\$493 million), with an additional RO 50.5 million (\$131 million) in development. Farm revenues during the 2023-2024 season reached RO 66 million (\$171 million), with the livestock sector contributing RO 40 million (\$104 million). Crop production has also expanded significantly, wheat output increased by 600 per cent to 10,510 tonnes in 2024, while date production nearly quadrupled to 1,880 tonnes.

Considering this growth, a masterplan is underway for a new Agricultural City in Najd.

The proposed city will integrate advanced agri-processing facilities, agricultural education and training centres and agri-tourism offerings.

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MUSIC

DIANA HADDAD
DAZZLES AT ROYAL
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MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat presented the ‘Voice of the Mountain’, Diana Haddad, in a spectacular concert on Saturday, October 18, at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts. With her rich vocals and commanding stage presence, Diana delivered an evening of unforgettable music that resonated deeply with audiences.

Performing a vibrant mix of her most beloved hits alongside new material, Diana brought energy, emotion and elegance to the stage. Her seamless ability to blend traditional Arab music with modern influences created a powerful connection with the audience, who responded with enthusiasm throughout the night.

Adding to the weekend’s celebrations, the Lebanese-Emirati star also appeared at Omani Women’s Night on Friday, October 17, joining in the recognition of the strength, achievements and cultural contributions of Omani women. Her presence brought a special resonance to the evening, underscoring the unifying power of music across cultures.

Known for her signature fusion of modern pop with traditional Bedouin and Khaleeji elements, Diana has long been celebrated as one of the Arab world’s most versatile and enduring performers. Her early work in the mid-1990s positioned her among the leading female voices in the Arabic pop and her ability to sing in multiple dialects — from Gulf and Levantine to Egyptian — has helped her reach audiences across the region.

Widely regarded as one of the most influential female Arabic-language pop stars, Diana continues to inspire a new generation of artists. Her cross-cultural appeal and musical versatility make her a true icon of pan-Arab pop, embodying the spirit of a ‘modern yet rooted’ artist who bridges tradition and contemporary sound.

QUICK FEATURES

CELEBRATIONS



A couple poses ahead of Diwali celebrations outside the temple, at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, in London. — Reuters

HARVEST



An Afghan boy stands at a sunflower field in the Panjwai district of Kandahar province. — AFP

PRICELESS THEFT



A tourist gets photographed in front of the window of the Louvre Museum, through which the thieves entered to steal priceless jewels on the second day of the museum's closure after the theft in Paris. — AFP

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Cartier Foundation opens high-tech museum



The new space is located at the Place du Palais-Royal, opposite the Louvre. — Foundation Cartier courtesy

After a sweeping renovation that cost \$233 million, the Cartier Foundation has reopened as a high-tech art hub in one of Paris’s most prestigious locations — directly across from the Louvre.

The revamped institution is not just another museum but a bold redefinition of what a contemporary cultural space can be in the 21st century.

The transformation is vast.

The new building is five times larger than the foundation’s previous home and was redesigned by Jean Nouvel, France’s celebrated architect. Rather than preserve the old structure, originally inaugurated in 1855, Nouvel stripped it to its core. The result is a flexible, dynamic museum that the foundation describes as a ‘21st-century museum’, fusing cutting-edge technology with architectural daring.

The foundation has begun unveiling the space to a select

group of critics, artists and patrons, but public visitors will soon experience it as doors open widely on Saturday.

A centrepiece of the new design is a system of five movable platforms, each measuring 1,250 square metres. Inspired by the engineering of mobile bridges and aircraft carriers, the platforms can be raised or lowered to create free heights of up to 11 metres. This allows curators to stage monumental installations, oversized sculptures, or immersive environments that traditional museums could not accommodate.

With its adaptable structure, the museum promises an ever-changing visitor experience.

Inside, architectural innovation continues. Walkways cut across the building like elevated balconies, giving viewers multiple perspectives of both artworks and space. — dpa



French mountaineer Benjamin Vadrines sorts his climbing gear in Kathmandu. — AFP

PAAVAN MATHEMA

NEPAL’S mountains including Everest have long drawn climbers from across the world, but a growing community is exploring hidden summits promising solitude and the chance to be first to the top.

The Himalayan nation is home to eight of the world’s 10 highest peaks and welcomes hundreds of climbers every year, making mountaineering a lucrative business.

While commercial expeditions dominate on Everest and other 8,000-metre giants, a new generation of adventurers is looking sideways rather than upward — towards the countless 6,000- and 7,000m summits studding Nepal.

The country has 462 peaks open for climbing and around a hundred have never been summited.

“If you are only interested in the height of the peak then there are limited mountains to climb”, French alpinist and veteran expedition leader Paulo Grobel said.

“But if you open your interest to 7,900 metres there is a lot of potential. If you go to 6,900 metres you have many more peaks waiting”.

This autumn Nepal has issued 1,323 climbing permits.

While most climbers are part of large commercial expeditions on popular peaks, small, independent teams are dispersed across remote and lesser-known mountains.

Many of these expeditions, including French, Japanese and Swiss teams, are tackling summits in true alpine style: minimal support, no supplementary oxygen, no fixed ropes and carrying all their own gear.

The concept is not new but it is rapidly gaining momentum.

‘Adventure is way bigger’

“It’s a huge challenge”,

said French mountaineering star Benjamin Vadrines, 33, back from the first ascent of the 7,468m Jannu East with another French climber Nicolas Jean.

