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DAILY
Observer



12 ZVEREV BEATS SHELTON TO WIN US OPEN TITLE

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HM TO PAY STATE VISITS TO BOTSWANA, ANGOLA

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK will go on two state visits to the Republic of Botswana and the Republic of Angola, starting on Wednesday.

A statement to this effect was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court, the text of which reads as follows:

“Within the context of enhancing the shared interests binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Republics of Botswana and Angola, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will go on two state visits to Botswana and Angola, starting this Wednesday, September 16, 2026. The visits stem from the keenness to develop relations to wider horizons.

The two visits will address areas of cooperation and the opportunities available to enhance them, as well as discussing all matters that contribute to promoting them across various fields.

His Majesty the Sultan will be accompanied by a high-level official delegation comprising



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office; Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority; Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Angola; and Ambassador Ali bin Said al Kathiri, Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the Republic of South Africa and Supervisor of the Sultanate of Oman’s relations with the Republic of Botswana. May Allah the Almighty safeguard His Majesty in his journeys. May He grant him success for the good of his people!” — ONA

SEE P2&3

OMAN PRAISED FOR ITS ROLE IN THE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE DIALOGUE

MUSCAT: Mukhtar Babayev, President of COP29, praised the role the Sultanate of Oman can play in the international climate dialogue, drawing on its strategic location, its economic importance in the energy sector, and its diplomatic legacy, alongside its pursuit of economic diversification. This grants the country the ability to bridge diverse viewpoints and manage the transition while preserving stability and development, he said at the second edition of Oman Climate Week 2026, which kicked off in Muscat on Monday.

Babayev highlighted the

importance of transforming climate agreements and commitments into tangible results on the ground. He noted that the world no longer treats climate change as a single, isolated environmental issue, emphasising that the current phase is witnessing an interaction among a wide range of risks. These include climate change, natural disasters, water scarcity, land degradation, wildfires, threats to public health, technological and industrial risks, conflicts, and geopolitical instability.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment

Authority, stated in his speech during the opening ceremony that the climate challenge is no longer an environmental issue isolated from development paths. Rather, it has become a fundamental component of decisions related to energy, water, food, investment, and the competitiveness of economies.

He added that the Sultanate of Oman views environmental sustainability as a pivotal element in its developmental trajectory. It is moving towards achieving Net-Zero emissions by 2050 through an organised and realistic transition that considers national priorities, maintains economic competitiveness and energy security, and enhances investment in low-carbon technologies and solutions.

SEE ALSO P4

Iran denies involvement in Yemen war



A member of the Saudi-backed Yemeni government forces, including the National Army and Taiz Axis forces, mans a turret mounted on the back of a pickup truck at a checkpoint along the Kadha frontline west of Taiz in western Yemen on Sunday. — AFP

SANAA: Yemen’s Ansar Allah launched a fresh barrage of missile and drone attacks on Saudi military targets on Monday, as Iran denied any involvement in the country’s revived civil war.

The group, fighting the Saudi-backed, internationally recognised government, last week seized control of Yemen’s Red Sea coast and the Bab Al Mandab Strait, which has become vital as the wider US-Iran war chokes the Strait of Hormuz.

The Ansar Allah said they fired dozens of drones and missiles at the kingdom, prompting the Saudi Civil Defence to issue brief alerts in the neighbouring cities of Khamis Mushait and Abha. Later, Ansar Allah missile attacks in western Yemen killed eight troops from Yemeni government forces, two military sources with the Aden-based administration said. A Khamis Mushait resident said he heard “intense blasts” which left fires burning for a “long time”.

“Honestly, we couldn’t sleep at all.”

The renewed fighting in Yemen comes as the wider regional war remains stalemated. But US President Donald Trump on Monday said he was open to holding talks with Iran.

“The failing Nation of Iran wants to make a deal, quickly and badly. I will determine whether or not the USA will choose to engage — The concept of which we are open to,” Trump said on his Truth Social network.

— AFP



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Towards economic partnerships, promising investments



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with President Duma Gideon Boko of Botswana, in Muscat. — **File photo**

WITH firm steps and a steadfast vision, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik continues to strengthen partnerships with various world countries and to broaden the horizons of cooperation in a manner that boosts the path of economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman.

His Majesty's state visit to the Republic of Botswana this Wednesday represents a translation of the Royal vision to enhance investment opportunities in promising markets, including those in the African continent, in a manner that serves Oman and its people as well as the peoples of these countries.

The visit constitutes an important milestone in the course of Oman-Botswana relations, and an opportunity to exchange views on a number of issues of common interest and to explore ways to develop cooperation in the economic and investment fields. This enhances communication between the business communities of the two countries and opens wider horizons for the private sector.

The two countries have worked to strengthen this cooperation and drive it towards broader horizons. The two visits made by President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana to the Sultanate of Oman constituted an important impetus in the course of relations between the two countries. The first was a private visit from October 18 to 20, 2025, and the second was an official visit from

April 12 to 15, 2026. A number of agreements and memoranda of understanding were signed in the fields of mining, energy, petroleum product storage, solar energy, and medical cooperation, in coordination with Botswana's needs.

Botswana's announcement on July 28, 2026, exempting holders of Omani passports from entry visas for stays of up to 90 days reflects a shared keenness to strengthen ties between the two peoples, facilitate commercial and economic exchange, and accelerate joint work between the two sides. It comes amid growing interest in reinforcing economic and commercial cooperation and exploring new opportunities in areas of common interest. Such efforts help activate channels of communication between the relevant authorities and the private sector in both countries, expand the base of commercial exchange, and open new horizons for partnerships and investments.

In November 2025, the two countries signed strategic agreements in Gaborone to implement renewable energy projects with a total capacity of up to 3,000 megawatts and to cooperate in mineral exploration across roughly 70 per cent of Botswana's unexplored territory. The agreements also cover the development of petroleum product storage facilities, strengthening both energy security and regional trade.

In Muscat on April 13, 2026, executive agreements and a power purchase agreement were signed

THE STATE VISIT TO BOTSWANA AIMS TO EXPAND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES, STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION, AND DEEPEN TIES IN PROMISING AFRICAN MARKETS.

THE VISIT BUILDS ON MOMENTUM ESTABLISHED BY TWO VISITS TO OMAN BY BOTSWANA'S PRESIDENT DUMA GIDEON BOKO (OCTOBER 2025 AND APRIL 2026).

STRATEGIC AGREEMENTS COVER UP TO 3,000 MW OF RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS, HEADLINED BY THE 500 MW MAUN SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT.

JOINT AGREEMENTS FOCUS ON MINERAL EXPLORATION COVERING ROUGHLY 70% OF BOTSWANA'S UNEXPLORED TERRITORY — TARGETING GOLD, DIAMONDS, AND GEOLOGICAL MAPPING.

OMAN AND BOTSWANA HAVE SHARED GOALS IN MINING, FOOD SECURITY, LOGISTICS, AND TOURISM, DRIVEN BY STRONG PRIVATE-SECTOR COLLABORATION AND DIRECT BUSINESS LINKS.

THE PARTNERSHIP LEVERAGES OMAN'S ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AND VISION FOR DIVERSIFICATION ALONGSIDE BOTSWANA'S STABLE DEMOCRACY AND STEADY ECONOMIC GROWTH.

for the Maun solar energy project, with a capacity of 500 megawatts. The foundation stone was then laid on April 16, 2026, making Maun the first project under the joint renewable energy cooperation programme — which has a total planned capacity of 3,000 megawatts — to advance from agreement to implementation. Further agreements covered the exploration and geological assessment of mineral resources in Botswana, the evaluation of prospects for strategic cooperation to strengthen fuel security, and a partnership to explore minerals including gold and diamonds.

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority, pointed out that the visit aims to build on the cooperation already achieved between the two countries. "We stand on solid ground of joint investments and renewed prospects for cooperation — ground that fulfils the visions and aspirations of the leaderships of both countries and serves the interests of the two peoples," he said.

He explained that the relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and Botswana represents a model of mutual trust. It has advanced at an accelerating pace from preliminary meetings to reciprocal visits, translating into investment agreements and projects, some of which have already had their foundation stones laid.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said that the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Botswana possess the economic fundamentals needed to expand their partnership. This partnership, he said, is built on a shared

commitment to sustainable development, openness to markets, and a greater role for the private sector, serving the interests of both countries and their peoples.

He added that mining, agriculture, livestock, food security, tourism, and logistics offer important avenues for investment and the exchange of expertise. He noted that raising awareness of both countries' potential and providing information on the business environment would encourage investors to establish high-quality projects with added value.

He affirmed that strengthening economic relations requires intensifying reciprocal visits, organising specialised meetings and forums, and building direct links between private sector institutions. He noted OCCI's keenness to support these efforts and to bring Omani business people closer to their counterparts in Botswana, thereby helping to stimulate trade and investment and to tap into regional and African markets.

The Republic of Botswana is known for its political stability and democratic traditions, holding general elections every five years. Its economy relies on the diamond sector, which accounts for more than 90 per cent of export revenues. The country has sustained steady growth over several decades, and its foreign policy is founded on strengthening friendly relations with the international community.

The Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, continues to harness economic diplomacy to enhance trade and investment, diversify the economy and expand international partnerships. — **ONA**

A flourishing partnership and promising investment horizons



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with President João Lourenço of the Republic of Angola, in Muscat. — File photo

THE upcoming state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Republic of Angola marks a pivotal milestone in the trajectory of bilateral relations between the two friendly nations and in the Sultanate of Oman's relations with the countries and peoples of the world.

This visit, with its multifaceted dimensions, carries profound significance for the strengthening of partnerships across various domains, particularly in the economic and investment spheres, as the volume of trade exchange during the first half of 2025 reached approximately RO 972,900 compared with some RO 1.31 million during the corresponding period of 2024. The trade balance during the first half of 2025 also recorded a surplus in favour of the Sultanate of Oman of approximately RO 969,700, compared with RO 1.17 million in the first half of 2024.

Omani exports to Angola during the first half of 2025 reached approximately RO 971,300 compared with RO 1.24 million during the same period of 2024. Prominent among Omani exports to the Angolan market were parts for machines and apparatus for filtering or purifying liquids or gases, powdered milk not prepared for industrial use, electrical cables, propylene copolymers and polyethylene, while the foremost products imported from Angola to the Sultanate of Oman included electrical machines and apparatus with self-contained functions, rubber rings and gaskets and textiles with technical applications.

In pursuit of strengthening financial cooperation between the two countries, the establishment of the African Bank of Oman was announced in the Angolan capital, Luanda, in April 2026, a step that contributes to supporting the movement of trade and investment between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Angola, facilitating the access of Omani companies to African markets, enhancing the economic presence of the Sultanate of Oman in Angola and opening new horizons for partnership between the private sectors of both countries.

The official visit of President João Lourenço of the Republic of Angola, to the Sultanate of Oman in December 2024 constituted a pivotal

The state visit marks a major leap in bilateral relations and Oman's diplomatic and economic engagement across Africa.

Oman has secured strategic stakes in Angola's Catoca and Luele diamond mines — complemented by joint energy agreements.

The launch of the African Bank of Oman in Luanda (April 2026) creates a direct institutional financing channel to support trade, ease investment flows.

The partnership seeks to connect Oman's major maritime hubs (Duqm, Sohar, Salalah) with Angola (Luanda, Lobito Port and Lobito Corridor railway).

Angolan commercial presence in Oman expanded to four companies with full foreign capital contribution by 2025.

Both nations are driving private-sector opportunities across agriculture, food security, logistics, renewable energy, and Angola's national privatisation.

milestone in the trajectory of relations between the two countries, culminating in the signing of an agreement to acquire a stake in the Catoca and Luele mines in the Republic of Angola, alongside two memoranda of understanding; the first pertaining to cooperation in the fields of energy, and the second to the exploration of cooperation opportunities in financial and strategic initiatives.

Since the Angolan President's visit to the Sultanate of Oman, bilateral relations have witnessed sustained momentum through reciprocal visits by a number of officials, government entities, representatives of the private sector and state-owned companies in both countries, addressing various files of bilateral cooperation, reflecting the shared interest in following up on what was agreed upon and strengthening avenues of cooperation and investment.

In continuation of this momentum, and at the behest of His Majesty the Sultan, the Foreign Minister participated in the celebrations marking the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Angola, held in the capital, Luanda. These developments reflected a direction towards building a more diversified Oman-Angola partnership, one not confined to trade exchange but extending to investment, energy, mining, logistics and the productive and service sectors, thereby reinforcing common interests and bolstering opportunities for economic cooperation between the two countries.

Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, non-resident Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Angola, said that the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Republic of Angola comes as the crowning achievement of a flourishing trajectory of bilateral relations between the two friendly nations, and within the framework of the endeavours exerted by His Majesty to broaden the horizons of relations with the various countries of the world, particularly with the friendly African states, stemming from His Majesty's conviction of the importance of openness to the world and of building bridges of communication and cooperation with the various nations and peoples. — ONA

Oman's ambassador to Angola presents copy of credentials



Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi with João Baptista da Costa in Luanda on Monday. — ONA

LUANDA: Abdullah BIN Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the Arab League, presented a copy of his credentials as Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Angola to João Baptista da Costa, Secretary-General of the Angolan Ministry of External Relations.

The Secretary-General of the Angolan Ministry of External Relations wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties, and affirmed his country's keenness to enhance and develop the existing relations of friendship and cooperation between Angola and Oman across various fields.

The ambassador expressed his pride in representing the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Angola, emphasising his commitment to strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries and expanding areas of cooperation in a manner that serves mutual interests and aligns with the aspirations of the leaderships of both nations. — ONA

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The committee has visited 12 centres and listened to 861 contestants.

Quran competition qualifying committee visits Dima W’attayeen

DIMA W’ATTAYEEN: The Preliminary Qualifying Committee of the 34th Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition, supervised by the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science at the Diwan of Royal Court, on Monday visited the Wilayat of Dima W’attayeen in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. The visit is part of the competition’s preliminary qualifiers for this year, during which the Committee listens to contestants from the wilayat.

Yousuf bin Mohammed al Balushi, Deputy Chairman of the Preliminary and Final Qualifying Committees, said the Committee has continued its work by visiting competition centres across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, in accordance with the approved schedule that began in early August. To date, it has visited 12 centres and listened to 861 male and female contestants across the competition’s seven levels.

He explained that the preliminary qualifiers will continue until November 18. The final qualifiers for those who advance will then begin, with eight qualifiers from each level.

The final qualifiers are scheduled to be held at the lecture hall of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in the Wilayat of Bausher, Muscat Governorate. — **ONA**

Oman Climate Week calls for action implementation

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

OMAN Climate Week 2026 opened in Muscat on Monday with experts and policymakers calling for a shift from climate ambition to implementation and accelerated action.

The second edition of Oman Climate Week, being held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from September 14 to 16, brings together more than 5,000 participants and 400 speakers from over 50 countries.

The three-day event features more than 20 training workshops, 80 environmental technology exhibitors and over 15 events, including panel discussions, specialised sessions, meetings and interactive platforms focusing on climate, energy, the circular economy, finance, innovation, resilience and nature-based solutions.

The programme also includes the ‘Eco-thon’ Challenge, involving 150 participants, the launch of a partnership to establish an Environmental Innovation Centre, and the unveiling of the ‘Green Branch’ Award during the opening ceremony.



The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthi and organised by Environment Authority.

Held under the auspices of Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, the event is organised by the Environment Authority and brings together decision-makers, experts, government officials, private-sector representatives, international organisations, academics, researchers and civil society.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, said hosting the event aligns with Oman’s development trajectory and its efforts to strengthen national and international partnerships on climate action, support innovation and practical solutions, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and

expertise.

He said these efforts are in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the national objective of achieving Net-Zero emissions by 2050.

“Environmental sustainability lies at the heart of Oman’s development path,” Al Amri said.

He noted that Oman is pursuing an orderly and realistic transition towards Net-Zero emissions, balancing national priorities, economic competitiveness and energy security while promoting investment in low-carbon technologies and solutions.

In a recorded address, Jasem bin Mohammed al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), stressed the importance of Oman hosting the event, noting that

climate change had evolved beyond an environmental concern into an economic and developmental challenge requiring collective action and effective regional and international cooperation.

