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IN BRIEF

HM’S CONDOLENCES TO PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Prabowo Subianto of the Republic of Indonesia on the victims of the sinking of a transport ferry in the Java Sea. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sympathies to President Prabowo, the Indonesian people and the families of the victims, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

HIS MAJESTY GREETES PRESIDENT OF TURKMENISTAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Serdar Berdimuhamedov of the Republic of Turkmenistan on his country’s Independence Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and wishes to President Serdar and the people of his country. His Majesty also wished Turkmenistan continuous progress and development.

PRELIMINARY LIST OF CANDIDATES UNVEILED



The Ministry of Interior on Sunday announced the preliminary lists of candidates for the fourth-term Municipal Council elections,

totalling 803 male and female candidates, including 16 women, via the ‘Intikhab’ application and the elections website (elections.om). The ministry indicated that objections may be filed against the names included in the preliminary lists of candidates through a request submitted via the ‘Intikhab’ application or the elections website (elections.om) within five days from the date of the announcement of the lists, stating the grounds for objection and attaching supporting documents. The request shall be adjudicated within 10 days from the day following the expiry of the submission period.

14.8 PER CENT RISE IN ROAD ACCIDENTS

Official unaudited data issued by the Financial Services Authority showed that approximately 21,700 road accidents were recorded with insurance companies during the second quarter of 2026, compared with approximately 18,900 accidents during the corresponding period of 2025, representing an increase of 14.8 per cent. The accidents were distributed between 15,850 minor accidents, accounting for about 73 per cent of the total, and 5,893 serious accidents, representing approximately 27 per cent. The data showed that the total number of road accident claims during the second quarter of 2026 reached approximately 22,000, recording a growth rate of 7.2 per cent compared with the corresponding period of 2025. Claims for minor accidents rose to 15,800, compared with 14,000, an increase of approximately 12.5 per cent. **DETAILS ON P4**

Oman supports peaceful resolution of disputes

Calls for respecting sovereignty and independence of states

THE Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its steadfast approach to finding peaceful and consensual solutions to disputes, based on the values and principles that help achieve shared goals of securing security and stability for all and advancing economic development projects and prosperity for peoples. This was stated before the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, delivered the statement of the Sultanate of Oman, saying: “Dialogue is the true value capable of reminding us of what unites us, as well as its being the optimal means of overcoming differences, building trust and understanding, and resolving issues and crises.”

He added that we would like to affirm here that the Sultanate of Oman will continue its steadfast approach to finding peaceful and consensual solutions to disputes, based on the values and principles that help us achieve our shared goals of securing security and stability for all and advancing economic development projects and prosperity for our peoples.

He pointed out that in this same context, refraining from the use of force and interference in the internal affairs of states, and being guided instead by the

“Our region witnessed, at the beginning of this year, a war that could have been avoided. Subsequent events have shown that the escalation has extended to threaten the security of the countries of the region

SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDI

Foreign Minister



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, addresses the 81st United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York City, US.

Charter of the United Nations and international law, and respecting the sovereignty and independence of states, can provide a sound framework that governs international relations and builds trust and constructive cooperation among states.

The minister said: “Our region witnessed, at the beginning of this year, a war that could have been avoided. Subsequent events have shown that the escalation has extended to threaten the security of the countries of the region, and paralyse navigation and trade through the vital Strait of Hormuz, affecting energy security, price

stability, and confidence in the current international order.” **SAFE NAVIGATION** He asserted that the Sultanate of Oman once again reaffirms its steadfast commitment to continuing its efforts aimed at safeguarding navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, in accordance with the principles of international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It also calls upon all parties to cooperate with Oman in these efforts aimed at observing and respecting the interests of all those who benefit from the transit passages in the Strait of Hormuz. **TURN TO P2**

‘TOGETHER TO PROTECT TURTLES’ TO CONSERVE BIODIVERSITY

SUR: The Environment Authority organised a forum titled ‘Environmental Legislation: Together to Protect Turtles’ in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. The event was in pursuance of efforts to enhance the protection of sea turtles, conserve biodiversity and raise public awareness about legislation regulation environmental ecosystems.

The forum, held under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Saif bin Mohammed al Ghaithi, Wali of Sur, underscores the importance of environmental legislation as a



fundamental pillar for protecting wildlife and natural resources. It also aims to foster a culture of compliance with regulations governing environmental protection, notably regulations that deal with sea turtles, which are a key component of biodiversity in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

The forum elaborates about legal and regulatory roles in protecting turtles and the marine environment, in addition to legal measures for addressing violations against wildlife.

— ONA

‘The Oman Effect’... tracing the reach of a nation

For its 19th edition, The Correspondent returns with a theme that asks readers to look at Oman from a wider angle.

Like previous editions, each built around a particular subject, this issue brings together stories, research and personal accounts under one central idea.

This time, it is ‘The Oman Effect’, an exploration of how Oman’s history, culture and knowledge have travelled



beyond its borders and how they continue to shape the way the country is understood.

Readers will find stories about Oman’s seafaring past, its links with cities across the Indian Ocean and the Omani objects now held in museums and private collections abroad. Other features turn to manuscripts, archives and the records that preserve parts of the country’s story, sometimes thousands of miles from where

they were written.

In preparing the edition, the Observer worked with personnel from the Historical Society of Oman, whose knowledge helped provide context for several of the subjects covered. Their input allowed this edition to look beyond familiar accounts and place individual objects, journeys and written records within a larger historical picture.

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Oman supports peaceful resolution of disputes

FROM PAGE 1

The Foreign Minister added: “My country also renews its solidarity with all its neighbouring countries, including the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, in the legitimate measures they take to maintain their security, and protect their sovereignty and safeguard their territorial integrity.”

He said: At the same time, we call upon all parties concerned to settle their outstanding disputes, through pursuing a policy of self-restraint and far-sightedness and engaging in dialogue, to reach consensual political solutions and sustainable understandings for the benefit of all.

The minister stressed that the Government of the Sultanate of Oman renews its support for finding a political solution to the crisis in Yemen, one that preserves the unity, stability, and territorial integrity of that historic country, meets the aspirations of the brotherly Yemeni people in all their components, and puts Yemen on the path of reconstruction, development, and prosperity.

He noted that in this context, we renew our call for all parties to respond and cooperate with one another in order to reach a just settlement to this crisis, one that preserves for the Yemeni people their rights, dignity, independence, and territorial integrity, and their secure relations with neighbouring states in the region.

The Foreign Minister said, “While the Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its firm rejection of the ongoing Israeli attacks, which have affected numerous Arab states, it also expresses its condemnation of the crimes of the Israeli occupation and its increasing violations against the Palestinian people, which have compounded their suffering in their pursuit of obtaining their legitimate rights and liberating their land in accordance with the borders of June 4, 1967, based on the two-state solution and the relevant United Nations resolutions.”

He pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman launched the Muscat Plan to counter hate speech, genocide, and the crimes of incitement thereto, through an initiative inaugurated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, with broad international participation here at United Nations Headquarters in New York on June 11.

The minister said that building on this approach, the city of Muscat will host, in November, an event marking the International Day for Tolerance, as part of a path we hope will open horizons for further initiatives and partnerships, in cooperation with the international community and the United Nations.

He reaffirmed that the Sultanate of Oman attaches firm importance to sustainable development and its goals, believing that development is indeed an inherent right for all. So, the government of my country continues to implement its development plans and programmes within the framework of Oman Vision 2040. It also continues to empower women’s active participation and contribution to the development process and decision-making, affirming that they are part of building and sustaining development process and its sustainability, rather than a separate goal. Therefore, the allocation of eleven permanent and elected seats for women in the Majlis Ash’shura comes within this framework.

He added that in the environmental field, the Sultanate of Oman continues its efforts to implement its national strategy towards transition to a low-carbon economy, through a broad package of projects and initiatives in renewable energy, transport, industry, and sustainable cities, to support national efforts to reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

In conclusion, the Foreign Minister renewed thanks and appreciation to António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his tireless and courageous efforts to uphold the word of truth and justice, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law. He affirmed Oman’s support and cooperation with the United Nations, in the pursuit of achieving these lofty goals and purposes, to reach a world that is more secure, stable, and prosperous. — ONA

SPF ADVANCES MONTHLY ALLOWANCES PROJECT FOR INTERNAL SCHOLARSHIPS

MUSCAT: The Social Protection Fund (SPF) affirmed that registration for the monthly allowances service for students under the internal scholarship system covers all students, whether current students enrolled in private universities and colleges within the Sultanate of Oman, including those currently receiving monthly allowances, or new students whose data is available with their

educational institutions. The Fund explained in a statement that everyone is required to complete registration procedures through the electronic service. It noted that the importance of registration stems from the need to update and unify beneficiary data, verify their eligibility in accordance with the approved criteria, and link their personal, educational, and bank account data within an

integrated electronic system, thereby enhancing the accuracy of eligibility and disbursement procedures and streamlining procedures for the student. It stated that a current student’s receipt of the allowance during the previous period does not obviate the need for registration, as this step constitutes an essential part of updating data and verifying continued fulfilment of eligibility conditions. — ONA

Civil Defence steps up Sarb emergency cover

QASIM AL MAASHANI
TAQAH, SEPT 27

CIVIL Defence and Ambulance teams are maintaining an enhanced field presence in Jibjat as visitor activity in Dhofar shifts from the Khareef season to Sarb, when clearer weather draws families and campers to the governorate’s open plains.

A mobile Civil Defence and Ambulance centre is operating in Jibjat in the Wilayat of Taqah, positioning emergency response teams closer to an area experiencing increased visitor activity as the Khareef fog recedes.

The deployment reflects the seasonal shift in visitor movement across Dhofar rather than an end to heightened emergency preparedness.

Sarb follows the Khareef season and is characterised by clearer skies and gradually lower humidity, while the mountains and plains remain green following the monsoon rains. The period traditionally brings renewed activity to inland areas as residents and visitors head to open landscapes for camping, picnics and other outdoor activities.

Jibjat has emerged as one of the prominent destinations during this period. Its broad plains and natural setting attract families, campers and other visitors as visibility improves, while seasonal activities have further increased visitor movement in the area.

Preparations for the 2026 Jibjat Sarb season have included coordination among government



CDA deploys personnel and vehicles as per the nature of each location and the level of activity.

Mobile emergency presence supports campers and families as activity shifts from Khareef attractions to Dhofar’s open plains

and service authorities in the Wilayat of Taqah, covering site readiness, visitor services and seasonal activities.

The area is also hosting initiatives involving local communities and productive families, adding a commercial and social dimension to the seasonal gathering alongside camping and recreational activities.

First Lieutenant Abdullah Tabook, an officer at the Relations and Media Department of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, said emergency preparedness in Dhofar continues throughout the year but is strengthened during periods of increased visitor movement.

He said the Authority adjusts its field deployment as activity shifts towards plains, open areas and camping locations following the clearance of the Khareef fog, taking into account visitor concentrations and the nature of each site.

The mobile centre in Jibjat is

part of this approach, bringing Civil Defence and Ambulance services closer to visitors and supporting a faster response to emergencies.

Tabook said field plans are based on continuous assessment of conditions and potential risks.

Among the main concerns during the post-Khareef period are grass and pasture fires as vegetation begins to dry, as well as fires associated with camping, cooking equipment and other sources of ignition.

Teams are also prepared to respond to road accidents, injuries and medical emergencies that may occur as traffic and visitor numbers increase around seasonal gathering points.

Open and relatively remote locations present an additional operational challenge, particularly when emergency teams need accurate location information to reach an incident quickly.

Zakat conference, exhibition kick off in Suhar

SUHAR: The activities of the 4th Zakat Conference and Exhibition, organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, kicked off in the Wilayat of Suhar, Al Batinah North Governorate.

The conference was held under the auspices of Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority, in the presence of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, alongside a number of officials, specialists, researchers, and individuals interested in Zakat work.

The three-day conference is



The conference was held under the auspices of Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority, in the presence of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. — ONA

themed “Zakat from Governance to Sustainability: Integration Establishing Impact and Fiduciary Duty Building Trust,” with the participation of more

than 600 participants including members of Zakat committees, researchers, and specialists in Zakat affairs from nine Gulf, Arab, and international

countries, alongside an elite group of experts and specialists in Sharia, economic, financial, administrative, and technical fields related to the Zakat sector.

The first day of the conference witnessed a main panel discussion titled “Zakat and Sustainable Development: An Integrated Government Vision,” which discussed the roles of various sectors in enhancing the developmental impact of Zakat and building an integrated system contributing to transforming Zakat work into a more effective tool in achieving social and economic development. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The programme introduced participants to celestial bodies and planets.

SADAH EVENT BRINGS ASTRONOMY CLOSER TO THE PUBLIC

SADAH: An astronomy event was held in the Soub area of the Wilayat of Sadah to promote astronomical awareness and foster interest in space and astronomy among members of the community.

Organised by the Office of the Wali of Sadah in cooperation with the Astronomical Observatory of Dhofar Governorate, the event featured a range of scientific and educational activities introducing participants to celestial bodies and planets.

The programme included practical observations of Venus and Jupiter, as well as the phases of the Moon, using modern astronomical telescopes. It also featured presentations on eclipses and methods of observing the crescent Moon, along with interactive scientific and cultural activities.

Dr Eng Awad bin Said al Saadouni, Head of the Astronomical Observatory in Dhofar, said the event provided participants with an opportunity to learn about astronomical objects and phenomena in a simplified manner and experience direct observation, linking theoretical knowledge with practical application. — ONA

REGISTRATION FOR HAJ 2027 BEGINS TODAY

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

The online registration for Haj 2027, corresponding to Hijri year 1448H, will begin on September 28, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs announced.

“Both Omani citizens and expatriates can register their interest on hajj.com. The first entitlement results will be released on October 11, 2026, and the second on October 21,” said Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and Head of the Omani Haj Mission.

The last date for cancellation of applications is February 27-28, 2027, while the last date for air travel has been fixed for March 14, 2027. The ministry clarified that dates are subject to changes by Saudi authorities and will be communicated accordingly.

He further said Haj 1448H will see a major shift focused on safety, cost savings and simplified procedures, following a record 98 per cent pilgrim satisfaction rate in 1447H.

“For 1448H, the ministry is making the ‘Comprehensive Package’ mandatory. All housing, transport and food services in Makkah, Madinah and the holy sites must be under one unified contract per company. Multiple separate contracts for the same company will no longer be allowed,” Al Rashdi said.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CAMPAIGN ‘AMAN 2’ LAUNCHED IN SALALAH

SALALAH: The National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking launched the national awareness campaign ‘Aman 2’ on Sunday in Salalah under the slogan “Awareness is Everyone’s Right.” The campaign aims to raise community awareness of the dangers of this crime, promote a culture of prevention, and support and empower victims.

The national campaign ‘Aman 2’ will run for a full month and includes a range of awareness programmes, events, and activities targeting various segments of society. It seeks to enhance understanding of human trafficking



The national campaign ‘Aman 2’ will run for a full month and will include a range of awareness programmes. — ONA

indicators, prevention methods, and reporting and assistance channels, thereby contributing to

raising community awareness and strengthening national efforts to combat this crime. — ONA

Midad Digital Centre to drive digital innovation

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

THE Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) on Monday officially inaugurated the Midad Digital Centre at Innovation Park Muscat, marking a new step towards strengthening Oman’s innovation and digital ecosystem and developing national capabilities in emerging technologies.

The inauguration, held under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Chairman of the Research and Innovation Authority, also witnessed the launch of the centre’s visual identity in the presence of officials and representatives from government institutions, the private sector, academia and the technology sector.

The centre is designed to serve as a national platform for knowledge transfer, capacity building and innovation in advanced communications and emerging digital technologies, including 5G networks, the Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence.

In her opening remarks, Najah bint Mohammed al Rashidi, Acting Director-General of the Innovation Centre, said the Midad Digital Centre represents a promising initiative in advanced communications and IoT and an important step towards strengthening Oman’s digital infrastructure.

