

IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO CHINA, CYPRUS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China on his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his good wishes to President Xi and the people of his country. His Majesty also sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Nikos Christodoulides of the Republic of Cyprus on the anniversary of his country’s Independence Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan wished Cyprus continuous progress and stability.

OBJECTIONS ON PRELIMINARY LISTS ENDS TODAY

The period for filing objections to the names listed in the preliminary candidate lists for the fourth-term municipal council elections will conclude on Thursday. The Ministry of Interior had set a five-day objection period starting from the date the preliminary lists were announced. Objections may be submitted through the ‘Intikhab’ application or the elections website (elections.om). Meanwhile, the Media Committee for the 4th term Municipal Council elections held its second meeting, chaired by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Chairman of the Committee, with the attendance of the committee members.

OMAN REGISTERS ‘RAZAT’ BANANA WITH UPOV



The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, represented by the Directorate-General of Agriculture and Animal Research, has completed the technical procedures required to register the ‘Razat’ banana variety submitted by the Royal Court Affairs, represented by the management of the Royal Razat Farm, with the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV). The registration of the variety follows the completion of the necessary technical examinations and tests in accordance with the approved rules and guidelines for novelty, distinctness, and stability testing of plant varieties.

DETAILS ON P4

H M gives audience to Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi

HM and Shaikh Tahnoon discuss regional situation



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday to Shaikh Tahnoon bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and National Security Adviser of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). At the outset of the audience, the guest conveyed the greetings of Shaikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, to His Majesty the Sultan, along with his good wishes for continuous good health and well-being. On his part, His Majesty asked the guest to convey his greetings to Shaikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, along with his wishes to him and the Emirati people for continued growth, development, and prosperity.

The audience discussed a set of topics of interest to the two countries at various levels, in a manner that serves the common interests and aspirations. In addition, views were exchanged on the rapid developments in the region and ways to achieve calm and de-escalate tensions through balanced diplomatic means and intensified coordination and consultation, to safeguard the interests and security of states. The audience was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, and Abdulsalam

bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority. Meanwhile, it was attended from the Emirati side by Ali al Shamsi, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for National Security, Mohamed bin Hassan al Suwaidi, Minister of Investment, and a number of officials. The guest was welcomed and seen off at the Royal Private Airport by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, accompanied by Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, and Shaikh Mohammed bin Maktoum al Maktoum, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

SEE ALSO P2

ZERO VAT ON 1,546 GOODS AND PRODUCTS FROM TODAY

MUSCAT: The new decisions made by the Tax Authority reducing value added tax (VAT) on 1,546 products to zero VAT come into effect from today (Thursday). Products and services subject to the decision encompass food, health, agriculture, and livestock sectors. The decisions update the existing list of basic goods and add new items of medical, health and veterinary products. The Tax Authority said that the

review and update of the lists were carried out in direct coordination and consultation with relevant government entities, including the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. The decisions also took into consideration feedback and suggestions received from consumers, suppliers and businesses. The Tax Authority said that the total number of basic food items

with zero VAT has been increased to 807, compared to 513 previously. The decisions also include new types of vegetables, fruits, cheeses, seafood and some types of flour. The food list includes a number of basic commodities such as live animals: cows, sheep, goats, camels and poultry intended for breeding, slaughter or milk production, as well as fresh, chilled, frozen or minced beef, sheep, goats, camels and poultry.

3.4% rise in number of health institutions in Oman

MUSCAT: The number of health institutions in the Sultanate of Oman increased to 2,464 in 2025, recording a growth of 3.4 per cent compared with 2024, according to data from the Health Statistics 2026 publication issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The data also showed growth in the health workforce, increases in a number of healthcare services, and improvements in several maternal and child health indicators. The total number of health

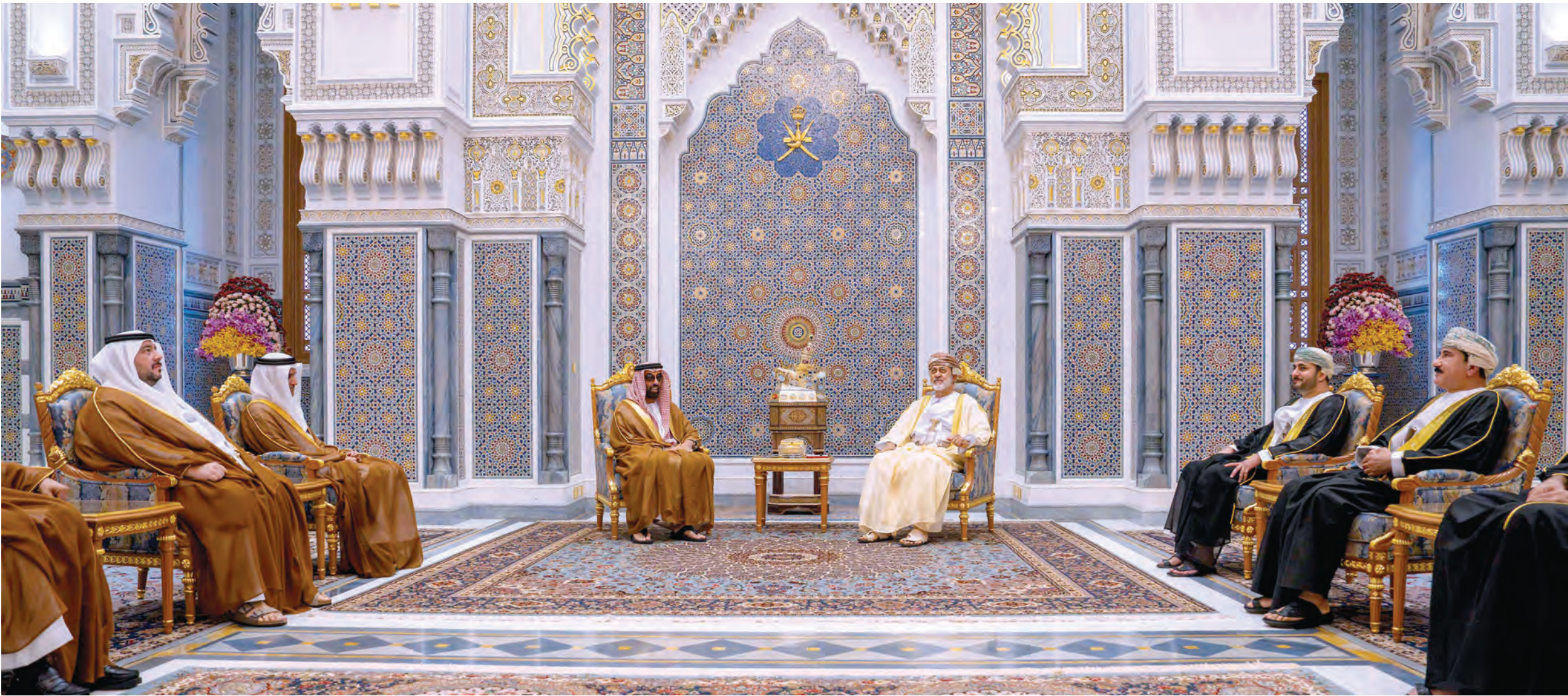
institutions in the government and private sectors increased by 80 during 2025, with Muscat Governorate recording the highest increase at 21 health institutions. The number of government and private hospitals stood at 98, compared with 94 hospitals in 2024. The health workforce also grew during the year, with Omanis accounting for 51 per cent of the total. The number of Omani doctors increased by 12 per cent to around



43,000 doctors in 2025, compared with 38,000 doctors in 2024. In terms of healthcare services, the total number of outpatient visits to Ministry of Health institutions increased to 16.1 million visits in 2025, up 3 per cent from 15.6 million visits in 2024. The total number of surgical procedures performed at Ministry of Health institutions also increased by 9 per cent to 101,7000 procedures in 2025, compared with 931,000 procedures in 2024.

Dialysis sessions increased by 5 per cent between 2024 and 2025, reaching around 401,000 sessions in 2025. The number of Ministry of Health institutions with dialysis units also increased to 32 institutions. In the area of blood donation, the number of donors increased by 1.4 per cent between 2024 and 2025. Muscat Governorate accounted for around 50 per cent of all blood donors in 2025, while Omanis represented 82.7 per cent of the total. — ONA

HM GIVES AUDIENCE TO DEPUTY RULER OF ABU DHABI



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday to Shaikh Tahnoon bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and National Security Adviser of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). — ONA



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SHORT TAKES



This meeting was held on the sidelines of the participation in the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention. — ONA

ATTORNEY GENERAL VISITS PUBLIC PROSECUTION IN UAE

ABU DHABI: Nasr bin Khamis al Sawa'ee, Attorney General, paid a visit on Wednesday to the Public Prosecution in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where he met with Hamad bin Saif Al Shamsi, Attorney General of the United Arab Emirates.

This meeting was held on the sidelines of the participation in the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice held in Abu Dhabi.