He highlighted the need to balance environmental protection with sustainable economic growth, improve resource efficiency and strengthen adaptive capacity.

Mukhtar Babayev, President of COP29 and Representative of the President of Azerbaijan for Climate Affairs, urged countries to move from negotiating commitments to delivering results.

He said climate change was no longer viewed as an isolated environmental issue, but as a risk multiplier affecting natural disasters, water scarcity, land degradation, wildfires, public health, technological and industrial hazards, conflicts and geopolitical instability.

Babayev noted that drought, for example, could affect food production, electricity generation, migration and livelihoods, while floods could have repercussions extending beyond immediate damage to infrastructure, supply chains and public health.

Mubashir Expands Regionally with Launch of MENA’s First Fuel Smart Digital Screen Technology in KSA

MUBASHIR, Oman’s pioneering Ad-Tech company, has officially expanded into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the launch of its fuel station Smart Digital Screen technology at an OOMCO fuel station in Qatif, marking the first deployment of this kind of fuel pump-integrated digital technology in KSA.

The milestone caps a rapid growth trajectory for Mubashir. Since first pioneering the technology in Oman in partnership with Shell Oman, followed by Oman Oil (Omanoil), the company has built the region’s only proven, at-scale network of smart, pump-integrated digital screens. With the Qatif launch, Mubashir now takes that same technology across the border, partnering with OOMCO KSA to bring its innovation to the Saudi market for the first time.

As part of the rollout, eight Smart Digital Screens were installed at the OOMCO Qatif station. The result is a new kind of touchpoint one that fuses practical, transaction-relevant information with brand engagement at precisely the moment customers are already engaged at the



pump. The technology enhances the customer experience while fueling and helps increase brand loyalty.

For customers, it means useful, real-time information paired with engaging content. For station operators, it means a new value-

add that turns every pump into a smarter, more connected touchpoint. Mubashir is now bringing that same value to partners and customers in Saudi Arabia.

Mubashir’s entry into Saudi Arabia forms part of its broader regional

expansion strategy. The Qatif launch is only the first step in Mubashir’s Saudi journey, with the aim of building a broader regional footprint and connecting brands with audiences well beyond Oman’s borders.

SHORT TAKES



AGRICULTURE MINISTER RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL OFFICIAL

MUSCAT: Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, received on Monday Mukhtar Babayev, Representative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Climate Affairs. The meeting took place within the framework of guest's visit to the Sultanate of Oman to participate in the second edition of Oman Climate Week 2026.

During the meeting, a number of topics of mutual interest were discussed in the fields of sustainable agriculture, water resources management and adaptation to climate change. The two sides also reviewed joint initiatives and projects that would support efforts to achieve sustainable agricultural and water development and enhance the capacity to address the impacts of climate change.

The meeting was attended by a number of officials from both sides. — **ONA**

SAF CHIEF OF STAFF RECEIVES ISLAMIC MILITARY COALITION CHIEF



MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), received on Monday in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa, Air Vice Marshal Mohammed bin Said al Moghedi, Secretary-General of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed a number of matters of common interest.

The Secretary-General of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition and his accompanying delegation also visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). Upon his arrival at the centre's headquarters, he was received by Commodore Abdullah bin Ali al Hajri, Head of the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). — ONA

Heads of Arab judicial inspection bodies meet

THE 30th meeting of the Heads of Judicial Inspection Bodies and Authorities in Arab States was held on Monday in Dhofar Governorate with the participation of 14 countries. The meeting will continue for two days.

The Supreme Judicial Council of the Sultanate of Oman presented a working paper entitled “Artificial Intelligence and Judicial Inspection: Towards an Arab Index for the Quality of Judicial Rulings”.

It addressed the application of modern technologies in analysing rulings and deriving quantitative and qualitative indicators that measure legal reasoning, the consistency of judicial jurisprudence and the speed of adjudicating cases. It affirmed that artificial intelligence is a supporting tool for the judge and the inspector, not a substitute for human discretion.

The participating Arab states, including Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Algeria and Kuwait, presented working papers addressing



The meeting also discussed a proposal to prepare a unified Arab model for assessing the quality of rulings, and to develop a guiding manual that considers the nature of Arab judicial systems.

the transition from traditional oversight to preventive oversight, the evaluation of court performance, and the prospects for employing smart technologies in legal research and data processing. They also discussed challenges related to algorithmic bias and the protection and confidentiality of judicial files.

The meeting also discussed a proposal to prepare a unified Arab model for assessing the quality of rulings, and to develop a guiding manual that considers

the nature of Arab judicial systems. It also approved the criteria and controls for granting the Arab Award for Judicial Inspection Works.

The 30th meeting of the Heads of Judicial Inspection Bodies and Authorities in Arab States concluded with a number of recommendations. The most prominent include adopting the draft Arab Award for Judicial Inspection Works, unifying procedural inspection standards among Arab states, and

developing judicial inspection methodologies by moving from traditional oversight to oversight based on performance and quality indicators.

They also include enhancing the independence of judicial inspection bodies and developing oversight and evaluation tools and mechanisms to strengthen transparency, raise performance efficiency and entrench the principles of integrity and justice.

The meeting further recommended adopting a balanced system for evaluating judges' performance, developing objective and measurable criteria, and linking evaluation results to continuous training and qualification plans.

It also recommended adopting artificial intelligence as an assisting tool in analysing the quality of judicial rulings and inspection work, while establishing legislative and ethical frameworks regulating its use. The participants adopted a number of scientific themes for the thirty-first meeting in 2027. — **ONA**

Aflaj
agreements
worth
 3.4m
signed

IBRA: Represented by the Directorate-General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed agreements worth more than RO 3.4 million to implement the second stage of aqlaj maintenance in the governorate, which recently suffered the impacts of 'Al Massarat' low pressure.

The signing ceremony was held under the auspices of Mahmoud bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North.

The agreements provide for the restoration of 155 aflaj. The maintenance tasks include the removal of silt, sand and debris from the damaged aflaj, the replacement of roofing for some aflaj and the construction of new supply channels where deemed necessary.

—ONA

Notice and Invitation to Attend the Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of OMAN INDIA FERTILISER (the "Company") has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Ordinary General Meeting, which will be held on Wednesday at 04:00 PM on 30/09/2026, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (Online).

If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Ordinary General Meeting shall be held on Thursday at 04:00 PM on 01/10/2026, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (Online) to discuss the following agenda.

Ordinary General Meeting Agendas :

1. To consider and approve the Company's audited financial statements for the first half of the financial year ending on 31 December 2026 (as per the attached Annexure)
2. To consider and approve the proposed distribution of interim cash dividends of 6.763 Baisa per share for the first half of the financial year 2026 to shareholders registered in the Company's shareholders' register as at the date of the Ordinary General Meeting, based on the audited financial statements for the first half of the financial year 2026
3. To consider and approve the determination of the sitting fees payable to the members of the Board of Directors and the Board Committees with effect from 8 July 2026 (as per the attached Annexure)

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority , we would like to draw your attention to the following:

1. Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
2. Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information please contact on telephone No: 99880514
or email: garg.harish@omifco.com

Chairman
SUNDER SINGH YADAV

**Legal Advisor
Said Al-Shahry & Partners
Advocates & Legal Consultants (SASLO)**

External Auditor
KPMG L.L.C




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Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with General Secretariat of **Tender Board**, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRE-26-107	Design & Build Upgrade of Roundabout at Salam Street LOT 3	04/10/2026	25/10/2026
PRE-26-061	Design & Construction of Mountain Slope Stabilization Works in Darsait (Re-Call)	22/09/2026	30/09/2026
PRE-26-138	Database Administration Support for MM	04/10/2026	25/10/2026
PRS-26-054	Supply of Fertilizers for Oman Botanic Garden	22/09/2026	30/09/2026
PRE-26-139	Supply of Underground Cable Fault Detectors	04/10/2026	25/10/2026
PRE-26-140	Street Light Feeder Pillar Works	04/10/2026	25/10/2026
PRE-26-141	Application Support for Etamid (Phase 2)	04/10/2026	25/10/2026

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
2. Clarification and Support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
 - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@pttc.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The exhibition presents scientific and interactive content through several corners.

Geological heritage exhibition opens in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The 5th edition of the Omani Geological Heritage Exhibition, titled ‘Sustainability and Job Opportunities’, commenced in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, running until the end of December.

The opening of the exhibition was held under the auspices of Sheikh Mahmoud bin Rashid al Saadi, Acting Governor of Al Dakhiliyah. The current edition includes new corners introducing the ‘Al Hajar Geopark’ project, which is considered the first national geopark project in Oman, aiming to contribute to conserving geological heritage sites and utilising them in the fields of tourism, education, and scientific research.

The exhibition presents scientific and interactive content through several corners featured in previous editions, including the story of geological heritage, the geological diversity of Oman, its history, the formation of Oman’s land across geological eras, and the importance of conserving and sustaining geological heritage, alongside job opportunities in the field of geotourism.

The fifth edition also features introductory corners on the ‘Al Hajar Geopark’ project, addressing the project’s concept, objectives, and its tourism, scientific, and developmental significance.

The exhibition showcases a collection of distinctive geological heritage pieces, including a fossil estimated to be about 800 million years old, 3D scientific models of the extinct primitive elephant whose fossilised teeth were discovered in the Aydam area in Dhofar Governorate, and a dinosaur whose fossilised bone remains were found in Al Khoudh area in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, alongside other models and fossils highlighting the geological history of Oman. — **ONA**

Workshop held on molecular breeding, crop improvement



The workshop showcases importance of sustained international cooperation and partnerships in advancing scientific research.

MUSCAT: A regional workshop on ‘Molecular Breeding and Marker-Assisted Selection’ began in Muscat today and will continue until September 24, focusing on strengthening scientific and technical cooperation and exchanging expertise in modern plant breeding technologies.

Held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture, the workshop aims to build national and regional capacities in using molecular technologies and genetic markers to improve crops and enhance agricultural production in response to environmental and climatic challenges.

The workshop is organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Dr Al Ghalia bint Hamid al Maamari, Director of the Tissue Culture and Biotechnology Research Centre, said the workshop reflects the importance of sustained international cooperation and partnerships in advancing scientific research and developing expertise in modern agricultural technologies. She noted that food security and agricultural sustainability remain key development priorities amid accelerating climate and environmental challenges. — **ONA**

RAFO, Nizwa University sign MoC on academic expertise

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) and the University of Nizwa on Monday signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) to facilitate the exchange of expertise, develop joint training and research programmes and foster participation in professional events. The MoC also sought to establish partnerships, develop national



competencies, integrate specialised expertise with academic knowledge and support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The MoC was signed by Air Commodore Khalid bin Mohammed al Abri, Senior Staff Officer at RAFO Command, and Prof Dr Ahmed bin Khalfan al Rawahi, Vice-Chancellor of Nizwa University. — **ONA**

Arts students seek relief over teacher qualification

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

A GROUP of students enrolled in arts programmes at colleges in Oman have called on the Minister of Education to consider exempting students who enrolled before the introduction of a new teacher qualification requirement. The students said the decision had raised concerns about their academic and professional futures, particularly for those who had already invested several years in their studies.

They said they had begun their university education under the regulations and requirements in place at the time of their admission, committing significant time, effort and financial resources to their chosen fields.

The students stressed that their request was not intended to oppose efforts to develop the education sector or improve teaching standards. Rather, they sought consideration for students who had already commenced their studies before the new requirement was introduced.

They urged the Ministry of Education to consider transitional arrangements for affected students, arguing that the retrospective application of new requirements could impose additional academic and financial burdens on those already well into their programmes.

For many families, the cost of higher education extends beyond tuition fees to include transportation, accommodation, books and other living expenses. The students said their families had made considerable financial sacrifices over the years, expecting them to complete their studies and enter the labour market.

“When we enrolled in our programmes, we had a clear understanding of the requirements



Students say the issue is a source of uncertainty for many families, particularly those that had already spent substantial amounts on their education.

The affected students have urged MoE to consider transitional arrangements arguing that the retrospective application of new requirements could impose additional academic and financial burdens

and the career path ahead of us. Our families made significant financial commitments based on those circumstances. We are now concerned that changes introduced after our enrolment could affect the future we have been working towards for years,” said student Mohammed al Hinai.

The students believe that granting an exemption or introducing transitional arrangements for those enrolled before the decision would strike a balance between the ministry’s efforts to improve educational standards and the need to protect the academic stability of students already pursuing their degrees.

They also highlighted the particular challenges faced by students nearing graduation, many of whom have already made plans for employment and further professional development based on their existing qualifications.

“We understand the importance of developing the education system and ensuring high professional standards. However, there should be consideration for students who entered their programmes under previous regulations. We hope the ministry will review our situation and provide a solution that allows us to complete our studies without

facing requirements that were not in place when we started,” said Wafa al Abri.

The students said the issue had become a source of uncertainty for many families, particularly those that had already spent substantial amounts on their children’s education.

They called for their circumstances to be considered and for a mechanism to be established that distinguishes between students beginning their studies under the new requirements and those who had already enrolled under the previous system.

“We are not asking for the new policy to be cancelled. Our request is for a fair transitional solution for students who were already enrolled before the decision was issued. We have spent years studying, and our families have supported us financially throughout this journey. All we are asking for is an opportunity to complete what we started under the regulations that applied when we enrolled,” said student Naser bin Abdulla al Rawahi.

The students further said that transitional arrangements would provide greater clarity for those affected while allowing the Ministry to continue implementing its broader educational policies.

They expressed hope that the ministry would take into account the timing of their enrolment, the years of study already completed and the financial commitments made by their families when considering their request.

For the students, the issue extends beyond an additional academic requirement. It is closely linked to years of study, family financial commitments and professional plans developed under the regulations in place when they entered higher education.

Al Sharqiyah North allocates 455 home plots

MUSCAT: The housing and urban planning sector in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate is witnessing continued development through the implementation of social housing projects, allocation of residential land, development of integrated residential neighbourhoods and expansion of digital services.

The initiatives are aimed at enhancing family stability, supporting organised urban growth and improving the quality of life across the governorate’s wilayats.

Ali bin Said al Rujaibi, Director-General of Housing and Urban Planning in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, said that the sector recorded significant activity during the first half of 2026, including the creation of 580 plots for various uses, the allocation of 455 residential plots and approval of 628 plots under the ‘Plan Your Land’ initiative.

He said the measures strengthen the governorate’s readiness for urban expansion and help meet demand for residential land while taking into account population needs and future development requirements.

In the social housing sector, 152 housing assistance packages worth about RO 4.4



million were provided in 2025, while 124 assistance packages worth about RO 3.5 million were provided in 2026, as part of government efforts to provide suitable housing for eligible citizens and promote family and social stability.

Al Rujaibi said several social housing projects are being implemented across the governorate. Work is continuing on a project in Al Rahibat, Al Qabil, comprising 45 housing units, a mosque and a council at a cost of about RO 2.44 million.

A project comprising 49 housing units in Hail Al Kafuf, Dima W’attayeen, has been completed at a cost of about RO 2.43 million.

Work is also continuing on 24 housing

units in Hail Al Qash, Dima W’attayeen, at an estimated cost of RO 1 million. Meanwhile, a project comprising 19 housing units in Buwad, Wadi Bani Khalid, has been completed at a cost of about RO 1.16 million. Work is also under way to complete a mosque in Hail Al Kafuf at an estimated cost of RO 185,000. Al Rujaibi said the projects form part of the social housing system aimed at providing suitable homes for citizens and developing residential communities with integrated basic services and facilities.

The governorate is also continuing to implement the ‘Surooh’ projects, which seek to develop integrated urban communities with residential facilities, services and infrastructure. The projects include Al Sumou neighbourhood in Al Mudhaibi, Al Ala neighbourhood in Bidiyah and Saih Al Rafie in Wadi Bani Khalid.

The Al Sumou project has a total cost of about RO 15 million, while the Al Ala neighbourhood project costs about RO 5 million. The projects are designed to create integrated residential communities connected to road networks, public services and facilities.— **ONA**

SHORT TAKES

French poll shows Le Pen to lead in presidential vote

PARIS: France’s far-right veteran candidate Marine Le Pen looks set to lead in the first round of elections next year, as the country’s increasingly disillusioned voters seek real change, a poll of more than 13,000 voters has suggested.

