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SHELTON
ADVANCES TO
FINAL FOR ZVEREV
SHOWDOWN



IN BRIEF

OMAN AND US
DISCUSS MILITARY
COOPERATION



Oman-US Joint Military Committee held its 18th meeting to discuss areas of military cooperation between the two friendly countries and ways to foster them, in Washington, DC. The Omani side was headed by Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, who is on an official visit to the United States. The American side was headed by Michael P. DiMino IV, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Near East and Central Asia (NECA). The two sides discussed a number of topics and ways to enhance mutual defence coordination. The meeting was attended by Talal bin Sulaiman al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the US, and a number of senior officers and officials from both sides.

PARTNERSHIP WITH
IRONMAN GROUP

Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), met Scott DeRue, CEO of Ironman Group, to discuss ways to benefit from the international promotional partnership and to promote the Experience Oman tourism promotion at global championships and events. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the performance of the Experience Oman Ironman Pro Series and its reach in international markets, the race schedule, viewership metrics on digital streaming platforms, and the promotional value the series generates for partners. **DETAILS ON P3**

OMANI FIRMS AT
WORLD FOOD FEST

The Sultanate of Oman will participate in World Food Moscow 2026, which will be held in the Russian capital, Moscow, from September 15 to 18. Sixteen Omani companies will be participating in the global expo with the aim of expanding the presence of national products in global markets and opening new horizons for Omani exports in the Russian and Central Asian markets. The participation is part of efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, represented by Exports Oman, to enhance the competitiveness of non-oil Omani exports and support national companies in accessing new markets. **DETAILS ON P14**

SAUDIS SHUT PIPELINE
HITTING OIL SUPPLIES

O m a n d e n o u n c e s t a r g e t i n g o f p i p e l i n e i n S a u d i A r a b i a

THE Sultanate of Oman voiced condemnation of targeting of a pipeline in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, reiterating its firm stance against such attacks and the targeting of vital and civilian infrastructure, regardless of the motives or causes.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Saturday, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its solidarity with its brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its support for all measures aimed at protecting its territory and vital infrastructure and safeguarding its security and stability.

The Sultanate of Oman stressed the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and avoiding anything that would threaten the security and stability of the region. It called on all parties to exercise wisdom and restraint in dealing with these developments, to prioritise dialogue, and to address the root causes through political and diplomatic means and solutions.

Earlier, Saudi Arabia has shut down its East-West pipeline, after the vital oil conduit came under aerial attack in the widening Middle East war, threatening to send energy prices even higher.

The world's largest crude oil exporter said it temporarily closed the pipeline as a precaution after a drone attack that both Baghdad and



A Satellite image shows damage to the East-West pipeline facility in the Hejaz Region, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday. — Reuters

Riyadh said had originated in Iraq, where militias operate. Iraq dismissed a military commander on Saturday in response to the attack.

The 1,200-km pipeline running across the Arabian Peninsula has served as the main route out for global supplies of Middle East oil for the past six months while the Strait of Hormuz has been largely shut by war. It has been moving 4 million to 5 million

barrels per day, amounting to 4-5 per cent of global supply, sparing Saudi Arabia the brunt of the disruption that has crippled other Gulf oil and gas exporters.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the strikes. Satellite images showed black smoke rising from an area of the pipeline south of Madina. The attack resulted in some injuries and damage that was being assessed, the Saudi

Foreign Ministry said without detailing the impact on exports.

Oil prices shot up over the past week and the retail price of diesel in the United States surged past a record \$6 a gallon, as the United States and Iran both fired on tankers.

Four Yemeni government sources said that the Ansar Allah had seized the strategic island of Perim on Friday in the middle of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. — Agencies

ANTHROPIC BOSS CALLS FOR SLOWING PACE OF AI DEVELOPMENT

NEW YORK: Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei on Saturday called on artificial intelligence (AI) firms to slow down the development of the powerful technology, amid mounting worries over the risks of “superintelligent” computer systems.

His comments came a few days after AI researcher Jacob

Coxon, who left OpenAI to join Anthropic, decided to leave the industry, accusing both US companies of “gambling with our lives” in the race to develop models capable of self-improvement.

“We must slow the pace at which we improve the capabilities of AI models. Progress will still

seem fast, and we must make wise use of the time we gain,” Amodei wrote in a post on his personal website.

“AI brings risks, and because it is such a powerful technology, these risks are serious.”

“Not building the technology deprives humanity of benefits or simply places AI in the hands

of authoritarian powers, while building it too fast is reckless. We have sought a middle way,” said Amodei, who co-founded Anthropic with his sister Daniela in 2021.

“But over the last few months, I have become convinced that fully addressing the risks requires even more prudence.” — AFP

August nearly matches entire Khareef season a decade ago

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 12

An entire Khareef season brought 652,986 visitors to Dhofar in 2016. Ten years later, an Observer calculation based on official cumulative figures puts the number recorded in August 2026 alone at 643,602. The difference is just 9,384 visitors. The comparison is not a conventional growth rate: one figure covers a single month and the other a full season. Rather, it illustrates how much the volume of

people moving into Dhofar during the Khareef peak has grown over a decade. Preliminary figures from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) put the number of visitors between June 21 and August 31 this year at 1,116,051, up 8.6 per cent from the corresponding period in 2025. The total had already surpassed the 1,070,738 visitors recorded during the entire 2025 Khareef season, with September still outside the latest 2026 count. Official figures show that the 2016 season attracted 652,986 visitors,



Dhofar recorded an increase in tourist flow by 8.6 per cent, reaching 1,116,051 visitors.

with Omanis accounting for 70.5 per cent of the total. A decade later, Omani travellers remain at the centre of Khareef — and they have driven nearly all of this year's increase. Dhofar received 88,796 more visitors by the end of August than during the same period last year. Of those, 82,494 were Omanis. That means Omani travellers accounted for nearly 93 per cent of the net increase. The latest figures also underline how heavily Khareef traffic remains concentrated in August. The Observer calculation, derived

from the NCSI totals for the end of July and the end of August, puts August's count at 643,602 — almost 58 per cent of everyone recorded since the season began on June 21. The month was also substantially busier than a year earlier. August 2025 brought 585,155 visitors, 58,447 fewer than the calculated figure for August this year. For Dhofar, the significance extends beyond another record. Khareef brings lower temperatures, mist, drizzle and green landscapes to parts of the governorate.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology continues to implement a number of road projects, including paving, maintenance, and rehabilitation in Dhofar Governorate.

ROAD PROJECTS
ENHANCE
CONNECTIVITY
IN DHOFAR

SUHAIL BIN NASSER AL NAHDI
MUSCAT, SEPT 12



ENG MOHAMMED
BIN AHMED
TABOUK
Director of the Road
Design, Dhofar

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology continues to implement a number of road projects, including paving, maintenance, and rehabilitation in Dhofar Governorate. The aim is to enhance connectivity between the governorate’s wilayats

and meet the demands of economic, social, and tourism development, while improving road safety and traffic flow.

The Directorate-General of Roads and Land Transport in Dhofar Governorate is implementing several strategic, service, maintenance, and rehabilitation projects. Eng Mohammed bin Ahmed Tabouk, Director of the Road Design and Construction Department at the Directorate-General of Roads and Land Transport in Dhofar Governorate, explained that the average completion rate for the Sultan Said bin Taimur dual carriageway project (sections three, four,

and five) has reached 27 per cent. This section spans approximately 400 km and has a total cost exceeding RO 258 million. He noted that the completion rate for the Raysut-Al Mughsail dual carriageway project reached 44 per cent by the end of last August. The project spans approximately 33 km and includes overpasses, underpasses, animal crossings, and two roundabouts. It connects

the Raysut area to the Al Mughsail area and links the 18th November Road to the dual carriageway, a distance of 5.5 km.

Eng Mohammed bin Ahmed Tabouk said that the Al Khairat-Al Shisir road project in the Wilayat of Thamrait has reached an implementation rate of 95 per cent. The project is being implemented in cooperation with the Najd Agricultural Development Office, due to its importance in serving agricultural areas and supporting food security requirements.

The road is 46 km long, starting from the intersection of Sultan Said bin Taimur Road with the Saih Al Khairat area and ending in the Niyabat of Al Shisir.

He added that construction work on the Al Shisir-Bethnah-Al Hashman road project is underway, with a completion rate of 29 per cent. The road is approximately 86 kilometres long. The project extends from the Niyabat of Al Shisir to the Bethnah area, reaching the Niyabat of Al Hashman. It is divided into two sections: the first, from the Niyabat of Al Shisir to Bethnah, with a distance of 45.35 km, and the second, from Bethnah to the Niyabat of Al Hashman, with a distance of 40.40 km. The project is expected to be completed in October 2027. — ONA

More awareness needed
to tackle stigma of cancer

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

THE Oman Cancer Association (OCA) hosted the second stage of its Youth Programme, where students presented ideas and recommendations following a summer awareness workshop.

“This is the second stage of our youth event, our youth programme that we had two weeks ago, where we trained school students on the importance of early detection and on our attempts to remove the social stigma of cancer. So we did a two-day programme with them,” said Nader al Azri, OCA.

As schools were closed for summer, individuals from different schools attended, and one of the institutions that participated as a group was Indian School Al Ghubra.

According to the students, the workshop was impactful.

“This is something we would like to do for more schools so we can have a full generation that believes in cancer awareness and completely removes the social stigma about cancer,” explained Nader.

Addressing the youth ambassadors of OCA, Dr Waheed al Kharousi, OCA Chairman, said, “This youth programme is a medium-term awareness programme so that by the time you reach twenty, you are all going to be versed in what cancer is and what should be done and know that cancer is a disease like any other disease.”

Speaking to the Observer, a young student, Muadh al Mandheri, said, “I learned about cancer and the importance of helping others. I learned that we should always eat healthy and make sure we have



The students pointed out that one of the first steps to support the cause would be to participate in OCA’s annual walkathon to be held on October 30.



This is something we would like to do for more schools so we can have a full generation that believes in cancer awareness and completely removes the social stigma about cancer

NADER AL AZRI
OMAN CANCER
ASSOCIATION

enough vegetables and fruits in our diet. And of course, no smoking.”

Indian School Al Ghubra student Daniello said that they had a youth group formed in school to attend the workshop. When asked what the most important message she has taken from the workshop was, she said, “Go for a regular checkup.”

Hamza al Mandheri pointed out that the whole experience was interesting: “We had doctors and specialists talk about ways to help and, most importantly, how to reduce the risk of cancer. We also had fun. I would like to thank OCA for the opportunity.”

The students pointed out that one of the first steps to support the cause would be to participate in OCA’s annual walkathon to be held on October 30.

Teachers from other schools also attended the programme. The

Sultan School has an annual cancer awareness campaign coinciding with OCA’s annual walkathon.

Megan Beencke, Creativity, Activity, Service Coordinator, Sultan School, said, “The 12th and 13th year students have to do a class called CAS (creativity, activity, service), where they have to do a project about a need in the local community. Some of our students choose a cancer cause in the month of October, aligning with OCA around the time of the walkathon. Our senior students put together a workshop for younger students to be more aware of cancer. Students also have the opportunity to visit Dar Al Hanan and see how their money is contributing to the support. Today I am here at the workshop to find out how we can be involved in the future.”

During their speeches, students presented their recommendations.

ATHUM WATERFALLS COME ALIVE AS RAIN
BATTERS PARTS OF DHOFAR GOVERNORATE

AHMED AL MASHANI
TAQA, SEPT 12

Wadi Athum in the Wilayat of Taqah came alive forming an eye-catching scene as rain battered several parts of Dhofar Governorate, on Saturday.

Water poured down from the mountaintop, cascading between the rocks and slopes forming waterfalls that revitalised the wadi after a lull.

Early in the morning, the stunning scene of the fountains of Athum gradually unfolded. The water began to carve its path from the mountain cascading powerfully over the rocks, its roar echoing throughout the wadi in a natural spectacle created by continued rainfall.

The wadi transformed into an open space for capturing one of nature’s most beautiful sceneries that follows rainfall.

Everyone raced against time to document the outset of water flow when dry rocks were transformed into pathways pulsating with water and life.

The sound of water held a special significance in the place, as the roar of cascading waterfalls mingled with the continuous raindrops, creating a natural symphony that needed no extra effect.

As the water crashed against the rocks and continued its descent, mist and low clouds enveloped the mountains, creating a scene that resembled



a living masterpiece of nature’s beauty.

Raindrops fell on the rocks, water gushed down from the heights, and the waterfalls continued their powerful flow, while expressions of wonder and joy were etched on the faces of the visitors who found themselves immersed in a unique natural experience.

The visitors were not merely spectators, they were part of the scene. Some stood for a long time contemplating the force of the rushing water, while others held their cameras or phones to capture the moments. Still others simply enjoyed the rainy atmosphere and the sound of the waterfalls that echoed in the area.

Wadi Athum is one of the natural wonders of Dhofar Governorate, particularly during rainfall when water flows down from the mountaintop. The wadi landscape transforms into a captivating scene, attracting nature lovers, photographers, and visitors seeking breathtaking scenery.

These recurring scenes reveal a facet of Dhofar’s natural diversity.

Its beauty extends beyond the verdant mountains and the autumnal mist, encompassing valleys, waterfalls, and springs that resurface with the rains, offering visitors a unique experience and a fresh perspective each time they visit.



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SHORT TAKES



Researcher Munira al Maqbali is among the beneficiaries of the grant.

Sohar University
launches Al Houqani
research grant

SUHAS: Sohar University has launched the Dr Suleiman al Houqani Research Grant, supported by his family, in an initiative aimed at sustaining his scientific and humanitarian impact and contributing to advancing higher education and scientific research in the Sultanate of Oman.

The grant extends the legacy of the late Dr Al Houqani who was a steadfast supporter of science and education and a firm believer in the importance of knowledge and its role in human development and community service. The grant embodies the values of giving and investing in science and researchers, contributing to supporting new generations of researchers.

The grant places particular emphasis on PhD students and post-PhD researchers, in recognition of their momentous role in generating knowledge and building research capacity. It aims to enable researchers to dedicate themselves fully to their research and complete their theses, in addition to supporting outstanding research projects, participation in international scientific conferences, and publication in peer reviewed scientific journals.

Dr Hamdan al Fazari, Vice-Chancellor of Sohar University, expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the family of Dr Al Houqani for their initiative, stating: “We extend our sincere thanks to the family of the late Dr Suleiman Al Houqani for this generous contribution. Investing in researchers and young minds is among the most sustainable and impactful forms of investment, reflecting a deep believe in the importance of scientific research and its role in serving society and development. We look forward to this grant to support of researchers and enhancing the quality of the university’s research output”

Munira al Maqbali is among the beneficiaries of the grant. “I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the family of Dr Al Houqani for this generous support, which will enable me to continue my PhD studies at Sohar University and complete my research project while dedicating myself fully to research and scientific publication. I hope that the findings of this research will contribute to sustainability efforts and serve the industrial sector and society in Oman”.

Rusting satellite dishes risk safety and health, mar skyline

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Thousands of satellite dishes and antennas, most of which are unused as households switch to streaming platforms, pose growing public safety, structural, and environmental risks.

“We are seeing more roof leaks and cracks under the dish installations, especially in Muscat and Salalah,” says Ahmed al Balushi, a facilities engineer with Muscat Municipality. “The sealant fails, water gets in during the monsoon, and you end up with mold and damage inside flats. The owners moved to IPTV, but the dish stayed.”

According to the safety engineers, wind is the bigger concern. Muscat

Municipality recorded 18 cases of loose dishes or brackets falling from buildings in Bausher, Ruwi and Al Ghubra. However, no fatalities were reported, but two cars were damaged and one pedestrian sustained minor injuries from falling debris.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) also notes access problems. Fire crews often use rooftops for ventilation and rescue in densely populated areas like Muttrah and Al Hamriya. Tangled cables, rusted poles, and abandoned dishes are a hindrance to rescue operations. Another risk is environmental. The dishes are mostly made of aluminium, steel, and UV-coated plastic. Left outdoors, they trap dust, rainwater, and bird



Removal typically costs between RO 5 and RO 15 per dish, which is far cheaper than repairing water damage or dealing with legal liability in the event of an accident.

droppings. After the rains, the water trapped becomes a breeding spot for mosquitoes. Scrap collectors sometimes cut them down for metals, leaving sharp edges and bolts, posing hazards.

The service providers say once a subscription ends, the dish belongs to the customer, while the building owners say tenants should remove it. Many tenants do not know which company installed it originally.

“This is orphaned infrastructure,” says an urban planning consultant in Muscat. “We had strict rules for installation to protect the skyline, but we never set rules for removal.”

Muscat Municipality ran a voluntary collection drive in early 2026 in Al Khuwair and Al Qurum, removing and recycling more

than 900 dishes. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is also reviewing building codes to require that service providers include a removal clause in contracts, so dishes must be taken down within 30 days of cancellation.

Experts advise residents to take steps to resolve this problem. Tariq al Barwani, an IT expert, says one should hire a technician to remove it properly instead of just cutting the cable if one no longer uses a dish.

“Also, the property managers should include abandoned dishes in annual maintenance audits and set a budget for removal, as well as the scrap collectors should be approached for bulk waste collection as aluminium and steel from dishes can be recycled,” he said.

Freelancers to get govt
projects worth **₹5,000**

THE Ministry of Finance (MoF), in its Financial Circular No (1) for 2026, directed all ministries, government units, authorities, and public institutions to award certain specialised projects and services, valued at no more than RO 5,000, to independent, Omani non-employed freelancers.

The directive aligns with the regulatory framework outlined in the Guide to Procedures for Contracting with Freelancers in the Sultanate of Oman, prepared by the National Employment Programme based on a decision by the Financial and Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers.

