

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y



20
WHERE
ART BECOMES
A MEMORY

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ROYAL DECREES

NON-RESIDENT
AMBASSADOR
APPOINTED TO
TAJIKISTAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued two Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No 84/2026 on the appointment of a non-resident ambassador to the Republic of Tajikistan.

Article 1 says that Sayyid Yarub bin Qahtan bin Nasser al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran, is hereby appointed as non-resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Tajikistan.

Article 2 stipulates that this Royal Decree should be published in the Official Gazette and takes effect from the date of issue.

Royal Decree No 85/2026 on the ratification of an international agreement.

Article 1 ratifies an agreement for international cooperation between the Ministry of Education of the Sultanate of Oman and the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) concerning scientific and technical cooperation in the field of high-energy physics, signed in Geneva on May 19, 2026.

Article 2 says that this Royal Decree should be published in the Official Gazette and takes effect from the date of issue. — ONA

HM’S CONDOLENCES
TO BRITISH PREMIER

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Andy Burnham, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), on the demise of his father. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to the Prime Minister and his family.

RO 20M FOR VOCATIONAL COLLEGES



The allocations for the Vocational Colleges System Development Plan for the period 2026-2030 have reached approximately RO 20 million. This drive reflects a strategic approach towards strengthening the institutional and training infrastructure of these colleges and enhancing their capacity to prepare and qualify national cadre in alignment with the requirements of economic and professional sectors.

DETAILS ON P2

HM begins state visits to
Botswana, Angola today

Translation of Royal vision to enhance investment opportunities

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

A statement to this effect was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court, the text of which reads as follows: “Within the context of enhancing the shared interests binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Republics of Botswana and Angola, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will go on two state visits to Botswana and Angola, starting on Wednesday. The visits stem from the keenness to develop the relations to wider horizons.

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

A number of officials from the Republic of Botswana affirmed that the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Botswana on Wednesday, has significant strategic, diplomatic, and economic dimensions for Botswana, and will move bilateral relations between the two countries from the foundational phase to broader economic and investment horizons.



Amangoye Madisakwana, Chargé d’Affaires of the Botswana Embassy in Kuwait, who oversees relations between Botswana and the Sultanate of Oman, said that this visit is a historic one for Botswana. Its historical significance lies in the remarkable acceleration in relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Botswana over the past year, which fosters the bonds of friendship and mutual trust between the two countries.

He added that His Majesty’s visit comes at a time when the Republic of Botswana is seeking economic diversification across a number of vital sectors, including mining and energy. Earlier this year, the Sultanate of Oman and Botswana signed an agreement for cooperation in the field of renewable energy, which resulted in the inauguration and construction of a large solar power plant in the Maun region of Botswana.

Temo Donald Ntapu, Executive Director for Export Development & Promotion at the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre, said that this visit gives Botswana an opportunity to foster its economic relations and promote economic diversification in various sectors.

SEE ALSO P2

OMAN, US CALL FOR REGIONAL DE-ESCALATION

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Tuesday, received a phone call from Marco Rubio, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

During the telephonic conversation, the two ministers discussed the latest regional developments and the successive transformations unfolding in the region. They exchanged views on efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions, containing their repercussions, and creating the conditions to pursue diplomatic endeavours and address outstanding issues in a manner that supports the security and stability of the region.

The call also addressed a set of regional files and issues of mutual interest. On the front of Omani-American relations, the two ministers affirmed the importance of building upon existing cooperation and developing mutual interests, and of continuing consultation and coordination through the communication channels between the two friendly countries, in support of bilateral relations and the efforts exerted to entrench security and stability at both the regional and global levels.

Meanwhile, a British marine monitor said it received a report of a vessel struck by an unknown projectile the day before in the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

UK Maritime Trade Operations said there was “no reported damage or environmental impact” from the incident, which it said took place on Monday, and that “authorities are investigating”.

In another development, Chinese foreign ministry said that Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will visit Beijing and meet with his counterpart Wang Yi.

The two ministers — who also met on the sidelines of the BRICS conference in Delhi last week — will hold talks on Wednesday, the ministry said, as Beijing seeks to mediate in Iran’s months-long war with the United States. — Agencies

Oman supports right of Palestinians to self-determination

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its firm position supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent, sovereign state on the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Oman emphasised that supporting the Palestinian economy

is not merely a response to the current crisis, but an investment in peace, stability, and the future of the entire region.

This came in the Sultanate of Oman’s statement before the 73rd session of the Trade and Development Board — UNCTAD on Agenda Item 6 concerning the report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people, delivered by Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative



A woman mourns during the funeral of a Palestinian who was killed in an Israeli strike on his tent on Monday, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and International Organisations in Geneva.

Al Khanjari expressed the Sultanate of Oman’s support for the statement presented by the delegation of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Arab Group, as well as the statements presented by the Group of 77 and China, and the Asia-Pacific Group.

He stated that the figures presented in the report clearly

reflect the scale of the economic and humanitarian catastrophe facing the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where nearly 92 per cent of economic establishments in the Strip have been destroyed or damaged, while recovery and reconstruction needs are estimated at about \$16.2 billion.

He said that these are not merely figures and economic indicators, but represent destroyed establishments, job opportunities..., **TURN TO P2**

OMAN

FROM PAGE 1

Oman supports right of Palestinians to self-determination



IDRIS AL KHANJARI
Permanent Representative of Oman to the UN and International Organisations

... income sources, and livelihoods, which collectively constitute essential requirements for a dignified life and for rebuilding a sustainable developmental future for the Palestinian people.

Al Khanjari added that the UNCTAD report demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Palestinian economy faces today a deep and unprecedented crisis, which has sharply intensified since October 2023, under the restrictions imposed on the Palestinian economy and the resulting weakening of its capacity for production, trade, and investment, as well as the erosion of the foundations of its growth and sustainability.

He pointed out that reconstruction should not be viewed merely as a process of physical rebuilding, but rather as an integrated developmental and humanitarian project closely linked to protecting the Palestinian individual and safeguarding their right to a dignified life, particularly in light of the sharp deterioration in food security levels and livelihoods.

He stated that the Sultanate of Oman stresses that addressing the impacts of the economic crisis in Palestine cannot be limited to treating its direct consequences, but must address its root structural causes, including the continuation of the Israeli occupation and the resulting control over resources, imposition of restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, disruption of economic and commercial activity, and undermining of production and development foundations, which prevents the Palestinian people from building a sustainable and self-reliant economy.

Oman's Representative emphasised that recovery and reconstruction require a comprehensive and sustainable international response that goes beyond providing emergency assistance to rebuilding infrastructure, restoring productive capacities, supporting the private sector and small and medium enterprises, reactivating commercial movement, enhancing the resilience of the Palestinian economy, and creating the necessary conditions to achieve long-term recovery and growth.

He also affirmed that Oman attaches importance to UNCTAD's continued role in providing objective economic analysis, technical assistance, and building Palestinian national capabilities, in a manner that complements the efforts of the United Nations system and the international community, thereby contributing to enhancing the capacity of Palestinian institutions and the economy to face current challenges and prepare for the recovery and rebuilding phase.

Al Khanjari noted that reconstruction and sustainable development cannot be separated from achieving a just and lasting peace.

Al Khanjari expressed his thanks to the UNCTAD Secretariat for its report on assistance provided to the Palestinian people, and for its continuous efforts in monitoring economic developments, providing technical assistance, building capacities, and supporting the resilience of the Palestinian economy. — ONA

HM’s Botswana visit to strengthen ties: Officials

A NUMBER of officials from the Republic of Botswana affirmed that the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to Botswana on Wednesday, has significant strategic, diplomatic, and economic dimensions for Botswana, and will move bilateral relations between the two countries from the foundational phase to broader economic and investment horizons.

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He added that His Majesty’s visit comes at a time when the Republic of Botswana is seeking economic diversification across a number of vital sectors, including mining and energy.

Earlier this year, the Sultanate of Oman and Botswana signed an agreement for cooperation in the field of renewable energy, which resulted in the inauguration and construction of a large solar power plant in the Maun region of Botswana.

Temo Donald Ntapu, Executive Director for Export Development & Promotion at the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre, said that this visit gives Botswana an opportunity to foster its economic relations and promote economic



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His Majesty's visit comes at a time when the Republic of Botswana is seeking economic diversification

diversification in various sectors with the Sultanate of Oman including agriculture, finance, energy and mining.

He noted that the exchange of visits and the rapid implementation of projects support efforts to diversify the economy, increase value-added of natural resources, and establish manufacturing in Botswana which is rich in natural resources such as copper, diamonds, and coal.

This provides investment opportunities for the Sultanate of Oman to benefit both countries.

The Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, is working on economic integration through international partnerships for single markets, including Botswana based on clear political vision and economic direction as Oman Vision 2040 represents the compass towards economic leadership. — ONA

Foreign Minister bids farewell to several ambassadors



The Foreign Minister commended the efforts made by the ambassadors in strengthening bilateral relations. — ONA

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received on Tuesday Dr Mohammad bin Nasser al Hajri, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by the ambassador, which contributed to strengthening fraternal relations between the two countries,

wishing him continued success in his future duties.

Sayyid Badr also received Dr Muhammet Hekimoglu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell upon the end of his tour of duty.

The Foreign Minister praised the efforts exerted by the ambassador in strengthening ties of relations between the two countries, wishing him success in his upcoming assignments.

Furthermore, Sayyid Badr received Warunee Pan-krajang, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty.

The Foreign Minister commended the efforts made by the ambassador in strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries, wishing her continued success in her future assignments. — ONA

About 20m allocated for vocational colleges development plan

MUSCAT: The allocations for the Vocational Colleges System Development Plan for the period 2026–2030 have reached approximately RO 20 million. This drive reflects a strategic approach towards strengthening the institutional and training infrastructure of these colleges and enhancing their capacity to prepare and qualify national cadres in alignment with the requirements of economic and professional sectors.

The Ministry of Labour has affirmed that the vocational colleges sector is receiving a great attention in terms of developing the training and qualification system and enhancing its responsiveness to future labour market requirements. During the first half of 2026, the vocational colleges implemented 71 training

programmes and courses, benefiting 1,062 participants. In addition, five cooperation programmes were signed with relevant entities, and six institutional policies were approved, thereby contributing to the development of the educational and training environment, the strengthening of institutional partnerships, and the enhancement of programme quality and training practices.

The ministry indicated that the Human Resources Development sector's activities during the first half of 2026 encompassed several domains, including organisational structuring and job classification, human resources development, professional colleges system development, training and professional accreditation,



The Ministry of Labour has affirmed that the vocational colleges sector is receiving a great attention. — ONA

administrative follow-up and service development, quality assurance and change management, as well as the development of the private training institutions system — all of which reinforce the integration of roles across the various pathways associated with human capital development.

In the domain of organisational structuring and job classification, the ministry stated that the Directorate General of Organisational Structuring and Job Classification processed 1,462 requests for job placement, status modification, and service transfer during the same period. It also completed 1,014 transactions in the area of job classification and 423 transactions for the settlement of employment statuses.

The ministry noted that the Directorate conducted 66 organisational studies and projects aimed at developing organisational structures and improving the job classification system, in line with government work requirements and the evolving dynamics of the labour market. These efforts contribute to enhancing the

efficiency of distributing mandates and responsibilities, optimising the utilisation of human resources, and strengthening the capacity of government entities to respond to job-related and organisational needs.

In the domain of training and professional accreditation, the ministry reported the issuance of 83,000 professional practice licences and the accreditation of 350 professions under the professional accreditation system. This forms part of ongoing efforts to regulate professional practice, raise compliance with professional standards and requirements, and enhance the quality of competencies operating across various professions.

Furthermore, 13,246 jobs were linked to the National Competency Framework. — ONA



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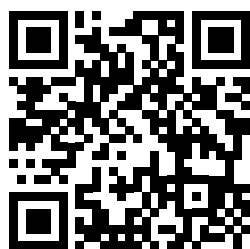
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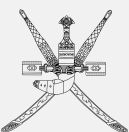
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SHORT TAKES



The competition targeted students from public and private schools. — ONA

WINNING STUDENT WRITERS HONOURED IN DHOFAR

SALALAH: Oman Writers and Literati Association, in cooperation with the Directorate-General of Education in Dhofar Governorate, today celebrated the honouring of student winners of the Literary Creativity Award for School Students in its third edition.

The ceremony, held at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Salalah, was held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The competition targeted students from public and private schools as well as students of special education, distributed across three categories: The Junior category (Grades 1–5) in the field of poetic recitation; the Young category (Grades 6–9) in the fields of poetic recitation, classical Arabic public speaking, and short story writing; and the Youth category (Grades 10–12) in the fields of literary text analysis (poetry), short story writing, and classical Arabic poetry composition. — ONA

MTC OPENS NEW FACILITIES AT ITS PREMISES

MUSCAT: The Military Technological College (MTC) inaugurated a number of educational and recreational facilities at its campus. The facilities include an Advanced Cyber Excellence Centre established in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance within the context of a “Partnership for Development” programme.

The MTC also opened a Learning Resources Centre, a recreational centre and an outdoor plaza (The Boulevard). The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman and Chairman of the MTC’s Board of Directors.

The chief guest and the attendees listened to a briefing about the new facilities’ modern equipment, technologies and programmes, as well as the integrated environment that the facilities provide to the college community in terms of innovation and ongoing development.

The facilities’ opening reflects the MTC’s constant efforts to enhance its academic, technical and service infrastructure. — ONA

CDAADISCUSSES QUALITY SYSTEM IN AMBULANCE SERVICES

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) held a senior management review meeting for the Quality Management System (ISO) at the Directorate-General of Ambulance, chaired by Maj Gen Sulaiman Ali al Husaini, Chairman of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, and attended by officials concerned with the implementation of the system within the Authority.

The meeting addressed a number of topics aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the quality management system and developing performance levels, thereby contributing to elevating the quality of ambulance services and



The meeting addressed elevating the quality of ambulance services and achieving higher levels of efficiency. — ONA

achieving higher levels of efficiency and sustainability in their delivery.

The meeting reviewed the results of the internal audit of the quality management system, improvement opportunities, the adequacy of resources, the results of beneficiary satisfaction measurement, the effectiveness of operational performance and its measurement indicators, as well as the risks, opportunities, challenges, and variables that may affect the effectiveness of the system. — ONA

Children and Family Forum returns with 18-day lineup

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

THE second edition of the Children and Family Forum is set to take place at Al Sahwa Park from October 1 to 18, coinciding with the celebration of Arab Children's Day.

The 18-day event brings together awareness, education, entertainment, culture and skills development, with the participation of a number of government and private sector institutions, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, Muscat Municipality and the Ministry of Education, in addition to a number of supporting and partner organisations.

Held under the theme ‘Every Child is an Ambassador’, the forum highlights the importance of children as active members of society, recognising their abilities, talents and aspirations and stressing that investment in childhood is an investment in the future of Oman.

The second edition builds on the success of the inaugural forum and the strong public response it received. This year’s expanded programme seeks to offer a comprehensive experience for children, families, specialists, students, jobseekers and visitors from Oman and abroad. Shaikh Mansour bin Nasser al Hinaï, Director-General of the Capital Centre for International Exhibitions and Secretary-General of the Children and Family Forum, said the second edition comes with a broader and more ambitious vision, building on the success of the first edition and the level of public engagement it generated.

He noted that the forum aims to establish itself as an integrated community platform bringing together knowledge, culture, entertainment and skills development, while



creating a lasting positive impact on society.

The broad participation of government and private sector institutions is among the key strengths of the forum. The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development, Muscat Municipality and Ministry of Education are taking part alongside a number of government and private organisations. Their participation will contribute to enriching the forum's programmes and activities across health, social, educational, cultural and family-related areas,. As part of its commitment to inclusion and community participation, the forum will provide a dedicated range of activities and interactive programmes for children with disabilities, designed to take into account their individual needs and abilities.The initiative underlines the forum's commitment to ensuring that all children

have the opportunity to participate, learn, interact and discover their talents in an inclusive and supportive environment.