Le Pen could garner a third of the vote on April 18, 2027 in the first round to replace centrist President Emmanuel Macron, results from the Ipsos-BVA survey showed on Sunday.



MARINE LE PEN
France’s far-right veteran candidate

Polls in recent months have shown Le Pen as the front-runner but this survey of 13,060 people, conducted earlier this month, is unusually large in scale.

Centrist contender Edouard Philippe would face Le Pen in the run-off on May 2, but only if his rival from the same camp Gabriel Attal steps down, according to results published in Le Monde daily.

But if both Macron’s former prime ministers stay in the race, splitting the centrist vote, hard-left hopeful Jean-Luc Melenchon would be runner-up and make it to the decisive second round, it suggested, after testing several scenarios.

Brice Teinturier of Ipsos-BVA said a negative mindset was increasingly prevalent among voters, with many worried about France’s public finances and the cost of living.

Almost three-quarters of respondents believed the country’s situation is about to “deteriorate”, compared to just 45 per cent before the last presidential elections in 2022 that saw Macron re-elected for a second and last term. — AFP

India approves electricity exports to flood-hit Nepal



A flooded home, with damaged trucks on its roof, along the banks of the Trishuli River, following the deadly flash floods and mudslides in Nuwakot district, Bagmati province, Nepal. — Reuters

NEW DELHI: India approved the export of electricity to Nepal on Monday to help its neighbour overcome shortages caused by extensive damage to its hydropower projects from catastrophic floods last month.

The August 26 flood, triggered by a glacial mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border, killed more than 1,400 people in Nepal and Tibet.

Hundreds of workers at a series of hydropower projects are among more than 5,300 people still missing in Nepal.

India will transmit up to 600 megawatts of electricity for 18 hours daily until the end of the year, the ministry of power said in a statement.

“The approval will help Nepal meet its power requirements during this difficult period and further strengthen the close and long-standing energy cooperation between India and Nepal,” it said.

The amount of electricity to be supplied from January 2027 onwards will be reviewed in December. — AFP

ARCTIC STRATEGY

EU should take more proactive role in Arctic



The European Union should take on a more strategic and proactive role in the European Arctic, 12 member states including Germany, France and the Netherlands said. Finland, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Sweden called on the union to commit to strengthening its Arctic engagement “with adequate resources and in line with evolving geopolitical realities.” — Reuters

FATHER’S DEATH

UK PM cancels engagements for 2 days



British Prime Minister Andy Burnham has cancelled his upcoming engagements on Monday, Tuesday due to the death of his father, Downing Street office announced. Burnham has said in interviews that his father, Roy, had Alzheimer’s disease and was living in a care home. After taking office in July, Burnham told The Times daily that his father, a former telecoms engineer who is in his mid-80s, did not know he was prime minister, which was a “sadness”. — AFP

ELECTION VIOLENCE

Voting in Philippines’ south after 3 killed



Voting began on Monday in the Philippines’ south under heightened security after three people were killed and 15 wounded in violence on the eve of the historic election. The vote is seen as a crucial test of efforts seeking to bring lasting peace and development to a region once torn by separatist conflict and extremism which peaked in the 2017 siege of Marawi City by IS-linked fighters. — AFP

Finland joins France’s nuclear deterrent initiative

BRUSSELS: Finland has joined France’s initiative to extend the reach of its nuclear deterrent through collaboration with partner European countries, the heads of both countries said on Monday.

In response to US President Donald Trump’s expressions of concern about the US security commitment to Europe and to the security implications of the Ukraine war, France in March announced the Forward Nuclear Deterrence Initiative.

“The initiative is first and foremost about strengthening



French President Emmanuel Macron with Finland’s President Alexander Stubb in Paris. — Reuters File

European security. It reinforces Europe’s responsibility for its own defence and helps prevent escalation,” Finland’s President Alexander Stubb said in a post on X.

“The exact nature of the cooperation will become clearer in later stages of the process,” Stubb later told reporters at a press conference in Helsinki, adding that each participant would determine how they wish to participate. He said the initiative had been discussed extensively with the United States and Nato. — AFP

Israeli strikes on southern Lebanese town kill 13

ISRAELI strikes on a southern Lebanese town killed at least 13 people including six children on Monday, Lebanon’s health ministry said, in one of the deadliest days of Israeli bombardment in recent weeks.

Fears of a renewed Israeli military campaign are mounting in Lebanon after days of escalating strikes despite a June ceasefire that was meant to halt fighting between the Israeli military and Lebanese armed group Hezbollah.

A woman who said she was related to at least three of the dead said one attack hit a residential building as children were getting ready for school. The Israeli military said it struck people seen transferring weapons in the area of the town, Kfar Rumman.

At the site, Reuters reporters saw children’s schoolbooks strewn between chunks of concrete where the building once stood. Rescue workers with heavy machinery had worked throughout the morning to pull bodies out from underneath the rubble.

Eight-year-old Mustafa Farhat lost his grandparents and his mother in the strike, locals said. Rescue workers were still searching for his father’s body on Monday morning while the boy lay in the hospital being treated for his wounds, they added.

One of his relatives, Mona Farhat, said it was their home that was hit in the run-up to school-time.

“What did they target? What is the goal they are targeting? Do they want us to leave our land? They are mistaken,” Farhat said at the hospital.

Lebanon’s health ministry said in an updated toll on its website that 12 people, including six children and three women, were killed in that attack on a residential building on Monday. State media had earlier said the attack happened after midnight.

A separate Israeli drone strike on a civilian vehicle in the town killed one medic, the health ministry said. Two other medics were wounded in the strike, the ministry said.



The southern Lebanese village of Al Haniyya shows smoke as it rises from the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted the village of Al Mansouri. — AFP

Strikes on town kill six children, three women and one medic, health ministry says as Israeli strikes on Lebanon have killed more than 4,300 people since March 2

The strikes on Kfar Rumman came without an online evacuation warning from the Israeli military.

Israel’s military said steps had been taken to mitigate harm “to uninvolved individuals, including the use of precise munitions and aerial surveillance.” The military said it was reviewing the report that “uninvolved individuals” were harmed as a result of the strikes.

The Israeli military said Hezbollah had launched two explosive drones overnight towards Israeli troops operating near the Ali al Taher ridge, a strategic cluster of hills in southeastern Lebanon where Hezbollah is thought to have built an underground military complex.

Israel said last week that it had cleared Hezbollah fighters out of the ridge. Hezbollah has not commented and Reuters could not independently confirm the military situation at Ali al-Taher.

In the days since, Israel has ramped up deadly strikes on towns to the ridge’s north and west where residents had returned after the

June ceasefire, Lebanese security officials said.

The officials said they were anticipating continued escalations in the south in the coming weeks.

On Sunday, at least 11 people were killed in Israeli strikes on three towns near the ridge, Lebanon’s health ministry said in an updated toll. Two of the dead were women killed in strikes on the town of Arab Salim, where Israel’s military had issued an online evacuation warning at 6:04 am local time.

The health ministry said separate Israeli strikes on Sunday had destroyed the Ghandour hospital in the town of Nabatieh al Fawqa.

Four other people were killed on Friday, including a woman, it added. Those strikes came without evacuation warnings.

Israeli strikes on Lebanon have killed more than 4,300 people since Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel on March 2 — two days after the start of US and Israeli strikes on Iran — triggering an Israeli air and ground offensive. — Reuters

HM’s visits to Botswana, Angola open new Africa ties



EDITORIAL

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s state visits to Botswana and Angola mark a significant moment in Oman’s foreign policy. Oman, under His Majesty’s leadership, is deepening its engagement with Africa not as a distant partner, but as a neighbour in the wider Indian Ocean and global economy.

The timing matters. The world is recalibrating trade routes, energy partnerships, and food security alliances in the wake of geopolitical shifts. For Oman, a maritime nation whose history is built on trade, dialogue, and mutual respect, Africa’s southern corridor offers both opportunity and responsibility.

Botswana and Angola represent two different but complementary models of African growth, and His Majesty’s decision to visit both signals that Oman understands that diversity.

In Botswana, Oman finds a partner defined by stability, good governance, and a careful stewardship of natural resources.

Botswana’s success in transforming diamond wealth into education, healthcare, and infrastructure is a story Oman respects. Both nations are relatively small in population, but large in ambition. Both prioritise long-term planning over short-term reaction. The discussions there likely centred on economic diversification, sustainable mining, tourism, and water management — areas where Oman Vision 2040 priorities align closely with Botswana’s development goals.

There is also room for cooperation in

logistics and financial services, leveraging Oman’s ports and Botswana’s position as a gateway to Southern Africa’s common market.

In the same context, Angola presents a different landscape, but no less important. As one of Africa’s leading energy producers and a country undergoing rapid reconstruction and diversification, Angola offers Oman avenues for cooperation in energy, fisheries, agriculture, and infrastructure.

Oman’s experience in managing hydrocarbons responsibly, developing downstream industries, and building ports can be directly relevant to Angola’s next phase of growth. Equally, Angola’s vast agricultural potential speaks to Oman’s interest in food security and resilient supply chains.

There is also a historical thread that should not be overlooked. For centuries, Omani ships connected the Arabian Peninsula to the eastern coast of Africa. That legacy of peaceful trade and cultural exchange provides a foundation of trust. His Majesty’s visits revive that legacy in a modern form — through investment, technology transfer, education exchanges, and joint ventures. The Indian Ocean is once again becoming a bridge, not a barrier.

What can be expected to come from these visits include an expansion of direct trade. Currently, trade volumes between Oman and both Botswana and Angola remain modest. That is an opportunity. Removing barriers, establishing joint business councils, and encouraging the private sectors on both sides to meet will be essential next steps.

Also, cooperation in renewable energy

In choosing Botswana and Angola, Oman has chosen partners for the long term. That is how nations build not just trade, but trust.

and the green economy is expected to grow further. Oman is investing heavily in green hydrogen and renewable projects. Botswana’s solar potential and Angola’s hydropower and offshore wind possibilities create natural complementarities.

There is also a topic of human capital. Scholarships, vocational training, and health cooperation can build the people-to-people ties that sustain government agreements. Oman’s universities and technical institutes have much to offer, and they have much to learn.

Some may ask why these destinations, and why now. The answer is strategic patience. Oman is not chasing headlines. It is building networks. By engaging with Botswana’s model of governance and Angola’s model of post-conflict reconstruction, Oman diversifies its diplomatic portfolio and secures new partners for a multipolar world.

His Majesty’s visit also sends a message at home. Oman Vision 2040 is not just about reforming the domestic economy. It is about positioning Oman as a proactive, outward-looking nation that creates opportunities for its youth beyond our borders. Every new trade route, every joint project, every student exchange is a job, a skill, and a future for an Omani.

His Majesty has once again shown that Omani foreign policy is guided by wisdom, balance, and foresight. In choosing Botswana and Angola, Oman has chosen partners for the long term. That is how nations build not just trade, but trust. And in today’s world, trust is the most valuable currency of all.

BHUTAN BETS ON HAZELNUTS FOR FARMING FUTURE

SARA HUSSEIN

Farmer Pema Dema had never even heard of hazelnuts when she was first recruited to begin growing them on her land in Bhutan’s Thimphu region.

“I wondered what sort of a nut it was,” the 58-year-old said looking out over the deep valley and terraced rice fields that unfold below her farm.

Now she has more than 140 hazelnut trees on the steep slope overlooking her home, and incorporates them into Bhutan’s traditional salted suja tea when guests visit.

Pema is one of thousands of Bhutanese growing hazelnuts as part of a social enterprise hoping to help subsistence farmers develop a high-value crop.

Mountain Hazelnuts began in 2009 as Bhutan’s first 100-per cent foreign direct investment project in the agriculture sector. More than 40 per cent of Bhutan’s workforce is in agriculture, but production remains largely subsistence-based and is complicated by the country’s mountainous terrain.

Steep slopes can be impossible to plough and prone to topsoil washing away in heavy rain. Hazelnuts seemed to offer a solution. They grow well at high altitudes and on mountainsides, require no ploughing and their roots can fix soil in place.

Hazelnuts are also a high-value crop with a growing market, and the trees can produce for decades. That was what attracted Pema, who has been farming for 40 years. “I thought hazelnuts would be better in terms of fetching a better price,” she said. “I hoped that it would benefit us in the future.”

Mountain Hazelnuts distributed its first saplings in 2011, over 145,000 plants to 800 growers. Each recruit’s land was assessed for suitability and to ensure the crop was not displacing anything.

Investors have so far ploughed \$36 million in Mountain Hazelnuts, and for now the company remains reliant on what CEO Sean Watson calls “patient capital”.

It hopes to be “cash flow positive” by 2031, Watson said, and to reach 10,000 metric tonnes of production. That is a long way from the current 30 metric tonnes, but “fruiting is starting to really kick in”, and production is expected to at least double each year, Watson added. — AFP

AI extinction warning sparks global debate

A RECENT post on X turned artificial intelligence from a technical debate into an international public anxiety. Jacob Coxon, a researcher who had worked on pretraining at OpenAI and Anthropic, announced that he was resigning from Anthropic.

He accused both companies of racing toward self-improving superintelligence and ‘gambling with our lives.’ The wider thread warned that advanced AI could kill everyone by the end of the decade. His post received more than 160 million views, spreading far beyond the United States and Europe into the Arabian Gulf, including Oman.

Some details circulating online require correction. Coxon did not claim that he had worked in AI for only a few months. He wrote that he had spent three years conducting pretraining research across OpenAI and Anthropic, although his time at Anthropic appears to have been much shorter than his total industry experience. The claim that humanity will be destroyed by 2030 is also a warning, not an established prediction. Coxon raised a serious possibility, but he did not provide evidence proving that such an outcome will occur.

The post’s extraordinary reach created a second controversy. People were no longer discussing only whether AI might become dangerous. They were also asking why a relatively unknown account had suddenly appeared in feeds around the world.

Elon Musk reacted skeptically, describing the episode as seeming like a setup and later characterising the surrounding campaign as a



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

Advanced AI may create dangers involving autonomous weapons, cyberattacks, misinformation, unemployment, surveillance, and the concentration of power

‘psyop.’ His reaction intensified suspicions that the post had been deliberately amplified to frighten the public and prepare it to accept stricter controls over AI and social media.

That suspicion is understandable, but it should not be presented as fact. There is currently no publicly demonstrated proof that X, a government, Anthropic, or another organisation artificially pushed the post.

Social-media virality can result from recommendation systems, reposts by influential accounts, news coverage, and the emotional power of a frightening message.

A warning from someone with experience inside leading AI laboratories contains all the ingredients for explosive attention. The unusual spread deserves scrutiny, but asking who benefited from it is different from proving that someone engineered it.

The debate should therefore avoid two extremes. One extreme treats human extinction as practically guaranteed and encourages panic. The other dismisses every warning

as propaganda and assumes that technological progress will automatically benefit humanity.

A wiser position recognises genuine risks without surrendering to fear. Advanced AI may create dangers involving autonomous weapons, cyberattacks, misinformation, unemployment, surveillance, and the concentration of power. These problems justify public oversight, independent safety research, and transparent rules. However, regulation should protect citizens rather than use fear as an excuse to remove their agency or silence legitimate discussion.

This controversy also raises a deeper question: What do we want AI to do for us? Many people would prefer machines to handle exhausting, repetitive work - cleaning homes, washing dishes, or performing hazardous industrial tasks - while humans retain meaningful and creative activities. Instead, AI is often being developed first to write books, produce images, imitate artists, and make films. This feels backward. Technology should free people from drudgery, not make human imagination seem disposable.

The viral warning matters, but not because it proves that everyone will die by 2030. It matters because it reveals a worldwide crisis of trust: distrust of AI companies, algorithms, governments, billionaires, and even viral information itself.

The responsible response is neither panic nor denial. It is to demand evidence, preserve human choice, regulate proportionately, and direct AI toward work that genuinely improves human life.

Let’s talk climate and act together



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

IMAGINE A HALL full of climate experts and decision-makers! We have been hearing about climate change, and here we are in Oman with experts and speakers from 50 countries at Oman Climate Week organised by the Environment Authority.