During the meeting, aspects of cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates were reviewed, and ways to enhance and develop them were discussed, supporting the exchange of expertise and experiences in areas of common interest and contributing to elevating prosecutorial work. — ONA

MUNICIPALITY TO UPGRADE SALAM STREET



MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality signed an agreement with AZ Engineers and Partners to implement the Al Salam Street Upgrade Project. This falls within the municipality's efforts to develop the road and infrastructure system in Muscat Governorate, provide sustainable traffic solutions to address congestion points at vital locations, and increase the road's capacity to keep pace with urban expansion and the anticipated rise in traffic volume. The project targets two vital locations experiencing high traffic density on Al Salam Street by developing intersections and enhancing their capacity. This contributes to reducing stopping times and congestion and improving traffic flow efficiency and safety levels in the area. — ONA

Symposium seeks optimal planning for resilient infrastructure

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

The symposium “Optimal Planning Towards a Resilient Infrastructure”, organised by Oman Water Society in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, concluded with a list of recommendations that included protection of wadi beds, updating of emergency plans, early warnings of weather systems in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Sea, amongst other suggestions, including further government and private partnerships. The symposium

was held under the auspices of Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of Al Sharqiyah South. A number of researchers, specialists, experts, and representatives from various governmental and private entities in Oman participated. The symposium reviewed several research papers, studies, and experiences of researchers and specialists through 25 scientific papers addressing issues related to the impact of planning on the resilience of infrastructure through several scientific themes. The themes included climate change and its impacts on infrastructure; urban planning and



The symposium recommended periodic joint exercises.

sustainable infrastructure; the impact of planning on the resilience of infrastructure projects; and lessons learned from emergencies. The symposium recommended that operators of vital assets prepare

recommended developing reproductive health services, expanding fertility clinics, establishing a centre for research and treatment of delayed childbearing, and supporting infertility research

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Socially, it recommended mandatory, free premarital guidance programmes, a national campaign on easing marriage, a framework to cut wedding costs,

and better coordination of family counselling services. At work, it proposed a “family-friendly work environment” with flexible and remote work for pregnant and breastfeeding women, reviewed maternity leave policies, on-site childcare, flexible retirement for mothers, and measures enabling women to have children without sacrificing their careers. Speaking during the forum's panel discussion, Malik al Harthi, Director-General of Entitlements at the Social Protection Fund, said the social protection system aims to support families throughout their life cycle and strengthen their social and financial stability, urging institutions to unite around families' needs.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS MEDIA COMMITTEE MEETS

MUSCAT: The Media Committee for the 4th term Municipal Council elections held its second meeting on Wednesday, chaired by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Chairman of the Committee, with the attendance of the committee members. The committee discussed several topics, including the work carried out related to media preparations, comprising plans and procedures for covering the municipal council elections and media campaigns for members, as well as raising awareness of the importance of community participation in this event. — ONA



Family stability a shared responsibility, ethical duty

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

THE National Committee for Bioethics' 13th Intellectual Forum, held at Sultan Qaboos University on Wednesday, recommended adopting a national strategy to strengthen family stability and raise fertility rates, and adding family stability indicators to Oman Vision 2040 goals. Themed “Enhancing Family Stability: Declining Birth and Fertility Rates between Ethical Duty and National Responsibility”, the forum was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, in the presence of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU and Chairman of the committee. Dr Ahmed al Busaidi, Secretary of the committee, said the birth rate among Omanis fell from 34.0 to 20.8 per 1,000 people between 2015 and 2025, reflecting “a demographic shift with far-reaching strategic dimensions”. Dr Shaikh Kahlan bin Nabhan al Kharousi, Assistant Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman and Deputy Chairman of the committee, said earlier forums focused on improving human health, while this one addresses preserving future generations by ensuring their existence and growth. He called human capital a strategic strength, adding that fear of scarce resources should not deter people from having children. On health, the forum



The forum was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The two sides exchanged views on matters of common interest. — ONA

SAF CHIEF OF STAFF RECEIVES BRITISH MILITARY OFFICIAL

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday Lt Gen Zac Stenning, Commander of the British Land Forces, and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of military topics and exchanged views on matters of common interest.

Additionally, Brigadier Abdullah bin Hamad al Harthi, Acting Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), received at Muaskar Al Murtafaa Lt Gen Zac Stenning, Commander of the British Land Forces, and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed topics of mutual interest. — ONA

RAO COMMANDER MEETS ITALIAN CHIEF OF STAFF



The two sides discussed ways to enhance ties. — ONA

ROME: Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), met with Gen Carmine Masiello, Chief of Staff of the Italian Army, within the framework of his visit to the Italian Republic.

During the meeting, they discussed areas of military cooperation between the two sides and ways to enhance them, particularly in training, qualification, and capability development.

Additionally, the Commander of the Royal Army of Oman and his accompanying delegation visited a number of Italian Army units and were briefed on their qualitative capabilities and the advanced systems and technologies they utilise. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, represented by the Directorate-General of Agriculture and Animal Research, has completed the technical procedures required to register the “Razat” banana variety submitted by the Royal Court Affairs, represented by the management of the Royal Razat Farm, with the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV).

The registration of the variety follows the completion of the necessary technical examinations and tests in accordance with the approved rules and guidelines for novelty, distinctness, and stability testing of plant varieties. The results of the examinations and the assessment of the Plant Variety Registration Committee concluded that the “Razat” banana variety meets the technical requirements prescribed for registration, confirming its distinctness, uniformity, and stability of

MUSCAT TO HOST THIRD EU FILM FESTIVAL

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

The European Union Film Festival is back in Muscat for its third edition from October 11 to 18, 2026 at Cinépolis, Oman Avenues Mall, promising eight days of European cinematic excellence and cross-cultural dialogue.

Organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Oman Film Society, International Film Foundation of Oman (IFFO) and Oman Avenues Mall, the festival will showcase films from nine European Union member states.

Participating embassies include



The programme will include masterclasses, workshops for Omani students and young film-makers.

Austria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Romania and Spain – the same countries that made the second edition a success last year with 22

films.

Officials said the full programme in English and Arabic will be available through QR codes, with entry of RO 1.5 for the public on a

first-come, first-served basis. Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, said the ministry’s participation reflects its belief in cinema’s important role in fostering cultural dialogue and bringing people and cultures closer together. Anwar bin Khamis al Raziqi, President of the Oman Film Society, welcomed the festival and particularly the Short Film Competition as a platform for young Omani talent, stressing the Society’s commitment to strengthening international partnerships and developing Oman’s film sector.

Dementia breakthroughs face diagnostic bottlenecks

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

THE fight against dementia has hit a historic turning point, driven by accelerating scientific breakthroughs, new disease-modifying therapies, and early-detection blood tests. However, a major global report warns that millions of patients — particularly across the Middle East and the Global South — risk being left behind due to health system bottlenecks, diagnostic delays, and pervasive social stigma.

According to the World Alzheimer’s Report 2026, published by Alzheimer’s Disease International (ADI), healthcare systems must urgently modernise to deliver faster diagnoses and fairer access to clinical trials.

Local experts emphasise that public education is the first line of defence. Dr Hamed al Sinawi, senior consultant in old age psychiatry at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital and Chairman of the Oman Alzheimer’s Society, stressed that raising public awareness of early symptoms is essential so families can spot changes early and seek medical diagnosis.

Similarly, Dr Mahmood al Hinai, senior consultant neurologist, Khoula Hospital, noted that while response to recent screening drives has been encouraging, fear and stigma still deter many.

“We have had quite a few people



Raising public awareness of early symptoms is essential so families can spot changes early and seek medical diagnosis.

— AI GENERATED IMAGE

According to the World Alzheimer’s Report 2026, published by Alzheimer’s Disease International (ADI), healthcare systems must urgently modernise to deliver faster diagnoses and fairer access to clinical trials

who eagerly came forward... because of their awareness about the importance of early diagnosis,” Dr Al Hinai said. “But on the other side, many people are still reluctant and fearful... because they are unaware of the implications, as well as the stigma attached to the diagnosis itself... Counselling is very important, and explanations of early diagnosis, appropriate care plans, and how to manage implications must be conveyed.” Dr Al Hinai emphasised that memory loss is not a normal part of ageing. He recommends screening for individuals over 60 or 65 exhibiting cognitive changes, noting that initial assessments—evaluating language, behaviour, and daily habits—help rule out treatable metabolic conditions before advancing to lab work and MRI scans.

Beyond diagnosis, structural capacity remains a critical hurdle. Dr Al Hinai highlighted a shortage of specialised memory clinics, scarce treatment resources, and unclear long-term care pathways, calling on the private sector to partner with public health authorities.

The stakes are rising rapidly. More than 55 million people currently live with dementia globally, a figure projected to reach 139 million by 2050, with the steepest increases expected in developing regions.

For the first time, however, treatment options offer real promise. Breakthrough drugs such as lecanemab and donanemab target harmful amyloid proteins in the brain, slowing cognitive decline by roughly 30 per cent and offering early-stage patients an estimated eight to ten additional months of independent living.

Yet, as Dr Al Sinawi cautioned, these therapies carry serious risks—including brain swelling and microbleeds—requiring rigorous MRI monitoring. They are not a cure, but experts view them as a foundational step. Today, 158 potential drugs are in clinical trials targeting amyloid, tau proteins, inflammation, and vascular health.

The report also stresses prevention, noting that up to 45 per cent of dementia cases could be prevented or delayed through lifestyle interventions, including diet, exercise, cognitive training, and cardiovascular control.

Oman registers ‘Razat’ banana variety with UPOV



The registration of the variety follows the completion of the necessary technical examinations and tests in accordance with the approved rules and guidelines for novelty, distinctness, and stability testing of plant varieties. — ONA

characteristics in accordance with the registration application.

The registration of the “Razat” banana variety serves as a practical model of integration

between research, agricultural production, resource protection, legislation, and investment. It demonstrates how agricultural efforts can be transformed, through

documentation, evaluation, and legal protection, into scientific and economic value capable of development as national assets. These assets can contribute to supporting innovation, developing the agricultural sector, creating new investment opportunities, enhancing the added value of local products and resources, and opening broader prospects for the private sector to invest in technologies and plant resources. It also strengthens the agricultural sector’s contribution to the national economy.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources affirmed that this measure carries significance beyond being a legal or technical step to register a new plant variety in the Sultanate of Oman. It forms part of a national framework aimed at protecting, documenting and preserving plant genetic resources, and establishing frameworks that enable their development and sustainable

utilisation. This enhances the value of national agricultural resources as a wealth capable of development and investment.

Dr Safaa hint Mohammed al Farsi, Head of the Seed Research and Plant Genetic Resources Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that documenting and registering plant varieties is one of the important pathways in conserving genetic resources. The registration process is not limited to proving the characteristics of a variety and granting it legal protection; it also contributes to establishing a documented scientific and technical record that can be referenced and utilised in agricultural research and development programmes. This becomes increasingly important given the strategic value of plant genetic resources for the agricultural sector as a fundamental basis for scientific research. — ONA

NEW EXCISE DUTY ON TOBACCO PRODUCTS FROM TODAY

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

The new excise rules for tobacco products will come into effect from October 1, with the Tax Authority setting minimum standard prices for cigarettes and other tobacco products for the calculation of excise tax.

According to Decision No 206/2026

issued by the Tax Authority, a minimum standard price has been fixed for tobacco products for the purpose of excise tax calculation.

As per the decision, the standard price for a pack of 20 cigarettes will not be less than RO 1. For shisha tobacco and other ready-to-use tobacco products, the minimum standard price will be RO 2.5 per 250 grammes.

The Authority clarified that the standard price is not the retail selling price. It is only a reference value used to determine the taxable value.

“Under the new mechanism, the retail price of the product will be compared with its prescribed standard price, and excise tax will be calculated on whichever is higher. This ensures that tax is not calculated on a value below

the minimum threshold,” a source from the Authority said.

