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BEAT THE BUGS

AVOID SEASONAL ILLNESSES

AS TEMPERATURES SHIFT, PREVENTION BEGINS BEFORE ILLNESS DOES

IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF NEPAL

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Ram Chandra Paudel of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, on the occasion of his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the President and the friendly people of Nepal.

OMAN, GERMANY FOR EASING REGIONAL TENSIONS

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received a telephone call from Dr Johann Wadephul, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany. The two ministers discussed a number of regional issues of common interest and exchanged views on ways to resume freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea region, while supporting efforts to reduce tension and escalation in order to enhance the chances of establishing regional security and stability. Meanwhile, Saudi authorities issued their first air raid alert in the capital since fighting returned to neighbouring Yemen, leaving residents of Riyadh rattled after they heard explosions ringing out in the early hours of Saturday.

OMAN AT 20TH ASIAN GAMES IN JAPAN



The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Olympic Committee, on Saturday participated in the opening ceremony of the 20th Asian Games (Aichi-Nagoya 2026), which is hosted by Japan from September 19 to October 4, with the participation of athletes from various Asian countries. The Omani delegation participating in the opening ceremony was headed by HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, President of the Oman Olympic Committee. The opening ceremony was held at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya, and included a range of artistic and cultural performances that reflected the identity of Aichi and Nagoya, Japanese culture, and celebrated the cultural diversity of the Asian continent.

HM’S GREETINGS CONVEYED TO KAZAKHSTAN’S PRESIDENT

ASTANA: President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, of the Republic of Kazakhstan, received Shaikh Dr Salah bin Salim Jaaboub, who presented his credentials as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Kazakhstan, at the Independence Palace in the Kazakh capital, Astana, on Saturday.

The ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, and his wishes for continued health and happiness to President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and further



The ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

progress and prosperity to the friendly people of Kazakhstan, and continued development and growth for the bilateral relations between the two countries.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev asked the ambassador to convey his greetings to His Majesty alongside his wishes for good health and well-being to him, and continued progress and prosperity for the Omani people and further development and growth for the bilateral relations between the two countries in a way that fulfils the aspirations of the two friendly peoples. — ONA

Omanis seeking treatment abroad drops by 49%

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

DR HILAL BIN ALI AL SABTI, Minister of Health, said that the number of patients sent abroad for medical treatment has dropped by approximately 49 per cent between 2023 and 2025 due to an expansion in specialised services within the Sultanate of Oman. The ministry is making great efforts to reduce waiting lists and is preparing to launch the National Centre for Virtual Health shortly.

In an interview with Oman Arabic Daily, sister publication of the Observer, Dr Al Sabti said that the number of patients sent abroad for medical treatment decreased from 779 to 398 during the same period, while the number of patients sent for treatment within the country increased from 536 to 1,417. He noted that the trend of sending patients abroad is currently confined to complex cases requiring technologies and expertise that are either unavailable locally or still being developed.

The minister attributed the prolonged waiting time to the increased demand for services and the challenges of managing patient flow, explaining that the solutions include improving appointment scheduling, simplifying procedures, and enhancing primary care. He said the virtual health centre will offer remote consultations, facilitating access to specialists and



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DR HILAL BIN ALI AL SABTI
Minister of Health



The ministry’s budget for 2026 hit RO 1 billion.

reducing the need for in-person visits.

The minister said that the ministry’s ongoing projects include Al Namaa Hospital in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, Samayil Hospital in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Al Falah Hospital in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, and Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Dhofar Governorate. This is in addition to plans to expand services and specialised centres.

The minister disclosed that 18 industrial projects are under construction, including 11 pharmaceutical factories, a

pharmaceutical raw materials factory, and six factories for medical supplies and equipment. He also pointed to the Council of Ministers’ approval for the implementation of a radioisotope and nuclear pharmacy factory project.

The ministry’s budget for 2026 hit RO 1 billion, while the Omanisation rate within the ministry stood at at 71.1 per cent by 2025, Dr Al Sabti, said stressing that prevention, localisation of specialised fields, and the training of national health professionals are among the ministry’s top priorities for the upcoming period.

Denmark emerges smiling from Trump-Greenland deal

COPENHAGEN: Danish commentators on Saturday cast a deal announced by US President Donald Trump to give Washington control over Greenland’s security as a diplomatic win for Copenhagen.

Since returning to the White House last January, Trump has repeatedly insisted that Washington needed Greenland - an autonomous Danish territory - for strategic reasons, triggering months of tension with Nato ally Denmark and concern across Europe.

Trump on Friday said the US, Denmark and Greenland had struck a deal giving Washington permanent control over Greenland’s security and barring Russia and China from setting up bases in the Arctic territory. The exact terms of the deal are unclear, but Denmark maintains it does not affect its sovereignty.

While Trump hailed the accord as “a dream come true for the United States of America”, Danish commentators were quick to argue that Copenhagen had emerged



A sign indicates the Greenlandic representation on North Atlantic House in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Saturday. — Reuters

largely unscathed.

“Shhh. Don’t tell Trump that it’s the Kingdom of Denmark that has prevailed,” US correspondent Jacob Heinel Jensen wrote in the Danish newspaper Berlingske.

“The craziest thing is that ministers, diplomats and civil servants have managed to sell it to Trump as a major personal triumph,” he added.

Commentators also noted that Washington was already able to ramp up its military presence on the

island provided it informs Denmark and Greenland in advance, under a 1951 defence pact, updated in 2004.

Marc Jacobsen, a researcher at the Royal Danish Defence College, said that, based on what is known so far, the deal appeared to benefit all three parties. “Donald Trump gets out of it that he can appear as a winner. He has been a good businessman who has pushed Denmark and Greenland into something new,” Jacobsen said.

— AFP
SEE ALSO P6

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

RESEARCH STUDY
MAPS SEAWATER
INTRUSION IN
COASTAL AQUIFER

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 19



DR MUHAMMAD
YOUNIS KHAN

A recent geophysical study conducted by researchers at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has provided new insights into the extent of seawater intrusion into a coastal aquifer in northern Oman, highlighting the

importance of advanced monitoring techniques in protecting the Sultanate of Oman's groundwater resources. Dr Muhammad Younis Khan, Assistant Professor of Applied Geophysics at the Department of Earth Sciences, College of Science at SQU, led the study titled "Imaging of Seawater Intrusion in a Coastal Alluvial Aquifer Using Transient Electromagnetic Data and Laterally Constrained Inversion in Northern Oman."

Groundwater is one of Oman's most valuable natural resources, but coastal aquifers are increasingly threatened by seawater intrusion caused by excessive groundwater extraction and changing environmental conditions.

Dr Khan explained that the resulting deterioration in groundwater quality has led to the abandonment of wells and affected economically important crops, including date palms in Oman. Against this background, the study investigated the extent of seawater intrusion in the Al Jifnain area between Al Jifnain Dam and the Sea of Oman, with the aim of developing a more reliable approach for distinguishing freshwater from saline groundwater and providing scientific information to support sustainable groundwater management. The research team used the Transient Electromagnetic (TEM) method combined with Laterally Constrained Inversion (LCI) to develop detailed images of underground conditions.

The resulting models identified the principal layers of the coastal aquifer system, including unsaturated near-surface gravels, a freshwater-bearing gravel aquifer and localised clay-rich layers.

15 productions from 9 countries take stage at Dhofar theatre fest

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 19

Fifteen productions from nine countries are competing for \$150,000 in prizes at the second Dhofar International Theatre Festival, bringing Omani theatre onto the same programme as works from Europe, Asia and the Arab world during a nine-day gathering in Salalah.

Six of the 15 productions are Omani, while the international line-up includes works from Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, India, Georgia and Iraq.

Running till September 22, the festival is organised by Dhofar Municipality across three competitive tracks — Elite Performances, Main Productions and the Dhofar Theatre Competition. Each carries a grand prize of \$50,000.

The structure gives theatre practitioners from Dhofar a dedicated competitive platform while exposing local performers and audiences to markedly different approaches to acting, direction, movement and stagecraft.

That contrast was evident from the opening day of the competition.

Spain's Romeo and Juliet, staged at Ubar Theatre in the Elite Performances track, reinterpreted Shakespeare's tragedy through flamenco, combining acting, movement, singing and guitar in a production built around a relatively restrained visual setting.

At the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment, Egypt's Shafiq and Metwally opened the Main Productions track with a contemporary treatment of one of the



Six of the 15 productions are Omani, while the international line-up includes works from Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, India, Georgia and Iraq.

country's best-known folk narratives. The programme has since widened further.

Tunisia's The Runaways, Türkiye's Fake Myself and Oman's Nails of Eternity were followed by the UAE production Depths of the Soul and Oman's Very Special Care. Further productions include India's Neythe – Dance of the Weaves, Tunisia's Garden of Lovers, Georgia's Hamlet and Iraq's Abu Abdullah's House.

Oman's presence also includes Ashes, The Custodian, The

Frankincense Tree and The People of the Sabbath.

Competitive performances continue until September 21, with the closing ceremony scheduled for September 22 at Al Murooj Theatre.

The festival's international dimension extends beyond the productions themselves.

Its judging and selection panels bring together theatre practitioners from Oman, Kuwait, Morocco, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Spain, South Korea, France, Jordan, Bahrain and

other countries.

The Elite Performances jury includes specialists from major theatre and performing arts institutions in Oman, Kuwait, Morocco, Egypt, Britain, Spain and South Korea. The Main Productions jury is chaired by Syrian actor Ayman Zeidan and includes Egyptian actor Ahmed Bedir, Jordanian actor Munther Rayahneh, French scenographer Jean-Guy Lecat, British academic Dr Andrew Sullivan, Bahraini actress Haifa Hussein and

A space to turn research
to viable projects

YOUSUF AL HABSI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

THE INNOVATION Park Muscat (IPM) at the Research and Innovation Authority (RIA), represents an integrated system aimed at transforming scientific knowledge and research into value-added economic projects. This supports economic diversification and achieves the goals of Oman Vision 2040. The IPM seeks to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's position as a regional hub for advanced technologies and the knowledge economy by providing an attractive investment environment and incentives that enable entrepreneurs and international companies to advance knowledge-based industries.

Najah bint Mohammed al Rashdi, Acting Director-General of the IPM, said that the IPM is the first multidisciplinary science park in the Sultanate of Oman and one of the strategic national projects implemented by the Research and Innovation Authority. The IPM seeks to build an integrated system for scientific research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, transforming the outputs of scientific research and innovation into value-added economic projects. This contributes to bridging the gap between scientific research and market needs, supporting economic diversification, and enhancing knowledge economy in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The IPM has allocated land for research and development centres on a usufruct system with the aim of attracting national and international institutions and companies working in priority scientific and technological fields.



The IPM has successfully attracted a number of entities specialising in AI, cybersecurity, energy and advanced technologies.

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The IPM plays a pivotal role in building a knowledge-based economy by enhancing the market readiness in terms of innovation, expanding their economic impact, providing an attractive environment for investment in technology and innovation, supporting entrepreneurs and startups, and enhancing partnerships between the public and private sectors and academic institutions. The IPM's competitive advantage lies in providing an integrated system that accompanies innovators through the various stages of the innovation process from developing and refining the idea, through conducting research and development, designing and testing prototypes up to establishing and emerging company.

Thus, the IMP forms a link between scientific research, innovation and the industrial sector. It also creates quality job

The Innovation Park Muscat to enhance Oman's position as a regional hub for advanced technologies

opportunities for national talent, transfers modern technologies as well as enhances the contribution of innovation-based industries to the GDP, she said.

Najah bint Mohammed al Rashdi, Acting Director-General of the IPM, noted that the work of the IPM aligns directly with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in the economic and development pillar, by supporting scientific research and innovation, promoting economic diversification, empowering the private sector, attracting quality investments, and developing knowledge-based industries and advanced technologies.

The IPM also contributes to building a knowledge-based and innovation-driven society and enhancing the Sultanate of Oman's regional and international standing in research, development, and technology.

Najah bint Mohammed al Rashdi, Acting Director-General of the IPM at the Research and Innovation Authority (RIA), said that the priorities for the next phase include attracting more international and technology companies, expanding the establishment of specialised research centres and enhancing business incubation and acceleration programmes, developing the infrastructure that supports innovation, launching quality initiatives and partnerships to raise the efficiency of the research, development and innovation system. The IPM also seeks to consolidate its position as a regional centre for innovation and future technologies, thereby enhancing the Sultanate of Oman's position as an attractive destination for investment in knowledge, scientific research and technology.



SHORT TAKES



The MoU supports the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

RAFO TRAINING CENTRE, DHOFAR VARSITY SIGN MoU

SALALAH: The Royal Air Force of Oman’s Air Training Center and Dhofar University signed a memorandum of cooperation at the university’s headquarters.

The memorandum aims to enhance training and qualification, exchange experiences, develop joint training and research programmes, and participate in scientific and professional events, thereby contributing to building effective strategic partnerships, developing national competencies, enhancing integration between specialised expertise and academic knowledge, and supporting the objectives of (Oman Vision 2040). The memorandum of cooperation was signed by the director of the Air Training Center on behalf of the centre, and by Dr Amer bin Ali al Rawas, the president of Dhofar University, on behalf of the university. — **ONA**

AL RUSTAQ MOUNTAIN ROAD PROJECT WELL UNDERWAY



The project is part of a series of development projects presently underway in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq.

SAID AL SALMANI
AL RUSTAQ, SEPT 19

Work continues on Al Rustaq mountain road development and beautification project, with an implementation rate of 70 per cent so far.

The project is part of a series of development projects presently underway in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, reflecting a focus on improving gateways, facades, and vital locations. This aligns with the historical and touristic significance of the Wilayat Al Rustaq, which boasts numerous natural, heritage, and tourist sites that attract visitors from across the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Rustaq mountain road has a particular importance being a prominent gateway to the wilayat. Its development and beautification will directly improve the overall landscape and enhance the visual experience for road users and visitors, while also adding an aesthetic touch that harmonizes with Al Rustaq’s natural environment and its historical and cultural identity. The project aims to bring about a qualitative transformation in the wilayat by developing its aesthetic and urban elements and raising the level of organization in the area. It would create a more attractive environment that aligns with the development the wilayat is witnessing across various developmental and service sectors.

The project reflects a constant trend towards implementing high-quality projects with a tangible impact at the level of the governorate and the wilayat. It would improve the quality of life, enhance the efficiency of vital sites while preserving local identity and highlighting the unique characteristics of the wilayat.

ECOTHON tackles pressing environmental issues

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

ECOTHON 2026, which was held as part of Oman Climate Week 2026, brought together 150 participants to tackle real-world environmental issues.

Dana al Zadjali, Project Manager of the hackathon, aljabr, said, “We have had 20 teams participating, and the age group ranged between 19 and 40. The hackathon focused on issues of climate change such as microplastic pollution, cooking oil, food waste, etc. The teams also attended workshops and mentorship. Finally, they presented their prototypes to the panel of judges.”

The ECOTHON was supported by Oman LNG, aljabr, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and the Environment Authority.

The three-day intensive climate innovation hackathon focused on two main tracks with six core prompts: Track 1 (General): Food waste and GHG emissions, cooking oil, and microplastic pollution. Track 2 (Plant-Related): Oil remediation in contaminated soil, methane quantification at intermittent vents, and dynamic fugitive monitoring.

Teams received hands-on mentorship from industry experts before pitching their final solutions to a judging panel for top positions and monetary prizes. Promising projects also secured ongoing support from Oman Energy and Al Jabr to explore viable startup creation.



First prize of RO 1,500 went to team SUST comprising Hamed al Masroori, Abdelrahman al lam and Ilyas al Numani for their project that took up the challenge of waste.

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First prize of RO 1,500 went to team SUST comprising Hamed al Masroori, Abdelrahman al lam and Ilyas al Numani for their project that took up the challenge of waste: Oman generates two million tonnes of municipal solid waste a year (150 Mt across the GCC), with 70 per cent of recyclables lost and 80 per cent going straight to landfill.

Their solution was an AI-vision-driven adaptive conveyor system (running on Jetson Nano, ROS 2-controlled arms) that sees, classifies, and separates waste in real time, self-learns weekly on Gulf-specific data, and targets 95 per cent recovery purity with a 55 per cent cut in labour needs.

The second winner was Emissiq AI with team members Wameedh al Dhuli, Yuma al Hasani, Maryam al Maskari, Mohammed Azharruddin, and Madiha Kazim, and they won RO 1,000. Their challenge

was methane quantification at intermittent vents, and their solution: EMISSIQ’s solution took the incomplete, intermittent data that existing monitoring systems capture and reconstructed it into full emission events — figuring out which equipment caused the leak, quantifying how much methane was released (with uncertainty bounds), predicting risk, and ranking which sources need urgent attention. Instead of treating every alert equally, it lets operators focus on the highest-impact leaks first. The result is fewer recurring methane losses, less wasted natural gas, more efficient maintenance, and real environmental and business value pulled out of monitoring infrastructure operators already in place.

Third place went to Cellova comprising Mohammed al Kwai, Ameer al Badi, Waleed al Aghbari, Sheikah al Khaduri and Aysha al Kaabi.

Their challenge was food waste and GHG emissions. They received RO 500 Cellova tackled the waste created when agricultural and plant residues are burnt, dumped, or left unused — a practice that drives greenhouse gas emissions and squanders a valuable resource. Their solution converts locally sourced plant waste into nanocellulose and its byproducts (cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin), turning it into high-value input material for more than 13 industries. This closes the loop on a circular economy, cuts environmental harm, and offers a sustainable substitute for conventional materials.