The activities will also provide children with disabilities and their families with an opportunity to take part in a safe and engaging experience that supports confidence, highlights abilities and promotes greater social inclusion.

This approach reflects the essence of the forum's theme, ‘Every Child is an Ambassador’, which is based on the belief that every child has a talent, ability and voice that deserves to be recognised and supported. A key feature of the forum will be a wide range of workshops and awareness programmes for parents, aimed at providing them with knowledge and practical tools to better understand their children’s needs and respond to the challenges facing families today. The workshops will create a platform for dialogue, learning and exchange of experiences, while introducing parents to new approaches to communication and parenting and helping them better understand their children's interests, abilities and aspirations.

The programmes reflect the forum's belief that the family is the first environment in which a child's personality develops, and that empowering parents with knowledge and awareness has a direct impact on children's development, wellbeing and confidence.

The forum will also place particular emphasis on raising awareness of child protection and Oman's laws and regulations relating to children, through educational programmes and awareness content designed to increase families’ understanding of children's rights and the mechanisms available for their protection.

Top Autos LLC - A Saud Bahwan Group Company and Geely Auto Sign Distribution Agreement to Relaunch Geely in Oman



Mr. Jinjun Tian, Chief Executive Officer of Geely Auto Middle East FZC and Mr. Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Chief Executive Officer of Saud Bahwan Group, shake hands after signing the distribution agreement, marking the relaunch of Geely in Oman.

TOP AUTOS LLC - A Saud Bahwan Group Company, a leading mobility solutions provider in Oman has signed a distribution agreement with Geely Automobile International Corporation to relaunch the Geely brand

in the Sultanate. The partnership brings together Geely Automobile International Corporation's expertise and Top Autos LLC's local market knowledge and customer-service capabilities.



Geely's passenger vehicle lineup showcased as part of the brand's relaunch in the Sultanate, in partnership with Top Autos LLC.

The signing ceremony was held at the Saud Bahwan Group Headquarters in Muscat and brought together senior representatives from both organizations. The event was attended by Mr. Jinjun Tian, Chief Executive Officer of Geely Auto Middle East FZC and Mr. Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Chief Executive Officer of Saud Bahwan Group and other officials.

The partnership marks a new phase for Geely in Oman with a focus on delivering stylish, connected and safe mobility solutions aligned with the needs of customers in the Sultanate.

Top Autos LLC will combine Geely's product and technology capabilities with its established sales and after-sales infrastructure to deliver a stronger customer experience.

As part of the relaunch, Top Autos LLC will introduce the Geely Coolray facelift and Starray Plus in September 2026 at their Wattayah Showroom, expanding its lineup alongside the Emgrand, Preface and GX3 Pro to offer a five-model portfolio covering key sedan and SUV segments in Oman. This refreshed passenger vehicle lineup combines Geely Auto's

global engineering, design, technology and safety with Top Autos LLC's established local automotive expertise and customer service infrastructure to meet the evolving needs of Oman.

Built on Geely's advanced modular platform architecture, the vehicles will be supported by a warranty of up to 7-years / 250,000-kilometres. In 2025, Geely Auto Group achieved a historical milestone with total vehicle sales reaching 3,024,567 units, representing a 39% year-on-year growth. International expansion served as a major growth engine, with 2026 H1 export

volume reaching 474,000 units outside China.

Top Autos LLC also plans to develop a professional sales and service network across Oman, with approximately 15 sales and service points targeted when fully operational. This network expansion is intended to provide customers with greater accessibility and consistent support across the country.

Mr. Jinjun Tian, Chief Executive Officer of Geely Auto Middle East FZC, said: “Entering this partnership with Top Autos is a pivotal moment for Geely in the Middle East. Oman is a market that values both tradition and transformation, mirroring the very essence of our brand. With Top Autos’ localized expertise and our commitment to R&D, we are confident in our ability to set

a new standard for stylish, connected and safe mobility throughout the Sultanate.”

Mr. Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Chief Executive Officer of Saud Bahwan Group, said: “Our mission at Top Autos is to align with brands that embody the future of the automotive industry. Our collaboration with Geely Auto reflects this commitment, bringing advanced technology, contemporary design and smart mobility to Oman. By combining Geely's engineering capabilities with our established heritage of service excellence, we look forward to delivering an automotive experience that meets the expectations of customers across the Sultanate.”

For more information, please visit [www.geelyoman.com](#)

SHORT TAKES



INDIAN SINGER ANITHA SHAIQ TO PERFORM IN MUSCAT

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

Anitha Shaiq, acclaimed Sufi singer and music composer, will be performing to a packed audience in Muscat at the Al Falaj Grand Sphere on September 18, as part of the Onam festivities of the Indian Social Club- Kerala Wing under the auspices of the Indian Ambassador Prashant Pise.

She is to perform Indian classical, Sufi, Ghazal, folk and pop music, and songs in a variety of languages including Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Oriya, Punjabi, and Tamil as part of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Indian Social Club Oman – Kerala Wing, according to the organisers.

Speaking to the media, the organisers said that the event aims to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the Kerala Wing, which has been ac-

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tively engaged in social, cultural, and welfare activities for the expatriate community in Oman for a quarter of a century, coinciding with the Onam celebrations, a key symbol of Malayali cultural heritage, through a variety of artistic performances.

Tawshi Behl Pandey, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy, will inaugurate the Onam celebrations at 11am on September 18. This will be followed by an Onasadya (traditional Onam feast) for invited guests and members. The cultural event will begin at 6.30pm in the presence of a large gathering of both Omanis and expatriates including Dr P Mohamed Ali, a prominent industrialist and Chancellor of the National University of Science and Technology, along with Suhail Khan, Chairman of the Indian Social Club Oman, and Shakeel KM, General Secretary, as guests of honour.

Notable activities of the Kerala Wing, registered with the Ministry of Social Development, include arts and cultural programmes, literary initiatives, competitions and training sessions for children and youth, women-centric activities, and social welfare projects.

In addition to addressing the community's diverse needs amidst the changing dynamics of expatriate life, the Wing has focused on preserving the Malayalam language and the artistic and cultural heritage of Kerala.

The organisers of the event claimed that the event will promise to be a unique celebration blending Silver Jubilee memories with the cultural spirit of Onam, accompanied by music and dance.

مدرسة مدينة السلطان قابوس الخاصة

Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos Private School

JOB VACANCIES

Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos Private School (bilingual) is hiring teachers for the following vacancies for the academic year 2026/2027:

Female English Teacher

Requirements: candidates must have

- B.A. in the subject and bachelor of education.
- Minimum 3 years of experience.
- Minimum score of 6 in IELTS.
- Must be resident in Oman.

Please submit your CVs via E-mail:
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Note: CVs from outside Oman will not be considered.

PRELIMINARY ROUNDS OF HOLY QURAN COMPETITION COMMENCE

IBRA: The preliminary qualifying rounds of the 34th Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition commenced on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Ibra, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, as part of its 13th station, with the participation of 145 male and female contestants across the competition's various levels. The rounds will continue for three days. The Preliminary Qualifying

Committee at the Ibra Centre listened to the recitations of participants across the competition's seven levels. These comprise the first

level, covering memorisation of the entire Holy Quran; the second level, covering memorisation of 24 consecutive parts (juz'); the third level, covering memorisation of 18 consecutive parts; and the fourth level, covering memorisation of 12 consecutive parts, for which contestants must be born in 2001 or later. The competition also includes the

fifth level, covering memorisation of 6 consecutive parts, for which contestants must be born in 2012 or later; the sixth level, covering memorisation of 4 consecutive parts, for which contestants must be born in 2016 or later; and the seventh level, covering memorisation of 2 consecutive parts, for which contestants must be born in 2019 or later. — ONA

Article 6.4 is in focus amid rising global carbon deals

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

ARTICLE 6.4 of the Paris Agreement was in focus on the second day of the Oman Climate Week held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre as the momentum is growing globally, regionally, and nationally. In the global landscape the number of countries that have established Article 6 of the Paris Agreement is 129 out of 198 in the Paris Agreement.

Oman has total credits of nearly more than 800,000 from three main projects that are associated with gas recovery and landfill projects.

Mohammed al Shuaili, VP of Carbon Market and Green Certificate Oman Net-Zero Center, said, "We are really very lucky to have such a detailed rule book that covers all the requirements and all the foundational requirements or regulations associated with working and establishing transactions and agreements within the carbon markets. If we look into the global landscape, you can clearly notice that the number of countries that have established DNA-designated national focal points for Article Six is really growing." He noted that similarly in 6.2, the number of agreements between countries has grown significantly, with roughly 112 agreements so far, spanning 65 countries.

"Bilateral collaboration basically is generating around 28 million tonnes of mitigation outcomes, so it is quite a significant volume to help countries achieve their NDC commitments," said Al Shuaili.

He quoted the World Bank's 2025 annual report on the Carbon Market that stated

Oman Climate Week is being held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

almost one-third of global total emissions are covered by some sort of carbon crediting mechanism, either a carbon pricing or carbon crediting mechanism.

Oman has already launched the national carbon registry—Oman's national carbon market infrastructure is anchored by the Oman Net-Zero Centre (ONZC) under the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, which utilises the Meezan digital platform to serve as the national carbon registry and accounting system. It includes three main modules. One module is an integrated accounting platform for either companies or sectors within Oman; they can key in their emissions and get immediate analysis and reports.

The second module is a detailed database that includes all the emission reduction projects spanning all the key sectors within Oman.

This database includes projects from

the oil and gas sector, the industrial sector, the agriculture and waste sector, the transportation sector, etc. The last module integrates with the carbon registry, which is moving forward and will be tied in or interconnected with the global carbon registry. It allows smoother movement of information and data between projects.

"The objective is to have a portfolio of projects. We do have over 200-plus projects. Emission reduction projects are being submitted, while some are at different stages of development; some are under development, some may be in the concept or selection stage, and so on."

According to him, these projects include different types of activities such as renewable energy, solar and wind; some of them are associated with battery storage and energy efficiency across commercial, residential and government buildings."

4-day workshop to review locust control

The workshop aims to enhance regional cooperation in combating the spread of desert locusts. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is hosting a 4-day regional workshop to review and approve a plan for the implementation of a project to control the spread of desert locusts.

The workshop, being held in Muscat until September 17, 2026, seeks to review and approve the documents and implementation plan for a project titled "Strengthening Desert Locust Preventive Control in the Central Region (East Africa and Arabian Peninsula) and the Horn of Africa." The event is held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture,

Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture.

The workshop aims to enhance regional cooperation in combating the spread of desert locusts, develop related early warning and response systems and boost national and regional capacities to address this trans-boundary pest. The project, funded by the French Development Agency, or Agence Française de Développement (AFD), aims to enhance preventive control measures against the spread of desert locusts, notably by supporting regional governance and strengthening national locust control units. — ONA

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Economy

The Ministry of Economy

Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees in Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
4/2026	Training Program on Public Policy Formulation	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	30/ 9/ 2026

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the project, Tender and Local Content Authority from the following website: Board can participate and collect the specifications and conditions of the www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Second

Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

Third

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om

Fourth

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone:

etenderhd@ita.gov.om

+96824402200

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Citizens who violate technology import and export regulations could be banned from leaving China, the State Council said.

China imposes travel curbs to protect ‘national security’

BEIJING: China imposed sweeping travel restrictions on its citizens on Tuesday, including exit bans on those deemed to endanger the country’s “industrial or technological security”. Citizens who violate technology import and export regulations could be banned from leaving China, the State Council said. Those who engage in illegal activities abroad could be “prohibited from leaving the country for a period of six months to three years from the date of their return to China”. China and the United States have been locked in a tech race, with both sides accusing the other in recent months of stealing the capabilities of locally developed artificial intelligence models. The new rules, first released in July but in effect from Tuesday, were formulated to “safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests”, the State Council said. However, analysts warn that the travel rules give China a “wide remit”. Security and criminal activities “can be vaguely defined and easily adjusted”, Chong Ja Ian from the National University of Singapore said. — **AFP**

MILLIONS AFFECTED AS FLOODS STRIKE INDIA’S BIHAR



Flooding began this month, and local media have reported 20 deaths, while officials said swaths of farmland have been swamped.

Flooding in India’s eastern Bihar state has affected nearly five million people, officials said on Tuesday as aid was being sent to the worst-hit areas. Bihar is among India’s most flood-prone states and all seven of its key rivers measured above their “danger level” on Tuesday after heavy rain, according to the state water resources department. “Food, clean drinking water, medicines, and other essential facilities are being continuously provided to the needy families,” Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, Bihar’s deputy chief minister, said. Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary said 7,000 rupees (\$72) each had been transferred to more than 827,000 flood-affected families in the state. Nearly five million people have been affected by floods. The government’s “priority is that every affected family gets flood relief and reconstruction work is done with a spirit of building back better”, Choudhary said in a statement. Flooding began this month, and local media have reported 20 deaths, while officials said swaths of farmland have been swamped. Bihar is downstream from Nepal, which suffered flooding last month. — **AFP**

FUEL HIKE

Syria protests spread to northeast



Hundreds of people took to the streets in Syria’s Qamishli on Tuesday amid wider protests over fuel price hikes, the largest against the new authorities. Syrian authorities on Sunday announced an increase in fuel prices amid global surges due to the Middle East war. Men and women in Qamishli held placards that read “no to the policy of starvation”, “preserve people’s strength” and “no to the increase in fuel prices” while others chanted “our fuel is for the people”. — **AFP**

LAMBORGHINI CRASH

Sterling admits dangerous driving



Former England footballer Raheem Sterling pleaded guilty on Tuesday to dangerous driving after he crashed his Lamborghini on a motorway in May. The 31-year-old also admitted possession of six nitrous oxide canisters for wrongful inhalation and failing to provide a specimen for analysis when he appeared at Basingstoke Magistrates’ Court. Raheem Sterling, attended court wearing a black suit jacket, black trousers, black shoes and a dark top.

90% WOMEN

Japan’s centenarians top 100,000



The number of centenarians across Japan topped 100,000 for the first time, the health ministry said on Tuesday. With a median age of 49.9 years, Japan has the second-oldest population in the world after Monaco, according to the World Bank. The latest government survey, published ahead of the annual “Respect for the Aged” public holiday next week, showed the number of those aged 100 or older stood at 107,677 as of September 1.