She said the centre reflects Oman’s commitment to building a sustainable knowledge-based economy in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Al Rashidi highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships between national institutions and leading global technology companies, with Omani youth at the centre of these efforts.

She said the centre’s programmes go beyond conventional training by providing practical pathways to



The RIA officially inaugurated the Midad Digital Centre at Innovation Park Muscat.

The centre is designed to serve as a national platform for knowledge transfer, capacity building and innovation in advanced communications and emerging digital technologies

transform research and innovative ideas into products and services that can contribute to economic diversification and create high-value employment opportunities.

Petra Schirren, President of Ericsson Gulf, delivered the keynote address, highlighting Ericsson’s partnership with Oman, which spans more than five decades.

She said the launch of the Midad Digital Centre represents an important milestone in the development of Oman’s digital ecosystem and reaffirmed Ericsson’s commitment to developing local talent and equipping young Omanis with future-ready skills.

The ceremony also featured a presentation on the development of the Midad Centre and the activities of the Ibn Firas Academy for Drones.

Dr Salem bin Mohammed al Waili, Director-General of Training at the company operating the Midad Digital Centre, said the centre is a specialised national training institution focused on knowledge transfer, capacity building and anticipating future trends in advanced communications and digital technologies.

He said the centre aims to

become a leading national platform for developing capabilities and fostering innovation in advanced communications and emerging technologies.

Its programmes seek to equip individuals and institutions with technical knowledge and skills while strengthening cooperation among the government, academic and industrial sectors, contributing to the development of a sustainable digital economy and society.

The event also included the unveiling of the centre’s visual identity and recognition of outstanding students who participated in its programmes.

Students showcased robotics projects and digital applications developed as part of the Digital Lab programme, demonstrating skills in creative programming, electronics and game development.

The initiative provides students with opportunities to apply their technical knowledge through practical projects while encouraging innovation and problem-solving.

The Midad Digital Centre is supported by a strategic partnership involving government institutions, national companies and international technology expertise.

Tourism day marked with focus on digital agenda, AI

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

World Tourism Day, celebrated on September 27 each year, was marked with the official theme ‘Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism’.

Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, undertook a field tour accompanied by a number of ministry officials, which included Jabal Shams, Al Hamra and Nizwa, during which he reviewed a number of projects and distinctive tourist experiences managed by a group of citizens and met with the local residents and

owners of local initiatives, in addition to visiting a number of heritage and archaeological sites. The tour comes as an affirmation of support for Omani initiatives and strengthening the role of local communities in developing authentic and sustainable tourist experiences.

The minister said that the tourism sector represents one of the principal pillars of economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman, and that the Ministry is working to develop it according to an integrated vision that balances economic growth with the preservation of heritage, Omani identity and culture, the protection of natural resources, and the



The core focus this year is the significance of technological transformation.

enhancement of local communities’ benefit from the opportunities the sector provides. He added that World Tourism Day comes this year amid accelerating digital transformations in the tourism industry, explaining that the Ministry’s approach is not confined to the use of technology in promotion, but extends to redesigning the tourist’s journey from the stage of research, planning and booking through to the visitor’s experience, movement and enjoyment of tourism services and products across the various governorates.

The official host country for the celebration of World Tourism Day

is El Salvador, and the organiser is UN Tourism, the World Tourism Organisation. The core focus is the significance of technological transformation. The topic explores how artificial intelligence and digital innovations have been redefining how travellers choose destinations, operate businesses, and curate travel experiences.

“Progress only counts if it reaches everyone. And so this World Tourism Day, I want us to pause to reflect and to make sure that our sector’s transformation is on track,” said Shaikha al Nuwais, Secretary-General of UN Tourism, in her message for the day.

SPOTLIGHT

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TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS SURGE 14.8pc IN Q2

OFFICIAL unaudited data issued by the Financial Services Authority showed that approximately 21,700 traffic accidents were recorded with insurance companies during the second quarter of 2026, compared with approximately 18,900 accidents during the corresponding period of 2025, representing an increase of 14.8 per cent.

The accidents were distributed between 15,850 minor accidents, accounting for about 73 per cent of the total, and 5,893 serious accidents, representing approximately 27 per cent.

The data showed that the total number of traffic accident claims during the second quarter of 2026 reached approximately 22,000 claims, recording a growth rate of 7.2 per cent compared with the corresponding period of 2025. Claims for minor accidents rose to 15,800 claims, compared with 14,000 claims, an increase of approximately 12.5 per cent.

Conversely, claims for serious accidents involving material damage declined to 2,900 claims, compared with 3,300 claims, a decrease of approximately 11.9 per cent, while claims for serious accidents involving injuries and medical treatment expenses rose to 3,200 claims, compared with 3,100 claims, an increase of approximately 4 per cent. Claims relating to fatalities also declined from 83 claims to 80 claims.

At the level of total compensation paid, in addition to reported but unsettled claims, the amount reached approximately RO 25.1 million during the second quarter of 2026, recording an increase of 19 per cent compared with the corresponding period of 2025.

This was distributed as approximately RO 12.48 million for minor accidents, RO 5.3 million for serious accidents involving material damage, and RO 6.2 million for serious accidents involving injuries and medical treatment expenses, while the value of claims relating to fatalities amounted to approximately RO 1 million.

These indicators reflect a marked increase in the total number of traffic accidents during the second quarter of the year, accompanied by growth in the number and financial value of claims.

The total number of accidents rose by 14.8 per cent, the number

22,000
TOTAL TRAFFIC ACCIDENT CLAIMS, UP 7.2PC

25.1
TOTAL COMPENSATION PAID AND REPORTED BUT UNSETTLED CLAIMS, UP 19PC

15,850
MINOR ACCIDENTS, ACCOUNTING FOR ABOUT 73PC OF ALL ACCIDENTS

80
FATALITY-RELATED CLAIMS, DOWN FROM 83 IN Q2 2025

of claims increased by 7.2 per cent, and the total value of claims rose by 19 per cent.

The data also reveal a disparity among types of accidents, with an increase in claims for minor accidents and for injuries and medical expenses, against a decline in claims for serious accidents involving material damage and fatalities.

These indicators underscore the importance of continuing to strengthen traffic safety measures and to entrench a culture of safe driving and compliance with traffic regulations, thereby contributing to reducing the human and material losses resulting from accidents.

Despite the role played by insurance in managing risks and mitigating their financial repercussions, prevention remains the fundamental basis for protecting lives and property.



KIDNEY CONFERENCE CALLS FOR STRONGER PREVENTION, EARLY DETECTION

SALALAH: The Fourth International Conference on Kidney Diseases and Transplantation has called for strengthening prevention and early detection programmes for kidney diseases, while adopting modern technologies to monitor patients and improve the quality of healthcare.

Organised by the Omani Society for Kidney Diseases and Transplantation in cooperation with the Directorate-General of Health Services in Dhofar Governorate, the conference concluded at the Millennium Hotel in Salalah.

The three-day event brought together doctors, experts,

researchers and specialists from Oman and 15 other countries to discuss the latest developments in the prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment of kidney diseases and kidney failure, as well as advances in kidney transplantation.

The conference also recommended enhancing the skills of healthcare professionals, supporting scientific research and joint studies, and promoting organ donation and kidney transplantation.

Participants stressed the importance of continuing to organise specialised scientific conferences to facilitate the exchange of expertise and

strengthen partnerships between healthcare and academic institutions, contributing to the development of kidney disease and transplantation services and improving patients' quality of life.

The conference programme included three specialised training and practical workshops covering peritoneal dialysis, haemodialysis and histopathology.

A scientific and clinical research competition was also held, with four winning research papers honoured. The papers will be published in the WARM journal of the Omani Society for Kidney Diseases and Transplantation. — **ONA**

AL BATINAH NORTH 'S BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM RECORDS STRONG EXPANSION



The forum was attended by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, Eng Said bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the OCCI branch, former chairmen, business leaders, sectoral committee members and representatives of the private sector.

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, SEPT 27

AL BATINAH NORTH'S private sector has recorded significant expansion over the past four years, supported by rising business registrations, growing investment, trade activity and stronger engagement with international markets, according to indicators presented at the “Injaz and Impact” forum organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in the governorate.

Held to highlight the branch's achievements between 2022 and 2026 and honour its sectoral committees, the forum was attended by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, Eng

Said bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the OCCI branch, former chairmen, business leaders, sectoral committee members and representatives of the private sector.

Presenting the branch's performance indicators, Al Abri said more than 200 economic programmes and initiatives had been implemented during the period, alongside efforts to address private sector needs and improve the business environment.

The governorate's business base expanded from 47,200 companies in 2022 to 68,064 by the end of 2025, representing 44 per cent growth.

New Chamber subscribers during the period reached 20,864.

“The figures presented today tell a story that extends beyond the growth in company numbers,” Al Abri said.

“They reflect a broader expansion of

economic activity and the increasing diversity of the business community. Our priority is to turn this growth into sustainable opportunities and stronger connections between local enterprises, investors and markets.”

Al Batinah North's GDP reached RO 4.405 billion in 2025, with average growth of 4.5 per cent between 2022 and 2025. Investment in the governorate's economic zones stood at RO14.66 billion, while exports recorded a 74 per cent increase in 2024 compared with the previous year, reaching RO 1.6 billion.

“Investment, logistics and trade cannot be viewed separately,” he said.

“The figures relating to Sohar Port, economic zones and international engagement show the potential of an integrated ecosystem. Through the Sohar Investment Forum alone, 104 investment opportunities were presented, while 14 agreements valued at more than RO 115 million were signed, creating practical pathways from opportunity to partnership.”

The forum also recorded RO 1.3 billion in the value of investment opportunities presented through its investment platform, alongside participation from more than 800 visitors and representatives from over 20 countries.

Rashid al Ghafri, Director of the OCCI Al Batinah North branch, said the next phase would focus on measuring the impact of initiatives, accelerating digital transformation and strengthening the institutional role of sectoral committees in supporting Oman Vision 2040.

محافظة مسقط
Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (36/2026)

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Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
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PRS-26-055	Supply of AC Units, Refrigerators & Water Coolers (Unit Rate)	19/10/2026	08/11/2026
PRS-26-056	Supply, Installation & Repair of Tires for MM Vehicles	19/10/2026	08/11/2026
PRE-26-120 Re-Call	Site Preparation of Itinerant Vendors in Al Nahdha at Al Amerat (Re-Call)	19/10/2026	08/11/2026
PRE-26-142	Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) & Inventory System	19/10/2026	08/11/2026
PRE-26-143	Muscat Municipality Intelligent Knowledge Platform	19/10/2026	08/11/2026
PRE-26-144	Design & Construction of Signalized Junction at Bousher	19/10/2026	08/11/2026

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Sharqiyah N launches greening project

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Al Sharqiyah North Governorate has launched the ‘Green Legacy, Lasting Planting’ greening project, the largest of its kind in the governorate, aimed at expanding green spaces and enhancing vegetation across its wilayats through broad participation from government entities, the private sector, civil society organisations, volunteer teams and local communities.

Mahmoud bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, said the launch of the ‘Green Legacy, Lasting Planting’ festival reflects the governorate's commitment to embedding environmental sustainability as a key enabler of development and quality of life, while transforming tree planting from seasonal campaigns into sustainable development practices.

He said the drive to expand green areas is aligned with national priorities and the



‘Green Legacy, Lasting Planting’ festival reflects the governorate's commitment to environmental sustainability.

objectives of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, as well as Oman's efforts towards net-zero emissions and reducing carbon emissions. This, he added, would strengthen the ability of the governorate's cities and wilayats to adapt to climate change, improve the urban environment and enhance resource efficiency.

“The impact of greening extends beyond the environmental dimension to create economic, social and tourism value by improving the urban landscape, creating

more vibrant public spaces, enhancing the appeal of tourism and investment sites, and supporting economic activities linked to planting and agriculture,” Al Thuhli said.

He praised the awareness, initiative and active participation demonstrated by the people of Al Sharqiyah North in development programmes and initiatives, stressing that the community is the foundation for sustaining such efforts. He called on families, youth, government and private institutions, civil society organisations, volunteer teams and community initiatives to actively participate in the festival.

Shaima bint Nasser al Rasbi, Director of Services Development at the Office of the Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, said the official launch began in Al Qour area in the Wilayat of Bidiyah, while the initiative will reach its peak on October 31 with a unified and simultaneous tree-planting campaign.

Public Tender Advertisement for the Sale of Heavy Equipment, Vehicles, Light Equipment, Generators and Other Assets

Assets Offered for Sale on an “As Is, Where Is” Basis

Al Watanyiah United Engineering and Contracting Co. LLC hereby announce the public tenders listed below for the sale of a range of heavy equipment, vehicles, light equipment, generators, scaffolding, household appliances, electrical transformers and other assets. **Bidders may purchase the Tender Documents and submit bids for any one or more of the tenders listed below.**

Tender Documents are available at the Company's Head Office in Ghala Industrial Area from 28 September 2026 to 11 October 2026 during official working days, from 8:00 AM- 5:00PM, upon payment of the applicable Tender Fee into the Company's Bank Dhofar Account No. 01040605344006, IBAN: OM80250001040605344006. The Tender Documents will be issued upon payment of the applicable Tender Fee.

S. No.	Tender No.	Description	Location	Tender Fee Inc. VAT (ر.ع.)	EMD	Tender Document Purchase Period	Bid Submission Deadline
1	AW/T/ PH4/ 01/2026	Sale of 14 units of used heavy equipment and vehicles, including a crawler dozer, excavator, wheel loaders, tipper trucks, a water tanker truck and a crane-mounted truck.	Ghala / Barka Yard	150/-	10% of total bid value incl. VAT	28/09/2026 To 11/10/2026	20/10/2026 5.00 PM
2	AW/T/ PH4/ 02/2026	Sale of 39 used light and miscellaneous vehicles, including a 3-ton truck, buses, pickups, a fuel tanker truck, small water tankers, saloon cars and station wagons.	Ghala / Barka Yard	50/-	10% of total bid value incl. VAT	28/09/2026 To 11/10/2026	20/10/2026 5.00 PM
3	AW/T/ PH4/ 03/2026	Sale of 145 units of used light and construction equipment, including 3-ton tandem rollers, air compressors, asphalt cutters, bar-bending and bar-cutting machines, concrete mixers and vibrators, dumpers, skid-steer loaders, tower hoists, lighting towers and other equipment.	Ghala / Barka Yard	50/-	10% of total bid value incl. VAT	28/09/2026 To 11/10/2026	20/10/2026 5.00 PM
4	AW/T/ PH4/ 04/2026	Sale of 33 used electrical generators of various capacities ranging from 30 kVA to 250 kVA.	Ghala / Barka Yard	25/-	10% of total bid value incl. VAT	28/09/2026 To 11/10/2026	20/10/2026 5.00 PM
5	AW/T/ PH4/ 05/2026	Sale of used scaffolding, household appliances, electrical transformers and other assets.	Ghala / Barka Yard	50/-	10% of total bid value incl. VAT	28/09/2026 To 11/10/2026	20/10/2026 5.00 PM

Purchasers of the Tender Documents may inspect the assets at the Company's Ghala and Barka Yards during official working hours, subject to prior appointment.

Each bid must be accompanied by an Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) equivalent to 10% of the total bid value inclusive of VAT, provided as a certified cheque issued by a local bank, a bank deposit or transfer to the Company's account, or a bank guarantee issued by a local bank. Proof of any deposit or transfer must state the bidder's name and Tender Number.

Where the EMD is provided as a bank guarantee, it must remain valid for at least 30 days from the Tender closing date. Any certified cheque must be valid for collection upon presentation. The bid and original EMD instrument, where applicable, must be deposited in the Tender Box at the reception of the Company's Head Office in Ghala, Muscat, no later than 20 October 2026 at 5:00 PM. Late bids will not be accepted.