Muscat launches citywide e-bike sharing

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Muscat is set to get a new electric mobility option as Muscat Municipality, in partnership with Thimar Company, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Nama, prepares to launch an e-bike sharing service supported by a network of battery swapping stations across the capital.

The initiative aims to provide a clean, affordable and convenient transport alternative for the Municipality workers as Oman approaches the cooler months, when outdoor movement and recreational activity increase.

According to officials who spoke to the Observer on the sidelines of the Oman Climate Week, the project will ultimately include 56 battery swap stations across Muscat Governorate. The first phase will see 14 stations become operational in key areas including Al Qurum, Al Ghubra and Al Khoudh. The bikes and the swap infrastructure have been supplied by Thimar Company, which has tied up with a Chinese manufacturer for the



The first phase will see 14 stations become operational in key areas including Al Qurum, Al Ghubra and Al Khoudh.

technology and equipment.

“E-bikes will help our team members to reduce carbon emissions in central areas and support the green, sustainable initiatives of the Muscat Municipality,” said Dr Khalid al Balushi, General Manager for Administration and Finance at Muscat Municipality.

Haitham al Bahrani, Adviser at Muscat Municipality, said the municipality is working closely with MoTC and Nama to integrate the stations with existing urban infrastructure and ensure seamless access for the users with no hassles and

prompt and efficient services.

On its technical front, Ali al Badi, Manager of Operations at Thimar said that each e-bike will be powered by two swappable LFP batteries, with each battery rated at 2.8 kWh. The combined 5.6 kWh capacity gives the scooter a range of 140 to 160 km per full battery swap, officials said.

“The e-bikes have a top speed of 120 km/h, but the ministry regulations prohibit riding on roads with speed limits exceeding 100 km/h. On the safety aspect, we have paid more attention to this crucial

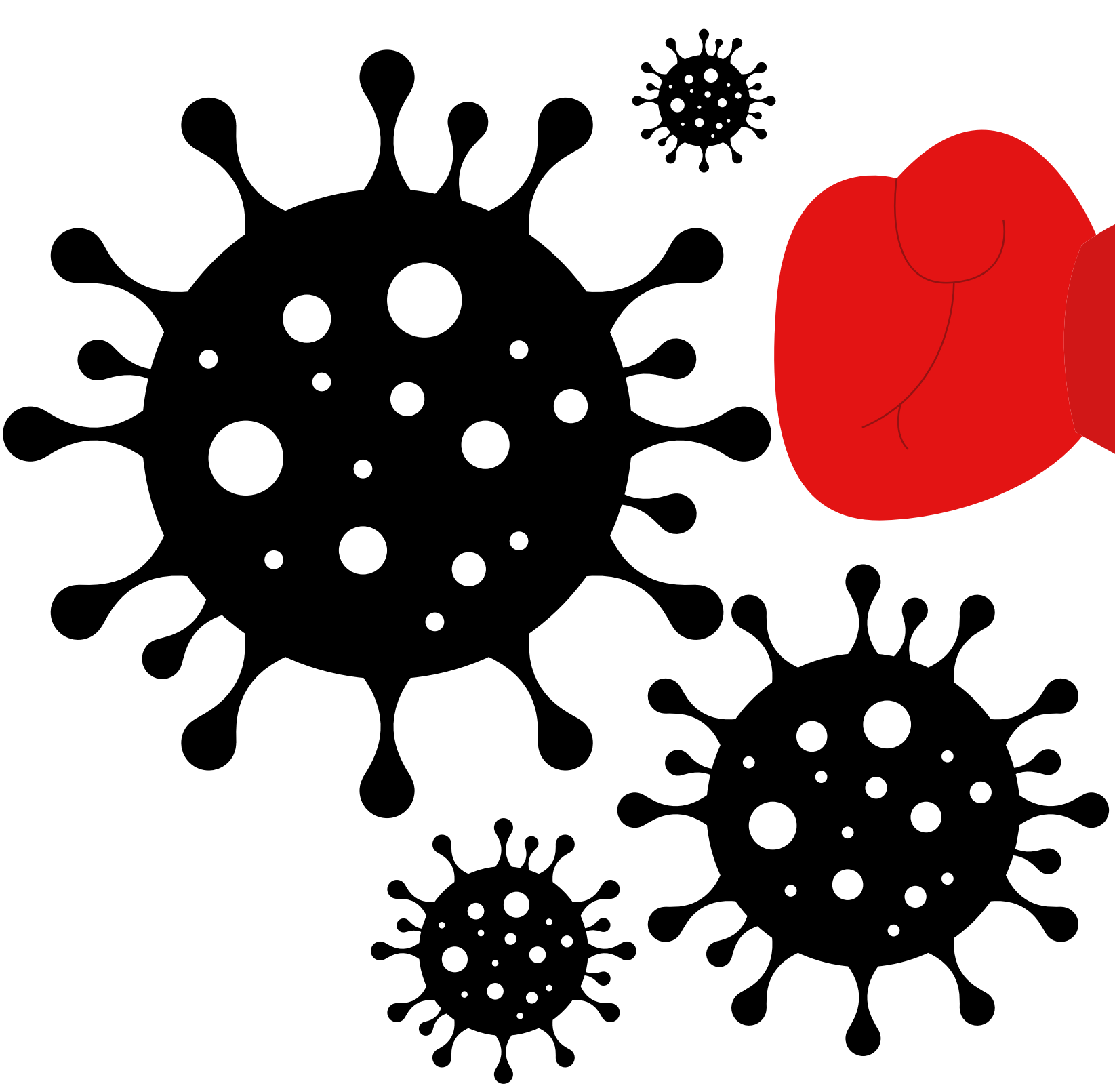
area and these batteries use LFP chemistry, which is non-flammable and explosion-proof. The safety of the battery is a key priority for us,” he said.

Each battery is also equipped with an IoT system and an Omantel SIM card. This allows both Thimar and the ministry to track and manage the batteries in real time through a unified battery-swapping platform. The swapping stations themselves will require a multi-phase power connection. Nama is supporting the roll-out to ensure the required electrical infrastructure is in place.

While a formal launch date has not yet been announced, officials said testing is underway at the 14 initial sites. Users will be able to swap depleted batteries for fully charged ones at any station, eliminating long charging wait times.

The project aligns with Oman Vision 2040 goals for sustainable transport and smart city development. Muscat Municipality officials said it will monitor usage data from the IoT platform to decide on future expansion locations.

SPOTLIGHT



BEAT THE BUGS

AVOID SEASONAL ILLNESSES

AS TEMPERATURES SHIFT, PREVENTION BEGINS BEFORE ILLNESS DOES



Avoid crowded places, use sanitiser and masks wherever necessary. Avoid direct contact with sick people



As Oman transitions into cooler weather, respiratory viruses like influenza spread rapidly



MoH urges annual flu shots for everyone aged six months and those in high risk groups



Landmarks across Oman illuminated in orange to raise awareness about patient safety



Focus on proactive prevention, and follow and healthy lifestyles to improve overall quality of life

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

AS Oman moves from the intense heat of summer towards cooler weather, the seasonal change brings more than a welcome drop in temperatures. It also marks a period when respiratory viruses, particularly seasonal influenza, can spread more easily, making prevention increasingly important, especially for people living with non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The Ministry of Health (MoH) is urging the public to take precautions against influenza, stressing that annual vaccination is the best way to protect against infection, particularly for groups at greater risk of developing complications.

Seasonal influenza can spread rapidly through respiratory droplets and close contact. The MoH advises people to avoid crowded places, wash their hands regularly with soap and water or use hand sanitiser, ensure adequate ventilation in enclosed spaces and avoid direct contact with people showing symptoms. Wearing

a mask in crowded settings and avoiding touching the eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands can also help reduce transmission.

According to the MoH, seasonal influenza vaccination is available for people aged six months and above, with priority given to specific groups. These include healthcare workers, pregnant women, children aged nine months, 24 months, three and four years, adults aged 60 and above, people living with chronic diseases and those with weakened immune systems or taking immunosuppressive medication. Pilgrims and Umrah performers are also among the targeted groups.

For people with NCDs, greater caution is particularly important. Chronic conditions affecting the respiratory system, heart, kidneys, liver, nervous system and blood, as well as metabolic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, can increase the risk of complications when a person develops a seasonal infection.

Oman’s focus on protecting people with chronic diseases is also

For people with NCDs, greater caution is particularly important. Chronic conditions affecting the respiratory system, heart, kidneys, liver, nervous system and blood, as well as metabolic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, can increase the risk of complications when a person develops a seasonal infection

reflected in the 2026 Omani Patient Safety Month, held under the theme “Towards Safe Care for a Lifetime”. As part of the national campaign, landmarks and buildings across Oman have been illuminated in orange in celebration of the month, drawing public attention to patient safety and the importance of safe care for people living with NCDs.

In remarks reflecting the vision behind the Royal Hospital International Congress 2026, Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs and chairman of the congress, stressed the importance of the event as a platform for bringing together expertise and strengthening integration between knowledge, innovation and healthcare practice.

He said the true purpose of developing health systems is not only to improve their ability to treat patients, but to give people more years of life with better health and quality, emphasising prevention, early detection and healthier lifestyles.

This preventive approach is also

being strengthened across Oman’s healthcare system. Qamra bint Said al Sariri, Director-General of the Centre for Quality Assurance at the Ministry of Health, said work is under way to strengthen performance indicators for monitoring NCDs and evaluating the quality of healthcare. She also noted that protocols, policies and legislation related to safe care for NCDs are being reviewed.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation’s recognition of Barka and Yanqul as healthy cities has brought the total number of internationally recognised healthy cities in Oman to eight, reflecting the Sultanate of Oman’s wider focus on health promotion and prevention.

As temperatures shift and seasonal illnesses circulate, the message is clear: prevention begins before illness does. For people living with chronic diseases in particular, vaccination, good hygiene, ventilation and responsible social behaviour can help reduce the risks associated with seasonal infections while supporting the wider goal of keeping people healthier for longer.

Belarus hosts ‘Splendour of Silver’

THE National Museum inaugurated the exhibition ‘The Splendour of Silver: Treasures from the Omani Court’ at the Grodno State Museum of the History of Religion in the Republic of Belarus.

This event marks the exhibition's third station in the Republic of Belarus; its first station was held at the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus in the capital, Minsk, in December 2025, before making its second stop at the Vitebsk Regional Museum of Local Lore in July 2026 as part of the programme of the International Arts Festival ‘Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk.’

The exhibition celebrates manifestations of Omani silver as a historically leading craft, showcasing a carefully selected collection of objects associated with the Sultans of Oman in Muscat and Zanzibar.The exhibition will run until November 20 and serves as an extension of the exhibition held at the National Art Museum in Minsk in December 2025.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU and Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum.

The event was attended by Yuri Khadzhimuratovich Karaev, Chairman of the Grodno Regional Executive Committee, along with a number of officials and individuals interested in cultural and museum affairs in the Republic of Belarus. The exhibition features a range of museum objects that highlight the allure of silver within



The exhibition is being held at the Grodno State Museum of the History of Religion in Belarus and is on until November 20.



The design of the men's perfume bottle was inspired by the Omani khanjar and was presented by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said to his guests, earning it the title ‘the Gift of Kings’. The fragrances incorporate precious natural ingredients such as frankincense, rose, and amber, with frankincense highlighted as a symbol of global civilisational exchange.

The Silver-Making section presents silver artefacts and their aesthetic and symbolic connotations, their use for adornment and protection, and their social and economic role for women as part of the dowry and a source of financial security.

The Traditional Dress section explores the functions of Omani attire as an expression of religious beliefs, identity, modesty, and adornment. It showcases the components of women's and men's dress, along with associated tools and weapons decorated with silver. Notable objects in this section include a shield and a matchlock firearm from the private collection of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The Elite Attire section displays the clothing and jewellery of distinguished Omani figures, including the jewellery and face mask (burqa') of Sayyidah Salma bint Said bin Sultan al Busaidi dating to 19th century. This section highlights the role of these objects in documenting social and cultural life at the Omani court and in East Africa.

The Grodno State Museum of the History of Religion was established in 1977 and is the only specialised institution of its kind in the Republic of Belarus. — **ONA**

The exhibition features a range of museum objects that highlight the allure of silver within the Omani cultural context, where expressions of luxury and elegance are clearly manifested.

the Omani cultural context, where expressions of luxury and elegance are clearly manifested. It sheds light on the diverse roles of silver, this precious metal whose use was not limited to the courts of the sultans, but extended into the details of daily life. The exhibition also highlights the craftsmanship of Omani silversmiths, offering visitors an opportunity to explore a world in which silver becomes a symbol of beauty, protection, and the essence of Omani craftsmanship.

The exhibition is divided into five main sections: the Omani khanjar; the Culture of Fragrance; the Art of Silver-Making; Traditional Dress; and Elite Attire of Prominent Omani Figures in East Africa during that period.

The Omani khanjar (dagger) section highlights its symbolism as an integral element of the emblem of the Sultanate

of Oman, tracing its history and development since the third millennium BCE, with reference to historical evidence confirming the continuity of its form across the ages. The section also presents types of Omani khanjars and their accessories, most notably the Sa'idi khanjar attributed to the ruling Al Said family and crafted specifically for them, alongside the Nazwani and Suri khanjars. The section further includes a janbiya presented by Ali Abdullah Saleh, former President of the Republic of Yemen, to the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The Culture of Fragrance section focuses on the importance of fine scents in the daily life and social occasions of Omanis. It displays rare perfume bottles dating back to 1983, made of crystal, 24-carat gold, and silver, representing the first fragrance creations of Amouage Perfumes under the name Amouage Gold.

CONDOLENCES

“Surely we belong to Allah and to Him shall we return”

The Management and Staff of **Rashid Al Kiyumi Trading Est.**

extends their deepest and most heartfelt condolences to the family, relatives, and friends on the sad demise of:

MOHAMMED RASHID HILAL NASER AL KIYUMI
(Managing Director)

Who passed away on 18.09.2026

We pray to Almighty Allah to grant the departed soul eternal peace in Jannat Al-Firdous.

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
452/2026	Pharmaceutical needs of the boarding unit (home for the severely disabled)	Companies specialized in the field of supplying medical supplies and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Sunday 04-10-2026 02:00 PM	Monday 19-10-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
453/2026	Supply of consumer medical tools and personal supplies to the boarding unit (home for the severely disabled)	Companies specialized in the field of supplying medical supplies and supplying food, beverages and luxuries and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Sunday 04-10-2026 02:00 PM	Monday 19-10-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Sunday 20/09/2026**.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200)..

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

Trump signs bill authorising sweeping Russia sanctions



DONALD J TRUMP
US President

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has signed a bill authorising new sanctions designed to pressure Russia over its war in Ukraine, after Congress gave its approval following months of delay.

Washington is pushing to revive a mediated path towards ending the conflict as Moscow intensifies attacks against Ukraine, even though much of its attention - and munitions - are focused on the ongoing war against Iran.

The legislation, which US lawmakers approved this week and Trump signed on Friday, takes aim at Russia's energy and defence sectors, alongside President Vladimir Putin and other senior officials.

It also targets Moscow's so-called shadow fleet of tankers used to evade Western sanctions, and allows Trump the authority to impose tariffs of up to 100 per cent on major buyers of Russian oil and gas.

The Republican-led House of Representatives passed the package by a 262-159 vote on Wednesday.

The bill would also target companies and foreign actors supporting Russia's military, and extend sanctions involving Iran.

But the broad powers to impose tariffs sparked an unusual split among Democrats, who largely support Ukraine but have resisted handing Trump wider authority over trade. — AFP

Russia-backed South Ossetia elects leader close to Moscow



A woman casts her ballot for Russia's parliamentary election at a polling station in Klimovsk in Moscow. — AFP

TBILISI: A former Russian federal official has been elected president of South Ossetia, a Russia-backed breakaway region of Georgia, in a vote Moscow hailed on Saturday as a sign of the territory's desire for closer ties with Moscow.

Marat Kambolov, the new president, is from North Ossetia, a Russian republic on the other side of the Caucasus mountains from South Ossetia.

He has no previous ties to South Ossetia, which broke away from Georgia during the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and later secured de facto independence with Russian backing. A brief war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 drove Georgian forces from parts of the territory they had previously controlled.

Moscow welcomed Kambolov's victory. "The results demonstrate South Ossetian society's widespread desire for domestic political stability, progress and the comprehensive development of ties with the Russian Federation," the Foreign Ministry said.

South Ossetia and Russia signed a treaty in May that deepened cooperation on defence, foreign and security policy and set out plans to integrate energy grids and transport networks.. — Reuters

UNKNOWN EXPLOSION

Syria blast at military site kills 11



Syrian authorities said an explosion of unknown origin killed 11 people at a military site in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor the previous day. "The defence ministry held a funeral procession for 11 of its fighters, who were killed in an explosion at one of the Syrian Arab Army sites" in Deir Ezzor province, the official SANA news agency said. The ministry had reported on Friday an explosion at an army site in Deir Ezzor, saying it was under investigation. — AFP

BREWED MIXTURE

Methanol-tainted drink kills 48 in Nigeria



Nigeria's food and drug regulator said alcoholic concoctions tainted with methanol killed 48 people and sickened 182 in recent weeks. The deaths occurred in three districts of Nigeria's southwestern Ondo state after victims consumed the locally brewed mixture, which local media said is known as 'Monkey Tail'. The first cases were reported earlier this month and the toll has gradually been rising. — AFP

FIREFIGHTING OP

Indonesia accepts help to tackle wildfires



Malaysia will send aircraft and dozens of firefighters to help tackle blazes in Indonesia, Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said, after receiving approval from Jakarta. The blazes were among the topics discussed when Ahmad met Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, who approved Malaysia's offer. "I appreciate Mr President's willingness to accept Malaysia's assistance, including a Bombardier CL-415MP aircraft," Ahmad said. — AFP

Belarus carries out military drills near EU border

WARSAW: Belarus carried out military drills near its western border with the European Union earlier this week, the Russian-allied country's defence ministry said on social media.