Oman is building a serious and increasingly feasible climate agenda, said Mukhtar Babayev, president of COP29 and representative of the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Climate Affairs.

He explained that the drought is no longer simply a drought when it affects food production, electricity generation, migration and livelihoods.

A flood is not simply a flood when it damages infrastructure, interrupts the supply chain and creates new public health risks. It is important we hear what the experts have to say and incorporate it into our day-to-day conversations.

And this is why: Dr Roberta Boscolo, Lead for Climate and Energy at the World Meteorological Organization, affirmed that the latest climate data confirms the continued warming of the planet and oceans, as well as rising sea levels and melting glaciers.

Haven’t there been so many occasions when you wished you had known it earlier? The world would know how to manage better if there was an early warning for natural

disasters. But most of the time nature has had the last laugh. Of course, meteorology has advanced so much more, but a melting glacier still shocked the world when disaster hit Nepal.

If prevention is what we are striving for, it is also our duty to contribute to the journey of crisis management to recovery. According to Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, there is a close interlinkage between climate change and biodiversity loss, emphasising that ecosystems serve as one of the most vital natural lines of defence against the impacts of climate change.

So can you and I as individuals help prevent climate change by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions? Let us think together. Here are some effective actions we came across.

Let us begin with using energy efficiently by turning off unused lights. Let us not wait for Earth Day to take this action. You and I can take this action now. With this action we will be using energy efficiently.

We save energy by turning off unused lights and appliances, use energy-efficient bulbs and appliances, and reduce unnecessary air-conditioning. The last one is a bit challenging for us, especially in summer.

Choosing cleaner transport is another action we can all take. Walk, cycle, use public transport, carpool, or choose an electric/ hybrid vehicle when practical. Carpool is such a practical action that could relieve car

Learn about climate issues, encourage friends and communities to take action, and support policies and ideas that promote climate solutions.

parking stress and ease road traffic.

Now here is a challenge – going easy with shopping. This is an era of fast fashion and online shopping. But the key words are ‘reduce’, ‘reuse’, and ‘recycle’ – we need to buy only what we need and avoid single-use products. Maybe it is a good idea to learn to repair items and recycle materials properly.

Eat more sustainably, say the experts – reduce food waste and consider eating more plant-based foods, while choosing locally and seasonally available foods when possible.

From childhood we are told to conserve water, but are there occasions when we become careless? Fix leaks, take shorter showers, and avoid unnecessary water use, since treating and pumping water requires energy and money, especially for us in Oman as we use desalinated water.

Protect and restore nature – in this regard we have seen so many government and individual initiatives that aim at caring for trees and native plants, protecting green spaces, and supporting conservation efforts.

Make responsible purchases – choose durable, energy-efficient products and support businesses that use sustainable practices.

“Use your voice” – this is an extremely important part of it all. Learn about climate issues, encourage friends and communities to take action, and support policies and ideas that promote climate solutions.

POTENTIAL NEW TUBERCULOSIS VACCINES COULD SAVE MILLIONS

New tuberculosis vaccines expected to become available from 2029 could save over seven million lives over two decades, Gavi said on Monday, but only if sufficient supply is ensured to the countries most in need.

New TB jabs in the pipeline have the potential of becoming the “next blockbuster immunisation tool”, said Sania Nishtar, head of the Gavi global vaccine alliance.

“However, they will only realise their potential if we are able to ensure sufficient, predictable and affordable supply for those countries with the highest disease burden,” she said in a statement.

Tuberculosis, or TB, remains the world’s leading infectious killer, claiming an estimated 1.23 million lives in 2024, according to the latest statistics available from the World Health Organization.

The only vaccine currently licensed to protect against the disease is the Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine, which is over 100 years old.

Gavi stressed that while that vaccine is effective in protecting infants and young children against severe forms of the disease, its protection wanes.

The organisation also voiced hope that a number of new vaccines being developed to prevent TB among adolescents and adults could fill the gap.

With the first of the new and promising candidate vaccines expected to secure regulatory approval by the end of the decade, a fresh Gavi analysis also determined that they “could avert up to 7.3 million deaths from 2030 through 2050”.

It also determined that the new vaccines held the potential of “unlocking up to \$135 billion in economic benefits across low- and middle-income countries” by mid-century.

The Gavi analysis however also identified a number of risks that could slow the rollout once licences are secured, including inadequate global and domestic financing, which could limit uptake in countries.

The demand uncertainty could in turn impact manufacturer capacity investments for late-stage candidates, creating supply risk, it warned.

Gavi, which brings together government and private donors to help developing countries acquire immunisations for key diseases at affordable prices, said it was working to en-sure sufficient and affordable supply of the vaccines as soon as they are licensed.

It also said that it would push for widespread uptake through routine immunisation, and would “encourage a competitive and geographically diverse pipeline of novel TB vaccine candidates”.

“In order to help countries secure doses in the volumes they need, we are beginning to work with partners now to lay the groundwork for timely access when these vaccines become available,” Nishtar said. — AFP

Artificial intelligence could slow governments

AI-GENERATED writing has become ubiquitous since ChatGPT’s release in 2022, and institutions are struggling to keep up. Nowhere is the pressure more evident than in the courts. In the United States, the share of federal lawsuits filed without a lawyer rose from an 11 per cent average in 2005–22 to 16.8 per cent in 2025, with researchers linking the surge to the advent of AI. The same study found that the share of federal civil complaints containing machine-written text rose from 1% in 2023 to 18 per cent today.

In July, the US Government Accountability Office warned that the Internal Revenue Service risks being swamped by AI-generated public comments on tax regulations. Because large language models can generate virtually unlimited variations on the same text, it noted, nearly identical comments are increasingly difficult to detect. Research funders are being similarly inundated. Applications for grants across 12 funding organisations in the United Kingdom and Europe have risen by 57% since 2022, fuelled by a surge in AI-assisted submissions. In response to the flood of AI-generated writing, governments have begun automating their end of the process. An OECD survey of 58 national tax authorities found that 69% were using AI in 2023, up from just 9% in 2016. As AI’s capabilities have advanced, so have its uses, with tax authorities now relying on the technology to support analytical work and case selection, improve taxpayer services and correspondence through virtual assistants, and automate high-volume, repetitive tasks.

But greater capacity invites greater demand. A government agency that can process twice as many public comments may soon find itself receiving twice as many. The safety researcher David Woods calls this the law of stretched systems: when a system is pushed to the limits of its capacity, each improvement is quickly exploited to operate at greater scale. Woods pairs that concept with what he calls “the substitution myth,” which holds that automation simply replaces human



SAMI MAHROUM SAMI

The author is, Founder and CEO of Spark X, previously held posts at INSEAD, the OECD, and Nesta

The more work AI models can process, the more they leave for humans to decide. Unless governments account for this imbalance, they may discover that they have automated everything but gained little

workers when, in practice, it changes the nature of the work and often creates more of it.

Human oversight, however, cannot be scaled as easily. The European Union’s AI Act requires high-risk systems to be designed so that “natural persons” can effectively oversee them. EU data protection law also gives individuals the right not to be subject to decisions based solely on automated processing.

Nor can companies and organisations satisfy these requirements by putting a human at the end of the process. In its 2023 SCHUFA ruling, which concerned automated credit ratings, the European Court of Justice held that what matters is whether the final decision depends on the automated assessment, even if a human formally retains decision-making authority. A signature that merely ratifies an automated decision does not amount to meaningful oversight.

Put these two forces together, and a bottleneck emerges. Everything upstream of the responsible person—search, sorting, drafting, checking, routing—gets faster, while the person does not. The deluge of AI-generated content boosts demand for human judgement, but the rate at which decisions can be made remains unchanged.

A recent engineering study illustrates the problem. Modelling nuclear reactor licensing, the authors compared today’s manual process with two automated alternatives. They found that the projected timeline even for the more integrated automated systems—roughly 15 months—did not change even as the assumed capabilities of AI improved from conservative to optimistic. The bottleneck was the queue of senior reviewers responsible for final approvals on the most complex cases, who could complete only about three a day. Making the machines twice as capable, in other words, would do little to speed up the review process.

Governments have so far used AI for searching documents, summarising cases, sorting comments, and drafting correspondence. These are natural

tasks for AI because they can be automated without delegating consequential decisions to machines. But when decision-making capacity does not expand at the same rate, automation merely shifts the bottleneck rather than removing it, potentially even making it worse.

The alternative is not to let machines decide, which the law prohibits in certain cases and which is generally unwise, but to use them to reduce the cognitive burden of reaching a decision while leaving the judgement itself to a human.

British psychologist Alan Baddeley’s model of working memory offers a useful way to think about this.

Some parts of our working memory hold and process verbal and visual information, while another part, which Baddeley calls “the central executive,” directs and allocates our limited attention. AI can already read, organise, compare, and present information, but deciding what deserves attention and exercising judgement remain distinctly human functions.

The goal of AI adoption, then, should be to make it easier for public officials to make decisions by developing tools that identify trade-offs and uncertainties, present competing arguments fairly, and acknowledge their own limitations. Alas, such a system is harder to build than a summarisation tool and makes for a less impressive sales pitch, since its output would look more like better briefs than an excuse to eliminate entire departments.

This problem is not new. In 1983, cognitive psychologist Lisanne Bainbridge warned of the “ironies of automation”: as machines take the easier cases, humans are left with the difficult ones. While Bainbridge was writing about industrial process-control systems, the same logic applies to AI.

Government agencies measure applications processed, cases closed, response times, and, increasingly, tasks automated. They don’t measure how much more decision-makers are being asked to handle.

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



The tournament is expected to provide an important competitive platform for the young players.

SEVEN CENTRES SET FOR HANDBALL FESTIVAL

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The Oman Handball Association, through its Athlete Development Centres Committee, will organise the 2026 Athlete Development Centres Handball Festival on September 18 and 19 at the main indoor hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The two-day festival will bring together seven centres representing Oman, Nizwa, Seeb, Ibri, Al Shabab, Saham and Wadi Al Maawil. Activities will be held in morning and evening sessions as part of a programme designed to develop young players and provide them with valuable competitive experience.

The festival is part of the committee’s ongoing efforts to improve the technical abilities of young handball players, identify promising talent and provide a structured pathway for their development. It will also allow the technical staff to assess the progress and performance of players following the training programme conducted over the past period, helping the committee shape its technical plans for the next stage.

In addition to the competitive aspect, the festival will provide young players with an opportunity to test themselves against players from other centres, gain match experience and further develop the skills they have acquired during training. The event is also intended to strengthen social interaction and cooperation among players and technical staff from the participating centres.

One of the key objectives will be the identification of outstanding players who could earn selection for the Athlete Development Centres national team. Selection will be based on the technical levels and performances demonstrated during the festival. Each centre is permitted to participate with a maximum of 20 players.

The festival will also feature a handball tournament, with the seven participating centres divided into two groups. Group A consists of Oman Club, Al Shabab, Wadi Al Maawil and Ibri, while Group B features Seeb, Saham and Nizwa.

The preliminary stage will be played on a single round-robin basis, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the semifinals. The winner of Group A will face the runner-up of Group B, while the winner of Group B will meet the runner-up of Group A.

The tournament is expected to provide an important competitive platform for the young players while giving coaches an opportunity to assess their technical development under match conditions.

The festival will conclude with a closing ceremony under the auspices of Jaber bin Mohammed al Shibani, Director of the National Teams Affairs Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY). The ceremony will be attended by officials from the Oman Handball Association as well as the administrative and technical staff of the participating centres.

World Cup dreams take shape for Oman’s U15s



Oman’s Under-15 players train during their first camp in Muscat ahead of the FIFA U-15 World Cup & Festival in Azerbaijan.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

OMAN’S Under-15 football team has begun its first training camp in Muscat, with 22 players competing for 14 places at the inaugural FIFA U-15 World Cup & Festival in Azerbaijan from October 22 to 31.

The camp, running from September 12 to 17, brings together players identified through the youth league and a scouting process at clubs outside the competition. It gives the coaching staff its first opportunity to assess the group before choosing the squad that will represent Oman at the new Fifa event.

Team manager Khalid al Wahaibi said the selection process began with players observed in the youth league. The staff then visited clubs and arranged assessment sessions for their players, spending approximately a week with different groups before settling on the initial 22-man list.

“These 22 players will be assessed, and 14 will be selected to take part in the FIFA event in Azerbaijan,” al Wahaibi said. He added that the Oman Football Association had followed the team’s preparations and provided administrative, logistical and financial support.

Head coach Nasser al Mayahi said the players had made an encouraging start to the camp. Their efforts showed that they understood the responsibility of wearing the national shirt and were eager to earn a place in the squad.



Oman’s Under-15 players take part in a training session during their first national team camp in Muscat.

“The camp came after a selection process, and it is also an opportunity to choose the players who will represent us in the coming competition,” al Mayahi said. “They are working hard and showing a strong desire to represent Oman.”

Although he wants a respectable performance in Azerbaijan, the coach said results were only one part of the team’s mission. His priority is to establish an identity and help develop young players who can continue together through the national age-group system.

“Our main goal is to build an identity for this team and develop a generation that can become a foundation for the Under-17 national team,” he said. Al Mayahi welcomed the support shown by the media and Omani sporting community, saying it would encourage the players at the beginning of their journey.

Nizwa Club player Al Mukhtar bin Jamal al Rawahi described his first national team camp as a dream come

true. He said the coaches had helped the squad learn discipline, while the players were forming a close bond. He hopes to progress towards the first team and said the prospect of playing abroad had given the group a shared purpose.

Ahmed Juma of Al Musannah Club said the players had learned respect, discipline and sportsmanship from Al Mayahi during the opening sessions. He knows that selection cannot be taken for granted: the coach is assessing each player’s physical condition, football ability and level before deciding who will travel. Ahmed said his ambition was to seize the opportunity and meet the expectations of Omani supporters.

On Monday, Al Mouj Muscat announced a partnership with the Oman Football Association to support the team’s participation in Azerbaijan, where Oman will take part in the first edition of the FIFA event.

The 22 players called up for the camp are Sulaiman bin Khalifa al Mufarji, Mohammed bin Ahmed al Araiimi, Mohammed bin Thamer al Kahali, Sulaiman bin Hilal al Ghuraibi, Moayad bin Younis al Ghassani, Abdulrab bin Idris al Nasri, Osama bin Nabil Bait Faraj Allah, Ammar bin Khalid al Shizawi, Sultan bin Nasser al Shukaili, Turki Talal , Ahmed bin Juma al Sarhi, Al Yazan bin Talal al Rashdi, Mohammed bin Ayoub al Sharji, Siraj bin Ali al Barhi, Yaseen bin Asaad al Jabri, Ayman bin Ali al Ghafari, Salim bin Nabil al Awadi, Ammar bin Abdulkarim al Jabri, Al Mukhtar bin Jamal al Rawahi, Yousuf bin Ibrahim al Buraiki, Rashid bin Khalid al Buraidi and Ali bin Qasim al Habsi.

Oman Karate builds strong Asian presence with talent development

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

OMAN STRENGTHENED its presence on the Asian karate scene through its participation in the 24th Asian Karate Cadet, Junior and U21 Championships, held in Amman, Jordan, from September 8 to 11.

The continental event brought together 351 athletes from 30 Asian countries, providing a highly competitive platform for some of the continent's most promising young karate athletes.

Oman's participation featured both athletic and officiating representation, with the national team gaining valuable competitive experience while Omani referees made a strong contribution to the championship and achieved notable success in the continental classification examinations.

The Omani national team consisted of four athletes: Sharifa bint Ali al Shabibi, Mohammed bin Ali al Shabibi, Mukhtar bin Salim al Omari and Al Yaqdhan bin Hilal al Abdali. The team was supervised by national team coach and international coach Ali bin Said al Shabibi, while Al Shaihan bin Ahmed al Zakwani, a member of the Oman Karate Committee, headed the delegation.

The championship represented an important stage in the development of the Omani athletes, giving them the opportunity to compete directly against athletes from across Asia with considerable experience at continental and international events.

The exposure provided the Omani athletes with valuable lessons in competition management, physical preparation and tactical execution, while also helping them gain greater confidence in dealing with the pressure associated with major championships.