Saudi to respond ‘firmly’ to Ansar Allah attacks

SAUDI ARABIA vowed on Tuesday to respond “firmly” to attacks by Yemen’s Ansar Allah, after the fighters wounded 13 people in the kingdom in an assault using ballistic missiles and drones. The Ansar Allah have been engaged in renewed fighting with Saudi-backed government forces since Yemen’s civil war reignited in July, when the group declared a maritime blockade on Riyadh and began targeting its ships in the Red Sea. They seized control of Yemen’s Red Sea coast and the Bab Al Mandab Strait last week, which has become vital as the wider US-Iran war chokes the Strait of Hormuz. Saudi Arabia issued attack alerts on Tuesday for Mecca — the holy city’s first of the Middle East war — and Jeddah and Taif governorates, before quickly cancelling them. The Saudi civil defence had earlier issued short-lived air-raid alerts in six regions. The Ansar Allah have also targeted the oil infrastructure of Saudi Arabia, the world’s leading crude exporter, pushing global oil prices above the \$100 threshold. An Ansar Allah strike in western Yemen on Monday killed eight government soldiers, according to two military sources. The group also claimed a new large-scale attack using “dozens of ballistic missiles and drones” against King Khalid airbase in Khamis Mushait, in southern Saudi Arabia. The Riyadh-led coalition confirmed on Tuesday there had been missile and drone attacks the previous day on Khamis Mushait, Abha and Taif, reporting 13 civilians wounded and damage to seven houses and two vehicles. Saudi Arabia responded with more than 50 strikes, as it had the day before, according to Ansar Allah. As attacks continue, the United



A girl, standing next to another girl and a boy with crutches, looks on at a temporary shelter for internally displaced people (IDPs) at the Shawkani school, north of Aden in southern Yemen, on Tuesday. The fighting in Yemen in recent weeks has displaced nearly 86,000 people, a UN agency said on September 13, with the number surging by 10,000 from a day earlier. — **AFP**

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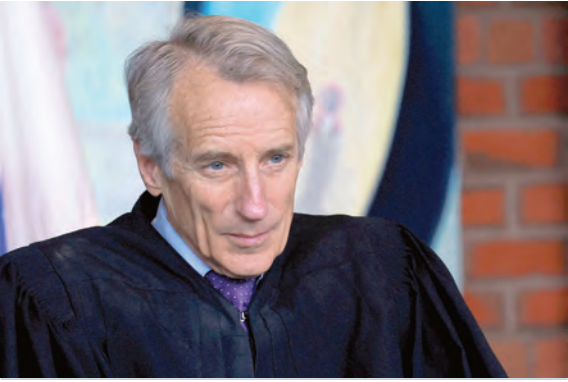
Nations Security Council was due to meet on Tuesday to discuss the Ansar Allah’s offensive, diplomatic sources said. The coalition said it would deal with the attacks “firmly to protect the sovereignty of the Kingdom” and would take “all necessary operational measures to deter this... hostile and extremist approach”. While Saudi Arabia has conducted dozens of air strikes on Ansar Allah-held areas, it has failed so far to deter the fighters’ lightning offensive. Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman held talks with Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah

el Sisi on Tuesday. US media reported last week that President Donald Trump had rejected a personal request from the Saudi crown prince to intervene in the war. Hazem al Assad from Ansar Allah’s politburo said the “Yemeni response will continue and escalate as long as they (Saudi Arabia) persist in their aggression against our people”. The UN refugee agency said on Tuesday that over 100,000 people have been internally displaced by the renewed Yemen conflict and thousands more have fled by sea to Djibouti. — **AFP**

DR CONGO EBOLA OUTBREAK STILL SPREADING FAST

The worst Ebola outbreak to hit the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has killed more than 3,400 people, is still spreading in a key province despite an improvement in other regions, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday. The huge African nation’s government indicated at the weekend that the outbreak may have peaked in August, but the WHO said that while the national figures were better, there were still Ebola hotspots to battle. Olivier le Polain, head of the WHO’s epidemiology and analytics response unit, said that as of September 12, authorities had recorded 7,200 cases in seven provinces with 3,475 deaths. “We are seeing some progress, particularly in Ituri province and its capital Bunia; some areas are under control,” Polain told a Geneva press conference. “However, there are other areas like in Butembo in North Kivu where we’re seeing the numbers come up.” Le Polain said the number of new cases and deaths per week had doubled in the past two weeks in North Kivu. The province accounts for about 45 per cent of the new cases recorded last week. — **AFP**

SHORTTAKES



The preliminary injunction from District Judge Dennis Saylor came one day before the new visa rules from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) were scheduled to take effect.

US JUDGE POSTPONES NEW VISA RULES FOR STUDENTS, JOURNOS

Washington: A US federal judge on Monday postponed implementation of a Trump administration policy that would impose stricter limits on how long foreign students and journalists can study or work in the United States.

The preliminary injunction from District Judge Dennis Saylor came one day before the new visa rules from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) were scheduled to take effect.

Under the proposed new rules, foreigners on student visas would be admitted for a maximum of up to four years after which they would have to apply for an extension. International students were previously allowed to remain for the duration of their studies.

Foreign journalists would be limited to stays of just 240 days, or around eight months, but could apply for extensions of similar duration. Until now they could stay up to five years.

Chinese journalists would get just 90 days, with extensions of 90 days.

A coalition of unions representing universities, teachers and journalists had filed a lawsuit challenging the visa restrictions. Saylor put implementation of the new DHS rules on hold for now without ruling on the merits of the case and scheduled another hearing for October 2.

But in an accompanying memo, the judge expressed scepticism about the visa restrictions on international students and journalists.

He said the current system has permitted tens of millions of foreign students to come to the United States, resulting in “groundbreaking research in science, medicine, and technology, substantial economic growth, and a host of other benefits.”

“Rather than attempt to improve that system, DHS elected to replace it with a new programme that will substantially restrict the overall number of foreign students, researchers, professors, and journalists,” he said.

The judge said that under the new rules, DHS denials of visa extensions would be “entirely discretionary and unappealable.”

“A DHS official — based on limited and vague criteria, and with no possibility of appeal — will have the power to cut short the academic, research, or teaching activities of any non-US citizen for no reason or any reason.” Foreign journalists applying for visa extensions would also have “no recourse and no appeal” in the event they are turned down, Saylor said.

“The possibilities for abuse are rampant — in particular, the obvious likelihood that the visas of foreign journalists who are critical of the government (or, more particularly, DHS officials) will not be renewed,” he said.

When it proposed the rule, DHS cited national security grounds, an argument the judge said “borders on the absurd” and was “based almost entirely on a small handful of anecdotes.” The visa restrictions are part of a broader immigration crackdown by President Donald Trump spanning aggressive enforcement operations in major cities as well as new restrictions on legal pathways to citizenship.— **AFP**

AIRBORNE DRILL



US Army paratroopers jump out of a USAF C-130J Super Hercules during Operation Orient Shield 26 Joint Airborne drop at Kita-Dalen Training area in Eniwa, Hokkaido, Tuesday. — **AFP**

US for first time confirms it has weapons in space

THE United States has weapons deployed in space, the US Space Force said on Monday, confirming the presence of such capabilities in orbit for the first time.

“The US has on-orbit space control weapons capable of defending the Joint Force against hostile adversary action,” a US Space Force spokesperson said in a statement that did not provide specifics on the weapons.

“Space control encapsulates the mission areas required to contest and control the space domain — employing kinetic and non-kinetic means to affect adversary capabilities,” the statement said, adding that “these capabilities can be employed for offensive and defensive purposes.”

Both Russia and China — the two main geopolitical rivals of the United States — pose potential threats to US interests in space.

China “develops and operates space and counterspace capabilities as part of a military modernisation strategy,” while Russia “views space as a warfighting domain and believes space supremacy will be a decisive factor in future conflicts,” according to the US Space Force.

The militarisation of space is as old as the space race itself — as soon as Sputnik was launched into orbit in 1957, Washington and Moscow began exploring ways to both arm and destroy satellites.

The biggest worry was once about nuclear weapons in space, but the superpowers and other countries signed the Outer Space Treaty in 1967, banning weapons of mass destruction in orbit.

Since then, Russia, the United States, China and India have explored ways to fight in space outside of that treaty, including by



A rocket carrying European satellites lifts off from the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou, French Guiana. The US, Russia and China are working on space weapons, which could include signal jammers to disable satellites. — **AFP**

Space control encapsulates the mission areas required to contest and control the space domain — employing kinetic and non-kinetic means to affect adversary capabilities... these capabilities can be employed for offensive and defensive purposes

US SPACE FORCE

targeting rivals’ satellites, which are key for military communications, surveillance and navigation.

Russia called on Tuesday for weapons to be kept out of space, after the US Space Force confirmed it had deployed “on-orbit space control weapons” for the first time.

“We believe that space must be free of any weapon,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

“We are counting on broad international consolidation to continue working toward the complete demilitarisation of space,” he added.

Russia’s ally China also on Tuesday slammed Washington’s move, and urged the United States to “stop preparing for war in outer space”.

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The 1967 Outer Space Treaty — to which the United States, Russia and China are all parties — bans the deployment of nuclear weapons in space, but is not a blanket ban on military activity.

Song Zhongping, an independent military commentator based in Hong Kong and former Chinese army instructor, said the announcement was “no surprise at all” as the fact that the US possesses such weapons “has long been an open secret”.

“The only difference is that the US used to keep it ambiguous, whereas now it has gone public, which shows that Washington is no longer trying to hide it,” he added.

“China will not stand by and do nothing”, he warned, noting Beijing already has its own space station in orbit.

“Whether China deploys weapons in space will depend entirely on whether the United States moves in that direction,” he said.

The Wall Street Journal said Beijing supplied Iran with satellite imagery that enabled Tehran to precisely target military facilities and kill US service members in Jordan in July — a claim China has denied. — **Agencies**

Russia and Ukraine press on with energy strikes

KYIV: hit petrol stations in Kyiv on Tuesday and Ukraine struck a Russian oil refinery, as the warring sides carried on with strikes on each other’s energy targets despite an announcement by US President Donald Trump that they had agreed to stop.

Russia launched 200 drones at Ukraine’s capital and other cities in overnight attacks, killing two people. In addition to petrol stations in Kyiv it struck energy and port infrastructure in other regions, Ukrainian officials said.

For its part, Ukraine hit a Russian oil refinery in Syzran in Russia’s Samara region on the Volga River, and also drone production facilities in the Taganrog and Oryol regions, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

The Samara governor said an industrial facility was hit there without identifying it. The Taganrog governor said a warehouse of e-commerce firm Ozon was struck there.

“Russia continues to attack our energy sector, regular logistics and critical infrastructure. And our responses to them for this are tangible,” Zelensky said on the Telegram app.

Trump said on Monday that Ukraine and Russia had agreed to halt strikes on each other’s energy infrastructure, which he says are the main factor in a global fuel shortage that has driven diesel prices in the United States to record highs.

Zelensky said that Ukraine was ready to halt such strikes



Paramedics prepare to transport a resident injured during a Russian drone strike on a gas station, amid Russia’s attack in Kyiv on Tuesday. — **Reuters**

but required credible guarantees from its partners that Russia would also stop.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Trump’s suggestion was a “very good idea”, but that it would take more to bring down global fuel prices.

“It is necessary to ensure safe commercial shipping and navigation here, including for oil tankers,” Peskov said, adding that Russia would stay in touch with the US about Trump’s proposal.

Russia has been targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure with missiles and drones persistently since Moscow launched its full-scale attack in 2022, and began targeting petrol stations in Kyiv and other cities in recent weeks.

Kyiv has stepped up long-

range attacks on Russia this year, including a campaign targeting oil refineries that has caused fuel shortages.

Previous attempts by the US administration to broker a ceasefire on energy infrastructure have failed.

Ukrainian officials said that one person was killed in Russian attacks on Kyiv and another died in the city of Zaporizhzhia in the southeast of the country.

Two petrol stations in Kyiv were damaged, the state energy company Naftogaz said. Reuters heard several explosions in Kyiv and the surrounding region. So far this year, Russia has damaged 16 petrol stations in Kyiv, city officials said, adding that there was no risk of fuel shortages due to diversified logistics.

“We see that the enemy started to strike petrol stations in Kyiv with precision,” Andrii Tkachov from Kyiv’s military administration told Ukrainian TV.

As Moscow’s attack on Ukraine was under way, neighbouring Poland held military aviation operations as a preventive step, Poland’s Armed Forces said, adding later that there was no violation of its airspace.

In Lithuania, a Nato fighter jet shot down a drone early on Tuesday, the National Crisis Management Centre said. It did not say the origin of the drone. Similar incidents in the Baltic region in recent months have involved Ukrainian drones that Kyiv says were steered across Nato borders by Russian signal jamming. — **Reuters**

OPINION

When their world feels foreign to us



HYESHA
BARRETT

The writer is a
Master Life Coach
and Positive Parent
Specialist

THERE WAS a time when parents understood most of the world their children were entering. The games were familiar, the risks easier to recognise and the path into adulthood more predictable. Today, children are growing up in a world that can feel almost unfamiliar to the adults guiding them. A child can be sitting quietly in a bedroom while learning, creating, competing and connecting in spaces their parents may barely understand.

We are watching an entire generation grow alongside technology that is evolving almost as quickly as they are. Gaming has become an industry, artificial intelligence is changing how we learn and work, and online spaces have become places where friendships, creativity, identity and opportunity are formed. The digital world is no longer separate from “real life”. For our children, it is simply part of life.

This can stir up a lot in parents. Fear, uncertainty, even a sense that we are losing control over a world we cannot fully see. Conscious parenting asks us to notice that reaction before we hand it straight to our children.

If we respond to everything unfamiliar with panic, criticism or restriction, our

children may learn that certain parts of their world are not safe to bring to us. Protection matters, yet protection without relationship can easily become control.

Perhaps one of the most important shifts we can make is to become curious before becoming critical. What are they playing? What do they enjoy about it? Who are they connecting with? What are they seeing that we may not know about? These conversations do more than give us information. They tell our children, “Your world matters to me, even when I do not completely understand it.” That sense of being understood makes guidance easier to hear, boundaries easier to accept and difficult conversations far less threatening.

That does not mean abandoning boundaries. Conscious parenting is not permissive parenting. Children still need limits, structure and adults willing to say no. The difference is in how those boundaries are held. A rule imposed through fear teaches a child to avoid punishment.

A boundary explained through connection helps them build judgement of their own. We are not simply trying to control what they do while they are under our roof. We are helping them develop the inner voice they will carry when we are not there.

This matters even more as technology

We can help them develop qualities that technology cannot replace so easily: self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, discernment, creativity, critical thinking and the confidence to ask questions rather than simply follow the crowd.

changes the future they are preparing for. Our children may work in jobs that do not yet exist, using tools still being invented. We cannot predict every skill they will need, yet we can help them develop qualities that technology cannot replace so easily: self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, discernment, creativity, critical thinking and the confidence to ask questions rather than simply follow the crowd.

They also learn from what we model. If we tell them to get off their phones while constantly checking ours, they notice. If we become dysregulated every time something frustrates us, they notice that too. Children learn far more from the emotional climate around them than from the rules spoken out loud. Our own relationship with screens, stress and connection becomes part of their education.

The digital generation gap may never completely disappear, and perhaps it does not need to. Our job is not to become experts in every platform, game or piece of technology. It is to remain connected enough that our children keep talking to us as their world expands. In the end, the greatest protection may not be knowing every corner of their world. It may be making sure they still know how to find their way back to us.

WTO WARNS OF ‘MOST SERIOUS AND SUSTAINED’ TRADE DISRUPTIONS

AGNÈS PEDRERO

The global trading system is enduring its most sustained disruption in living memory amid challenges to trading rules that could batter living standards in a “geo-fragmented world”, the WTO warned on Tuesday.

The system is now in a decisive phase, the World Trade Organization said in its annual report, which “provides new evidence that a reversion to unilateral trade policy would impose large costs”.

Such a reversal could slash global GDP by around five per cent and drag down exports 18.6 per cent by 2050, it warned.

“Global trade policy and the WTO are experiencing the most serious and sustained disruptions since the multilateral trading system was created 80 years ago,” the report said.

It echoed a warning by its director-general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala in March, shortly after the start of the US-led war on Iran.

“We have seen trade rules challenged on a scale unseen since multilateral institutions were created to underpin open, stable and predictable global trade in the wake of the Great Depression and the Second World War,” Okonjo-Iweala wrote in a preface to the report. She said trade cooperation had “helped narrow income gaps between developing and advanced economies, and contributed to peace among members”.

Although “the global trading landscape has changed significantly... the founding logic of the system, that all economies are better off cooperating rather than acting unilaterally, remains as relevant today as ever”, she added.

But the outlook has darkened after US President Donald Trump launched a tariff blitz since returning to the White House in January 2025, and amid soaring geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Middle East.

The WTO pointed to a range of factors that have hit cooperation, including shifts in economic power and the growing prominence and diversity of government intervention in markets.

Looking forward, WTO economists analysed the likely economic growth development under different scenarios.They found that “fragmentation along geopolitical lines could reduce global GDP by about five per cent”, Okonjo-Iweala told diplomats on Tuesday.

And “in a world where the WTO disappears and is replaced by a network of FTAs [free trade agreements], the losses would be closer to seven per cent”, she warned. — **AFP**

The UN can’t — and need not — wait for consensus

WHEN LEADERS from around the world meet in New York for the United Nations’ 81st General Assembly this month, it will be no ordinary gathering. Member states will be close to choosing the next secretary-general, who will immediately be confronted not only by many global crises, but also by the UN’s diminished finances.