The drills come amid heightened tensions between Russia and Europe over the Ukraine war. Belarus routinely carries out military drills, sometimes alongside Russia. The ministry said the exercises,

parts of which were held in regions neighbouring Nato members Poland and Lithuania, were "strictly defensive in nature". "It is aimed, among other things, at enhancing the ability of the

soldiers to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state," it said. The exercises took place from Tuesday to Friday, the ministry said. — AFP

Denmark hails 'binding' Greenland deal with Trump

DENMARK

ON Saturday hailed a 'binding' deal announced by US President Donald Trump to give Washington "permanent control" over Greenland's security and bar Russian and Chinese bases from the Arctic territory.

Since returning to the White House in January 2025, Trump has repeatedly insisted that Washington needed to control Greenland for strategic reasons, alarming Nato ally Denmark and sparking fierce pushback from the alliance.

Denmark and Greenland — an autonomous Danish territory — both hailed the deal and said they would sign it on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York next week.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said Saturday the potential signing meant "next week could be a good week".

"A long period of uncertainty will hopefully be replaced by a binding agreement that strengthens security in the Arctic and North Atlantic," the foreign minister said in a social media post.

The deal respected Denmark's "red lines" and was "important" in light of a changed security situation, he said.

While the terms are still unclear, Denmark maintains that its sovereignty remains intact.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said the agreement "recognises the sovereignty and territorial integrity



Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen (L) and Denmark's Defence Minister Jeppe Bruus after a meeting in the Foreign Policy Committee at the Danish Parliament Christiansborg in Copenhagen, Denmark. — AFP

Denmark and Greenland have both hailed the deal and said they would sign it on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York next week

of the Kingdom and the Greenlandic people's right to self-determination".

Trump meanwhile hailed it as an "Infinite Life' Agreement, there is no end!" and said Washington would immediately start building up a large military presence in the territory.

"From now on, no US adversary can EVER have a base in Greenland, have a military presence in Greenland, or make sensitive investments in Greenland, without our express written approval."

While Trump presented the deal as a major triumph, Danish commentators said he had not

really gained anything, noting that Washington was already able to ramp up its military presence on the island provided it informs Denmark and Greenland in advance, under a 1951 defence pact updated in 2004.

"Shhh. Don't tell Trump that it's the Kingdom of Denmark that has prevailed," US correspondent Jacob Heinel Jensen wrote in the Danish newspaper Berlingske on Saturday.

"Donald Trump gets out of it that he can appear as a winner. He has been a good businessman who has pushed Denmark and Greenland into something new," Marc Jacobsen, a researcher at the Royal Danish Defence College, said.

Trump has repeatedly warned of Russia and China trying to establish a foothold in Greenland as a strategic battle for supremacy in a warming Arctic unfolds, and the State Department left no doubt that they would not be allowed to do so.

"This agreement guarantees that China and Russia cannot have a base in Greenland, they cannot send troops to Greenland, and the necessary mechanisms are in place to prevent investment in sensitive sectors," a State Department official said.

Frederiksen said Friday she was "pleased that there is a prospect of a good agreement for Greenland, the Kingdom of Denmark and the United States," adding that it was "good for Nato and Europe."

Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen said the deal with the United States "strengthens" the territory's security. — AFP

GAZA SOLIDARITY

A Palestinian man walks past a mural painted on the rubble of a destroyed building and dedicated to US rapper, singer, dancer and DJ, Benjamin Haggerty, known as Macklemore, in Gaza City. Macklemore was booted from Ed Sheeran's US tour after provoking outrage by saying 'free Palestine' at one of the stadium stops this month, the US rapper said.

The artist made headlines after telling the crowd at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey that he wanted the people of Gaza and the West Bank to know they had not been forgotten. — AFP

SHORTTAKES

Luxembourg launches probe after drones suspend operations



LUC FRIEDEN
Luxembourg
Prime Minister

LUXEMBOURG: Luxembourg’s government said on Saturday an investigation is ongoing after Luxembourg Airport temporarily suspended services the previous evening following the detection of drones. The government

said in a statement that flight operations had been temporarily suspended “following the visual sighting of unidentified and unauthorised drones within the airspace over Findel”.
A total of 19 flights were diverted to other airports, it said, with airport operations resuming at approximately 1:20 am local time.
Prime Minister Luc Frieden told reporters on Saturday that his country had been “confronted with something new for Luxembourg, the presence of potentially bigger drones in the Luxembourg airspace”.
“We have observed this over the past few days, which led to the precautionary measure last night,” he said.
Luxembourg’s Interministerial Drone Assessment Unit had convened to assess the situation, and Frieden had held a meeting with a group of ministers and relevant authorities, the government said.
The government statement said that “at this stage, the information available does not allow for definitive conclusions to be drawn”.
“The competent authorities are continuing to analyse all information collected and to carry out the necessary checks in close cooperation with their international partners.”
Flag-carrier Luxair said more than 1,800 passengers were affected by the suspension, which caused the diversion of 17 inbound flights to other airports such as Brussels, Paris and Frankfurt.
“Luxair is working closely with lux-Airport, the relevant authorities and its operational partners to assist affected passengers and restore its flight schedule,” the airline said.
Operations resumed on Saturday but further disruption and knock-on effects were expected, it added. — **AFP**

BERLIN ELECTION RALLY



Christian Democratic Union (CDU) top candidate Stefan Evers poses for pictures with supporters on the day of his final election campaign rally ahead of state elections in Berlin, Germany. — **Reuters**

CNN, MS NOW denied access to White House grounds

WASHINGTON: US media outlets CNN and MS NOW said they were denied access to the White House grounds on Saturday, a day after President Donald Trump announced a ban against them for reporting what he calls “fake news.”
The news outlets both denounced the move as a violation of the US constitution and vowed to keep reporting on the US government. Both are expected to take the bans to court to regain access to the presidential mansion.
“The White House belongs to the American people and the decisions made inside are funded with our tax dollars,” MS NOW, formerly known as MSNBC, said on X.
In its own statement CNN said, “we have a right under the US Constitution to do our reporting without hindrance or interference from the government and this ban is an illegal



CNN’s broadcast booth is seen in the press area of the White House in Washington, DC. — **AFP**

assault on this fundamental right.” There was no immediate word from Politico, which was also banned. Reached for comment, the White House referred AFP to President Donald Trump’s comments announcing the bans.

The 80-year-old Republican warned that other outlets could face a similar fate but did not say which ones. “I am proud to announce that, effective immediately, I am banning Fake News CNN, MSNOW...and Politico...from the White House as a result of their constant ‘reporting’ FAKE NEWS!” Trump said on his Social platform.
Trump did not say what prompted the move but added that “media Outlets shouldn’t be able to constantly write or report FICTION and LIES when they’re covering the President of the United States.”
Both of Trump’s White House terms have seen him lash out repeatedly at media whose coverage displeases him. He has filed multiple defamation suits against news outlets, attacked the press on Truth Social and verbally assaulted several reporters, notably women, including CNN anchor Kaitlan Collins. — **AFP**

UN urges smooth transition before peacekeepers pull out

THE HEAD of United Nations peacekeepers in Lebanon said on Saturday it was critical to ensure other UN agencies and Lebanese troops could assume the tasks carried out by the force before it begins withdrawing at the end of this year.

Major General Diodato Abagnara of Italy said in southern Lebanon at a position operated by the UN peacekeeping force known as UNIFIL, which has been monitoring hostilities in southern Lebanon for nearly 50 years.
Since a new war erupted between Israel and Hezbollah in March, the force has also provided security escorts for humanitarian aid convoys to residents in a small cluster of predominantly Christian southern Lebanese towns now encircled by Israeli troops. Residents in much of the rest of southern Lebanon have been forcibly displaced by Israeli strikes and evacuation orders.
The UN Security Council has ordered UNIFIL to begin withdrawing at the end of 2026, triggering concerns over whether aid deliveries can continue and how the force can transfer its positions to Lebanese troops.
“There are other United Nations entities here in the south, and so what is very important for us (is) to conduct a very smooth transition to different entities, or for the future of a new mission,” Abagnara said.
He said UNIFIL was already working with the UN’s country team to ensure humanitarian



There are other United Nations entities in the south, and so what is very important for us (is) to conduct a very smooth transition to different entities, or for the future of a new mission

COMMANDER
MAJOR GEN
DIODATO



United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon troops stand in formation at the UNIFIL base, near Mansouri, Southern Lebanon. — **Reuters**

assistance in Israeli-occupied areas and information sharing with the Lebanese army about “sensitive areas (and) how they can manage this situation.”
Abagnara acknowledged that it could be “very difficult” to hand over some of UNIFIL’s posts to Lebanese troops given that more than half lie within areas now controlled by Israeli troops.
Diplomats worry UNIFIL’s departure will mean an end to the UN’s “eyes and ears” in southern Lebanon.
Abagnara spoke at a position overlooking Mansouri, a town where Israeli forces have been carrying out demolitions since ordering residents to leave in June, despite a ceasefire. Reuters reporters could see excavators in the town knocking down trees and multi-storey homes.

Abagnara described demolitions as “another violation” of UN Security Council resolutions on Lebanon. Israel’s military has said it is destroying Hezbollah infrastructure across southern Lebanon.
As a US-backed plan for Lebanon’s army to disarm Hezbollah and take control of southern Lebanon has stalled, a diplomatic scramble is underway to address the vacuum that will be left by UNIFIL’s withdrawal.
Lebanon wants an extension. Other countries have discussed a new multinational mission, though it remains unclear what kind of mandate it would have.
Abagnara said an extension would be “a great honour” but that without a new Security Council decision, his force would need to stop operating at the end of the year. — **Reuters**

Police move Ceuta migrants off beaches in Spanish enclave’s port area

MADRID: Police on Friday moved hundreds of migrants from the beaches of Ceuta to a temporary camp in the Spanish enclave’s port area, weeks after a record influx into the tiny territory. During the transfer, the police struggled to contain crowds of people jostling to secure one of the 1,700 places at the new tented site after weeks of living on the beaches.
More than 70,000 migrants streamed into Ceuta from Morocco on July 30 and 31 in an unprecedented, chaotic surge that left scores dead and sparked European Union infighting over the sensitive topic of immigration.
Most returned in the following hours, but thousands remained in precarious conditions in the small city, sleeping in the streets or in makeshift tents.
Deteriorating conditions have fuelled tensions with local residents, with near-daily protests calling for a return to normality.
Many accuse the government of abandoning the enclave in the middle of

Deteriorating conditions have fuelled tensions with local residents, with near-daily protests calling for a return to normality



Migrants line up to charge their mobile phones with the help of an international support network called Team Lifeline near the Trampolin beach in Ceuta, Spain. — **Reuters**

a humanitarian crisis.
Police on Friday started rounding up the migrants at 6:30 am, according to a Spanish government source in Ceuta.
By noon, all places at the new camp had been taken and the transfer

operation had wrapped up, a government source said, bringing the enclave’s total temporary accommodation capacity to 6,000 people.
Ceuta authorities estimate that 13,000 migrants have remained in the 18.5-square-kilometre territory. The central government says the figure is lower. The Spanish government went ahead with the transfer despite opposition from the conservative local authority.
“This is a key step,” digital transformation minister Oscar Lopez said on Friday, arguing that moving migrants off the beaches would help authorities process cases more quickly and ease pressure on public spaces.
Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has faced strong criticism over the handling of the crisis. He is also in dispute with Italy, which temporarily reimposed border controls.
The government has had to identify the thousands of migrants who have remained for weeks to check if they are entitled to asylum, while unaccompanied

children cannot be summarily deported.
Last week, Madrid said more than 5,300 of the migrants who remained in Ceuta after July’s influx had returned to Morocco within a month.
The migrant surge has also generated a constant churn of negative headlines and dominated the political debate for weeks.
But with no end to the crisis in sight, worry and anger are growing among Ceuta’s 84,000 residents who accuse the government of abandoning them.
The migrants are living in informal camps while the leftist government works to expand emergency accommodation for them. Isolated episodes of violence have broken out, including fights between migrants, the stoning of a military patrol and reports of sexual assault.
The row has become entwined with Spain’s broader political debate over migration ahead of next year’s election, with the conservative and far-right opposition accusing Sanchez’s government of failing to protect Spanish sovereignty in Ceuta. — **AFP**

OPINION

The circle of life, navigating the empty nest syndrome



DR HAMED AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

LAST SUNDAY, my colleague walked into the office with a big smile on his face and a plate of halwa in his hand, and before we said anything, he announced that his son got engaged. We all congratulated him, and then I asked him, “So, how does it feel?” He answered, “Mixed feelings; on one hand, I feel happy to see my son starting his own family, but at the same time it feels that we are approaching an empty nest situation.” I reassured my colleague and reminded him that it’s the natural course of life; many years ago we left our parents to start our family, and now it’s our children’s turn. His response made me reflect deeply on this universal experience. The empty nest is not truly empty; it’s simply a transformation, a shift in the nature of our relationships and our roles as parents. The physical absence of our children from our daily lives doesn’t diminish our connection; it often strengthens it by allowing both generations to relate as adults. I thought about my parents. When I left home to pursue my studies and eventually my career, they must have felt exactly what my colleague is feeling now. Yet, they never made

me feel guilty about leaving. Instead, they celebrated my independence and supported my decisions, even when those decisions took me far from home. That unconditional encouragement is perhaps the greatest gift parents can give. The empty nest, when it comes, is actually evidence of successful parenting. It means we have raised individuals confident enough to build their own lives, strong enough to face the world’s challenges, and brave enough to take on new responsibilities. It’s a paradox that the moment we’ve been preparing them for since birth — their independence — is the one that tugs most at our hearts. But here’s what I’ve observed from watching my own parents and grandparents navigate this phase: life doesn’t end; it simply reshapes. The daily routines change, but the love remains constant. And often, relationships with adult children can become deeper and more meaningful. When they visit, it’s by choice, not obligation. When they call, they have something to share, not just a question about homework or permission to go somewhere. I also encouraged my colleague to consider

As our children grow old and start their own families, we need to rediscover ourselves beyond our role as parents

this transition as an opportunity, not a loss. This is the time to rediscover yourself as a person beyond your role as a parent. It’s the chance to invest in your marriage, pursue hobbies you’ve postponed, travel to places you’ve always dreamed of, or dedicate more time to your profession. The empty nest can be filled with new adventures, personal growth, and renewed focus on the partnership that created the family in the first place. Moreover, this phase often brings unexpected joys, the pride of watching your son or daughter build something of their own, the privilege of becoming a grandparent someday, and the comfort of knowing that despite the distance, your influence lives on in the values and character you’ve instilled. As I finished speaking, my colleague’s expression softened. He understood that yes, life is changing, but not ending. His son’s engagement isn’t a departure from family; it’s an expansion of it. The halwa he brought to share that morning symbolised exactly that sweetness that multiplies when shared with others. In my opinion, the empty nest is really just another chapter in the beautiful circle of life.