The minimum standard price will be applied proportionately for different pack sizes. If the standard price for 250 grammes of shisha tobacco is RO 2.5, it will be RO 5 for 500 grammes. Similarly, the RO 1 benchmark for 20 cigarettes will be adjusted proportionately for packs with more or fewer cigarettes.

KHOULA HOSPITAL IMPLEMENTATS VNS TECHNOLOGY



This initiative constitutes part of the hospital's efforts to expand specialised therapeutic services for epilepsy patients. — ONA

KHOULA Hospital recently began to implement the Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS) technology to treat drug-resistant epilepsy. This initiative constitutes part of the hospital's efforts to expand specialised therapeutic services for epilepsy patients.

The implementation of this technology caps off the hospital's ongoing efforts to develop its surgical epilepsy treatment programme and provides advanced treatment options for

patients who do not respond adequately to conventional medications, thereby enhancing the localisation of specialised medical services within the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Ahmed bin Sulaiman al Azri, Senior Consultant Neurosurgeon who heads the Neurosurgery Unit at Khoula Hospital, said that Khoula Hospital's launch of the VNS technology sets a new milestone in the hospital's epilepsy treatment programme. He noted that the implementation of this technology is the outcome

of integration among the hospital's neurosurgery, neurology and epilepsy teams.

Dr Ahmed pointed out that expanding these services helps minimise the need to refer such cases for treatment abroad and provides patients with advanced, specialised treatment options within the national healthcare system. He affirmed that the upcoming phase will see the introduction of specialised surgeries under the epilepsy treatment programme.

— ONA

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

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

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

Tender Documents are available at the Company's Head Office in Ghala Industrial Area from 28 September 2026 to 11 October 2026 during official working days, from 8:00 AM- 5:00PM, upon payment of the applicable Tender Fee into the Company's Bank Dhofar Account No. 01040805344006, IBAN: OM080250001040605344006. The Tender Documents will be issued upon payment of the applicable Tender Fee.

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

- Purchasers of the Tender Documents may inspect the assets at the Company's Ghala and Barka Yards during official working hours, subject to prior appointment.
 - Each bid must be accompanied by an Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) equivalent to 10% of the total bid value inclusive of VAT, provided as a certified cheque issued by a local bank, a bank deposit or transfer to the Company's account, or a bank guarantee issued by a local bank. Proof of any deposit or transfer must state the bidder's name and Tender Number.
 - Where the EMD is provided as a bank guarantee, it must remain valid for at least 30 days from the Tender closing date. Any certified cheque must be valid for collection upon presentation. The bid and original EMD instrument, where applicable, must be deposited in the Tender Box at the reception of the Company's Head Office in Ghala, Muscat, no later than 20 October 2026 at 5:00 PM. Late bids will not be accepted.
 - Tender Fees and submitted bid prices shall be inclusive of VAT. The 10% EMD shall be calculated on the total bid value inclusive of VAT.
- Contact: 2450 2581 / 82, Ext. 149 / 150; Mobile: 7722 8166 / 9294 7637.

Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education



الهيئة العمانية لضمان جودة التعليم

TENDER NOTICE

The Internal Tender Committee of the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA) hereby announces the issuance of the following tender:

Tender Number	Tender Title	Company Grade	Tender Fee	Date		
				Distribution Till	Last Day to receive Clarifications	Bid Submission Date
34/2026	Provision of Technical Support and Renewal of Licenses for Dell EMC VxRail Hardware, Software, and VMware	Companies and institutions specialized in Information Technology, registered with the Projects, Tenders, and Local Content Authority, classified under Grade (Excellent and First)	25	15 Oct 2026	22 Oct 2026	9 Nov 2026

The Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA) is hereby inviting all local, specialized bidders to participate in this TENDER as per the following instructions, in addition to all terms of TENDER enclosed in the TENDER documents

For project brief, please visit the below link:
etendering.tenderboard.gov.om

Purchase of Tender Documents

- Companies specialized in this field and registered with the Projects, Tenders, and Local Content Authority under the grade specified above, and wishing to participate in the aforementioned tender, shall obtain the relevant Tender Documents through the Authority's e-Tendering portal (Esnad) via the website below:(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) no later than the date specified in the above table, subject to the payment of the prescribed document fee .through the electronic payment gateway available on the website

Submission

- All Proposals should be SUBMITTED ONLINE AT e-TENDERING System etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- Tenders submitted shall remain valid for a period of ninety (180) days from the date of submission via the electronic portal
- The Internal Tender Committee reserves the right to cancel or reject any tender without stating the reasons
- Tenders must be submitted through the above-mentioned website no later than 10:00 a.m. on the specified closing date
- Any tender received after this deadline shall not be accepted
- The Internal Tender Committee shall not be bound to accept the lowest-priced tender or any other tender

Correspondence Tender Inquiry

All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online through the eTendering System ONLY

Tendering System Inquiry

All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and 24402200

Home exhibition from Oct 5

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning announced the Sultanate of Oman's hosting of World Habitat Day 2026, in partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), under the theme “Adequate Housing for All,” coinciding with Urban October 2026 - Home, Build & Conference Exhibition.

This came during a press forum organised by the ministry at the Experience and Sales Center in Sultan Haitham City, to introduce the event and its programme, which is held as part of the “Urban October” activities from October 5 to 8 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The exhibition will also witness the presentation ceremony of the “United Nations Honorary Award,” honouring initiatives and institutions in the field of human settlements. — ONA

Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.)

P.O. Box 311, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

DIRECTORS' REPORT THE THIRD QUARTER ENDED ON AUGUST 31, 2026

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit an unaudited financial statement of the company for the third quarter that ended on August 31, 2026, along with related reports.

Revenue is 10,031,885 as against 10,529,521 in the corresponding period of the previous year whereas net Profit after taxes for the period is 1,882,209 as against 2,051,316 in the last year.

The total shareholders fund increased from 28,712,444 at the end of August 2025 to 29,285,999 at the end of August 2026 and as a result of this growth, the net assets per share has recorded 3.696.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express the most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector. Furthermore, I would extend our gratitude to his government for their cooperation and assistance with special mention to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, Muscat Stock Exchange, and Financial Services Authority.

I conclude this report by expressing our appreciation to the shareholders, Petroleum Development Oman, our bankers and customers for their valued support and cooperation.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Financial Position		
as at 31 st August, 2026		
	2026	2025
	1,000	1,000
Fixed Assets	12,495	13,751
Current Assets		
Inventories	32	23
Trade & Other Receivables	5,665	5,827
Receivable from related party	21	41
Bank and Cash	14,654	13,382
	20,372	19,273
Total Assets	32,867	33,024
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	818	830
Payables to related parties	2,004	2,699
Lease liability	-	6
Tax liability	366	346
	3,188	3,881
Long-term Liabilities		
Deferred Tax liability	365	405
Employees' end of service benefits	28	26
	393	431
Total Liabilities	3,581	4,312
Net Assets	29,286	28,712
Shareholder's Fund		
Share Capital	7,923	7,923
Legal Reserve	2,641	2,641
Retained Earnings	18,722	18,148
Total Shareholders' Equity	29,286	28,712

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income		
For 9 months ended 31 st August, 2026		
	2026	2025
	1,000	1,000
Turnover/Revenue	10,032	10,530
Gross Profit	2,267	2,523
Other Income	399	346
Administration & General Expenses	(448)	(451)
Operating Profit	2,218	2,418
Finance Charges	(4)	(5)
Profit before taxation	2,214	2,413
Taxation	(332)	(362)
Net Profit attributable to ordinary shareholders	1,882	2,051

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be delivered to any shareholder within 7 days of receipt of the request. Such request may be sent to the Board Secretary, Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.), P.O.Box: 311, Postal Code -100, Muscat.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Ethiopian Airlines Group Chief Executive Officer and the Boeing Company Senior Vice President in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. — Reuters

ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES BUYS 10 BOEING FREIGHTERS

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopian Airlines on Wednesday signed a deal to buy 10 Boeing cargo planes, and its chief executive said the state-owned airline had the option to buy eight more.

CEO Mesfin Tasew told a signing ceremony in Addis Ababa that the deal was for eight Boeing 777-8Fs and two 777Fs. Mesfin said the catalogue price of the aircraft was \$5 billion but that the actual price agreed was confidential. He added that Ethiopian Airlines had a right to purchase eight more 777-8Fs.

The airline already operates 12 777F cargo planes, as well as three Boeing 767 freighters and four converted 737s on medium-haul routes, as part of a fleet of more than 140 jets. The airline is helping to fund a \$12.5 billion plan for what officials say will be Africa's largest airport, with phase one due to open in 2030. — Reuters

THAI FLOODS SHUT TOYOTA PLANTS AS TOLL RISES TO 40



Baggage from Thai Airways flights at Suvarnabhumi International Airport after heavy rain and flooding disrupted the airline's ground operations, in Bangkok, Thailand. — Reuters

BANGKOK: Floods in Thailand have caused the temporary shutdown of four Toyota plants and suspension of cargo operations of flag carrier Thai Airways, the companies said on Wednesday, as the country braces for more heavy rain next week. Flag carrier Thai Airways suspended inbound and outbound cargo operations from Wednesday through to October 6, with many employees unable to travel to work.

Thailand's weather agency forecast heavy rain from October 5 to 8, with increased rainfall expected in the northeast and north. Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul told reporters that Bangkok, its metropolitan area and Thailand's central region were still at risk from floodwaters flowing in from the north, and said a war room has been set up to monitor the situation.

Government spokesperson Ekkapob Pianpises put the death toll at 40, citing Health Ministry figures. In Ratchaburi, about 80 km (50 miles) west of Bangkok, riverside communities were flooded and evacuations were under way, with six other provinces put on high alert, the Office of the National Water Resources said. Authorities were draining Bangkok's floodwater into canals and aimed to return conditions to normal within two or three days, Ekkapob said. — Reuters

PASSENGERS OVERCAME PILOT WHO TRIED TO CRASH FLYDUBAI FLIGHT

TEL AVIV: The co-pilot of a flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv tried to crash the plane after stabbing the pilot, but passengers subdued him while other pilots landed the plane safely in Saudi Arabia, Israeli officials said on Wednesday. Describing the event as "a highly severe security incident", Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saudi authorities would interrogate the co-pilot of flydubai flight FZ1073 from the United Arab Emirates to Israel, which had more than 170 Israelis on board. The airline said in a statement that

the underlying reasons for the event remained unknown and warned against "premature speculation". The cause of the altercation between the pilots was not clear.