Eng Omar bin Abdulaziz al Maamari, Head of the Entrepreneurial Track at the National Employment Programme, said the financial circular constitutes a qualitative leap in the development of the self-employment system in the Sultanate of Oman as it opens broader horizons for independent Omanis to participate in executing projects and providing services to government entities. Al Maamari noted that a guide to contracting procedures with freelancers in the Sultanate of Oman will be published in the upcoming period. This guide will serve as a comprehensive procedural reference, regulating contracting mechanisms between government entities and freelancers.



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It will clearly define procedures and responsibilities to ensure efficient implementation and high-quality outputs and services. In addition, it will create a more transparent environment that allows freelancers to compete for opportunities offered by government agencies.

He said that the move is part of a comprehensive national strategy aimed at building an integrated freelancing system that keeps pace with rapid global changes and opens new horizons for skilled and talented individuals to benefit from opportunities that match their abilities. He noted that this strategy focuses on developing regulatory and legislative frameworks, identifying areas and

activities related to freelance work, enhancing training and qualification programmes, building capacity and providing professional and business consultations. It also aims to facilitate access to business opportunities and leverage the incentives and support provided by government entities.

Opening the door to freelancers to participate in government projects enables Omani talent to utilise their skills and expertise, transforming them into effective and direct economic opportunities. This contributes to building a solid professional portfolio that enhances their growth and competitiveness in the labour market, in addition to strengthening local content, diversifying income sources, and stimulating a spirit of innovation and initiative, Al Maamari said.

He added that the circular aligns with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to build a diversified and competitive national economy based on knowledge and Omani talent. He noted that such initiatives would enhance labour market flexibility, raise productivity levels as well as expand youth participation in various economic activities and sectors. The circular constitutes a pivotal practical step in moving the freelancing system from its regulatory framework to a tangible economic reality that provides real opportunities for freelancers, Al Maamari said. — ONA

MoHT, IRONMAN TO PROMOTE OMAN TOURISM ABROAD

NICE: Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), met with Scott DeRue, CEO of Ironman Group, to discuss ways to benefit from the international promotional partnership and to promote the Experience Oman tourism promotion at global championships and events.

During the meeting, they reviewed the performance of the Experience Oman Ironman Pro Series and its reach in international markets, the race schedule, viewership metrics on digital streaming platforms,



Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, with Scott DeRue, CEO of Ironman Group, at the participants' village for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship in Nice, France.

and the promotional value the series generates for partners.

Both sides focused on the quality of media, reaching target markets, and translating the brand's global reach into tangible interest in the Sultanate of Oman that contributes to increased tourist visits and bookings.

The Minister said that the success of international partnerships is measured by their ability to achieve a promotional and economic impact and to reach new segments of the market.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the minister visited the participants' village for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship, held in the French city of Nice.

He reviewed the organisational experience accompanying the championship, including the village's facilities, services, and interactive platforms designed for athletes, fans, and partners.

The Minster was briefed on the event's organisational mechanisms, logistics, and media services. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

5.5M

acres under food production

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

OMAN'S agricultural and food production sector covers 5.5 million acres of arable land—about 7.5 per cent of the country's total land area.

According to the Annual Report of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the total agricultural holdings span 355,000 acres, with 312,000 acres under active cultivation.

Oman is home to 9.1 million date palms, a key crop in the country.

The country has 20 research centres, stations, and nurseries, plus 6 specialised honeybee units.

The sector employs approximately 256,000 workers. There are 3.2 million acres of natural pastures distributed across Oman.

Total agricultural and fisheries output reached 5.6 million tonnes, contributing significantly to national food security under Invest Oman.

The annual report reflects the results of a year of continuous work and sincere national efforts towards achieving the goals of sustainable development. The ministry's direction for the coming period is to increase agricultural and fisheries production, support small and medium enterprises, raise the self-sufficiency rate, focus on local content, optimise the utilisation of resources, and ensure food safety and quality.

The focus is also on strengthening the role of the private sector and implementing investment opportunities while increasing the gross domestic product.

"The agriculture, fisheries, and water resources sectors witnessed tangible progress this year in implementing strategic programmes and initiatives, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and enhancing the contribution of these sectors to economic diversification, raising production rates, and achieving local added value," states Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in the annual report 2025.

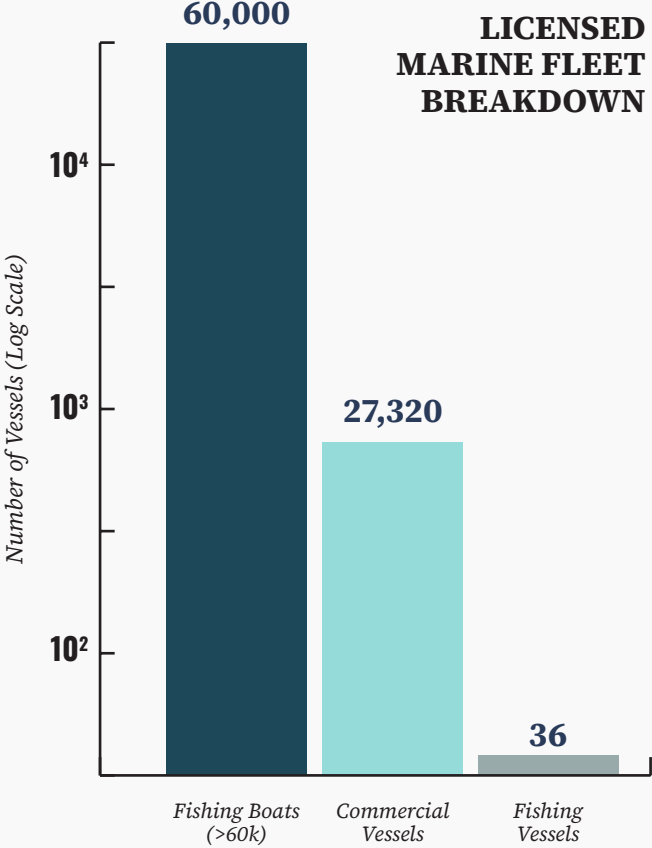
He added that the ministry has also been paying great attention to adopting innovation and modern technologies, developing the service system, and improving the efficiency of resource use, especially water resources, in light of increasing climatic and environmental challenges, in order to ensure their



The ministry worked to empower national talent to raise productivity and enhance local added value.

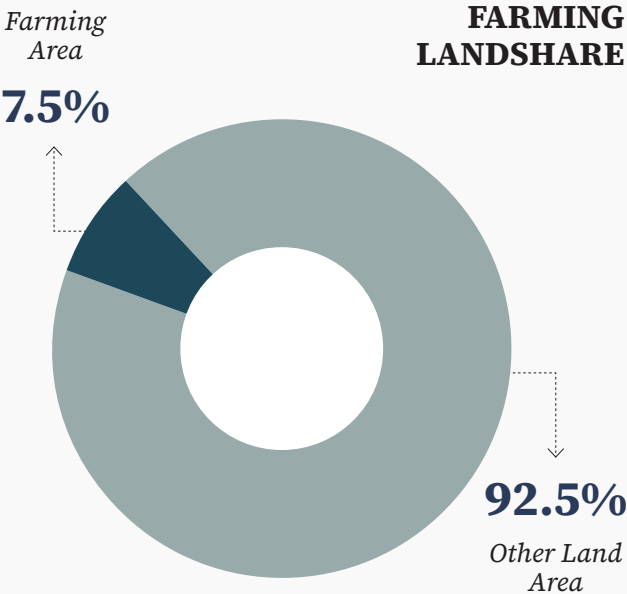
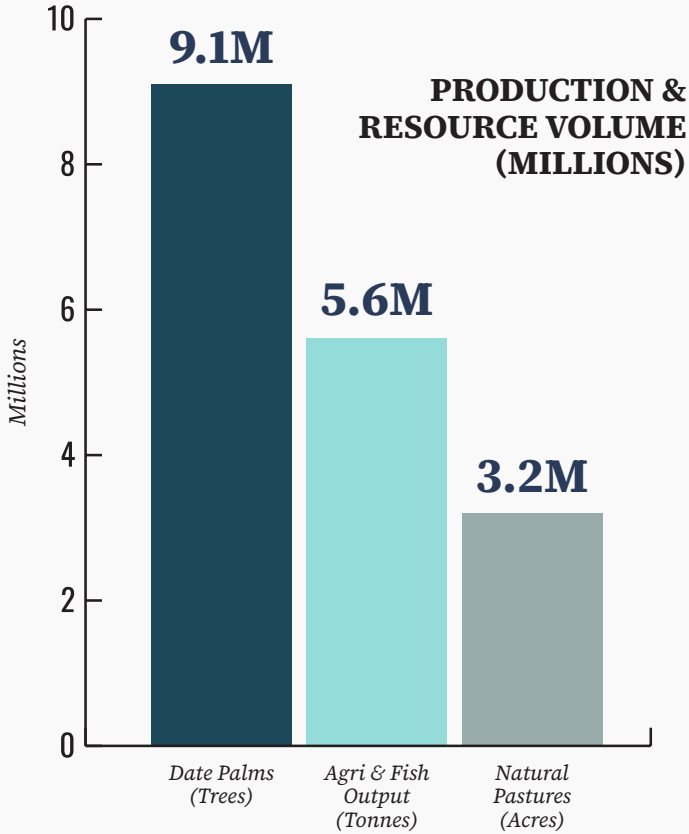
sustainability for future generations. This annual report highlights the strategic planning, the adoption of modern technologies, and the strengthening of partnerships with the public and private sectors. "The ministry also worked to empower national talent and support quality initiatives and projects that contribute to raising productivity and enhancing local added value." In light of the accelerating environmental and climate challenges, the annual report noted that the ministry continued its efforts to ensure the optimal use of natural resources and enhance the efficiency of water management, contributing to achieving a balance between development requirements and preserving the environment for future generations. The report reviews the most prominent initiatives, projects, and programmes implemented during the year, along with the indicators and results achieved in the ongoing journey towards developing the sector and enhancing its regional and international competitiveness. Based on the data provided in the Fisheries Statistical Yearbook, there are more than 60,000 licensed fishing boats, 27,320 licensed commercial vessels, 36 licensed fishing vessels, 1,243 licences for transporting and marketing fish, 1,220 infrastructure and markets and existing fish markets, 24 existing ports, 62 existing fish processing plants, 119 fisheries establishments holding a quality control certificate, and 4,117 fish processing factories by the governorates. The total number of factories across the governorates is 110.

OMAN AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES KEY DATA OVERVIEW



AGRICULTURE & RELATED SECTOR WORKFORCE

256,000
Employed workers across Oman



The focus is also on strengthening the role of the private sector and implementing investment opportunities while increasing the gross domestic product

SHORT TAKES



This year, 31 GED top achievers, 13 girls and 18 boys, were recognised for outstanding averages ranging from 94.5 per cent to 99 per cent.

ABM International School celebrates over a decade of excellence

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Ahmad Bin Majid (ABM) International School celebrated the outstanding achievements of its students at its 2026 General Education Diploma and Cambridge IGCSE Recognition Ceremony, marking a historic milestone as the school celebrates its tenth consecutive year of achieving the nation's top General Education Diploma results.

The ceremony brought together distinguished guests, members of the Board of Directors, educators, parents and the wider school community to honour students whose dedication, perseverance and academic excellence continue to set a national benchmark.

The boys' ceremony was inaugurated by Shaikh Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation, while the girls' ceremony was graced by Dr Badriya bint Ibrahim al Shihi.

This year, 31 GED top achievers, 13 girls and 18 boys, were recognised for outstanding averages ranging from 94.5 per cent to 99 per cent. In addition, 11 students, 8 girls and 3 boys, were honoured for exceptional Cambridge IGCSE results, reflecting ABM's commitment to internationally benchmarked academic standards.

Addressing the ceremony, ABM board member Hamad bin Najim al Tamami emphasised that the school's achievements extend beyond classrooms and examination results. He highlighted ABM's philosophy of developing students of strong character, integrity, respect, responsibility, compassion and resilience, while preparing them to become confident and capable future leaders.

The school's educational philosophy is reflected in a wide range of experiential and global programmes. Through its Umrah Programme, students develop leadership, responsibility and service while deepening their connection to their faith and heritage. Cultural exchange initiatives in Germany and Japan broaden students' global perspectives while strengthening their pride in representing Oman.

Students have also participated in Unesco programmes focused on sustainability, heritage and global citizenship, winning the CIPP Global Award from among 30,000 participants for a sustainable city design. Through its partnership with Sultan Qaboos University, students have gained hands on experience in archaeological excavation and research, contributing to discoveries of sites and artefacts dating back approximately 3,000 years.



KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Backed by the massive drive to empower Omani youth, an Indian technology company has offered to train 1,000 citizens to become entrepreneurs, giving them the capabilities needed to drive their own businesses.

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the Oman-India Business Forum, Noushad M K, Founder and CEO of KenPrimo, a digital marketing and technology solutions agency based in India, which specialises in helping businesses build and improve their online presence, said that the company has plans to identify, develop and enable 1,000 startups and entrepreneurial ventures in Oman over the next three years.

The country already has entrepreneurs, startups, government programmes, incubators, investors and institutions supporting SMEs. The opportunity now is to connect these strengths

NOUSHAD M K
FOUNDER AND
CEO OF KENPRIMO



Noushad M K, Founder and CEO of KenPrimo

“We are targeting building entrepreneurs and creating enterprises in order for them to take part in Oman's future-building exercise, aiming at building a connected platform where aspiring entrepreneurs can move from idea to enterprise, and from enterprise to scale,” he said.

The initiative envisages bringing together the different elements required for entrepreneurship, such as talent, ideas, mentors, technology, incubation, investment, corporates, government institutions and markets, into one collaborative ecosystem, rather than creating another standalone programme.

This concept is based on the national economic transformation under Oman Vision 2040, with strong emphasis on economic diversification, innovation, technology, knowledge, private-sector development and entrepreneurship.

“The country already has entrepreneurs, startups, government programmes, incubators, investors and institutions supporting SMEs. The opportunity now is to connect these strengths, increase participation, accelerate entrepreneurial journeys and

create more scalable businesses.”

The idea, which is currently in the final stages, aims at making entrepreneurship an attractive career and economic opportunity for the next generation of Omanis. The initiative will work across the complete entrepreneurial journey, from inspire to ideate and from incubate to build, fund, market and scale.

This mission directly supports the bThis new training programme follows the recent Omani CFO Mentoring Programme by Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI Muscat) in association with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) where six batches of the Omani CFOs were given intensive training as part of the programme across different regions of the Sultanate of Oman over the past couple of years.

Takyef’ trains experts to boost addiction aftercare

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL Development (MoSD) has launched the ‘Takyef’ training programme, targeting 80 specialists to enhance their capabilities in providing aftercare services to people recovering from addiction and supporting their families.

The programme seeks to strengthen the post-treatment care system by developing a comprehensive national model that promotes stability, family support and social integration for recovering individuals.

It focuses on equipping specialists with the skills and knowledge required in counselling, psychological and family rehabilitation, while strengthening professional practices in the provision of aftercare services.

The initiative comes as part of efforts to enhance the social care system and ensure continued support for recovering individuals beyond the treatment stage. It recognises aftercare as an essential component of the recovery process, particularly in helping individuals adapt to their social and family environments and resume their roles within the community.

A key objective of the programme is to develop a comprehensive national model for aftercare that provides appropriate support to



The programme promotes stability, family support and social integration for recovering individuals.

The initiative reflects an approach that views recovery as a continuing process rather than one that ends with the completion of treatment

recovering individuals and their families.

The model is expected to contribute to improving coordination among relevant institutions and strengthening the quality and consistency of services provided during the post-treatment period.

It also seeks to empower specialists with the necessary professional skills in counselling and psychological and family rehabilitation. This is aimed at enhancing their ability to address the challenges faced by recovering individuals and provide appropriate guidance and support.

The family plays an important role in helping recovering individuals maintain their progress after treatment.

‘Itqan’ to transfer legal training into digital environment

MUSCAT: An agreement was signed between the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs and Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) to build an integrated digital system for training and qualifying lawyers and legal advisers, named ‘Itqan’, aimed at elevating professional practice efficiency and the quality of legal services in the Sultanate of Oman.

The contract was signed on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs by Dr Yahya bin Nasser al Khusaibi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, while it was signed on behalf of Omantel by Eng Sami bin Ahmed al Ghassani, Chief Commercial and Operational Officer at the company.

The ‘Itqan’ platform aims to transfer the legal training system into a modern digital environment that enables offering training programmes and pathways efficiently and flexibly, helps unify training and evaluation standards, makes programmes accessible to beneficiaries across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, and monitors trainees’ performance to measure their progress and achievement of targeted educational and



An agreement was signed to build an integrated digital system for training and qualifying lawyers. — ONA

professional outcomes.

‘Itqan’ is scheduled to provide specialised digital legal and training content combining legal knowledge, professional skills, and practical applications, covering national legislation, professional ethics, research, drafting, pleading, and legal consultation skills, as well as other areas related to legal practice.

The preparation of the content will take into account the diversity of target group needs and their professional levels, while subjecting materials and programmes to stages of review and accreditation to ensure their legal soundness and scientific and technical quality, utilising national and specialised expertise in preparing and delivering content, thereby contributing to establishing a digital legal library adaptable to updates and development in line with legislative and professional developments.

Dr Yahya bin Nasser al Khusaibi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, affirmed that the ‘Itqan’ platform represents an important step in implementing training and qualification requirements, reflecting the ministry's keenness to prepare legal practitioners possessing the necessary knowledge.

He explained that through the platform, the ministry seeks to establish a sustainable approach to professional development in the legal sector that keeps pace with legislative and professional developments and contributes to enhancing the readiness of legal practitioners. — ONA

Indian firm to train 1,000 Omanis to become entrepreneurs

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



People sit near a TV screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a train station in Seoul. — AFP

NORTH KOREA FIRES MULTIPLE BALLISTIC MISSILES

SEOUL: North Korea fired multiple ballistic missiles on Saturday, Seoul said, a day after South Korea concluded five days of joint maritime drills with the United States and Japan that were focused on the North.

Pyongyang last month slammed plans for the so-called Freedom Edge joint exercises in international waters off South Korea as a “threat” to North Korea and other countries of the region.