With some member states not fully meeting their financial obligations to the organisation, the UN has already had to slash its 2026 budget by 9% and eliminate around one-fifth of its workforce, leading outgoing Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to warn that “the current trajectory is untenable.” Yet the UN remains essential. It was created to help us maintain peace, prevent wars, protect human rights, support sustainable development, set global norms, and uphold international law. No other international organisation can claim the same degree of universal legitimacy. But universal membership and legitimacy come with tradeoffs. Reaching a consensus takes time, and negotiations can produce compromises that do not adequately address the problems they were supposed to solve. Given these limitations, the UN system needs partners that can complement its work.

That is why governments and their citizens have long turned to smaller “coalitions of the willing” — under the banner of “plurilateralism” — in cases where consensus is not possible. Plurilateral organisations have emerged to address everything from climate-related issues and extractive industries to human rights and trade. Because the members of such coalitions share values, goals, or interests, they can agree, innovate,



HELEN CLARK

The author is a former prime minister of New Zealand

The UN-centred multilateral system remains the foundation of global governance. But in an era of deepening polarisation, reduced funding, and attacks on democracy, its capacity to drive domestic implementation of urgently needed reforms and regulations is stretched thin.

and act together more quickly. Such pragmatic arrangements were what Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney had in mind in his landmark “middle powers” speech in Davos in January.

Of course, not all plurilateral organisations are the same. Some are mere talking shops, but others have emerged as effective platforms for experimentation and coordinated policymaking. Some provide concrete standards for how countries should act, while others let members choose their own commitments. Some open the conversation to the public, while others remain behind closed doors. And some hold their members accountable for delivering on their promises, while others do not.

Consider the critical minerals that will power the next generation of clean energy.

Because the issue touches on everything from climate, trade, and energy to security and human rights, no fewer than eight plurilateral initiatives are in the works to secure future supplies. Many governments and much of the private sector, of course, want their clean energy to come with minimal environmental costs and no human exploitation. But hoping for these standards to be upheld is not enough. If their payments are ultimately pocketed by warlords, or if human-rights standards are not consistently monitored and enforced, we will repeat some of the worst mistakes of the fossil-fuel era.

Throughout the developing world, dependence on fossil-fuel extraction has been a strong predictor of poverty, corruption, authoritarianism, and conflict. To prevent our inevitable critical-minerals dependency from reproducing the same outcomes, we must establish clear, strong safeguards from the outset.

What’s true for critical minerals is also true for many other areas of global governance. Instead of leaving more positive outcomes to chance, we need to insist that plurilateral arrangements focus on three things: promoting concrete actions (such as coordinated environmental and labour regulations); encouraging participation by a wide variety of stakeholders; and establishing independent monitoring mechanisms. In each case, the core objective should be to enhance democracy. If these values are upheld, plurilateral arrangements can support the UN’s mission, rather than unwittingly undermining or substituting for it.

Similarly, plurilateral organisations like the EITI require transparency across the oil, gas, and mining sectors, and the Financial Action Task Force helps countries update their anti-corruption and counterterrorism systems to meet international standards. What the OGP, the EITI, and the FATF share are the three foundational principles I listed above: they promote concrete, coordinated action, include many different stakeholders, and provide for independent monitoring.

The UN-centred multilateral system remains the foundation of global governance. But in an era of deepening polarisation, reduced funding, and attacks on democracy, its capacity to drive domestic implementation of urgently needed reforms and regulations is stretched thin. Plurilateralism can help, but only if it is explicitly designed to strengthen democracy.

We don’t have to make a choice between multilateralism and plurilateralism. But we do need to complement multilateralism, as embodied by the UN, with the right kind. © **Project Syndicate, 2026**

Berlin’s public spaces at heart of poll campaign



PIERRICK YVON

The writer is a news correspondent for AFP in Germany

POLITICIANS CAMPAIGNING for Sunday’s Berlin state election have painted an unflattering picture of the German capital, vowing to clear garbage-strewn streets and promising “syringe-free playgrounds”. Town hall-hopefuls have also pledged to clean up graffiti-covered train stations, end “forever-building sites”, fix buckled cycling lanes and take steps to ease a desperate shortage of affordable housing. Taken together, the list of woes hardens the image of a chronically broke city whose administration often struggles to reliably provide services for its almost four million people. Certainly, many who live in Berlin love its rich artistic and cultural life, green spaces, lakes and children’s playgrounds, vibrant start-up scene and hedonistic, anything-goes nightlife. The long-divided city boasts countless museums, galleries and sites reflecting its troubled history, as well as two zoos and three opera houses. But all of that has gone hand-in-hand with persistent complaints about a slow bureaucracy and a dysfunctional city administration which famously took almost 15 years to build an international airport with next-door Brandenburg state. Cross-financed by Germany’s wealthier states, Berlin is deep in the red, with 2.2 billion euros in debt calculated in late 2024, which forced painful spending cuts in multiple areas. Local newspapers often write about Berlin’s

“crime hotspots” and rising homelessness, and make great sport of documenting ever-new Berlin disasters - from rat-infested police stations to the closure of the Technical University’s main campus due to structural defects and fire safety issues. With renovations now set to cost around 2.4 billion euros, university president Fatma Deniz blamed “decades of delayed investment and budget cuts in public infrastructure”. The small party Volt has been running campaign posters with the promise to clean Berlin that list a litany of complaints from potholes to “garbage mountains” and, more generally, “Berlin frustration”. One Berlin resident, fed up with filthy streets, has taken matters into her own hands. Valeriia Tantcyreva, 31, started the volunteer group Sauberberlin (Clean Berlin), which, on a recent outing in the working-class district of Wedding, filled a secure disposal box with syringes discarded by drug users. “No one cares about the city,” she charged, calling the waste management service “useless”. She said she decided to take action after her dog was repeatedly injured by broken glass and other refuse. City hall said, when asked about the garbage problem, that there were “no operational failures”, pointing instead to many residents’ lack of civic responsibility. Another pet peeve for many is sketchy cycling lanes in a city where 18 per cent of all trips are made by bike. They are often “outdated, too narrow, overgrown with vegetation and buckled by

Cross-financed by Germany’s wealthier states, Berlin is deep in the red, with 2.2 billion euros in debt calculated in late 2024, which forced painful spending cuts in multiple areas

tree roots”, complained Lisa Feitsch of the cycling association ADFC. The city’s politics may be even messier than its streets, and the next government is certain to again be run by a multi-party coalition. Four parties are leading the race for the Rotes Rathaus (Red Town Hall), all polling in the range of 16 to 21 per cent, with the centre-left SPD trailing behind them. Frontrunners for the top spot are the centre-right CDU - which is strongest in Berlin’s leafy western suburbs - and the far-left Die Linke, whose heartland lies in parts of the former east. The far-right AfD, whose bastion is among the communist-era residential tower blocks of the former East Berlin, expects new record results - but also to remain shut out of power by all other parties. Also among the top four are the Greens, who dominate in hip inner-city areas known for trendy cafes, organic supermarkets and cargo bicycles. When Berlin voters head to the polls on Sunday, they will hope to elect a capable new government - but also simply that the city-state doesn’t mess up the vote itself, as it did in 2021. Citizens back then waited in hours-long queues while some polling booths ran out of ballot papers and resupplies were obstructed by a marathon the city had decided to stage on the same day. The 2021 election fiasco, as well as subsequent street unrest on New Year’s Eve, led the Bavarian state premier Markus Soeder, based in far tidier Munich, to thunder that Berlin was a “chaos city”.

SRI LANKA’S FAMED BEACH SHACK BATTLES DEMOLITION

AMAL JAYASINGHE

Sri Lanka’s famed seafood shack Beach Wadiya has hosted royalty, including Britain’s Princess Anne, and sporting legends such as cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, but now faces demolition under a government-ordered coastal clean-up. The simple Colombo beach restaurant has welcomed a string of celebrities, featured in Madhur Jaffrey’s culinary travels and received rave reviews in international publications, including London’s Financial Times. “Beach Wadiya comes with a lot of history,” said Suhara Chandrasekera, the founder’s granddaughter, now a director of the restaurant. But more than half a century after it opened, the glamour is giving way to grief at Wadiya - which means “shack” in the island’s Sinhala language. The government’s Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management Department gave Wadiya 10 days to pack up and leave - or face demolition. That deadline expired on September 10, but the restaurant is resisting the order to leave. Seven other beach properties were given extensions of about four days to salvage furniture and fittings. A few shops near Wadiya were demolished last month as part of a broader government plan to remove businesses within 10 metres of the shoreline. “There shouldn’t be any buildings within the 10-metre coastal reservation from the shoreline,” Environment Minister Dammika Patabendi said. “We have identified 82 such premises and we are taking steps to remove them.” Beach Wadiya is the only establishment resisting the order and has taken the matter to court. The family of its late founder, Olwyn Weerasekera, argues that the restaurant existed before the 1981 Coast Conservation Act being used to evict them. “We built in 1974, which predates the law that they were talking about... We have permits dating all the way back to 1974,” 26-year-old Chandrasekera said. “In addition to the appeal to the Coast Conservation Department, we also took the decision to file a writ,” she said, referring to a case filed in the Court of Appeal. The family has won a temporary reprieve, with the court ordering the department not to demolish the restaurant for two weeks pending a hearing. When Wadiya was established, the beach was wider and cleaner, with rows of coconut trees, most of which have since been lost to sea erosion. “Right now we have lost two of our huts... We’ve lost parts of our bathroom due to sea erosion,” Chandrasekera said. She said Wadiya was the only restaurant on the beach before Sri Lanka’s tourism boom in the late 1970s. Princess Anne had dinner at Wadiya in 1995. Nepali royals have also dined there. — AFP

A hijab ban is not liberation; it is control

FRANCE HAS long defended laïcité, or state secularism, as a principle intended to protect both the neutrality of public institutions and the freedom of individual conscience. But the National Rally’s (RN) renewed proposal to ban the hijab in public spaces risks turning that principle on its head. Rather than keeping the state out of religion, it would give the state greater power to decide how Muslim women are permitted to dress. The proposal resurfaced ahead of the 2027 presidential election, with senior RN figures discussing prohibiting Islamic headscarves in public spaces and imposing fines on women who violate the ban. Marine Le Pen has supported extending restrictions to places including the street, although the party has shown internal disagreement over exactly how the policy would work. Jordan Bardella has taken a more cautious position, suggesting that the issue should be decided through a referendum and initially focusing restrictions on obvious religious symbols in public-sector buildings. France already places significant restrictions on religious dress in certain settings. Since 2004, students in public primary and secondary schools have been prohibited from wearing conspicuous religious symbols, a rule that applies not only to Muslim headscarves but also to obvious symbols associated with other religions. Public servants must similarly maintain religious neutrality while carrying out their duties. But extending these restrictions to ordinary public spaces would cross a fundamentally different line. A woman walking down a street is not representing the French state. She is an individual citizen. If she chooses to cover her hair because of her faith, culture, or personal convictions, the government should not get involved. There is an obvious contradiction in claiming to defend women’s freedom while threatening to fine



OMAN AL YAHYAI

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A woman, wearing a hijab and a protective face mask, walks at Trocadero Square near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. — Reuters file photo

them because of their clothing. Telling a woman that she must cover her hair and telling her that she must uncover it are the same form of coercion and both deny her the freedom to choose. Women’s liberation cannot reasonably mean replacing religious or familial pressure with instructions from the state. The political context makes the proposal even more concerning. France is already experiencing a documented rise in anti-Muslim incidents. The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights reported that authorities recorded 326 anti-Muslim acts in 2025, an increase of 88 per cent compared with the previous year. The commission has also warned that official statistics substantially underestimate racist incidents because many victims never report them. Against that backdrop, a law singling out an item of clothing overwhelmingly associated with Muslim women risks reinforcing the message that visible expressions of Islam are somehow incompatible with being fully French. The RN argues that it is targeting what it calls the “Islamist veil”, yet even within the party there is uncertainty about what precisely that term means. Le Monde reported

that RN figures have struggled to define which garments would be prohibited, while the party remains divided over the scope and implementation of the measure. That ambiguity should itself be alarming. Laws restricting fundamental freedoms require precision, not political slogans. France’s secular tradition is strongest when it guarantees citizens the freedom to believe. If the RN eventually comes to power, the treatment of Muslim citizens will therefore be an important test of what laïcité has become. There are Muslim women who are pressured to wear the hijab, women who freely choose it and women who strongly reject it. A democratic state should protect all three. The principle should be straightforward: women should be able to decide what they wear. France cannot credibly defend women against religious control by imposing another form of control in its place. If freedom, equality and laïcité are to mean anything, they must protect the choices of people whose beliefs and clothing the majority may not share. A free society does not demonstrate its confidence by forcing women to remove their clothes. It demonstrates it by allowing them to choose for themselves.

SPORTS

26TEAMS



Saada bint Salim al Ismaili, the ministry's women's sports expert, conducted the draw following an address by Khawla bint Rashid al Rawahi, director of the Women's Sports Department.
— Shamsa al Harthi

156 PLAYERS SET FOR WOMEN'S BOWLING CHAMPIONSHIP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

The 18th Women's Bowling Championship will bring together 156 players representing 26 teams from 22 public and private institutions at Fun Zone in Qurum from September 20 to 30.

Organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth's Women's Sports Department in cooperation with the Oman Bowling Committee, the championship features singles, doubles, team and masters competitions.

The draw at the Omani Society for Fine Arts in Ghala divided the teams into two groups. Saada bint Salim al Ismaili, the ministry's women's sports expert, conducted the draw following an address by Khawla bint Rashid al Rawahi, director of the Women's Sports Department.

Al Rawahi welcomed newcomers and praised institutions for their continued participation. She said the championship encouraged physical activity, helped ease workplace pressures, supported working women's well-being and provided opportunities to connect through sport, while stressing fair play and an environment that respects women's privacy.

Group A comprises Petroleum Development Oman, Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing (A), Occidental (B), Ministry of Finance (B), Awasr, Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Royal Court Affairs (B), United Services Company, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Company, Environment Authority, Muscat Municipality and MB Holding.

Group B features Sohar International, Al Maha (B), Occidental (A), Ministry of Finance (A), Royal Court Affairs (A), Consumer Protection Authority, OQ, Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Shell, Rihal, Diwan of Royal Court, State Audit Institution and Omantel. Team qualifying opens on September 20, followed by singles on September 22, doubles on September 27 and Masters on September 29. The team finals and presentation ceremony are scheduled for September 30. Play starts at 3.30 pm on competition days.

Teams may register four players and two reserves, all employed by their respective institutions, including a maximum of two non-Omani residents. Singles, doubles and team contests comprise three games, with seven teams from each group advancing to the team finals. The top 30 players by aggregate scores across the opening singles, doubles and team events qualify for the three-game Masters final. First-time participants receive bonus points. Overall institutional standings will be determined by medal tallies and medal colour, with the top three institutions honoured.

Shamsa bint Rashid al Shukaili, representing MB Holding, said she had participated since the inaugural edition and helped establish several company teams. "The championship is more than a competition. It gives working women a welcome outlet and a chance to come together in an enjoyable, competitive atmosphere," she said.

She highlighted improving standards and increasingly competitive teams, while thanking the organisers for sustaining the event. Sohar International's Samar al Maashari, competing for a fourth consecutive year, said her team aimed to improve on last year's third-place finish.

"We are proud of that achievement, but it motivates us to perform better and challenge for the leading positions," she said.

Al Maashari said the team hoped to build on previous experience, while calling for greater attention to lane oiling and competition timings to improve playing conditions.

Sektioui names Oman squad for Gulf Cup 27

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

THE OMAN national football team is continuing its preparations for the 27th Gulf Cup, which will be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, from September 23 to October 6. The Oman team will head to Jeddah on Thursday and will enter several camps ahead of the opening clash with Iraq on September 23.

Tarik Sektioui is aiming to make a strong start to his first official assignment as head coach of Oman. The Red Warriors are targeting their third Gulf Cup title after finishing runners-up at the previous two editions, in Basra in 2023 and Kuwait in 2024.

Oman have been drawn in Group A alongside hosts Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait.

They will face Iraq in their opening match, followed by Saudi Arabia on September 26, before concluding the group stage against Kuwait on September 29.