"All passengers are out of harm's way," Netanyahu said in a video statement released by his office. He also ordered tighter security on both Israeli and non-Israeli carriers flying into Israel. The passengers departed Saudi Arabia for Israel aboard a flydubai replacement aircraft after eight hours on the ground.

Netanyahu quoted a passenger as

saying that passengers along with a member of the crew broke into the cockpit after the aircraft "entered a tailspin and began to dive" and found the co-pilot "trying to sabotage the plane's systems". "They saved many lives. They prevented a heavy disaster," he said. The aircraft's flight data showed it suddenly and rapidly descended by nearly 14,000 feet in less than 30 seconds before a first emergency signal was sent on Wednesday morning, according to flight-tracking website Flightradar24. — Reuters

JOY AND FEAR IN IRAQ AS LAST US FORCES LEAVE

IRAQIS CELEBRATED the departure of US forces after more than two decades of war on Wednesday, though many were worried that a security vacuum could increase the power of armed groups or provide an opening for the return of IS.

The withdrawal of the final troops, mainly from an airbase in Erbil in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region, ended the biggest US war of the century, which brought widespread devastation and chaos from which Iraq has yet to fully emerge. Tehran and its allies hailed the withdrawal as a victory in their campaign to drive US forces from the Middle East. Iraqi troops paraded in vehicles through the streets of Baghdad and the city of Najaf to mark the pullout.

The withdrawal "fills our hearts with joy," said Baghdad resident Ahmed Salah, who said he felt reborn at the age of 70. But he also said it was now time for powerful armed groups to surrender their weapons, "and let the government be the one responsible to protect me and you on the ground, sky and water."

The pullout was agreed in 2024 under President Joe Biden and carried out by Donald Trump's administration even as it wages war against Iran next door. US forces invaded to topple former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein in 2003,



Members of the Iraqi security forces drive in a convoy in Najaf, Iraq. — Reuters

triggering years of upheaval and chaos. The Americans initially left at the end of 2011 but came back less than three years later to assist Iraqi forces after IS fighters seized a third of Iraq.

More than 4,500 US troops died in Iraq, around twice as many as in the parallel war in Afghanistan. The Iraq Body Count project says more than 200,000 Iraqi civilians were killed. The Pentagon said the United States and its coalition partners formally concluded "Operation Inherent Resolve" and Washington would continue to provide targeted training and intelligence support to Iraqi partners.

"The end of the international coalition's mission does not mean the end of our battle against terrorism, but rather Iraq's

The withdrawal "fills our hearts with joy," said Baghdad resident Ahmed Salah, who said he felt reborn at the age of 70

transition to a phase in which it assumes full responsibility for its security and stability," said Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Faleh al-Zaidi in a statement.

SECURITY VACUUM

While the departure of US forces is broadly popular among Iraqis, some worry that security forces trained and funded by the United States still can't protect the country.

"The lesson from the past two decades is that security vacuums can be extremely dangerous," said Jassim al Bahadli, an Iraqi analyst who advises the security forces.

Some Iraqi security officials, both in the federal government and the semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region, say the US pullout also risks giving new life to IS fighters, who, despite the defeat of their self-proclaimed caliphate nearly a decade ago, retain a sleeper cell network.

"The most important question now is whether Iraq's security institutions have prepared a viable Plan B for the post-coalition phase," said retired Iraqi Army General Mohammed al Jubouri, who led a brigade in the war against IS.

"One of the worst-case scenarios would be IS obtaining armed drones or improvised explosive drones at a time when Iraq still lacks sufficient air defence capabilities to counter such threats effectively." — Reuters



ISRAELI STRIKES KILL SIX IN GAZA

GAZA: Israeli strikes killed at least six Palestinians in two separate attacks in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, the territory's health officials said.

Medics said an Israeli air strike on a vehicle killed at least four people and wounded 14 others in the Tel Al-Hawa neighbourhood in Gaza City, while an earlier air strike on an apartment elsewhere in the city killed a woman. Later on Wednesday, an Israeli air strike outside a mosque in Khan Yunis killed one person and wounded others, medics said, taking the day's death toll to at least six. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on any of the reported strikes.

Israel, which says Hamas has been rearming and launching attacks in violation of an October ceasefire, has stepped up strikes on the group in recent weeks. Hamas has denied trying to carry out attacks or rebuild its arsenal and accuses Israel of undermining the Gaza peace deal.

Israeli air strikes have continued. At least 1,400 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire, according to the territory's health officials, while Israel says four of its soldiers have been killed. — Reuters

REPATRIATION PROGRAMME

UN says concerned by refugees returns



The United Nations Refugee Agency on Wednesday said it was concerned by Malaysia's return of more than 1,000 people to Myanmar because of the dire humanitarian conditions there. Malaysia deported around 1,500 Myanmar nationals, including children, on Tuesday as part of a refugee repatriation programme, despite objections from the United Nations and dozens of human rights groups. Malaysia has said returns are strictly voluntary. — Reuters

VOTER LISTS

Indian oppn to protest over manipulation



An alliance of India's opposition parties said on Wednesday it would launch protests to "save democracy" after a newspaper report said the Election Commission pushed large-scale voter list changes despite two commissioners questioning the process. Opposition parties say the lists were manipulated to benefit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party. The Election Commission of India rejects the charges and says differences are normal in any institution and all its actions were lawful. — Reuters

US DEPORTEES

Burundi agrees to take deportees from US



Burundi has agreed to join a clutch of other African nations in receiving migrants from other countries deported from the US under President Donald Trump's immigration policy. However, Bujumbura will only accept those not accused of crime or terrorism links, said Nancy Ninette Mutoni, spokesperson for President Evariste Ndayishimiye. Tuesday's announcement gave no details of numbers, timing, or financial details. — Reuters

SHORTTAKES



British PM Andy Burnham speaks on stage at the Labour Party's annual conference in Liverpool. — Reuters

BURNHAM SAYS UK SHOULD WEIGH POST BREXIT EU OPTIONS

LONDON: Prime Minister Andy Burnham said on Wednesday Britain should consider options for its future relationship with the European Union, including rejoining the bloc, doubling down on his message that Brexit had “done more harm than good”. At his Labour Party’s annual conference on Tuesday, Burnham, who campaigned to stay in the EU in a 2016 referendum on membership, argued the nation should again consider options for “Britain’s long-term relationship with our European partners”. Speaking to the BBC, Burnham again said Britain should consider several options for a future relationship, including not only full membership but also rejoining the EU’s single market or a customs union — reigniting a divisive debate that has split the country for the last 10 years. “We could stay as we are. That’s definitely an option, if people think this is the right place to stay,” Burnham said, listing certain options including one to “go all the way”. It is not clear how Burnham will canvass opinion on the EU, but he said in his conference speech that he would “take the opportunity around the summit to lay out to you, to lay out to the country, what I believe the different options are”. — Reuters

SPAIN PROBES MIGRANTS ABUSE IN CEUTA



Spain’s Defence Ministry said on Wednesday it had alerted prosecutors to an Amnesty International report alleging the military tortured or mistreated migrants in Ceuta, and ordered an internal probe into whether any personnel were to blame. The rights group accused members of Spain’s armed forces of torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment of migrants stranded in the North African enclave after over 72,000 crossed the border from Morocco in late July. Amnesty International Spain Director Esteban Beltran said that the group had documented 22 cases of torture and abuse by military personnel. — Reuters

ROMANIAN PM-DESIGNATE MURESAN LOSES CONFIDENCE VOTE

BUCHAREST: Romania’s Prime Minister-designate Siegfried Muresan failed to win a parliamentary vote of confidence on Wednesday, extending a political crisis that threatens the country’s investment grade rating. Muresan, 45, a respected lawmaker in the European Parliament, is the third failed prime minister nomination by Romania’s centrist President Nicusor Dan since a pro-European broad coalition government collapsed nearly five months ago. Muresan secured 182 votes against

the 233 he needed. Wednesday’s vote raises the possibility of the hard-right Alliance for Uniting Romanians (AUR), which is critical of the European Union, Nato and aid to Ukraine, forming a new ruling majority with the leftist Social Democrats (PSD). Analysts have said such an outcome would raise concerns about Romania’s efforts to cut its budget deficit, proportionally the largest in the EU, getting derailed. The leftists, currently the largest party in parliament, toppled the

coalition government they were a part of in early May. Earlier this week, the Social Democrats said they no longer ruled out forming a government with AUR. AUR, which leads opinion surveys with 40 per cent, more than double PSD’s support, has been pushing for snap elections but also did not rule out cooperating with the leftists. Muresan had won the backing of the three centre-right parties from the former coalition. They have mostly ruled out governing with the leftists again. — Reuters

Russia sends warning to Nato as tensions increase

RUSSIA HAS warned Nato it would be ready to resort to nuclear weapons if the Western alliance attempted to cut off Kaliningrad, a Russian exclave that borders the Baltic Sea. In a document sent to Nato and seen by Reuters, Moscow accused the alliance of a “dangerous and reckless course” that entailed “high risks of the outbreak of a direct armed conflict”. The document said this included the possibility of “Russian strikes against decision-making centers in the alliance’s member states right from the outset”. “Russia will be ready to use the entire arsenal of forces and capabilities at its disposal, including nuclear weapons, in order to defend its territory should Nato countries undertake any attempt aimed at isolating the Kaliningrad Region from the rest of the country,” the diplomatic note said.