The Omani athletes demonstrated commitment, discipline and fighting



The Omani national team consisted of four athletes.

spirit throughout their participation, while adhering to their technical instructions and maintaining a strong sporting attitude both on and off the tatami.

Beyond the immediate results, the experience gained from competing against some of Asia's leading young karate athletes is expected to provide the coaching staff with valuable information for assessing the team's current level and identifying areas requiring further development.

The participation also highlighted the importance of maintaining a long-term development programme aimed at building a strong pool of athletes capable of representing Oman at major international competitions. Greater international



The Amman championship represented another important step in Oman's ongoing efforts to develop karate.

exposure, training camps and structured programmes for promising athletes across different age categories will remain important

elements in this process.

REFEREEING ACHIEVEMENT

Oman also made a notable contribution on the officiating side, with seven Omani referees holding Asian licences participating in the championship's refereeing courses, examinations and competition management.

The officials were Yousuf bin Muslim al Siyabi, Hilal bin Mohammed al Abdali, Mohammed bin Khalifa al Hinai, Adil bin Salim al Hinai, Tariq bin Jumaa al Raisi, Khalifa bin Hamad al Rasbi and Zulfabint Saif al Kindi.

Five of the Omani Asian referees successfully passed the classification and promotion examinations held

alongside the championship.

Yousuf bin Muslim al Siyabi earned an RA Referee classification in kumite, while Hilal bin Mohammed al Abdali also achieved the RA Referee classification in kumite.

Meanwhile, Adil bin Salim al Hinai, Tariq bin Jumaa al Raisi and Mohammed bin Khalifa al Hinai were awarded the JA Judge classification in kumite. The achievement represents another important milestone for Omani karate officiating and reflects the technical competence of the country's referees and their ability to meet the standards required at the continental level.

Their success also strengthens Oman's representation in the management of Asian competitions and underlines the continued development of the country's officiating system.

Participation in the championship provided the Omani officials with an opportunity to enhance their technical knowledge, follow the latest developments in the international karate rules and gain further practical experience through continental-level competition.

The Oman Karate Committee continues to support the participation of national teams, coaches and referees in international events, recognising the importance of international exposure in developing the sport as a whole.

Such participation also contributes to the committee's longer-term plans for developing athletes, coaches and officials, while supporting the organisation of specialised competitions and technical courses. The Amman championship therefore represented another important step in Oman's ongoing efforts to develop karate. The experience gained by the athletes is expected to contribute to their readiness for future competitions, while the refereeing achievements further strengthen Oman's position on the Asian and international karate stage.

United States women fight off spirited France to win 12th World Cup

BERLIN: Daniel WIGHTON The United States won the women's basketball World Cup for a record-extending 12th time, defeating a spirited France 97-79 thanks to an excellent second-half in the final in Berlin on Sunday.

The US are perennial red-hot favourites at this tournament and had not lost a World Cup match since 2006, but they were below their best for much of the competition.

They trailed by two points at half-time to an energetic France side but turned it on when it mattered, outscoring the Europeans 30-12 in the third quarter.

American veteran Breanna Stewart once again led from the front, scoring a game-high 22 points along with 10 rebounds and four assists as she became the first player to be named World Cup MVP a second time.

"I'm really happy the way we let the rest of the world know our goal is always gold," she told reporters, while describing the country's World Cup record as "an insane stat".

Coach Kara Lawson called Stewart "the greatest winner that we've had probably".

Jackie Young hit four crucial threes and finished with 18 points to extend the US record to 36 wins in a row at the tournament.

Indiana Fever guard Caitlin Clark scored just one point in the semifinal but chipped in with some crucial buckets down the stretch, scoring 12 points including two threes as the Americans silenced the pro-France crowd.

"We kind of got in a little bit of a hole there," Clark told reporters of the



We kind of got in a little bit of a hole there. And then we came back in and kind of dug ourselves out of it. That run we went on into half-time and then came out in the second half and really just dominated from there.

CAITLIN CLARK
US WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PLAYER



Breanna Stewart of the US lifts the trophy with teammates and head coach Kara Lawson after winning the FIBA Women's World Cup Final. — Reuters



USA's guard Chelsea Gray celebrates after the 2026 FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup final game between the United States and France. — AFP

second-quarter.

"And then we came back in and kind of dug ourselves out of it.

"That run we went on into half-time and then came out in the second half and really just dominated from there."

Playing in their first ever World Cup final, France were seeking revenge for their one-point loss in the gold medal match at the 2024 Paris Olympics but lost their composure as the Americans turned on the afterburners in the second half, committing 16 turnovers.

France's Gabby Williams, the player of the match in their semifinal win over Germany, scored an impressive 16 points in the opening half but added just four more after that.

AMERICANS VULNERABLE

The US, huge favourites who are used to dominating World Cups and the Olympics, came into Sunday's game looking vulnerable, having come close to defeats against unheralded Italy and again against Spain in the semifinals.

No team had come within 20 points of France as they cruised into a maiden World Cup final and started strongly, ending the opening quarter with a three-point lead and running out to a 14-point gap midway through the second.

Forced to up the ante, the US fought back with Young hitting two quick-fire threes and Clark grabbing one of her own seconds before half-time, cutting France's lead to two points.

The US were far more composed after that, with Clark finding her range from the field. The favourites took the steam out of the match in the fourth as they kept the French at bay.

Earlier on Sunday, Spain soothed the disappointment of their narrow semifinal loss to the US by claiming bronze with an 81-58 win over Germany.

The Spanish went close to a major boil over on Saturday, pushing the heavily favoured Americans all the way in their semifinal, levelling the scores at 58-58 three-quarters of the way through the match, before the US pulled away.

On Sunday, Spain were in control throughout against the spirited but limited hosts, who had never reached the final four of the tournament as a unified country. Top-scorer Iyana Martin was one assist away from a double-double, with 20 points while grabbing a game-best nine dimes. — AFP

SPORTS

ZVEREV

beats Shelton to win US Open title

TOP seed Alexander Zverev banished bitter US Open memories to beat American Ben Shelton 6-3 7-6(2) 5-7 6-2 in the final on Sunday, capturing the title six years after letting a golden opportunity slip through his fingers.

The German squandered a two-set lead in the 2020 title match against Austrian Dominic Thiem but now armed with a champion's mentality following his breakthrough triumph at Roland Garros in June, he broke American hearts with a devastating display against Shelton.

"I think God has seen how hard we worked, how much we suffered, how much pain we went through and I think 2026 is the outcome of all the years that happened before," Zverev said during the presentation ceremony.

The home fans were desperate to see Shelton end a 23-year American men's Grand Slam drought but the eighth seed never found his top form in his first major final.

"I know that today 99.9% of the people wanted Ben to win so I'm very sorry," said Zverev. "Even though I know that the crowd was against me, the crowd was always incredibly fair and we as players we appreciate it."

Zverev was so focused on the job at hand, he did not even realise he had won the title when Shelton smacked a service return long.

As the umpire announced 'Game, set and match Zverev', the German headed back to the baseline, ready to receive Shelton's serve.

It took him a few seconds to register why the cheering fans were giving him a standing ovation — as he belatedly cracked a smile and ran to the net to embrace Shelton.

He was beaming again as he was handed a Grand Slam record \$5.5 million winner's prize.

ZVEREV GETS HOT START

In a battle between two of tennis' most explosive players, it was Zverev who had all the early firepower, as Shelton's inexperience showed with a double fault on break point in the opening game.

Shelton produced one of the points of the match in the sixth game, scrambling to reach a drop shot and prevailing in a tense exchange at the net.

Encouraged by his team, the American mixed in serve-and-volley tactics in an attempt to shift the momentum, but the move proved ineffective and he handed Zverev the set with a double fault.

The partisan crowd tried to get under Zverev's skin in the second set, cheering wildly after he produced a double fault in the ninth game. But the German refused to get distracted, surging to a 5-0 lead in the tiebreak as the fans desperately chanted "Let's go, Ben!"

Zverev looked like he would roll to the finish line in the third set as he saved a break point in the sixth game with a lethal backhand winner.

Shelton's frustration boiled over two games later when he slipped and crashed to the court, prompting the American to let out an expletive.

But Shelton dug in his heels, subduing his opponent with a series of powerful groundstrokes from the baseline to break serve and force a fourth set.

Shelton's resilience only delayed the inevitable as Zverev came through a 25-shot rally to secure an early break in the deciding set. He never let go of that advantage as he finally got the chance to hoist the US Open trophy on his 11th appearance at the hardcourt major.

"My successes are a gift, the failures are a gift, and being here playing in front of you guys is a gift," said Shelton, the first Black American man in 54 years to contest the New York final after Arthur Ashe.

His girlfriend, Olympic champion soccer player Trinity Rodman, made it to his player's box after racing 200 miles from her Washington Spirit game, which largely overlapped with the start of his match. — Reuters



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,630.086

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$127.62
BRENT \$107.40
LIGHT \$102.39



SHORT TAKES



The Sultanate of Oman Pavilion was inaugurated by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

OMAN TAKES INTEGRATED ENERGY PITCH TO GASTECH

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The Sultanate of Oman is showcasing its integrated energy value chain at Gastech 2026 in Bangkok, seeking to strengthen international partnerships and attract investment as the global industry navigates rising energy demand and the transition towards lower-carbon sources.

Oman's participation in the September 14-17 event brings together Energy Oman, OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP), Integrated Gas Company (IGC), OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) and Oman LNG under the banner "Energy from Oman".

The joint pavilion presents the country's capabilities across the energy value chain, highlighting its gas resources, infrastructure and operations as well as efforts to improve efficiency, reliability and sustainability.

Gastech, one of the global energy industry's major gatherings, provides Oman with a platform to engage international companies, investors and customers as it seeks new partnerships and investment opportunities.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, inaugurated the Oman pavilion in the presence of Issa bin Abdullah al Alawi, Oman's Ambassador to Thailand and chief executives of the participating companies.

Al Aufi toured the pavilion, which features projects, technology solutions and operational capabilities across Oman's energy sector.

The participation comes as the Sultanate of Oman seeks to balance energy security and industrial growth with its longer-term energy transition and emissions-reduction objectives under Oman Vision 2040.

Oman has been working to strengthen coordination across its energy companies and infrastructure while developing new opportunities in conventional and lower-carbon energy.

The participating companies said the joint presence at Gastech demonstrates the integration of Oman's energy sector and its ability to combine national expertise and infrastructure to respond to changing global market requirements.

The pavilion will also be used for meetings with existing and prospective customers and international partners, with participating companies seeking opportunities for strategic partnerships and investment.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Oman's landmark Mazoon Copper Project has reached a key mining milestone with the start of pre-stripping operations, marking the physical transition of one of the Sultanate of Oman's largest copper resources towards commercial production.

Mattar al Badi, Chief Executive Officer of Minerals Development Oman (MDO), said the first excavator had begun cutting into waste rock at the mine that will supply the project's copper concentration plant.

Pre-stripping involves removing overburden and waste rock to expose the underlying orebody ahead of full-scale mining.

"This is the moment when a resource moves from a number in a report to a mine on the ground", Al Badi said, describing the seemingly routine activity as one of the most

Oman Islamic banking assets top AED 9.6 billion

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

THE Sultanate of Oman is moving to deepen its Islamic money and sukuk markets as the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) seeks to strengthen the sector's role in financing investment, economic diversification and the country's broader development agenda. Asia al Raisi, Deputy Chief Economist for Investment and Market Operations at the CBO, said the central bank was advancing Wakalah certificates of deposit and Islamic government treasury bills as part of efforts to build a deeper and more liquid Islamic money market.

Speaking at the IFN Oman Forum 2026, Al Raisi said the measures would build on existing instruments, including the collateralised Qard Hasan intraday facility and restricted Mudarabah overnight facility.

The CBO is also seeking to accelerate the development of the domestic sukuk market, which could provide alternative funding for productive investment and broaden the investor base.

"A deep domestic Sukuk market can diversify funding, finance productive investment, and attract a wider investor base," Al Raisi said, adding that greater standardisation, transparency and legal certainty would improve comparability, tradability and cross-border participation.

Oman's Islamic banking industry has expanded rapidly since the Islamic Banking Regulatory Framework was introduced in 2012.

By the second quarter of 2026, Islamic banking assets had exceeded RO 9.6 billion,



The CBO is seeking to accelerate the development of the domestic sukuk market: Asia al Raisi, Deputy Chief Economist for Investment and Market Operations.

A deep domestic Sukuk market can diversify funding, finance productive investment, and attract a wider investor base. Greater standardisation, transparency and legal certainty would improve comparability, tradability and cross-border participation.

ASIA AL RAISI
Deputy Chief Economist for Investment and Market Operations, CBO

accounting for 19 per cent of total banking sector assets, while quarterly profit topped RO 23 million, Al Raisi said. The sector maintained a non-performing loan ratio of 3.3 per cent.

The CBO is now pursuing structural changes aimed at strengthening the industry. In July, it issued the Islamic Banking Windows Conversion and Transformation Framework, establishing a phased process from 2026 to 2030 for existing Islamic banking windows to become independent Islamic banks.

Al Raisi said the transition was intended to create institutions with stronger governance, clearer accountability, greater operational autonomy and sufficient scale to compete regionally.

The central bank has identified five priorities for the sector: deepening the Islamic money market, accelerating sukuk development, promoting responsible digital innovation, strengthening governance and supervision, and directing more financing towards Oman's economic transformation.

The CBO's open banking and digital banking frameworks would provide a regulatory foundation for innovation, while maintaining

requirements covering cyber resilience, data protection and governance, she said.

Islamic finance should also play a greater role in supporting Oman Vision 2040, particularly by financing small and medium enterprises and sectors targeted for economic diversification.

The CBO's targeted-sector capital framework provides incentives for banks to direct financing towards activities supporting diversification, employment and sustainable growth, Al Raisi said.

Globally, Islamic financial assets reached about \$5 trillion in 2025, with GCC countries accounting for nearly 70 per cent. Outstanding sukuk exceeded \$1 trillion, while annual issuance reached about \$234 billion.

Al Raisi said the expansion of Islamic finance across borders would require closer cooperation between central banks, regulators, standard-setters and financial institutions, particularly on prudential standards, Sharia governance, disclosure, resolution frameworks and sukuk documentation. Oman aims to position itself as a trusted centre for responsible innovation, high-quality regulation and sustainable Islamic finance, she added.

OMAN
PROPERTY
TRADE RISES
7.7% TO AED 1.72
BILLION

MUSCAT: The value of real estate transactions in the Sultanate of Oman rose 7.7 per cent to RO 1.716 billion in the first seven months of 2026, driven by a sharp increase in property sales, official data showed. Total property transactions were valued at RO 1.593 billion in the corresponding period of 2025, according to figures released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The value of sales contracts jumped 15.7 per cent to RO 843.2 million from RO 728.5 million a year earlier, providing the strongest growth among the major transaction categories. The number of sales contracts increased at a slower 3.9 per cent to 39,719 from 38,226, indicating that the average value of transactions also rose during the period. Mortgage activity remained broadly

stable by value despite a strong increase in the number of contracts. The value of mortgage contracts edged up 0.7 per cent to RO 864.4 million from RO 858.4 million, while their number surged 22.3 per cent to 15,441 from 12,621 in 2025. Exchange contracts recorded the strongest percentage increase in value, rising 33.6 per cent to RO 8.2 million from RO 6.1 million.

— ONA

Pre-stripping begins at Oman's flagship Mazoon copper project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 14



Mazoon is being developed by MDO as Oman's largest integrated copper concentrate production project (Picture for illustration only).

decisive stages in mine development.

Located in the Wilayat of Yanqul in Al Dhahirah Governorate, Mazoon is being

developed by MDO as Oman's largest integrated copper concentrate production project. The development covers around 20 sq km and is centred on multiple open-pit mines feeding a central processing complex.

MDO's 2025 Annual Report put total reserves at approximately 23.4 million tonnes, following the addition of around 4.9 million tonnes of new resources.

The processing plant will have capacity to handle 2.5 million tonnes of ore annually and produce around 115,000 tonnes of copper concentrate with a copper grade of approximately 21.5 per cent.

Supporting infrastructure includes central crushing facilities, a tailings storage facility, power and water networks; and administrative and residential facilities.