Sektioui has announced a 26-player squad for the tournament: Harib al Saadi, Khalid al Buraiki,



Abdurmajeed al Balushi, Mohsin al Ghassani, Jameel al Yahmadi, Ahmed al Kaabi,

Amjad al Harthi, Abdullah Fawaz, Zaher al Aghbari, Musab al Shaqsi, Ghanem al

Habshi, Esam al Subhi, Nasser al Rawahi, Ahed al Mashaikhi, Sultan al Marzouq, Khalid al Ghatreifi, Abdulhafidh al Mukhaini, Turki Bait Rabie, Yousuf al Maliki, Hussein al Shahri, Al Harith al Mukhaini, Arshad al Alawi and Waleed al Musalmi. The goalkeepers in the squad are Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Ahmed al Rawahi and Ibrahim al Rajhi.

The squad features several notable omissions, including Al Mundhir al Alawi, Abdulrahman al Mushaifri, Salah al Yahyai, Ahmed al Khamisi, Mohammed al Ghafri, Thani al Rushaidi and Abdulsalam al Shukaili. Mohammed al Musallmi, Fayez al Rushaidi and Ali al Busaidi are unavailable following their international retirements.

Sektioui has handed Gulf Cup call-ups to 11 players who will be making their debut in the competition: Waleed al Musallmi, Abdulmajeed al Balushi, Musab al Shaqsi, Nasser al Rawahi, Sultan al Marzouq, Khalid al Ghatreifi, Abdulhafidh al Mukhaini, Turki Bait Rabie, Yousuf al Maliki, Al Harith al Mukhaini and Ghanim al Habshi.

Oman to take part in Asian TT in Tashkent



Ahmed al Riyami in action.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

The Oman's national table tennis team is gearing up for a significant continual appearance as the team take part in the 29th ITTF-ATTU Asian Table Tennis Championships 2026 which will be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from October 19 to 25, 2026.

The Asian Championships will represent a major test for Oman's leading players, with the event bringing together some of the strongest table tennis nations in the continent. The championship will also serve as an important qualification pathway for the WTTTC Finals 2027, adding further significance to Oman's participation.

Oman will field a five-player squad comprising Muhannad al Balushi, Ahmed al Riyami, Ghassan al Ghassani, Bilal al Rashdi and Nasser al Balushi.

The team will be accompanied by a technical staff led by head coach Omid Shams of Iran and Syrian assistant coach Adnan Fawakherji. The team entered an intensive phase of technical and physical preparation as the coaching staff works to ensure that the players reach Tashkent in their best possible condition. The preparatory programme is focusing on tactical awareness, technical execution, match readiness and physical conditioning, with particular attention being given to the demands of competing against high-level Asian opponents.

For Oman, the Asian event competition will give the players valuable international experience and exposure as the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) continues its efforts to strengthen the national team's competitiveness at regional and international level.

Muhannad al Balushi from Al Amerat club will enter the Asian



Muhammad al Balushi in action.

Championships with confidence after claiming the men's singles title at the Senior National Table Tennis Championship earlier this month. Al Balushi defeated Seeb Club's Nasser al Balushi 3-1 in the final to secure the national crown. Ghassan al Ghassani, also representing Seeb Club, finished third after defeating his club teammate Haitham al Mandhari 3-1.

The recent national championship provided an important competitive platform for the players ahead of the continental assignment and offered the technical staff an opportunity to assess the current form of the leading national-team candidates.

Last month, Oman team had recorded a strong medal haul at the West Asia Table Tennis Championships in Jordan, collecting three medals after seven days of competition involving national teams from across the region. The results

included one silver and two bronze medals, with Oman's young players demonstrating their potential in team and doubles competitions.

Ahmed al Rawahi and Iyad al Jassasi had secured the silver medal in the boys' under-19 doubles. The Omani pair advanced to the final after defeating Qatar's Taqi al Din Najadat and Jad al Baisani 3-2 in a closely contested semifinal. The pair then produced another determined display in the final but narrowly lost 3-2 to Qatar's Ahmed Qarni and Rawad Al Nasser to finish runners-up.

Talia al Rawahi, Salma al Nasri and Fatma al Balushi won bronze in the girls' U13 team event while another bronze followed in the girls' U13 doubles, where Salma al Nasri and Talia al Rawahi had reached the semifinals before losing 3-1 to Qatar's Kinda Mahmoud and Hessa.

NINE TEAMS



The league is taking place from September 13 to 22 at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

GFW LAUNCHES FOOTBALL LEAGUE FOR TRADE UNIONS

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

The General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW) has launched the Football League for Trade Unions in Dhofar as part of its efforts to enhance workers’ quality of life and promote trade union activities through innovative approaches. The league is taking place from September 13 to 22, 2026 at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

The sporting event aims to promote workers’ physical and mental well-being, harness sport to strengthen professional and social relations, and foster communication and a sense of trade union belonging among trade union members. It also seeks to raise trade union awareness, encourage trade union membership, and establish a sustainable trade union sporting experience in preparation for extending it to trade unions across other governorates.

The league features nine teams representing nine trade unions at establishments operating in Dhofar Governorate: the Trade Union of Alpek Polyester (Octal), the Trade Union of Al Safa Food Company, the Trade Union of Oman Pharmaceutical Products Company, the Trade Union of Atteen Hotel Management Company (Al Fanar Hotel), the Trade Union of Carmeuse Majan Establishment, the Trade Union of Salalah Ports Services Company, the Trade Union of Taqa Hotel Management Company (Rotana Resort), the Trade Union of Dhofar Integrated Services Company, and the Trade Union of Salalah Beach Tourism Development Company.



Players in action at the Football League for Trade Unions in Dhofar.

Oman to host Global Tour beach handball in Dec

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

OMAN will welcome some of the world’s leading beach handball teams when it hosts the third stage of the fifth edition of the International Handball Federation Beach Handball Global Tour on December 4 and 5. Organised by the Oman Handball Association (OHA), the international event will take place at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher and will feature eight teams, with four competing in the men’s competition and four in the women’s event. The participating delegations are scheduled to arrive in Oman on December 3.

The men’s tournament will bring together hosts Oman, reigning world champions Germany, Croatia and Poland. Croatia secured their place after winning the opening stage of the Global Tour in Zagreb, while Poland qualified after finishing runners-up in the second stage in Plock, city in central Poland. Germany will compete as the reigning world champions.

In the women’s competition, world champions Argentina will be joined by Portugal, winners of the women’s title in Zagreb, and Germany, who claimed the title in Plock. The fourth participating women’s team will be announced later.

The Muscat stage carries particular importance for Oman as the country continues its preparations to host the IHF Beach Handball World Championships for men and women in Dhofar Governorate in 2028.

It will be Oman’s second time hosting the World Championships, having previously staged the global event in 2012 at the Sports City in Al Musannah.

MILESTONE EVENT

Hamood al Hasani, head coach of Oman’s national beach handball team, described the upcoming Global Tour stage as an important milestone for both the national team and the continued development of the sport in the Sultanate of Oman.

“The tournament is very important to us from a technical point of view,” Al Hasani said. “It will give our players the opportunity to play competitive matches and maintain continuity



The men’s tournament will bring together hosts Oman, reigning world champions Germany, Croatia and Poland. Photo by **Ammar al Musafir**



HAMOOD AL HASANI

Head coach of Oman’s national beach handball team

This tournament will show the world the capabilities Oman has in hosting major global events. Its importance has become even greater after Oman won the right to host the 2028 Beach Handball World Championships in Salalah.

in beach handball through regular competition.”

He added that hosting the event also carries a wider message about Oman’s ability and readiness to organise major international sporting competitions.

“This tournament will show the world the capabilities Oman has in hosting major global events. Its importance has become even greater after Oman won the right to host the 2028 Beach Handball World Championships in Salalah,” he said.

Al Hasani praised the efforts of the OHA, led by its chairman Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, in securing the hosting rights for the 2028 World Championships.

For the national team, the December tournament will provide a valuable opportunity to compete against some of the strongest sides in the sport, including world champions Germany, Croatia and Poland. “These are established teams with great experience in beach handball, and playing against them is an important opportunity for our players,” Al Hasani said. “Competing with such teams on our home soil is a major step for the development of our national team.”

The coach also revealed that the upcoming event could provide an opportunity to introduce new

players to the national team as Oman begins building towards the 2028 World Championships.

“With the World Championships taking place in Oman in 2028, we are looking at the possibility of bringing in new players and assessing the available talent. This tournament will be an excellent opportunity to test new elements and evaluate their potential against top international opposition,” he said.

Oman has established a strong reputation in beach handball, having won Asian and Gulf titles and competed at the most recent World Championships in Croatia. Oman was also among the early countries in the Gulf region to embrace and develop the sport.

The 2026 Global Tour began in Zagreb on April 30 and May 1, where Croatia won the men’s title and Portugal claimed the women’s crown. The second stage was held in Plock on June 13 and 14, with Germany winning both the men’s and women’s competitions.

Oman is also scheduled to host another stage of the Global Tour in 2027, giving the national team and local organisers another important step in their preparations before the world’s best beach handball teams gather in Dhofar for the 2028 World Championships.

Olympic Day puts fitness, youth at heart of Oman’s sporting vision

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

The wide community participation in Olympic Day 2026 has highlighted the growing importance of making physical activity a regular part of everyday life in Oman, with children and young people emerging as a key focus in efforts to build a healthier and more active society.

More than 800 citizens and residents took part in the event, organised by the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), represented by the Oman Committee for Sport and Active Society, on Monday at The Village in Al Hail North. The programme brought together people from different age groups in a setting combining sport, health awareness, entertainment and community engagement.

HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Oman Olympic Committee Chairman, said the strong turnout provided an important indication for the OOC and reinforced its



The Olympic Day programme began with a 1.7-kilometre community walk along the waterfront in Al Hail North.

commitment to continuing community-based initiatives that promote physical activity and contribute to building a sporting culture across society.

He stressed that sport and physical activity are fundamental to maintaining good health and

a balanced lifestyle, while noting that the participation of people from different age groups and backgrounds demonstrated the importance of creating activities capable of reaching a broad section of the community.

HH Sayyid Azzan said particular

attention was given to children and young people because of their importance to the future of sport and society.

1.7 KM COMMUNITY WALK

The Olympic Day programme began with a 1.7-kilometre community walk along the waterfront in Al Hail North. Participants of different ages joined the walk, underlining the message that physical activity can be incorporated into daily life through simple and accessible activities.

The event also provided participants with opportunities to discover and try a wide range of sports, including taekwondo, karate, athletics, badminton, table tennis, teqball, sepak takraw, 3x3 basketball, wheelchair basketball and tennis.

Sports specialists, coaches and athletes were present at the different activity areas, allowing visitors to learn more about each discipline and encouraging them to explore sports suited to their interests and abilities.

Golf was also among the sports

showcased at the event. HH Sayyid Azzan, who plays golf himself, encouraged those involved in the sport to use community occasions such as Olympic Day to introduce visitors to golf, encourage them to learn more about the discipline and give it a try. The programme also featured a Strongest Man competition, where participants tested their physical strength through a series of challenges, including a car-lift deadlift and a log-lift challenge.

Winners of the Fitness Challenge, which had been held over several weeks, were also announced during the event following final measurements.

Children and families were another major focus of the programme. Dedicated areas offered activities including skateboarding, drawing, colouring, face painting and interactive games. Held under the theme ‘You Can Do This! Let’s Move’, Olympic Day 2026 underlined the OOC’s broader objective of taking sports beyond competitive arenas.

SPORTS

OMAN SHIFT FOCUS TO ARAB CHAMPIONSHIP WITH SOHAR CAMP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

BARELY a week after completing their continental campaign in Japan, Oman's men's volleyball team will return to training on Wednesday as preparations begin for their next assignment at the 24th Arab Men's Volleyball Championship in Jordan.

The national team will assemble at Sohar Sports Complex for a domestic training camp running until September 30, providing head coach Nizar al Shukaili with an important preparation window ahead of the Arab tournament, scheduled from October 4 to 14.

The camp will allow the technical staff to assess Oman's recent performances at the AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship and address areas that require improvement before the team travels to Jordan.

Training is expected to focus on restoring physical readiness following a demanding Asian campaign, while further developing coordination and tactical organisation. Reception, serving, blocking and transitions between defence and attack will be among the key areas of attention during the Sohar gathering.

The short turnaround between the two tournaments presents another challenge for the national side, with Al Shukaili looking to maintain match sharpness while making adjustments based on the lessons from Japan.



Oman's national volleyball team gained valuable continental experience during the Asian Championship in Japan.

The short turnaround between the two tournaments presents another challenge for Oman, with the coach looking to maintain match sharpness while making adjustments based on the lessons from Japan.

Oman faced high-level opposition in all three Pool A matches at the Asian Championship. They opened against hosts Japan and produced a spirited display despite a 3-1 defeat, becoming the only team in the group stage to take a set from the Asian powerhouse in that encounter.

Australia then handed Oman a straight-set defeat in their second match before Bahrain won 3-0 in the final group fixture, ending Oman's campaign in the preliminary round.

While the results fell short of expectations, the tournament provided valuable exposure for several younger

members of the squad and continued the technical staff's approach of combining emerging players with experienced internationals.

IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITY
The upcoming Arab Championship now offers Oman an immediate opportunity to respond and return to winning form.

The national side had enjoyed a strong run before travelling to Japan, highlighted by their historic triumph at the second West Asia Men's Volleyball Championship in Muscat in July.

Oman claimed the regional title for

the first time after defeating Qatar in straight sets in the final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, capping an impressive campaign on home soil.

That success, followed by matches against some of Asia's established teams, has given Oman a sustained period of high-level competition heading into the Arab event.

The technical staff will now aim to turn that accumulated experience into greater consistency in Jordan, with the Sohar camp serving as the final major phase of preparation before the squad enters another important regional challenge.

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SHORT TAKES



Madayn seeks to expand services supporting industrial and logistics activity in the city.

MADAYN OFFERS FOUR SUR INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has offered four investment opportunities in Sur Industrial City, where cumulative investment reached about RO 2.3 billion by the end of the first half of 2026.

The opportunities cover the development of a private hospital, a specialised training centre, a quarry and an integrated residential complex as Madayn seeks to expand services supporting industrial and logistics activity in the city.

Eng Nasser bin Hamoud al Mabsali, Director General of Sur Industrial City, said the proposed medical centre would provide primary healthcare and supporting medical services to employees of companies operating in the industrial city as well as residents of surrounding areas.

The land area for the project is flexible and will be offered under a renewable 30-year contract.

A second opportunity involves establishing and operating a specialised training centre offering programmes tailored to the requirements of industrial and service companies and their employees. The project will also have a flexible land allocation and a renewable 30-year contract.

Madayn is also offering a 45,000-square-metre site for a quarry supplying backfilling materials under a three-year contract.

The largest land allocation covers 182,000 square metres for an integrated residential complex aimed at meeting growing accommodation demand from companies operating in Sur Industrial City. The project will be offered under a renewable 30-year contract and must comply with health, safety and environmental requirements and Oman Energy Association (OPAL) standards.

Sur Industrial City has an eight-kilometre waterfront and hosts major LNG and fertiliser projects alongside small and medium enterprises.

Fuel support bill in Oman hits ~~162~~ million

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

OMAN spent RO 162 million supporting petroleum product prices in the first half of 2026 — roughly 4.6 times the RO 35 million allocated for the full year — according to an analysis of the Ministry of Finance's second-quarter fiscal bulletin by audit and advisory firm Nexia AMB.

Almost all of it arose in the second quarter. The fuel support line stood at RO 17 million at the end of March and reached RO 162 million by the end of June, implying about RO 145 million over three months as crude traded well above the budget assumption while domestic pump prices were held steady.

The figure sits inside an otherwise near-balanced half-year.

Public revenue reached RO 6.602 billion and spending RO 6.619 billion in the six months to June 30, leaving a deficit of RO 17 million against RO 259 million in the same period of 2025.

Revenue ran at 58 per cent of the annual estimate and spending at 55 per cent. The approved 2026 budget anticipates a full-year deficit of RO 530 million. The Ministry labels the 2026 figures preliminary.