On Saturday, Seoul’s military detected “multiple short-range ballistic missiles launched from the Wonsan area toward the East Sea,” also known as Sea of Japan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. The missiles were detected at around 05:20 am and flew around 250 kilometres, they added.

South Korean and US intelligence authorities “have tracked and shared relevant developments since the initial stage of the launch and also shared information regarding the ... missile with Japan,” the JCS statement said. — **AFP**

PHILIPPINES FERRY FIRE TOLL HITS 76



Myra Bilan, cries while speaking to a relative on the phone as they wait for information about family members who are among those missing following a fire aboard the MV June Aster ferry off the coast of Palawan, in Coron, Philippines. — Reuters

CORON: Philippine disaster agency workers carried coffins to a cemetery in the resort town of Coron on Saturday, intended for the temporary burial of victims of a ferry fire that has killed dozens of people.

The bodies arrived by sea to begin the painstaking process of identification by forensic specialists, days after a fire tore through the M/V June Aster “in seconds”, according to the coast guard. The confirmed death toll is 76 people, counting 30 bodies included in the initial transfer from the wrecked ferry and five others recovered earlier, but officials have said more bodies remain aboard the vessel.

A local official said that teams in Coron, Palawan had dug 70 graves on the instruction of disaster officials. The one-metre deep graves are intended to hold the victims’ remains until DNA testing is completed, Kristine Ablana, a tourism official serving as an official spokesperson, told reporters on Saturday. Relatives will first be brought into a room to identify personal items that may have belonged to family members.

“Once someone is able to verify... that this photo or these belongings are indeed those of their relative, they will be asked to provide a DNA sample,” Ablana said. — **AFP**

3 IRANIAN SECURITY FORCE MEMBERS KILLED IN CLASHES

TEHRAN: Three members of Iran’s security forces were killed in clashes with gunmen on Saturday, state media reported, in a region plagued by violence involving armed groups, activists and traffickers.

State television said four of the gunmen were also killed during the operation against “fighters” in Iran’s southeast.

“During a joint operation by the Revolutionary Guards, the General Intelligence Directorate and the

police, four fighters were killed,” it reported, citing a statement from the Guards, the ideological arm of Iran’s military.

The statement, which did not specify if the gunmen were affiliated with any organisation, said they were planning an “operation” in the city of Saravan, which lies more than 1,300 kilometres from the capital Tehran.

Iranian forces also seized “weapons, ammunition and

explosives”, the statement added.

The operation took place in Sistan-Baluchistan province, one of Iran’s regions that borders Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Security forces regularly clash with armed groups, fighters and traffickers in the area.

On Tuesday, a commander in Iran’s Basij paramilitary force, which is affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards, was killed in an attack in Sistan-Baluchistan. — **AFP**

BRICS urge ‘maximum restraint’ in ME war



Leaders pose for a family photo during the BRICS summit in New Delhi, India. — Reuters

MEMBERS OF the 11-nation BRICS group including China, Russia, Iran and India called for calm in the Middle East, in a joint statement issued on Saturday at a summit in New Delhi.

“We express deep concern over the continued escalation of tensions in Middle East/West Asia and, recalling our respective national positions, call for exercising maximum restraint, as well as avoiding actions that could further aggravate the situation,” said the statement.

Foreign ministers of the BRICS grouping failed to agree on a joint statement when they met in New Delhi in May, with member states Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates divided over the war that began with US-Israeli strikes on February 28. But a statement was issued at the leaders’ meeting on Saturday after intense diplomatic efforts by host India.

The statement also condemned

Chinese President Xi Jinping, says that the Middle East war ‘does not serve the common interests of the international community’

attacks on civilian infrastructure and nuclear facilities.

“We express serious concern over deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure and peaceful nuclear facilities under full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in violation of international law and relevant resolutions of the IAEA,” it said.

“Nuclear safeguards, safety, and security must always be upheld, including in armed conflicts, to protect people and the environment from harm.”

BRICS was created in 2009 as a forum for major emerging economies seeking greater influence in institutions dominated by Western powers. Chinese President Xi Jinping, speaking on Saturday at the opening of the two-day summit, said that the Middle East war “does not serve the common interests of the international community”, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian are all at the summit.

“We note the current global context of polarisation and distrust and encourage global action to strengthen international peace and security,” the joint statement read.

“We stress the need to work together to maintain smooth flow of global trade, supply chains and energy, in accordance with applicable international law,” it added. The UAE crown prince, Sheikh Khaled Bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is also at the summit in New Delhi, as is Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan was expected to join later.

The declaration, adopted on the first day of the BRICS leaders’ annual summit in New Delhi, comes at a time when US and Iran have resumed tit-for-tat strikes against each other, after a pause in fighting for much of August. — **AFP**



JOURNALISTS SEARCH CONTINUES

A search team uses binoculars while combing the coast of Mount Anak Krakatau from the waters of the Sunda Strait during the fifth day of the search for five journalists missing while covering the eruption of Mount Anak Krakatau on September 7.

Indonesian rescuers have been searching the waters and islands around an active volcano for a missing speedboat carrying eight people including five journalists sent to cover a volcanic eruption. — **AFP**

DISEASE SPREADS

DR Congo Ebola epidemic passes 7,000 cases



More than 7,000 Ebola cases have been recorded in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s worst outbreak of the deadly disease ever. It began in the northeastern Ituri province before spreading to conflict-plagued, remote eastern and northern regions where armed groups have roamed for decades. The disease was confirmed to have spread to a seventh province, South-Ubangi, which borders the Central African Republic and Congo-Brazzaville. — **AFP**

UNANNOUNCED VISIT

Lebanon’s president visits south



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun visited the country’s south on Saturday, in a surprise trip to a city close to a strategic Hezbollah position recently captured and blown up by Israel. Official Lebanese media said he arrived in the city of Nabatieh unannounced and accompanied by security officials. His visit comes a day after a senior US diplomatic official said a new round of US-brokered talks between Israel and Lebanon, initially scheduled for next week, had been pushed back to October. — **AFP**

NO CASUALTIES

Explosions at ammunition storage site



An explosion and fire have hit an ammunition storage site in Bulgaria, police said, weeks after a blaze at another munitions facility in the country. The latest incident happened late on Friday at a warehouse operated by Bulgarian arms maker EMCO, whose munitions are used in Ukraine, near the central village of Gorni Varpishta. No casualties were reported and workers were evacuated from the site. — **AFP**

SHORTTAKES



President Volodymyr Zelensky & Russian President Vladimir Putin.

ZELENSKY READY TO MEET PUTIN AT G20 IN MIAMI

BERLIN: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he would be willing to meet Russian leader Vladimir Putin at the G20 summit in Miami for talks on ending the war, in a media interview released on Saturday.

But the Kremlin said it had not yet made a decision on whether Putin would attend the gathering of world leaders on December 14-15, and repeated the Russian leader’s demand that Zelensky come to Russia for talks.

Putin has repeatedly rejected offers for a face-to-face meeting with Zelensky aimed at brokering an end to more than four years of war.

But the latest offer comes as Washington seeks to kick-start long-stalled talks on Europe’s deadliest conflict since World War II, with US negotiators visiting Kyiv and Moscow and President Donald Trump and Putin this week holding talks over the phone.

The United States holds this year’s presidency of the Group of 20 major economies, which comprises 19 countries plus the European Union and the African Union, and Russian’s finance minister has already attended one G20 meeting.

Asked whether he would be willing to meet Putin at the December summit if both leaders were invited, Zelensky told German broadcaster Deutsche Welle: “Yes, of course.

“We have to come. We have to meet, to speak, and make decisions. It’s not about words. What I will tell him or what he wants to tell me, it doesn’t matter.”

All that mattered were “results”, he added.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was cited by Russia’s TASS news agency as saying that “we do not know yet whether we will be going to Miami”.

Peskov repeated Putin’s demand that Zelensky come to Russia -- which launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, triggering the war — for any talks: “If he really wants to meet Putin, then Putin has said before that he can fly to Moscow.”

In June Zelensky said he had proposed meeting Putin in the United States during a call with Trump, and was waiting to see what came of it.

The Ukrainian leader previously said that Putin ignored an invitation to meet him at a G7 summit in France the same month.

Last weekend, US negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner visited Moscow and Kyiv. — **AFP**

Trump says he would ‘love’ to see a united Ireland

US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he would “love” to see British-run Northern Ireland unify with Ireland, remarks made during a visit to Dublin that drew a sharp response from pro-British unionists in Northern Ireland.

Trump’s comments come weeks after new British Prime Minister Andy Burnham said a referendum on Northern Ireland leaving the United Kingdom was “off the table”, a position Downing Street on Saturday said remained unchanged.

“Well, I don’t want to cause any problems, but I will tell you, I’d love to see it unified,” Trump told reporters sitting next to Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin after the pair met in Dublin. “It’s going to happen eventually ... I think it would be a fantastic thing.”

“Now the UK will have something to say about it ... but I think it would be a great thing,” he added.

Trump later said that there “was no good answer” to the question on Irish unity but repeated that he thought it would be “a very cool thing”.

Under the terms of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, a referendum can be held only at the discretion of the British government. The accord ended three decades of violence between Irish nationalists seeking a united Ireland and unionists who wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK.

While polls show a comfortable majority in Northern Ireland favour remaining in the UK, the gap has narrowed slightly since Britain’s departure from the European Union pushed unity higher up the political agenda.

The leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland’s largest party advocating continued union with Britain, rejected Trump’s prediction, saying unification with Ireland would lead to “the destruction of our country.”

“Northern Ireland’s constitutional future will be decided by the people of Northern Ireland, not by commentary in London, Dublin or Washington,” Gavin Robinson, who has publicly supported Trump in the past, wrote on X.

In Belfast, supporters of Irish unity gave a guarded response.



US President Donald Trump meets with Ireland’s Prime Minister Micheal Martin at Farmleigh House in Phoenix Park in the Irish capital Dublin. — **AFP**

British PM has said referendum on unity ‘off the table’ as pro-British unionists dismiss comments. Trump says Ireland has fleeced US on trade but that’s okay

“I think it’s just headline grabbing ... I don’t think he gives a toss whether there is a United Ireland or not,” said Eamon Hanna, a supporter of the nationalist SDLP party, which has been a strong critic of Trump’s policies.

Previous US presidents, including those with strong Irish heritage like Joe Biden, have been careful to remain neutral on Irish unification. The US government played a key role in brokering the 1998 peace deal.

Trump also met Irish President Catherine Connolly, who had joined a protest against his 2019 visit to Ireland, before she was elected to the mostly ceremonial role last year.

Connolly, formerly a long-time left-wing lawmaker, said in a statement that she conveyed to Trump “the strong view of the Irish people that the normalisation of war and genocide can never be accepted.”

Her statement did not reference any conflict, but she has been previously critical of the US war with Iran and Israel’s assault on Gaza, which Ireland, in common with a UN inquiry and several human rights groups, has described

as a genocide.

Israel rejects that characterisation, saying that it is fighting the militants who attacked it from the Palestinian enclave in 2023.

Thousands of protesters, some holding posters calling Trump a warmonger and chanting “Free free Palestine”, marched through central Dublin shortly after Trump left to watch a golf tournament at one of his resorts in the west of Ireland.

It was one of the country’s largest anti-war protests in recent years.

The centrist premier Martin had earlier focused his remarks on the countries’ close economic ties. US-owned companies, mainly in the technology and pharmaceutical sectors, employ about 10 per cent of workers in Ireland after successive governments prioritised the companies’ jobs and tax revenues over decades.

“You took all our medical companies, we’ve got to get a couple of them back,” Trump said. “You fleeced us but that’s okay ... There’s a lot of room to go around and our relationship with you is fantastic.” — **Reuters**

French police suspect train derailment was sabotage

CLEON, France: French investigators suspect sabotage was behind a train derailment in northwestern France that injured 44 people and left passengers in a state of shock, prosecutors said on Saturday.

Carrying 186 passengers, the train was running between the Normandy cities of Rouen and Caen when it came off the rails around 7:45 pm on Friday close to Renault’s factory in the town of Cleon.

During the derailment, one carriage tipped onto its side while four others left the tracks.

A fragment of rail was found on the track, with the possibility of a malicious act being treated as the main line of inquiry, said Rouen prosecutor Sebastien Gallois.

“The reasons for its presence are unknown and will have to be determined by the investigation,” he said.

Authorities activated a mass-casualty response plan, with 130 firefighters, five medical teams and 80 vehicles drafted in.

A photographer saw a mass of railway staff working around the train on Saturday morning.

Gallois said 44 people were injured, including an 18-year-old woman



MELANIE DELACOUR Mayor of Cleon

A fragment of rail was found on the track, with the possibility of a malicious act being treated as the main line of inquiry, says Rouen prosecutor Sebastien Gallois



A derailed train carriage in Cleon, northwestern France, the morning after the incident. — **AFP**

evacuated “in a critical condition”.

She was no longer in life-threatening condition on Saturday but remained hospitalised.

Cleon mayor Melanie Delacour said the victims were “in a state of shock.”

“The windows of the carriages that remained upright shattered, and because of the train’s speed, stones flew into the carriages,” she said.

She said that some victims had told her they would never take the train again.

“It is a tragedy that could have turned into a disaster on a very large scale,” Delacour added.

One of the passengers said the accident was “really shocking.”

“Suddenly there were a few jolts, and then after about three seconds it got stronger and stronger,” Louis, 24, told ICI Normandie radio.

“I couldn’t stay in my seat any more,” he said. “The windows partially shattered, the stones from the track came into the carriage,” he said.

“I’m still shaking,” he added.

SNCF Réseau, which controls the French rail network, initially said that traffic on the line had been suspended and power to the tracks cut to allow emergency services to operate.

According to SNCF, the accident caused “major disruptions” to rail traffic between Rouen and Caen and between Caen and Le Havre in both directions.

A spokesperson for SNCF Réseau said on Saturday that services had resumed.

The train will only be lifted off the line once the public prosecutor allows it, with investigations into the cause of the derailment still ongoing.

SNCF said that it would offer “full cooperation in complete transparency” to the inquiry. — **AFP**

OPINION

When the therapist goes to therapy



DR HAMED AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

RECENTLY watched the TV series “In Treatment” follows Dr Paul Weston, a psychotherapist in his fifties, through his weekly sessions with patients who come from different ages and backgrounds. The set is strikingly simple, a therapist’s clinic with a comfortable sofa and the usual decoration of books and framed certificates. No outdoor scenes, no car chases, no CGI. We watch Dr Paul navigates the sessions with his clients listening and reflecting, asking the right questions, and providing a safe space. At times he has to restrain his own emotions when a patient becomes hostile or flirtatious, because he knows those feelings are not directed at him but at someone in the patient’s life. We then see him meet his supervisor and mentor, Dr Gina, who listens to him as he lets down his guard and speaks freely about his emotions, how his clients make him feel, and about how distant he has become from his wife, who tells him that he cares about his clients more than he cares about his family. As a psychiatrist, I felt I could relate to what Dr Paul was experiencing in his daily life and

to the way his job affects his personal life. The series does a great job of displaying the emotional labour of sitting with another person’s pain, hour after hour, and remaining useful. We are trained to notice everything in the patient and almost nothing in ourselves. Burnout among health professionals is rarely dramatic. It rarely announces itself as a collapse but arrives slowly. The clinic list that once felt meaningful becomes a queue to be cleared, the interesting case becomes the difficult patient, and the colleague’s question becomes an interruption. We become efficient yet slightly absent. We finish the day with very little energy, and we tell ourselves this is temporary, that it will settle when more staff join the team, but in reality, it rarely does. There is also a particular kind of stigma at work here. Those of us who spend our careers persuading others to seek help are often the last to seek it ourselves. Admitting that the work has affected us can feel like admitting incompetence. The truth is actually the opposite. The therapist who has never

The therapist who has never examined his reactions is the one most likely to act them out, with a patient, with a trainee, or at home

examined his reactions is the one most likely to act them out, with a patient, with a trainee, or at home. As mental health professionals, we need a listener who is patient and compassionate. In many countries, supervision is often treated as something for trainees which stops them from qualifying. In my opinion, it should be a lifelong thing that is offered by a trusted senior colleague, a peer support group where clinicians can say how their clients make them feel, without fear of being judged. The series raises a point we rarely address how being a therapist can drain your empathy so that by the time you reach home, there is very little left to give your family. And if one is not careful, the roles quietly reverse. Coffee with a son or a daughter stops being time to bond and becomes an unannounced therapy session, in which the psychiatrist is the one venting or quietly seeking acknowledgement for a good day at work. In my opinion, A good therapy session differs significantly from a surgical operation. Nobody sees the life we saved, and no one is waiting at home to be told about it.