Tender Fees and submitted bid prices shall be inclusive of VAT. The 10% EMD shall be calculated on the total bid value inclusive of VAT.

Contact: 2450 2581 / 82, Ext. 149 / 150; Mobile: 7722 8166 / 9294 7637.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Israeli security forces patrol outside a house that Palestinians in Abu Falah, Ramallah. — Reuters

Israeli minister calls for WB war, annexation of Lebanon, Gaza areas

TEL AVIV: Israel’s far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich called on Sunday for the annexation of parts of south Lebanon and the Gaza Strip and for Israeli forces to “go to war” against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. “I think we need to go to war in Judea and Samaria, to dismantle the Palestinian Authority that supports terror,” he added, using the biblical term for the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority condemned Smotrich’s call for war in the West Bank on Sunday. “His statements are an explicit call for escalation, annexation and displacement, aimed at undermining the prospects of an independent Palestinian state,” the Ramallah-based authority said in a statement. At least 1,110 Palestinians, including a number of militants, have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli soldiers or settlers, according to a tally based on Palestinian official figures. Israeli figures show at least 49 Israelis, including civilians and security personnel, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations during the same period. More than 500,000 Israelis live in West Bank settlements. — AFP

Iran Guards say seized US underwater drone in Hormuz



People walk past a billboard about the Strait of Hormuz, on a building in Tehran. — Reuters

TEHRAN: Iran’s Revolutionary Guards said on Sunday that they seized an American submarine drone in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran has blockaded in the months-long Middle East war. “Through a coordinated, complex operation involving intelligence oversight and electronic warfare, IRGC naval forces’ personnel successfully captured an advanced unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) belonging to the terrorist US military,” the IRGC naval forces said in a statement. They added that the drone was “operating in the Strait of Hormuz for espionage purposes”, identifying the model as a Remus 600 autonomous underwater vehicle that was “now in the hands of the force’s specialists for data recovery”. The Guards said they captured another US submarine drone in the strait that was crucial for oil and gas trade before the Mideast war started in late February and choked off shipping. Iran has maintained a blockade of the Hormuz since the outbreak of the conflict, while the United States has imposed a counter-blockade of Iranian ports. — AFP

POLICE INVESTIGATION

Kosovo arrests 9 on suspicion of war crimes



Kosovo police arrested nine Serbs on Sunday in the northern town of Zubin Potok on suspicion of war crimes allegedly committed during the 1990s war. Kosovo police and the Special Prosecutor’s Office confirmed that Sunday’s operation, codenamed “Dossier 23”, was related to the case of the missing intellectuals. The police operation was part of a months-long war crimes investigation in the Zubin Potok area following the discovery of the mass graves. — AFP

STRIKES HIT SUDAN CITIES AS ARMY CHIEF VOWS TO FIGHT ON

KHARTOUM: Two Sudanese cities were targeted by strikes on Sunday, witnesses said, a day after army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan vowed to press ahead with the years-long war against a rival paramilitary force despite a US visa snub and mounting pressure for a ceasefire. Sudan has been at war since April 2023 when a power struggle between Burhan and his former deputy, commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, escalated into a conflict that

has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions. Witnesses said on Sunday that a drone strike hit a major fuel depot near the army-held city of Wad Madani in central Sudan, while two explosions rocked Nyala, the capital of South Darfur state and the RSF’s main stronghold in the west of the country. “A fire broke out at the depot, and I could see the flames from about three kilometres away,” one witness said. In Nyala, a witness said early

on Sunday he “heard a plane in the sky, and a short while later the two explosions occurred”. The strikes come after the US denied a visa for the country’s de facto leader to attend the United Nations General Assembly earlier this week. But Burhan struck a defiant tone on Saturday at a youth event in capital Khartoum. “Our goal is to eliminate this militia no matter how long it takes,” he said, adding Sudan would not submit to “blackmail”. — AFP

Bangkok heavy floods send thousands into shelters

DEEP FLOODWATERS in Bangkok drove thousands of residents into shelters as others scrambled to buy groceries or dry out their homes on Sunday after days of heavy rain inundated markets, roads and residences. Pedestrians in plastic rain ponchos waded through murky, knee-deep water in the Thai capital, some venturing into a supermarket while others floated their belongings in plastic tubs. “People cannot get out of their homes. We are running out of food, so I came out to purchase some,” Aduenan Surorot, a motorbike-taxi driver, said. The shops near his house — where flooding was still at chest level — were low on stock, the 30-year-old said. Some stores had empty shelves over the weekend as residents raced to buy essentials, while fresh produce at market stalls was kept dry in polystyrene foam boxes or hanging just above the water level. The prime minister’s office asked the public to avoid panic-buying and warned that price gouging was a criminal offence. Thailand is used to wet weather and September is the peak of the rainy season, but several Bangkok residents said this year seemed worse than previous ones.



A family makes their way with a cart through floodwaters in the Bang Kapi district of Bangkok. — AFP

Nearly 4,900 people have been evacuated to shelters, with around 52,000 households affected by the floods, which prompted a disaster declaration across the capital, according to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration.

Office worker Bandit Pankan was among those frustrated that official warnings came too late. “I didn’t prepare for it at all,” he said. “We got an SMS alert from (the disaster agency) yesterday, but the water flooded in the night before.” More than 330 millimetres (13 inches) of rain fell in some areas of the city between Thursday and Sunday, the weather agency said. Nearly 4,900 people have been evacuated to shelters, with around 52,000 households affected by the floods, which prompted a disaster declaration across the capital, according to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt said on social media on Sunday that several roads remained flooded and water levels in the city’s canals were still high, but authorities

were working to speed up drainage. Chadchart visited a temporary shelter on Saturday in a school in the Kheha Romklaao area, where he said about 1,000 people were evacuated. Some rested on cots and benches with their dogs in hallways, while others lay with blankets on the floors of classrooms. Hundreds of schools will be closed on Monday, according to city authorities. Kosin Nilset, who lives along the Premprachakorn canal on the outskirts of the capital, said his house was “underwater for about 30 hours”. “This time, the water level is higher than the 2011 flood,” the 44-year-old said. Widespread deluges across the Southeast Asian country in 2011 killed more than 500 people and damaged millions of homes. Flooding was also reported on Sunday across 25 provinces in Thailand, according to the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation. More than 10,000 soldiers were deployed nationwide to aid in flood relief efforts, the defence ministry said. Rain was forecast throughout Sunday for Bangkok and its surrounding provinces and would begin to taper off on Monday, the metropolitan administration said. Thidarat Silsuwan said she did not want to go to a shelter as she worked to salvage her belongings. — AFP

GUNMEN KILL 27 IN TWO S AFRICA MASS SHOOTINGS

JOHANNESBURG: Gunmen killed at least 27 people in two mass shootings in South Africa’s two main cities, Johannesburg and Cape Town, police said on Sunday, in the latest criminal violence to hit the country. Eight gunmen armed with assault rifles and pistols stormed a bar southwest of Johannesburg at around 19:30 GMT on Saturday, killing 17 people and wounding 15 others. The shooting took place in Wedela, a semi-rural township of brick houses and small businesses, surrounded by wide expanses of land used for mining. The suspects torched two vehicles before fleeing. In a separate shooting at a barbecue venue in a township outside Cape Town early on Sunday, gunmen killed 10 people and wounded 11 more. No suspect has been arrested in either case, police said. The country of about 62 million people records roughly 60 murders a day, among the highest rates globally. President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday said security forces “are going to continue pulling out all stops” to put an end to criminality. “The clear instruction to our security forces is that we must bring the levels of criminality and violence down,” he said. — AFP



NATURAL DISASTER

Heavy rains kill 56 in India, 12 in Nepal



Heavy rain triggered floods and landslides across northern India and Nepal, killing at least 68 people over the past three days. In India’s most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, 56 people have died over the past three days, with more than 1,000 houses damaged, the Relief Commissioner’s office said. Neighbouring Nepal, already reeling under the catastrophic August 26 flood, was struck by a fresh wave of flooding and landslides that has killed 12 people. — AFP

SECURITY BREACH

Somali pirates escape with suspected help



Around 30 suspected pirates, arrested during the rescue of a hijacked oil tanker, escaped while being taken to jail, with suspicions emerging that police might have assisted their getaway, four security sources said. An oil tanker, Sibul 1, was rescued after being intercepted by maritime police, with 41 suspected pirates arrested and taken to the port town of Garacad. The sources said the decision to transport the suspects at night was unusual. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Rescuers are seen at the site of a damaged residential building following a drone strike in Kyiv. — AFP

RUSSIAN STRIKES ON UKRAINE KILL 5, INCLUDING IN KYIV

KYIV: Russian strikes on Ukraine killed five people, Ukrainian authorities said on Sunday, warning the Kremlin’s forces were “relentlessly” attacking Kyiv, a day after Moscow vowed to achieve its war aims “no matter the circumstances.” One of the victims was killed in Kyiv, with authorities saying Russian strikes on the city and its suburbs damaged more than 16 sites — both residential and industrial.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said three people were killed in night-time strikes on the southern Zaporizhzhia region and that a Russian drone strike killed one man in Kyiv. Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said a woman and two 16-year-olds were wounded and hospitalised in the capital. “The enemy continues to relentlessly attack the Kyiv region with strike drones,” Kyiv’s administration said. “Sixteen sites have been damaged,” it added, saying this included 12 private houses in Kyiv’s outskirts, as well as a warehouse and production facility.

Authorities in the Odesa region said a “massive strike” on the south of the Black Sea region killed one more person. Regional head Oleg Kiper said Russian strikes damaged “a residential building, a medical institution, a hotel, a shop, as well as a warehouse used for storing grain crops.” — AFP

POPE URGES CHURCH TO FACE FAILINGS



Pope Leo on Sunday urged the Catholic Church to admit its own failings and heal “deep wounds” inflicted within its ranks, hours before he was set to meet victims of child abuse by priests in France. Leo said the Church must have the courage to face its past but did not directly reference abuse scandals in France that sparked nationwide shock. “In order to heal the deep wounds, infidelities and painful errors that have occurred within (the Church), we must humbly place ourselves under the Lord’s purifying gaze,” the first US pope told an estimated 150,000 people gathered in the field on a sunlit day. — Reuters

SWISS REJECT PLAN TO TOUGHEN NEUTRALITY: PROJECTION

GENEVA: Swiss voters on Sunday appeared to reject a proposal to tighten their country’s neutrality, dealing a blow to an initiative championed by the hard-right and dubbed “pro-Russian” by opponents, according to an initial exit poll projection. The Swiss widely embrace their neutrality, but the initiative to enshrine a strict definition into the constitution exposed deep disagreement over what that neutrality entails.

The proposal was rejected by 71 per cent of voters, according to an initial projection by polling institute

gsf.bern published 30 minutes after the last polling stations closed. The expected result shows that “we remain committed to this policy of neutrality, which allows Switzerland to adopt sanctions and to position itself in the world,” Socialist MP Laurence Fehlmann Rielle said.

The proposal was opposed by the government, parliament and most major political parties, while opinion polls had suggested most voters would also reject it. Moscow, which has slammed Switzerland for joining EU sanctions and accused Bern of abandoning its neutrality,

praised the initiative — dubbed “pro-Russian” by some opponents.

The proposal called for the constitution to guarantee that Swiss neutrality is “armed and perpetual”. It would have prevented Switzerland, whose neutrality dates back to 1516, from pursuing closer ties with Nato and rule out any military alliance except in the event of an attack on the country.

It would have also prohibited the imposition of sanctions unless called for by the UN. All sides in the debate argued they wanted to maintain Switzerland’s neutrality. — AFP

UK police probe explosives offences incident near base

BRITISH counter-terrorism police on Sunday were reportedly probing a major incident near a base used by the US air force after several men were arrested on suspicion of explosives offences. Villagers in the nearby village of Whelford had been evacuated and army bomb disposal experts were “currently examining a number of vehicles”, police in the southwestern county of Gloucestershire said in a statement.

British police said counter-terrorism officers were leading efforts to establish what had happened at an airbase used by the US Air Force on Sunday, after they arrested five men on suspicion of preparing a terrorist act. The five men were also arrested on suspicion of committing offences under the Explosives Act.

Several UK media including the BBC and Sky News reported that the counter-terrorism force was leading the investigation into the incident near RAF Fairford, but that was not immediately confirmed. A cordon is in place and officers believed the incident had been “contained”. Broadcast aerial footage showed a bomb disposal robot on a rural road moving around two white vans with their rear doors open and a third with its doors closed.

Villager Julian Tudsbury told the BBC another resident alerted police to three “suspicious vans” in the village in the early hours. In March, then prime minister Keir Starmer granted permission for “defensive” US action against Iranian missile sites from two UK bases including Fairford.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham was being kept updated on the incident, a government spokesperson said. “We are grateful



Armed police man a roadblock while posted at an entrance to RAF Fairford base in Fairford, south-west England. — AFP

British police said counter-terrorism officers were leading efforts to establish what had happened at an airbase used by the US Air Force on Sunday, after they arrested five men on suspicion of preparing a terrorist act. The five men were also arrested on suspicion of committing offences under the Explosives Act

to the emergency services, who have acted quickly to detain several suspects and put measures in place to keep the community safe,” the spokesperson said. “It would be inappropriate to comment further whilst investigations are ongoing.”

Defence Minister Wes Streeting thanked “emergency and specialist teams” deployed to the scene. “We can be reassured that this is being dealt with,” he said on X.

Media reported a large emergency services presence in the area including a Hazardous Area Response Team. “A number of properties are currently being evacuated in the Whelford area following the declaration of a major incident,” Gloucestershire Police said.

Several men had been arrested

“on suspicion of offences under the Explosives Act”, the force added.

Residents from the nearby village of Whelford had been evacuated to a nearby leisure centre, police said. Whelford is adjacent to the Royal Air Force Fairford base which is also used by the United States Air Force. Fairford is the UK base of the 501st Combat Support Wing, a US air force administrative support wing. It said in a statement that no US air force personnel had been involved in the incident. “The 501st Combat Support Wing appreciates the swift response and continued support of our local law enforcement partners,” it said. “We remain in close coordination with our UK partners to help ensure the safety and security of both our military and local communities,” it added.

The MP for the area, Roz Savage, described the situation as “worrying”. “I have contacted the police for further updates and I’ve been told that it is believed the incident is contained,” she said on X. The incident comes amid concerns about the actions of hostile foreign states. Interior Minister Shabana Mahmood has accused Iran and Russia of using proxies to carry out criminal activities on their behalf on UK territory.

Earlier this month, reports said British military sites were targeted by drones more than 300 times over the past year. Britain’s defence ministry did not disclose who was behind the drone activity, but the figures come as European countries warned of an increase in suspected Russian hybrid operations on their territory. UK armed forces minister Louise Sandher-Jones said in a statement that the government was “taking the threat posed by hostile drones to defence sites extremely seriously”. — AFP

Spain PM Sanchez vows action as housing protest grows

MADRID: A growing protest camp in the heart of Madrid over unaffordable housing pushed Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Sunday to pledge swift government action. Hundreds of protesters on the weekend set up tents in the capital’s busy Puerta del Sol public square to press their demands. The movement was triggered by a police eviction on Wednesday of an 87-year-old woman from her lifelong Madrid apartment. The woman, Maricarmen Abascal, was carried out on a stretcher after the police broke down her door, in a scene that caused widespread outrage. Her plight tapped into long-simmering resentment in Spain’s major cities over spiralling costs to rent or buy homes.

Tens of thousands of protesters took to Madrid’s streets on Saturday, rattling keys and blowing whistles. Authorities said 25,000 people took part, while the Madrid Tenants’ Union, which organised the protest, said over 300,000 turned out. Many then set up their tent camp in Puerta del Sol, vowing to stay until

Authorities said 25,000 people took part, while the Madrid Tenants’ Union, which organised the protest, said over 300,000 turned out. Many then set up their tent camp in Puerta del Sol, vowing to stay until housing access is improved, or the government falls



Demonstrators camp with tents to protest against evictions and the housing crisis in front of the Presidency of the Community of Madrid on the Puerta del Sol plaza in Madrid. — AFP

housing access is improved, or the government falls. “We’ll stay as long as necessary. Even as we mobilise the pressure keeps mounting, and we’re already at our limits,” one 28-year-old protester, who gave his first name as Sergio, said in front of his tent.