COSTLY OVERHAUL THREATENS CAIRO KIOSKS

Cairo’s omnipresent street kiosks, where commuters grab cigarettes, children buy sweets, and residents stop for cold drinks or phone credit, are set for a makeover that some fear could price many small operators out of business. Authorities in the Egyptian capital last week launched a scheme to standardise thousands of licensed kiosks, giving existing operators three months to adopt a unified design costing between 50,000 and 60,000 Egyptian pounds (\$1,000-\$1,200), a hefty sum for many small business owners. The overhaul is the latest in a series of projects reshaping Cairo’s urban landscape, which critics say have at times come at the expense of the city’s architectural heritage and historic character. Beneath a clutter of snack packets and soft-drink adverts in Cairo’s leafy Heliopolis district, shopkeeper Moamen Hassan topped up a customer’s phone credit as he voiced support for the plan but concern over the price tag. “We definitely want the city to look better,” the 27-year-old said. “But many kiosk owners in poorer areas won’t be able to afford the cost. Some will have no choice but to close.” Cairo Governor Ibrahim Saber described the scheme as an effort to improve the city’s appearance and keep pavements clear, and a prototype unveiled downtown offers a glimpse of that vision. With its cream-coloured exterior, gold lettering and neatly arranged shelves, it stands in stark contrast to the colourfully chaotic kiosks that line Cairo’s streets, their metal frames crowned with branded awnings and crammed with everyday goods. Known locally as the koshk, the compact structures have been part of Cairo’s streetscape for generations, tucked between ageing apartment blocks, transport hubs and busy intersections all across the sprawling city. Often among the first businesses to open each morning and the last to close at night, many have become neighbourhood landmarks. “I pass by the kiosk almost every day,” 19-year-old university student Sabrine Ahmed said. “It makes life easier.” Under the new scheme, kiosks will be fitted with QR codes allowing the public and authorities to access information including licence details and payment records. The standardised structures, measuring either six or nine metres square, will also include fixtures like electricity meters and fire extinguishers. The overhaul comes as many Egyptians are still struggling with the fallout from years of sharp currency devaluations and soaring prices. — AFP

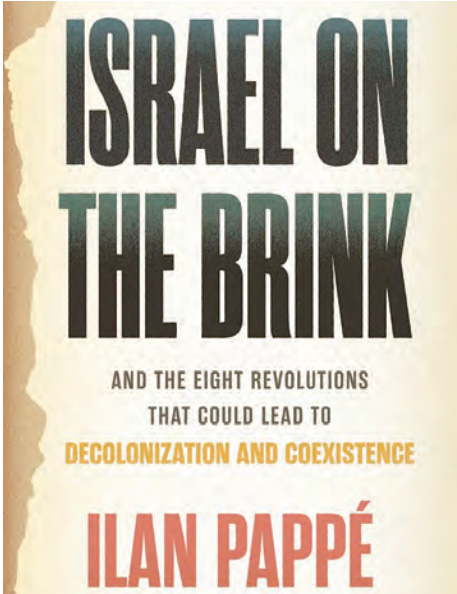
Israel on the brink: A divided society

ILAN PAPPÉ, an Israeli Jewish historian, argues in his latest book, ‘Israel on the Brink’, that Israel has reached a moment of profound political and moral danger. He does not call for the disappearance of Jewish people or Palestinians, nor for the destruction of Israeli society through violence. Rather, he argues that the State created by Zionism is unsustainable. His book describes deepening divisions within Israeli society. The most significant are between secular Zionists, represented by parties such as Likud and the National Unity Party, and religious-nationalist Zionists, including Religious Zionism and Jewish Power, led by Itamar Ben-Gvir. These groups disagree over religion, State authority and the role of the judiciary. Nonetheless, they share a commitment to illegal settlements and territorial expansion. This hasn’t produced lasting security. Instead, it has intensified conflicts and isolated Israel on the world stage with growing international hostility. The relationship between secular and religious-nationalist Zionists is toxic. Some ultra-Orthodox religious-nationalist leaders have denounced secular Jews in language just as extreme as their rhetoric towards Arabs. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the former spiritual leader of the extremist Shas Party, made statements calling for the deaths of leaders of secular parties and, in other sermons, used profoundly dehumanising language towards Arabs by referring to them as ‘snakes’ and ‘ants.’ The glue keeping these opposing factions in power is their support for a Greater Israel and a desire to ethnically cleanse the whole of Palestine. It is difficult to see how groups with such profound internal hostility could ever live harmoniously within an expanded State. Most Israelis have become indoctrinated to believe that security can be achieved only through



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author



military superiority, settlement expansion and permanent control over Palestinians. But an increasing number are leaving, having recognised that Israel cannot maintain its present system indefinitely. Pappé points to declining confidence in the two-state solution. Polling has suggested that only about 34 per cent of Israelis support an independent Palestinian State. Among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, recent surveys indicate that only around 33 per cent of Palestinians now believe a two-state solution is a realistic possibility. Settlements have expanded across the West Bank, while Palestinian communities have faced demolitions, displacement and settler violence. Roads, military zones, checkpoints and legal restrictions have fragmented Palestinian territory. The conditions required for a viable and sovereign Palestinian State no longer apply. Pappé describes Israel as a colonial project to draw attention to this unequal structure of power. He argues that Zionism sought to establish and preserve a Jewish state in a land inhabited by a large Palestinian majority. He does not deny Jewish suffering nor the reality

of antisemitism. His argument is that Jewish insecurity cannot justify the permanent subordination of the indigenous Palestinians. Pappé describes Israel’s growing international isolation. He believes that Israel is gradually losing legitimacy and risks becoming a pariah state if it continues on its present path. Western governments have historically declared support for peace while allowing occupation, settlement expansion and annexationist policies to continue. Palestinian leaders have often been offered proposals described as opportunities for statehood. Yet most would have left Palestinians with fragmented territory, limited sovereignty and no satisfactory resolution of the questions of refugees, borders and security. If extremist Zionist forces continue to reject Palestinian political rights and rely on military force and territorial expansion, the consequences for Israelis will be catastrophic. Political collapse accompanied by violence could produce a human tragedy on an enormous scale. Pappé advocates a peaceful transformation into one democratic State in which Muslims, Jews, Christians and others live under the same laws and participate equally in political life. He argues that Jewish security cannot be achieved through permanent domination over Palestinians. According to Pappé, Israel faces a choice between transformation and catastrophe. Following the genocide in Gaza, I doubt that a two-state solution remains politically viable. The question is how to establish one State with equal rights, security and political representation for everyone living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Israel’s enemies may now reject peace and instead seek revenge.

Asylum-seekers... a very western world problem



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

LET'S LOOK at how Europe is managing the social, political, and economic repercussions of the current asylum-seeker crisis facing the Western world.

Much of Europe has lost patience with the flood of asylum-seekers, with Poland's government exercising the full force of its immigration laws in sending those who entered via their borders back immediately. Their borders have been upgraded with steel barriers since the killing of a border guard, stabbed by a migrant, in 2024. This stricter policy has resulted in only 236 attempted crossings during the last 6 months, compared with almost 16,000 during the corresponding period last year, according to Polish Interior Ministry statistics.

In Greece, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis recently announced stricter measures aimed at curbing illegal immigration, concentrating on radically swift deportation procedures and a better-resourced border force to counter the thousands of boat arrivals from North Africa to Greece's islands and mainland, noting that the 'phenomenon' has grown far beyond charity and goodwill. Mitsotakis has delivered an ultimatum to previously unhelpful Libyan and Turkish officials, seeking their assistance in stopping people smugglers, and, without a positive response, will implement 'zero' illegal immigration protocols.

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre also recently announced they were moving towards controlled immigration, adding

that they will retain their 'compassionate responsibility towards Ukrainian arrivals and family reunifications.' He said they would ensure current policies on undocumented immigration, however, remain in full force, and that criminal deportations remain non-negotiable.

Sweden's coalition government, under Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, has implemented a significant package of legislative reforms this year, aimed at drastically reducing asylum applications and residency pathways, moving away from a human-rights-dominated policy to one with greater emphasis on individual immigrant responsibility, saying the rights-based model was ineffective and impractical.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni came to power four years ago on a nationalist, some would say Neo-Fascist platform, based on increased migration control, and currently faces the prospect of a 2027 election based on 'immigrational homogenisation,' an extremist challenge that is gaining traction. Having previously focused on deportations of Illegals 'in situ,' pressure is now coming from the electorate for her to go further. This could become the next Italian political football, in an election that could feature some 'dirty' politics!

France now has a significant African immigrant population, and in January this year, following a public outcry from the electorate, a new law to control immigration and improve social integration was proposed by Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who said it was both "revolutionary and balanced," with Prime

Much of Europe has lost patience with the flood of asylum-seekers, with Poland's government exercising the full force of its immigration laws in sending those who entered via their borders back immediately

Minister Emanuel Macron's agreement on tougher border controls, harsher expulsion measures, and more transparent integration processes. However, the opposition far-right strongly criticised any 'easing of integration,' and the far-left opposed the 'repressive tone' of the bill. Of the 86 articles drafted, a watered-down version of 51 articles was passed, in a very Gallic expression of 'democratie.' France is home, currently, to 160,000 asylum-seekers, not counting those en route to the UK, so it's no wonder the 70 million citizens are getting 'furieux,' and 'en colere.'

However, the French are not genuinely concerned, are they? Don't they simply take their illegals to the English Channel beaches and put them on 50-foot-long rubber dinghies, and escort them to England's shores, then wash their hands of them? This, despite being paid £675 million by the UK Government, to 'tackle the problem.'

And what does the UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham say? That "immigration must fall," and "we will stop people smugglers." Oh, that's going so well. On Sunday, September 6, the government's own website identified 8 migrant vessels landing 625 undocumented asylum-seekers in a 24-hour period.

So, that's 625 more people who can get £49-18 per week; free accommodation in a house, flat, or hotel; NHS healthcare, dentistry, prescriptions, and eye care; travel costs; schooling and free meals (age 5-17). Do your sums on that and consider also that there were 93,525 asylum-seekers living in the UK at the end of March 2026, 20,885 of those in hotels.

Study suggests Venus may have swallowed its moon

STEVE GORMAN

A California-based astrophysicist presented a new theory to explain why Venus, the planet most like Earth in size, mass and structure, lacks its own moon. Call it a case of celestial cannibalism.

The extremely slow speed at which Venus rotates on its axis would have doomed any natural satellite that may once have orbited that planet to gradually spiral closer to its parent and ultimately be consumed in a cataclysmic smash-up.

So goes the theory offered by scientists at the University of California, Riverside, and published on Monday in The Astrophysical Journal, marking a departure from past explanations for why Venus, the second planet from the Sun, is without a lunar companion.

"If it had a moon, and it likely did at some point, it could not have kept it," astrophysicist Stephen Krane, lead author of the study, said on Monday. "That moon would have crashed down on the planet in a relatively short time scale."

Krane said data from computer models based on planetary physics and simulating the gravitational mechanics of hypothetical Venusian moons of various sizes showed them all meeting the same fate - sooner or later collapsing into their mother planet.

Such a presumed moon-gobbling event likely occurred within the first billion years in the history of Venus, which, like the rest of the solar system, dates back about 4.5 billion years, Krane said.

Scientists previously theorised that Venus, known as Earth's "twin," either never acquired its own moon to begin with, or possibly had a moon that was obliterated in the massive impact from another celestial object.

The UC Riverside study, focusing on Earth-Moon dynamics, found that planetary rotational speed was the key factor.

In contrast to Venus, which takes 243 Earth days to complete a single rotation - slightly longer than its orbit around the Sun - Earth spins on its axis every 24 hours, more than 200 times more rapidly than Venus, Krane said.

The transfer of energy from Earth's faster rotation is gradually pushing our moon farther away, causing it to recede from Earth at the rate of 4 centimetres a year - precisely measured by mirrors left on the lunar surface in 1969 by Apollo 11's astronauts.

Venus, the third brightest object in the night sky after the Sun and Moon, looms large as a point of study for scientists seeking to learn more about Earth's history and its future.

Similar in its rocky structure but slightly smaller than Earth, Venus is enveloped in a thick, toxic atmosphere that has created a runaway greenhouse effect, scorching its surface at temperatures as high as 880 degrees Fahrenheit, hot enough to melt lead. — Reuters

A rising star of Kenya channels Gen-Z anger

A 44-year-old senator, Edwin Sifuna, has emerged as a rising challenger to Kenya's President William Ruto ahead of next year's election as he channels anger over political violence and corruption.

The east African country goes to the polls in August 2027 and a clear candidate has yet to emerge from a busy opposition playing field.

Many Kenyans are furious at the entrenched corruption under Ruto and the extreme violence used against any hint of protest, including more than 100 deaths and dozens of abductions blamed on security forces in the last two years.

Sifuna earned goodwill among Kenya's young "Gen-Z" voters when he actively sought to stop police violence during the biggest protests in June 2024. Now, the former lawyer is drawing huge crowds as he tours the country, including in the capital Nairobi on a recent Sunday, though he has yet to officially declare a run for the presidency.

So far, his message has been almost entirely focused on criticising Ruto, whom he accuses of overseeing a culture of "impunity".

"(Ruto) doesn't believe in the rule of law. He doesn't believe in democracy. He doesn't believe in freedom," Sifuna said in an interview at his Nairobi office.

Sifuna's popularity has made him a target. Rallies have been violently disrupted by gangs of young thugs - a common tactic used by all sides of the political spectrum in Kenya.

"It has been quite amazing to see the people showing up to our meetings, despite all the threats, all the intimidation," Sifuna said.

"This spectre of attacking people's motorcades, killing and maiming people, is the lowest we have sunk in our politics," he added.

Many remain sceptical about Sifuna's chances, however, saying he is too young and inexperienced and lacks any defined policies.

"He has not come out as a compelling presidential candidate who means business," political

Sifuna's popularity has made him a target. Rallies have been violently disrupted by gangs of young thugs — a common tactic used by all sides of the political spectrum in Kenya



Nairobi Senator and opposition figure from the Linda Mwananchi (Protect Citizens) coalition Edwin Sifuna (C) reacts while holding a Kenyan flag from the top of a car during an opposition road rally in Nairobi. — AFP

analyst Javas Bigambo said, noting that he has failed to stake out ground on any major political talking point.

He also said Sifuna had one of the "shortest" profiles in Kenyan politics, having only served a single term as senator. But he previously served as the secretary-general of ODM, Kenya's longest-serving opposition party, and some believe he could rally similar support to late leader Raila Odinga, a huge figure in Kenyan politics.

For a man whose name is on the lips of much of Kenyan society, Sifuna can seem uncomfortable with the limelight.

He admitted to feeling awkward while having his photo taken by AFP — the moment only relieved when a group of waiters gathered for a nearby event spotted him and started shouting "Sisi ndio Sifuna" ("We are Sifuna").

"I'll be honest with you, my life has changed dramatically," he said. "(But) if you allow fear to paralyse you, you will never do anything."

He dodged questions about his policies, saying he was working with experts to build a manifesto.

"We accept there are people who know things better than us, and they

need to be given the opportunity to help you run a government," he said.

And he dismissed questions about his age, pointing out he has served as a senator for longer than Barack Obama did before he was president: "How is it a criticism to be young?"

Sifuna's eager young team say they are receiving small donations from ordinary citizens - almost unheard of in Kenyan politics. His opponents say the real money is coming from former president Uhuru Kenyatta, an ally-turned-rival of Ruto.

Sifuna denies he is anyone's puppet and says the 2024 protests "fundamentally changed" Kenyan politics as young people mobilised around economic and political issues, rather than ethnic divides and the power of old money.

At a recent rally, he drew huge crowds in Nairobi, including Joshua Kebwago, 32, who said Sifuna represented a break in establishment politics. "He's here to uplift the poor, reduce taxes and the cost of living," he said. "We want something better."

Kenya's median age is just 20, and Sifuna admits he is riding a wave that is highly volatile: "There is this new energy that everybody is aware of, but is also untested," he said. — AFP

SPORTS

PREMIER LEAGUE



Brighton and Hove Albion's Pascal Gross celebrates scoring their first goal with Luka Vuskovic. — Reuters

ARSENAL THRASHED BY BRIGHTON, SORRY SPURS LOSE AGAIN

LONDON: Arsenal's perfect start to their Premier League title defence came off the rails in a 3-0 trouncing by Brighton, while Tottenham remain winless after a 3-2 defeat to Aston Villa.

Mikel Arteta's men arrived on the south coast in formidable form having won all seven games in all competitions this season. But it was Brighton's fine start to the campaign that was maintained as goals from Pascal Gross, Charalampos Kostoulas and Chema Andres breached the Gunners' normally impenetrable defence.

It is the third consecutive season that the Premier League champions have lost at the Amex after Liverpool and Manchester City in the past two years.

Brighton were full of confidence after becoming the first side in 50 years to come from 2-0 down to beat Manchester United at Old Trafford in the League Cup in midweek.

Fabian Hurrzeler's side went at Arsenal from the start but had to wait until 31 minutes for the opener when Gross crashed a shot in off the inside of the post.

After four games without a goal, an end to Spurs' drought came too late as they were already 3-0 down before two consolation strikes from Conor Gallagher and Jan Paul van Hecke.

Arsenal were punished for allowing too much space on the edge of their area again just before half-time when Kostoulas this time picked his spot to beat David Raya.

Rather than a rousing second-half response, the visitors fell further behind on the hour mark as Andres was afforded the space to head in Gross's corner inside the six-yard box for Brighton's 16th goal in five league games this season.

The defeat is Arsenal's heaviest in any competition since April 2023.

SPURS 'TOO FRAGILE'

It was also another day to forget for their north London rivals as Tottenham will have to stew over a three-week international break in the relegation zone.

After four games without a goal, an end to Spurs' drought came too late as they were already 3-0 down before two consolation strikes from Conor Gallagher and Jan Paul van Hecke.

Villa were indebted to goalkeeper Zion Suzuki for a string of saves to keep them in the game before Johan Manzambi slotted the visitors ahead at the end of the first half.

Nicolas Jackson exposed some woeful Spurs defending to add a second before a brilliant strike from Emi Buendia secured Villa's first league win of the season.

Newcastle ended newly-promoted Hull's unbeaten start with two goals inside the first seven minutes through Joe Willock and Lewis Hall for a 2-1 win. Konstantinos Tzolakis saved Yoane Wissa's penalty before half-time to keep Hull alive and they produced a nervy finish at St James' Park when Mohamed-Ali Cho pulled a goal back.

Everton climbed up to fifth after extending their unbeaten start with a 1-0 win over 10-man Ipswich. Thierno Barry scored the only goal and had another ruled out by VAR before Abdul Fatawu saw a second yellow card for diving. — AFP

JABER RETURNS TO REVIVE AIR FORCE FORTUNES

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

RASHEED JABER has been handed the task of restoring Air Force Club's (Al Quwa Al Jawiya) winning form after the Iraqi side turned to their title-winning Omani coach following a difficult start to their domestic and continental campaigns.

The club announced his appointment as head coach, replacing Tunisia's Fathi Jebal and reuniting Jaber with the team he guided to the Iraq Stars League title last season.

His return comes with the defending champions struggling to build momentum. Air Force collected seven points from their opening seven league matches, recording one victory, four draws and two defeats. That return has placed an early emphasis on recovery for a side accustomed to challenging for honours.

Their continental campaign also began with disappointment. Air Force lost 1-0 away to Uzbekistan's Neftchi Fergana in the AFC Champions League Elite on September 14, with Zoran Marusic scoring the decisive goal in the 83rd minute. The Iraqi side managed only one shot on target, underlining the attacking improvement required alongside greater consistency in the league.

Jaber's previous success gives the appointment particular significance. Having delivered the league crown, he returns with first-hand knowledge of the club's expectations and the demands of Iraqi football.