The realised average oil price for the half was \$74 a barrel, against the \$60 assumed in the budget — but slightly below the roughly \$75 realised in the first half of 2025. Net oil revenue nonetheless rose 10 per cent to RO 3.332 billion, meaning the increase came from factors other than price, which the bulletin does not itemise.

Nexia also flags a timing effect. Oil revenue is recognised only



The uptick corresponds to a period when crude traded well above the budget assumption while domestic pump prices were held steady.

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after sale, delivery and collection are complete, so receipts lag market prices by some months.

Brent reached \$138.21 a barrel on April 7 before ending June at \$70.46 and part of the fiscal effect of that spike may therefore surface in second-half receipts.

The outlook has moved since the bulletin was published on August 23. Nexia cites the US Energy Information Administration's September Short-Term Energy Outlook, issued on September 9, which raised the Brent forecast to about \$91 for 2026 and \$74 for 2027, from \$81.91 and \$64.76 in the July edition the Ministry had used. Both paths sit above the \$60 budget assumption, though the margin narrows through 2027.

Gas was the strongest revenue line, up 32 per cent to RO 1,164 million. Oil and gas together generated about 68 per cent of public revenue in the first half,

against about 67 per cent a year earlier. Current revenue, including taxes and fees, grew 6 per cent to RO 2,045 million.

On spending, ministries and government units disbursed RO 798 million in development expenditure, up 16 per cent and equal to 61 per cent of the RO 1,300 million allocated for the year. Of that, RO 146 million went to economic transformation projects — 37 per cent of the RO 400 million line introduced under the 11th Five-Year Development Plan.

Disbursement reflects past commitments and milestones and does not by itself signal new tenders, the firm cautions.

Public debt stood at RO 14.16 billion at the end of June, up 0.3 per cent year on year but below the approximately RO 14.6 billion recorded at end-2025.

The Ministry has committed to using any additional oil revenue to cover the deficit and reduce debt.

Oman Islamic finance seeks deeper, more liquid markets

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

Oman's Islamic finance industry needs deeper capital markets, greater liquidity and a broader range of investment products to sustain its rapid expansion as the sector heads towards an estimated \$45 billion in assets this year, industry executives said.

Speaking at the IFN Oman Forum 2026, senior bankers, asset managers and legal experts said the Sultanate of Oman had built considerable scale in Islamic banking and sukuk, but capital-market products, asset management and takaful remained relatively small.

Abbas Ali, Chief Investment Officer at U Capital, said the industry was worth about \$35 billion last year, comprising roughly \$25 billion in Islamic lending and \$10 billion in outstanding sukuk.

Asset management and other capital-market products accounted for only about \$1 billion, or 2.5 per cent of the industry, he said, while Islamic banking represents around 20 per cent of system-wide banking assets.

"The market has become bigger,



Experts said Oman had built considerable scale in Islamic banking and sukuk, but capital-market products, asset management and takaful remained relatively small.

it's not become deeper, it's not become broader", Ali said.

He said Oman needed a fuller range of Sharia-compliant investment options that would allow individual and institutional investors to allocate savings across different asset classes.

A key requirement was more frequent sukuk issuance across different maturities, including short-term Islamic treasury instruments as well as medium- and long-term securities. Such instruments would help establish pricing benchmarks and improve liquidity for asset managers and investment banks. Ali said the

performance of Sharia-compliant assets showed that the issue was not necessarily investment returns. Sukuk had outperformed some conventional bond benchmarks over five- and 10-year periods, while Islamic equity strategies had also delivered competitive long-term returns.

Asad Qayyum, Managing Partner at MAQ Legal, said structural reforms under way in Oman could provide another catalyst for the industry.

Banks operating Islamic windows are expected to submit plans to the Central Bank of Oman by the end of this year as the sector

moves towards standalone Islamic banking structures, with broader corporate governance reforms targeted by 2030.

Qayyum said Islamic banking assets currently account for about 65–66 per cent of Oman's Islamic finance sector, with sukuk representing around 30 per cent. Takaful and asset management together make up only about 2–3 per cent. "We need to see growth in that", he said, adding that expansion was taking place but was not yet fast enough to make a significant impact on the industry's composition.

Legal certainty will also be important as Islamic financial products become more sophisticated, panellists said.

Qayyum said Oman already has the Central Bank of Oman's Islamic Banking Regulatory Framework, which defines Islamic banking products, but questions remain over how some structures would ultimately be interpreted and enforced by courts.

Greater legislative clarity and judicial familiarity with Islamic finance could provide investors and issuers with greater certainty, particularly in complex transactions, he said.

James Sadler, Head of Debt Capital Markets and Structured Finance at Oman Investment Bank, said Oman and the wider region already possessed considerable capacity and supply of Islamic financial products.

The next stage required "greater liquidity, greater pricing transparency, and a broader base of participation", he said.

For Oman, attracting more international investors into domestic sukuk markets over the medium term could broaden the investor base and strengthen secondary-market activity.

The discussion highlighted a shift in the industry's priorities after years of rapid balance-sheet expansion. Rather than focusing principally on increasing the headline size of Islamic finance, executives said the next phase would depend on creating deeper markets, expanding non-bank Islamic financial products and improving the mechanisms through which securities are priced and traded.

For a sector approaching \$45 billion, Ali said the priority was clear: "I'm not looking for more size, I'm looking for more depth and I'm looking for more breadth".

ADVERTORIALS

SHORT TAKES



Renault is continuing to build its presence in the Omani market.

RENAULT BEGINS VEHICLE DELIVERIES IN OMAN

MUSCAT: Renault has marked a significant milestone in its return to the Omani market with the delivery of the first Renault Koleos to a customer in Oman, marking the beginning of a new chapter for the European automotive brand in partnership with Al Hashar Automotive, the official importer and distributor of Renault in the Sultanate of Oman.

The first Renault delivery represents brand’s commitment to bringing together European excellence, modern technology, comfort and an engaging driving experience to meet the evolving needs and expectations of customers across the Sultanate of Oman.

In words of Shady Galal, Business Head, Renault Oman, “Today marks an important milestone for Renault in Oman as we deliver the very first Renault Koleos to its new owner. It is a proud moment for our team and we look forward to sharing this experience with many more customers and growing the Renault family across the Sultanate of Oman”.

Through its partnership with Al Hashar Automotive, Renault is continuing to build its presence in the Omani market, with a strong focus on delivering a complete customer experience across sales and after-sales services, supported by dedicated customer care.

As expressed by the customer, “Renault is a brand with a strong legacy, built on trust and value. Knowing that Renault is backed by the strength and reputation of Al Hashar Group gives us even greater confidence in our choice and reassurance in the quality of the brand and its after-sales support”.

Renault Oman offers a diverse line-up tailored to the evolving needs of Omani customers. From the versatile Renault Express Van, which delivers practical and dependable mobility for businesses, to the Renault Duster, a bold SUV built to combine everyday comfort with confident capability, the range reflects Renault’s approach to purposeful, accessible mobility.

But this is only the beginning. A new chapter for Renault in Oman has begun and what comes next will be worth the wait.

Renault is a leading French automotive brand with more than a century of innovation, developing vehicles that combine attractive design with human-centric technology and electric powertrains, without compromising on driving pleasure.

Renault vehicles are designed as versatile living spaces that adapt to the different aspects of everyday life.

BANKDHOFAR HOSTS INVESTMENT AND WEALTH MANAGEMENT FORUM IN SUHAR

MUSCAT: BankDhofar organised an Investment and Wealth Management Forum in the Wilayat of Suhar under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North and in the presence of senior bank officials and members of the executive management team.

The forum forms part of BankDhofar’s efforts to deepen engagement with customers and showcase its expanding range of private banking and wealth management solutions, as well as investment opportunities available to individuals, families, entrepreneurs and institutions.

In her keynote address, Hind bint Abdulmalik al Sabbagh, AGM Private Banking & Wealth Management at BankDhofar, said the forum reflects the bank’s continued commitment to enhancing the customer experience and strengthening its position as a trusted financial partner for individuals, families and business owners.

She added that the initiative embodies BankDhofar’s broader

strategy of building enduring customer relationships founded on trust, personalised service and a deep understanding of customers’ evolving aspirations, particularly against a backdrop of rapidly changing economic and investment landscapes.

BankDhofar’s Private Banking and Wealth Management business is a key specialised area of the bank, offering a comprehensive suite of services and solutions that provide customers with access to local and international investment opportunities.

Agreement signed to relaunch Geely in Oman

TOP Autos LLC - A Saud Bahwan Group Company - a leading mobility solutions provider in Oman has signed a distribution agreement with Geely Automobile International Corporation to relaunch the Geely brand in the Sultanate of Oman.

The partnership brings together Geely Automobile International Corporation’s expertise and Top Autos LLC’s local market knowledge and customer-service capabilities.

The signing ceremony was held at the Saud Bahwan Group Headquarters in Muscat and brought together senior representatives from both organisations. The event was attended by Jinjun Tian, Chief Executive Officer of Geely Auto Middle East FZC and Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Chief Executive Officer of Saud Bahwan Group and other officials.



Jinjun Tian, CEO of Geely Auto Middle East FZC and Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, CEO of Saud Bahwan Group, shake hands after signing the distribution agreement, marking the relaunch of Geely in Oman.

The partnership marks a new phase for Geely in Oman with a focus on delivering stylish, connected and safe mobility solutions aligned with the needs of customers in the Sultanate of Oman. Top Autos LLC will combine Geely’s product and technology capabilities with its established sales and after-sales infrastructure to deliver a stronger customer experience.

As part of the relaunch, Top Autos LLC will introduce the Geely Coolray facelift and Starray Plus in September 2026 at their Wattayah Showroom, expanding its lineup alongside the Emgrand, Preface and GX3 Pro to offer a five-model portfolio covering key sedan and SUV segments in Oman.

This refreshed passenger vehicle lineup combines Geely Auto’s global engineering, design, technology and safety with Top Autos LLC’s established local automotive expertise and customer service infrastructure to meet the evolving needs of Oman.

Built on Geely’s advanced modular platform architecture, the vehicles will be supported by a warranty of up to 7-years / 250,000-kilometres.

In 2025, Geely Auto Group achieved a historical milestone with total vehicle sales reaching 3,024,567 units, representing a



Geely’s passenger vehicle lineup showcased as part of the brand’s relaunch in the Sultanate of Oman.

39% year-on-year growth. International expansion served as a major growth engine, with 2026 H1 export volume reaching 474,000 units outside China.

Top Autos LLC also plans to develop a professional sales and service network across Oman, with approximately 15 sales and service points targeted when fully operational. This network expansion is intended to provide customers with greater accessibility and consistent support across the country.

Jinjun Tian, Chief Executive Officer of Geely Auto Middle East FZC, said: “Entering this partnership with Top Autos is a pivotal moment for Geely in the Middle East. Oman is a market that values both tradition and transformation, mirroring the very essence of our brand. With Top Autos’ localized

expertise and our commitment to R&D, we are confident in our ability to set a new standard for stylish, connected and safe mobility throughout the Sultanate of Oman.”

Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Chief Executive Officer of Saud Bahwan Group, said: “Our mission at Top Autos is to align with brands that embody the future of the automotive industry. Our collaboration with Geely Auto reflects this commitment, bringing advanced technology, contemporary design and smart mobility to Oman.

By combining Geely’s engineering capabilities with our established heritage of service excellence, we look forward to delivering an automotive experience that meets the expectations of customers across the Sultanate of Oman.”

Four customers win Jetour X90 Plus SUVs in Jetour campaign draw

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles LLC, the authorised distributor of Jetour vehicles in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the four winners of its highly anticipated Summer Campaign lucky draw, with each winner receiving a brand-new Jetour X90 Plus SUV.

The lucky draw marked the conclusion of the “Celebrating our Customers this Summer” campaign, which gave customers purchasing a new Jetour vehicle during the promotional period an opportunity to win one of four Jetour X90 Plus SUVs.

The four winners were delighted to learn that they had won and expressed their happiness and surprise upon receiving the news. The unexpected prizes transformed their vehicle purchase into an even more memorable experience and reflected the excitement at the heart of the summer campaign.



The lucky draw marked the conclusion of the “Celebrating our Customers this Summer” campaign.

Commenting on the occasion, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said: “It gives me immense pleasure to congratulate the four winners of our the Jetour campaign’s lucky draw. Their happiness and genuine surprise made this occasion

particularly rewarding for all of us.

At MHD Automobiles, we believe that our relationship with our customers extends well beyond the purchase of a vehicle.

Initiatives such as this allow us to thank them for their trust while creating memorable experiences that strengthen their connection with the Jetour brand.

We wish each winner many enjoyable journeys in their new Jetour X90 Plus”.

The summer campaign offered customers a compelling combination of attractive vehicle prices, complimentary ownership benefits and the opportunity to win a premium family SUV.

Depending on the selected model, benefits included free insurance and registration, complimentary service up to 50,000 km and free window tinting on the Jetour G700.

The Jetour X90 Plus offers a

combination of bold styling, generous interior space, advanced technology and everyday versatility. Designed to accommodate the needs of modern families, it delivers a comfortable and refined driving experience for both daily travel and longer journeys.

The successful conclusion of the campaign reflects Jetour’s growing presence in Oman and MHD Automobiles’ continued commitment to delivering greater value, rewarding customer loyalty and creating engaging ownership experiences.

Jetour vehicles are available across the Sultanate of Oman at showrooms in Al Athaiba, Al Maabehla, Barka, Suhar, Al Buraimi, Salalah and the Mall of Oman.

For further information about the Jetour range, customers may visit their nearest showroom or call 80080222.

SHORTTAKES



The conference, scheduled to begin on October 12, will be hosted by Nama Electricity Distribution in collaboration with IEEE Oman.

OMAN ENERGY
CONFERENCE
TO DRAW 5,000
PARTICIPANTS

MUSCAT: Around 5,000 energy professionals are expected to attend the fifth Oman Electricity and Energy Conference next month, with discussions focusing on grid resilience, renewable energy, storage and emerging technologies shaping the power sector.

The conference, scheduled to begin on October 12, will be hosted by Nama Electricity Distribution Company in collaboration with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Oman Section.

Participants will include representatives from utilities, government institutions, regulatory bodies, technology companies, consultancies and research centres from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

The conference will examine future trends in electricity generation and distribution, including advances in energy storage and recovery during periods of peak demand. Emerging technologies such as wireless electricity transmission using ultrasonic waves will also feature in the programme.

Organisers said the event would showcase international technologies in electricity production, generation and distribution while addressing challenges facing the global power industry and the efficient use of natural resources.

Eng Khalfan bin Nasser al Bartamani, Head of Commercial Affairs at Nama Electricity Distribution Company, said the 2026 conference would be the largest edition to date.

The programme will focus on energy transmission pathways and grid resilience as Oman expands renewable energy capacity and works to modernise its electricity infrastructure.

CBO gold value doubles
to ~~RO~~468 million in 2025

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

THE value of bullion held by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) doubled to RO 468.1 million at the end of 2025, from RO 234 million a year earlier, as higher global gold prices generated a substantial revaluation gain on the central bank's holdings.

CBO's 2025 financial statements put the value of bullion at RO 468.125 million on December 31, 2025, compared with RO 233.993 million at the end of 2024. The annual increase amounted to RO 234.1 million, or 100.1 per cent.

A significant part of that increase reflected valuation rather than an equivalent rise in physical gold holdings.

The central bank recorded a RO 157.010 million revaluation gain on bullion under other comprehensive income during 2025, more than three times the RO 48.760 million recorded a year earlier. The revaluation gain alone accounted for about two-thirds of the annual increase in the reported value of bullion.

The gain was recorded outside net profit, which stood at RO 194.096 million for the year, distinguishing the change in the carrying value of gold from the CBO's ordinary earnings.

The difference between the RO 234.1 million increase in bullion value and the RO 157 million revaluation gain is about RO 77.1 million. However, the published financial statements do not provide a detailed reconciliation of gold acquisitions, disposals and valuation movements, meaning the residual cannot be treated simply as the value of new purchases.