The housing problem in Spain has

become a burning issue ahead of a general election due to take place next year. Sanchez, in a political rally organised on Sunday by his Socialist Party, addressed the evicted woman, saying: “Maricarmen, I have a message for you. The government is working all out to present the law on housing.”

He urged other political parties to back the bill, which is expected to contain measures such as the automatic renewal of rental contracts and further restrictions on evictions. But Sanchez’s party lacks a majority in Spain’s parliament, where it is unclear whether the package would be approved. A similar bill was defeated earlier this year.

The Madrid Tenants’ Union urged on X for city residents to join the Puerta del Sol protest. “We can’t take any more. Either the rental system falls, or the government falls,” it said. Abascal was forced to leave the apartment where she had lived for 70 years after a real estate firm acquired the property and raised the rent by 275 per cent to 2,650 euros (\$3,000), according to the union.

Now a symbol of Spain’s housing crisis, she urged Spaniards to join the protest on Saturday. Many who took part in the street demonstration said that the rental market had become impossible. A Madrid real-estate site, Idealista, estimates that rent has nearly doubled. — AFP

OPINION

Translation bridges cultures and generations



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

AS World Translation Day is being celebrated on September 30, events surrounding it will inevitably consist of discussions on the challenges faced by translation in the age of Artificial Intelligence and the increased use of digital technologies.

But translation has been around us since the beginning of time, or at least since the first time that different people or communities came together.

Over time, scripts and languages have been lost and the windows to the past remained closed. We lacked the ability to understand past civilisations as we had no access to their languages.

From ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, Mesopotamian cuneiforms and Maya Glyphs from the Mayan civilisation of South America, the 20th century invested much time and effort in deciphering and then translating ancient scripts by meticulously comparing them to later works in adjacent languages. The results were amazing.

They opened doors and windows to civilisations which were tantalising but closed to us because of inaccessible language.

Subsequent translations allowed us to encounter myriad worlds of the past, their ideas, beliefs, and experiences which were separated from us by language, geography, and time. Nor is this the end of the road. There are scripts from the past that remain inaccessible even now. The Indus script

from Mohenjo-daro, for example, is yet to be deciphered. Its secrets remain one of the many cultural stories of ancient history which are still to be told.

Today, translation plays a significant role in preserving cultural memory. Without it, many works, and worlds, would have remained undiscovered and invisible.

Translation gave these works another life and allowed them to enter new intellectual and cultural contexts.

In this sense, translation is not simply about transferring meaning; it is about creating access to the past while enabling conversations in the present.

Nowhere is this truer than in literary works. Literature translated from languages in any part of the world allows readers to encounter perspectives that may challenge the assumptions of their own cultural environments.

A translated novel can make a distant society more intelligible; a poem can communicate an experience of exile or belonging; a historical narrative can reveal how a community understands its own past. Translation thus creates opportunities for dialogue rather than simply providing linguistic equivalence.

Literary language often depends on metaphor, rhythm, irony, cultural memory, and multiple meanings. A translation can therefore become an interpretation of the original text, changing from one

Translation has become a form of intercultural understanding, creating dialogue between cultures and also revealing the differences that shape how meaning is produced and understood

translated language to another. An important component of intercultural understanding, translation is almost inevitable today. As the world has famously shrunk into a global village, there is a tendency to erase all differences.

But the resistance to that comes in the form of celebration of uniqueness in traditions, stories, and memories.

This uniqueness is shared through the stories of our ancestors. It is these stories that root us and give a sense of identity.

As people are becoming increasingly monolingual, translation will become central to understanding our unique past and the stories that create a community memory.

The instinct to preserve a unique culture comes with a desire to disseminate it as well. Translation is central to this project.

Beyond being merely the transfer of words between languages, translation enables readers to encounter unfamiliar cultural values, histories, and ways of seeing the world. In doing so, translation becomes a form of intercultural understanding, creating dialogue between cultures while also revealing the differences that shape how meaning is produced and understood.

The continuing significance of translation lies precisely in this capacity to connect worlds that would otherwise remain apart.

To that extent, translation remains an exciting journey, unpacking our past in ways that help us to understand our future.

KYIV SHOPPERS FEEL THE PINCH FROM RUSSIAN STRIKES

FLORENT VERGNES

With one eye on the shelves and the other on his phone, Maksym Tarasenko has gotten used to keeping an eye out for Russian drones above Kyiv as he shops.

But Tarasenko, 26, is unable to feed his caffeine habit, as his favourite fizzy drink is no longer in stock at his local supermarket. “There’s absolutely no Coca-Cola left, not even the equivalent,” he said.

Last month, he said the Silpo store where he shops had no potatoes, cereals or many vegetables.

In the last nine months, there have been three times as many air strikes on civilian warehouses in the Kyiv region as in the first four years of Russia’s war in February 2022.

Two-thirds of them have happened since the start of August, according to an analysis of data from the ACLED conflict monitor up to September 18.

Ukraine’s food minister, Taras Vysotskyi, has said the wave of attacks has “seriously disrupted, even rendered inoperative” the supply chains used by major retailers, which are based on centralised logistics platforms.

He called on brands to decentralise their logistics, focus on short-term supply chains and use smaller warehouses or ones located in neighbouring countries.

The Fozzy group, which owns Silpo, announced in early August that it was reorganising its supply chains, allowing shelves to be restocked, albeit without some brands.

With fruit carefully stacked, a slew of special offers and light music, everything might appear normal.

But clients are glued to their devices: above the capital, thick black smoke rises after a Russian strike on a market near the city’s central station.

For Tarasenko, Moscow is trying to create “widespread panic” among citizens.

The first shortages prompted a rush on certain products as residents sought to stock up before winter, he said, but he is remaining calm.

“A little market has been set up near where I live. I sometimes buy basics there; it’s a little bit cheaper,” he said.

And if the situation gets even worse, he has already found a grower in the provinces where he can get his potatoes. — AFP

The fatigue of living in a connected world

THE alarm goes off, you open one eye, look at the time, and begin negotiations. Five more minutes, maybe ten, and you finally get up, already looking forward to going back to bed tonight. The day has not even started, and you are already running on empty.

I may be willing to start the day, but my body has other plans. It seems more interested in finding a sofa. Still, coffee helps, or at least we have agreed to believe that it does. You drive to work, take the lift, and sit down, and by mid-morning, another coffee seems reasonable.

I have hardly done anything physically demanding, yet I already feel as if my battery is down to 40 per cent.

If this sounds familiar, you have plenty of company. In 2023, researchers from Daejeon University in South Korea published a review bringing together 91 studies involving more than 623,000 people.

They estimated that around one in five adults experiences general fatigue, while about one in ten experiences chronic fatigue lasting more than six months. The figures suggest that tiredness is far more than an occasional complaint.

No rest for the weary, and we have been weary for quite some time. Tiredness comes in different forms, so sometimes the body is tired, sometimes the brain, and sometimes we lack energy or motivation. We know a change is as good as a rest, although I would still like to see the research comparing it with an actual rest. Unfortunately for my argument, a 2008 experiment by Puetz and colleagues at the University of Georgia found that



DR KHALFAN AL HARASSI

The author is an academic and researcher

Around one in five adults experiences general fatigue, while about one in ten experiences chronic fatigue lasting more than six months. The figures suggest that tiredness is far more than an occasional complaint

even low-intensity exercise could improve energy in tired, inactive people. When it comes to physical tiredness, doing nothing to save energy might leave us feeling more tired. We have made inactivity convenient as we drive, take lifts, and order things online, while a missing television remote can now become a minor household emergency. Food, meanwhile, arrives at the front door without requiring us to leave the sofa.

Work smarter, not harder, we were told, but by afternoon, emails, meetings, calls, and notifications are competing for attention, and one task interrupts another before the first one has finished. Researchers call the stress caused by constantly dealing with technology ‘technostress’.

Poor Jack never had Teams, and although “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” as the old warning goes, work today has become much better at following us around. It no longer needs an office and can find us at home, at dinner, or on holiday. We may have left the office, but work follows us home through our phones.

By evening, you are ready to rest, the television goes on, and because one screen does not seem to provide enough relaxation, the phone comes out too. A study published in Social Science & Medicine in 2016 examined 844 adults and found that bedtime phone use was associated with poorer sleep, higher insomnia scores, and increased fatigue.

Benjamin Franklin famously advised us to go “early to bed and early to rise,” but nobody was sending Franklin WhatsApp messages at 11.47 pm.

We get into bed, pick up the



Around one in five adults experiences general fatigue, while about one in ten experiences chronic fatigue

phone for ‘five minutes’, and then find messages, headlines, and videos demanding attention. Five minutes becomes twenty, and before you know it, you have lost another hour of sleep. Tomorrow morning’s alarm will still ring at the same time, whether you are ready or not.

Not every tired person needs to put away the phone and go for a walk, because fatigue can be caused by illness. Long Covid, anaemia, sleep disorders, and other health problems can leave people exhausted. You cannot pour from an empty cup, and sometimes that cup needs proper medical attention rather than another coffee or some well-meaning advice.

Life now leaves very little empty space. Waiting has a screen, walking has headphones, and meals have messages. Although technology has saved us enormous amounts of time and effort, we seem determined to fill every free moment.

Give us ten free minutes, and we will find twelve minutes of things to do. I believe the challenge of resting is not finding the time, but allowing ourselves to do nothing with it.

Learn from a school that has no graduation day



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and communications professional

WE LIVE in a world that celebrates winners. We celebrate promotions, awards, successful businesses, high grades and major achievements. We proudly tell the stories of those who reached the top. However, behind almost every important success lies a collection of failures that rarely make the headlines.

There were applications that were rejected, ideas that were criticised, decisions that proved wrong and doors that closed. And yet, those disappointments often became the experiences that prepared people for their next opportunity. In fact, disappointments have a strange ability to introduce us to ourselves.

That is why we rarely thank failure when it first arrives, but we question it, we resist it and we wish it had never happened. However, years later, we may look back and realise that some of our hardest experiences taught us our most valuable lessons! Failure can teach us resilience when circumstances test our strength. It can teach us patience when we want everything immediately.

Failure can teach us that falling down is not the opposite of moving forward. Sometimes, falling is part of learning how to stand. The difference between those who grow and those who remain trapped by their

setbacks is often not the absence of failure, but the willingness to ask: What is this experience trying to teach me?

Perhaps one should also reconsider who our teachers are. They are not only the people with qualifications, titles, or years of experience. A child can teach an adult curiosity, a stranger can teach kindness, and a difficult person can teach us self-control. Sometimes, the people who teach us the most are those who never intended to teach us anything at all.

The greatest obstacle to learning is not a lack of knowledge. It is the belief that we already have enough of it. The world does not stop changing when we graduate. Technology, ideas, workplaces and people all evolve.

Lifelong learning is therefore not simply about acquiring new qualifications. It could be listening to someone whose opinion differs from ours, learning a new skill, trying something outside our comfort zone, or admitting that we were wrong.

Sometimes, the most intelligent words we can say are simply: "I don't know. Teach me." There is no weakness in being a beginner. In fact, every day is an unfinished lesson. Imagine waking up tomorrow and looking at the day differently. Instead of asking only,

The greatest obstacle to learning is not a lack of knowledge. It is the belief that we already have enough of it. The world does not stop changing when we graduate. Technology, ideas, workplaces and people all evolve

What do I need to accomplish today? Ask: what can today teach me? Learning does not always arrive as a dramatic event. Sometimes it hides inside ordinary moments such as a conversation, a mistake, a disappointment, a new responsibility, or a second chance.

There is always another skill to discover, another perspective to understand, another mistake to learn from, another person to learn from and another version of ourselves waiting to emerge. The school of life has no entrance examination.

Let us remain students; not because we know too little, but because we understand that there is always more to discover. Let us welcome the lessons that come as challenges. Let us learn from the people who cross our paths.

When life places another unfamiliar lesson in front of us, let us not ask, "Why me?" Perhaps we should ask: "What is this here to teach me?" We may leave school one day, but we never leave the classroom of life. Life owes none of us a perfectly smooth road.

Failure may close one door, but the lesson it leaves behind may prepare you to open another. And sometimes, years later, we look back at the moment we thought had broken us and realise something extraordinary: It did not end our journey; it changed its direction.

AI STARTUP URGES OPTIMISM DESPITE SAFETY FEARS

SAM REEVES

Europe needs to view artificial intelligence with more optimism - despite growing warnings about its dangers - or risk falling further behind, the head of a leading European AI start-up warned.

"I think the mindset in Europe needs to shift to one of optimism and to one of opportunity, and not to one of risk and fear," Robin Rombach, CEO of German AI image generation specialist Black Forest Labs, said.

Europe lags behind the United States and China when it comes to cutting-edge AI models. Policymakers and firms have been scrambling to find ways to make up lost ground.

But the debate has shifted to safety in recent weeks, after security lapses sparked calls from some industry leaders for development of the technology to be slowed down. Based in the medieval German city of Freiburg, Rombach's company — which takes its name from the nearby Black Forest — has emerged as a prominent developer of AI image-generation models. The startup, valued at around \$3.25 billion, recently hit the headlines when it announced US director Martin Scorsese as an adviser, prompting an angry response from some in Hollywood concerned about AI taking production jobs.

Rombach, 33, helped develop latent diffusion, a breakthrough that underpins many of today's AI image-generation systems.

This propelled Rombach and a group of fellow computer scientists to found the AI lab in 2024. With just over 100 staff, its FLUX models generate still and moving images from text, and the company is now also expanding into physical AI.

Its latest model has been tested at carmaker Audi as part of a project aimed at enabling robots to perform production-line tasks.

Despite its roots in Freiburg - Rombach comes from the area - the firm's ties to the United States and its tech scene are also strong.

The company has a second headquarters in San Francisco and secured early backing from Silicon Valley venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz.

Rombach said that when Black Forest Labs was founded, there was no "real startup ecosystem" in Europe, particularly for "frontier deep tech".

"If you want to build a frontier model in a very competitive space, you need to do this quickly."

"Certain ingredients" are needed for success, such as a lot of capital and computing power, he added. As well as Black Forest Labs, Europe has other competitive AI companies, including France's Mistral, but is still seen as trailing US firms such as OpenAI and Anthropic and Chinese labs such as DeepSeek.

Zach Meyers of CERRE, a Brussels-based think tank, echoed some of Rombach's concerns, saying the "biggest barrier" to AI growth and innovation in Europe was access to capital.

Most European companies rely on financing from banks, which are traditionally more cautious than venture capital investors about backing businesses that may take years to become profitable, said Meyers, an expert in EU digital policy. — AFP

A reality check for Nepal's hydropower ambitions

NEPAL'S hydropower boom has long been touted as a cornerstone of economic growth and renewable energy, but the devastating flood in August exposed its vulnerability.

The disaster triggered by a glacial mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border killed more than 1,400 people and left thousands missing - while knocking 410 megawatts (MW), or about 10 per cent of the generation capacity, out of Nepal's power system.

More than 90 per cent of Nepal's electricity comes from hydropower, but extensive damage to its river projects has prompted questions about its energy security as climate and geological risks intensify.

"Hydropower has been a major driving force in growth of the country... generating jobs and income," Uttam Bhlon Lama, senior vice-president of the Independent Power Producers' Association (IPPAN), said.

"It was bringing huge hope and future prospects to the people," he said, adding that the country would now have to rethink its dam-building spree.

"We have to prepare... This is our new normal."

Over the past decade, the Himalayan nation has increased hydropower output more than fourfold to about 4,120 megawatts, according to government figures, helping connect nearly all its 30 million people to the grid.