The warning highlighted Moscow’s urgent concern at what it sees as a growing Nato threat to Kaliningrad, a heavily militarised Russian territory that is wedged between Poland and Lithuania and is slightly bigger than the US state of Connecticut. In a written response, Nato said it was a defensive alliance committed to countering threats to its members from all directions. “None of Nato’s exercises or activities pose a threat to the territory of the Russian Federation,” it said. “We call upon the Russian Federation to end its unprovoked full-scale attack on Ukraine. We urge the Russian Federation to refrain from increasingly reckless behaviour towards the Allies and to cease its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric.” Nikolai Sokov, a Vienna-based nuclear analyst and former Russian diplomat, said it was becoming



Investigators search the rubble for the remains of two residents in Kyiv. — Reuters

increasingly hard for Western countries to keep stepping up their support for Ukraine without tipping into direct confrontation with Moscow. He said the Russian warning may indicate that hardliners are gaining influence in a debate over how to respond to Western actions that include arms supplies to Kyiv, new sanctions on Moscow, interceptions of Russian ships, frequent military exercises and intelligence flights near Kaliningrad. “They (Russia) expect more action, including a blockade of the Baltic Sea — just below the level of war in European calculation, but for them this will be open war. I see a risk of mutual miscalculation,” Sokov said. In an online interview, he said Russia and Europe were on a collision course that required caution and calculation on both sides. Instead of this, the Europeans were applying “full court pressure” and Russia was delivering a serious warning that this was highly risky, Sokov added. In addition to the private

warning, Russian embassies in at least three European countries have issued statements in the past three days accusing Nato of escalating tensions through military exercises and planning scenarios involving Kaliningrad. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described these as diplomatic reminders to “hotheads in Europe”. Relations, already dire since Russia’s 2022 attack of Ukraine, have sharply worsened this year, with European governments accusing Moscow of stepping up a “hybrid war” on the continent through acts including sabotage and arson. Russia denies that, and rejects repeated statements by Western politicians that it is gearing up for a possible military attack on a Nato country. A Nato diplomat said: “I would say that the Russian letter is only another Russian attempt to intimidate Europeans, and that the response by Nato is firm and responsible. (It) reaffirms that we will not be dissuaded from supporting Ukraine.” — Reuters

Injuries, arrests as students keep up blockade of French schools

SAINT-DENIS: Dozens of people have been injured and hundreds arrested, most of them children, officials said, in a wave of student demonstrations against teacher shortages and dilapidated buildings which on Wednesday impacted high schools nationwide. The demonstrations and blockades, which began last week and coincided on Tuesday with a broader public-sector strike, have become a political flashpoint at a sensitive moment for France. On Thursday, the government will unveil the country’s 2027 budget which is expected to involve spending cuts aimed at easing pressure on government finances. In Saint-Denis, a large suburb north of Paris, students stood outside the

gates of their school near a fire that had been set as police looked on, while in Lyon and Lille television images showed people throwing projectiles at lines of police officers. “There are cockroaches and rats everywhere in the school,” Fadila, a 17-year-old student, told Reuters. She said temperatures in classrooms could swing from sweltering to below freezing, depending on the weather. “We can’t work in those conditions,” she said. According to the OECD global policy forum, French spending on primary and secondary education was in the middle of the range among member countries and increased between 2015 and 2022, but its share of the budget has slightly decreased. France’s



French CRS riot police stand guard in front of the entrance of the Lycee Paul Eluard high school in Saint-Denis, near Paris. — Reuters

Education Minister Edouard Geffray said that there had been 76 injuries, both among students and personnel, since the beginning of the demonstrations. He did not specify who the personnel were or the severity of the injuries. Politicians from the hard-left France Unbowed party have joined the demonstrations. Other officials and politicians have denounced the party for rhetoric they said was stoking students’ anger. Bally Bagayoko, a France Unbowed mayor who was quoted as saying violence is sometimes legitimate, has said his words have been taken out of context. Interior Minister Laurent Nunez told broadcaster BFM that some 440 people were detained over the high school protests

on Tuesday alone, most of them minors. Nunez said there were seven incidents in which people threw hydrochloric acid at law enforcement officers. The protesting students say classrooms are overcrowded and that there are not enough teachers. The government has criticised violence that has broken out at some of the demonstrations but said that difficulties in high schools should be acknowledged and addressed. Gamze, a 17-year-old student in Saint-Denis, said students in the historically working-class suburb were treated unfairly compared with students elsewhere. “It’s always us ... who are suffering when in Paris or in the countryside, they’re not in such a situation,” she said. — Reuters

OPINION

When the numbers run out



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

The writer is an environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development.

When the player who completed Oman's comeback against Kuwait pulled off his shirt in delight, the referee booked him, and the caution left Oman and Iraq identical in every column the Gulf Cup could consult, down to 8 yellow cards apiece. The players celebrated at the stadium all the same, believing their disciplinary record had carried them through, until the count caught up with the shirt. After all that football and arithmetic, qualification came down to drawing lots at a hotel in Jeddah around midnight, and the Omani reds went through. The competition had arrived at the end of its calculations: every goal recorded, every relevant criterion consulted, and still the table could not produce the distinction the tournament required. We expect numbers to settle an argument. Here, they established precisely how little there was left to settle it with. The rules had anticipated this possibility. Drawing lots was an agreed way of choosing between teams that remained equal under the measures the competition had adopted, and nobody needed to pretend that the draw revealed which team played better football. Before the draw, Iraq's coach had pressed for another number: the world ranking, the final separator under the World Cup

rules this summer, on which Iraq stood well above Oman. The Gulf Cup kept to its own regulation. The ranking is a genuine record, built from years of results against other opponents, and it answers a different question from the one this group had asked; the lot, for its part, sent home a side that never lost to Oman. You can make an honest case for either. Outside sport, we give numbers much larger responsibilities and reach for borrowed ones far more readily than the Gulf Cup did. We ask gross domestic product whether a country is thriving, and a rise in production can coexist with a loss of natural wealth long before anyone reads the accounts side by side. A restoration project can report how many trees were planted with considerable precision, and the planting total is useful for as long as it is read as the beginning of an inquiry that may continue for years after the announcement. Judging whether the project worked requires returning to see what survived and asking whether the people expected to care for it have the means to do so, and if you have walked such a site a year after its ceremony, you know how far apart the planting figure and the survival figure can drift. A target that ends at planting

Development unfolds across generations, with consequences for people who were absent when the measures were chosen, and a community downstream cannot always make its losses visible in the account of a project upstream.

encourages a different kind of work from one that follows survival, because what we choose to count directs attention and funding. Football has the advantage of a bounded contest, whose length and criteria are fixed before a ball is kicked. Development unfolds across generations, with consequences for people who were absent when the measures were chosen, and a community downstream cannot always make its losses visible in the account of a project upstream. In Jeddah, both federations had accepted those criteria before the tournament began, and the side that lost had still argued for a different number. The downstream community accepted nothing in advance and has no seat at any draw; when the numbers run out on its behalf, someone upstream decides what it is owed, and the people who live with that decision are rarely told that the numbers have run out. This is food for thought as we consider scenarios in which numbers run out and ask ourselves, "Are there better alternatives, or have we thought them through?" The writer is an Omani environmental strategist advancing Middle East climate action and women's leadership. Follow her on LinkedIn: @RumaithaAlBusaidi

AI DRIVING UP INNOVATION INVESTMENT: UN

ROBIN MILLARD

Artificial intelligence is fuelling a rebound in investment in innovation, with corporate research and development spending reaching record highs, the United Nations said on Tuesday. The UN's World Intellectual Property Organization said more money was going into venture capital, even as the number of VC deals was shrinking and becoming increasingly concentrated on AI firms. WIPO, the UN patent and innovation agency, said AI was shortening the paths of discovery and fuelling much of the world's economic growth. "AI is not just a breakthrough technology; it's going to change the way that we innovate and create," WIPO chief Daren Tang told reporters. "A new generation of deep-science startups is translating breakthroughs into products and transforming fields such as life sciences, space, robotics and clean energy."

Global research and development is expected to reach \$3.4 trillion this year, growing faster than GDP growth, while corporate R&D reached a record \$1.5 trillion in 2025, up 5.8 per cent, said WIPO. And while the number of venture capital deals dropped for the fourth straight year, their value rose by 28 per cent to \$510 billion in 2025. AI accounted for 53 per cent of global VC deal value last year, and 77 per cent in the first half of 2026. For the 16th consecutive year, Switzerland led the Global Innovation Index, which tracks innovation drivers in the world's economies. Sweden and the United States retained second and third place for the fourth year running, followed by South Korea and Singapore. China has meanwhile shot up from 35th place in 2013 to 10th position, while India rose from 66th to 38th place during the same period, the report showed, also highlighting big jumps up by the likes of Vietnam, Türkiye and the Philippines. The top five innovation clusters remain unchanged in 2026, led by Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou, followed by Tokyo-Yokohama, San Jose-San Francisco, Beijing and Seoul, the report showed. Further down, Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto and Paris overtook Los Angeles, which dropped two places to 12th. Most of the big risers were in China, with Ningde the most prominent, up 24 places to 75th. Outside China, Miami rose six places to 61st, while Chennai climbed five places to 79th. The biggest fallers were Pittsburgh and Oxford, which both dropped eight places to 84th and 85th, respectively. — AFP

From Tashkent to Muscat

ALMOST 50 founders, VC investors and ecosystem builders from the Sultanate of Oman participated in ICT Week in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, with support from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Riyadh, Afouq's Oman AI Zone, Cyfr, UzOman, KOM and Oman Embassy in Tashkent. Founders and investors included Zumr in fintech, Mubashir in digital advertising and smart retail technology, Darrbak experie digital market place in adventure tourism, Mys EV and Medad, to name a few. We travelled to explore partnerships and opportunities. I returned thinking about a deeper question: how can we turn encounters with people, technology and history into practical progress at home?

Between the meetings at ICT Week and reflections inspired by the Islamic Civilization Center in Tashkent, three priorities became clearer to me: Education that develops capability, entrepreneurship that connects people to opportunity, and artificial intelligence that solves problems. The Center offered a starting point. Bringing spiritual, scientific and cultural heritage into one setting encourages visitors to consider how knowledge travels across generations. The revered Mushaf traditionally attributed to Sayyidna Uthman ibn Affan RA recalls the responsibility of preserving knowledge. The legacy of scholars such as Timurid Amir, astronomer and mathematician Ulugh Beg invites us to consider how new knowledge is created. For me, the connection is straightforward: Societies progress when they preserve what matters, question what they do not understand and equip people to contribute. This brings me to education. Ulugh Beg's astronomical work depended on scholars working together, observing carefully and building on earlier knowledge. Their



For Oman, the question is where AI can deliver a useful improvement that someone is willing to adopt and pay for.