Earlier information provides some context on the physical position. Oman Daily reported on April 2, 2026, citing a CBO study, that the central bank's gold holdings had reached 8.74 tonnes by October 2025, when they represented around 9.4 per cent of its net foreign reserve portfolio.

The study, according to the newspaper, said the CBO had been gradually increasing



The CBO's gold holdings had reached 8.74 tonnes by October 2025

its gold position since 2022.

The latest annual accounts do not disclose the physical quantity held at the end of December, making it important to distinguish between growth in the value of the bullion position and growth in the amount of gold itself.

The pattern is also visible across global reserve portfolios. The European Central Bank's The international role of the euro, June 2026, published on 2 June, found that gold accounted for 27 per cent of total official foreign reserves at the end of 2025, compared with 22 per cent for US Treasuries and 15 per cent for the euro.

But when the ECB recalculated the figures using the gold price prevailing at the end of 2023, gold's share fell to 16 per cent, equal to the euro, while US Treasuries rose to 26 per cent. The comparison illustrates how higher prices alone can materially alter the apparent composition of reserves without an equivalent shift in underlying holdings.

Central-bank demand nevertheless remained strong. The World Gold Council estimated net purchases by central banks and other official institutions at 863.3 tonnes in 2025, compared with 1,092.4 tonnes in 2024.

For Oman, bullion represented about 6.3 per cent of the CBO's RO 7.476 billion in gross foreign assets including bullion at end-2025. Securities remained the largest component at RO 3.618 billion, followed by placements abroad at RO 2.915 billion.

The ECB has also pointed to the trade-offs associated with gold as a reserve asset, including price volatility, the absence of remuneration, storage costs for physical holdings and constraints on supply.

For Oman, the higher value of the CBO's gold position adds to reserve diversification, but it also means that movements in international gold prices can have a greater effect on the reported value of that part of the reserve portfolio — in either direction.

Oman's advanced air mobility strategy enters consultation phase

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

Oman's push to develop a national framework for next-generation aviation is entering a key new phase, with the international GUAMobility consortium launching its second mission in the Sultanate to advance the National Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Strategy.

The latest phase shifts the focus from initial strategic alignment and stakeholder mobilisation to intensive consultation, data gathering and validation of proposed strategic directions against Oman's operational requirements, according to GUAMobility.

Seven workshops are scheduled in Muscat during September, bringing together government authorities, operators, technology companies and other economic stakeholders to help shape the national roadmap for the phased deployment of AAM technologies.

The programme begins with a workshop focused on AAM companies and prioritisation of potential use cases, followed by discussions covering urban planning, infrastructure and tourism. Subsequent sessions will



The GUAMobility-led international consortium was formally mandated in June to develop Oman's National Advanced Air Mobility Strategy.

address cross-sector coordination within the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), training and skills development, regulation and safety, low-altitude aviation security, airspace management and Unmanned Aircraft Traffic Management (UTM).

The consultation programme concludes on September 23 with a workshop dedicated

to investment, financing and public-private partnerships.

According to GUAMobility, the exercise will gather data on the needs, constraints and priorities of authorities, operators and economic stakeholders, helping underpin the national roadmap and prepare the ground for subsequent stages of AAM deployment.

"The ambition goes far beyond drones and eVTOLs," the consortium said, describing the initiative as an effort to create a new dimension within Oman's mobility, aviation and logistics ecosystem aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

The GUAMobility-led international consortium was formally mandated in June by MoTCIT, in coordination with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Oman Logistics Center (OLC), to develop Oman's National Advanced Air Mobility Strategy.

The programme is intended to establish a framework for the progressive integration of drones and electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft into Omani airspace. Potential applications include passenger transport, cargo logistics, emergency medical

services, search and rescue, infrastructure inspection, security and oil and gas operations.

GUAMobility's core consortium partners include Innovitech, DTA International and Oman-based GIS HUB, supported by specialist partners including Egis, Setec, CGX, Jade Advisory, MIXHIVE, LUNA and FRACS, bringing expertise spanning innovation, engineering, infrastructure, geospatial technologies, aviation safety and strategic advisory services.

The initiative also dovetails with Oman's broader National Aviation Strategy 2040. During its 2027–2030 "Acceleration and Takeoff" phase, the national aviation roadmap specifically envisages establishing an AAM regulatory framework, developing a nationwide UTM platform and activating advanced air mobility within a controlled sandbox environment.

The latest mission is therefore expected to help bridge the gap between high-level strategy and eventual real-world deployment - a progression GUAMobility characterises as moving "from Strategy to Sandbox" and ultimately "from Sandbox to Operations".

MARKET WATCH

Gold steadies ahead of Fed decision



Gold prices stabilised ahead of the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy decision after touching a more than one-month low.

Spot gold held at \$4,300.96 per ounce. Markets expect a quarter-point interest rate hike following stronger inflation data, while elevated Treasury yields, geopolitical tensions and rising oil prices continue to influence sentiment. — ONA

SUPPLY CONCERNS

Oil rises on Middle East tensions



Oil prices rose as escalating Middle East tensions kept concerns over global supply disruptions elevated. Brent gained 1.18 per cent to \$106.93 per barrel, while WTI climbed 1.24 per cent to \$102.65. Higher energy costs are also adding to global inflationary pressures, reinforcing expectations that central banks could maintain tighter monetary policies. — ONA

REFINERY DISRUPTION

Drone strikes hit Russian diesel output



Half of Russia's six biggest diesel-producing refineries have significantly reduced or halted output following drone attacks, tightening global fuel supplies. The six facilities account for about half of Russian diesel production. The disruptions have forced Moscow to restrict fuel exports, adding pressure to markets already strained by the Iran conflict. — Reuters

OPINION

Advancing sustainable fuels for aviation, maritime industry



DOMINIC EMERY

The writer is Chair of HutanBio and a veteran expert in climate change and the energy transition.

NEARLY all fuel used today derives from fossil fuels. In reality, for hard-to-abate sectors like aviation, shipping and heavy road transport, there is limited availability of viable sustainable fuel available at the scale required to undertake a meaningful shift. The small pool of biofuel drawing on used cooking oil and tallow is expensive, variable in quality and difficult to access. Unlike passenger and lightweight vehicles — which can take advantage of advancing battery technology — aircraft and vessels carrying heavy payloads across oceans cannot, and will continue to require the energy density that liquid fuels provide. The constraint at hand carries severe consequences. Global sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) production is expected to reach roughly 2.4 million tonnes this year — less than one percent of all aviation fuel consumed. The maritime industry, meanwhile, is pursuing wind-assist technologies, efficiency improvements and dual-fuel vessels, but its transition to sustainable fuels remains problematic. Reaching net-zero by 2050 will require annual SAF output in the vicinity of 500 million tonnes — a more than 200-fold expansion within 24 years. Behind the crunch lie two linked constraints: limited availability of sustainable feedstocks and biocrudes suitable for refining and insufficient biorefinery capacity. Refiners are, understandably, reluctant to commit capital without assurance of consistent feedstock supply. While bio-based fuels already exist,

their supply base is limited and, in certain respects, contentious. Crop-derived feedstocks — including corn, soy and palm — compete directly with food production and can drive land conversion, including the expansion of large-scale monocultures at the expense of natural ecosystems and, in some cases, primary forest. Used cooking oil and animal tallow belong to the more defensible alternatives, but their available supply is inherently limited and increasingly sought after. The dominant SAF production pathway today relies heavily on these and other lipid feedstocks, making diversification increasingly important. Under EU regulation, this constraint is reflected in policy: waste oils and fats sit in Annex IX, Part B of the Renewable Energy Directive and are capped at 1.7% of the transport fuel mix. Advanced feedstocks such as forestry residues, other lignocellulosic materials and algae can mitigate many of these pressures. With freshwater already scarce and limited national land suitable for agriculture, balancing food security, energy security and decarbonisation poses a formidable challenge for countries like Oman. Absent a domestic feedstock, Oman's alternative is longer term reliance on imported fuel, or imported feedstock for domestic refining. Oman does possess, however, several thousand kilometres of pristine coastline, among the highest levels of solar irradiance globally, and extensive desert land with no competing agricultural value. These conditions offer a strong match

Unlike passenger and lightweight vehicles — which can take advantage of advancing battery technology — aircraft and vessels carrying heavy payloads across oceans cannot and will continue to require the energy density that liquid fuels provide.

for a newly identified marine microalga — Sphaerica — a feedstock with potentially high commercial as well as environmental value. Its cultivation can generate biocrude suitable for conversion into high-quality sustainable fuel, alongside biomass that can be used for other productive purposes. This particular organism needs no freshwater but thrives in very high salinity seawater and the water drawn into the system can be recycled through multiple cycles rather than extracted once and then discarded — a meaningful distinction for a country that already directs much of its scarce freshwater to agriculture. Nor does it require arable soil. Cultivation takes place on land with no food-producing value, leaving soil health undisturbed, within an enclosed photobioreactor system designed not to degrade the land beneath it and using lightweight, modular construction. Genuine diversification means directing future investment towards feedstocks that can grow at scale and achieve acceptable cost structures without reproducing the sustainability problems associated with earlier generations of biofuels. Oman's coastline and sunlight give it the means to lead that shift. I'm presently visiting the country, leading a delegation from a UK biotechnology company, HutanBio, which is dedicated to innovation in this respect. Taking part in the Oman Climate Week, we benefit from conversation with multiple parties, exploring ways our bioenergy platform can be taken forward in Oman, thereby scaling production of a sustainable, quality bio/fuel, to serve Oman as well as international markets.

CHINA DRAWS ON CRUDE INVENTORIES IN AUGUST AS REFINERY RUNS RISE

CLYDE RUSSELL

China dipped into its massive crude oil stockpile in August for the third month in the past four as increased refinery processing exceeded a modest increase in oil imports. Refineries processed about 640,000 barrels per day (bpd) more than what was available to them from imports and domestic oil production, according to calculations based on official data. China, the world's biggest crude importer, slashed its purchases to the lowest in a decade in the wake of the higher oil prices caused by the disruption to supplies from the Middle East after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. It also trimmed refinery run rates to levels sufficient to meet domestic demand, but not high enough to support exports of refined fuels, which also dropped sharply in the months following the outbreak of the Iran conflict. China does not disclose the volumes of crude flowing into or out of its strategic and commercial stockpiles, but an estimate can be made by deducting the amount of oil processed from the total crude available from imports and domestic output. On this basis, imports of 8.93 million bpd in August and domestic production of 4.34 million bpd meant refiners had a total of 13.27 million bpd available. Refineries processed 13.91 million bpd in August, the most since March, according to official data released on Tuesday, meaning throughput was 640,000 bpd more than available crude. China tapped inventories by about 500,000 bpd in May and 940,000 bpd in June, before a surplus of 210,000 bpd was seen in July as imports ticked up slightly and refinery runs stayed weak. The recent draws on China's crude inventories, which are estimated to hold at least 1.2 billion barrels, haven't been enough to outweigh builds seen in the early part of the year, with a surplus of 330,000 bpd for the first eight months. Nonetheless, it's clear that China is still undergoing a dramatic shift in response to the loss of millions of barrels of crude from the Middle East. The Strait of Hormuz, through which about 20% of global crude and refined products flowed prior to the start of the war, remains contested between Iran and the United States, while advances by Yemen's Ansar Allah group threaten Saudi exports through the Bab El Mandeb passage from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. While there is some dispute as to the exact volumes flowing from the Middle East, even the most optimistic figures point to a loss of about 5 million bpd. — Reuters

Why does everyone have a side hustle?



RAHMA AL KALBANI

The writer is a journalist and writer specialising in economic and social affairs.

WHAT do you want to be when you grow up? A teacher, a doctor, or a journalist — which was my dream. That was twenty years ago when your job title and the kind of work you did seemed to shape the life you would have. Today, I sit with my nieces and nephews and ask the same question, the ten-year-old proudly tells me he has already started his own gaming channel while my younger sister tells me about a friend who began building her fortune selling phone accessories online before she even started university. They all seem to agree on one thing, the goal is wealth that gives them freedom and it does not necessarily have anything to do with a job or a profession. These conversations always leave me with bigger questions, why are so many people today looking for something beyond a single job and a single source of income? Is it simply about making more money and buying a little freedom from the traditional nine to five, or are we also looking for something a salary alone may not give us — “a sense of purpose, ownership and meaning”? A 2022 Harvard Business Review study found that 90 per cent of employees and executives surveyed around the world wanted their work to bring a sense of purpose to their lives. Perhaps then the side hustle is not always about the extra income and sometimes, it is about building something that feels like your own. In recent years, this shift has become hard to miss in Oman, as small businesses seem to be everywhere, often starting from a phone or an Instagram account, selling everything from perfumes and clothes to cosmetics, homemade products and services. And the numbers suggest this is more than just a social media impression. By mid-July 2025, Oman had 10,543 licensed e-commerce

A 2022 Harvard Business Review study found that 90 per cent of employees and executives surveyed around the world wanted their work to bring a sense of purpose to their lives. Perhaps then the side hustle is not always about the extra income and sometimes, it is about building something that feels like your own.



By mid-July 2025, Oman had 10,543 licensed e-commerce businesses, after growing at a compound annual rate of 191 per cent between 2020 and 2025.

businesses, after growing at a compound annual rate of 191 per cent between 2020 and 2025, and local e-payment transactions also jumped from 67 million in 2024 to more than 168 million in 2025. This is not just happening in Oman, as the same shift towards starting something of your own can be seen around the world, with more than 900,000 new businesses started in the UK in 2023 according to NatWest's New Startup Index, while the number of online stores hosted by Squarespace jumped from around 12,700 in 2020 to 300,000 by early 2024, showing how quickly the idea of having your own small business has spread. Although a side hustle can be a good way to earn some extra income as living costs rise, it can also give you the chance to try, plan and learn how to run something of your own. But as easy as it may seem — to start a business today with just a phone and a social media account — succeeding is another story, especially as more people enter the market and competition grows. So perhaps keeping the day job is not such a bad idea after all. Research published in the Academy of Management Journal found that entrepreneurs who started their businesses, while keeping their jobs, had better chances of survival when they later moved into full-time entrepreneurship. So maybe a steady salary is still the safety net we need before becoming a little braver with our business adventures. I am not sure whether this article has answered why people are no longer satisfied with just one job, or whether it will tempt you to try your own luck in the world of business. But one thing seems clear is that the question itself is changing. Perhaps “What do you want to be when you grow up?” is no longer the right one, as the new generation does not seem interested in defining itself by a single job title. They can be employees, business owners and content creators all at once and perhaps something completely different a few years later, so maybe the question we will hear more often in the future is simply: What do you want to build?