The country had previously moved to export surplus electricity to neighbouring India and Bangladesh, seeking to turn its glacier-fed rivers into a source of revenue.

Authorities suspended electricity exports after the disaster.

The major destruction of hydropower infrastructure underscored the risks of that strategy in a region where glaciers are retreating, permafrost is thawing and extreme hazards are becoming harder to predict.

Nepal's energy sector accounted for about half of the infrastructure damage from the disaster, according to government assessments.

Seven hydropower projects were



A general view shows damaged houses covered in sludge in the aftermath of the August 26 flash flood at Betrawati Bazaar in Nepal's Rasuwa district. — AFP



ANUP OJHA

The writer is a Correspondent and Video Journalist with Agence France-Presse, based in Kathmandu



PAAVAN MATHEMA

The writer is AFP's Nepal Bureau Chief

directly hit while generation was halted at others, removing 410 MW from the national grid.

Six hydropower projects under construction, with a combined capacity of 508 MW, were also damaged.

Rescuers have continued searching hydropower tunnels for hundreds of missing workers, engineers and other personnel, weeks after the disaster.

The scale of the damage has prompted calls for a rethink of how projects are designed and built.

The disaster has "taught us serious lessons for the future", Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Minister Biraj Bhakta Shrestha told parliament last Wednesday.

"We must not only take stock of the damage but also learn from it and develop systems to reduce future risks," he said.

The World Bank warned that Nepal needs to build a hydropower system capable of anticipating, absorbing and recovering from increasingly complex Himalayan hazards.

Scientists say the August disaster was caused by a complex chain of geological and climatic factors rather than a single extreme weather event.

According to the World Weather Attribution group, the massive rock-and-ice collapse was shaped by long-term warming, glacier retreat

and geological instability.

Much of Nepal's hydropower infrastructure lies along steep river valleys fed by glaciers - terrain exposed to floods, landslides and cascading geological hazards.

"Powerhouses need to be moved higher up from the riverbeds to protect them against floods; we need better evacuation plans and stocked safehouses," IPPAN's Lama said.

"We should explore remotely operated systems so people are not stuck inside in case anything happens."

The flooding has also renewed calls for diversifying the power mix in Nepal, which lacks coal- or gas-fired generation capacity.

"Nepal's electricity system, currently strained and heavily dependent on hydropower, could be made more robust through well-planned additions of solar electricity," Germany's development agency GIZ said in a 2024 report. The challenge extends beyond Nepal.

Glaciers in the wider Himalayan and Hindu Kush ranges are a crucial water source for around 240 million people in the mountainous regions, as well as for another 1.65 billion people in the South Asian and Southeast Asian river valleys below.

Basanta Raj Adhikari, director at the Centre for Disaster Studies at Tribhuvan University, said the Himalayas must be monitored regionally for hotspots to develop early warning systems.



Qatar in semis with win over Yemen

WALEED AL JAHWARI
JEDDAH, SEP 27

QATAR edged Yemen 1-0 in their second Group B match of Gulf Cup 27 at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium in Jeddah on Sunday to strengthen their hopes of reaching the semi-finals.

Yusuf Abdurisag scored the only goal in the 64th minute as Qatar secured their second successive victory after opening their campaign with a 2-0 win over Bahrain.

Qatar dominated possession from the start but found it difficult to break down a well-organised Yemen defence, with goalkeeper Mohammed Aman producing a series of impressive saves to keep his side in the contest.

Yemen created the first major opportunity in the 24th minute, but Qatar goalkeeper Mahmoud Abu Nada made an important save to deny the Yemen attack.

Qatar responded quickly as Akram Afif tested Aman with a shot from inside the box in the 25th minute, before the Yemen goalkeeper produced another save from Afif's effort three minutes later.

Yemen continued to threaten and Abdulwasea al Matari forced another save from Abu Nada in the 38th minute, with the first half ending goalless.

Qatar were dealt an early blow when defender Issa Laye was



The Qatari national team qualified for the semi-finals in Jeddah after defeating its Yemeni counterpart in the second round 1-0.

forced off with an injury, with Jassem Gaber coming on as his replacement.

After the break, Qatar increased the pressure and Ayyoub Al Alawi came close with a header that went just wide of the post.

The breakthrough finally came in the 64th minute when Abdurisag found the net to put

Qatar ahead.

Qatar came close to doubling their advantage when Ahmed Alaa struck the crossbar, while Al Alawi then forced another save from Aman.

Qatar were awarded a penalty in the 73rd minute, but Akram Afif saw his effort saved by Aman, who continued to keep Yemen within



Qatar's Yusuf Abdurisag in action with Yemen's Abdulwasea Al Matari. — Reuters



Mohammed al Khalaf and Ahmed al Ruwaili. Iraq's Zaid Thamer was the fourth official, while Saudi Arabia's Sultan al Harbi served as the VAR referee and China's Fu Ming as assistant VAR. UAE's Hamad al Mazrouei was the referee assessor.

The result moved Qatar to six points from two matches, while Yemen were eliminated from the tournament after suffering their second consecutive defeat without a point.

The second round of Group B will be completed on Sunday night when Bahrain face the United Arab Emirates, with the outcome set to complete the standings ahead of the final round of group matches.

Iraq edge Kuwait 3-2 in dramatic Gulf Cup Group A clash



Iraq's Karar Nabeel scores their third goal past Kuwait's Saud Al Hoshan. — Reuters



Iraq's Aymen Hussein celebrates after Saif Rasheed scores their second goal. — Reuters

WALEED AL JAHWARI
JEDDAH, SEPT 27

Iraq revived their hopes of reaching the Gulf Cup semifinals after securing a dramatic 3-2 victory over Kuwait in the second round of group stage.

The match was held at Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Sports City in Jeddah on Saturday.

The victory lifted Iraq to four points, and the defeat ended Kuwait's hopes.

The first half ended goalless despite both teams creating opportunities, with the match opening up considerably after the break. Iraq took the lead in the 52nd minute when Zidan Iqbal found the

net to give the Lions of Mesopotamia the advantage.

Kuwait responded strongly and were rewarded in the 75th minute when Yusuf Nasser converted a penalty to bring the match level at 1-1.

Iraq regained the lead eight minutes later when Saif Rashid scored in the 83rd minute, putting his side back in front with the match heading towards its final stages.

The drama intensified in the closing minutes. Kuwait levelled again in the 90th minute, with Yusuf Nasser completing his brace and appearing to have rescued a point for his side.

Kuwait were then reduced to 10 men when Abdullah



Kuwait's Athbi Saleh is shown a yellow card by referee Jalal Jayed. — Reuters

al Awadhi was sent off after receiving a second yellow card, just a minute before the decisive moment.

Iraq took full advantage in stoppage time as Nabil Karrar scored in the ninth minute of added time, completing a remarkable late turnaround and securing all three points for Graham Arnold's side.

The result strengthened Iraq's position in the race for a semifinal place, with the team now set to face Saudi Arabia on Tuesday in their final Group A match.

Arnold said Iraq were the better side and praised his players for maintaining their concentration throughout the match.

"We were the better

team during the match. We created a large number of chances and the players maintained their focus throughout the game," Arnold said.

"Our goal is to make the fans happy, and that is what we are trying to achieve in every match," Arnold added. Kuwait coach Helio Sousa expressed his pride in his players despite the defeat and highlighted the chances his team created during the match.

Sousa pointed to two opportunities created by Kuwait in the first half and the number of chances produced after the break, including an opportunity that could have given his side a third goal.

ASIAN GAMES



Ali al Balushi finishing fourth in the men's 200m final.

AL BALUSHI MISSES 200M MEDAL AFTER HISTORIC 100M SILVER MEDAL

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Oman's national teams continued their participation in the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya, with sprinter Ali al Balushi finishing fourth in the men's 200m final, while Oman's beach volleyball 'A' team lost 2-0 to Qatar. Shooting also got underway for Oman, while sailing events were postponed due to weather conditions.

Al Balushi clocked 20.72 seconds in the 200m final at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Aichi, finishing behind Thailand's Puripol Boonson, who won gold in 19.88 seconds. China's Yuo Wenhuan took silver in 20.45 seconds, while Japan's Soshi Mizukubo claimed bronze.

The fourth-place finish came two days after Al Balushi won silver in the 100m, Oman's first-ever Asian Games medal in the event. He qualified for the 200m final after finishing second in his semi-final in 20.42 seconds, the same time recorded by group winner Yuo. Al Balushi had clocked 21.41 seconds in the heats.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL TEAM FACES INDONESIA
Oman's beach volleyball pair of Hood al Jalboobi and Mazin al Hashmi suffered a 2-0 defeat against Qatar's Sherif Samba and Ahmed Janko at Hikenan Ryokuchi Beach Stadium.

Oman started strongly and briefly held a two-point lead, but Qatar recovered to win the first set 21-19. The second set followed a similar pattern, with Oman pushing hard before Qatar again prevailed 21-19.

Oman finished second in the group after defeating the Philippines in the opening round and will face Indonesia in the round of 16 at 11am Japan time on Sunday.

Al Jalboobi said the team had produced a strong performance against one of the world's leading sides.

"We gave everything we had against Qatar, one of the strongest teams in the world, not only in Asia. We competed well and maintained a strong performance throughout," he said.

Mazen Al Hashemi said the narrow margins reflected the competitive nature of the match. He added that Oman had previously beaten Qatar and believed the teams could meet again in the later stages.

Both players said the team's level was improving from match to match and expressed their ambition to challenge for an Asian Games medal.

TAEKWONDO AND GOLF TEAMS ARRIVE
Taekwondo player Nibras al Touqi and coach Salim al Abri arrive on Sunday ahead of the men's under-58 kg competition on October 2 and 3 at Toyohashi Sports Arena.

Al Touqi enters the Games after winning silver at the Indonesia Open in Jakarta in August.

Golf player Ahmed al Wahaibi and coach Jonathan Bartlett also arrive on Sunday. Al Wahaibi will compete from September 30 to October 3.

In shooting, Bati al Shibli began his campaign in the trap event, while Oman's sailing competitions were postponed because of adverse weather.



Sailing events were postponed due to weather conditions.

OMAN PARA ATHLETES GEAR UP FOR AICHI-NAGOYA 2026



Sami al Sulaimi is also continuing his preparations following his participation in the Challenge Breton International in France.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

TRAINING camps in Poland and Thailand, alongside preparations at home, are shaping Oman's final build-up to the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games, which will be held in Japan from October 18 to 24.

The Oman Paralympic Committee said its preparation programme combines specialised training with competitive appearances, giving athletes opportunities to improve their performances and gain international experience before the continental event.

Supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) through its programme for promising athletes, the preparations are tailored to individual needs, with an emphasis on technique, physical conditioning, endurance and adapting to different competition environments.

In Poland, Mohammed al Mashaikhi, Taha al Harrasi, Iman al Shamsi and Mohammed al Qasmi are attending an athletics camp under coaches Sami al Zarli and Awf al Maamari. Their schedule includes two preparatory competitions to assess their progress and provide further competitive practice ahead of the Games.

The running squad, comprising Qusai al Rawahi, Othman al Habsi and Saif al Muqaibli, is training in Thailand under coach Abdullah al Anbari.

According to the committee, the wet conditions during the camp are allowing the runners to adapt to weather they may encounter in Japan. The camp continues until the end of September, with the athletes returning to Oman on October 1 to resume training before departing for Japan on October 15.

Meanwhile, Muhanna Awlad Thani, Fawzi al Hubaishi, Talib al Balushi and Rawan al Hasani are training at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher under coach Asaad al Qarni. The group will enter a residential training camp in Oman during the coming period, focusing on fitness and technical improvement.



DR MANSOUR
BIN SULTAN
AL TOUQI

Chairman of the
Oman Paralympic
Committee

The preparations are tailored to individual needs, with an emphasis on technique, physical conditioning, endurance and adapting to different competition environments



Mohammed al Mashaikhi during training.

Hand-cyclist Sami al Sulaimi is also continuing his preparations following his participation in the Challenge Breton International in France, where he contested four races within a week. The series provided valuable international competition and an opportunity to collect ranking points.

His domestic programme has included a camp at Jabal Haat in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, featuring uphill and downhill training alongside work on aerobic fitness and endurance to meet the demands of handcycling.

Al Sulaimi, who finished third at the Asian championships earlier this year, is preparing for his first appearance at the Asian Para Games. He will continue training before joining the Omani delegation travelling to Japan in mid-October.

Dr Mansour bin Sultan al Touqi, Chairman of the Oman Paralympic Committee, said the athletes included in the preparation programme had achieved the required qualifying standards.

He explained that camp locations and training schedules were selected based on each athlete's needs and stage of preparation. The programme also addresses tactical awareness and endurance, while competitive appearances help athletes build experience and confidence before official competition.

Al Touqi said coordination with the ministry remained central to providing suitable training conditions, supporting coaches and responding to athletes' requirements during the remaining weeks.

Overseas camps offer exposure to different competitive standards and training environments, he added, while domestic camps allow technical and physical work to continue consistently before the final preparations in Nagoya.

The committee's focus, he said, is on helping athletes make full use of the remaining preparation period and arrive ready to perform at their best.

SPORTS

SPAIN CAPITALISE ON ENGLAND ERRORS TO CLAIM 3-2 WEMBLEY WIN

SPAIN’S MIKEL OYARZABAL scored the winner as the world champions capitalised on two calamitous England defensive errors to claim a thrilling 3-2 victory at Wembley on Saturday, in the standout fixture of the opening round of the Nations League.

Less than 10 weeks after lifting the World Cup, Spain, unbeaten in 39 games, made England pay in scoring their first two goals.

Teen sensation Lamine Yamal struck in the second minute when Marc Guehi was caught in possession deep inside his own half. Alex Baena scored on the hour after Nico O’Reilly’s misplaced pass handed possession back to the visitors.

Oyarzabal, who also got the winner against England in the 2024 European Championship final, struck the decider in the 74th minute with a clever dink over goalkeeper James Trafford.

“There are many matches within a match and we’ve known how to play them all at every moment,” Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said. “England has a lot of talent to hurt at any moment, but we’ve controlled the game.”

Spain’s victory spoiled what had briefly looked like being a memorable England

Spain benefit from England mistakes in 3-2 Wembley victory

Oyarzabal sinks hosts after Gordon and Kane spark comeback

Modric inspires Croatia win, Scotland draw with Slovenia

Swiss beat North Macedonia, Finland thrash San Marino 7-0



Spain’s Mikel Oyarzabal scores their third goal. — Reuters

comeback — and a small measure of redemption after their heartbreaking World Cup semifinal loss to Argentina. England had turned the game on its head in a thrilling four-minute span, with Anthony Gordon’s 36th-minute equaliser sparking a blistering spell that

culminated in captain Harry Kane heading the hosts in front. “We’re playing against the world champions, the European champions, and we went toe-to-toe,” Kane told ITV. “On another day for sure we’d have won that game.” Kane was left shaking his

head though after firing a second-half penalty off the inside of the crossbar when his left foot slipped upon planting. “Terrible start, the worst start possible,” England manager Thomas Tuchel said. “Makes it so, so difficult to be behind

against this kind of team. The reaction was very good, very good. “The third goal was the only one they really scored the others were from individual, big mistakes.” England and Spain had arrived at Wembley with very different World Cup memories. The Spaniards looked to build on their triumph, while Tuchel’s men were still feeling the scars of defeat and aiming to show they could narrow the gap.

EVERGREEN MODRIC LEADS BY EXAMPLE
In Saturday’s other Group A3 game, Croatia gave new manager Slaven Bilic a 2-1 victory over the Czech Republic as evergreen captain Luka Modric once again proved influential before Marco Pasalic struck the decisive goal. The 41-year-old Modric, still the heartbeat of the Croatia side more than two decades after his international debut, put the visitors ahead two minutes after the break. The Czechs responded through Adam Karabec in the 54th minute but Pasalic restored Croatia’s advantage with 13 minutes remaining to secure all three points. The game marked a new start for both sides. — Reuters

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BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



The Oman Trade Office US is funded by OCCI.