MONITORS GUARD BHUTAN AGAINST GLACIER RISK

SARA HUSSEIN

In a humble control room a few hours from Bhutan’s capital, a team works around the clock to monitor the risks of the Himalayan country’s rapidly melting glaciers. The glacial collapse that caused deadly floods on the Nepal-Tibet border late last month is a stark reminder of the dangers faced by Bhutan, which has over 600 glaciers nestled in the mountain ranges across its north. As climate change melts these ancient ice rivers, they can form glacial lakes held back by fragile debris walls. When these collapse, the lakes burst and flood communities downstream. The threat is not theoretical. In 1994, a so-called glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) killed 21 people along Bhutan’s Punatsangchhu river, also know as the Sankosh. The risk has increased exponentially since then. “The Thorthormi glacier, due to climate change, it has fully transformed into a glacial lake,” said Dechen Peldon, junior engineer at the GLOF emergency warning facility in Wangdue Phodrang region. “Now we have to be more vigilant and more concerned.” The warning centre began work in 2011, as part of a push for better monitoring after the 1994 GLOF. It oversees a network of sensors that detect changes in water levels at glacial lakes and downstream rivers, and sirens that warn communities to evacuate. There are over 600 glacial lakes in Bhutan, with 17 considered potentially dangerous. Some of those considered most dangerous sit at the head of a river feeding into the Punatsangchhu. Four glacial lakes have formed, with two only separated from each other by a fragile debris dam. In a “worst-case scenario”, the wall separating the lakes would collapse, unleashing an estimated 53 million cubic metres of water downstream. The nearest communities would have just minutes to evacuate, so sirens there are automatically triggered if water level changes suggest a potential GLOF. Sirens further downstream are triggered manually by Dechen’s team, which works 24 hours a day, if a dangerous change in water levels is detected. Though the recent disaster in neighbouring Nepal involved a glacier collapse, rather than a GLOF, it has reinforced the urgency of the job, said Dechen. “I’m more alarmed and taking this more seriously,” she said. “We, the control room operators, are more vigilant than we were before.” Working with the disaster agency, the facility organises mock drills and information sessions, but nearby cafe owner Pushpa Karki admitted she was not sure what the siren outside her business even sounds like. — AFP

The peril of placing nukes in unstable hands



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author



In the nuclear age a single decision could destroy cities, kill millions and trigger a wider war. — AI generated image

of empathy for people who suffer because of his actions. The danger increases if he dismisses expert advice, removes officials who challenge him and surrounds himself with people who tell him only what he wants to hear. There may also be a more direct danger when a leader loses contact with reality. Severe paranoia, delusions, mania, or major cognitive decline can impair the ability to assess evidence and understand consequences. A leader might interpret an ordinary military exercise as an imminent attack or believe that personal or political defeat justifies extreme retaliation. This raises a question democratic societies have not adequately addressed: should anyone be given control over nuclear weapons without an independent psychiatric assessment of mental fitness? The purpose would not be to judge political opinions or ideology nor to exclude candidates simply because their views are unpopular. It would be to identify serious clinical conditions that could impair reality-based judgement, impulse control, emotional stability, appreciation of consequences or the ability to respond to expert advice. Clear legal safeguards would be needed to prevent medical assessments becoming tools for removing legitimate political opponents. Mental fitness should

also be monitored during office. A leader’s condition may change because of illness, medication, substance misuse, neurological disease, exhaustion or the pressures of power. Someone who was fit at the beginning of a term might later suffer a condition affecting his judgement. There should therefore be a constitutional and medical procedure for temporarily transferring nuclear authority when credible evidence demonstrates serious impairment. Psychiatric assessment is not enough. Nuclear states need multiple layers of authorisation, reliable military advice, independent institutions and clear communication between rival governments. Officials must be able to question a leader without fearing dismissal, imprisonment or personal revenge. No diagnosis can predict with certainty that a leader will launch nuclear weapons. Nor can professional assessment guarantee wise decisions. It can, however, identify conditions that may seriously impair judgement and provide an additional safeguard before extraordinary power is granted. The answer is not to stigmatise mental illness. It is to recognise that nuclear authority demands emotional stability, reality-based judgement, self-restraint and respect for human life.

No diagnosis can predict with certainty that a leader will launch nuclear weapons. It can, however, identify conditions that may seriously impair judgement and provide an additional safeguard before extraordinary power is granted

Boomers to millennials, the vulnerable generations



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

THE NEW, social, technologies are great, aren't they? Well, if you're of the current generation, and 'tech' has been part of your life while you're growing up, they are as easy as 'falling off a log.'

But for us 'baby boomers,' born during the fifties and sixties, 'Gen X' the seventies and eighties, and 'millennials, till the end of the century, then you would fall off that log. You may be competent without being confident, and are being overpowered by the 'tech.'

Recent research tells us that though 15 per cent of those are confident enough to be 'digitally included,' at the other end of the scale another 15 per cent are digitally 'excluded.' That means that 70 per cent are somewhere in the middle, and for them, the 'tech' is a worry to some extent or other.

Certainly, banking and retail have moved inexorably towards tech within what they call 'customer service,' to the extent that 'simple' transactions and processes have become challenges to baby boomers thru millennials. Phone and internet functions challenge simple tasks, and even navigating the various app screens has become more complex, creating a reluctance to do 'easier' tasks.

Physical health impacts from eyesight to dexterity, stereotypically age-related, are genuine fears for the older user, though eager to be self-sufficient, independent, and

connected, the feeling of 'uselessness,' is difficult to shake!

I purchased an appliance recently, not a large one, and paid cash, and was asked for my email and phone number, "Just for your warranty you understand." Well, since then I've been bombarded with numerous enquiries that end in a sales pitch for new appliances. So, it's not about the warranty at all. Grrrrrr!

How ridiculous is it that if I go out for a meal, to a local pub, or a chain establishment, I must scan and download the menu and read it on my phone. What a palaver! Or to get a pizza delivered I'm not trusted to pay on delivery anymore. It must be done through the app. Nuts!

If I go to park my car in a parking building the automatic number plate recognition system reads me in and out, but payment must be done through an app, and every parking building seems to be on a different app. Even more inconveniently, if I park on the street, I must decide how long I will be, download an app, and pay that way, and probably for a time more than that I need, for fear of overstaying! Easy? Well. Maybe for you whippersnappers...

These generations are not comfortable with using ATMs, having no confidence that they are as safe as they have been using their bank branch, with tellers and staff they know,

Recent research tells us that though 15 per cent of those are confident enough to be 'digitally included,' at the other end of the scale another 15 per cent are digitally 'excluded'

and have known, for years! Now they take money, unprotected, from machines, in busy, but exposed high street locations, rushed, flustered, under pressure, maybe confusing their PINs numbers, taking their money with people maybe, watching. It's sooooo stressful!

And self-service check-outs, as preferred by the major retail chains, mean their purchases must be taken from the trolley or basket, scanned, and placed aside, then paid for, packed away, trolleyed, and taken out... and there are always 'beeps,' always things that don't scan. It's called progress!

Only last week, my energy supplier asked me to 'roll-over,' my rate structure for the next two years, but their unwelcome implied threat at the end of the proposal was along the lines of, "Failure to complete this agreement may mean disruption to your energy needs, and the application of premium rate electricity and gas to your account." How appalling is that?

Caroline Abrams of Age UK, has been at the forefront of ensuring that generations of people who grew up using their fingers, pencils and paper to keep their finances in order, have genuine and appropriate support via national standards, saying the current situation is "profoundly unfair," and she's not wrong!

...And don't get me started on two-factor-identification, authorisation, verification or whatever!

SWEDEN RACES INTO FINAL STRETCH BEFORE ELECTION

PIA OHLIN

Sweden's party leaders campaigned in the final stretch of a close election race that could see either the centre left take back power or the far right enter government for the first time.

Outgoing Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson is hoping for a renewed mandate to "make Sweden great again", he said on the sidelines of a campaign rally, in a nod to US President Donald Trump's catchphrase. While Europe is dominated by right-wing governments, opinion polls in Sweden have for months shown the opposition left-wing bloc holding a strong lead ahead of Sunday's general election, although the final days of the campaign has seen the lead narrowing.

"The most important thing is that the right wing wins, to continue what they have started," pensioner Kurt Flodin, 79, said of Kristersson's outgoing government.

He said he wanted Kristersson to continue focusing on curbing the organised crime plaguing the country.

For their part, the centre-left Social Democrats — which governed for the better part of the 20th century and remain Sweden's biggest party — have pledged to help struggling households pay bills and bolster the welfare state.

Jenny Larsson, a theatre worker who turns 54 on election day, said these issues mattered. She said she was unhappy with politicians "blaming immigration for things that are not caused by immigration" - and said she feared the far-right Sweden Democrats would be allowed into government if the right-wing bloc won.

The anti-immigration Sweden Democrats, long viewed as political pariahs, caused shock in the 2022 election when they overtook Kristersson's Moderates to become Sweden's second-biggest party, on 20.5 per cent.

Kristersson responded by making an unprecedented deal with the extreme-right party so his minority coalition could form a government.

He gave the Sweden Democrats significant influence over government policy - especially on crime and immigration - in return for far-right support in parliament.

He has now gone further, promising the Sweden Democrats cabinet posts if he is re-elected, a pledge whose significance he downplayed on Friday.

"There's nothing dramatic in that," he argued.

"Everybody can see that we have been cooperating successfully for the last four years," he said.

An Indikator opinion poll published on Friday credited the four opposition parties - the Social Democrats, Greens, Centre and Left — with 50.8 per cent of voter support.

The right-wing bloc — Kristersson's Moderates, the Sweden Democrats, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals — garnered 47.6 per cent.

In another poll by Ipsos, the two sides were practically dead even, with the opposition winning 49.3 per cent of votes against 49.0 per cent for Kristersson's side. — AFP

Philippine enclave trades bullets for election ballots

ON A BASKETBALL court in the Philippines' Marawi, ballots piled high on pallets awaited transport to towns across a region that has traded decades of separatist violence for a chance at self-determination.

Not far from there, campaign posters clung to the sides of bombed-out buildings, a stark reminder of bloody battles between fighters and government forces nearly a decade ago. Following an on-off peace process that began in the late 1990s, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) heads to its first polls on Monday, trading appointed parliamentarians for elected ones.

In a region long marred by political violence and blood feuds between powerful families, a peaceful election would be considered a success, party leaders said last week.

"Everyone agrees that more than winning, we need to preserve the relative peace we've achieved... That's paramount for everyone," said candidate Naguib Sinarimbo, a key strategist for the newly formed Bangsomoro Federalist Party (BFP).

Former rebels and dynastic clans are expected to dominate the polls, while minority Christians and Indigenous groups vie for representation.

The group that had fought for regional autonomy in the predominantly Catholic country, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), is now split between two competing parties.

An estimated 14,000 men from the MILF remain under arms.

Thousands of them have followed military commander Abdulraof Macacua to his BFP party since President Ferdinand Marcos chose him as interim chief minister.

Senior MILF leadership opposed that appointment, with thousands more fighters remaining loyal to longtime chairman Murad Ebrahim and his United Bangsamoro Justice Party. Checkpoints have proliferated in recent weeks and more than 20,000 security personnel have been assembled to secure polling stations, but the lead-up to Monday's vote has not been without incident.



CHAD WILLIAMS

The writer is Manila bureau chief for AFP



A worker moves ballot boxes next to piles of election paraphernalia inside a stadium in Marawi, Lanao del sur province on the southern island of Mindanao. — AFP

Last month, a Macacua motorcade was ambushed and peppered with bullets.

On the day after AFP arrived in regional capital Cotabato, a convoy of about 200 armed MILF fighters was turned away from the city for violating the terms of the region's peace agreement, said election official Ray Sumalipao.

At a base for the MILF's military wing outside Cotabato, a young fighter said he was fearful of a clash "brother against brother".

In his office inside the compound, 78-year-old Murad shook his head at the idea, saying there would be "no conflict".

"The spirit of brotherhood is stronger than political differences," he said, adding he maintained open lines of communication with his one-time allies, who remain MILF members despite being stripped of rank.

The group's former chief negotiator, Mohagher Iqbal, said in a separate interview: "If we lose fair and square, we don't have a problem with that."

To Murad, residents accepting the outcome would hinge on how the polls are conducted, citing alleged voter intimidation by the Philippine military.

"Sometimes during elections, the military conducts operations. Although they don't directly block people from going to vote... people

get scared," he said.

Sinarimbo, of the rival faction, warned against the "dangerous idea that some groups are the only ones entitled to rule the government because they were the ones who fought for it".

"There are risks involved," he said of the vote. "But I think the level we've achieved is sufficient enough to hold the parties to continue with the (peace) agreement."

"There's no turning back."

In Lanao del Sur province, home to Marawi, Vice Governor Mohammad Khalid Adiong said that "the most critical element" was returning the region's combatants to civilian life.

"Decommissioning was the central purpose of the peace talks," he said.

The Adiong family has joined with other regional political dynasties in forming the BARMM Grand Coalition, positioning itself as an alternative to the now-divided MILF.

Many voters, meanwhile, are contending with an unfamiliar process.

"Who knows how to vote?" candidate Emelita Cordero had asked a group of would-be constituents in one of the BARMM's Christian communities.

"No one was raising their hand," said Cordero, 57, whose small BEST party is fielding a slate that is nearly half women.

SPORTS

AL SHABAB STUN OMAN CLUB AS BAHLA FIGHT BACK AGAINST SUR

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

AL SHABAB revived their Jindal League campaign with a valuable 2-0 win over Oman Club at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Friday, while Bahla came from behind to beat Sur 3-1 and Dhofar collected their first point in a goalless draw away to Sohar. The scheduled meeting between Al Nasr and Al Musannah in Salalah was postponed due to an electrical fault at Al Saada Sports Complex.

The results added more movement to the early standings after three rounds. Al Shabab moved to six points, level with Oman Club, who suffered their first defeat after two wins. Sohar advanced to five points, Dhofar finally opened their account, and Bahla picked up their first victory after back-to-back defeats.

At Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Al Shabab made a perfect start against Oman Club. In the second minute, Musab al Mamari delivered a precise cross into the area and Croatian forward Marko rose well to head the ball into the net, giving Al Shabab an early 1-0 lead.

Oman Club tried to respond through Joel Mozefiko, whose free-kick in the 12th minute was handled by goalkeeper Majdi al Ajmi. The Muscat side created further chances through Ammar al Shiyadi, Al Harith al Mukhaini and Abdulaziz al Shaqsi, but Al Shabab's defence stayed organised.

Oman Club pushed harder after the break and nearly levelled in the 49th minute when Mozefiko's effort struck



Al Shabab and Oman Club players in action during the third round of the Jindal League at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.



At Sur Sports Complex, Bahla produced a strong second-half response to defeat Sur 3-1.



Action from Sohar's goalless draw with Dhofar at Sohar Sports Complex in the Jindal League third round.

the crossbar. Al Shabab then punished that miss in the 56th minute as defender Khalid al Buraiki headed in from a corner to double the lead. Oman Club continued to threaten, but Majdi al Ajmi produced key saves late on to secure the clean sheet.

At Sohar Sports Complex, Sohar and Dhofar shared the points after a 0-0 draw. Dhofar were the better side for spells of the first half and came close through Abu Kamara, whose effort hit the post after another chance had been cleared by Algerian defender Mohammed Ihab.

Sohar improved after the interval and created opportunities through Abdullah al Maqbali and Ibrahim al Raqadi, but neither side could find the finishing touch. Sohar ended the match with 10 players after Rashid al Hosni was sent off in stoppage time.

BAHLA BEAT SUR

At Sur Sports Complex, Bahla produced a strong second-half response to defeat Sur 3-1. Sur went ahead in the 17th minute through Ayser al Alawi, but Bahla returned with greater purpose after the interval. Mohammed al Omairi equalised in the 53rd minute before Jacques put Bahla ahead in the 61st minute. Substitute Abdulwahid al Hinai sealed the win in the 86th minute to hand Bahla three important points.

In Salalah, Al Nasr's match against Al Musannah was called off after officials waited for nearly an hour while attempts were made to fix an electrical fault in parts of Al Saada Sports Complex. The Oman Football Association will announce a new date for the fixture.

Promising talents shine at speed skating championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

The Speed Skating Championship highlighted promising talent among young skaters as 65 boys and girls took part in a sporting event aimed at promoting skating and encouraging emerging talents to practise and develop their skills.

Organised by Elite Sport Club under the supervision of the Oman Skating Sports Committee (OSSC), the championship featured skating teams from Al Dhahirah, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Al Buraimi and Muscat, along with individual amateur competitors.

The event came as part of the committee's efforts to support and develop skating sports in the Sultanate of Oman by providing competitive platforms for young talents, helping discover their abilities, refine their technical skills and strengthen the presence of skating sports across different age groups.

Participants competed in four age categories: Category A for ages 4 to 6, Category B for ages 7 to 9, Category C for ages 10 to 12, and Category D for ages 13 to 15, in addition to speed skating races.

In Category A, Natalie Navi won first place, followed by Shivank Amin in second and Ryan Abu



65 boys and girls took part in the Speed Skating Championship.

Manshar in third. In Category B boys, Muhanna al Hasni claimed first place, with Ziyad al Waili second and Omair al Hasni third. In the girls' competition of the same category, Sarah al Wahibi topped the standings, followed by Ding Zi Xiao and Kayan al Qumail.

In Category C boys, Saud al Yaqoubi won first place, ahead of Muadh al Amri and Ding Zi Yu. In the girls' competition, Dhubya al Sakiti secured first place, while Rabab al Ghafri came second and Meera al Yaqoubi third.

In Category D, Saif al Mahrouqi took first place, followed by

Mohsin al Amri in second and Turki al Mundhiri in third.

The speed skating races witnessed strong competition, with Nuwaira Dasi winning first place in Category A, Roxana Salehi second and Arafah Falisha third. In Category B, Spica SD topped the race, followed by Nora Balisha and Varshikan SD.

SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH

Khalid bin Salim al Shaqsi, OSSC Secretary, expressed his happiness with the successful launch of the event, saying it aligned with the committee's objectives to enhance



The championship was organised by Elite Sport Club under the supervision of the Oman Skating Sports Committee.

skating sports, develop athletes and qualify young people in administrative and technical fields.

He added that the committee continues to expand its programmes in various skating disciplines, noting the recent participation of national team players in an international camp in Belarus. "We seek to expand the committee's programmes in speed skating. We congratulate all winners, but the biggest victory is the interaction and record participation witnessed in the first speed skating event," he said.

Abdullah al Sulaimani, a

competitor from Muscat, said he was pleased to take part and meet skaters from across Oman. He added that this was his second speed skating championship and that he aspires to improve in speed skating and ice hockey.

Dhubya al Sakiti from Al Dhahirah said she was proud to win first place in her category at the Oman level, adding that she hopes to represent Oman globally in skating sports. At the conclusion, Khalid bin Salim al Shaqsi honoured the winners in an atmosphere that reflected the championship's success.



The complex was developed in accordance with the standards approved by the International Shooting Sport Federation.