KHALID
AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

Oman has its own intellectual, maritime and commercial traditions to draw upon. We can bring them into contemporary learning through stories, research and practical projects that connect past experience with future possibilities

tables included a catalogue of 1,018 stars. Behind that achievement were people, instruments, sustained effort and a shared intellectual purpose. What would this spirit look like in Oman's classrooms today? It could begin with students working on real challenges alongside businesses and public institutions. An engineering class could help a manufacturer reduce waste. Business students could test whether customers need a proposed service. Students learning AI could examine how it might improve a specific process, while checking accuracy and protecting information. Assessment would then consider the quality of their questions, evidence, teamwork and results. Knowledge becomes meaningful when learners understand what they can do with it. The second lesson concerns entrepreneurship. Our delegation brought together founders and organisations with different capabilities. That diversity creates possibilities, but a visit only becomes valuable through what follows it. I believe each participating venture should identify one promising relationship from Tashkent and agree on a concrete next step. This might be a

customer introduction, a distribution discussion, a technical collaboration or a small trial. A named person, a clear objective and a follow-up date would help turn goodwill into progress. Supporting institutions could make this easier through a shared follow-up process. Founders need timely introductions and help resolving specific obstacles. Recording what advances, what stalls and why would also improve future delegations. This approach would give us a clearer measure of success: partnerships that produce learning, customers and growth. The third lesson concerns AI. For Oman, the question is where AI can deliver a useful improvement that someone is willing to adopt and pay for. My strongest takeaway from Tashkent is a call to follow through. Give life-long learners meaningful problems. Help founders reach customers. Test AI against measurable needs. Then return to the people we met with something more valuable than a greeting: evidence that a conversation has become a contribution. That would be a journey worth continuing.

The political rocks that swing Brazil



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is a journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

IN Brazil, the situation is precarious, and voicing ideas outside the accepted political and entrepreneurial narratives can carry consequences. Political debate and civility have degenerated into a circus.

Social media platforms remove posts that do not align with the main players’ and adversaries’ lines of thought and political inclinations. People in power and behind the scenes are spreading a disruptive situation.

The country is turning into a theatre in which, more often than not, politics mix with religion. That is a red flag because fanaticism in both areas can have disastrous effects on society.

Elections in Brazil are very competitive, though polarised, it is characterised by vibrant public debate, and political violence can be high. Its strength draws from the power of BBB (beef, Bible, and bullets).

It baffles me how people with criminal ties are allowed to stand as candidates to represent citizens in governmental institutions. Brazil blocks candidates with final criminal convictions under the Clean Record Law, but individuals facing unproven charges or ongoing appeals can often still run.

Why would political candidates engage in fraud, embezzlement, corruption, or have dubious criminal ties and run for office? Participating in politics could be a calculated strategy to avoid punishment.

The idea that a presidential candidate allegedly promises, if he wins the election, to submit the country, its rare earth, and political governance to a foreign government is difficult to swallow. Openly declared a traitor and still running for president in a democratic election process is an irony!

International institutions such as Freedom House point out that corruption is endemic at top levels, contributing to widespread disillusionment among the public. Powerful business interests undermine democratic accountability by facilitating or encouraging corruption among elected officials.

Gaining insight into the dishonest manoeuvres of people holding powerful legislative, executive, entrepreneurial, and national football hero players, and recognising the extent and profitability of influencers’ involvement in the country’s politics, is beneficial.

Within the nation’s democratic structures, people have the opportunity to access and debate questionable tactics employed by oligarchic families, parts of the mainstream media, and corporate influences.

Then there are people in high level institutional leadership receiving benefits to influence legal, financial, and political decisions.

I now understand why one of the most loved footballers was included in the Brazilian national squad for the 2026 World Cup. I begin to see why one of the best players

The country is turning into a theatre in which, more often than not, politics mix with religion. That is a red flag because fanaticism in both areas can have disastrous effects on society

of the Brazilian squad did not take a penalty shot but passed the ball to another team player; the reason, as it slowly comes out, is financial. Brazilian football and politics, including the judiciary, are driven by too much ambiguous money.

How can it be that in a nation of over 210 million people, a single man manages to buy influence across every sector for years, set up a private banking system, plunder pensioners’ incomes, and still run fraudulent financing schemes? If we were still in the Cold War period or under a dictatorship, the citizen would never know about these occurrences.

Years ago, I wrote a piece claiming that Brazil is not for the weak; that lessons from Brazil can teach us about many issues and manipulations. From the extermination of indigenous people and illegal exploitation of their lands to political corruption in the heart of the country’s capital, as well as feminicide, and the insertion of the religious image of Our Lady Aparecida, the patron saint of the country, in the presidential election campaign, these issues highlight the complexity of Brazil.

Are external forces meddling in the presidential election? It is a strong possibility, with Internet platforms being selective, posts removed, and other hidden forces.

Whatever happens in Brazil’s presidential election will set the country on a new path, for better or for worse for its people.

THE STRENGTH OF BELIEF

Throughout my extensive teaching experience, I have maintained that if people do not have confidence in themselves, they will face competition with doubt and expect to fail. Regrettably, these concerns and pessimistic anticipations influence your performance.

To break that slump, you need to anticipate success and have confidence in yourself. You need to confront those negative beliefs that have intruded into your mind and are fuelling your stagnation.

As an athlete, your potential is primarily restricted by what you ‘THINK’ is achievable. Confidence is an essential component of optimal performance. When you have confidence in yourself, there are hardly any boundaries to how far you can soar.



ISHWAR S DESHMUKH

The writer serves as a senior physical education teacher at Indian School Salalah

Nevertheless, if you lack confidence in yourself, you won’t even start to take off. To lift off once more, you need to cultivate an expectation of success.

Faith can assist you in discovering the potential in every impossibility. It can transform common talent into something remarkable. It’s that mysterious element that, when included in the formula, makes everything wonderfully unpredictable. It converts the wholeness into something greater than its individual elements.

How often in sports do we see the remarkable strength of belief pushing athletes and teams to achieve what appears unachievable? A constructive self-reinforcing cycle consistently drives you towards achievement. With my vast experience in the field of game and sports, I can say that the strength of belief is an invisible, powerful force that turns unseen dreams into real-life achievements.

Every athlete encounters hurdles, injuries, and defeats. Doubt is a natural opponent, but the strength of belief acts as a shield against it.

When challenges arise, you just grow more determined. You are not willing to give up. Challenges enhance your drive and resolve to achieve success. Your optimistic belief creates a self-fulfilling prediction where you ultimately receive what you anticipate.

The intensity of belief in sports serves as a strong psychological motivator that enables athletes to overcome physical boundaries, maintain composure in stressful situations and transform lofty aspirations into tangible outcomes.

I always tell my students, you do not need the world to clap for you; you only need an inner voice that refuses to quit.

I would like to conclude with a quote — Believe you can and you’re halfway there.

Europe now aims to go electric in future

WHEN European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was delivering her State of the Union address in Strasbourg, I was in Washington at a meeting of the Global Advisory Committee of the Energy Futures Initiative Foundation, created and led by former US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz. In Strasbourg, Von der Leyen set out a bold ambition: “Let’s make Europe’s future electric.” In Washington, we grappled with a sobering reality: electrons alone cannot power economies.

Von der Leyen was right about one thing: Europe cannot remain an “industrial powerhouse” while facing “structurally too high” energy prices. As long as the European Union remains dependent on imported fuel, this will be a chronic constraint, as was apparent when Russia launched a war on Ukraine, forcing Europe to diversify rapidly. And it has again been underscored since the United States and Israel launched their war against Iran. Europe has spent an additional €90 billion (\$102 billion) on fossil-fuel imports since the war began, Von der Leyen lamented, without adding a “single molecule of energy.”

For Von der Leyen, there is only one solution: electrification. She set the goal of doubling electricity’s share of European energy consumption by 2040. It is a worthy aim, given Europe’s need for much more electricity — clean, abundant, and competitively priced — and grids capable of delivering it. As Von der Leyen also noted, the EU installed more than 80 gigawatts of renewable capacity last year, but roughly six times as much is still awaiting grid connection. That is an infrastructure problem on a strategic scale.

But not even the most effective electrification strategy will provide Europe’s missing molecules. Critical sectors — such as aviation, maritime transport, chemicals, fertilisers, high-temperature industrial processes, heavy transport, and defence — cannot run on electrons



ANA PALACIO

The writer is a former foreign minister of Spain and former senior vice-president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

Europe confronts a dual challenge: decarbonise, with clean hydrogen and its derivatives providing a growing share of the molecules that currently come from fossil fuels, while ensuring secure energy supplies along the way



The EU has installed more than 80 gigawatts of renewable capacity last year.

alone. Whether we like it or not, Europe will continue to consume oil and gas for the foreseeable future.

Any European energy strategy must therefore blend a firm commitment to decarbonisation with a plan for managing continued dependence on oil and gas securely. This must include refining capacity.

In Europe, refineries are often viewed as relics of the hydrocarbon age. This is dangerously reductive. In fact, they are part of an industrial ecosystem encompassing storage, ports, pipelines, logistics, emergency supplies, aviation and maritime fuels, petrochemical feedstocks, skilled workers, and technological know-how. Europe might consume progressively less oil and gas, but as long as it consumes any, outsourcing its refining capacity merely increases dependence and vulnerability. The EU learned the hard way that optimising for price during normal times (by purchasing ever-larger quantities of Russian gas) can come at a high cost in times of crisis.

Eventually, Europe will move beyond fossil fuels. But it will not move beyond the need for molecules. That is where hydrogen, which did not receive a single mention in Von der Leyen’s address, comes in. Hydrogen is a victim of a familiar cycle: an emerging technology is presented as a solution to almost everything, progress proves slower and more expensive than anticipated, and

enthusiasm dwindles. But hydrogen is neither a panacea nor a failure.

Green hydrogen, produced through electrolysis using renewable energy, can substitute for fossil fuels in a wide range of applications, from transport to heavy industry and household heating. But it is not always the best option. In some situations, direct electrification works better. Hydrogen should thus be applied only in areas where direct electrification is difficult, such as steel, fertiliser, and chemical production, certain high-temperature processes, shipping, and, potentially, aviation.

The challenge is to turn molecular hydrogen from an aspiration into an industry at scale. This requires affordable clean electricity, electrolyses or other low-carbon production routes, storage capacity, transport infrastructure, certification systems, and, crucially, sufficient demand to justify investment. Meeting these conditions will take time. Europe cannot conjure a hydrogen economy into existence by proclamation any more than it can legislate the physics of an electricity grid.

Energy independence is not realistic. Europe needs to manage interdependence by diversifying suppliers, developing domestic advantages, and avoiding dependencies that can be weaponised.

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AL RAWAHI, AL SHAQSI STRIKE IN DRAMATIC ENTRY TO SEMIS



WALEED AL JAHWARI
JEDDAH, SEPT 30

OMAN PRODUCED a remarkable second-half comeback to defeat Kuwait 3-1 and secure a place in the semifinals of the 27th Arabian Gulf Cup.