The immediate challenge will be to translate that familiarity into results while assessing a squad whose early performances have fallen short of expectations.

The Omani coach also brings experience



Rasheed Jaber has been handed the task of restoring Iraq's Air Force Club's winning form.

of continental success. In 2022, he guided Seeb to the AFC Cup title with a 3-0 victory over Kuala Lumpur City in Malaysia, making them the first Omani club to win an Asian title. That achievement remains a major landmark in his coaching career.

PLAYER RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is expected to feature prominently in his latest assignment. Reports preceding his appointment indicated that Jaber sought control over technical decisions and a leading role in the winter transfer window, alongside responsibility for shaping the squad for next season.

According to media reports, the discussions included plans to recruit five

players and release five foreign players currently in the squad. The newspapers also reported that Jaber wanted to select domestic recruits himself, with the changes guided by his assessment of the team's needs.

Those reported plans point towards changes beyond the coaching appointment. Before the winter window, however, Jaber will need to improve results with the players already available, rebuild confidence and establish greater cohesion across a demanding domestic and Asian schedule.

He is expected to begin work upon arriving in Baghdad, with his assessment of the squad set to determine the priorities for the next phase of Air Force's season.

Oman U17s begin final camp ahead of WAFF tourney

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Oman's national under-17 football team has entered a final domestic training camp in Muscat as preparations intensify for the West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) U17 Championship, which will take place in Aqaba, Jordan, from September 26 to October 5.

The camp, which began on Saturday and will continue until September 24, represents the final stage of preparations before the young Red Warriors travel to Jordan for the regional competition.

Oman were drawn in Group B alongside hosts Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, while Group A features Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. The top two teams from each group will progress to the semifinals. Oman will open their campaign against Jordan on September 27 before facing the UAE on September 29, with both matches scheduled for 7 pm Oman time at Aqaba Stadium.

National head coach Ahmed bin Salem Bait Said has called up 23 players for the current camp as he looks to put the finishing touches on the squad ahead of the tournament.

The selected players are



Young Red Warriors go through their training drills during the ongoing camp in Muscat, which runs until September 24.

Ahmed al Mukhaini, Nahidh Bait Jameel, Mohammed al Hinai, Abdullah al Farsi, Abdullah al Zaabi, Ziyad al Maamari, Bashar al Shamsi, Mohammed al Balushi, Hassan al Balushi, Nayer Bait Ardeen, Saif al Jabri, Jassim al Dawood, Mohammed al Mahrouqi,

Jihad al Shukaili, Sultan al Balushi, Abdulrahman al Hashmi, Abdullah Bait Ali Issa, Nader al Noobi, Mohammed al Maqbali, Al Mulhim al Sulaimi, Abdulrahim al Tuwairshi, Mohammed al Omrani and Said Bait Rajab.

The technical staff are

expected to place greater emphasis during the coming days on physical conditioning, tactical organisation and technical work, while also strengthening understanding and cohesion between the players. The camp will also allow Bait Said and his coaching staff to fine-tune tactical plans and determine the combinations they intend to use in Jordan, with competition for places expected to remain high until the squad departs for the championship.

Oman have followed an extensive preparation programme in the year, featuring several domestic camps and friendly matches. In August, the team held a camp in Muscat from August 6 to 17 and played two friendlies against Bahrain, losing the first 2-1 before responding with a 2-0 victory in the second.

The WAFF Championship will also serve as an important competitive test ahead of Oman's main continental assignment later in the year. The Sultanate of Oman will host Group G of the AFC U17 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2027 Qualifiers in Salalah from November 8 to 20, with Oman drawn alongside Kuwait, Bahrain, Lebanon and Brunei Darussalam.

CHALLENGES IN SUSTAINING YOUTH PLAYERS' TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

IDENTIFYING a talented young footballer is only the beginning of the development process. The greater challenge for clubs, academies and national teams is ensuring that the player continues to improve, maintains a stable technical level and eventually develops into a consistent performer at senior level.

For youth football, talent alone is no longer enough. Coaches and technical departments increasingly need a structured and scientific approach that considers a player's technical ability, tactical understanding, physical development, psychological readiness and long-term potential. The absence of common evaluation standards, continuity between age groups, sufficient competitive matches and qualified youth coaches can all affect the progress of talented players, according to coaches with experience in youth football.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT
Experienced national youth coach Khalid al Lahouri believes that one of the key challenges is the lack of unified criteria for assessing young players. "Each coach looks at different aspects of the player," Al Lahori told Oman Observer. "One coach may focus on receiving the ball, shooting, heading and ball control, while another may give greater importance to physical fitness. Others may look at speed, movement and how quickly a player makes decisions."

He stressed that there is a need for a more comprehensive approach rather than allowing the development of a young player to depend entirely on the philosophy of an individual coach.

MORE THAN TECHNICAL SKILLS
The modern youth player needs to be assessed from several dimensions. Khalifa al Shibli, Technical Director of Football at Al Madam Club in the UAE, said selection should no longer be based simply on personal impressions or a player's natural talent. He highlighted four major areas including: football intelligence and tactical understanding, technical ability, physical characteristics and psychological and professional behaviour.

A young player must be able to read the game, make decisions under pressure and understand his responsibilities

during attacking, defensive and transition phases. Technically, ball control at speed, passing accuracy with both feet and the ability to execute skills under pressure are essential. Physical assessment should also look beyond a player's current strength.

"During adolescence, players go through rapid changes in height and weight, which can temporarily affect coordination and balance," Al Shibli explained. "Therefore, assessment should consider the player's potential for future development rather than focusing only on his current physical strength."

Mental qualities are equally important. Discipline, willingness to learn, self-improvement, the ability to deal with pressure and the capacity to recover mentally after mistakes are all part of the development process.

TALENTED PLAYERS LOSE CONSISTENCY
Al Lahouri pointed to several reasons why promising players sometimes fail to maintain their level. One of them is the absence of continuity. Young players may move between different coaches and teams without a consistent development plan, while some junior and amateur teams may not have sufficiently qualified coaches with a strong foundation in youth development.

"The player needs continuity in his development," he said. "There has to be a clear pathway from one age group to another, with coaches who understand the fundamentals of developing young players."

The number of competitive matches available to youth players is another concern. Al Lahouri noted that some young players may participate in only seven or eight league matches before the decisive stages, with the total number increasing only if their team progresses to the final rounds.

For a player at this stage of development, he believes the number of competitive matches should be significantly higher. "The player at this age needs to play more than 50 or 60 matches during the season to gain the required experience," he said, stressing that training alone cannot replace the learning gained through actual matches.

Al Shibli also identified biological changes, physical and mental exhaustion, academic commitments and psychological pressure as factors that can contribute to fluctuations in performance. He called for long-term athlete development programmes in which training



HASSAN
AL FARSI
Youth football coach



KHALID
AL LAHOURI
National youth coach



KHALIFA
AL MAQBALI
Technical Director of Football at Al Madam Club in the UAE



KHAMIS
MOHAMMED
Youth football coach

loads are progressively adjusted according to the player's age and stage of development.

DANGER OF EARLY PROMOTION
Another challenge comes when talented youngsters are promoted too quickly to senior football. Early exposure to first-team football can provide valuable experience, but it can also create psychological challenges. A young player who performs exceptionally well may begin to believe that he has already reached a high level, while another who struggles may lose confidence after feeling that he has failed to meet expectations. Al Lahouri believes clubs must carefully manage the transition. The objective should not simply be to place a talented youngster in the first team, but to ensure that the player is psychologically and technically prepared for the demands of senior football.

Al Shibli similarly stressed the importance of creating an environment where development, rather than immediate results, remains the priority. "Focusing on the learning process rather than the result" should be central to youth development, he said, with individual progress and teamwork given greater importance during the early stages.

QUALIFIED COACHES
The development pathway must also extend beyond clubs. Al Lahouri believes junior teams should be managed by qualified coaches, while academies and school football programmes should benefit from the experience of former players and coaches who understand the technical and developmental requirements of the game. The daily lifestyle of young players must also be considered. Many are balancing school commitments with training, sometimes travelling considerable distances to reach training grounds.

A player may finish school in the afternoon and shortly afterwards have to travel to a training session. Poor scheduling, long journeys and excessive workloads can eventually affect both physical readiness and technical performance.

For Hassan al Farsi, a football coach experienced in youth teams, maintaining performance requires regular training, appropriate nutrition and sleep, psychological support and continuous feedback from coaches. He stressed that technical decline can also be linked to irregular training, inadequate programmes, injuries, limited match experience and

inconsistent coaching approaches.

EVALUATION SYSTEM
The coaches agree that clubs need clearer and more objective methods of evaluating young players. Al Shibli proposed comprehensive evaluation cards based on key performance indicators covering four principal areas: technical, tactical, physical and psychological/behavioural performance.

Video recording and match analysis can also provide a more accurate picture of a player's ability than occasional observation from the touchline. He further recommended that promotion decisions should not rest with one coach alone. Technical directors, age-group coaches and performance analysts can work collectively to provide a broader assessment.

Khamis Mohammed, another coach with experience in football development, also stressed that consistency should be one of the most important criteria. "Player selection should not rely solely on raw talent or a single highlight from one match," Khamis said. "It must be based on a comprehensive framework of technical, physical, mental and behavioural standards."

He added that a player who consistently performs and improves over time may be better prepared for senior football than one whose performances fluctuate despite possessing considerable natural talent.

LONG-TERM PATHWAY
Ultimately, maintaining a talented player's technical level is not the responsibility of the player or coach alone. It requires an integrated system involving clubs, academies, schools, coaches, technical directors, performance staff and the players themselves. The pathway should begin with accurate identification, continue through structured training and regular competition, and be supported by continuous assessment as the player moves between age groups. As Al Farsi underlined, youth development is about more than producing a successful player for a particular age category. The objective is to develop footballers who can sustain their performance, adapt to increasing demands and eventually compete consistently at the highest level. The real measure of a successful youth system, therefore, is not how many talented players it discovers, but how many of those players it can develop, protect and consistently progress into senior football.

OPENINGSTAGE



The champions will receive RO 5,000, the league shield and 25 gold medals.

NINE CLUBS COMPETE FOR OMAN WOMEN’S FUTSAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

The 2026-27 Oman Women’s Futsal League gets under way on Sunday with two Group One fixtures at the auxiliary hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Al Shabab face Salalah at 4 pm in the season opener before Al Amerat take on Qurayat at 7 pm. Group Two begins at the same venue on Monday, when Fanja meet Masirah at 4 pm and Saham play Al Bashayer at 7 pm.

Nine clubs are taking part in the competition, organised by the Oman Football Association (OFA). Group One comprises Al Shabab, Salalah, Al Amerat, Qurayat and Sohar, while Group Two features Fanja, Al Bashayer, Masirah and Saham.

The opening stage will be contested as a single round-robin within each group. The top three sides from Group One and the leading two from Group Two will advance to the five-team championship stage. The qualifiers will then compete in a double round-robin, with each club playing its rivals twice. The team finishing with the highest points total will be crowned league champion.

The four clubs that do not qualify will enter classification play-offs to determine positions six to nine. The fourth-placed team in Group One will meet the third-placed side in Group Two for sixth and seventh places, while Group Two’s fourth-placed team will face the fifth-placed side from Group One to decide eighth and ninth. A draw at the end of regulation time will be settled directly by a penalty shoot-out. Teams receive three points for a win and one for a draw. If clubs finish level, the regulations apply head-to-head points, head-to-head goal difference and goals scored, followed by overall goal difference and total goals. Fair-play records are considered next, with the lower disciplinary-points total taking precedence, before lots are drawn if the tie remains unresolved.

MEDALS AND PRIZE MONEY

The champions will receive RO 5,000, the league shield and 25 gold medals, while the runners-up will collect RO 3,000 and 25 silver medals. The third-placed team will receive RO 2,000 and 25 bronze medals.

Hajar al Muzaini, OFA board member and Chairwoman of the Women’s Committee, said domestic competitions provide a sustained competitive environment for identifying talent and developing players technically, physically and mentally. She added that the league also gives national-team staff an important platform to monitor and assess players across age groups.



Abdullah al Rawahi and co-driver Atta al Hamoud led all six stages of the rally by a comfortable margin, thanks to their fault-less performance.

Al Rawahi tops fifth round of Jordan National Rally

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
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OMANI rally star Abdullah al Rawahi claimed the honours in the fifth round of the 2026 Jordan National Rally held at the Dead Sea region on Friday.

Al Rawahi alongside his Jordanian co-driver Atta al Hamoud in Škoda Fabia R5 retained their trophy they won last year.

Jordanian driver Shaker Juwaihnan and his compatriot co-driver Mustafa Juma, driving a Mitsubishi Evo 10, came in second place. Jordanian driver Sheikh Bader al Fayez and his Lebanese co-driver Joseph Matar, also driving a Skoda Fabia RS, finished third.

The rally was organised by the Jordan Motorsport Federation and sponsored by Zain Jordan. The total rally distance was 266.98 km, including 86.74 km of special stages on a gravel track, divided into six stages: Panorama 1 & 2, Suweima 1 & 2, and Shuna 1 & 2. Nineteen drivers from Jordan, Oman, Palestine and Lebanon took part in the rally.

Al Rawahi led all six stages of the rally by a comfortable margin thanks to his fault-less performance in the Dead Sea region, where temperatures were extremely high due to the nature of the terrain at the Dead Sea — the lowest point on Earth.

Abdullah, who drove a Škoda Fabia R5, said after the rally: “The fifth round of the rally was difficult for everyone due to the high temperatures and that the rally was somewhat long.”

He added that his primary goal and focus were to improve the car’s performance, test

the car on the same stages that hosted the Jordan International Rally at different speeds, and minimise the mistakes he made in this year’s international rally.

He said: “Thanks to God for today’s victory — our second in a row. I thank everyone here for their cooperation in making the rally a success, and I thank our supporters for standing behind us in every event. We are now working on our plans for upcoming events and hope to compete in the Cyprus International Rally next month.”

THROUGH THE STAGES

The first stage (Panorama 1), covering 16.95 km, saw Abdullah al Rawahi and Atta al Hamoud take the lead in a Skoda Fabia RS with a time of 11:39.0 minutes.

Shaker Juwaihnan and co-driver Mustafa Juma, driving a Mitsubishi Evo 10, finished second in 12:31.0. Jordan’s Sheikh Bader al Fayez and his Lebanese co-driver Joseph Matar, also driving a Skoda Fabia RS, came in third (12:52.4).

In the second stage (Suwayma 1 — 11.21 km), Al Rawahi and Al Hamoud continued to lead, after completing the stage in 5:48.9 minutes. Sheikh Badr and Joseph Matar advanced to second place in 6:22.0, while Shaker Juwaihnan and Mustafa Juma dropped to third place with a time of 6:24.2 minutes.

In the third stage (Al Shuna 1 — 15.3 km), Al Rawahi and Al Hamoud maintained their lead, topping the stage in 13:20.6 minutes.

Shaker Juhaian and Mustafa Juma advanced to second place in 14:13.9 minutes, while Sheikh Bader and Joseph Matar came in third with a time of 14:27.3 minutes.

Stage Four (Panorama 2 — 16.95 km),

saw Abdullah and Atta maintain their lead in 11:37.1 minutes. Shaker Juwaihnan and Mustafa Juma held onto second in 12:33.5 minutes. Sheikh Bader and Matar remained in third place with a time of 13:09.8 minutes.

In the fifth stage (Suwayma 2 — 11.21 km), Abdullah and Atta maintained their lead in the rally, achieving a time of 5:48.7 minutes.

Sheikh Bader and Matar advanced to second in 6:39.4 minutes, while Issa Abu Jammous and Dawood Abu Jammous moved into third place with a time of 6:57.8 minutes.

In the final sixth stage (Al Shuna 2 — 15.3 km), Al Rawahi and Al Hamoud continued their form to top in 13.05.2 minutes.

Shaker Juwaihnan and Mustafa Juma moved up to second in 14:23.4 minutes, while Sheikh Bader and his Joseph Matar dropped to third place with a time of 14:26.4 minutes.

Jordanian driver Farah Zakaria and her Lebanese navigator Doline Chlink won the Women’s Cup at the rally.

Jordan Rally overall standings (fifth round)
(Read as position, driver/co-driver, car, timing. Jordan otherwise specified)

1. Abdullah al Rawahi (OMA)/Atta al Hamoud (Jordan) Skoda Fabia RS 1:01:19.5
2. Shaker Juwaihnan/Mustafa Juma Mitsubishi Evo 1:07:22.5
3. Sheikh Bader al Fayez/ Joseph Matar (LEB) Skoda Fabia RS 1:07:57.3
4. Mohammad al Shurafa/ Samer Sfeir (LEB) Mitsubishi Evo 9 1:10:09.3
5. Sagr Abu Jammous/Fayez al Qammaz Mitsubishi Evo 9 1:14:09.9
6. Issa Abu Jammous/ Daoud Abu Jammous Mitsubishi Evo 10 1:14:33.8
7. Farah Zakaria/Doline Chlink (LEB) Can-Am Maverick 1:20:53.1.

Yalla Shabab Giants prevail in final to retain Oman D50 title

MUSCAT: The renewed edition of the Oman Cricket-owned Oman D50 concluded in thrilling fashion, with Yalla Shabab Giants successfully defending their title after defeating Royal Oman Stallions by 36 runs in the final at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground.

The 18-day tournament featured six of Oman’s leading Premier Division sides competing in a single round-robin league, with the top two teams progressing to the final. Both Yalla Shabab Giants and Royal Oman Stallions finished the league stage with just one defeat, setting up a fitting contest between the two strongest sides of the competition.