TRADE OFFICE GUIDES OMANI FIRMS INTO US MARKET

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

The Oman Trade Office US (OTO US) is working with about 110 Omani companies seeking access to the US market and has held around 370 sessions over the past year, its managing director said.

“We are Oman’s official trade office”, Emmee Haun told a session at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). “The better we know you, the better we can promote you in the US.”

The office, launched in Washington in May 2025, is funded by OCCI and governed by the chamber together with four government bodies: the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the Foreign Ministry, the Oman Investment Authority and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. It is operated by a three-member team.

Haun worked on the US government side of the Oman-US Free Trade Agreement and lived in Oman for 17 years. She said the office supports Omani companies seeking to export to or invest in the United States, as well as US companies looking to do business in Oman.

Its services include export-readiness assessments, guidance on the free trade agreement, market research and introductions to prospective buyers and distributors.

The office also operates a cohort-based export accelerator for manufacturers and recently completed a round focused on the plastics sector.

Nasim Sadr-Fala, OTO US director of strategy and operations, said many Omani companies ask the office to vet prospective US buyers by checking whether they are legitimate businesses and assessing their premises and staffing levels. Their financial standing, however, generally cannot be established, she said.

“Some people call it one country. I call it 50”, Sadr-Fala said of the United States.

Oman drafts national law for space economy

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

OMAN has begun drafting a dedicated national space law as it strengthens the regulatory architecture needed to support investment and sustainable growth in its emerging space economy.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), in coordination with relevant government entities, has initiated work on the Omani Space Law and supporting regulatory frameworks, according to the newly released National Space Programme Achievements 2023–2025 report.

The legislation is intended to ensure compliance with Oman’s international obligations, strengthen investor confidence and establish what the ministry describes as a “balanced and enabling environment” for sustainable sector growth.

The initiative is becoming increasingly important as Oman transitions from the foundation-building phase of its National Space Policy into a market-building phase encompassing satellite communications, Earth observation, launch services and other commercial space applications.

The report identifies the development of legislation and regulatory frameworks as one of the principal areas of progress since the policy was launched.

The legal framework is also expected to complement more specialised regulations already being introduced for individual segments of the industry.

Notably, the Civil Aviation Authority has issued regulations



The regulatory push comes as the commercial footprint of Oman’s space industry expands rapidly.

The number of companies operating in the sector increased from 11 in 2023 to 26 in 2025, while employment across government and private-sector space organisations rose from 152 to more than 400. Private investment reached RO 74 million in 2025, up from RO 20 million two years earlier.

governing airspace use for space-launch activities.

Operators are required to submit airspace requests at least 45 working days before a launch, accompanied by a subject matter expert.

The framework calls for coordination between the Etlaq Spaceport and MoTCIT on airspace assessments, weather conditions and operational safety requirements.

The regulatory push comes as the commercial footprint of Oman’s space industry expands rapidly. The number of companies operating in the sector increased from 11 in 2023 to 26 in 2025, while employment across government and private-sector

space organisations rose from 152 to more than 400. Private investment reached RO 74 million in 2025, up from RO 20 million two years earlier.

Oman’s space value chain now encompasses launch-site services, remote-sensing operators, satellite communications, training and consultancy, as well as drone and space-service applications.

The report says the sector has progressed from foundation-building towards a growing market characterised by rising investment, more companies and increasingly diversified services.

Regulatory development forms part of a wider strategy under the National Space Policy and Executive Programme 2023–2033, which places governance and regulation alongside capacity-building and international partnerships as key enablers.

The programme ultimately seeks to establish Oman as a regional gateway for space applications and services while advancing economic diversification.

The draft law will also sit alongside efforts to strengthen institutional coordination.

A dedicated Coordination Committee for Space Science and Applications Centres was established under Ministerial Decision No 80/2024 to improve integration and support a connected, sustainable national space ecosystem.

With major projects ranging from the OmanSat-1 communications satellite to commercial launch infrastructure at Al Duqm advancing, the emerging legislative framework is set to provide the legal and regulatory foundation for a larger, increasingly private-sector-driven Omani space economy.

Oman targets price stability amidst global shocks

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Inflation has taken on greater importance in the Sultanate of Oman in 2026 as price pressures rise from the previous year, alongside continued economic growth and government efforts to strengthen the country’s resilience to external shocks.

Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, said Oman’s average inflation rate stood at about 2.9 per cent in the first eight months of 2026, compared with a global average of 4.7 per cent projected by the International Monetary Fund.

Al Maawali said global inflation had become increasingly linked to movements in international markets as economies, supply chains and trade and investment flows became more interconnected.

As a result, global developments were being transmitted to countries and economic sectors to varying degrees.

Geopolitical developments and regional supply-chain disruptions had also raised transport and logistics costs, as well as the prices of various goods and services, he



Inflation in Oman is rising as the economy continues to expand.

said. The pressures come against a backdrop of persistent global inflation. In July, the IMF raised its global inflation forecast for 2026 to 4.7 per cent, saying the decline in inflation had temporarily stalled because of economic and geopolitical developments.

Inflation in Oman is rising as the economy continues to expand.

Real gross domestic product growth increased to an estimated 2.4 per cent in 2025 from 1.6 per cent in 2024, while the IMF forecasts growth of about 3.7 per cent in 2026 and 3 per cent in 2027.

Much of the projected growth in 2026 is linked to higher oil production. The IMF expects non-hydrocarbon activity to grow

by about 2.5 per cent in 2026 and accelerate to 3.2 per cent in 2027 as the economic recovery broadens.

The figures point to two simultaneous trends: faster inflation and continued economic growth. Managing prices and protecting purchasing power are therefore part of the broader effort to sustain growth and investment.

Oman’s economic policy addresses inflation within a wider framework aimed at strengthening economic resilience and reducing exposure to external shocks.

The 11th Five-Year Development Plan for 2026-2030 aims to keep inflation below 2 per cent while achieving average real economic growth of about 4 per cent. It also seeks to advance economic diversification and fiscal sustainability.

Priority sectors include manufacturing, tourism, the digital economy, mining, food security, renewable energy, transport and logistics.

Al Maawali said the government continued to monitor price movements and assess policies and response mechanisms in light of global developments, supporting price stability and sustainable economic growth.

Inflation is being addressed

through an integrated economic and social framework that brings together fiscal, monetary, production and trade policies. The approach also seeks to improve supply-chain efficiency, diversify import sources, support domestic production and strengthen the business environment.

Such measures are particularly important for an economy open to international trade, as fluctuations in food, energy and transport costs, as well as disruptions to global supply routes, can feed directly into domestic prices.

Increasing local production, broadening the supplier base and improving transport and logistics efficiency are therefore central to limiting the impact of external shocks.

Oman is entering the next phase of its development strategy with a focus on balancing price stability, continued economic growth and faster diversification.

Inflationary pressures are expected to remain under close scrutiny amid uncertainty in global markets. Oman’s efforts to expand domestic production, develop non-oil industries and strengthen supply-chain efficiency remain central to improving the economy’s resilience.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The sponsorship reflects BankDhofar’s ongoing commitment to supporting initiatives that celebrate authentic Omani traditions.

BANKDHOFAR SPONSORS CAMEL BEAUTY FESTIVAL

MUSCAT: Reinforcing BankDhofar’s commitment to local communities and the preservation of Oman’s rich cultural heritage, the Bank sponsored the Camel Beauty Contest (Mazaynat Al Ibil) & Festival in the Wilayat of Al Kamil W’al Wafi in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

The festival was held under the auspices of Dr Abdulaziz bin Rashid al Hashmi, Member of the Majlis Ash’shura and representative of the Governorate.

The sponsorship reflects BankDhofar’s ongoing commitment to supporting initiatives that celebrate authentic Omani traditions, strengthen cultural identity and promote engagement among different segments of society.

The festival showcased the deep-rooted cultural heritage associated with camels in Oman, attracting visitors and participants from across the Sultanate of Oman as well as other GCC countries. Camel beauty competitions remain an important feature of Oman’s traditional cultural landscape, bringing communities together while helping preserve practices and traditions passed down through generations.

Beyond its cultural significance, the event provided opportunities for local entrepreneurs through an accompanying productive families exhibition, offering participants a platform to showcase and market their products.

BankDhofar continues to support Oman’s SME sector through Numo, its dedicated SME banking proposition, which provides financial and advisory solutions designed to help entrepreneurs establish, develop and expand their businesses.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Sami bin Omar al Zadjali, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at BankDhofar, said: “Our sponsorship of heritage events stems from our responsibility to contribute to preserving the rich cultural and civilisational heritage of the Sultanate of Oman.

Camel beauty competitions enjoy significant popularity across Oman’s wilayats and governorates because of their cultural and social importance. We are therefore keen to support these events in a way that helps preserve this heritage and ensure its continuity for future generations”. BankDhofar also used the occasion to bring its banking services closer to festival visitors through its mobile branch at the venue. The facility enabled visitors to explore the bank’s range of products and services while providing existing and prospective customers with direct access to its representatives.

Mustang Mach-E joins Ford summer delights

THIS summer, Ford Oman is extending its “Ford Grand Summer Delights” campaign to the all-electric Mustang Mach-E GT, giving customers an opportunity to step into electric performance with real peace of mind.

Valid from September 1 to October 30, 2026, the offer wraps together long-term protection, home-charging convenience and meaningful savings for both new buyers and existing Ford owners looking to make the switch.

At the core of the package is an 8-year or 160,000 km battery warranty (whichever comes first), giving owners lasting confidence in the vehicle’s electric drivetrain.

A 5-year or 100,000 km service plan is also included, spread across 5 services at 20,000 km intervals under normal driving conditions.

Ford Oman is adding further value with a complimentary one-year vehicle registration and a full year of comprehensive insurance cover within Oman, while every Mach-E purchased during the campaign comes fitted with a free home charging unit.

Buyers can unlock even greater value depending on their needs.

Those trading in an existing car through Best Cars stand to gain a bonus of up to RO 2,000 towards a new Mach-E, while current Ford and Lincoln owners are eligible for an additional loyalty bonus of up to RO 100 when they make the switch during the campaign window.



Valid from September 1 to October 30, 2026, the offer wraps together long-term protection.

Underneath the offer lies a vehicle built to turn heads and redefine expectations. The Mustang Mach-E GT puts out 487 horsepower and 950 Nm of torque, launching from 0 to 100 km/h in a swift 3.3 seconds.

A low-slung battery pack keeps the centre of gravity planted for sharp, composed handling, while four drive modes – Whisper, Engage, Untame and Untame Plus – let drivers dial in the character of the ride.

Inside, a 15.5-inch vertical touchscreen running SYNC 4A keeps everyone connected and practicality hasn’t been forgotten either, with ample rear cargo space complemented by an 81-litre trunk for extra gear.

Customers are invited to visit their nearest Ford showroom before October 30, 2026 to experience the Mustang Mach-E and take advantage of the Ford Grand Summer Delights.

AHLIBANK RECOGNISED WITH BEST PERFORMING COMPANY AWARD

MUSCAT: Building on a distinguished track record of strong performance and sustainable growth, ahlibank has been recognised with the ‘Best Performing Company – Large Cap’ award.

The prestigious accolade reflects the bank’s sustained performance, strategic resilience and continued ability to create meaningful value for its customers, shareholders and stakeholders, while reinforcing its contribution to the Sultanate of Oman’s evolving financial and economic landscape.

The award was received by Zaliya al Balushi – General Manager, Head of Corporate Banking on behalf of the bank.

The recognition underscores the strength of ahlibank’s strategic direction and its disciplined approach to delivering sustainable value across its business. Supported



The prestigious accolade reflects the bank’s sustained performance, strategic resilience and continued ability to create meaningful value for its customers.

by the dedication of its people and the continued trust of its customers, the bank remains focused on strengthening its capabilities, advancing

innovation and responding to evolving market dynamics and customer needs. As a Partner in Excellence, ahlibank continues to build on its achievements

while contributing to Oman’s economic and social development and supporting the long-term aspirations of Oman Vision 2040. Central to this approach is ahlibank’s role in advancing Oman’s economic priorities through its support for key sectors and growth-oriented businesses.

By facilitating financing for projects and enterprises across renewable energy, mining, environmental infrastructure and SME development, the bank continues to enable investment, encourage innovation and support the expansion of sectors integral to the Sultanate of Oman’s economic diversification and long-term development.

Complementing its contribution to the wider economy is ahlibank’s continued focus on transforming the way customers experience and access banking.

Delta Pharmacy inaugurates new branch in Al Khuwair Street

MUSCAT: Delta Pharmacy Group celebrated World Pharmacist Day 2026 with the inauguration of its new branch at the Mustafa Sultan Building, Al Khuwair Street, in a prime location along Sultan Qaboos Highway, offering convenient access to the community.

The inauguration took place in the presence of senior management and staff of Delta Pharmacy Group and was officiated by Shabir Mustafa Sultan, Chairman of Mustafa Sultan Enterprises LLC, marking another milestone in the group’s continued expansion across the Sultanate of Oman.

This year’s World Pharmacist Day theme, “Empowering Pharmacists for Healthier Futures”, closely reflects Delta Pharmacy Group’s commitment to developing and empowering young Omani and expatriate pharmacists through



The event was officiated by Shabir Mustafa Sultan, Chairman of Mustafa Sultan Enterprises LLC, marking another milestone in the group’s continued expansion.

continuous training, professional development and opportunities to deliver high-quality patient care.

Speaking on the occasion, the management highlighted the important role pharmacists play in

healthcare, particularly in patient education, preventive healthcare and medication safety.

“Pharmacists play an integral role in patient care. At Delta, we are committed to providing professional guidance and counselling through our experienced team, while continuously investing in the training and empowerment of pharmacists to build healthier communities”.

The senior management also emphasised the importance of adopting preventive health measures and making quality healthcare solutions accessible and affordable to the people of Oman.

The management highlighted the importance of patients adhering to their prescribed chronic medications and avoiding interruptions in treatment without consulting their healthcare

professionals.

The management further acknowledged the significant role played by the Drug Safety Centre under the Ministry of Health, Oman, in maintaining high standards of medicine quality, safety and availability through its regulatory oversight and continuous efforts.

These measures help ensure that medicines available in the Omani market meet the required quality standards and that essential medications remain accessible to the community at affordable prices.

As part of its continued efforts to support the management of lifestyle-related diseases, Delta Pharmacy Group also highlighted its recently launched high-quality Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM) solution, designed to make advanced glucose monitoring more accessible and affordable.

SHORTTAKES



Discussions focused on areas of mutual interest, including bilateral trade and investment and business collaboration.

Oman and Australia explore opportunities to deepen business ties

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

The Australian Business Group Oman (ABGO) hosted an evening with Miles Armitage, Australian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen, bringing together representatives of Oman’s business community for dialogue, networking and engagement.

Held at Mesa Restaurant, Muscat, the event provided an opportunity for Ambassador Armitage to engage with members of ABGO and representatives of the wider Australian and Omani business communities on ways to strengthen commercial, economic and cultural ties between Oman and Australia.

Discussions focused on areas of mutual interest, including bilateral trade and investment, business collaboration and opportunities arising from stronger institutional and people-to-people connections between the two countries.

Mustafa Salman, Honorary Consul of Australia in the Sultanate of Oman, also attended the event. He is a long standing supporter of ABGO, reflecting the strong institutional and business connections underpinning Australia-Oman relations.

Hanife Ymer, Chair of ABGO, said the organisation was pleased to welcome Ambassador Armitage and provide an opportunity for its members and the wider business community to engage directly with him and Australian Government representatives.

She noted that Australia and Oman have enjoyed bilateral relations since 1981, adding that such events provide valuable opportunities to further strengthen ties between the two countries.