“For me, it is very important. Alpine style is completely different in terms of skills, in terms of passion. The adventure is way bigger”.

Vadrines believes there are

NEPAL’S HIDDEN PEAKS ATTRACT NEW CLIMBERS



French mountaineering star Vadrines believes there are huge possibilities for alpine climbs on Nepali mountains outside the highest peaks

huge possibilities for alpine climbs on Nepali mountains outside the highest peaks.

“They’re just lower than 8,000 metres”, he said. “Maybe society values them less, but they’re underrated. There’s so much left to explore”.

The shift comes as questions about sustainability, overcrowding and commercialisation reshape mountaineering.

Billi Bierling, who runs the Himalayan Database recording expedition data, said: “With more crowds on the 8000’ers it is actually a beautiful development”. That young, technically able alpinists are looking at other, more interesting peaks. “Hopefully it will also be safe because that’s the next thing”.

Endless possibilities Many of Nepal’s mid-range peaks remain logistically out of reach — not because they are too difficult, but because they are too remote.

“In Nepal, what is challenging is access”, said Nepali climber and guide

Vinayak Malla, whose team has been nominated for the prestigious Piolets d’Or award for the first ascent of the 6,450m Patrasi Peak last year.

“It is expensive to travel and then you will have to trek to areas where hotels don’t exist much”, he added. “Rescue is difficult”.

On the plus side, smaller expeditions also mean climbers are spread across a wider area, bringing tourism income to valleys that have long remained outside mainstream trekking routes.

In August, Nepal waived climbing fees for 97 mountains to promote lesser-known peaks.

“We are seeing more interest in mountains below 8,000 metres”, said Himal Gautam, chief of the mountaineering section at Nepal’s tourism department.

“Gradually, we’re promoting new regions, so that as interest increases, the infrastructure and manpower needed to support them can develop”.

— AFP

FEATURES



OMANI SCOUTS BRIDGE HERITAGE AND DIGITAL HORIZONS

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

THE crackle of a radio signal. The glow of laptop screens in classrooms turned into communication hubs. The laughter of young scouts swapping stories under the night sky. Across Oman, these sounds and sights blended into a single heartbeat as scouts joined the world’s largest digital scouting event: the Jamboree-on-the-Air and Jamboree-on-the-Internet (Jota-Joti).

Each October, millions of scouts gather not in one place but in a boundless digital camp where voices travel through radio waves and friendships spark across chatrooms. For Omani scouts, it was a chance to weave traditions, skills and dreams into the tapestry of a global adventure.

At Al Farouq Basic Education School, the Rover Scouts of Al Khabourah filled their days with energy fuelled by curiosity. A treasure



Jota-Joti teaches dialogue, tolerance and openness. It places Oman on the global scouting map, not as an observer, but as a voice

SALEM BIN MOHAMMED AL MAAMARI

Scout leader

hunt sent teams racing through clues, shouts of triumph echoing down hallways. Sports and cultural quizzes stirred friendly rivalries, while evenings were reserved for a makeshift campfire under starry skies. Workshops offered practical skills: civil defence officers demonstrated safety and rescue techniques, scouts tried their hands at first aid; and visits to carpentry and recycling units tied in lessons of sustainability and self-reliance.

Then came the magic of the jamboree itself. Headsets went on, screens lit up and Omani scouts spoke to peers across distant time zones. Through ScoutLink, they compared traditions, shared scouting stories and discovered how small the world feels when curiosity bridges gaps.

Bahla’s scouts embraced Jota-Joti with heritage in one hand, innovation in the other. Their programme included first-aid drills and a workshop titled ‘Technology of Tomorrow’, imagining how digital tools could

shape scouting in years to come. Yet it was Bahla itself — the town of forts and crafts — that defined much of the experience. Scouts wandered the cobbled paths of Bahla Fort, shaped clay at pottery workshops and exchanged greetings with global peers inside the centuries-old halls of Jabreen Castle.

Each message sent became more than digital communication; it became a thread linking Oman’s cultural pride to global curiosity. The scouts planted saplings around heritage sites, a quiet yet powerful gesture of service. Later, a horse parade thundered through the streets, riders embodying Oman’s timeless courage and grace. By the jamboree’s end, exhibitions of crafts, projects and stories proved that Bahla’s scouts had lived the event not just as participants but as cultural storytellers.

In Sur, the sound of cheering filled schoolyards before headsets were even switched on. Rover Scouts and Guides of Al Tali’a Sports and Cultural Club

kicked off with sports: tug-of-war ropes strained, footballs flew and running shoes pounded the ground. When digital sessions began, scouts crowded around screens, sharing Sur’s maritime heritage, scouting legacies and stories with peers from Europe, Asia and Africa. Workshops emphasised safe tech use, cultural exchange and leadership in a digital age.

Scout leader Salem bin Mohammed al Maamari reflected: “Jota-Joti is more than an event. It teaches dialogue, tolerance and openness.

It places Oman on the global scouting map, not as an observer, but as a voice”.

Oman’s scouts proved the essence of scouting endures: exploring, serving, connecting and growing. Radios and laptops may join compasses and campfires, but the heart of scouting remains timeless. This jamboree offered Oman’s youth a passport to the world, stamped in friendships, memories and a renewed spirit of adventure.