NOSC-MUSCAT EMERGES AS NATIONAL HUB FOR OMANI SHOOTERS

State-of-the-art complex provides year-round platform for training, talent development and international competition

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

THE National Olympic Shooting Complex (NOSC) in Muscat is fast establishing itself as more than a venue for tournaments and competitions. It is emerging as a national hub for developing Omani shooters, providing a dedicated environment where athletes can build their technical skills, gain competitive experience and prepare for major regional, continental and international assignments.

Since its official opening on May 12, 2025, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, the complex has represented a significant addition to Oman's sports infrastructure and a major step forward for the development of Olympic shooting in Oman. For the Oman Shooting Federation (OSF), the establishment of NOSC-Muscat provides an opportunity to create a more structured and sustainable pathway for national-team athletes, emerging shooters, coaches, referees and administrators.

The complex was developed in accordance with the highest international specifications and standards approved by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF), allowing Oman to provide athletes with training and competition conditions that meet international requirements.

HOME FOR OMANI SHOOTERS
Khalid bin Ali al Maqbali, OSF Secretary-General, said the facility has become an important component of the federation's efforts to improve the technical level of Omani shooters and provide them with a professional training environment. "The complex brings together a number of facilities



designed to meet the needs of athletes and technical teams, making it possible to conduct regular training programmes, selection trials, technical activities and competitions at one location," he said.

"This represents an important change for national-team preparation. Instead of relying solely on external camps and overseas facilities, Omani shooters now have access to a permanent, purpose-built facility where their development can continue throughout the year. The complex can also serve as a meeting point for the shooting community in Oman, supporting the identification of young talent and providing aspiring athletes with a pathway towards competitive shooting," he said.

OLYMPIC SPORT
Musallam bin Abdullah al Subhi, OSF board member, said the establishment of NOSC-Muscat reflects Oman's efforts to strengthen its position in Olympic sport. "The establishment of the

NOSC stems from efforts to promote the status of Omani sport at regional, continental and international levels," Al Subhi said. "The facility stands as testimony to Oman's progress in developing and modernising sports facilities in accordance with the highest international standards and criteria."

He added that the complex represents a national landmark that reflects Oman's sporting ambitions and strengthens the country's ability to host official competitions at different levels. "Perhaps the most important long-term role of NOSC-Muscat is its potential to widen the base of Omani shooters. With a permanent national facility, the federation has greater scope to introduce shooting to new participants, organise development programmes and identify promising athletes at an earlier stage," he added.

"The complex can provide a progression pathway beginning with basic skills and familiarisation with



KHALID AL MAQBALI
OSF Secretary-General



MUSALLAM AL SUBHI
OSF board member

the sport before moving athletes towards structured training and national-level competition. This development model could eventually strengthen the national teams across different shooting disciplines, while creating greater depth behind the established names. For the federation, the objective is not simply to produce athletes capable of competing in one championship, but to establish a sustainable system in which shooters can train regularly, compete frequently and gradually gain the experience required to perform under international pressure," he said.

"The availability of the complex also supports Oman's ambition to achieve greater self-sufficiency in national-team preparation. While international camps and competitions will remain important for exposure to different conditions and high-level opponents, NOSC-Muscat provides a permanent home base from which those programmes can be planned," he said.

INTERNATIONAL-STANDARD FACILITIES
NOSC-Muscat consists of several buildings and specialised facilities. Its main building covers approximately 2,400 square metres and includes a spacious open hall, administrative offices, a weapons warehouse and ammunition storage facilities, in addition to a restaurant and a media broadcasting room designed to support digital and visual coverage of tournaments and events. The complex's shooting facilities provide capacity across several disciplines.

The 10-metre shooting range covers approximately 2,700 square metres and features 80 targets, allowing up to 80 shooters to train simultaneously. The 25-metre shooting range covers around 2,900 square metres and includes 50 targets, also accommodating up to 50 shooters at one time. Meanwhile, the 50-metre shooting range occupies approximately 2,600 square metres and features 80 targets. The controlled indoor environment is designed to provide athletes with consistent conditions, allowing them to concentrate on precision and technical execution. Spectator stands are also available across the shooting areas, supporting the facility's ability to host competitions and attract spectators.

GOING BEYOND ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
The role of NOSC extends beyond athlete preparation. One of the strategic objectives of the facility is to contribute to the development of national technical and administrative personnel. Coaches, referees and administrators can benefit from specialised programmes, theoretical sessions and practical experience associated with competitions hosted at the complex. The facility also includes spaces for lectures and theoretical training, creating opportunities to strengthen knowledge in areas such as technical regulations, competition management, judging and athlete development.

DOHA AND ROAD TO LOS ANGELES
The immediate international focus for Oman's shooters is the ISSF World Championship Doha 2026, which will be held in Qatar from November 1 to 14. The championship at the Lusail Shooting Complex represents one of the biggest events on the international shooting calendar, bringing together leading shooters from around the world. The competition carries additional significance as it is acting as part of the qualification pathway for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

A total of 36 Olympic quota places are set to be distributed at the championship, increasing the importance of every competition and every performance. For Oman, participation in Doha will therefore provide more than an opportunity to compete for medals. It will be an important test of the progress achieved by the national shooters and their ability to perform at the highest level.

SPORTS

OPENINGDAY



Sweden's Armand Duplantis celebrates after his victory in pole vault final during the World Athletics Ultimate Championship at the Gyula Zsvotzky National Athletics Centre in Budapest. — AFP

Faultless Duplantis, hungry Ingebrigtsen shine at Ultimate

BUDAPEST: Seasoned Scandinavian campaigners Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis and Jakob Ingebrigtsen shone on the opening day of the inaugural Ultimate Championship in Budapest on Friday.

With unmatched prize money totalling \$10 million on offer over 28 disciplines, Duplantis and Ingebrigtsen walked away with \$150,000 each for winning the men's pole vault and 5,000m respectively.

Pitched as a season-ending championship to bring together the best of the best, including 26 Olympic champions from the 2024 Paris Games, 26 world champions from Tokyo last year and 25 Diamond League winners from the 2026 season, the opening eight finals more than lived up to the hype.

US-born Swede Duplantis cleared 6.20 metres for victory ahead of Greek rival Emmanouil Karalis, while Norway's Ingebrigtsen continued his comeback from injury with a stunning win in the 5,000m in 12:59.24, just the second time in his career he has gone sub-13min. "It was a really fun competition tonight. It was a little bit chilly, but I had a great time," said Duplantis.

Olympic champion Ingebrigtsen, who will also race the 1,500m, produced a devastating sprint down the home straight for victory over world champion Cole Hocker of the US (13:00.05).

"I haven't run too many 5,000m races this season, but it's always good to be back competing," said Ingebrigtsen, who won his fourth successive European 5,000m title in Birmingham last month in what was his first race of the year following achilles surgery. "This victory is truly amazing."

RUSSELL, THARP VICTORIOUS

Two of this season's world record holders, Masai Russell and Ja'Kobe Tharp, duly won their short hurdles races.

Russell, fresh from running a pace-setting 12.09sec in Brussels, reeled in the 100m hurdles field after a sluggish start for victory in 12.22sec ahead of Nigeria's Tobi Amusan, in 12.34sec.

Russell's US teammate Tharp, who set a world record of 12.75sec in June, edged world champion Cordell Tinch by one-hundredth of a second for 110m hurdles victory in 12.94sec.

The first title of the first night of action went to the United States in the 4x100m mixed relay, giving them a shared pot of \$80,000.

The quartet of Ronnie Baker, Anavia Battle, Courtney Lindsey and Kayla White clocked 39.64sec ahead of world record holders Jamaica (39.72) and Britain (40.26) rounding out the podium.

"It's really exciting to be the first ever Ultimate champions!" said Baker. — AFP



USA's Ben Shelton makes a return to USA's Frances Tiafoe during their US Open semifinal at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. — AFP

Shelton advances to final for Zverev showdown

BEN SHELTON defeated compatriot Frances Tiafoe 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, 7-5 in an electric US Open semifinal on Friday to secure a title clash with Alexander Zverev and move closer to ending a 23-year American wait for a men's singles Grand Slam champion.

Zverev booked his place in Sunday's final by fighting past unseeded Russian Karen Khachanov 6-3, 7-6(7), 7-6(6) earlier in the day to close in on a second major title.

Victory sent the German top seed into his second final in New York after his runner-up finish in 2020 to Dominic Thiem.

Shelton, the big-hitting 23-year-old, now stands one victory away from becoming the first American man to win a major singles title since Andy Roddick hoisted the trophy at Flushing Meadows in 2003.

With the semifinal line-up having already ensured a Black American man would reach the final, Shelton's win made him the first to do so in New York since Arthur Ashe in 1972, and at any of the majors since MaliVai Washington at Wimbledon in 1996.

French Open champion Zverev was pushed to five sets in each of his opening two rounds, but has now won four straight matches without

Shelton defeats friend and rival Tiafoe; Zverev beats Khachanov

Shelton is one win from ending 23-year Grand Slam drought for American men

Siniakova, Townsend secure career Grand Slam in women's doubles



Germany's Alexander Zverev smiles after winning the semifinal against Russia's Karen Khachanov in New York. — AFP

dropping a set to charge into his third consecutive major final and stand in Shelton's path.

"I'm going for it," Shelton said. "I'm going to leave it all on the court. I hope you guys come and back me, let's do this for the US

"It's a lot of emotion. My dad, my mom have sacrificed a lot for me to be in this position today. My dad lost his mom earlier this year and she's the reason he was able to play tennis. Without her there's no Ben Shelton standing here today. This one is for her."

POIGNANT START TO EVENING

On a poignant evening that began with commemorations marking the 25th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, Tiafoe powered ahead

5-4 when Shelton produced a double fault, before raising the roof on the main showcourt with a hold to bag the first set.

"It's a difficult day to be out here playing," Shelton said.

"My thoughts and prayers are going out to all the families who are impacted by 9/11. This is one of the greatest cities in the world and one of the biggest tragedies. But yeah, thoughts and prayers to everyone involved and affected."

Tiafoe continued to target his opponent's relatively weaker backhand in the second set but Shelton dialled up the intensity to draw level and broke in the fifth game of the third set to take a commanding lead.

With his booming left-handed serve and his defence proving impenetrable in the high-octane fourth set, eighth seed Shelton heaped the pressure on late and moved into his maiden major final after a double fault by Tiafoe.

"Frances, he's like a big brother to me," Shelton added.

Top seeds Katerina Siniakova and Taylor Townsend earlier secured a team career Grand Slam with a 5-7, 6-0, 6-2 victory over American wildcards Ashlyn Krueger and Robin Montgomery in the women's doubles final. — Reuters

Oman's ACC Premier Cup campaign ends in Hong Kong defeat

MUSCAT: Oman's ACC Men's Premier Cup campaign ended in disappointment on Saturday as Hong Kong powered to a nine-wicket victory in the third-place play-off, handing Vinayak Shukla's side a fourth successive defeat.

Sanju Sajeev's fighting half-century was not enough to prevent Oman from being bowled out for 144 in 40.1 overs at the UKM-YSD Cricket Oval in Bangi, Malaysia, as Hong Kong rode on Nasrulla Rana's four-wicket haul before Anshuman Rath and Zeeshan Ali made light work of the chase. The defeat also brought into sharp focus Oman's batting struggles that persisted throughout the tournament.

Hong Kong raced to 146 for one in just 19.5 overs to secure third place

and a spot in the ACC Rising Stars Asia Cup alongside finalists UAE and Nepal.

Electing to bat, Oman suffered an early collapse as Hong Kong struck four times inside the opening four overs. Mujibur Ali fell for three at nine, Jatinder Singh followed for five two runs later, while Hammad Mirza was dismissed without scoring. Jiten Ramanandi's departure for four left Oman reeling at 16 for four after 3.5 overs.

Karan Sonavale attempted to rebuild with 17 from 22 balls, hitting three boundaries, but his dismissal at 52 opened the door for another setback. Captain Vinayak Shukla then added 23 from 31 deliveries, including a four and two sixes, before becoming the sixth wicket to fall with



Sanju Sajeev of Oman in action during his knock of 59 against Hong Kong.

Oman on 74.

From there, Sajeev was left to carry the innings. The 27-year-old middle-order batter, playing only his

second ODI, showed determination as wickets continued to fall around him, reaching his half-century from 80 balls. He eventually made 59 from 99 deliveries, hitting six fours and a six. However, he found little support from the rest of the batting order.

Apart from Sajeev's 59, Shukla's 23, Sonavale's 17, and Nadeem Khan's 11, the remaining batters were restricted to single-digit scores. Oman lost their last wicket at 144 in the 41st over, with Sajeev's dismissal off Aizaz Khan bringing the innings to an end.

Rana led Hong Kong's bowling effort with four for 26 from nine overs. Yasim Murtaza claimed three wickets, while Aizaz Khan returned exceptional figures of two for three from 4.1 overs.

Hong Kong's response was in

complete contrast.

Rath and Zeeshan launched into the chase with purpose, bringing up the team's 50 in just 6.3 overs. The opening pair remained unbeaten through the first 10 overs as Hong Kong reached 79 without loss.

Rath was the first to his half-century, reaching the milestone from 41 balls as the opening partnership continued to grow. The pair brought up their 100-run stand from just 84 deliveries before Zeeshan completed his own fifty from 41 balls.

BRIEF SCORES: Oman 144 all out in 40.1 overs (Sanju Sajeev 59, Vinayak Shukla 23, Karan Sonavale 17; Nasrulla Rana 4-26, Yasim Murtaza 3-51, Aizaz Khan 2-3) lost to Hong Kong 146-1 in 19.5 overs (Anshuman Rath 68 not out, Zeeshan Ali 63) by nine wickets.

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



INBOUND TOURISM SPENDING SURPASSES **₹**1 BILLION IN 2025

MUSCAT: Oman’s tourism sector recorded strong growth in 2025, supported by increased investment and the implementation of projects by the public and private sectors aimed at diversifying tourism products and experiences and improving the quality of services.

According to the “Tourism Reality in the Sultanate of Oman” bulletin issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the number of visitors to Oman reached 4 million in 2025, while inbound tourism spending exceeded RO 1 billion.

The average stay of inbound tourists was 6.5 nights, with average spending reaching RO 256 per visitor. The number of hotel guests also rose significantly, exceeding 5 million in 2025, compared with 3.5 million in 2018.

The bulletin reviewed the tourism sector’s recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic and highlighted its growing contribution to economic growth, GDP, employment and economic stability.

The number of establishments operating in tourism-related activities exceeded 24,000 in 2025, representing growth of more than 40 per cent from 2020. Muscat accounted for the largest share at 43.5 per cent, followed by Dhofar at 17.5 per cent and Al Batinah North at 11 per cent.

These establishments employed more than 182,000 people, including about 32,000 Omanis in 2025, up from 28,000 in 2024 and 25,000 in 2023.

The sector’s direct added value stood at about RO 1.107 billion, with hotels contributing RO 252.1 million, travel agencies and booking services RO 242.7 million, restaurants RO 198.8 million and transport RO 196.5 million. — **ONA**

OIA, Templewater pact channels 50pc of innovation fund into Oman



Officials representing the Oman Investment Authority, Hong Kong’s Innovation and Technology Commission and China-based Templewater at the agreement signing in Hong Kong.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has further advanced the ‘Omani Angle’ of its international investments by signing an investment agreement in partnership with Hong Kong’s Innovation and Technology Commission and China-based Templewater. Under the agreement, OIA will commit 25 per cent of Templewater Innovation Fund’s capital, with the Fund allocating 50 per cent of its total capital to investments in a range of promising sectors in Oman.

Signed as part of OIA’s participation in the Belt and Road Summit 2026, hosted in Hong Kong, the agreement reflects OIA’s approach to leveraging its international

investments to create added value for the national economy. OIA’s commitment to the Fund is matched by an allocation twice that size for investment in Oman, helping attract capital, companies and technologies to local sectors, facilitate knowledge transfer, build partnerships and open new markets.

The agreement falls under Hong Kong’s Innovation and Technology Venture Fund programme, through which the Innovation and Technology Commission is establishing Templewater Innovation Fund in collaboration with Templewater. The Fund will invest in promising innovation and technology companies, supporting their growth and expansion while focusing on a range of

Banks expand as assets rise 9.2pc to **₹**48.7bn

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

OMAN’S BANKING sector assets expanded by 9.2 per cent to RO 48.7 billion in 2025, as lending and deposits grew and the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) lowered its policy rate in step with the US Federal Reserve, according to the central bank’s annual report.

Total bank credit rose 8.8 per cent to RO 35.3 billion, up from 6.7 per cent growth a year earlier, while customer deposits increased 7 per cent to RO 34 billion. Credit to the private sector, which accounts for 81.6 per cent of the total, grew by 6.5 per cent.

Capital and liquidity buffers remained well above regulatory minimums. The sector’s capital adequacy ratio stood at 18.8 per cent against a required 13.5 per cent, while the liquidity coverage ratio reached 194.2 per cent and the net stable funding ratio 120.9 per cent — both comfortably above the 100 per cent threshold. Gross non-performing loans edged down to 4.4 per cent from 4.5 per cent, with the net NPL ratio unchanged at 1.4 per cent.

Combined net profit of conventional and Islamic banks rose 6.8 per cent to RO 565.6 million, supported by a 34.6 per cent jump in other income and a 1.6 per cent fall in provisions for non-performing assets, which offset an 8.1 per cent rise in operating expenses.

The CBO cut its repo rate to 4.331 per cent in December 2025



Capital and liquidity buffers remained well above regulatory minimums: CBO

The Muscat Stock Exchange was the best performing market in the GCC during the year, with the MSX-30 index climbing 28.2 per cent after a 1.4 per cent gain in 2024

from 5.145 per cent a year earlier, following three quarter-point reductions by the Federal Reserve that took the US target range to 3.50–3.75 per cent. Under the Rial’s peg to the dollar, the CBO sets its policy rate at the upper limit of the US target rate plus a 50 basis point risk premium.