Winning the toss, Yalla Shabab Giants, owned by Chaitanya Khimji, elected to bat first but were immediately put under pressure,



Champions Yalla Shabab Giants players celebrate with the trophy.

losing both openers within the first two overs. Vinay Radha (24 off 56) and Ameer Zeeshan (17 off 43) steadied the innings with a cautious partnership before the Giants continued to lose wickets at regular

intervals.

With Yalla Shabab Giants struggling at 64/7, experienced campaigner Zikriya Islam (43 off 55) joined forces with 14-year-old Shravan Kurup (51 off 88) to produce

a crucial eighth-wicket partnership. Their valuable stand helped the defending champions recover and post a competitive 173 all out in 49.5 overs. Muhammed Nadeem was the pick of the Royal Oman Stallions bowlers with 3/32.

Royal Oman Stallions’ chase got off to a difficult start as they lost four wickets inside the opening ten overs. Usman Ali Afridi led the early attack with three wickets, while Yashas GL claimed one, leaving the Stallions under considerable pressure.

Sabin Raj attempted to revive the chase with an aggressive 46 off 30 balls, but the Stallions were unable to sustain the momentum. Further wickets from Zikriya Islam and Kamleshwaran A, who claimed two wickets apiece, saw Stallions bowled out for 137 in 32.1 overs, handing

Yalla Shabab Giants a 36-run victory and back-to-back Oman D50 titles. Zikriya Islam was named Player of the Match for his vital all-round contribution in the final.

At the closing ceremony, Pankaj Khimji, Chairman of Oman Cricket, along with Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer, presented the individual and team awards.

Gowtham Sagar of Royal Oman Stallions was adjudged Player of the Tournament following an all-round campaign with 312 runs and 8 wickets in six matches.

BRIEF SCORES: Yalla Shabab Giants 173 all out in 49.5 overs (Shravan Kurup 51 (88), Zikriya Islam 43 (55); Muhammed Nadeem 3-32) beat Royal Oman Stallions – 137 all out in 32.1 overs (Sabin Raj 46 (30); Usman Ali Afridi 4-44) by 36 runs.

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



Petroleum product prices recorded the strongest increase, surging 88.2 per cent year on year.

OMAN PRODUCER PRICES SURGE 32.7%

MUSCAT: Producer prices in the Sultanate of Oman rose 32.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2026 from a year earlier, driven by sharp increases in crude oil, natural gas and refined petroleum product prices, official data showed.

Prices in the mining and quarrying sector increased 31 per cent, reflecting a 31.9-per-cent rise in crude oil and natural gas prices, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Prices of stone and sand products increased 0.5 per cent, while metal ore prices fell 14.3 per cent from the second quarter of 2025.

The manufacturing producer price index climbed 40.3 per cent, led by a 55.3-per-cent increase in the prices of other transportable goods. Within that category, refined petroleum product prices recorded the strongest increase, surging 88.2 per cent year on year. Chemical product prices rose 21.4 per cent.

Prices in the metal products, machinery and equipment group increased 31.7 per cent during the quarter. Iron, steel and aluminium products posted the largest increase within the group, rising 48.9 per cent. Prices of power transformers, electricity distribution equipment and cables climbed 39.8 per cent.

The food products, beverages and textiles group recorded a more moderate increase of 2.8 per cent. Footwear prices rose 6.7 per cent, the highest increase within the category, while woven fabric prices increased 2.8 per cent.

Utility producer prices also rose during the quarter. Electricity prices increased 13 per cent from a year earlier, while water prices climbed 4.4 per cent, the NCSI data showed. — ONA

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Gulf economies risk facing tighter financial conditions through two channels at once: a sharp increase in long-term US Treasury yields and higher policy rates transmitted through regional currency pegs, according to an Omani economist.

Azza al Habsi, Vice-President for Economic Research and Emerging Trends at Ominvest, said the combination could deliver what she described as a “double tap” to the economy.

Al Habsi made the comments on her personal LinkedIn account. The post was presented as her own analysis and not as a statement by Ominvest.

Official US Treasury data support the central figure behind her argument. The yield on the 10-year Treasury stood at 4.19 per cent on the first trading day of 2026 before reaching 5.01 per cent on September 16, the day of the Federal Reserve’s decision.

That represented an increase of about 82 basis points before the latest policy move. The yield subsequently eased to 4.94 per cent on September 17.

Long-term bond yields and central-bank policy rates affect different parts of the financial system and should not be added together as a single rate increase. However, both can tighten financial conditions by increasing government, corporate and

OQ eyes major Angola energy investments

OQ Group is exploring investments across Angola’s energy value chain, including oil and gas, liquefied natural gas, petrochemicals and a proposed 500-megawatt renewable energy project, as the Sultanate of Oman seeks to expand its economic partnerships in Africa.

The plans were outlined during the visits of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Botswana and Angola, which are aimed at strengthening political and economic relations and opening new avenues for trade and investment.

Ashraf bin Hamad al Mamari, Group Chief Executive Officer of OQ, said the Royal visits provided momentum and confidence to economic relations at the highest levels.

“They contribute to accelerating the transition from the stage of researching and exploring opportunities to the actual establishment of partnerships and projects”, he said.

Al Mamari said the visit to Angola offered OQ an opportunity to strengthen its presence in African markets and pursue commercially viable energy partnerships capable of generating sustainable value for both countries.

The areas under evaluation include exploration and production, LNG, fertilisers, ammonia and petrochemicals, as well as the trading of petroleum and petrochemical products.

OQ and its Angolan counterparts are also considering joint investments in upstream assets, LNG



The visit to Angola offered OQ an opportunity to strengthen its presence in African markets and pursue commercially viable energy partnerships capable of generating sustainable value for both countries.

developments and fertiliser projects. The discussions include ways to maximise the use of Angola’s natural gas resources for ammonia and petrochemical production.

The proposed cooperation covers oil and gas operations, refining, petrochemicals, fertilisers and trading. It also includes potential renewable energy developments led by OQ Alternative Energy.

Al Mamari said the breadth of OQ’s operations allowed the group to assess opportunities from an integrated perspective and develop partnerships drawing on the expertise and capabilities of both sides. OQ signed two memoranda of cooperation in Angola covering conventional and renewable energy investments.

The first agreement, signed with Angola’s state-owned oil company Sonangol, establishes a framework

for assessing investment opportunities and exchanging technical, operational and commercial expertise across the energy value chain.

The second memorandum, between OQ Alternative Energy and Angola’s Ministry of Energy and Water, covers the evaluation and potential development of a renewable energy project with a total capacity of about 500 MW, supported by a battery energy storage system.

“These memoranda mark a significant milestone in strengthening our partnership with the Republic of Angola and exploring areas of collaboration where our expertise aligns with our investment aspirations”, Al Mamari said.

“Angola possesses promising potential in the energy sector, and we look forward to working together to develop economically viable projects

that deliver sustainable added value for both parties.”

He said the agreements reflected OQ’s strategy of building international partnerships that support growth, strengthen the Sultanate of Oman’s presence in global markets and increase the value generated by the energy industry.

The Royal visit to Botswana also resulted in the signing of a memorandum involving O-Green that focuses on energy security.

Al Mamari said the company planned to transmit electricity generated by its projects in Botswana to neighbouring countries through a renewable energy plant that is under construction.

OQ operates an integrated portfolio spanning exploration and production, refining, petrochemicals, trading and alternative energy. Al Mamari said these capabilities allowed the group to identify projects offering tangible value to its partners.

He said OQ sought partnerships that combined expertise and capabilities, facilitated knowledge transfer and capacity building, and opened access to new markets.

Projects would be assessed on their economic viability and strategic alignment, with the objective of delivering sustainable benefits to the Sultanate of Oman and its African partners, he added.

OQ already has a commercial presence in several African markets through its subsidiaries. The agreements with Angola provide a framework for identifying further investments and expanding the group’s portfolio across the continent. — ONA

Fed hike risks dual tightening across GCC, economist says



Higher US Treasury yields had already increased market borrowing costs before Gulf central banks followed the Federal Reserve’s quarter-point rise.

banking funding costs.

The Federal Reserve raised its target range by 25 basis points to 3.75–4 per cent on Wednesday. The unanimous decision was its first increase since July 2023.

The Fed said US economic activity was expanding at a solid pace but inflation remained elevated. It said the increase would support a timelier return to its 2 per cent inflation objective.

Most GCC central banks subsequently raised their benchmark rates because their currencies are pegged to the US dollar. Kuwait is the principal exception, as the

dinar is linked to a currency basket rather than solely to the dollar.

The Central Bank of Oman raised its repo rate by 25 basis points to 4.5 per cent, effective September 17. Under the CBO’s published framework, the repo rate is calculated from the upper limit of the US federal funds target range plus a spread of 50 basis points.

Al Habsi questioned whether further rate increases could effectively address inflation generated by disrupted supplies. She asked how an additional 25 or 50 basis points would prevent supply-driven inflation from feeding into underlying prices.

She suggested the Fed’s action might instead be intended to reinforce its inflation-fighting credibility and create room to reduce rates more aggressively if economic growth deteriorates.

The concern is sharper for the GCC, she argued, because higher borrowing costs are arriving alongside an oil-price shock and disruption to regional export routes. Higher oil prices may not translate fully into increased fiscal revenue if export volumes and shipping flows remain constrained.

She concluded that many regional economies could need lower rather than higher interest rates.

The available Omani indicators, however, make the domestic picture more complicated. Consumer inflation reached 3.4 per cent year on year in August, while

average inflation during the first eight months of 2026 stood at 2.9 per cent.

Transport prices increased 8.5 per cent and food and non-alcoholic beverages rose 7 per cent.

Bank credit also remained strong. Total outstanding credit extended by conventional and Islamic banking institutions increased 11.5 per cent to RO 37.4 billion at the end of May.

The CBO said its increase would help maintain monetary and financial stability, contain inflationary pressure, limit undesirable cross-border capital movements and reduce exchange-rate risks.

Previous experience nevertheless suggests that the increase may not pass fully into household and corporate borrowing costs.

During the earlier tightening cycle, the CBO found that substantial increases in policy and interbank rates produced only a modest rise in average retail lending rates.

The immediate test for Oman will therefore be how far the higher repo rate feeds into interbank rates, bank funding costs, deposit pricing and new or variable-rate loans.

The wider question is whether monetary tightening imported through the currency peg is appropriate for domestic economic conditions when part of the inflationary pressure originates from energy prices and disrupted supply rather than excessive local demand.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



OHEC 2026 will serve as a key platform to advance conversations on quality of care, technology integration, workforce localisation, and the development of medical tourism.

COUNTDOWN BEGINS FOR OMAN HEALTH EXHIBITION & CONFERENCE 2026

MUSCAT: The countdown is officially underway for the Oman Health Exhibition & Conference (OHEC) 2026, set to take place from September 21 to 23, 2026 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). Hosted by the Ministry of Health, the three-day event will bring together healthcare professionals, policymakers, investors, researchers, pharmaceutical and medical technology companies, healthcare institutions, industry leaders and other key stakeholders to explore the opportunities and developments shaping the future of healthcare in Oman. The Oman Health Exhibition & Conference 2026 will be held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation at the Ministry of Health, Sultanate of Oman, who will grace the opening ceremony as Chief Guest.

His presence underscores the significance of the event as a key platform for advancing dialogue, collaboration and innovation across Oman's healthcare sector, bringing together government representatives, healthcare leaders, medical professionals, industry experts and solution providers to explore priorities shaping the future of healthcare in the Sultanate of Oman.

Aligned with the healthcare priorities of Oman Vision 2040, OHEC 2026 will serve as a key platform to advance conversations on quality of care, technology integration, workforce localisation and the development of medical tourism.

The conference programme has been structured around four principal areas: establishing Oman as a regional medical tourism hub, fostering sustainable healthcare and investment, driving clinical innovation and localisation; and promoting proactive health models that shift the emphasis from treatment towards prevention.

The opening day on September 21 will commence with registration and inauguration, followed by welcome remarks and a presentation on “The Advantage of Oman as a Health Tourism Destination”. The official programme also includes presenting a token of appreciation to the Chief Guest, followed by an official visit to the Oman Health Exhibition.

Day One will place particular emphasis on the development of an integrated healthcare ecosystem through sessions including “Engineering Oman's Integrated Health Tourism Ecosystem”, “Oman Destination Health — Redefining the Global Care Journey”, “Integrating Occupational Health and Workplace Resilience” and “Mobilising NGOs, Endowments and CSR for Sustainable Health Ecosystem”.

BANK NIZWA LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE HOME FINANCE BUYOUT OFFER

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to being a reliable, responsible and relevant financial institution that benefits all stakeholders, Bank Nizwa has launched an exclusive home finance buyout offer under “Feel the difference”.

The offer gives customers looking to transfer their existing home financing or loans an opportunity to benefit from Bank Nizwa's Sharia-compliant banking solutions, while providing greater financial flexibility in managing their long-term commitments.

It also gives customers access to a comprehensive range of banking products and services designed to meet their evolving financial needs. The offer includes a competitive



profit rate of 4.25%, additionally 50% discount on valuation fees through selected valuation companies and a waiver of credit card fees for the first year along with up to 5,000 bonus points on credit card activation.

Together, these benefits are designed to provide greater value and flexibility to customers transferring their existing home financing to Bank Nizwa.

Commenting on the offer, Mohammed al Ghassani, Chief Retail Officer at Bank Nizwa, said: “The launch of the home finance buyout offer reaffirms Bank Nizwa's commitment to meeting the diverse financial needs of our customers and empowering individuals with Sharia-compliant banking solutions.

Through this offer, we are providing a competitive profit rate alongside a range of additional benefits that enhance the overall value available to our customers”.

Ford Oman unveils grand summer campaign



Oman has unveiled its latest summer campaign, “Ford Grand Summer Delights”. Running till October 30, 2026, the campaign

rewards customers across the Ford line-up with a generous package of benefits, including 5 years of service and warranty, complimentary registration, free accessories on select models, a trade-in bonus, a loyalty bonus for existing owners and the chance to win exciting prizes through an exclusive raffle draw (Terms & Conditions Apply).

The campaign covers the Ford Territory, Taurus, Everest, Mustang, Mustang Mach-E, Expedition, Explorer, Bronco, Ranger and F-150, with Transit and Super Duty models excluded from the offer.

At the heart of the promotion is a 5-year or 100,000 km service package (whichever comes first), covering 10 services at 10,000 km intervals under normal operating conditions, available on the Territory, Taurus, Everest, Mustang, Expedition, Explorer, Bronco, Ranger and F-150. This is backed by a matching 5-year or 100,000 km manufacturer's warranty offered across all models in the range.

Adding further value, customers purchasing any eligible model for private use can enjoy complimentary one-year vehicle registration. While select variants — the Territory, Everest XLS, Expedition, Explorer, Bronco and Ranger — come with complimentary accessories to enhance the ownership experience.

To make the season even more rewarding, Ford Oman is running a “Buy and Win” raffle draw for customers who purchase the Territory, Taurus, Everest, Mustang, Mustang Mach-E, Expedition, Explorer, Bronco, Ranger or F-150 during the campaign period. Participants stand a chance to win one of four exciting prizes: a fuel card worth RO 100, a dinner voucher for four, a one-night weekend hotel stay for a couple or an Amouage perfume gift voucher.

The draw will take place at the end of the campaign, with a total of 38 lucky winners



The campaign rewards customers across the Ford line-up with a generous package of benefits.

announced.

The campaign also brings added savings for customers looking to upgrade or reward their loyalty. A trade-in bonus of up to RO 400 is available for customers who trade in their existing vehicle through Best Cars and purchase a Territory, Everest, Expedition, Explorer, Bronco, Ranger, Mustang or F-150 (Taurus, Transit and Super Duty are excluded from this offer).

Meanwhile, existing Ford owners can benefit from a loyalty bonus of up to RO 100 when purchasing a Territory, Taurus, Everest, Expedition, Explorer, Bronco, Ranger, Mustang or F-150 during the scheme period, with Transit and Super Duty excluded.

This summer's line-up showcases the full breadth of Ford's model range in Oman. The Ford Taurus continues to impress with its bold design and refined performance, while the Territory offers a striking presence and spacious, tech-forward cabin ideal for everyday family life.

The Everest brings rugged 4x4 capability together with a premium, home-inspired interior for up to seven passengers. Adventure seekers can look to the

Explorer and Expedition, both offering powerful performance, advanced terrain management and generous passenger space, while the Bronco and F-150 remain the go-to choices for customers seeking uncompromising off-road strength and towing capability.

The Ranger rounds out the line-up as a versatile pick-up built for work and play alike and for customers looking to the future, the all-electric Mustang Mach-E delivers thrilling performance paired with sustainable innovation.

With unmatched peace of mind, generous rewards and the chance to win exciting prizes, “Ford Grand Summer Delights” gives customers even more reasons to choose Ford this season. Customers are invited to visit their nearest Ford showroom before October 30, 2026 to explore the range and take advantage of these limited-time offers.

In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co LLC. Please log on to [www.fordoman.com](#), [www.facebook.com/FordOman](#), [www.youtube.com/FordOmanChannel](#), or [www.instagram.com/ford_oman](#) for the latest news, test drive requests and press releases.

Instant credit cards with Bank Muscat mobile banking

MUSCAT: In line with its vision of delivering a fully digital customer experience, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the launch of its instant credit card issuance service through the Mobile Banking application for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman.

This service enables customers to apply for a new credit card entirely through their smartphone, with no requirement to visit a branch or complete any physical documentation.