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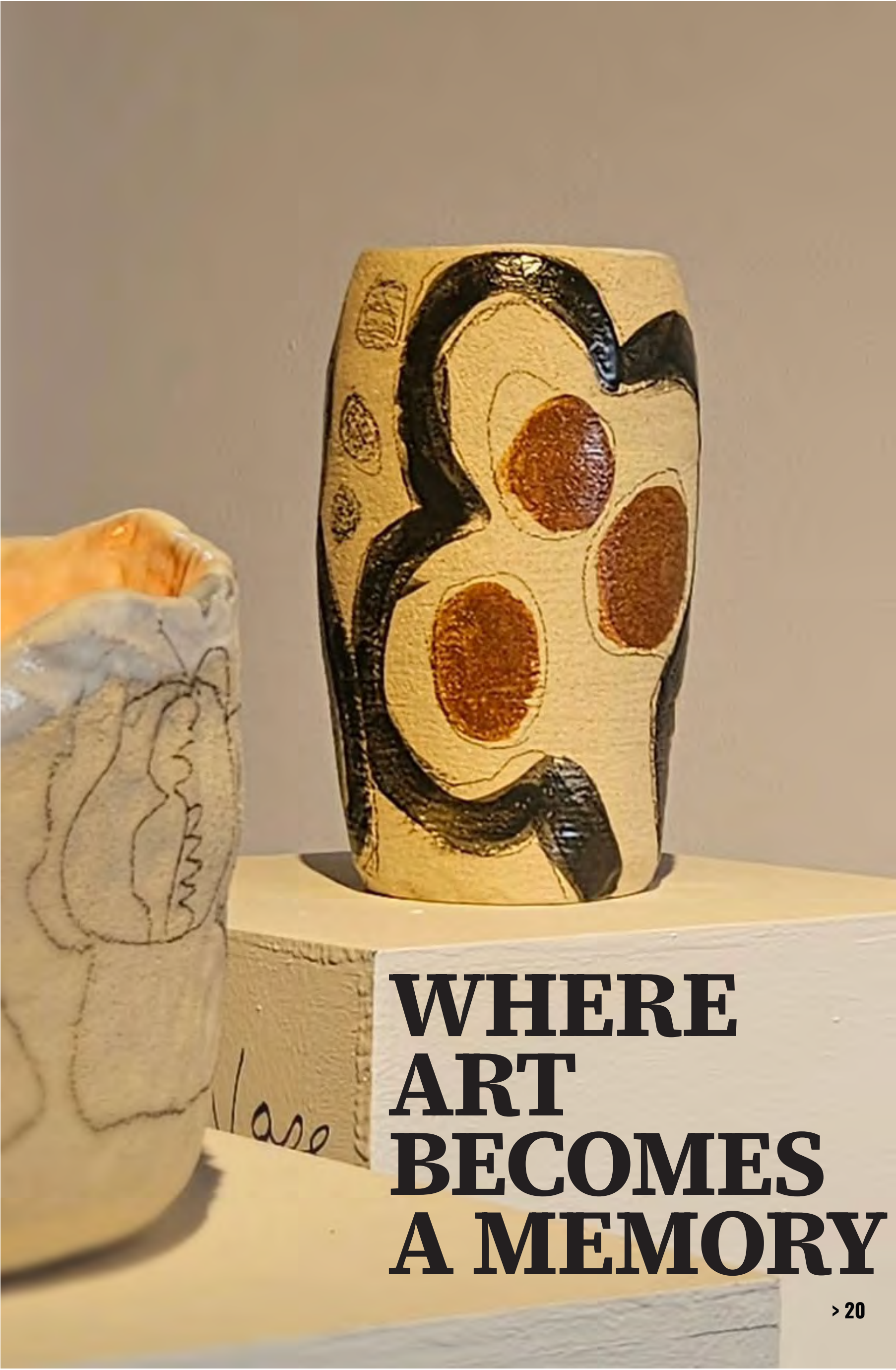


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ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

PRESS 0 TO SPEAK TO A HUMAN



Yeru Ebuen
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

There was a time when being angry with customer service at least meant someone had to listen to you. You called. Someone answered. You explained what happened, sometimes calmly, sometimes after you had lost your patience. The person on the other end might not solve the problem immediately, but at least somebody heard it. Today, increasingly, nobody does. Call a service provider and you are welcomed by a recorded voice. Press one. Press two. Enter your account number. Then comes the link to a website, an app or a chatbot.

You type your problem. “I understand your concern”, it replies. Except, of course, it doesn’t. Whether it is electricity, water, telecommunications, banking or deliveries, getting through to an actual person can sometimes feel like completing an obstacle course. And perhaps there

Perhaps, while we are busy teaching machines how to behave like humans, machines are quietly teaching us how to behave like them. File the complaint. Get the number. Wait. Maybe this will change.

is a bigger problem here than inconvenience. It is much easier to avoid responsibility when nobody has to hear the frustration on the other end. A family without water becomes a ticket. An internet connection that has been down all day becomes a reference number.

Money that has disappeared becomes a case marked “pending”. There is no anger in a case number. There is no urgency in a ticket. The system doesn’t hear the exhaustion in your voice. It doesn’t understand that what may be a routine technical problem to a company might be an emergency to you.

So we learn to behave differently too. We stop getting angry because there is nobody to get angry with. We choose the nearest category from a menu even when none describes our problem. We shorten complicated stories into tiny chat boxes.

Perhaps, while we are busy teaching machines how to behave like humans, machines are quietly teaching us how to behave like them.

File the complaint. Get the number. Wait. Maybe this will change.

AI is improving quickly. Customer service systems may eventually become extraordinarily good at understanding what we need. Perhaps one day we will wonder why we ever spent 20 minutes waiting for someone to answer a telephone. I hope so. Because right now, technology seems good enough to remove the human being, but not quite good enough to replace what that human being gave us.

Sometimes that wasn’t even a solution. Sometimes it was simply knowing that somebody had listened.

So perhaps companies should keep one old-fashioned option somewhere in that increasingly clever menu: Press 0 to speak to a human.

What has been your most frustrating experience with modern customer service? Are we already living in the future, or should we brace ourselves for what comes next?

Q U I C K F E A T U R E S



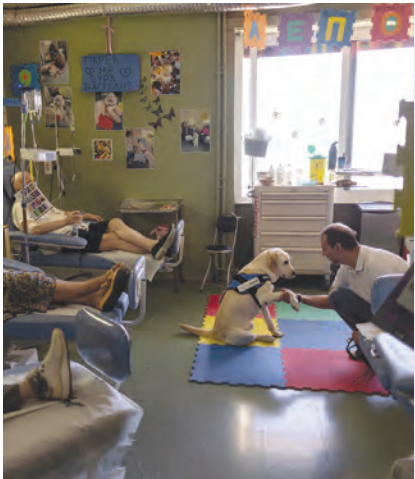
RUNWAY

A model has their make up done during the Spring/Summer 2027 Indigenous New York Fashion Week. — Reuters



CULTURE

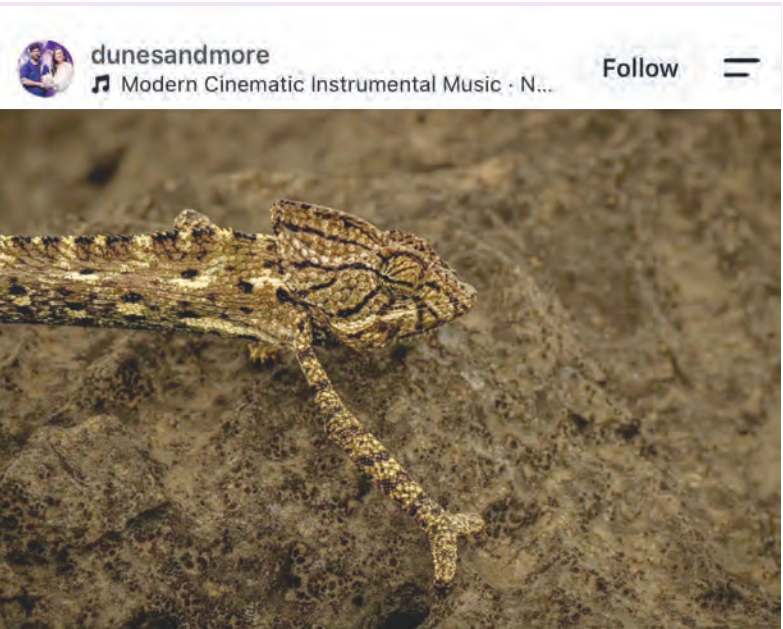
Performers in colourful traditional attire take part in a cultural dance during a regatta in Yoff, Dakar, Senegal. — Reuters



FURRY FRIENDS

Emotional support dog “Dylan” comforts cancer patients at Metaxa Cancer Hospital in Greece. — Reuters

INSTA PICKS



Arabian chameleon



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MUSK THREATENS TO SUE DOCUMENTARY MAKER



The documentary traces the career and life of Elon Musk. — AFP

Elon Musk’s lawyers put the makers of a new four-hour documentary about the multibillionaire on formal legal notice days before its premiere, warning that the film defames him.

The film premiered last week at the Venice Film Festival to a lengthy standing ovation and strong reviews.

Alex Gibney traces the career and life of the South Africa-born Musk from dot-com entrepreneur in Silicon Valley in the early 2000s to becoming the world’s first trillionaire.

It also delves into his personal life, including his difficult childhood and the 14 known children he has fathered with a series of women.

Trade bible Variety called it a “lacerating portrait”, while Deadline said the “damning” film had “thrashed” Musk as “petty, narcissistic, megalomaniacal, cruel”.

The letter from attorney Alex Spiro, addressed to a

producer at Alex Gibney’s Jigsaw Productions, accuses the Oscar-winning documentarian of building “Musk” around a predetermined conclusion.

It also says Gibney refused to fact-check the film with the world’s richest man.

“This project did not begin as an inquiry.

It began with a conclusion”, Spiro wrote.

Jigsaw hit back in a statement to The Hollywood Reporter, saying scrutiny of powerful public figures is protected by the First Amendment.

This was something all Americans should defend, “including the associates of Elon Musk, who has proclaimed himself to be a ‘free speech absolutist’”, the statement added.

Musk has spent several days attacking Gibney on X, the platform he owns, calling the film a “hit piece that misses” and dismissing it as boring.

— AFP



US actress Jean Smart won her fifth consecutive Emmy for best comedy actress for her role in “Hacks”. — AFP



US actress Allison Janney winner of Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series for “The Diplomat”. — AFP

‘WIDOW’S BAY’ AND ‘THE PITT’ WIN BIG AT EMMY AWARDS



US actor Stephen Root winner of Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series for “Widow’s Bay”. — AFP



US actor Noah Wyle winner of Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series and Outstanding Drama Series for “The Pitt”. — AFP

QUIRKY horror series “Widow’s Bay” cleaned up at Monday’s Emmys, setting a new record for the most awards won by a comedy in a single year, as gritty hospital show “The Pitt” won again for best drama.

Apple TV’s “Widow’s Bay”, which stars Matthew Rhys as the leader of an isolated New England island that appears to be haunted, emerged as one of the most talked-about debut series of the year.

With 14 total awards, “Widow’s Bay” bested the previous record for a comedy set just last year by Seth Rogen’s Hollywood satire “The Studio”, also from Apple.

Rhys, Kate O’Flynn and Stephen Root all claimed acting prizes for their roles in the hit show.

Rhys earned his first comedy Emmy and also triumphed as lead actor in a limited series for his sinister turn in “The Beast in Me”. He earned the best comedy series prize in his role as producer.

Jean Smart repeated as best comedy actress for “Hacks” — her fifth award for the series in as many

seasons.

“What a ride this has been!” Smart said.

The win was her eighth acting Emmy, tying her with Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Cloris Leachman for the most ever by a performer.

Minutes later, Allison Janney equalled the record with her win for best drama supporting actress for “The Diplomat”.

Host Mariska Hargitay, the “Law and Order: SVU” star, opened the awards gala with a song and dance.

“The Pitt” won its second consecutive Emmy for best drama.

The smash series follows stressed workers in a Pittsburgh emergency room, with each episode unfolding in real time.

The hit had led all shows with 25 nominations and clocked six statuettes by night’s close.

Star Noah Wyle won his second straight acting prize, and took home another statuette for best series as one of its producers.

“Pluribus” star Rhea Seehorn nabbed the statuette for best actress in a drama.

Sally Field notched the award for best actress in a limited series

or television movie, for her turn in “Remarkably Bright Creatures”.

The beloved performer gave a fiery speech that offered thinly veiled criticism of efforts to merge Paramount and Warner Bros.

“Our diversity, our unique storytelling matters. We can’t let those voices be silenced or compromised or merged”, Field said.

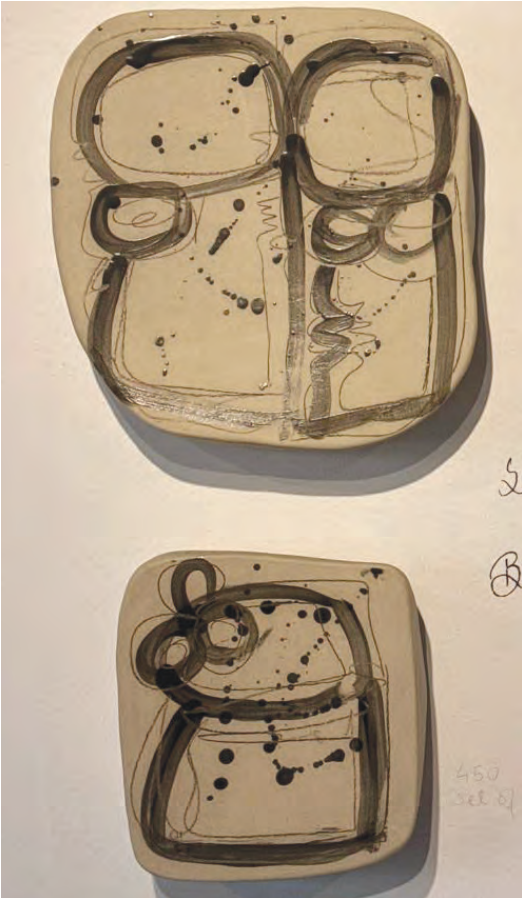
The 78th Emmy Awards gala featured a tribute to late country music icon Dolly Parton, who was also an Emmy winner.

“She was genuine and humble, supportive and blisteringly funny”, said Field, her co-star in the film “Steel Magnolias”, who then introduced country singer Reba McEntire to sing “Appalachian Memories”.

Noah Kahan sang “Bridge Over Troubled Water” during the broadcast’s In Memoriam segment, which included a heartfelt remembrance of Catherine O’Hara.

Jamie Lee Curtis delivered a tearful homage to Rob Reiner, calling the late filmmaker and actor “generous and kind and funny as hell”. — AFP

FEATURES



FRAGRANCE OF BELONGING :
WHERE
ART
BECOMES A MEMORY

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

A familiar scent can take us somewhere long before a photograph or a painting does. A trace of frankincense can recall a childhood home, while the fragrance of roses may bring back a place, a person or a moment thought to be forgotten. It was this intimate relationship between scent, memory and place that lay at the heart of artist Radhika Hamalai's The Fragrance of Belonging, an exhibition held at H1 Art Gallery in Al Qurum. Bringing together painting, handmade ceramics, hand-painted furniture and fragrance, the exhibition transformed the

gallery into a space where art was not merely observed, but sensed, remembered and experienced. For Hamalai, belonging was not a fixed idea. It was something formed gradually through the places we inhabit, the people we encounter and the sensations that remain with us. "We are not born with an introduction", she said. "We sort of come into a space and we are given a name and our identities are formed". Originally from India and having lived in Oman for around 35 years, Hamalai described Oman as her home. That sense of belonging ran through the exhibition, where local materials and scents became part of her artistic

Fragrance became an invisible medium, with frankincense from Dhofar and Omani rose providing olfactory threads connecting the artworks to place. Hamalai saw scent as another language of art, capable of evoking emotions and memories as powerfully as colour, texture or form.

vocabulary. A painter by profession, Hamalai had increasingly ventured into ceramics, working with clay sourced from Oman. Through her art studio, Inma Arts, she also taught others to create ceramics, extending her interest in the handmade and the intimate relationship between people and objects. The exhibition's most distinctive element, however, was perhaps what could not be seen. Fragrance became an invisible medium, with frankincense from Dhofar and Omani rose providing olfactory threads connecting the artworks to place. Hamalai saw scent as another language of art, capable of evoking emotions and memories as powerfully as colour, texture or form. "Fragrance is a very important part because here the bukhoor is very important", she said. "Everything is sourced from Oman. This is my home". Among the works that held a special place for her was Being Together, a versatile ceramic piece that could be hung on a wall, placed on a table or even used to serve food. For Hamalai, its adaptability carried a deeper meaning. "I think we as humans have to be that flexible, that we can fit into any category or anywhere at any given point of time", she explained, linking the object's multiple functions to the human need for connection and self-understanding. Visitors were invited to slow down rather than simply look. "When you come inside, you have to be absolutely in the state of being calm", Hamalai said. "The moment you start smelling, your senses should be like, 'Oh, I can smell this'". From there, she hoped the scent would lead visitors towards their own memories, a familiar place, a forgotten moment or perhaps a realisation of where they came from. In The Fragrance of Belonging, Hamalai removed the distance between artwork and everyday life. Furniture became a canvas, ceramics became companions and fragrance became a bridge between the visible and invisible. Perhaps, she suggested, belonging was not found in one particular place, but in the small sensations that told us, quietly and unmistakably, that we were home.