Transmission was visible across the market. The weighted average lending rate at conventional banks fell to 5.472 per cent in December from 5.775 per cent, while the average deposit rate eased to 2.468 per cent from 2.533 per cent, narrowing the rial spread to 2.930 per cent from 3.098 per cent. The average yield on 28-day treasury bills declined to 3.628 per cent from 4.086 per cent.

Banks made greater use of central bank liquidity, with the value of repo operations rising 70.3 per cent to RO 383.8 million. Treasury bill issuance fell 14.1 per cent to RO 1,910.1 million, which the CBO attributed to improved

government fiscal liquidity and reduced reliance on short-term domestic borrowing.

Broad money (M2) grew 6.1 per cent to RO 26.4 billion. Currency held by the public rose 11 per cent, reversing the previous year’s contraction, while growth in rial demand deposits slowed sharply to 4.1 per cent from 27.2 per cent in 2024.

The Muscat Stock Exchange was the best performing market in the GCC during the year, with the MSX-30 index climbing 28.2 per cent after a 1.4 per cent gain in 2024. Market capitalisation rose 16 per cent to RO 32 billion, while total trading turnover quadrupled to RO 5 billion from RO 1.3 billion.

The CBO attributed the rally to structural factors including Oman Investment Authority IPOs, sovereign sukuk issuance, initiatives under Estidamah and the activation of liquidity providers and market makers. Government development bonds were issued in seven tranches totalling RO 582.7 million, with maturities of three to 10 years.

Islamic banking entities increased assets 10.8 per cent to RO 9.5 billion, or 19.5 per cent of total banking sector assets. Their deposits rose 14.2 per cent to RO 7.6 billion and private sector financing 10.1 per cent.

The year’s main regulatory milestone was the Banking Law 2025, which expands the CBO’s statutory mandate, shifts supervision towards a risk-based approach and creates licensing categories for digital banks and fintech activity.

TENDERS

Nama Electricity Generation Company (The Rural Areas Electricity Company S.A.O.C) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the following tenders:

REFERENCE	TENDER NAME	TENDER FEE (₹)	GRADE	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS	LAST DATE FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSION
TENDER NEGC/09/2026	EPC CONTRACT FOR ENHANCEMENT OF KHASAB POWER STATION AUXILIARIES AND REINFORCEMENT WORKS.	105/- (INCLUDING VAT)	SPECIALIST COMPANIES	17/09/2026	15/10/2026
TENDER NEGC/10/2026	SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF FUEL GAS OIL TO HALANIYAT AND DUQM POWER STATIONS.	525/- (INCLUDING VAT)	SPECIALIST COMPANIES	17/09/2026	15/09/2026
TENDER NEGC/11/2026	DIESEL FUEL TRANSFER FOR NEGC POWER STATIONS.	25.5/- (INCLUDING VAT)	SPECIALIST COMPANIES	17/09/2026	15/09/2026
Auction NEGC/01/2026	USED LUBE OIL DRUMS IN NEGC POWER STATIONS.	25.5/- (INCLUDING VAT)	SPECIALIST COMPANIES	17/09/2026	08/10/2026

1 **Collection of Tender Documents:** Interested and qualified companies and establishments registered with Nama Electricity Generation Company and the Tender Board, and hold a valid Local Content Certificate with valid registrations, may obtain the tender documents from the Procurement & Contracts Department at the Company’s Head Office in Wilayat Al Seeb – Airport Heights, during official working hours from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, or by email at: tender.purchase@negc.nama.om.

- Companies shall also be registered on the Tawteen platform and comply with the applicable Omanization requirements of the Ministry of Labour.
- The non-refundable tender document fee shall be deposited into the Company’s bank account: Bank Muscat – Account No : 0423010783090017.
- All companies holding a Riyada card shall be exempt from fees for purchasing auction documents.

2 **Bank Guarantee:**

- Each bid should include a temporary insurance in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of submission and addressed to Nama Electricity Generation Company (The Rural Areas Electricity Company S.A.O.C) - excluding Riyada card holders from this Bid Bond. Bids that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered.
- The awarded bidder shall enclose a performance bond of 5%. This bank guarantee should be for 5% of the total quotation value and to be addressed to the Chairperson of Nama Electricity Generation Company (The Rural Areas Electricity Company S.A.O.C), within 10 Days of receiving the Letter of Award (LOA).

3 **Bids Submission:**

- Tenders (NEGC/09/2026 & NEGC/10/2026):** Bids should be submitted in three separate envelopes (Pre-Qualification, Technical & Financial) with red wax addressed to the Chairman of Minor Tender Committee, Nama Electricity Generation Company (The Rural Areas Electricity Company S.A.O.C) marked with tender number and name. No indication or any reference to bidders’ identity is permitted on the envelope.
- Tender (NEGC/11/2026) & Auction (NEGC/01/2026):** Bids should be submitted in three separate envelopes (Pre-Qualification, Technical & Financial) with red wax addressed to the Chairman of Procurement Committee, Nama Electricity Generation Company (The Rural Areas Electricity Company S.A.O.C) marked with tender number and name. No indication or any reference to bidders’ identity is permitted on the envelope.

4 **Submission Location:** Bids should be dropped in the tender box at the main office of Nama Electricity Generation Company (The Rural Areas Electricity Company S.A.O.C), in Wilayat Al Seeb, Airport Heights, no later than 12:00 PM on the last date of submission.

5 Nama Electricity Generation Company (The Rural Areas Electricity Company S.A.O.C) is not bound to accept the highest/lowest or any other Bids.

6 **Site Visit:** A site visit to Power Stations will be arranged for companies that have obtained the tender documents. The Procurement & Contracts Department will notify the concerned bidders of the date, time, and relevant arrangements for the site visit.

Notice:
A 1.2% training contribution shall be deducted in accordance with the applicable approved instructions and requirements.

نماء
nama
الإنعاج الكهربائي
ELECTRICITY GENERATION

Nama Electricity Generation
Business Tower, Muscat Hills, Airport Heights
P.O Box 1166, Post Code 113, Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number: +968 91766576

For more information, please call: 91766576

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Omani companies to showcase products at World Food Moscow



ZAKIA BINT ABDULLAH AL AMRI

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will participate in World Food Moscow 2026, which will be held in the Russian capital Moscow from September 15 to 18. Sixteen Omani companies will be participating in the global expo with the aim of expanding the presence of national products in global markets and opening new horizons for Omani exports in the Russian and Central Asian markets.

The participation is part of efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, represented by Exports Oman to enhance the competitiveness of non-oil Omani exports, support national companies in accessing new markets and connect them with international importers, distributors and buyers. It also aims to explore trade opportunities and partnerships to increase the reach of Omani products and enhance their global competitiveness. Zakia bint Abdullah al Amri, a trade information specialist at Oman Exports, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said that Oman Exports seeks to support Omani companies and enable them to access target markets through high-level participation in international exhibitions and by connecting exporters with available business opportunities. The aim is to expand the market base for national products and enhance their competitiveness. She expressed her hope that this participation will transform trade meetings into export opportunities and tangible partnerships that bolster the growth of the Sultanate of Oman's non-oil exports. She noted that the Russian market was chosen due to the opportunities it offers for Omani products, particularly in the food industry. She noted that this participation builds upon the positive results achieved in the previous edition of the exhibition, which contributed to signing trade deals and building strategic partnerships with suppliers and agents in the Russian market, thus reinforcing the importance of maintaining a presence at this international platform. This year's edition of the exhibition is expected to feature more than 1,100 exhibiting companies from approximately 30 countries and attract over 26,000 specialised visitors. — **ONA**

Nvidia holds talks to invest in Anthropic's mega IPO



Anthropic is in talks to bring Nvidia as an anchor investor into what could be the largest IPO in history. Anthropic is seeking to raise as much as \$100 billion that could value the artificial intelligence startup at around \$2 trillion, the people said. Nvidia is considering investing up to \$10 billion in the IPO, one of the sources added. The plans remain under discussion and could change, they cautioned, requesting anonymity because the discussions are confidential. Nvidia's potential involvement in the IPO, which has not previously been reported, would give Anthropic an early strategic backer for the outsized offering, while further deepening ties between the chipmaker and one of its major customers. Bringing a deep-pocketed anchor investor like Nvidia onboard could boost investor confidence in the listing, which is shaping up to be a major test of public-market appetite for the enormous valuations and capital requirements of frontier AI labs. — **Reuters**

Sohar Intl officially opens Asia Pacific office in HK

SOHAR International has marked another significant milestone in its international growth journey with the official opening of its Asia Pacific Office in Hong Kong, strengthening the Bank's ability to build relationships with investors, financial institutions, businesses and strategic partners across Asian markets. The office was officially launched during a gala ceremony at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, held in the presence of Paul Chan Mo-po, Financial Secretary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, as Guest of Honour; Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry; Pankaj Kanaksi Gokaldas Khimji, Adviser for External Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Muneer bin Ali bin Nasser al Muneeri, Deputy President of Oman Investment Authority for Operations; Said bin Mohamed al Aufi, Sohar International Chairman; and Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Sohar CEO, alongside Board of Directors and other senior representatives from Oman and Hong Kong. The opening follows Sohar International's receipt of approval from the Hong Kong Monetary Authority in April 2026, followed by final approval from the Central Bank of Oman in May 2026. The Asia Pacific Office provides the Bank with an on-the-ground platform to deepen institutional and commercial relationships in Hong Kong and across wider Asian markets, while creating stronger connections between international opportunities and the Sultanate of Oman. The significance of the opening is also rooted in Oman's longstanding engagement with Asia. For centuries, Oman's geographical position and maritime capabilities connected its shores with markets across India, Southeast Asia and China.



The opening follows Sohar International's receipt of approval from the Hong Kong Monetary Authority in April 2026, followed by final approval from the Central Bank of Oman in May 2026

Omani sailors, merchants and ports participated in extensive maritime trading networks between East and West, including those now associated with the Maritime Silk Roads. These historic relationships extended beyond the exchange of commodities, contributing to the movement of knowledge, ideas, culture and commercial relationships across regions. Sohar was among the Omani ports that played an important role within these networks. Historical research documented by Unesco identifies Sohar as an important trading port and entrepot for vessels travelling between East and West. By the tenth century, it had developed into one of the most significant commercial centres of the Islamic world, with international trading links extending to markets including China. Sohar International's presence in Hong Kong builds on this wider legacy of outward-looking engagement, translating Oman's historic tradition of international connectivity into a contemporary context centred on investment, finance, enterprise and strategic partnerships. Commenting on the milestone, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, CEO, of Sohar International, said: "Oman has looked east for centuries, building strong commercial and cultural

connections across Asia, with Sohar playing an important role in this history. Today, we are building on that legacy in a modern economic context. Our presence in Hong Kong is a strategic step in Sohar International's international growth, giving us closer access to one of the world's most important financial and commercial centres and a stronger platform from which to engage with investors, financial institutions, businesses and strategic partners across China and Asia. Our objective is to turn this connectivity into tangible opportunities for Oman and our clients — attracting investment and capital into the Sultanate of Oman, supporting Omani businesses seeking to access Asian markets and creating stronger channels for investment, trade, knowledge and business between Asia, Oman and the wider GCC; it is an important gateway through which Sohar International can build meaningful relationships and create value across these interconnected markets". The Asia Pacific Office reflects Sohar International's commitment to supporting the broader economic ambitions of the Sultanate of Oman under Oman Vision 2040. The official opening ceremony brought together senior representatives from Oman and Hong Kong, reflecting the growing economic and institutional ties between the two markets.

Boycott of US goods spurs grocers to adapt

TORONTO: A growing consumer push to buy Canadian and boycott US products is reshaping supermarket shelves in Canada, forcing grocers to improve country-of-origin labelling and secure new sources of supply. In Ontario, the president of independent grocer Vince's Market, Giancarlo Trimarchi, turned to Facebook to show customers that most produce on his stores' shelves is Canadian after receiving angry emails and comments about the grocer stocking US produce. A bitter trade war between the US and Canada has made consumers more conscious of where their dollars go. "Buy Canadian" movements started early last year after US President Donald Trump imposed tariffs on Canadian goods and have intensified in recent weeks after trade talks broke down and Trump signed an executive order renaming as Lake America. "It is a lot more aggressive this time around than last year", Trimarchi said in an interview. His four stores, spread across the Greater Toronto Area, now have about 90% Canadian produce. He is now sourcing strawberries from Quebec instead of the US and has cut his advertising budget as the changes have pressured operating costs, he said. "We were always put in a position where you had to balance quality versus price. Now it's quality versus price versus country of origin", Trimarchi said. Loblaw Cos, the country's largest food retailer, brought back large signs featuring a maple leaf in its produce and fresh food sections in August after a brief hiatus to flag the products' Canadian origins. Loblaw also



"Buy Canadian" movements started early last year after US President Donald Trump imposed tariffs on Canadian goods and have intensified in recent weeks after trade talks broke down and Trump signed an executive order renaming as Lake America.

reintroduced a "T" tag to inform customers which products are affected by tariffs and make Canadian products easier to identify. Metro, the country's third-largest grocer, said it would continue to prioritise local Canadian products in the current context. "There has been a permanent change in the Canadian psyche", said Gary Sands, senior vice president of public policy and advocacy for the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers. Canada is the world's fifth-largest importer of fresh vegetables by value. The US is still the biggest supplier of fresh produce, accounting for more than half of the imports, followed by Mexico. However, the share of Canada's vegetable imports from the US fell to 62.6% in

July, the latest government data showed, from 69% in the same month of 2023, before Trump was elected. More than half of the country's fruit imports came from the US as of July. Trade talks broke down on August 21, spurring a new round of tariffs and counter tariffs. John Ambard, 27, a software engineer who lives in downtown Toronto, said he has tried to avoid buying American products when possible, preferring to support Canadian brands and businesses. He said he checks product labels and researches companies online to identify Canadian-made goods. "I think, honestly, if I can support Canadian products and Canadian institutions through these tough times, I think that's a way to help in my small way", he said. "I'm a little bit mad with America right now with how things are going. The attitude has just not been that of a friend". Canada's harsh winters present a challenge for fresh produce and grocers typically rely on greenhouses, stocked root vegetables or imports, which are usually more cost-effective. But the change in sentiment toward the US could push grocers to explore more local suppliers, experts say, while Canada invests in building a more self-reliant food system. The Canadian government is investing about \$3 billion over 10 years to build greenhouses to increase production during the harsh winter months. It is also trying to lower food inflation — among the highest in the Group of Seven developed nations — by increasing the domestic food supply. — **Reuters**

Oman expands product reach to over 130 plus global markets

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

THE Sultanate of Oman's non-oil exports are seeing an advanced phase of growth and expansion in global markets, supported by the growing competitiveness of national products and the increasing ability of Oman's companies to access new destinations. This is further supported by an integrated trade and logistics ecosystem, the readiness of ports and land border crossings, the development of systems and streamlined procedures, as the Sultanate of Oman moves towards establishing a sustainable export model that expands the reach of national products and strengthens its position as a trade and logistics hub connecting regional and international markets.

Oman Exports, under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), serves as an integrated platform connecting Omani companies with international markets. It provides market information and data, technical guidance, capacity building, promotion and links with importers, helping companies make more efficient and sustainable export decisions.

GROWTH IN EXPORTS, RE-EXPORTS

Ghalib bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, affirmed that Oman's non-oil exports of Omani origin recorded a notable increase, reaching approximately RO 3.6 billion by the end of June 2026, compared with around RO 3.3 billion during the same period in 2025, representing growth of 11.4 per cent, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Al Maamari explained that the growth was more concentrated in the second quarter of the year. Exports in the first quarter remained at levels similar to the corresponding period of the previous year, at around RO 1.6 billion, while cumulative growth through the end of May did not exceed 1.5 per cent. Growth then accelerated by the end of June, with exports in the second quarter alone reaching approximately RO 2.0 billion, reflecting a clear acceleration in performance during the quarter.

Al Maamari added that this performance coincided with a 15.3 per cent increase in total merchandise exports by the end of June 2026, reaching approximately RO 13.2 billion. Re-exports also recorded growth of 20 per cent by the end of the first half of 2026 compared with the same period in 2025, representing an increase of around RO 163 million. Meanwhile, the trade surplus rose by 51 per cent to approximately RO 4.7 billion.

This performance is consistent with



GHALIB AL MAAMARI
Under-Secretary, MoCIIP



MUBARAK AL DOHANI
Director-General and the MoCIIP's official spokesperson



FARIS AL FARSI
Economic Expert, MoCIIP



ENG SALIM AL BARTAMANI
CEO of Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives



FAHMI AL HINAI
Executive Director of Poly Products LLC



Non-oil exports reached RO 3.6 billion by June 2026, recording growth of 11.4 per cent.

the non-oil export development strategy, which focuses on diversifying target markets, enhancing exporters' readiness and increasing the access of Omani products to international markets.

The growth recorded in re-exports stands out as an important indicator of the expanding trade and logistics activity of the Sultanate of Oman and its ability to leverage its strategic location, infrastructure and logistics services to facilitate the movement of goods and connect markets, further strengthening its role as a gateway for regional and international trade.

STREAMLINED PROCEDURES

Export and re-export activity benefits from the readiness of Omani ports and land border crossings and their integration with transport and logistics networks, helping facilitate the movement of goods and enhancing companies' ability to access regional and international markets.

The development of electronic systems and the simplification of procedures related to trade, imports, exports and customs clearance also support greater efficiency in foreign trade.

The integration of procedures and electronic connectivity between relevant entities help accelerate transactions and improve the experience of exporters and importers, enhancing the ease of doing business and raising the Sultanate of Oman's competitiveness in trade and re-export activities.

Omani products today reach more than 130 countries worldwide, expanding their presence in international markets. This has been supported by the quality and diversity of national products, the Sultanate of Oman's strategic location, the efficiency of its ports and logistics ecosystem, as well as programmes and initiatives aimed at empowering exporters and opening new markets for them.