Construction made significant headway during 2025. Major construction and service packages were awarded to local contractors, while concrete works for the

primary crushers and grinding mills were completed.

MDO has also contracted Finnish mining technology specialist Metso to supply key processing equipment and technologies.

The latest mining milestone comes after Mazoon secured substantial financing for its development.

Earlier this year, ahlibank announced the financial close of a dual-currency, multi-tranche syndicated facility exceeding RO 154 million (\$400 million), comprising conventional and Islamic financing tranches with participation from a group of Omani financial institutions.

Copper concentrate production is targeted to commence in 2027, positioning Mazoon as a cornerstone of Oman's efforts to revive domestic copper production, expand its non-hydrocarbon industrial base and build a stronger presence in global critical-minerals supply chains.

BUSINESS FEATURE

INSTANT PAYMENTS

widen value lead over OmanNet

QASIM AL MAASHANI

OMAN'S instant-payment system sharply widened its value lead over the national OmanNet card network during the first half of 2026, as account-to-account payments grew considerably faster than card-network activity.

The Mobile Payments Clearing and Switching System (MPCSS) handled 224.2 million transactions worth RO 8.218 billion during the six months, according to Central Bank of Oman data. Transaction volume rose 49 per cent from a year earlier, while value increased 72 per cent.

OmanNet, which covers point-of-sale terminals, ATMs and the domestic e-commerce payment gateway, processed more transactions but carried substantially less value.

It handled 359.5 million transactions worth RO 4.71 billion, with volume rising 34 per cent and value increasing 10 per cent. The two systems were carrying broadly similar value a year earlier.

MPCSS processed RO 4.765 billion in the first half of 2025, compared with around RO 4.3 billion through OmanNet, based on Observer calculations from the reported growth rates. By the first half of 2026, MPCSS was carrying roughly RO 3.5 billion more.

Across Oman's retail payment systems, 606.5 million transactions worth RO 29.2 billion were processed during the first half. Transaction numbers rose 38 per cent year on year, compared with a 28 per cent increase in value.

The Automated Clearing House (ACH), which handles services including direct credits, direct debits and recurring payments, processed 20.85 million transactions worth RO 10.83 billion, up 24 per cent by volume and 25 per cent by value.

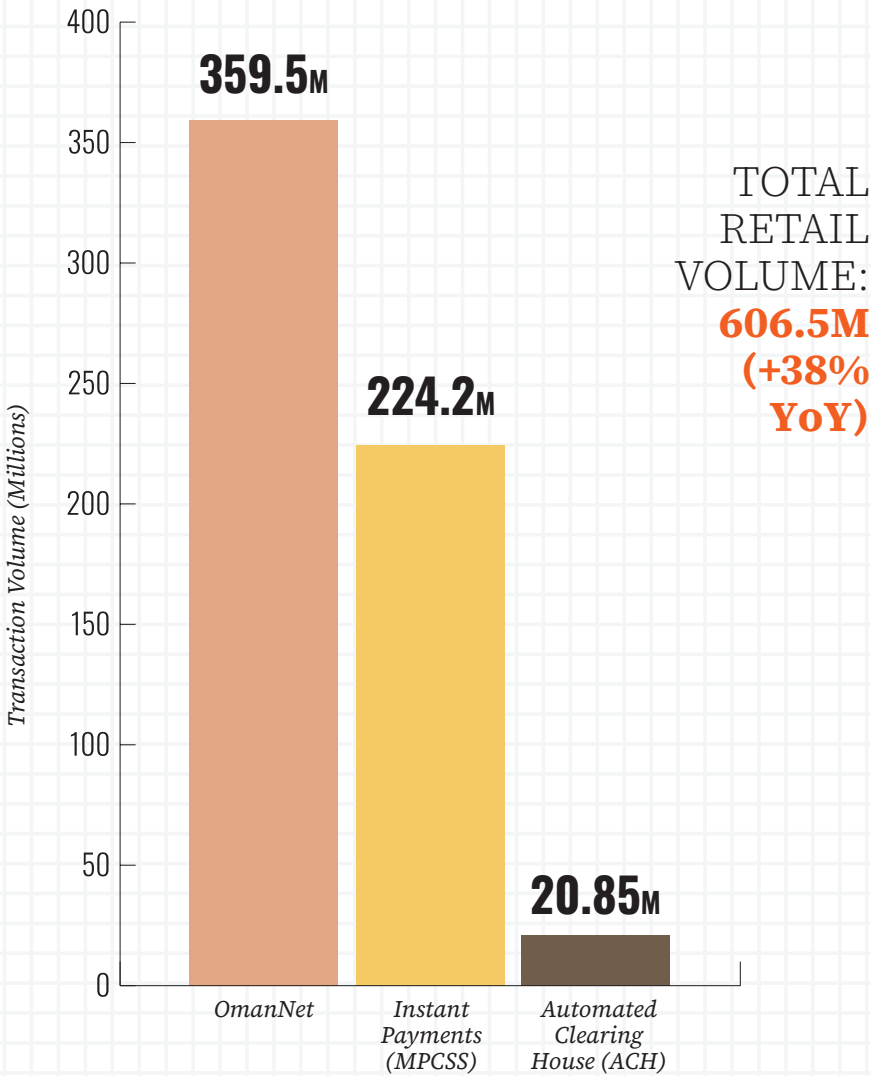
INSTANT-PAYMENT VALUES RISE
The average transaction processed through MPCSS rose to around RO 36.7 during the first half of 2026, from about RO 31.6 a year earlier, based on Observer calculations using the reported CBO figures.
The system supports person-to-person, person-to-business and person-to-government payments. Published figures do not separate those categories, so the increase cannot be attributed specifically to greater business payments or to transfers between individuals.

POS TAKES LARGER SHARE
The most recent detailed OmanNet channel breakdown

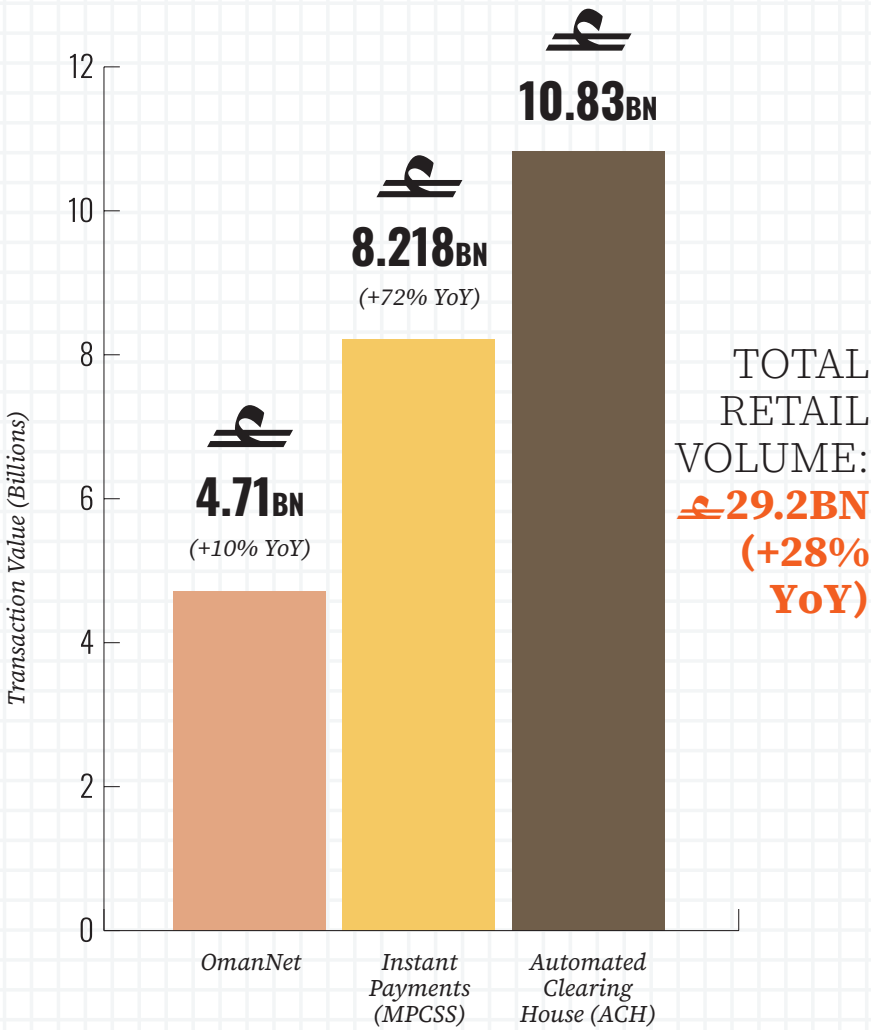
OMAN RETAIL PAYMENT SYSTEMS

H1 2026 Summary

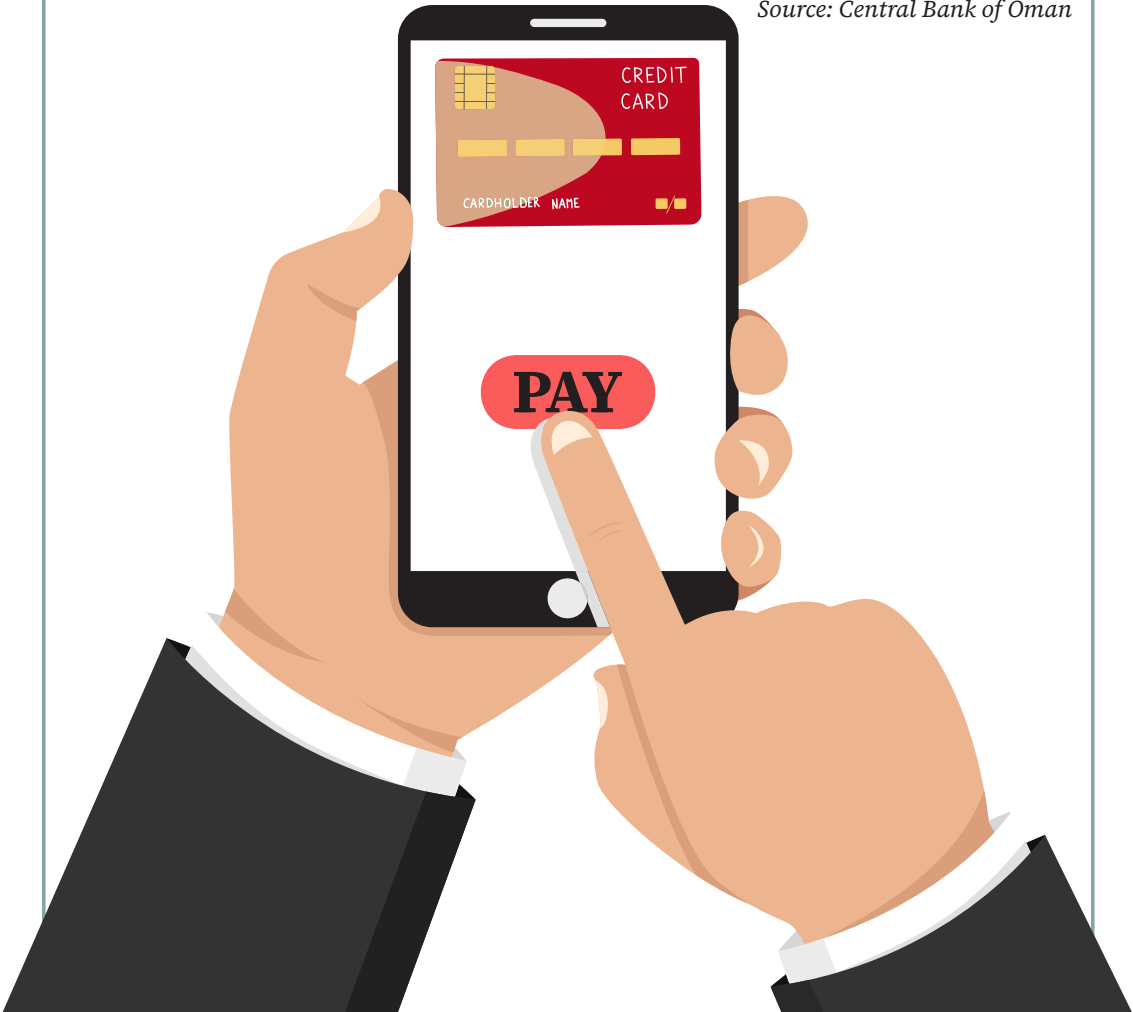
Transaction Volume by System (H1 2026)



Transaction Value by System (H1 2026)



Source: Central Bank of Oman



in the CBO's National Payment Systems Annual Report covers 2024.

Point-of-sale transactions accounted for 80 per cent of OmanNet transaction volume in 2024, up from 74 per cent in 2023. ATM activity declined to 8 per cent from 11 per cent, while e-commerce accounted for 12 per cent, down from 15 per cent.

The figures require careful interpretation. OmanNet's ATM channel supports functions other than cash withdrawal, including account transfers and balance enquiries.

The CBO does not publish the composition of the ATM category in its payment statistics, so a fall in ATM's share cannot be read as an equivalent decline in cash withdrawals. OmanNet also combines POS, ATM and e-commerce activity.

Changes in the relative weight of those channels can alter the network's overall average transaction value even if the amount consumers spend per shop purchase remains unchanged. The CBO material reviewed for this report does not provide an equivalent POS, ATM and e-commerce breakdown for the first half of 2026.

JULY REFORMS COME LATER
The first-half figures pre-date the CBO's latest payment-fee reforms. From July 1, 2026, local digital fund transfers through national payment systems became free for retail customers and small and medium-sized enterprises.

The maximum merchant service fee for QR-based Scan and Pay transactions was also

INSTANT PAYMENTS
CARRIED ABOUT

3.5

BILLION MORE THAN
THE NATIONAL CARD
NETWORK IN THE
FIRST HALF OF 2026,
WHILE JULY'S FEE
REFORMS WILL FIRST BE
REFLECTED IN SECOND-
HALF DATA.

reduced to 0.50 per cent from 0.75 per cent, capped at RO 2 per transaction.

Those measures therefore cannot have contributed to the growth recorded between January and June. Second-half data will be the first to reflect activity under the new fee structure.

The timing is particularly relevant to smaller businesses, where payment-acceptance costs can weigh more heavily on narrow margins.

PAYMENT MIX CHANGES
The CBO has described rising volumes and values across ACH, MPCSS and OmanNet as part of Oman's continued movement towards a society less dependent on cash, while electronic cheque-clearing volumes and values have continued to decline.

OmanNet processed around 135 million more transactions than MPCSS during the first half, but MPCSS carried roughly RO 3.5 billion more in value. That widening divergence is one of the clearest features of Oman's latest payment data.

SHORTTAKES



The 9.6 MW wind turbine is described as the world’s largest onshore turbine installed outside China.

O-GREEN INSTALLS LANDMARK WIND TURBINE IN DUQM

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Omani state-backed integrated clean energy platform O-Green has installed a 9.6 MW wind turbine at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), describing it as the world’s largest onshore wind turbine installed outside mainland China.

The turbine, featuring blades nearly 100 metres long and a 115-metre tower, will supply renewable electricity to Al Duqm’s expanding industrial ecosystem, including the nearby Mawarid wind turbine manufacturing facility, according to O-Green.

Located near the OQ8 refinery, the turbine forms part of the Al Duqm City Renewable Energy initiative being developed through Naqaa Sustainable Energy, an O-Green subsidiary.

“For us, this turbine represents more than 9.6 MW of renewable generation. It represents the next stage of Oman’s energy transition: building renewable energy infrastructure while localising the technology and industrial capability behind it”, O-Green said.

Omani contractors and specialists participated across the project, including engineering, site works, construction and the complex transportation and installation of tower sections and blades. The turbine platform has also been engineered for the demanding operating conditions of the GCC, O-Green said.

The installation represents the single-turbine Duqm North component of the wider Duqm North and South Wind Project. Together, the two developments will comprise six turbines with combined capacity of 58 MW. Duqm South will account for the remaining five turbines and 48 MW.

Once operational, the wind projects are expected to generate around 190 GWh of electricity annually, supporting efforts to decarbonise industrial activity at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and strengthen Oman’s emerging renewable-energy manufacturing ecosystem.