Their progression was eventually decided by draw of lots after finishing level with Iraq in Group A.

Oman trailed 1-0 at half-time following Shabib al Khaldi's early goal for Kuwait in the sixth minute.

The Red Warriors responded with three goals in the second half to turn the match around and keep their semifinal hopes alive in a dramatic final round of group matches at Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Stadium on Tuesday night.

Nasser al Rawahi was the driving force behind Oman's revival, scoring twice to put his side in control before substitute Musab al Shaqsi added the third to complete the comeback.

The opening goal gave Kuwait confidence, while Oman struggled to find their rhythm in the first half.

However, the momentum shifted after the break as the Omani side increased their attacking pressure in search of an equaliser. Their persistence paid off in the 65th minute when Al Rawahi finished a well-worked move from the right, converting a low cross into the net to restore parity.

AL RAWAHI HITS BRACE
Oman continued to push forward, and their pressure was rewarded again in the

81st minute. Al Rawahi found space inside the Kuwait defence before unleashing a powerful strike to put the Red Warriors ahead 2-1.

The comeback was completed four minutes later when substitute Al Shaqsi rose to meet a cross from the left and headed home the third goal, sparking celebrations among the Omani supporters.

The 3-1 victory kept Oman in contention for a place in the last four, but their fate remained dependent on the outcome of the other Group A encounter between Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Saudi Arabia defeated Iraq 2-0, with Abdullah al Salem opening the scoring in the 54th minute before Abdullah al Hamdan added the second in the 69th minute. The result left Oman and Iraq level after the group-stage matches, with neither

side able to secure an advantage through the applicable head-to-head and other tie-breaking criteria.

The Gulf Cup organisers therefore resorted to a draw of lots to determine the second qualifying team from the group.

Oman were eventually announced as the winners of the draw, joining group leaders Saudi Arabia in the semifinals in a rare moment in the tournament's history.

The decision brought an extraordinary end to a night of tension for the Omani players and supporters.

Wednesday's Group B matches see Qatar face the UAE and Bahrain meet Yemen, with both kicking off at 9.30 pm (Oman time).

Oman will face the Group B winners (UAE or Qatar) in the semifinal on October 3.

SEKTIIOUI BACKS OMAN CHOICES, LOOKS AHEAD WITH CONFIDENCE

WALEED AL JAHWARI
JEDDAH, SEPT 30

Oman head coach Tarik Sektioui pointed out that his side faced a decisive challenge against Kuwait in the final Group A match of the Gulf Cup 27, with the need to score as many goals as possible and Kuwait's early goal adding to the pressure.

"Oman recovered from 1-0 down to secure a 3-1 victory and keep their qualification hopes alive."

"The match was one that we had to win. We needed to score as many goals as possible, and Kuwait's goal made things difficult for us. However, we created many chances and managed to score," Sektioui said.

The Moroccan coach also addressed criticism of his squad selections, stressing that his decisions were made with the

interests of Omani football in mind.

"I came here to serve Oman football. I work without selfishness and accept criticism from the media over the players I have not selected, but my choices are always made with a clear conscience."

ARNOLD QUESTIONS DRAW OF LOTS
Meanwhile, Iraq coach Graham Arnold questioned the use of a draw of lots to determine the second qualifying spot from Group A after his team and Oman finished level on points and several other criteria.

Iraq lost 2-0 to Saudi Arabia in their final group match, while Oman defeated Kuwait 3-1. Oman subsequently secured the second semifinal place after the draw of lots.

"We have to follow the Fifa regulations," Arnold

said, arguing that Iraq's higher position in the world rankings should be taken into consideration. Iraq are ranked 63rd in the world, while Oman are 80th.

"I believe our level is higher than Oman's and our ranking is higher. If we want to be fair, we should follow the rules. We will see what happens, but I do not think it would be fair if we do not qualify," he said.

"Saudi Arabia played well, while we made a number of mistakes that cost us dearly," he said, adding that several injured players were expected to return after two days.

DONIS PRAISES SAUDI SPIRIT
Saudi Arabia coach Georgios Donis, meanwhile, praised his players' fighting spirit and the support of the Green Falcons' fans after the victory over Iraq.

"My team created dangerous

chances despite not enjoying much possession. We are concerned over injuries to some players, including that of left-back Zakariya Hawsawi."

Kuwait coach Helio Sousa said: "Out long-term objective was to build a team capable of competing for titles, urging observers to look beyond immediate results."

Kuwait midfielder Yousef al Haqan highlighted that "the team aimed to deliver better performances and results in the future."

Oman secured second place in Group A and advanced to the semifinals after defeating Kuwait 3-1 in the final round, finishing level on points with Iraq before winning the draw.

Saudi Arabia had already secured qualification after the second round and went on to finish top of the group with a perfect nine points.



Oman head coach Tarik Sektioui during the match against Kuwait. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

143-BALL 230



Shravan Kurup's innings included 20 fours and 11 sixes as OCA Red U19 cruised to a mammoth total of 511-5 in 50 overs.

SHRAVAN HITS DOUBLE TON AS OCA U19 RED POST RECORD TOTAL

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket Academy U19 Red produced a remarkable batting performance to register the highest team total in an U19 match in Oman's domestic cricket, in a high-scoring encounter highlighted by a sensational double century from Shravan Kurup.

OCA U19 Red posted 511-5 in 50 overs, setting a new benchmark in Oman's U19 domestic cricket. At the heart of the record-breaking innings was Shravan Kurup, who struck a magnificent 230 in 143 balls, providing the foundation for his team to build an imposing total.

The match witnessed an outstanding display of aggressive and consistent batting from the OCA U19 Red lineup, with Ojjus Pachisia (104 of 37), Saumya Sampat (58 of 35) and Aryan Joshi (54 of 72) also making significant contributions as the side maintained the scoring rate throughout their innings. Kurup's double century was the defining individual performance of the encounter. His innings included 20 fours and 11 sixes, combined power and composure and helped OCA U19 Red establish a commanding position in the match.

With the bat, OCA U19 Red dominated proceedings from the outset, eventually totalling of 511 runs entering the record books as the highest U19 total in Oman's domestic cricket.

IAS CA U19, chasing the formidable target, responded with paltry 125 all out within 26 overs, with Razzaq Muhammad showing some resistance. However, OCA U19 Red's bowling attack kept control of the contest to secure a 386 run victory courtesy of Arshad Farshad's 4 wicket haul including a hat-trick in the first over and Kanishq Basu's three wickets.

The result caps a memorable match for OCA U19 Red and reflects the growing talent within Oman Cricket's youth structure. The U19 domestic competition continues to provide an important platform for young cricketers to test themselves in competitive match conditions and develop towards senior domestic and representative cricket.

While the record total provides the headline, Kurup's double century adds another standout chapter to an extraordinary match — one that showcased the batting talent emerging through Oman Cricket's youth pathway.



UAE beat Oman 1-0 in their second Group B match of the 13th West Asian Football Federation U17 Championship at Aqaba Stadium in Jordan.

Oman U17s exit WAFF tourney after UAE defeat

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

OMAN'S NATIONAL under-17 football team bowed out of the 13th West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) U17 Championship after suffering a 1-0 defeat to the United Arab Emirates in their second Group B match at Aqaba Stadium in Jordan on Tuesday evening.

The young Red Warriors entered the match needing a positive result to keep their semifinal hopes alive after losing 3-1 to hosts Jordan in their opening encounter on Sunday. However, a late UAE goal settled the contest and brought Oman's campaign to an early end. The match remained closely contested for much of the 90 minutes, with both sides looking for the breakthrough. Oman sought to recover from their opening defeat and stay in contention, but the UAE eventually found the decisive goal in the closing stages to claim all three points.

The result lifted the UAE to three points, level with Jordan, while Oman completed their two group matches without a point. Jordan had earlier defeated Oman 3-1, with Bashar al Shamsi scoring Oman's goal in the ninth minute before the hosts responded



through Faisal al Hourani, who struck twice, and Jameel al Issa.

With Oman eliminated, Jordan and the UAE have both secured their places in the semifinals. The two teams will meet on Thursday at 6 pm Jordan time to determine the winners and runners-up of Group B.

The tournament format sees the top two teams from each group advance to the knockout stage. The Group A winners will face the runners-up from Group B in the semifinals, while the Group B winners will take on the runners-up from Group A. The

winners of the two semifinals will progress to the final on October 5.

Despite the early exit, the championship provided Oman's coaching staff with two competitive regional matches as part of the team's wider preparation programme. The tournament in Aqaba has been viewed as an important opportunity for the players to gain international experience ahead of their next continental assignment.

FOCUS ON U17 ASIAN CUP

Oman will now turn their attention to the AFC U17 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2027 Qualifiers, where the Sultanate of Oman will host Group G in Salalah from November 8 to 20. Oman have been drawn alongside Kuwait, Bahrain, Lebanon and Brunei Darussalam, with only the group winners progressing to the continental finals.

The WAFF U17 Championship is also set to take on greater significance from its next edition, with the competition expected to serve as a direct pathway to the AFC U17 Asian Cup finals. The top four teams will earn direct qualification to the continental tournament under the new arrangement.

For Oman, the focus will now shift towards addressing the lessons from the two matches in Aqaba and stepping up preparations ahead of the Asian qualifying campaign at home.

Oman Corporate League 2026 draw held at Sultan Haitham City

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

The official draw ceremony for the Oman Corporate League (OCL) 2026 was held on Wednesday at the Experience and Sales Centre in Sultan Haitham City, ahead of the football tournament's scheduled competition in Muscat from October 4 to 11.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Salim bin Abdullah al Abdali, Director-General of Human Resources at the Royal Court Affairs, and was attended by representatives of participating companies and tournament partners, including Dr Ahmed bin Murad al Balushi.

The tournament is organised by Sport Makers in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The draw evening brought together representatives of participating companies and provided an overview of the



The football tournament is organised by Sport Makers in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

tournament format, groups and competition pathway.

The 2026 edition will feature three separate competitions: Category A, Category B and Category +40, providing companies with opportunities to compete across different categories.

In Category A, the draw placed Bank Nizwa, Omantel and OTE in the first group, while Ooredoo, ASYAD and Majid Al Futtaim were drawn together in the second group. The top two teams from each group will

advance to the next stage.