He affirmed that the Sultanate of Oman is working to build a base of exporters capable of competing and maintaining a sustainable presence in international markets. He explained that the objective

is not limited to increasing export volumes, but also includes enhancing the readiness of national companies and making exports a sustainable part of their growth and expansion plans.

He added that the impact sought by Oman Exports is based on identifying target markets, understanding their needs and requirements; and building long-term commercial relationships within them. The exporter support ecosystem focuses on providing companies with market information and data, as well as guidance on standards, technical requirements, certificates of conformity and market access requirements. It also includes direct promotion of products through international exhibitions and bilateral meetings, connecting companies with importers and distributors.

NON-OIL EXPORTS

Mubarak bin Mohammed al Dohani, Director-General of Planning at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the MoCIIP's official spokesperson, said that non-oil exports amounted to RO 1.611 billion in the first quarter of 2026, equivalent to 15.7 per cent of GDP at current prices, which stood at RO 10.293 billion, compared with 15.2 per cent during the same period in 2025, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

According to the latest commodity-level data published by the National Centre for Statistics and Information through the first quarter of 2026, chemical products recorded the highest growth rate at 17 per cent, reaching RO 216 million. Base metals and articles thereof followed with growth of 10.8 per cent to RO 376 million, while exports of live animals and animal products increased by 6 per cent to RO 104 million, reflecting a gradual shift in the sources of growth towards higher value-added manufactured products.

During 2025, the Sultanate of Oman participated in 17 local and international exhibitions and trade events under the umbrella of the Omani Products

Promotion Committee (OPEX), resulting in a number of deals, distribution and agency agreements and business opportunities.

PROMISING NEW MARKETS

Faris bin Nasser al Farsi, Economic Expert at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said Omani companies have begun expanding their target markets beyond a number of traditional destinations to new and promising markets, including Iraq, East Africa and several Asian markets.

He added that this shift is not limited to the number of new markets, but also extends to how companies enter them. Companies are increasingly seeking to establish direct relationships with importers and conclude distribution and agency agreements rather than relying solely on individual transactions, thereby supporting a more sustainable presence in international markets.

Al Farsi explained that 'Oman Exports' works to bridge the gap between exporters and target markets by providing market reports and information, export guides and guidance on documentation and logistics services, alongside connecting companies with international buyers and importers. This helps companies identify the markets most suitable for their products before deciding to enter them.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Bartamani, CEO of Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives, said the company's products currently reach more than 40 countries, noting that its production capacity has increased from around 60,000 metric tonnes two decades ago to nearly 240,000 metric tonnes today, an increase of approximately 300 per cent.

He added that the most significant shift has been in the company's sales structure. While the domestic market previously accounted for around 80 per cent of production, with 20 per cent exported, the situation has now been almost reversed, with around 80 per cent of production destined for international markets.

Al Bartamani affirmed that Oman Exports has enhanced the company's access to information on markets and export opportunities and helped it explore non-traditional markets, identify target destinations and access data on importers relevant to its products.

Fahmi bin Said al Hinai, Executive Director of Poly Products LLC, said that benefitting from 'Oman Exports' has contributed to strengthening the company's export activity and expanding its reach to new markets and buyers. He explained that connections established through the initiative have helped the company access markets including Armenia and Georgia, as well as buyers and distributors in Africa and East Asia. The company is also looking to enter additional markets in the coming period.

MSX liquidity surges as Oman steps up global capital push: CEO

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has more than doubled in market capitalisation since 2020, while average daily traded value has risen more than thirtyfold, according to MSX CEO Haitham al Salmi.

Speaking to CNBC on the sidelines of the Belt and Road Summit in Hong Kong, Al Salmi said reforms linked to Oman Vision 2040, a growing pipeline of initial public offerings and measures to deepen liquidity had transformed the performance and profile of the Omani market.

"If we take the base year of 2020, we are currently double the size in terms of market cap", he said.

Daily trading value had increased from around \$5 million to between \$140

million and \$150 million, he added, representing more than 30 times the level recorded at the beginning of the market's expansion drive.

The improvement in liquidity had helped unlock the value of listed companies and supported stronger index performance. Al Salmi said the MSX index rose 28.5 per cent last year and had gained about 28 per cent year to date, making it the best-performing market in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

He attributed the gains to a series of market-development initiatives, including extended trading hours, the launch of the parallel AIM market and a programme of government-related listings that had attracted strong demand from domestic and international investors.

The recent initial public offering of Oman India Fertiliser Company (Omifco)



We are not just creating liquidity; we are bringing value back to the Omani market and attracting the attention of international investors to Oman

HAITHAM AL SALMI
CEO, MSX

was subscribed more than 18 times, demonstrating the depth of investor appetite for quality Omani assets, he said.

"We are not just creating liquidity; we are bringing value back to the Omani market and attracting the attention of international investors to Oman", Al Salmi said.

Oman is also seeking to build stronger investment links with Asian markets. An Omani investment fund focused on China was established last year and the authorities are now looking to encourage capital flows in the opposite direction.

Al Salmi said MSX and its intermediaries were working on a proposed exchange-traded fund that would invest in Oman and the wider GCC and potentially be listed in Hong Kong or mainland China.

The initiative would require trading links and regulatory agreements

between the relevant authorities, creating a platform through which Asian investors could gain exposure to Gulf markets.

Addressing concerns over regional geopolitical tensions, Al Salmi said Oman's neutral foreign policy, relationships with neighbouring and international partners; and strategic location facing the Indian Ocean had helped insulate its economy and capital markets.

Recent tensions had not halted Oman's IPO programme, he said, while logistics, oil and other sectors had continued to perform strongly.

The country's stability had reinforced its position as a safe investment destination within the GCC, he added.

"The challenges are still running, but with challenges, opportunities appear", Al Salmi said.

OPINION

From corporate commitment to national economic value



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

PRIVATE-SECTOR growth and participation should comprise the backbone of the government’s endeavours to realise Oman Vision 2040. To achieve this goal, the private sector must assume a leading role in economic diversification, investment, employment and the development of national capabilities. In this regard, Local Content should not be perceived as a government contractual requirement. Employing Local Content should be seen as a core business strategy.

Local Content incorporates a range of opportunities including employment, the purchase of locally manufactured goods and services, investment in local production, SMEs and the creation of competitive national supply chains.

This strategy should be aligned with Oman Vision 2040 that seeks to develop a private sector that is self-reliant and capable of driving a modern and competitive economy. This Vision encourages greater collaboration between big and small enterprises, localisation, value addition to local resources and development of local capabilities.

Private sector companies should view Local Content as more than a legal requirement. It is an opportunity to enhance the local economy through the development of local industries and strengthen long-lasting relationships with customers and stakeholders.

Large procurement greatly influences the private sector. In the case of Oman, each purchasing decision positively affects the economy. Companies have the opportunity to explore if certain goods and services

can be sourced competitively from local manufacturers, SMEs, entrepreneurs, or service providers.

The energy sector is a good example of the positive effects of carefully structured Local Content programmes. Ministry of Energy and Minerals statistics demonstrate that Local Content programmes have greatly impacted opportunities for national companies and SMEs. For the year 2024, the reported Local Content rate reached 31.9 per cent, while SME expenditure as a proportion of total sector procurement reached 17.2 per cent. These statistics show procurement can have an impact on economic development, rather than just being an operational responsibility.

However, procurement is only one aspect of the Local Content equation. The focus should be on local people. Private sector companies should refrain from imposing arbitrary numerical Omanisation quotas. Rather, companies should implement a strategy to develop local Omani talent capable of technical, management, specialist and leadership roles.

This can be done through a variety of strategies aimed at developing local talent such as graduate development and apprenticeship programmes, as well as active collaboration with universities and vocational training institutions.

The development of SMEs is also important. Rather than continuing to see SMEs as sub-contractors, large companies should be more committed to the advancement and integration of SMEs in sustainable

Local Content incorporates a range of opportunities including employment, the purchase of locally manufactured goods and services, investment in local production, SMEs and the creation of competitive national supply chains

supply chains. Examples of such impactful corporate pledges could include supplier development programming, technical mentoring, simplified procurement practices, opportunities to secure longer supply contracts, innovation challenges and partnerships with international suppliers.

To implement measurable change, most of the major private companies in Oman should establish a Corporate Local Content Strategy containing targets and KPIs on local procurement, spending on SMEs, Omanisation, talent development, local manufacturing, innovation, technological transfers and the development of suppliers. The strategy should include the measurement of the targets and communication to management on their progress.

The goal then moves from Local Content compliance to Local Content competitiveness. Local Content is the development and cultivation of local talent, local suppliers, local technologies and local products. Companies that achieve this will positively impact national priorities, however, more importantly, they will improve the stability and profitability of their businesses.

Should the private sector begin asking this question and integrating Local Content into their business decisions surrounding spending, talent acquisition, sourcing and procurement, Local Content will have the ability to create jobs and stimulate the SME sector and industry through the innovation of local talent and spending, all of which creates sustainable value for the country.

THE NEXT CHALLENGE FOR OMAN’S RENEWABLE GRID

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

For most of the history of electricity generation, producing power has been relatively predictable. A gas-fired plant can increase or reduce its output according to demand. Solar and wind energy introduce a very different challenge. Their fuel arrives according to the weather.

As Oman rapidly expands renewable energy, knowing when that energy will arrive could become almost as important as generating it.

Renewable energy forecasting uses weather observations, satellite information and increasingly sophisticated computer models to predict how much electricity solar panels and wind turbines are likely to produce. Forecasts can range from minutes ahead to several days, giving electricity operators more time to balance supply with demand.

The technology is becoming increasingly important as renewable energy occupies a larger share of electricity systems worldwide.

For Oman, that shift is already under way. Renewable energy accounted for approximately 9.46 per cent of electricity transmitted through the national grid in 2025, according to Oman Electricity Transmission Company figures. The country is working towards increasing the contribution of renewables to around 30 per cent by 2030.

Much of that growth will come from solar and wind.

Unlike conventional generation, however, neither can simply be switched on whenever electricity is required. A layer of cloud moving across a large solar installation can affect generation, while changes in wind speed can alter the output of a wind farm.

Accurate forecasting helps grid operators prepare for these fluctuations.

Solar forecasts can combine satellite imagery with information on cloud movement, temperature and historical generation. Wind forecasting is more complex because wind conditions can vary considerably between locations and heights. Data collected from turbines, weather stations and atmospheric models can be used to estimate how conditions will change.

Artificial intelligence is adding another layer. Machine-learning systems can analyse enormous quantities of historical weather and electricity-generation data, identifying patterns that conventional forecasting models may overlook. As more operational data becomes available, predictions can potentially become increasingly precise.

This has implications beyond simply knowing whether tomorrow will be sunny.

When inflation slows, prices do not go back

WHEN INFLATION falls, prices do not necessarily fall with it. Lower inflation simply means prices are rising more slowly; household grocery bills, transport costs and other everyday expenses do not automatically return to where they were a few years ago.

That may partly explain the gap between relatively benign national inflation figures and the unease heard in everyday conversations about household budgets.

Figures from the National Centre for Statistics and Information show average inflation was 0.6 per cent in 2024 and 1.0 per cent in 2025. The Centre’s Consumer Price Inflation Report for July 2026, published on August 13, showed prices 3.2 per cent higher than in July 2025. Separately, average inflation over the first seven months of 2026 stood at 2.9 per cent. Food and beverages rose 7.3 per cent year-on-year and transport 6.5 per cent.

These figures do not establish a cost-of-living crisis and one month’s food inflation should not be extrapolated indefinitely. But taken together with the trend since 2024, they justify a more useful question than simply asking whether salaries should rise: has household purchasing power kept pace with the economy around it?

That question is particularly relevant to the cost-of-living allowance paid to Omani civilian government employees. Under the unified salary schedule introduced by Royal Decree 78/2013, which took effect on January 1, 2014, the allowance ranges from RO 50 to RO 100 a month, with larger amounts assigned to lower grades. The logic was straightforward: the same rise in essential expenditure weighs more heavily on a lower income than a higher one.

More than 12 years later, there is nothing unreasonable about asking whether that structure still performs its intended function. That is not the same as demanding a general salary increase — and there are strong



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

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

Oman has strengthened the public balance sheet. The harder question now is whether household purchasing power has kept pace

arguments against one.

A government pay rise is not a one-off cost. It becomes recurrent expenditure, year after year. Granted broadly, it also directs public money towards higher earners with considerably less need for cost-of-living support. It could widen the public-private sector wage gap at a time when Oman is trying to make private employment more attractive to nationals. And if additional income raises demand faster than the supply of goods and services, part of its benefit can be absorbed by higher prices.

These are not objections to brush aside. Oman’s 2026 Budget estimates revenue of RO 11.447 billion against expenditure of RO 11.977 billion, a projected deficit of RO 530 million, based on an oil price of \$60 a barrel. The IMF’s 2025 Article IV Consultation, published on January 15, 2026, noted that fiscal adjustment under the budget was expected to be supported partly by restrained spending on wages, energy subsidies and capital expenditure, while identifying the narrowing of the public-private sector wage gap as a labour-market priority. The Fund also said Oman retained some fiscal space for temporary, targeted support if adverse shocks materialised.

Nothing in the IMF’s assessment argues against reviewing the cost-of-living allowance. But any change should be weighed against both considerations: continued restraint on the wage bill and the goal of narrowing the public-private sector wage gap. A targeted, progressive adjustment would sit more comfortably within that space than a broad increase.

The debate has already reached the formal policy arena. On June 29, 2026, the Majlis Ash’shura heard an Urgent Statement on Enhancing the Cost of Living Allowance from Sultan bin Humaid al Hosni, a Majlis Ash’shura member representing the Wilayat of Al Khabourah. The statement linked the issue to geopolitical and economic

developments affecting international trade, supply chains, shipping and household costs.

That should not automatically lead to an increase. It should lead to a calculation.

Oman now has better economic data, a more developed social-protection system and stronger public-finance institutions than when the present salary structure was introduced. Those tools could support a proper purchasing-power review: how essential household expenditure has changed since 2014; how wages and other income have evolved; which income groups face the greatest pressure; and what different policy responses would cost.

Such a review would not have a predetermined outcome. It might find the allowance remains adequate and that pressure is better addressed through targeted social protection. It might find that only the lower grades need adjustment. It might conclude the mechanism should be reviewed periodically rather than increased automatically. Or it might find that another policy offers better value for public money. What would be difficult to justify is assuming, without measurement, that a mechanism designed more than a decade ago remains optimally calibrated today.

There is a broader point here too. Much of Oman’s recent economic effort has focused on repairing the state’s balance sheet.

But reform also interacts with a second balance sheet: the household’s. Purchasing power affects more than personal welfare; it shapes consumer confidence, retail demand and the small businesses that depend on both. If real incomes weaken for a sustained period, the effects eventually reach the wider non-oil economy.

None of this means converting every fiscal improvement into higher salaries, or letting temporary oil revenue fund permanent wage commitments — that would recreate the vulnerability Oman has worked to reduce.

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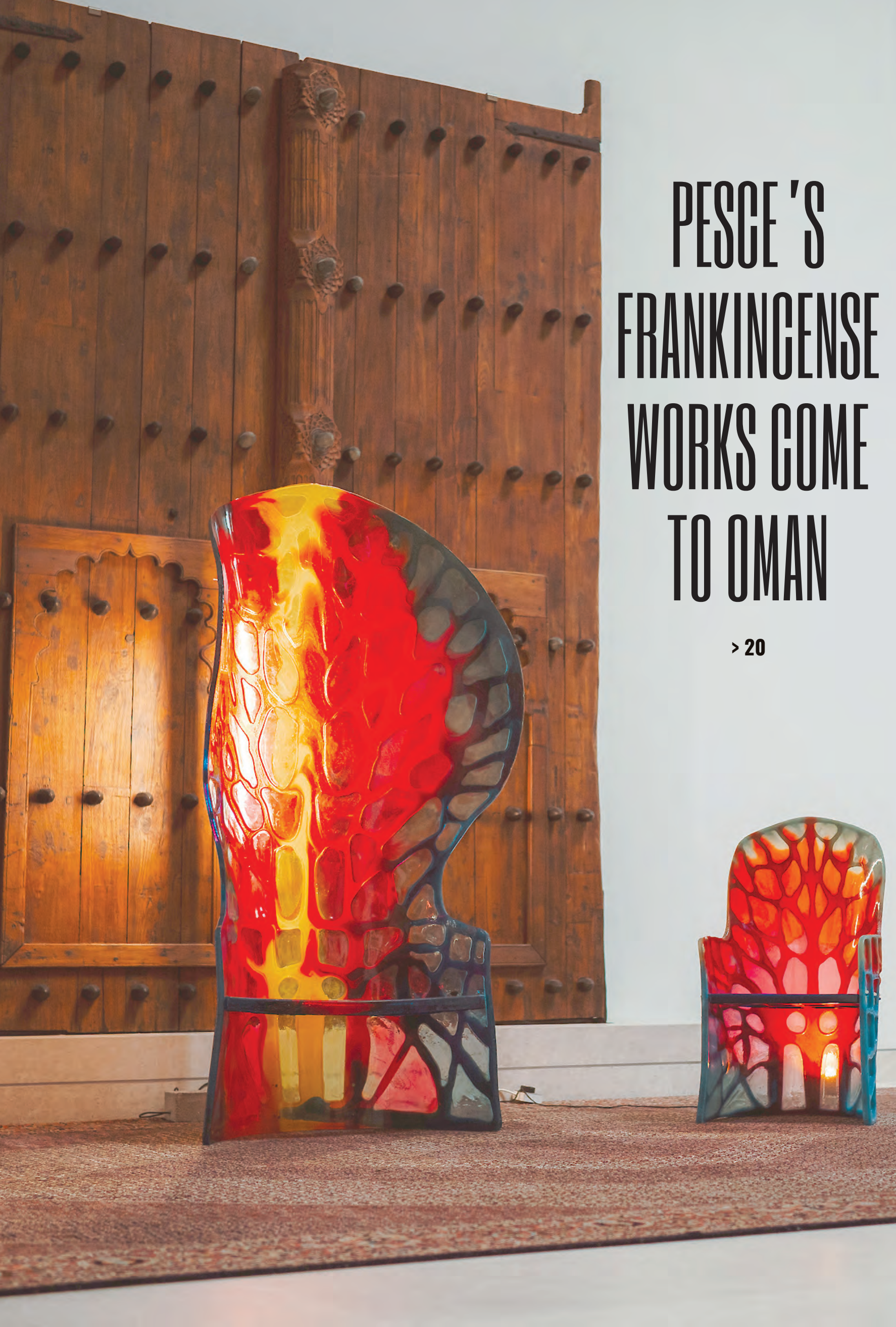
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ART/LIFE

SYMBOLISM OF OMAN'S FRANKINCENSE TREES



PESCE'S FRANKINCENSE WORKS COME TO OMAN

> 20

CINEMATIC **SHOWCASE**

STARS READY FOR BUSY TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



North America's largest film festival kicks off on Thursday in Toronto with a jam-packed line-up of more than 200 films and high-wattage stars including John Malkovich, Penelope Cruz, Chris Rock and K-pop superstar Lisa.