This launch marks a significant milestone in Bank Muscat's ongoing journey towards a comprehensive digital banking experience for customers across Oman. Previously, customers applying through digital banking platforms were required to visit a branch in person to sign their documents; the new instant service delivers a fully end-to-end digital journey from eligibility verification through to card activation.



This launch marks a significant milestone in Bank Muscat's ongoing journey towards a comprehensive digital banking experience for customers.

It also complements the bank's recently introduced instant digital debit card service, with customers being able to apply for a digital credit card, ensuring a seamless, digital only experience.

The service is designed for maximum simplicity. Customers log into the Bank Muscat Mobile Banking application, navigate to the credit card section and choose from the Bank's full range of retail credit cards (subject to their eligibility).

Upon approval, the digital credit card is issued instantly and customers can view their CVV and expiry date securely in-app for online purchases, while the card can also be tokenised and added to Apple Pay and Samsung Pay for immediate contactless payments.

Commenting on the launch, Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager — Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “In continuation of our “instant” theme this year, we are proud to launch end-to-end digital credit card. Oman is generally a debit card

market, but we have seen an increase in the usage of credit card in the past 2 years.

Our intention is to simplify the onboarding journey by empowering the customers to complete the full process on their own and at ease”.

The digital credit card carries the same fees and limits as a standard card, with the added flexibility of enabling or disabling international usage directly from the app at any time. Security is built into every layer of the experience through advanced authentication mechanisms and One-Time Passwords (OTP). In addition, if the customer would like to obtain the physical card, they can have it delivered to them with complimentary courier service.

Bank Muscat continues to provide a full suite of secure banking services to its customers across the Sultanate of Oman. These state-of-the-art services meet the requirements of the Bank's tech-savvy customers and are further easing the delivery of various services.

SHORTTAKES



Passenger traffic was recorded between June 1 and August 31, when the airport handled 5,148 arriving and departing flights.

SALALAH AIRPORT HANDLES 686,808 PASSENGERS

MUSCAT: Salalah Airport handled 686,808 arriving and departing passengers during the 2026 Khareef Dhofar Season, highlighting the seasonal tourism industry’s growing importance to the Sultanate of Oman’s aviation sector.

Passenger traffic was recorded between June 1 and August 31, when the airport handled 5,148 arriving and departing flights.

The number of arriving passengers stood at 355,045, while inbound flights totalled 2,561, an increase of 4 per cent from the corresponding period of 2025.

The figures underline the role of air transport in supporting tourism and connecting destinations in the Sultanate of Oman with domestic, regional and international markets.

Monthly passenger numbers rose sharply as the season gained momentum.

Salalah Airport handled 92,735 passengers in June, rising to 236,088 in July and 357,985 in August. The three figures brought total passenger traffic for the period to 686,808.

Aircraft movements followed a similar pattern. The airport handled 957 arriving and departing flights in June, 1,854 in July and 2,337 in August, bringing the three-month total to 5,148 flights.

The increase reflected the close relationship between the tourism and aviation industries during Khareef Dhofar, when seasonal demand translates into a sharp rise in passenger and aircraft movements.

The figures also demonstrate the need to continue improving the efficiency and capacity of the aviation system to accommodate substantial seasonal changes in demand and support the wider tourism economy.

Hamed bin Ahmed al Barashdi, official spokesperson for the Civil Aviation Authority, said the results reflected the scale of growth in travel during the 2026 season.

Oman localises transformer production

THE Sultanate of Oman will invest about RO 15 million in local manufacturing of electrical transformer components under 10 agreements aimed at strengthening domestic supply chains and reducing reliance on imports.

The projects, facilitated by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion through Invest Oman, will establish seven factories and add production lines to existing manufacturing facilities.

The investments will be located in Khazaen Economic City, industrial estates operated by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates, Madayn, and SOHAR Port and Freezone.

The programme is being developed by Invest Oman, Voltamp Energy and other public and private-sector entities to convert identified industrial requirements into investment opportunities for local and international investors.

The 10 agreements were signed on August 12, 2026, under Voltamp Energy’s “Wattanha – From Vision to Partnerships” initiative, which was launched in cooperation with the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR).

The investment opportunities were offered to the private sector through the Invest Oman platform after being identified on the basis of Voltamp Energy’s supply-chain requirements.

They are supported by advance purchase contracts, providing investors with clearer demand for the components and helping to improve the commercial viability and growth prospects of the



The projects will establish seven factories and add production lines to existing manufacturing facilities.

manufacturing projects.

The programme covers the production of 10 key transformer components. Eight will be manufactured at new facilities, while two will be produced through additional lines installed at existing plants.

The projects will occupy a combined area of about 34,000 square metres, with commercial production expected to begin between 2027 and 2028.

Four agreements were signed with Omani small and medium-sized enterprises, while six involve local and international companies.

Officials said the initiative would increase the participation of Omani companies in energy-sector value chains, expand the domestic supplier base and bring specialised industrial technologies and expertise into the country.

Invest Oman works to move projects from the promotion and investor-attraction stages into localisation and implementation. This includes

identifying opportunities in priority sectors, connecting project owners with potential investors and government agencies and monitoring their progress towards commercial production.

Lamya bint Sultan al Habsi, Assistant Director-General of Investment Promotion at the ministry, said linking opportunities to confirmed industrial requirements would make manufacturing investments in the Sultanate of Oman more attractive.

The approach allows private companies to enter partnerships supported by identifiable demand, helping generate added value for the national economy, she said.

Al Habsi said Invest Oman was focused on presenting high-quality opportunities aligned with priority sectors and supporting their transformation into sustainable projects.

The programme would increase local content, develop national supply chains

and expand the country’s manufacturing base, she added.

Al Habsi said demand-led localisation began with identifying industrial requirements and converting them into clearly defined investment opportunities.

Investors and relevant institutions were then brought together to establish the partnerships required to build factories and production lines.

Mohammed Ajmal Pasha, Chief Executive Officer of Voltamp Energy Group, said the agreements reflected the company’s commitment to creating a more integrated industrial ecosystem and converting part of its supply-chain demand into domestic production.

He said the programme was supported by Invest in Oman, Oman Investment Authority, Oman Electricity Transmission Company, Nama Group, Hydrom, APSR, Madayn and other relevant organisations.

— ONA

FEED contract awarded for marine fuels terminal at Shinas Port

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

International engineering and consultancy firm Bilfinger has secured a front-end engineering design (FEED) role in the development of a major marine fuels terminal planned at Shinas Port on Oman’s Al Batinah North coast.

Germany-headquartered Bilfinger said it has signed an agreement with Shinas Marine Fuels & Oil Terminals SPC (SMFOT) for the delivery of Phase 1 FEED consultancy services for the project, which is expected to strengthen marine fuel infrastructure at the strategically located port.

Oman’s Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), which separately announced the



Phase 1 targets around 200,000 tonnes per month of capacity, which is equivalent to 2.4 million tonnes annually (Image for illustration only).

engineering and basic-design agreement earlier this month, cited a targeted first-phase capacity of

around 200,000 tonnes per month, equivalent to 2.4 million tonnes annually.

Bilfinger said its engineering and consultancy work would help define the project’s technical and commercial framework, supporting the development of what it described as a modern and sustainable marine fuels facility in Oman.

The company said the project is designed to help deliver cleaner marine fuels and support regional emissions-reduction initiatives. “A key element is the Desulphurisation Unit, which contributes to cleaner marine fuels, supporting regional efforts to reduce emissions and promote more sustainable maritime operations”, Bilfinger said.

A signing ceremony was held

during the Gulf Green Mobility Forum in Salalah recently in the presence of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar; and Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. Bilfinger was represented by Muntaser al Hashmi, Sales Director Middle East.

The SMFOT development comes as Oman moves to expand the commercial and logistics role of Shinas Port, located on the Sea of Oman coast in Al Batinah North Governorate.

Earlier this month, MoTCIT signed a 39-year agreement with QS Maritime LLC (QSS Maritime) to manage, operate and develop the port, building on a framework agreement reached with the company in August 2023.

QSS Maritime subsequently took over operations, with the new operating arrangement formally launched in January 2024.

Under the long-term concession, Shinas is slated for further infrastructure development and increased operating capacity, alongside stronger links with regional ports.

Planned initiatives include digitalised port operations, solar generation and battery storage, shore power for vessels, electrification of cargo-handling equipment, charging infrastructure and water-reuse and waste-management systems.

The investments form part of efforts to broaden Shinas Port’s role as a maritime and logistics hub serving northern Oman and regional shipping.

AI COMPETITION

Anthropic weighs new model ahead of IPO



American artificial intelligence firm Anthropic is considering launching a new AI model ahead of an expected IPO as it faces growing competition from OpenAI’s GPT-6 Astra. The company is evaluating the model’s safety and release timing, sources said.

The deliberations come after CEO Dario Amodei called for slower development of AI capabilities to address mounting safety concerns. — Reuters

AVIATION DISPUTE

US airlines oppose Air China flights



US airlines have opposed Air China’s request for additional flights from Beijing to New York and Washington, citing competitive disadvantages over Russian airspace access.

US carriers cannot use Russian airspace, while Chinese airlines can on some routes, shortening journey times. The group wants the proposed services classified as charter flights rather than added to regular schedules. — Reuters

SUPPLY DISRUPTION

Aramco halts some European crude deliveries



Saudi Aramco has halted October crude deliveries to some European refiners after drone attacks shut its East-West pipeline and disrupted Red Sea exports. Customers are seeking alternative supplies, while Aramco works to restore pipeline capacity. The company has also increased Gulf exports through ship-to-ship transfers off Oman’s SOHAR Port and Freezone to offset reduced shipments from Yanbu. — Reuters

OPINION

Local development in Oman: Building prosperity from within



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

LOCAL development has become essential for Oman's economic and social development. The Sultanate of Oman has begun to interpret development beyond the construction of infrastructural and other public facilities and services. For Oman Vision 2040, development is progressively understood as the creation of sustainable development opportunities and adequate employment in governorates, reinforcing the national private sector and maximising the benefits to citizens from capital and economic activities. Different forms of opportunities and comparative advantages in various sectors of the economy abound in the governorates. Large scale business, finance and service activities dominate in Muscat. Large scale agriculture and other rural activities, manufacturing, tourism and logistics activities and other economic activities offer opportunities for the other governorates. Given the varying opportunities and comparative advantages, the same model of development cannot be applicable to all the governorates. Each can develop in line with its comparative advantages. Different models of development can be aligned to investment and other opportunities within the governorates. It is

imperative that the models be integrated to maximise development in the country. Consistent with the above, local development and local content policies are complementary. The goal of both policies is to ensure that opportunities created by large scale projects in the country benefit the national economy, people and entrepreneurs of Oman. When new major projects are launched in various sectors in a governorate, it is important to evaluate the outcomes of the projects broadly. The value of the investment and completion of project works are not sufficient for evaluation. More importantly, it is critical to assess the extent of procurement kept within Oman, the number of local businesses and Omanis employed in the project and the project's potential to stimulate new businesses. Measuring outcomes of projects and investments in this manner allows Oman to more effectively track the country's expenditure and evaluate the impact of its investments. The same is true for SMEs. In competitive markets, local enterprises may be better positioned than larger firms to understand the particular requirements and preferences of local customers and thereby differentiate their offerings in the market. However, for SMEs to be successful, there must be an integrated approach which

For Oman Vision 2040, development is progressively understood as the creation of sustainable development opportunities and adequate employment in governorates, reinforcing the national private sector and maximising the benefits to citizens from capital and economic activities.

involves, for example, provision of finance and business skills, modern management and production methods; and other support, in addition to public and private sector procurement opportunities. Large firms can contribute, for example, through support and training of SMEs, in order to build the capabilities of SMEs in productivity and other areas necessary to access larger markets. Beyond these, there must be similar integration of the efforts of public, private and non-governmental sectors in Oman, to promote and build the necessary knowledge and skills required for business development in various economic sectors, especially at the local level. The use of technology can expedite this process. Investment, supplier and workforce digital information can be integrated and presented at the governorate level. If integrated with data on the SME sector and public expenditure on contracts and grants, this technology can assist in locating potential economic (business) opportunities and evaluating the impact of investments. Measurable objectives should be established for the development of the workforce, including employment, entrepreneurship and business (both SME and large enterprise) creation, investment and public procurement, as well as community and economic development.

WHEN SOLAR AND WIND LEARN TO HOLD THE GRID

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

For decades, the stability of an electricity grid depended on something surprisingly physical: enormous pieces of metal spinning inside conventional power stations. The rotating turbines of gas, coal and other traditional plants did more than generate electricity. Their momentum helped keep the frequency of the grid steady when demand or supply suddenly changed. As renewable energy expands, that familiar foundation is beginning to change. Solar panels and modern wind turbines connect to electricity networks largely through power electronics rather than the heavy rotating machinery associated with conventional generation. As their share of electricity rises, power systems therefore need new ways of maintaining the stability that was once provided almost automatically. One emerging answer is grid-forming technology, an area attracting increasing attention as countries move towards electricity systems dominated by renewable energy. Most renewable power installations currently use what are known as grid-following inverters. In simple terms, they detect the electrical rhythm already established by the grid and follow it. Grid-forming inverters can behave differently. They can help establish voltage and frequency themselves, allowing renewable plants and battery systems to take a more active role in keeping an electricity network stable. Recent research has placed the technology among the important tools for addressing low inertia and weak-grid conditions as conventional synchronous generators are displaced by renewable resources. The subject has gained fresh momentum as electricity systems around the world prepare for larger shares of inverter-based generation. As conventional synchronous generation declines, so does some of the natural inertia traditionally available to electricity networks. At the same time, grid-forming technologies are moving from research towards commercial renewable and energy-storage applications. For Oman, the timing is particularly relevant. The Sultanate of Oman's renewable electricity system is expanding rapidly. Nama Power and Water Procurement has been progressing a pipeline of large solar and wind developments, including the Adam and Sinaw solar projects. Plans have also been outlined for Oman's first large-scale round-the-clock renewable energy project, designed to combine solar, wind and battery storage. Longer-term plans are larger still, with several utility-scale solar developments envisaged as Oman works towards substantially increasing the contribution of renewable energy to its electricity system. This means the challenge is gradually shifting.

When geography is an administrative cost

OMAN has spent considerable effort removing friction from government services. By the end of 2025, procedures for 3,166 priority government services had been simplified, while 2,277 priority services and permits had been digitised. Average beneficiary satisfaction with digital services across 48 government entities reached 78 per cent. These figures matter because administrative efficiency is not simply about convenience. It has economic value. Every form eliminated, visit avoided and procedure shortened saves time for citizens, businesses and institutions. At sufficient scale, those minutes become working hours and those hours become productivity. But there is another type of administrative friction that is harder to digitise. It exists in the way people deal with one another. A recent professional experience made me consider a simple question: can geography and familiarity influence how seriously a professional role is treated? The same employee may carry the same title, represent the same institution and perform the same responsibility, yet encounter different levels of responsiveness depending on where the interaction takes place. Sometimes distance creates formality. A person arriving from elsewhere may immediately be seen through the institution they represent. Familiarity can blur that distinction. Someone known locally may first be seen as a familiar face rather than as a professional carrying out a specific task. This is not necessarily intentional and a personal experience cannot establish a wider pattern. But the economic question is still worth examining. If a straightforward request requires several calls, repeated explanations or movement between different people before it is completed, something has been lost even if no money has visibly changed hands.



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics dept at Observer

Oman has made significant progress in simplifying and digitising government services. The next productivity gain may depend on reducing the human friction that technology alone cannot remove.

THAT SOMETHING IS TIME Businesses understand this instinctively. A delayed approval can hold up a project. A contractor waiting for information may lose working hours. An entrepreneur moving between offices instead of running a business is paying a cost. An employee spending part of the day following up on something that should have been resolved in one interaction is also consuming an institutional resource. None of these losses necessarily appears as a separate line in a budget. Collectively, however, they become part of the cost of doing business and the cost of running institutions. This is why productivity should not be discussed only through technology, automation, skills or headcount. There is also productivity hidden inside everyday interactions. How quickly is a routine request understood? How clearly is responsibility assigned? How many people need to become involved? Does the response depend on the procedure, or on who knows whom? Would two people making the same legitimate request receive broadly the same service? These may sound like questions about workplace culture. They are also questions about economic efficiency. Oman Vision 2040 calls for administrative bodies characterised by high productivity, flexibility and effectiveness; and for high-quality, high-performance government services. The direction is clear: better institutions are part of better economic performance. Considerable progress has already been made on the technical side. Government procedures have been simplified, services digitised and common platforms introduced. These changes reduce physical visits and limit some of the variation that naturally occurs when transactions depend heavily on individual interactions. Technology, however, can standardise a form more easily than it can standardise behaviour. A digital platform can ensure that two applicants see the same requirements. It cannot, by itself, ensure that every professional

interaction outside the platform receives the same degree of attention. **THAT IS THE NEXT LAYER OF EFFICIENCY** It becomes particularly important as economic activity expands across Oman's governorates. Companies, government bodies and professionals increasingly operate across geographical boundaries. People travel between Muscat and other governorates not simply as visitors, but as investors, managers, engineers, journalists, contractors, consultants and public servants. **THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY SHOULD TRAVEL WITH THEM** A professional role should carry broadly the same institutional weight wherever it is exercised. A legitimate request should not gain or lose importance because the person making it is local, unfamiliar, well-connected or personally known. This is not an argument for giving outsiders preferential treatment. Nor is it an argument that local employees deserve special consideration. It is an argument for consistency. One measure of a mature institution is that personal familiarity becomes largely irrelevant to the quality of service it delivers. Clear procedures matter. Defined responsibilities matter. Reasonable response times matter. Digitalisation matters. Professional culture matters too. The objective should be to make the shortest route to getting legitimate work done the official route — not the personal one. Perhaps this is one of the less visible frontiers of productivity in Oman. We measure how many services have been digitised, how many procedures have been simplified and how satisfied users are with them. We should also pay attention to the effort that remains between a legitimate request and its completion. Because the real cost of administrative friction is not always found in rials. Sometimes it is measured in the hours we should never have needed to spend.