Sharia-compliant firms hit ₮8 bn market value

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

THE market capitalisation of 35 Sharia-compliant companies on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has reached around RO 8 billion, accounting for about 52 per cent of the relevant market universe, as Oman expands Islamic investment and financing options, MSX Chief Executive Officer Haitham al Salmi said.

Speaking at the IFN Oman Forum 2026, Al Salmi said the exchange has been working to widen the range of investment products available to Sharia-conscious investors, complementing the development of Islamic banking and sukuk markets in the Sultanate of Oman.

The MSX Sharia Index, comprising the top 15 eligible companies, has a market capitalisation of around RO 7.12 billion, he said.

MSX works with IdealRatings to assess listed companies against Sharia requirements, including standards set by the Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI).

Al Salmi said Sharia compliance has also become an increasingly important consideration for



The liquidity has been enhanced. The next step was to ensure investment products available on MSX cater to different classes of investors and match both local and global investment appetite.

HAITHAM AL SALMI
CEO, MSX

companies entering the exchange through initial public offerings, as issuers seek access to a broader pool of local and international investors.

Abraj Energy Services, one of the first companies in Oman’s recent wave of state-backed IPOs, became Sharia-compliant after its listing, while subsequent offerings have increasingly incorporated Sharia compliance. OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP), which carried out Oman’s largest IPO, was also Sharia-compliant, Al Salmi said.

The exchange also hosts around RO 1.5 billion worth of listed sukuk, providing investors with Islamic debt instruments alongside Sharia-compliant equities.

Al Salmi said MSX was working to complete the investment ecosystem by introducing services aimed specifically at Islamic investors. These include a purification rate that enables investors to determine amounts requiring purification from their investments.

The exchange has also introduced a Zakat platform among its 2026 initiatives, allowing investors to calculate Zakat on their holdings.

Oman’s Islamic capital market has developed alongside the country’s Islamic banking industry.

The first sovereign sukuk was issued in 2015, followed by the first

US dollar-denominated sovereign sukuk in 2016. Bank Nizwa subsequently issued the first sukuk by an Omani Islamic bank in 2017, while retail investors were given access to a sovereign sukuk offering in 2020.

Al Salmi said the expansion of Sharia-compliant products was taking place alongside broader growth in Oman’s capital market.

The market’s size has risen to around 39 per cent of Oman’s gross domestic product from about 20 per cent previously, while trading liquidity has increased sharply.

Average daily traded value has climbed from around RO 1.8 million based on the 2020 baseline to more than RO 55 million currently, representing an increase of roughly 30 times, according to Al Salmi.

“The liquidity has been enhanced”, he said, adding that the next step was to ensure investment products available on MSX cater to different classes of investors and match both local and global investment appetite.

MSX, formerly the Muscat Securities Market, was transformed into a commercial company and rebranded in 2021 as part of efforts to deepen Oman’s capital market and provide an exit platform for state-owned and private companies.

Oman launches Green AI Alliance

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has established a Green AI Alliance to promote energy-efficient artificial intelligence and high-performance computing, as the country seeks to build a sustainable digital economy powered increasingly by renewable energy.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology held the alliance’s inaugural meeting on Monday in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Authority for Public Services

Regulation (APSR), bringing together government and private-sector representatives.

The alliance will focus on integrating renewable and green energy into AI and high-performance computing infrastructure, while supporting research into low-emission and net-zero computing technologies.

At the meeting, members approved the alliance’s founding document, established a technical committee and reviewed its 2026 work plan.

The initiative brings together government agencies, businesses, academic and research institutions and investors to develop a national ecosystem for Green AI and attract local and international partnerships.

Oman is seeking to expand its digital economy while managing the growing energy requirements associated with AI and data-intensive computing. Greater use of renewable power and energy-efficient computing could help reduce emissions while supporting

the country’s broader economic diversification objectives under Oman Vision 2040.

The alliance will also encourage private companies to adopt cleaner technologies and explore incentives aimed at accelerating investment and innovation in sustainable computing. Other priorities include developing national expertise, supporting Green AI projects with potential economic returns and strengthening cooperation with international organisations and research institutions. — ONA

HORECA Oman brings together 200 exhibitors and 1,500 brands

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The fifth edition of HORECA Oman, bringing together more than 200 exhibitors representing over 1,500 local and international brands from seven countries, opened at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday.

The three-day exhibition, held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Hamoud bin Qais al Said, runs until September 16 and features the latest products, services, technologies and solutions for the food and beverage and hospitality sectors.

Co-organised by Hospitality

Services and Al Nimr Expo, with the support of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR), the event covers more than 5,500 square metres of exhibition space and is expected to attract over 8,000 buyers and trade visitors.

The exhibition brings together stakeholders from across the hospitality and foodservice industries, showcasing innovations in food and beverages, hotel and kitchen equipment, hospitality design and operations.

Speaking at the event, Joumana Dammous-Salamé, managing director of Hospitality Services,



The exhibition brings together professionals, innovators and emerging talents.

said HORECA Oman reflected the continued growth and dynamism of the Sultanate of Oman’s hospitality sector. “It has become an important annual meeting place where professionals come together to

discover what’s new, exchange ideas and expertise, meet the right partners and create new business opportunities,” she said.

Salim bin Omar al Hashmi, CEO of Al Nimr Expo, said the exhibition contributed to strengthening the capabilities of the hospitality sector and positioning Oman as an evolving destination for investment and growth.

He highlighted the importance of collaboration between government institutions and private companies in bringing together professionals, innovators and emerging talents, while supporting the development of the sector.

The programme includes HORECA

Talks, featuring industry experts discussing key opportunities and challenges facing the hospitality and foodservice sectors in Oman and the wider region.

More than 30 competitions and masterclasses involving over 250 competitors are also being held, including the Hospitality Salon Culinaire, Junior Chef Competition, Art of Service Competition, HORECA Barista Competition Oman, Latte Art Competition, Mocktail Competition and Bed Making Competition.

More than 40 speakers, experts and guest chefs are participating in masterclasses, live cooking demonstrations and knowledge-sharing sessions.

GOLD PRESSURE

Gold slips as rate hike bets rise



Gold prices edged lower on Monday as rising oil prices fuelled inflation concerns and strengthened expectations of a US Federal Reserve rate hike this week.

Spot gold fell 0.5 per cent to \$4,327.80 per ounce. Precious metals traders see an 86 per cent probability of a rate increase after August inflation accelerated, while other precious metals, like silver, also declined. — ONA

SUPPLY SHOCK

Oil surges on Saudi supply disruption



Oil prices jumped more than 3 per cent as fresh attacks on Saudi energy infrastructure and vessels heightened global supply concerns. Brent climbed to \$107.40 per barrel, while WTI reached \$102.39.

Prices gained around 9 per cent last week amidst escalating Middle East tensions, pushing the United States’ diesel above \$6 per gallon for the first time. — Reuters

ENGINE COMPETITION

Airlines seek wider access to used parts



Global airlines are pressing jet engine manufacturers to allow independent suppliers greater access to reconditioned parts, seeking to ease shortages and increase competition. IATA’s call follows a European antitrust settlement requiring Pratt & Whitney Canada to relax restrictions affecting used turboprop components. Airlines now want similar measures extended to the larger jet engine market. — Reuters

OPINION

Are you ready for a computer on your face? Welcome to smart glasses



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

IMAGINE walking into a restaurant, looking at the menu and asking the glasses you are wearing, “What do you recommend I eat today?” The glasses read the menu, translate it if necessary and recommend a meal.

After dinner, you walk outside and ask for directions. Your glasses guide you. Someone approaches and speaks to you in a language you do not understand. No problem. Your glasses translate the conversation, perhaps even displaying the translation in front of your eyes. You continue walking and see something intriguing. You simply say, “Take a picture”. No phone. No keypad. No screen.

A picture is taken and stored for you. All this happens without reaching for a smartphone. How can that be? Welcome to smart glasses.

Yes, this is no longer science fiction. I believe we are witnessing the early stages of what could become the next major computing platform. Smart glasses are essentially wearable computers built into eyewear. Today’s models combine cameras, microphones, speakers, wireless connectivity, processors and artificial intelligence.

Future models will increasingly include displays that place digital information directly into our field of vision. Think of it simply as AI becomes the brain, cameras become the eyes, microphones become the ears, speakers become the voice and sensors help the device understand movement and

surroundings. The technology is moving quickly. Meta’s (the company behind Facebook & Instagram) Ray-Ban Meta glasses have already brought AI, voice interaction, photography and translation into ordinary-looking eyewear. Snap is moving further into augmented reality with its new SPECS glasses. Google and Samsung are also developing intelligent eyewear with partners including Gentle Monster and Warby Parker, with new products planned for 2026. What makes this exciting is that smart glasses could fundamentally change our relationship with technology.

For decades, computing has demanded our attention. We look down at our phones. We open apps, type, scroll and stare at screens. Smart glasses, however, could reverse that relationship. Instead of asking us to look at technology, it could begin looking at the world with us.

Imagine walking through an unfamiliar city and receiving directions without constantly checking your phone. Imagine looking at some building and asking your glasses, “What is this?” Imagine attending a meeting and receiving a translation through your ears. The possibilities are enormous.

Having shared all that, yet there is one major issue, ie, the privacy. A smartphone camera is visible. When someone points a phone at you, you generally know they may be taking a picture or recording.

Smart glasses, however, change the equation. The camera is sitting on someone’s face. It can potentially capture images and

For decades, computing has demanded our attention. We look down at our phones. We open apps, type, scroll and stare at screens. Smart glasses, however, could reverse that relationship. Instead of asking us to look at technology, it could begin looking at the world with us.

audio without everyone around the wearer immediately realising it. Who was recorded? Where was the footage stored? Who can access it? Is AI analysing what the camera sees? How long is it retained? And should someone have the right to say, “Please don’t record me?”

These are not hypothetical concerns. Privacy regulators are already raising concerns about wearable technologies and the possibility of people being monitored without their knowledge. And this is where the real debate begins. The success of smart glasses may not depend only on battery life, AI capability, or how good the display is. It may depend on whether society trusts the person wearing them.

We have spent years learning how to live with smartphones, cameras and social media. Smart glasses could elevate that challenge by making the technology less visible while increasing our awareness of our surroundings. The smartphone changed the way we look at screens. Smart glasses may change the way technology looks at us.

In my humble opinion, they are much more than another gadget. They could represent a new computing platform. One where the interface is not a screen in our hand, but the world in front of our eyes. The future may not be about carrying a smarter computer. It may be about wearing one.

Until we catch up again next week, let’s continue watching this space. Smart glasses could truly revolutionise the way we see, hear and interact with the world.

CAN US DEMOCRACY SURVIVE ITS DEBT TIPPING POINT?

JOACHIM KLEMENT

As US borrowing costs rise, the country has reached a tipping point where it may have to issue new debt just to pay interest on existing obligations. If democratically elected politicians don’t change course, bond markets might force their hand, putting democracy itself at risk.

As the axiom goes, the US Congress is a place where Republicans want lower taxes and Democrats want higher spending. Instead of negotiating, they often reach a compromise: lower taxes and higher spending.

As a result, US government debt has recently topped \$40 trillion, roughly doubling under the presidencies of Donald Trump and Joe Biden. That partly reflects some justified pandemic-era crisis spending, but also many questionable fiscal decisions. To please voters in the present, many politicians have no problem borrowing from the future.

One of the key strengths of democratic systems is their responsiveness and efficiency in reacting to people’s wishes. But this responsiveness to voters’ desires can lead to fiscal imprudence, creating long-term vulnerabilities that can undermine a country’s resilience — its ability to withstand normal downturns and shocks.

The current rise in long-term US government bond yields to levels not seen in many years highlights this risk. The 30-year Treasury yield recently hit 5.25% — just shy of its August peak of 5.30%, but a staggering jump from 1.67% in December 2021. Investors have to look all the way back to May 2004 to find long-term borrowing costs this high.

The days of a balanced US budget are long gone. While it’s debatable whether a large developed economy should seek to run a balanced budget, few would argue that running ever-widening deficits is desirable or sustainable.

Over the last 25 years, the US federal deficit has ballooned to 5.8% of gross domestic product and is projected to average 6.1% of GDP over the next 10 years, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Even the primary deficit, which excludes interest costs, is projected to average 2% of GDP over the same decade.

Expanding deficits should lead to an ever-higher debt burden. CBO projections for a rising debt-to-GDP ratio are well-known. But what many may not know is that the Treasury’s own forecasts paint an even worse picture.

While the nonpartisan CBO projects that US debt will reach 150% of GDP by 2048, the Treasury expects this milestone to be reached as early as 2040.

The difference lies in the two institutions’ forecasting methodologies. The CBO bases its projections on current laws, accounting for sunset provisions on tax cuts or government spending programmes. — Reuters

Old winds, new cargo: An African opportunity

ASK an old trader in Muttrah or Stone Town where the Indian Ocean begins and he will talk about the wind, not a map. For centuries the north-east monsoon carried Omani sailors to Mombasa, Zanzibar and Kilwa with dates, dried fish and cloth; and the south-west monsoon brought them home with cloves, timber and grain.

Swahili still carries Arabic in its vocabulary; Omani families still carry Swahili in their kitchens. Africa is not a new market for Oman. It is an old one, coming back into view at exactly the moment both sides need it.

Consider what Africa has become. The African Development Bank estimates the continent grew 4.4 per cent in 2025, with 22 economies recording growth of five per cent or more. East Africa, Oman’s natural hinterland, is projected to grow 5.9 per cent this year.

Foreign direct investment reached about \$70 billion in 2025, the third-highest level since 1990, with UNCTAD noting a growing share from the Gulf and Asia. The African Continental Free Trade Area now has 54 signatories and is designed to connect 1.4 billion people into a single market across the continent. Its implementation is deepening, even though the agreement has not yet translated into a fully integrated single market.

A continent long defined by what it exported raw is beginning to trade with itself. Now consider what Oman has become. Non-oil activity is roughly 73 per cent of GDP; goods exports rose 15.3 per cent in the first half of 2026; foreign investment stock reached RO 32.2 billion, up 8.7 per cent in a year. Omani ports handled more than 143 million tonnes of cargo in 2025, while Al Duqm recorded 143 per cent growth.

The Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan, Oman Vision 2040’s second chapter, asks the private sector to carry 56 per cent of output, foreign investment to reach eleven per cent of GDP and non-oil



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The monsoon once carried Omani dhows to the Swahili coast. Today, the same route connects the Sultanate of Oman — diversifying under Oman Vision 2040 — with a continent of 1.4 billion people that is growing faster than the rest of the world and the partnership now runs from Kigali to Luanda.

exports to rise to 26.4 per cent of GDP by 2030. Those targets need a hinterland beyond the Gulf and the most familiar one lies across the water.

The relationship has been quietly deepening. The Oman Investment Authority has signed agreements with Tanzania and Zanzibar covering port development and a fisheries survey of the Tanzanian coast. South Africa imported \$3.66 billion of Omani goods last year.

Kenya became Oman’s largest tea supplier in 2025, at RO 20.2 million, with volumes quadrupling in a single year and the two governments have opened structured talks on agriculture.

This year alone Oman has held business forums in Dar es Salaam, Tunis and Salalah, sent an investment mission to Johannesburg and begun formal consultations with Nairobi.

What is newer and less noticed, is that the corridor has crossed the continent. In Angola, Oman has agreed to take a stake in the Catoca and Luele diamond mines and in April the African Bank of Oman opened in Luanda to carry trade and investment flows between the Gulf and Africa.

In Botswana, diplomatic relations established only last year have already produced a 3,000-megawatt energy cooperation framework, a 500-megawatt solar plant with battery storage at Maun, a fuel-storage partnership between OQ and Botswana Oil and joint mineral exploration.

In Rwanda, SalamAir began flying Muscat to Kigali in July and this month the two countries signed a double-taxation agreement and six memoranda covering agriculture, logistics, dry ports and investment promotion.

Diamonds, sunlight and dry ports are not the cargo of the old dhows, but they follow the same logic: go where the partner’s need and Oman’s capability meet.

What does Africa offer Omani companies? Markets, first: consumers who will number

2.5 billion by mid-century and industries that import the fertilisers, petrochemicals, building materials and foods Oman already makes.