Hot on the heels of Venice and Telluride, the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) draws hundreds of thousands of attendees to screenings and red-carpet events for some of the year's most anticipated premieres.

Underdog stories take centre stage in the programme for the festival's 51st edition, which will host the world premiere of "I Play Rocky".

Directed by Oscar winner Peter Farrelly ("Green Book"), the film tells the unlikely story of how a then-little-known Sylvester Stallone (played by Anthony Ippolito) took on Hollywood to bring to the screen — and star in — a movie that would change his life.

Opening night is reserved for the world premiere of "Being Heumann", a biographical drama directed by Oscar winner Sian Heder ("CODA") that highlights the tenacity of US activist Judy Heumann, who fought for the rights of people with disabilities.

The Apple TV production stars Ruth Madeley in the title role and Oscar nominee Mark Ruffalo.

Another biopic debuting at this year's TIFF is "Villeneuve: The Rise of a Legend", which chronicles the ascent of Canadian racing star Gilles Villeneuve from his humble beginnings in Quebec to the pinnacle of Formula 1.

TIFF offers something for every taste, including several films expected to be in the awards conversation this season.

US comedian Chris Rock is bringing Hollywood satire "Misty Green" to the festival in a film that marks his return as writer-director. It stars Rosalind Wiseman as an actress who has fallen on hard times and is now seeking a second chance.

The cast also includes Oscar winner Daniel Kaluuya, Oscar nominees Adam Driver and Anna Kendrick and Rock himself.

Another programming highlight is "Wild Horse Nine", which follows two CIA agents on Easter Island during the tense final days of Salvador Allende's government in Chile.

Directed by Martin McDonagh ("The Banshees of Inisherin"), the movie debuted in Venice and screened at Telluride, but stars John Malkovich and Sam Rockwell are expected in Toronto to boost their Oscar campaigns.

Also making their way to Toronto from the Telluride festival in Colorado are "Elsinore", starring Andrew Scott and Olivia Colman and the musical comedy "The Debut", the latest directorial effort from Jesse Eisenberg. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



GASTRONOMY

A bakery worker carries a tray of freshly baked mooncakes through the production area at a confectionery kitchen ahead of the upcoming Mid-Autumn Festival. — Reuters



CINEMA

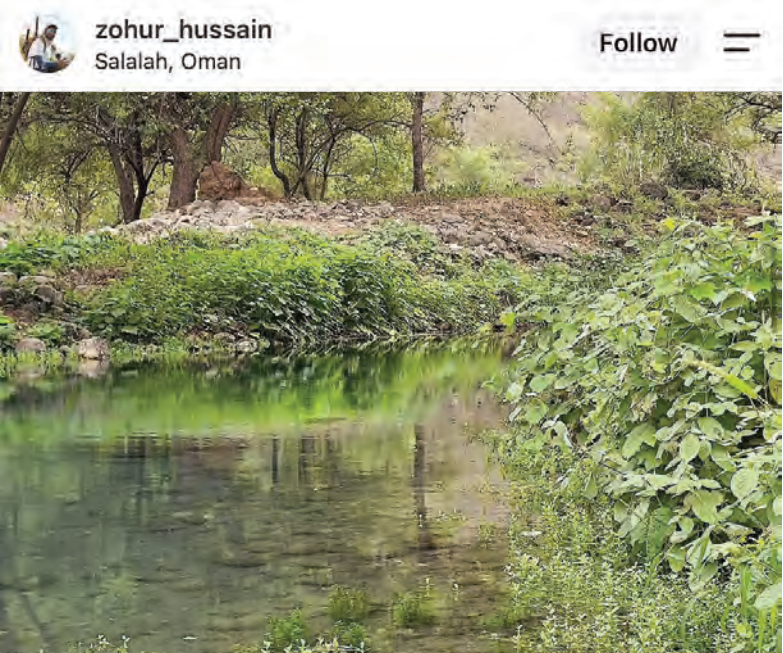
Algerian actress and dancer Sofia Boutella poses during the 52nd edition of the Deauville American film festival, in Deauville, northwestern France. — AFP



FASHION WEEK

Models present creations by Liu Wei with the theme Green Tech Uniform during the grand China Fashion Week that is taking place in Beijing. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Dhofar turns green



The wise Eagle Owl's stare

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OMANI PRESENCE AT KAZAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



STAFF REPORTER

The Sultanate of Oman is marking a notable presence at the 22nd Kazan International Film Festival “Altyn Minbar”, held in Kazan, Russia, from September 4 to 8, 2026.

Oman is represented by Fahad bin Ramadhan al Maimani, Lecturer in the Department of Photography at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, who is serving on the festival’s international jury alongside renowned Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi, who chairs the jury and filmmakers from Russia, France, Syria and Algeria.

The festival, supported by the Russian Ministry of Culture and the leadership of the Republic of Tatarstan, brings together filmmakers and cinema professionals from around the world, promoting cultural dialogue through film.

Al Maimani said his selection reflects growing recognition of Omani cinematic talent and carries a responsibility to further strengthen Oman’s presence internationally. He highlighted the festival

as an opportunity to build professional relationships that could lead to international productions filmed in Oman, co-productions, knowledge exchange and training opportunities.

He also pointed to Oman’s diverse landscapes and heritage, including mountains, deserts, coastlines, villages and historic sites, as offering filmmakers a wide range of visual and production possibilities.

Oman’s participation is further strengthened by the screening of the Omani feature film “Lego Queen”, directed by Haitham Sulaiman.

“Cinema knows no borders”, Al Maimani said. “Oman has many stories that deserve to be told and shared with the world”.

The festival received 1,030 film submissions from 67 countries, with 55 films selected for its official competition, underscoring its growing international reach.

Oman’s participation reflects the expanding presence of its cinema on the international stage and opens new avenues for collaboration and future productions.

‘A CELEBRATION’: AMSTERDAM MUSEUM UNVEILS KUSAMA SHOW WEEKS AFTER DEATH



MORE than 300 works by Japanese contemporary artist Yayoi Kusama go on display in Amsterdam from Friday, an exhibit that has become a tribute to the “polka dot queen” who died last month.

The exhibition at Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum features dozens of ceramics, etchings and drawings from Kusama, one of the world’s best-known artists, as well as her trademark polka dot pumpkins.

Around 50 of the pieces have never been displayed before, said curator Leontine Coelewijn, who pulled together works from several museums in Japan, including in Tokyo and Kusama’s birthplace Matsumoto.

“I think the show will be a highlight for people who do not know the work of Kusama, but also people

Yayoi Kusama was a famous Japanese artist associated with Tate Kids and best known for her colourful polka dots, repetitive net patterns and immersive mirror rooms.

who’ve seen her work on several occasions”, Coelewijn said in an interview during a press preview on Wednesday.

“I think there will be many surprises”, added the 62-year-old curator.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is a huge “infinity room” with black walls covered by yellow polka dots, featuring mirrors that give visitors the disorienting impression the dots are never-ending.

Kusama died aged 97 in August, after a career spanning 70 years that saw her work exhibited around the world.

She channelled hallucinations and well-documented battles with mental illness into vibrant art that inevitably featured polka dots — how she saw the world. “What I think is very characteristic of Kusama is that for her making art and drawing what went on in her mind, was a way to deal with

the difficult issues she had”, said Coelewijn.

“Art can be like a healing power. And that has been so in her early years, but also continued all through the years”, added the curator.

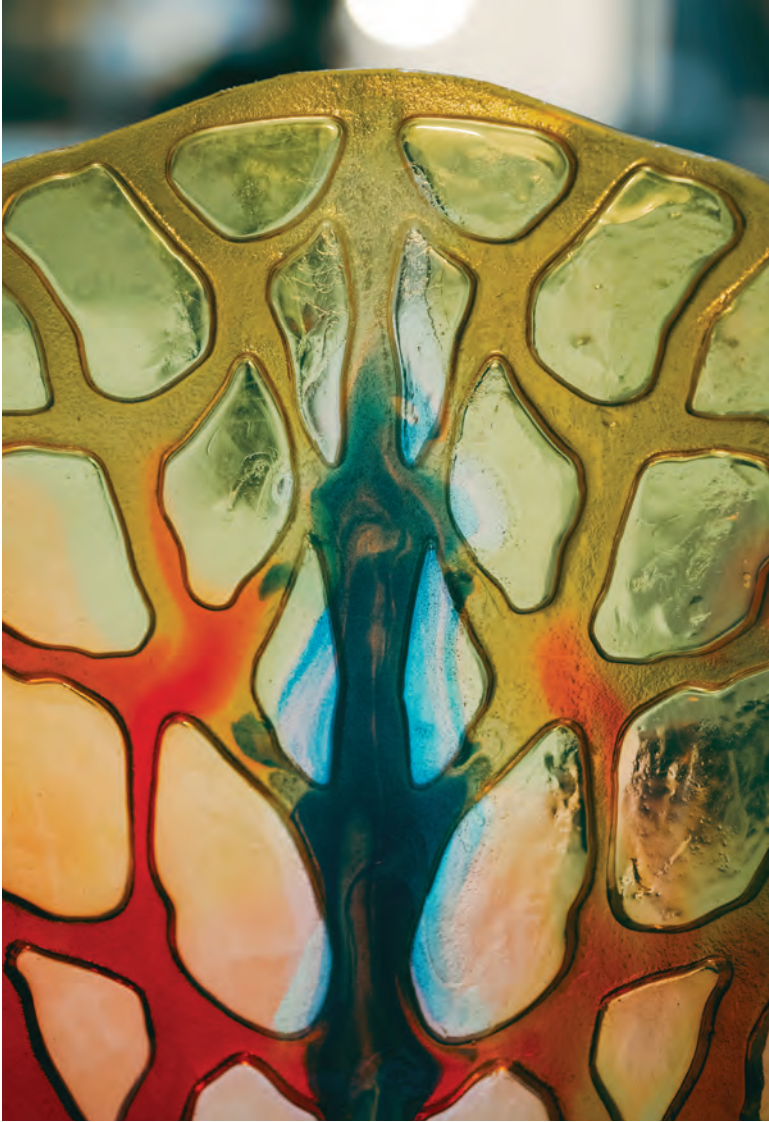
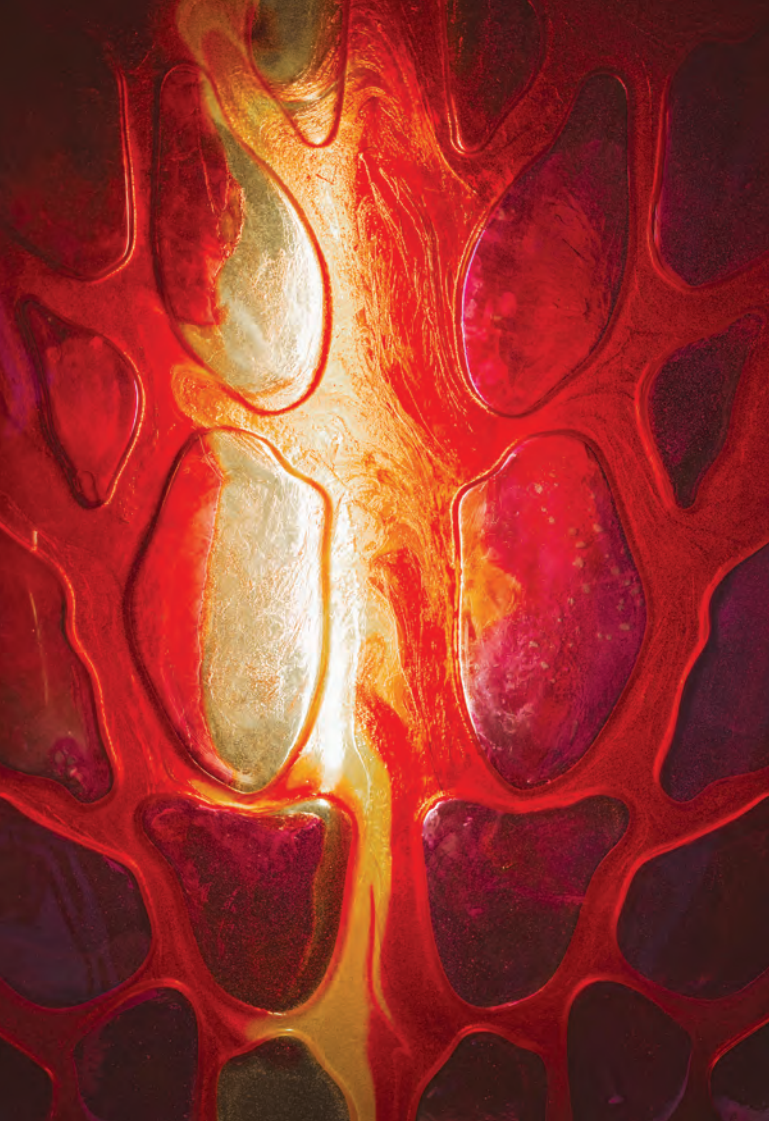
Marvellous tribute After studying art in Japan, Kusama moved to the United States in the late 1950s, becoming a leading figure in New York’s avant-garde scene.

On her return to Japan in the 1970s, she checked herself into a Tokyo psychiatric hospital, where she lived and worked right up to her death.

News of her death came as the Amsterdam exhibition was being installed.

“We were very sad when we heard the news... On the other hand, we could say that this exhibition is a great celebration of her work, a tribute to a wonderful life and a wonderful body of work”, said Coelewijn. — AFP

FEATURES



Gaetano Pesce in his workshop while working on “The Oman Collection”.



Gaetano Pesce and Renaud Salmon at Wadi Dawkah in 2023, where a shared fascination with resin began to take form.

PESCE’S FRANKINCENSE WORKS COME TO OMAN

HIBBA AL KINDI

AN art collection inspired by Oman’s ancient frankincense trees and resin is on display in the Sultanate of Oman for the first time. “The Oman Collection”, created by late Italian multidisciplinary artist Gaetano Pesce, can now be seen at the National Museum in Muscat, following its international debut during Milan Design Week in 2025. Created in 2023, the sculptural collection grew out of Pesce’s collaboration with Omani perfume house Amouage. An architect, artist and designer, Pesce became a key figure in experimental design, with synthetic resin at the heart

of his work. The collaboration traces back to 2022, when Amouage partnered with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on the development of Wadi Dawkah, a Unesco-listed frankincense site in Dhofar. Amouage Chief Creative Officer, Renaud Salmon, sent Pesce five kilogrammes of Omani frankincense resin, sparking the artist’s interest and setting the collaboration in motion. A year later, Pesce visited Wadi Dawkah where he was struck by the diversity of its frankincense trees. Commenting on the visit, the artist said: “Even deep in nature, in the middle of the desert, in a place that looks very homogeneous, you find this

The Oman Collection brings together Gaetano Pesce’s experimental use of synthetic resin with the natural resin of frankincense and the forms and symbolism of Oman’s frankincense trees. Created in 2023, the three sculptural works grew out of his collaboration with Amouage and his visit to Wadi Dawkah in Dhofar.

notion of diversity”. “The trees not only express diversity, but the two of us standing next to each other express the same idea. Different generations, different positions, different sizes and, obviously, a different take on the world as well”, he added. The result is “The Oman Collection”, featuring three main sculptures: the Oman Chair, the Oman Chair with Frankincense and the Frankincense Throne. Varying in size, the resin sculptures take the form of seating pieces, drawing on the twisted forms, textures and symbolism of frankincense trees, while also reflecting Pesce’s distinctive use of bold colour and experimental materials. The “Oman Chair with Frankincense” goes a step further by incorporating actual Omani frankincense resin into the work itself, adding an olfactory dimension to the piece and creating a fitting link to the collaboration with the perfume house. Speaking to the *Observer*, Johanna Ratti, Amouage’s Chief Brand Officer, explained what drew the house to the collaboration. “[This collaboration] with Gaetano Pesce was really inspired by one of the most iconic ingredients from Oman, frankincense and that is also one of the most iconic ingredients within the perfume range of Amouage”, Ratti said. She added: “There was a deep admiration for the work of this artist, who has a 60-year legacy”. Ratti also described the collaboration as part of a broader view of perfume, art and design as applied arts. “I think that’s the combination of what fragrance and art and design are at the end of the day: applied arts that have an impact on the everyday life of everyone”, she said. The collaboration extended beyond the sculptures, with Pesce also contributing to the visual identity of Wadi Dawkah, where a new visitors centre is expected to open by the end of 2027. The Oman Collection was also among the final projects of Pesce’s career before his death in 2024 at the age of 84. Over the course of his career, he became known for works including the 1969 UP5 lounge chair and the later Pratt Chair series, with his work entering major museum collections including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York and Centre Pompidou in Paris. The collection is on display at the National Museum until the end of September.



In the “Oman Chair with Frankincense”, Pesce used real Omani frankincense resin, which adds an olfactory dimension to the artwork.