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ART/LIFE



USCONCERT

MACKLEMORE DROPPED OVER FREE PALESTINE SPEECH



US rapper, singer, dancer and DJ, Benjamin Haggerty, known as Macklemore. — AFP

Macklemore was booted from Ed Sheeran’s US tour after provoking outrage by saying “free Palestine” at one of the stadium stops this month, the US rapper said on Monday.

The artist made headlines after telling the crowd at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey that he wanted the people of Gaza and the West Bank to know they had not been forgotten.

That led to accusations of antisemitism and calls for him to be removed — including from singer Pink.

Stadium owners closed ranks and told the tour organisers that Macklemore was not welcome.

“We have been notified by venues on the upcoming US tour dates that they will not allow a concert to take place with Macklemore on the lineup, which would result in the cancellation of the tour and impact hundreds of thousands of fans”, said a statement from Messina Touring Group, which is promoting Sheeran’s US Loop Tour.

“After discussions with stakeholders, Macklemore will not be performing on the remaining support dates”.

Macklemore said on Instagram he hoped the decision would not affect his relationship with his “friend” Sheeran, who he said was in a difficult position.

“His typical apolitical stance was being challenged in a way it never had been before”, he wrote. “I hope this isn’t the end of my relationship with Ed. Thirteen years of friendship doesn’t disappear because of one painful disagreement”.

“But if those words cost me the stage, while turning the conversation back to Palestine, then it was the most successful tour I’ve ever been on”.

After the October 2023 Hamas attacks, the Israeli military response killed more than 73,000 people, according to Gaza’s Hamas-run health authority.

Macklemore, known for hits including “Thrift Shop” and “Can’t Hold Us”, has long taken a stand in support of the Palestinians.

In 2024, he released “Hind’s Hall”, which pays tribute to Hind Rajab, a five-year-old Palestinian girl whose death sparked a wave of international outrage.

The song’s title refers to Columbia University’s Hamilton Hall, which student protesters occupied and renamed in Rajab’s memory during demonstrations over the war in Gaza. The track backed campus protesters and called for a ceasefire, while criticising US support for Israel and the music industry’s silence on the conflict.

The track also criticised then-president Joe Biden and his administration’s Israel policy.

Macklemore pledged to donate the song’s streaming proceeds to UNRWA, the United Nations agency supporting Palestinian refugees. Its accompanying video featured footage of student demonstrations alongside images of the war.

— AFP

QUICK FEATURES



RUNWAY

A model showcases shoes and a bag on the runway during New York Fashion Week’s Spring/Summer 2027 collections. — AFP



RECREATION

Palestinian jockeys during a local horse race in the West Bank city of Hebron. Horse culture has emerged as one of the rare forms of recreation that still draws Palestinians together. — AFP



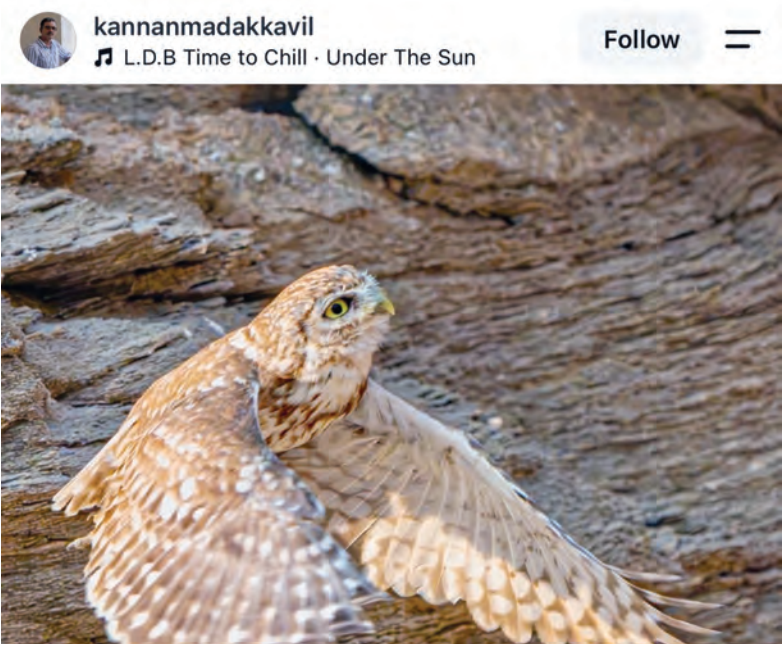
CULTURE

Students rehearse before performing rapa’i geleng, a traditional Acehese dance, in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



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MUSIC STAR PARTON’S FIRST POSTHUMOUS SONG RELEASED



The late country music singer, songwriter and philanthropist Dolly Parton. —dpa

Dolly Parton’s first posthumous song has been released two weeks after the US country music star’s death.

Parton died aged 80 on August 25 following a “brief battle with cancer”. “Bound To Ride”, recorded by Parton in 2022, features on “Where The Soul Never Dies: Celebrating 80 Years Of The Stanley Brothers”, due for release on October 16.

Parton recorded her vocals for the song, popularised by The Stanley Brothers in 1964, in her private studio during a Covid surge, avoiding the risks of travelling.

Produced by husband and wife Garry West and Alison Brown, the album honours Carter and Ralph Stanley, known for their work in bluegrass, a genre beloved by Parton.

Speaking to Rolling Stone, West said: “I call it the full Dolly. We didn’t know what we would

get back and she really did over-deliver.

“We were shocked. We couldn’t have gotten anything better”.

Other performers include Willie Nelson, Steve Martin and Ed Helms.

Across a career spanning more than 60 years, Parton sold more than 100 million records worldwide and wrote more than 3,000 songs, including “Coat Of Many Colours” and “Joshua”.

Her business empire included the Dollywood theme park. A pioneering philanthropist, she founded Imagination Library, a book-gifting programme that has given more than 300 million books to children worldwide.

Tributes following her death came from across the music world, with Miley Cyrus, Elton John, Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, Taylor Swift and Beyoncé among the biggest names to pay their respects to the country music star. — dpa

‘Resident Evil’ brings video game’s ethos to the big screen



US actor and writer David Dastmalchian and actor Austin Abrams attend the premiere of ‘Resident Evil’ at the United Theater on Broadway in Los Angeles. — AFP



Director Zach Cregger sought to capture the feel of playing “Resident Evil” in his film adaptation. — AFP

US director Zach Cregger is a huge fan of the “Resident Evil” video game franchise, so when he was tapped to direct its new film adaptation, he gave himself one objective: “Be authentic to the spirit of the games”.

The “Weapons” and “Barbarian” filmmaker did so by leaning into the visual language of video games, shooting the film from the perspective of the protagonist, played by Austin Abrams.

Cregger decided it was more important to match the vibe of playing “Resident Evil” than using the characters or plot from the series.

“It’s a new character, but the story should feel like the gameplay feels”, he said in an interview.

The new film, which hits US theatres on Friday, follows Bryan (Abrams), a courier who takes on a late-night delivery job from a hospital that quickly devolves into a nightmare.

By placing the camera behind Abrams so it was

The new film, which hits US theatres on Friday, follows Bryan (Abrams), a courier who takes on a late-night delivery job from a hospital that quickly devolves into a nightmare

“swinging around to look at what he’s looking at”, he choreographed it such that it “feels video game-like” from that first-person perspective.

Another way he adapted the game was in the progression of weaponry available for the hero. “You start with a pistol and then you get a shotgun, then you get a machine gun”, Cregger explained.

“I feel like people who play the games... are gonna recognize many aspects of the games in this movie”.

While previous movie adaptations of “Resident Evil” — such as those starring Milla Jovovich — were more action movies, Cregger went all-in on horror for the latest edition.

“I wanted to really lean into the horror and that slow sense of dread that the games have done so well across all of them”, Cregger said.

That is not to say the new film lacks action sequences and leading man Abrams said he had to get in shape to shoot the movie — though he did not want to look like he

was playing a superhero. “A part of the challenge was... I wanted the character to not be someone that looked like they could do this”, Abrams said.

“I feel like the more in-shape he is, the more you feel like, ‘okay, man, maybe you can do this”.

The 30-year-old actor admitted he had never played “Resident Evil” until he landed the film’s lead role, but he is now familiar with the challenge — and he does not think he would make it through the ordeal his character Bryan has to survive.

Cregger said he knows the “Resident Evil” fan base might not be totally satisfied with the lack of characters or details from the games themselves, but he stayed true to his vision.

“I’m sorry that’s not what this movie is, but I feel like if I had done that, I would have screwed it up”, Cregger said.

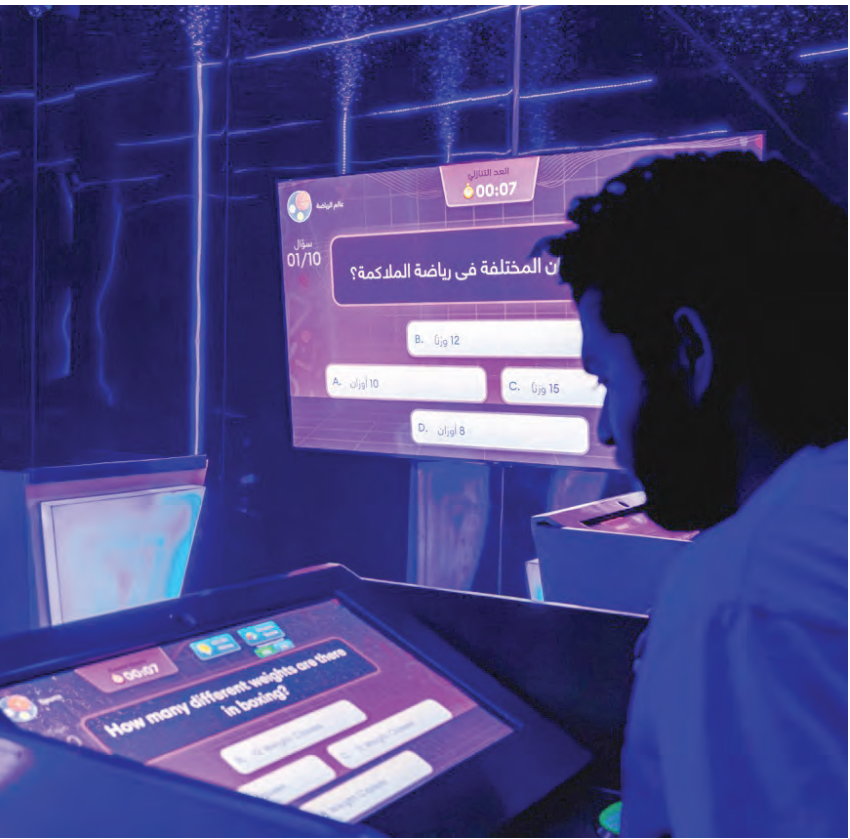
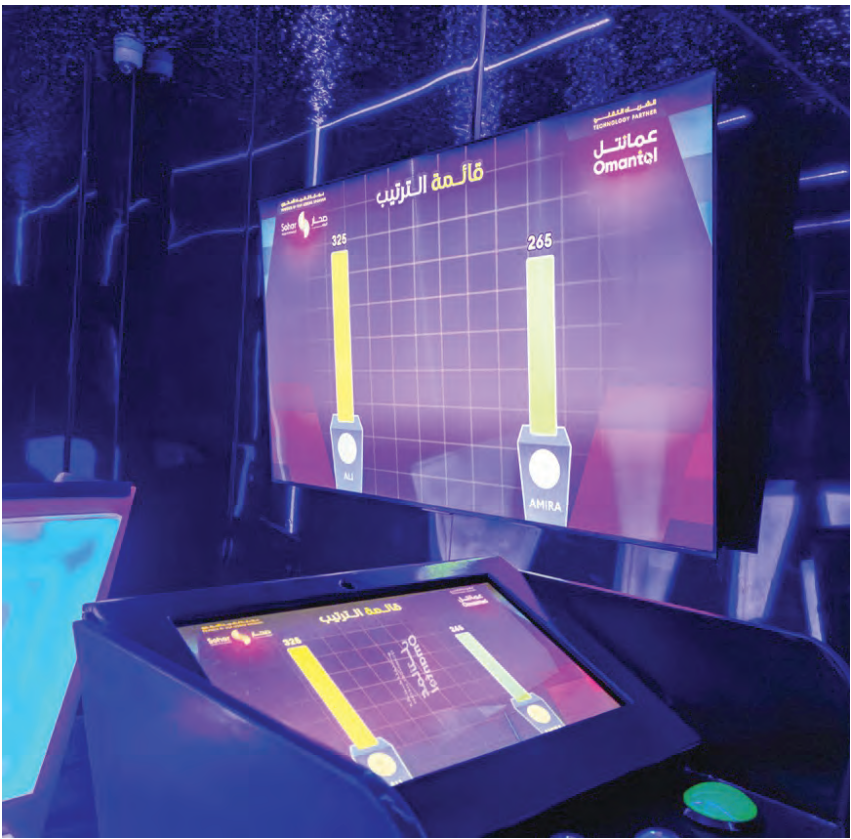
“To me, the best thing to do is to tell an original story that celebrates everything that I love about the games”.

— AFP

FEATURES



Every visitor becomes part of the action



Categories range from science and history to films, geography, technology and sport, while surprise mini-games keep players guessing throughout.

WHERE THE AUDIENCE BECOMES THE CONTESTANT

YERU EBUEN

THE lights dim. Dramatic music begins to build as giant digital screens flicker to life. Around the room, teams exchange nervous glances while colourful player names and avatars appear on interactive game stations. Moments later, the first challenge flashes across the screen. A countdown begins. Within seconds, the leaderboard changes, cheers erupt from one corner of the room and laughter follows from another. Before anyone realises it,

strangers are debating answers, colleagues are celebrating clever plays and families are urging one another on. It feels remarkably like stepping into a television game show. Except there are no spectators. This is Game of Minds, an interactive live game show in Muscat where every guest becomes a contestant. Operating daily from 1 pm to 10 pm at Al Khuwair Complex, the experience combines giant interactive screens, cinematic lighting, live scoring and fast-paced challenges. Yet behind the flashing scoreboards and dramatic countdowns lies a surprisingly

simple idea. “In today’s world, people spend more time looking at their phones than interacting with each other”, says founder Mohamed Fikry Mohamed Fouad. “I wanted to create something that keeps everyone actively involved from beginning to end”. That belief sits at the heart of everything Game of Minds has become. Growing up in an Egyptian family that encouraged creativity, entrepreneurship and continuous learning, Fouad built a career spanning business development, event management, technology and experience design.

Everyone is a contestant in this interactive experience in Muscat. Combining quizzes, visual puzzles and surprise challenges, it puts knowledge, memory and teamwork to the test, with shifting leaderboards keeping players guessing until the final round

“For many years, I have been passionate about understanding what creates memorable human experiences”, he says. “That passion eventually led me to develop Game of Minds”. Rather than watching contestants compete on stage, every visitor becomes part of the action. Teams answer questions in real time, solve visual puzzles, test their memory, react under pressure and use strategic power-ups that can dramatically alter the leaderboard. Knowledge helps, but it is only one part of the challenge. Instead of rewarding only the person with the most facts at their fingertips, the experience has been designed so that observation, communication, logic, creativity and quick decision-making all carry equal weight. “Our goal isn’t simply to find the smartest person in the room”, he explains. “It’s to create the most exciting shared experience possible”. That philosophy also means every session feels different. Categories range from science and history to films, geography, technology and sport, while surprise mini-games keep players guessing throughout. One moment they might be racing to identify subtle differences between two nearly identical images. The next, they are trying to crack a secret number using colour-coded clues, memorise increasingly complex light sequences or convince other players through carefully crafted bluffs. “The variety is one of the biggest reasons people come back”, Fouad says. “They know every visit offers something new”. Every player has the chance to contribute. Traditional quiz nights often favour whoever possesses the widest general knowledge. Here, someone with quick reactions, a sharp memory or strong teamwork skills can be just as valuable as the history enthusiast or science expert. That broad appeal is precisely what convinced Fouad that Oman was the right place to launch the concept. Muscat’s multicultural population, combined with growing demand for indoor activities during the warmer months, presented what he saw as the perfect opportunity. The venue welcomes everyone from birthday celebrations and family outings to school groups and corporate team-building events. Families, meanwhile, often discover that the playing field is unexpectedly level. For him, however, success is measured long before anyone lifts a winner’s trophy. His favourite moment comes in the closing stages of the game, when carefully built leads can disappear in an instant. “The leaderboard changes dramatically in the final rounds”, he says. “You can see excitement, laughter, suspense and teamwork all happening at once. People suddenly realise that anyone can still win”. When the final scores are announced, he notices something else. Players rarely head straight for the exit. Instead, they gather in small groups replaying the experience they have just shared—laughing about the questions they missed, debating the strategies that worked, joking about unexpected blunders and already planning another visit. “That’s exactly what we wanted to create”, Fouad says. “Not just a game, but a shared experience people continue talking about long after they’ve left.” Perhaps that is Game of Minds’ biggest achievement.