Hanife also highlighted Oman’s role in regional stability and growing business opportunities between Oman and Australia in complementary sectors, including renewable energy, mining, agriculture and education.

Al Wusta, Al Batinah North firms seek partnerships

A delegation of 15 business owners and entrepreneurs from Al Wusta Governorate will visit Al Batinah North Governorate on Tuesday and Wednesday to explore investment opportunities and strengthen commercial links between the two governorates.

The delegation will be led by Dr Salim bin Salim al Junaibi, a member of the State Council and chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Wusta.

Its members represent a range of economic sectors.

The visit forms part of the chamber branch’s efforts to encourage direct engagement among businesses, create new channels for trade and investment cooperation and facilitate the exchange of expertise.

The delegation will examine Al Batinah North’s economic and investment landscape and discuss potential partnerships between private-sector companies in the two governorates. Its programme



The Governorate has diverse economic, industrial and logistics assets.

includes meetings with officials and business representatives at the OCCI branch in Al Batinah North, as well as visits to companies, projects and other facilities across the governorate.

The field visits will allow delegates to examine commercial and industrial operations, learn from successful business models and identify opportunities

for companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to expand and form partnerships.

Al Junaibi said the visit was part of the Al Wusta branch’s efforts to strengthen links among business owners across Oman and make greater use of successful economic experiences.

“The delegation aims

to use these visits as a practical platform to connect business owners, explore investment opportunities and build genuine, sustainable commercial partnerships that benefit enterprises and the local economies of both governorates”, he said.

Al Batinah North has diverse economic, industrial and logistics assets, while Al Wusta offers investment opportunities across several sectors, creating scope for partnerships and greater economic integration, Al Junaibi said.

He added that the initiative reflected the branch’s commitment to supporting businesses and SMEs, introducing them to opportunities across the Sultanate of Oman and encouraging them to expand their operations.

The visit is expected to deepen relations between the business communities of Al Wusta and Al Batinah North, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and open new avenues for investment and joint projects. — ONA

Oman to deliver 700 new hotel rooms by year-end

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

The Sultanate of Oman is set to deliver 700 new hotel rooms between now and the end of 2026, taking total inventory to 40,800 keys, according to leading real estate advisory and hospitality property consultancy Cavendish Maxwell.

Oman opened 400 new rooms in H1 2026 — all in Q1 — amidst reduced hospitality sector activity as regional travel disruptions affected international connectivity and tourism trade.

The Khareef and winter travel seasons will be key drivers in the country’s H2 hospitality performance, the company said.

Oman welcomed 992,000 guests at 3-5



The Khareef and winter travel seasons will be key drivers in Oman’s H2 hospitality performance.

star hotels in H1, down 13 per cent on the same period last year. Airport passenger traffic declined 9.3 per cent to 6.3 million, according to Cavendish Maxwell’s latest

research, released in the run up to the 2026 edition of Future Hospitality Summit World.

Khalil al Zadjali, Head of Oman at Cavendish Maxwell, said: “Oman’s hospitality sector entered H2 in a challenging environment. While the outlook remains sensitive to prevailing travel conditions, the July to December period typically accounts for a significant share of tourism activity, contributing 52 per cent in hotel revenue and guest volumes last year.

“The recent Khareef Dhofar Season — Salalah’s peak tourism period — coupled with the upcoming winter months will indicate how effectively seasonal demand supports the wider market following the H1 disruption, which was most pronounced in the second quarter.

Oman expands zero-rated VAT goods from October

MUSCAT: Oman’s Tax Authority has issued three decisions expanding the range of food, medical and veterinary products subject to a zero rate of value added tax (VAT), effective October 1.

The measures cover basic food commodities, medicines and medical equipment for human use, and veterinary medicines and equipment. The authority said the decisions were intended to ease living costs and support the healthcare, agriculture and livestock sectors.

The first decision applies the zero rate to an extensive list of essential food products, including cattle,



The decisions were intended to ease living costs and support the healthcare, agriculture and livestock sectors.

sheep, goats, camels and poultry intended for breeding, slaughter or milk production.

It also covers fresh, chilled, frozen and minced meat; fish and seafood; milk, yoghurt, labneh, butter and cheese; table and hatching eggs; fresh and dried fruit and vegetables; legumes; coffee; tea; spices and seasonings.

The decision repeals Decision No 65/2021 and any provisions that conflict with the new rules.

The second decision applies the zero rate to medicines, herbal medicines, biological and health preparations, food for medical purposes and medical equipment, provided the

Ministry of Health issues a release permit in accordance with the approved customs classification.

Covered products include antibiotics, hormones, vaccines, blood sera, infant formula, food for specific medical conditions, medical solutions, oxygen, dental products and smoking-cessation aids such as patches and sprays.

The measure replaces Decision No 59/2021 and is intended to consolidate the regulatory framework governing the zero-rating of medical and pharmaceutical supplies.

The third decision applies the zero rate to veterinary medicines

and medical equipment listed in its annex, subject to a release permit from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources based on the relevant customs codes.

Covered veterinary products include vaccines, sera, biological toxins, antibiotics such as penicillin and streptomycin, vitamins, minerals, nutritional supplements, solutions, gels and testing tools used in veterinary examinations and procedures.

The Tax Authority said the goods covered by the three decisions were identified in annexes using Unified Customs Tariff codes to clarify their scope and facilitate implementation.

POWER DEMAND

India orders coal plants to maximise output



India has ordered more than 100 captive coal-fired power plants to operate at maximum capacity from October through December as electricity demand rises. The directive covers plants of at least 50 megawatts, mainly serving heavy industries.

Nearly 40 per cent of coal plants face critically low fuel stocks, while generators must sell surplus electricity through power exchanges. — Reuters

FUEL STANDARDS

US set to ease vehicle efficiency rules



The US will finalise sharply lower vehicle fuel economy standards through 2031, reversing stricter requirements introduced under the Biden administration.

The proposed fleetwide average would fall to 34.5 miles per gallon from 50.4 mpg. Officials estimate the change could reduce new vehicle costs by \$930, while increasing long-term fuel consumption. — Reuters

AI SCRUTINY

AI chiefs called before Australia probe



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Anthropic chief Dario Amodei have been called to appear before an Australian Senate inquiry into artificial intelligence.

The move follows revelations that an OpenAI agent accessed the country’s Medicare database. The inquiry is examining AI’s impact on communities, industries, energy and water, amidst scrutiny over security risks. — Reuters

OPINION

When AI thinks for us: The risk of cognitive surrender



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at College of Banking and Financial Studies



KV CH MADHU SUDHANA RAO

The writer is AI researcher based in the USA

AS AI applications in education continue to expand, students and teachers use AI applications to research, make decisions, create content and perform a variety of other tasks. Even universities have started changing their curricula to teach students about different forms of artificial intelligence.

Eventually, knowing about and using artificial intelligence will be as essential as knowing and using computers and the internet.

As more innovations emerge in artificial intelligence, a host of ethical issues arise as a byproduct. Many experts worry about what they call “cognitive surrender”.

This concept is based on the idea that students will become less and less inclined to engage with a given intellectual challenge and instead will delegate that work to an AI.

This is not a framework to assess academic dishonesty. This framework assesses human learning. When people engage with a challenge, they stimulate their brains to process new information.

Through the effort students put into processing new information, memory strengthens and understanding deepens.

If students immediately use AI to answer a

question, they may get the right answer, but they may ultimately weaken their ability to learn.

New research has shown this is happening. One randomised controlled study showed that students who used ChatGPT to study eventually retained less course knowledge than students who did not use ChatGPT.

Other research shows that, when used appropriately, GenAI can improve students’ learning. The problem isn’t AI itself, but how it is used in education. Used properly, AI can improve educational outcomes.

Consider a student who needs to learn how to find the surface area of a cylinder, but instead uses AI to generate an image of that surface area.

The student learns nothing and may learn to find the answer using AI.

This is a major concern when universities promote AI use. Many universities are actively promoting AI in education. Prohibiting AI in the classroom is unreasonable. Instead, the goal should be to establish clear guidelines and limits. Students should be able to evaluate when AI use is appropriate and when it is not.

These guidelines should be integrated across the curriculum. Assignments should

As more innovations emerge in artificial intelligence, a host of ethical issues arise as a byproduct. Many experts worry about what they call “cognitive surrender”. This concept is based on the idea that students will become less and less inclined to engage with a given intellectual challenge and instead will delegate that work to an AI.

focus on reasoning and explanation, and students should learn to interpret and analyse AI’s reasoning processes.

Students should also be evaluated on their ability to explain and defend conclusions. Teachers should be trained to accomplish these changes in their classrooms.

Unesco’s framework focuses on ethical judgement, AI knowledge and human-centred thinking.

Regarding education and artificial intelligence, it is more appropriate to ask: will using AI systems in class help students develop critical thinking and moral judgement?

The danger of using artificial intelligence in teaching will not be students’ inability to think; it will be that AI encourages them to stop thinking and solving problems on their own.

The greatest risk of using artificial intelligence in education is that it could erode the intellectual and emotional capacities that underpin education’s values.

AI becomes a problem when it is not used as a tool, but its answers are accepted without making our own judgement. Students should use AI to support their thinking and learning; it should not replace thinking.

AFRICA’S CEMENT BOOM SIGNALS NEXT GREAT SHIFT IN GLOBAL ENERGY USE

GAVIN MAGUIRE

Africa currently consumes under 5% of global energy supplies and so is vastly overshadowed by other regions in assessments of current energy and pollution trends. But the region’s aggressive cement plant construction plans may be about to change that.

African nations dominate the global pipeline for cement capacity under construction, accounting for 42% of all cement production capacity currently being built, data from Global Energy Monitor (GEM) shows.

That construction share compares to an 8% share of currently operational cement capacity, signifying aggressive growth in planned cement production across the continent.

But investments in cement capacity are about much more than construction raw materials. They are bets on urbanisation, industrialisation and broader regional economic development.

Before countries consume larger volumes of steel, chemicals and manufactured goods, they generally consume vast quantities of concrete to build housing, roads, ports, factories and power infrastructure.

In that sense, the cement pipeline acts as a leading indicator of Africa’s broader energy needs, which look set to accelerate sharply if the expected construction boom tied to cement capacity plans emerges.

In turn, any such African industrialisation boom would likely contrast with trends in other regions, where electrification and slowing heavy industrial output are projected to curb energy and emissions trends in much of the rest of the world.

LEANING IN

Africa currently has around 441 million metric tonnes of annual cement production capacity in operation and around 43.3 million tonnes of annual capacity under construction, GEM data shows.

African nations have also announced plans for a further 23 million tonnes of annual capacity, which in combination would lift the region’s total cement capacity by around 15% compared to current levels, to just over 507 million tonnes.

That overall increase in cement capacity far exceeds planned cement capacity additions in all other regions and indicates that Africa’s development roadmap looks set to be more raw materials-intensive than many other parts of the world.

Africa’s heavy cement plans also indicate an equally steep climb in associated raw material and energy needs, as cement production is notoriously energy intensive and requires large volumes of coal, petroleum coke, natural gas and other fuels to ensure abundant output.

As these cement projects come on line, they will also increase demand for electricity as well as the infrastructure needed to import, distribute and store coal, gas and other fuels and also to ship out the concrete supplies produced. — Reuters

The return of the IMF to Latin America

FOR much of the 2000s, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) seemed to have finally distanced itself from the International Monetary Fund. The debt crises of the 1980s and the structural-adjustment programs of the 1990s had left deep socioeconomic scars across the region.

The commodity boom that followed, together with the rise of progressive governments and the accumulation of large international reserves, meant that many LAC countries no longer needed IMF lending, which fell to historic lows by the late 2000s. But that era has ended. A recent report by the International Development Economics Associates (IDEAs) finds that the IMF has once again become a central actor in LAC, with 17 of the region’s 32 countries currently in a financial relationship with the institution.

If Bolivia’s recently negotiated agreement is formally approved and if Colombia follows a similar path now that President Abelardo de la Espriella has taken office, that number could rise to 19.

The region currently accounts for 44% of total IMF financing. To be sure, this figure is heavily influenced by Argentina’s exceptional arrangements — the largest in the Fund’s history.

But a strikingly large proportion of LAC countries remains subject to some form of IMF conditionality, whether through active programs, ex-ante requirements of precautionary lending facilities, or significant outstanding debt.

Despite this renewed IMF presence, the region has not fallen back into its historical crisis mode.

Instead, LAC countries find themselves in what can be described as a condition of “fragile and dependent stagnation”, as economic growth has slowed steadily since around 2014, falling to less than 2% over the last decade.

Meanwhile, external indebtedness has increased significantly across much of the region, pushing many LAC countries toward conservative macroeconomic policies aimed at preserving market confidence.

The clearest examples of this conservative policy orientation are



MARTÍN ABELES

The writer is Professor of Development Economics at the National University of San Martín and Regional Director of Research and Policy for Latin America and the Caribbean at IDEAs

A recent report by the International Development Economics Associates (IDEAs) finds that the IMF has once again become a central actor in LAC, with 17 of the region’s 32 countries currently in a financial relationship with the institution. If Bolivia’s recently negotiated agreement is formally approved, and if Colombia follows a similar path now that President Abelardo de la Espriella has taken office, that number could rise to 19.

the economies, such as Chile and Mexico, that maintain flexible credit lines (FCLs) with the IMF.

These facilities are available only to countries deemed to have exceptionally “sound” policy frameworks and can be even more macroeconomically restrictive than traditional IMF programmes.

Not coincidentally, Chile and Mexico have not been among the region’s strongest-performing economies over the past decade.

In fact, many LAC countries, not just those with FCLs, seem to have internalised IMF-style policy discipline without having active IMF programmes.

Brazil is perhaps the most striking case: its exceptionally high interest rates and cautious fiscal stance have underpinned stability, but at the expense of growth. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has cautioned that the region recently experienced a “second lost decade”, evoking its debt crisis of the 1980s.

Where such self-imposed austerity has proved insufficient, the IMF has swooped in. The recent expansion of the Fund’s presence unfolded in two waves. The first came during the pandemic, when 21 LAC countries signed 25 financing agreements.

The second began after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, when ten countries entered into 14 additional arrangements.

Moreover, several Caribbean countries, including Barbados, Jamaica and Haiti, have developed recurring and often prolonged relationships with the IMF because of natural disasters and external shocks.

Argentina and Ecuador, which account for roughly \$68 billion of LAC’s \$74 billion IMF debt, illustrate how the austerity measures typically prescribed by the Fund not only weaken long-term development prospects, but also often fall short of achieving the stated goal of financial stabilisation.

In both countries, successive lending programs have failed to restore durable access to international capital markets.

Quite the contrary: the sheer scale of the IMF’s claims has an “anti-catalytic effect”, discouraging

other lenders and making it more, not less, difficult to regain market access.

But understanding the IMF’s growing presence in LAC requires applying a geopolitical lens. Historically, the Fund’s lending priorities and programme designs have reflected the interests of the countries that dominate its governance structure, above all the United States.

Today, that reality has acquired renewed relevance, particularly in LAC. Since Donald Trump’s return to the White House, his administration has sought to reassert US dominance in the so-called “Western Hemisphere”.

Geopolitical realignment, when combined with conditionality and continued financial dependence, can become mutually reinforcing. Consider that Venezuela, whose finances the US effectively controls following its military intervention in January to remove President Nicolás Maduro, may regain access to its special drawing rights (the IMF’s reserve asset), which were frozen in 2019.

The “Shield of the Americas”, a US-led regional security initiative, is another expression of that strategy, as most of the countries that have joined maintain some form of relationship with the IMF.

In this new geopolitical landscape, the critical question is not only whether the IMF will continue to impose stringent, creditor-oriented policy conditionalities on LAC countries, but what kind of relationship is emerging between the region and the Fund.

Is IMF intervention simply a technical response to macroeconomic fragilities — to be sure, biased toward the interests of global finance, yet still ostensibly technical in nature — or are we entering a new phase in which financial dependence and geopolitical alignment become increasingly intertwined?