Inputs, second: tea, coffee, meat, grains, horticulture and minerals that Omani free zones can blend, pack, certify and distribute to all six Gulf markets, adding the value that currently accrues elsewhere.

Partners, third: African entrepreneurs in fintech, agritech and logistics whose knowledge Oman’s own diversification needs.

For a family group in Muscat, that means a distribution licence in Nairobi, a processing plant in an East African economic zone or a stake in a port; for a small exporter, an agent in Dar es Salaam found at a trade fair.

What does Oman offer Africa? A dependable gateway to the Gulf and beyond. Mombasa and Dar es Salaam are five to twelve days’ sailing from Salalah, Al Duqm and Suhar, ports that sit directly on the open Indian Ocean.

In a year when regional supply chains are being redrawn and shippers pay a premium for routes that avoid chokepoints, that geography has become a commercial asset.

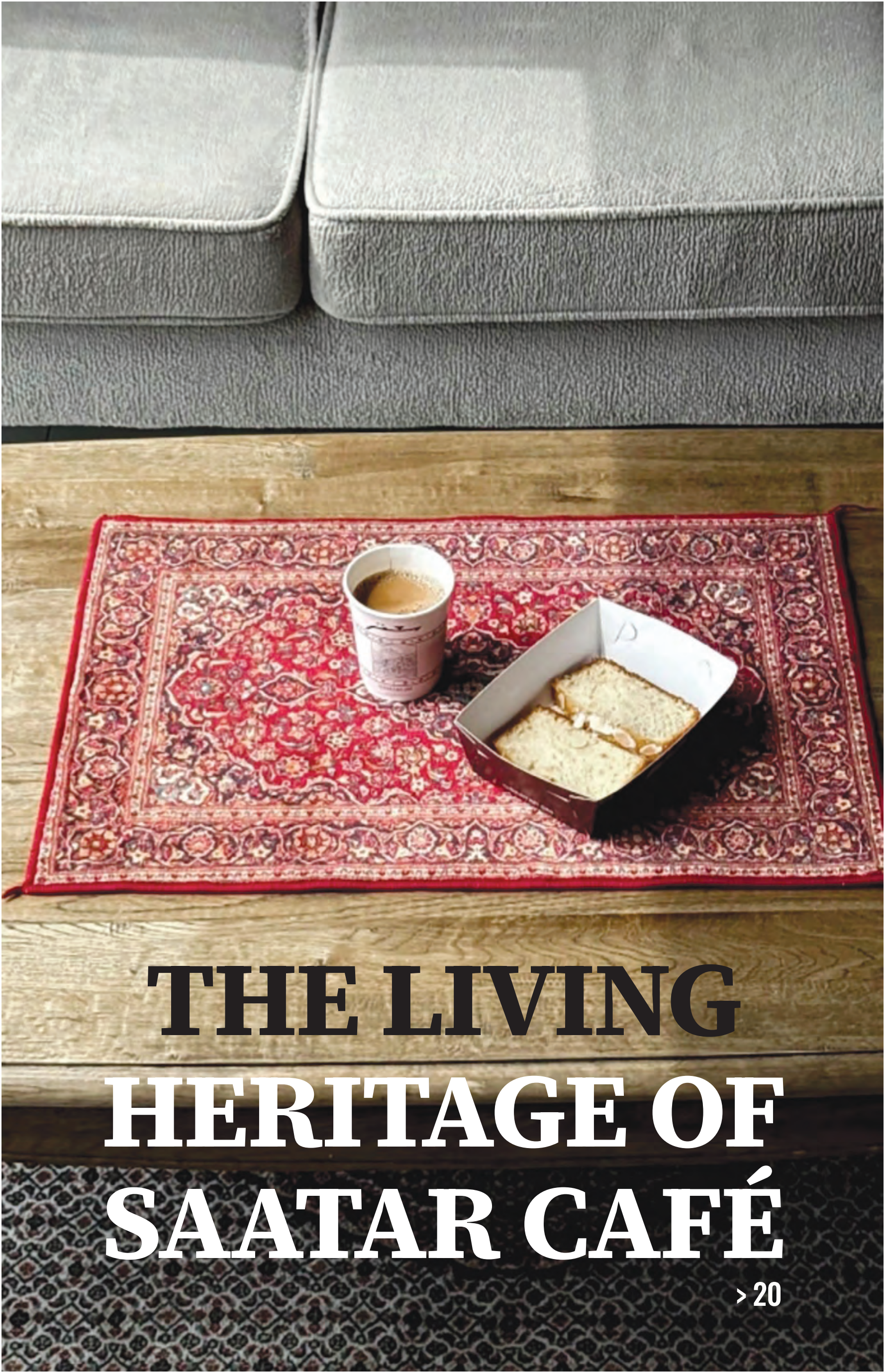
Oman also offers an investment-grade base, free zones with long tax holidays, a dollar-pegged currency and, since June, an economic partnership with India that explicitly casts the Sultanate of Oman as the bridge to East Africa.

An Ethiopian coffee exporter or a Kenyan software house can serve the Gulf and South Asia from one Omani address.

The ideas that would turn momentum into structure are modest. A scheduled shipping rotation between an East African port and Salalah, anchored by fertiliser southbound and agricultural produce northbound.

Tax and investment-protection treaties of the kind just concluded with Rwanda, extended to Kenya, Tanzania and beyond, so that a single company can operate on both shores.

ART/LIFE



THE LIVING HERITAGE OF SAATAR CAFÉ

> 20

FILM FESTIVAL

STALLONE BIOPIC RECEIVES STANDING OVATION AT TIFF



The film stars 27-year-old actor Anthony Ippolito as Stallone. — AFP

“I Play Rocky”, a new film which traces the path of a then-unknown Sylvester Stallone fighting to create the movie that would make him a star, premiered on Saturday at the Toronto International Film Festival, where it garnered a standing ovation.

Directed by Peter Farrelly, who won an Oscar for the 2018 film “Green Book”, the film recounts Stallone’s initial struggles as he tried to break into Hollywood, following the aspiring actor through the setbacks that preceded his breakthrough.

His big break came when he wrote a screenplay about a boxer who, against all odds, gets his moment in the ring and seizes the opportunity — a story that reflected his own reality.

Poor to the point that he had to sell his dog because he could not afford to feed it, Stallone turned down studio offers for the script over one condition: he would only sell it if he could star in it.

That insistence placed his ambitions as an actor at the centre of negotiations over a screenplay that offered him a way out of poverty. Selling the story alone would have meant surrendering the chance to play its leading role.

“The depth that Stallone had gone to before he made this movie and the battle was even when he was shooting the movie, it all got me, because I didn’t know it all”, Farrelly said on the red carpet in Toronto.

The filmmaker said he aimed to convey the same message in his film as the 1976 original: “Just hang in there, be tough, you take some shots, but if you have integrity, you will win in the end”. Shot on a shoestring budget, “Rocky” ended up becoming the highest grossing film of 1976, catapulting Stallone to stardom and garnering 10 Academy Award nominations, winning three, including Best Picture.

Before the movie screened, Farrelly personally thanked Stallone for giving his blessing to make the film.

“I said from the beginning I’m not going to make the movie unless Sylvester Stallone signs off on it”, Farrelly said.

“And he read the script and said ‘go ahead’ and he saw the movie, he was very happy, thank God”. The result brings the story behind “Rocky” to the screen, with Stallone’s own struggle for a breakthrough taking centre stage.

The film stars 27-year-old actor Anthony Ippolito as Stallone, who landed the role by sending in an audition tape before casting even began, Farrelly said.

“The movie shows that it’s not really that easy to be an actor sometimes and it’s just...absolutely surreal”, Ippolito said.

TIFF concludes on September 20. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A Japanese woman in a Gothic Lolita dress walks along a street in Tokyo’s Harajuku district.

— AFP



TRADITION

An Indian artist waits to perform ‘Theyyam’, a traditional dance form of Kerala, during a cultural event in Chennai.

— AFP



ART

Tschabalala Self’s sculpture ‘Lady in Blue’ is unveiled on the Fourth Plinth in London’s Trafalgar Square.

— Reuters

INSTA PICKS



Dhofar Mountains



Laughing Dove

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CHRIS ROCK RETURNS TO DIRECTING WITH ‘MISTY GREEN’



US comedian, actor and film director Chris Rock attends the premiere of his movie “Misty Green” during the Toronto International Film Festival.

— AFP

Comedy star Chris Rock has returned to directing after a decade-long pause by making a drama but said that does not hint at a future filled with darker work.

“I’m always going to be a comedian,” Rock said on Sunday, the day after the world premiere of “Misty Green” at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

“The next (film) may be super gritty, or it might be really silly,” he added. “Whatever it is, I’m going to try to make it great.”

“Misty Green” stars Rosalind Wiseman (Slow Horses) as a hard-partying, once-successful actor whose career is struggling. She’s short on cash, about to be kicked out of her apartment and needs to book a gig quickly.

While the film includes plenty of laugh lines, the tone is serious throughout, with explorations of institutional racism, substance abuse and the pitfalls

of stardom in Hollywood.

On the red carpet ahead of Saturday’s premiere, the legendary stand-up comic Rock said: “I shouldn’t have to do the same thing every time.”

“Let’s see what Chris Rock’s drama looks like.”

Variety magazine has called “Misty Green” the “best movie about Hollywood in years,” and Eleazar’s leading performance has attracted critical praise.

The British actor stars alongside established names including Adam Driver, Anna Kendrick and Rock himself.

She told reporters on Sunday she was concerned that her being cast might keep other stars away.

“There are lots of bigger names than me that could have taken this part,” she said.

She worried privately that other actors considering the film would think Eleazar was “not big enough ... it’s not worth my while,” she said. — AFP

‘OBSESSION’ DIRECTOR AND STAR REFLECT ON SUCCESS



25 year old film lead Inde Navarrette.



26-year-old director Curry Barker

CURRY Barker knew he was making a good movie when he directed “Obsession” — but he never expected it to become a box office phenomenon that would make Hollywood obsessed with him.

One year after premiering the movie at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), the 26-year-old director returned to the event alongside the film’s lead actress, Inde Navarrette.

The pair are still trying to process the gargantuan success of the movie, made on a \$750,000 budget and grossing over \$500 million at the global box office, turning “Obsession” into one of the most profitable productions in Hollywood history.

“It feels like a one-year anniversary of our lives changing,” Barker said.

The film’s simple premise involves what happens when a wish comes true.

It follows the character Bear (Michael Johnston), who cannot bring himself to admit his crush on his friend Nikki (Inde Navarrette). One night, in a bout of frustration, he makes a wish on a magic branch: that Nikki loved him as much as he loves her.

When that wish starts to come true, his life takes a turn for the macabre.

“Be careful what you wish

for,” Barker said with a smile, recognizing the phrase also applies to his film’s meteoric success.

“What’s funny is that I don’t think any of us anticipated how big this movie would become, and I think that most of it is a very, very positive thing, and we’re so happy that the movie did so well,” he said.

But it has not been all sunshine and roses.

“It can get scary, and there’s pressure for your next thing,” he added.

Barker, who hails from the southern US state of Alabama, got his start in filmmaking by creating videos on YouTube.

He said he is working on “something that I think is cool” for his next project, but feels the weight of the industry watching him this time around.

“Obviously, there’s the exterior pressure of the world of, ‘Hey, you know, your next movie better be as good as this last (one),’” he said.

For Navarrette, the success of the movie has been a roller coaster, but she is “taking it day by day.”

It has undoubtedly led to new opportunities — including the role of Rogue, an X-Men character who can steal other mutants’ powers, as part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

But the rapid ascent to stardom has been dizzying for the 25-year-old actress.

“I think whenever you’re being

put in a position like this, it’s really important to look back at yourself and go, ‘Okay, well, what changes can I do to keep that original creativity and to keep what I can, as much as I can, authentically?’ Because it’s a lot!” Navarrette said.

Some of Navarrette’s most outlandish scenes in “Obsession” have gone viral on social media to the point that they have become memes.

The phenomenon has surprised the actress, but does not bother her.

“I love being a meme... it’s definitely a really fun thing,” she said.

The box office success of “Obsession” has been the subject of much debate in Hollywood as the industry continues working to boost theater audiences to levels seen before the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The barrier for entry is open,” Barker said of getting started in the film industry. “I think that’s the lesson.”

Navarrette, for her part, is ready to discover the next breakout film.

“I’m really excited to see what comes out of TIFF this year and what comes out of the movies this year. “We set a precedent of ‘you will be understood’, and people in our generation do love cinema, and they just want to have it, to my knowledge, in a language that they can understand,” she said. — AFP

FEATURES



Saatar Café has become a gathering spot for people of different ages who come seeking a warm drink and a sense of community.

F R O M M O U N T A I N T O C U P

THE LIVING HERITAGE OF SAATAR CAFÉ

BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

IN the quiet alleys of Al Rustaq, where the indigenous rugged mountains stand like ancient guardians soaring into the soft sky, Saatar Café has quietly become one of the region's rare places that embrace the scent of local culture and blend it into the heart of its modernity. It is more than a place to drink tea; it is a space that narrates the soul of Al Rustaq and blends flavour into an experience that feels both familiar and new.

The café built its identity starting from picking the name Saatar, which is one of the local herbs usually reaped during long hikes through Al Rustaq's valleys.

In addition to the name that was carefully chosen, their slogan is shaped proudly to be a mirror that reflects their identity as a destination for authentic mountain flavours, highlighting their commitment to these authentic mountain flavours.

This identity was shaped by the rooted relationship between Al Rustaq's people and tea — an affection the owner, Hisham al Ghafri, describes as “a tradition and a shared ritual that brings people together”. He also clarified that his vision was to create a café that served as a bridge between the mountain and this long-standing love for tea.

The café's visual identity also holds a story: their logo — the shape of a small peak — was inspired by scattered saatar found on Al Rustaq's mountains. Each dot in the Arabic word “Sattar” symbolises roots, memory, heritage and the scent of wild herbs — emphasising that identity is built not from a single element but from the combination of many.

From the moment you step inside Saatar, nothing feels accidental. A gentle narration unfolds in the place,

Named after a local mountain herb, Saatar Café brings the flavours of Al Rustaq's mountains to the table, pairing tea infused with wild herbs with locally inspired treats in a space shaped by Omani hospitality.



deliberately echoing the mountains that define this region. The earthy, grounded design and the curves of wood are inspired by Al Rustaq's natural textures and old woven textiles. The scent of natural herbs fills the air and the calm atmosphere mirrors village gatherings, with the soft glow of lighting that mimics the natural sunset.

Each corner in the café reflects

cultural identity carved from Al Rustaq's history. As the owner explains, they carefully picked “living heritage, not heritage that hangs on walls”. Even the way tea is served, on a classic tray, echoes traditional Omani hospitality.

All the elements in the café stand next to each other to mirror the feeling of the owner, who believes that “Al Rustaq's mountains naturally carry something

that cannot be described but can be felt” — a quietness and authenticity he attempts to transfer into the space itself.

The café offers different types of tea; desserts and pastries are simple yet full of character, inspired by village kitchens and ancestral practices. There, tea is crafted with real mountain herbs — wild saatar and local mint — in ways that honour the past while surprising the present, applying modern preparation techniques such as luxury-style smoked tea, balanced fruity blends and karak infused with a local spirit. Among all their offerings, the drink that most reflects the café's identity is the Saatar Signature, which blends real mountain saatar.

Desserts and pastries carry the sweetness of dates and the warmth of cinnamon, and some of them are enriched with local traditional flavours like saatar. In their menu, each sip and each bite feel like a quiet tribute to the local cuisine.

Saatar Café has become a gathering spot for people of different ages who come seeking a warm drink and a sense of community. “We believe that the mountain identity is not for a certain age but for every heart that is passionate about calm”, Hisham al Ghafri proudly explains, introducing their café as a popular destination.

Al Ghafri describes the way visitors interact with the place: older visitors find it a station that returns them to memories they know well — the scent of saatar, the quiet atmosphere — while younger visitors perceive it as a creative experience that offers them a living sense of heritage.

Saatar Café is not simply a business; it is a station that holds culture, heritage and memory, celebrating the local beauty. It presents the local cuisine and offers visitors a taste of the heritage that makes Al Rustaq unique.