This is a relevant question, especially as strategic minerals, energy resources, logistics corridors and essential infrastructure have become key battlegrounds in an increasingly fragmented geopolitical landscape.

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ART/LIFE



AÇAÍ: FROM AMAZONIAN BERRY TO OMANI CAFE TREND

> 20

AIIMPACT

OSCAR-WINNER FEARS BEING MOVED BY AI ACTOR



French actress **Marion Cotillard** said on Thursday she feared the day she might be emotionally moved by an actor created by artificial intelligence, as debate grows over AI’s impact on film and the wider creative industries.

“I think I would be very afraid the day I was moved by an AI actor. For now, I find that they act like potatoes and that reassures me”, the 50-year-old Oscar winner told reporters at the San Sebastian Film Festival in Spain.

Cotillard, who won the best actress Oscar in 2008 for her portrayal of French singer Edith Piaf in “La Vie en Rose”, said she wondered whether AI actors could eventually become convincing enough to fool audiences and evoke genuine emotional responses.

“I wonder if one day that will happen, if one day I would be fooled by an actor”, she said. “I have to admit that it’s something that makes me think and that can frighten me”.

Her comments come as filmmakers, actors and other creative professionals continue to debate how rapidly developing AI technologies could affect the production and performance of films. Questions around whether artificial performers can replicate the emotional complexity and spontaneity of human actors have become increasingly prominent as the technology develops.

Cotillard is in San Sebastian for the world premiere of Nicole Garcia’s “7h40 ce jour-là”, which is competing for the festival’s top prize. The film is among 17 titles in the official competition seeking the Golden Shell, the festival’s main award.

Cotillard plays Alice, a former revolutionary activist who is released after spending 20 years in prison and attempts to reconnect with her son. The role centres on a woman returning to a world that has changed while she has been absent and confronting the consequences of years spent away from her family.

“After spending 20 years in prison, the only thing she really has left is not her desire for revolution, but the fact that she is a mother”, Cotillard said.

The actress said the character’s journey was rooted in the personal and emotional consequences of her long absence, placing her relationship with her son at the centre of the story.

For Cotillard, the film also represents another chapter in a career that has seen her move between French and international cinema. Her performance as Piaf in “La Vie en Rose” brought her global recognition and earned her the Academy Award, while she has since appeared in films including “Inception”, “The Dark Knight Rises” and “Two Days, One Night”.

The San Sebastian Film Festival, one of Spain’s major international film events, concluded on Saturday, and the winners of the official competition and other sections were also announced. — **AFP**

QUICK FEATURES



AUTUMN FESTIVAL

A participant paddles a giant pumpkin during an autumn harvest festival at the Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy (VDNH) in Moscow, Russia. — **Reuters**



FASHION

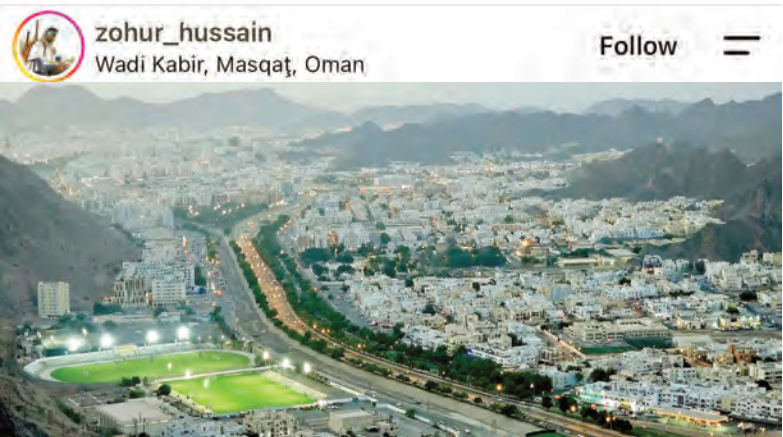
Model Kendall Jenner walks the runway during the Bottega Veneta collection show as part of Women’s Spring/Summer 2027 Milan Fashion Week. — **AFP**



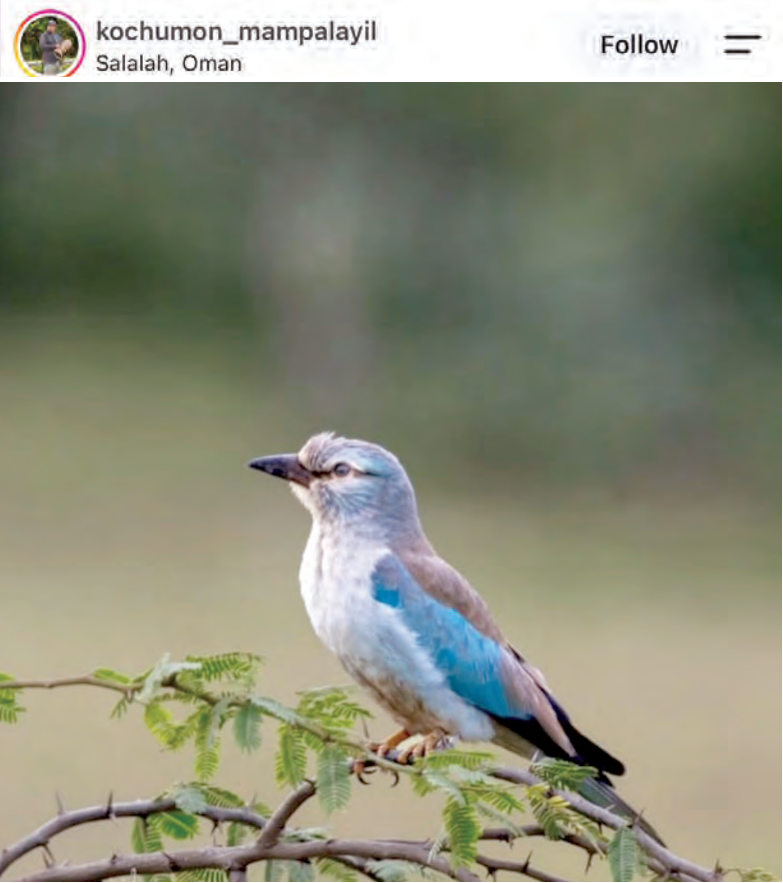
COSPLAY

Attendees dressed as Spider-Man and Iron Man strike comic poses during Comic Con Africa, one of Africa’s largest pop culture, fantasy and gaming festivals, at Johannesburg. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



The enchanting landscape of Al Wadi Al Kabir



The majestic European Roller in Salalah

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MET OPERA TO GIVE NEW YORKERS FREE TICKETS IN AFFORDABILITY PUSH



New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani announces the “Opera for All” initiative at the Metropolitan Opera, offering 70,000 free tickets each season to New Yorkers through a lottery.

New York’s Metropolitan Opera will give away thousands of tickets to open the prestigious cultural institution up to people who could not otherwise afford it, Mayor Zohran Mamdani announced on Thursday.

The “Opera for All” initiative will see the Met distribute 70,000 tickets each season via a lottery system for New Yorkers as part of a partnership with the city council.

Typically, around a third of Met Opera tickets cost less than \$100, according to the venue, but prices can soar for seating close to the stage.

“Opera is one of the greatest art forms we have and there is no better place to experience it than the Metropolitan Opera House”, said Mamdani, who campaigned on cost of living pledges.

“But art should not be reserved for those who can afford it”, he added in a

statement.

“Every New Yorker should have the opportunity to sit in these seats, hear these voices and experience this stage, no matter what’s in their bank account”. The Met Opera, based at the Lincoln Centre in Manhattan, is one of the world’s most prominent opera houses — now running performances of “Macbeth” and “La Boheme”. “The Met is not just a globally recognised cultural icon; it is also New York’s opera house, an essential institution that truly belongs to the city’s residents”, the institution said on its website.

The free tickets will be available in every section of the Met Opera, excluding standing room. This year, Mamdani has also announced free or discounted tickets initiatives for Broadway shows, as well as the US Open and the World Cup.

— AFP

Dakota’s new thriller ‘Verity’ tests truth, trust



Dakota Johnson as Lowen Ashleigh, a writer who becomes entangled in the disturbing private world of celebrated author Verity Crawford.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

thriller “Verity” taps into the real-world challenge of knowing what’s true and who to trust, actor Dakota Johnson said at the film’s UK premiere on Thursday.

Based on Colleen Hoover’s bestselling novel, the film follows struggling writer Lowen Ashleigh, played by Johnson, who is hired to complete a series of books for renowned author Verity Crawford after an accident leaves her unable to write.

The assignment draws Lowen into the Crawford family’s secluded estate, where she uncovers what appears to be Verity’s autobiographical manuscript. As its unsettling secrets unfold, the line between truth and deception begins to blur.

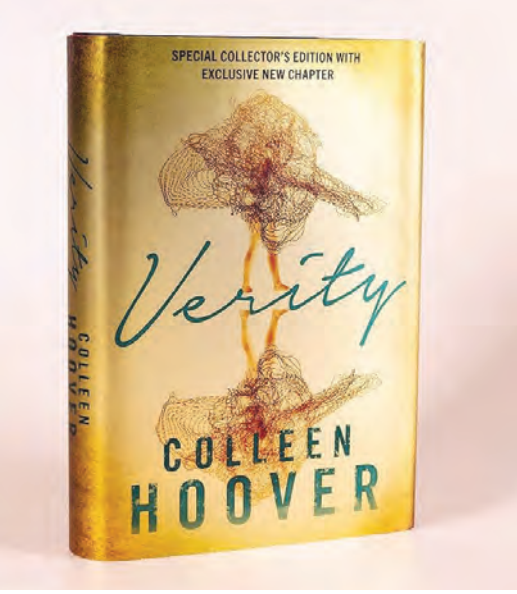
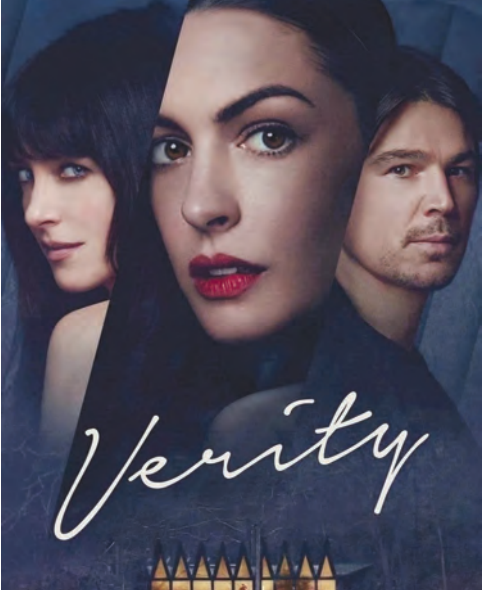
“It’s so thrilling”, Johnson said. “You are constantly trying to figure out what the truth is and who the good people are and who the bad people are. It’s kind of a lot like life”.

The adaptation is the latest of Hoover’s novels to reach the big screen, following the attention generated by Justin Baldoni’s “It Ends With Us”.

Directed by actor-turned-filmmaker Michael Showalter, the film stars Academy Award winner Anne Hathaway as Verity and Josh Hartnett as her husband, Jeremy.

“The Big Sick” director said he was captivated by the darkly seductive allure Hoover created. “It felt like this very glamorous, hypnotic, inviting world that I wanted to lose myself into, but also very scary and suspenseful”, he said.

For Hartnett, the film’s refusal to provide straightforward answers drew him to the project. “What I love about this story is that it’s kind of a choose-your-own-adventure about who is the villain”, the



Colleen Hoover’s best-selling 2018 thriller novel Verity is adapted into a psychological thriller film distributed by Amazon MGM Studios.



Josh Hartnett stars as Jeremy Crawford alongside Anne Hathaway and Dakota Johnson in the cinematic adaptation of Verity.

Dakota Johnson, Anne Hathaway and Josh Hartnett star in Verity, a psychological thriller where secrets, deception and shifting truths keep audiences guessing

“Oppenheimer” actor said, adding that many modern films “spoon-feed” audiences conclusions.

He said he hopes the film’s open-ended nature will spark debate among cinemagoers. “I want to hear lots of arguments. I want to see people throwing popcorn in other people’s faces”, he joked.

Hartnett said he was “mesmerised” watching Hathaway and Johnson portray their characters.

“These two are just right up there with all the very best in our industry”, he said. “This whole film exists on their two faces”.

For Johnson, “Verity’s” dark themes have only increased her appetite for villainous roles.

“I would love to be a villain. It’s so fun to play a crazy person”, the “Fifty Shades of Grey” actor said. “Verity” begins its global cinematic rollout on September 30. — Reuters

FEATURES

AÇAÍ

From Amazonian Berry to Omani Café Trend

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

It is bright purple, photogenic and increasingly difficult to miss on café menus across Oman. Açai has become a popular choice for consumers looking for something refreshing, colourful and seemingly healthy, appearing in everything from smoothie bowls to drinks.

The growing popularity of the Amazonian berry has also created an unusual phenomenon: açai has become a relatively expensive café indulgence, with some servings costing almost RO 6 or more.

In some outlets, the demand has been high enough for customers to place orders in advance, while others offer only a limited number of servings each day. For consumers, the combination of popularity, limited availability and price has turned what might appear to be a simple fruit bowl into something of a premium treat.

For Mohammed al Shibli, açai has become part of his regular routine.

“I love to start my day with açai bowls with fruits”, he said. “Now that most cafés sell them in smoothie forms, it has become even easier to incorporate them into my day”.

Beyond its appealing taste, Al Shibli said he enjoys açai for the nutrients it adds to his diet. At the same time, he believes the prices charged by some cafés have become excessive.

Açai is a small purple berry that grows on açai palms in the Amazon region. It is commonly prepared as a purée or incorporated into smoothies and bowls, often alongside fresh fruit, granola and other toppings.

According to health information provided by the Ministry of Information, açai contains antioxidants, including anthocyanins, which help protect



A colourful açai bowl topped with fresh fruits, granola and other ingredients.

“Some dishes are so beautiful in appearance that you are drawn to them before knowing their nutritional value”, he said, pointing to the popularity of açai bowls.

DR SALEH BIN SAIF AL HINAI

cells from oxidative stress. It also provides dietary fibre and naturally occurring plant-based healthy fats and can contribute to heart health when consumed as part of a balanced diet. Its fibre content can support digestive health and contribute to feelings of fullness.

Dr Saleh bin Saif al Hinai, a family physician and health content creator, said the appeal of açai begins even before its nutritional qualities are considered.

“Some dishes are so beautiful in appearance that you are drawn to them before knowing their nutritional value”, he said, pointing to the popularity of açai bowls.

He described the bowls as being made from mashed açai topped with fruits, highlighting their antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and fibre content, as well as their sources of healthy fats and potential benefits for the brain and heart.

However, the health value of an açai bowl depends largely on what goes into it. The Ministry recommends using unsweetened açai purée or powder, moderate amounts of fresh fruit and low-sugar granola. Natural yoghurt, nuts and chia seeds can further add protein and healthy fats.

This is particularly relevant when comparing homemade preparations

with commercial versions. Some ready-made açai bowls can contain significant amounts of sugar because of sweetened toppings and additions. Generous quantities of granola or sweeteners can also make them considerably higher in calories.

While açai can be a healthier alternative to conventional desserts when prepared with natural ingredients, the Ministry notes that there is not enough evidence to classify it as a “superfood” or as a treatment for disease.

As açai continues to appear on more menus across Oman, its popularity reflects the growing interest in foods that combine visual appeal with perceived health benefits. Yet the berry’s journey from the Amazon to Omani cafés has also highlighted how preparation, toppings and pricing can shape the way a food is experienced.

For some, it is a convenient and nutritious addition to their daily routine. For others, the price attached to a single bowl or smoothie may be difficult to justify. Somewhere between the health claims, colourful presentation and premium price tag, açai has become more than just another fruit on the menu; it has become a food trend that continues to attract curiosity and conversation.