In Category B, the first group consists of Al Maha, MDO, Daleel Petroleum and Abraj Energy, while the second group includes NBO, Oman Oil, Shell and MB. The first-placed and second-placed teams from each group will qualify for the following stage of the competition.

A separate Category +40 competition will also be held for older participants, with Daleel Petroleum, Abraj Energy, UES and Ooredoo forming the group.

BEYOND FOOTBALL

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Ahmed bin Murad al Balushi highlighted the importance of the Oman Corporate League in promoting sporting competition among companies and institutions. He noted that the diversity of participating teams and categories would contribute to a strong competitive environment while creating opportunities for interaction among employees from different sectors.

Waleed bin Juma al Obaidani, Chief Executive Officer of Sport Makers, said the tournament had developed beyond a football competition since its launch in 2018.

"Since the Oman Corporate League was launched in 2018, we have worked to make it more than a football competition. We wanted it to be a platform that enables company employees to practise sport, build bridges between institutions and create opportunities for Omani teams

to participate outside the Sultanate of Oman," Al Obaidani said.

He added: "We are proud to continue developing the tournament in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and to hold this year's draw in Sultan Haitham City, which shares our ambition of creating more active communities."

Al Obaidani also pointed to the league's contribution to connecting domestic competitions with international participation, including corporate football and Socca tournaments. "We look forward to delivering a 2026 edition that meets the expectations of the participating companies and gives their employees a sporting and social experience that extends beyond the final whistle."

The Oman Corporate League has continued since 2018 to promote corporate sport and provide competitive opportunities for teams representing various companies.

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SHORT TAKES



Al Ghamari described a chain through which capital creates employment, jobs develop skills, skills lift productivity and higher productivity strengthens competitiveness.

Labour Ministry urges shift to capability economy

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

The speed at which employers' skills requirements are changing has emerged as a bigger labour-market challenge than unemployment, according to the Ministry of Labour, which has called on private companies to take a greater role in developing Omani talent.

Khalid bin Salim al Ghamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour, outlined the ministry's position at Oman Forum 2026, held under the theme "The Future of Growth: How the Private Sector Leads the Next Phase in a Changing World".

His presentation, "People at the Heart of Growth: From an Opportunity Economy to a Capability Economy", argued that investment alone was insufficient to generate sustainable economic growth.

Al Ghamari described a chain through which capital creates employment, jobs develop skills, skills lift productivity and higher productivity strengthens competitiveness.

He contrasted the traditional career path, in which people completed their education before entering the workforce, with a more flexible model involving continuous learning, skills development and career transitions.

"The future does not reward those who only possess knowledge, but those who possess the ability to renew it", Al Ghamari said.

The ministry identified three instruments supporting the transition: employment-linked training, wage assistance for recruitment and wage support for replacing expatriate workers with Omanis. Al Ghamari said the future challenge would centre on workforce readiness rather than simply the number of jobs available.

He identified green energy, logistics, advanced manufacturing, the digital economy and artificial intelligence as five sectors expected to drive growth in Oman and internationally.

Oman plans three new gas turbine power plants

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

OMAN is advancing plans for three new combined-cycle gas turbine (CCGT) power plants with an aggregate capacity of 2,800–3,000 MW, reinforcing the role of flexible gas-fired generation in supporting rapidly growing electricity demand alongside the Sultanate of Oman's expanding renewable-energy portfolio.

Serbian engineering consultancy Energoprojekt ENTEL (EPE) announced that it has secured a major consultancy services contract from Nama Power and Water Procurement (Nama PWP), the Sultanate of Oman's single procurer of power and water capacity, covering development and tendering of the three projects.

EPE will serve as Technical Consultant, with responsibilities encompassing concept design, participation in site selection, preparation of tender documentation and support throughout the competitive tendering process.

Its mandate extends to the selection of EPC contractors and assistance through contract award and signing, alongside continuous technical support and coordination with financial and legal advisers.

"We are proud to contribute our engineering and consultancy expertise to the development of Oman's power generation infrastructure", EPE said, adding that the assignment will draw on teams in Oman, Serbia and Qatar.

Details of the locations, individual capacities and targeted commissioning dates of the three proposed plants have yet to be disclosed.

The award represents another significant Oman assignment for Belgrade-headquartered EPE, part of Energoprojekt Group, whose origins date to 1951. The specialist energy and infrastructure



Energoprojekt ENTEL (EPE) announced that it has secured a major consultancy services contract from Nama PWP covering the development and tendering of three CCGT projects.

Nama PWP's latest seven-year outlook targets renewables at 30–40 per cent of electricity generation by 2030, rising to around 60–70 per cent by 2040. Solar and wind generation, however, are intermittent resources, underscoring the continuing requirement for dispatchable capacity capable of responding to fluctuations in renewable output and peak demand.

consultancy has maintained a presence in Oman since 1996, initially providing consultancy services to the then Ministry of Housing, Electricity and Water.

The new CCGT capacity is being planned as Oman simultaneously accelerates its transition towards renewable electricity.

Nama PWP's latest seven-year outlook targets renewables at 30–40 per cent of electricity generation by 2030, rising to around 60–70 per cent by 2040. Solar and wind generation, however, are intermittent resources, underscoring the continuing requirement for dispatchable capacity capable of responding to fluctuations in renewable output and peak demand.

The three proposed plants come as Oman is already progressing two major CCGT schemes at Misfah and Al Duqm.

In January 2026, Nama PWP signed 20-year power purchase agreements for the projects, representing combined investment of around RO 1

billion. The Misfah project is being developed by a Nebraska-led consortium, while the Duqm project is led by Korea Western Power (KOWEPO).

Misfah is planned at around 1,700 MW, while Al Duqm will provide roughly 870 MW of capacity. Both will use high-efficiency CCGT technology and are being designed for potential future carbon-capture integration and operation with a fuel mix containing up to 30 per cent hydrogen.

Nama PWP has described such high-efficiency gas plants as "critical transitional capacity" that will facilitate large-scale renewable-energy integration while providing the flexibility needed to meet peak electricity demand.

The latest three-plant programme therefore signals that Oman's power transition will combine a rapidly expanding solar and wind fleet with modern, flexible gas generation to safeguard grid reliability as electricity requirements grow.

Oman, Uzbekistan target trade and industrial projects

MUSCAT: Oman and Uzbekistan have discussed accelerating work on a proposed preferential trade agreement and developing joint industrial and logistics projects as the two countries seek a more results-driven economic partnership.

Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, held talks in Muscat with Laziz Kudratov, Uzbekistan's Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade.

The discussions focused on expanding bilateral trade, increasing the range of products exchanged and converting identified opportunities into commercially viable projects.

The two sides considered measures to make it easier for Omani and Uzbek products to enter each other's markets, including connecting exporters with buyers and importers.

They also reviewed issues involving technical specifications, certification requirements and customs procedures that could



The discussions focused on expanding bilateral trade, increasing the range of products exchanged and converting identified opportunities into commercially viable projects.

affect trade flows.

The proposed preferential trade agreement was among the main subjects discussed. Officials

considered ways to accelerate technical negotiations covering eligible goods, tariffs and rules of origin.

The two countries also discussed updating their agreement on the promotion and protection of investments to improve investor confidence and broaden the scope of bilateral economic cooperation.

Industrial cooperation focused on identifying joint manufacturing projects supported by direct engagement between companies in the two countries.

Officials stressed the need to assess demand, market conditions and capital requirements to determine which proposed projects were commercially feasible.

The talks also covered stronger air and logistics links, including the use of Omani ports to develop shipping routes and facilitate the movement of goods.

The two countries are seeking to build on the direct air connection between Muscat and Tashkent to support trade, investment and market access.

They also considered opportunities to establish export-oriented manufacturing

operations in Oman's economic and free zones.

Private-sector organisations could establish a business council and hold a business forum to present specific investment opportunities and connect companies with prospective partners.

Preparations for the sixth session of the Oman-Uzbekistan Joint Intergovernmental Committee in Muscat were also reviewed.

Both sides agreed on the need to identify priority projects, establish clear follow-up mechanisms and move bilateral cooperation towards implementation and measurable results.

The meeting was attended by Ghalib bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry; Abdusalam Khatamov, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Oman; and officials from both countries.

— ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORT TAKES



The trip reflects A'Sharqiyah University's commitment to providing its students with high-quality educational experiences.

A'Sharqiyah University students embark on an educational and cultural Trip to Türkiye

MUSCAT: A'Sharqiyah University organised an educational and cultural trip to the Republic of Türkiye from September 6 to 17, 2026, with the participation of 19 outstanding male and female students from various colleges of the university. The trip offers an enriching experience that combines academic learning, knowledge exchange, cultural engagement and tourism and exploration.

The trip reflects A'Sharqiyah University's commitment to providing its students with high-quality educational experiences, enhancing their exposure to international experiences and offering opportunities to explore academic and institutional models and practices beyond the Sultanate of Oman.

This contributes to developing their skills, broadening their perspectives and strengthening their abilities in communication and teamwork.

The programme includes visits to several universities and academic institutions in Istanbul and Trabzon, with the aim of exploring international educational experiences, learning about innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, exchanging knowledge and expertise, and gaining insights into diverse approaches to education and university life.

The cultural and historical component of the trip includes visits to some of Istanbul's most prominent historical and cultural landmarks, as well as visits to Bursa and the Princes' Islands. Students will also have the opportunity to experience aspects of Turkish culture and society, fostering greater awareness of cultural diversity and openness to different civilisations.

The tourism and exploration component includes visits to some of northern Türkiye's most prominent natural and tourist destinations, including Uzungöl and the Ayder Highlands.

Students will experience the natural beauty of the Black Sea region while exploring some of Trabzon's most notable tourist attractions.

Through this trip, the University seeks to provide participating students with a comprehensive experience that brings together knowledge, academic exposure, culture, and exploration.

It also provides an inspiring environment for exchanging ideas, building relationships, and strengthening team spirit, positively contributing to their personal development and university experience.

Mitsubishi Motors Oman introduces exciting offers

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), a part of The Zubair Corporation and the authorised distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, has announced its exciting offers, giving customers an opportunity to take advantage of an exceptional range of benefits across the Mitsubishi range.

Designed to deliver greater value, comfort, and peace of mind, the exciting offers combine attractive financing options with comprehensive ownership benefits for an even more rewarding Mitsubishi experience.

Customers can take advantage of an exceptional financing opportunity with 0% interest for up to 24 months, complemented by a comprehensive package of ownership benefits. The offer includes complimentary insurance



The offers combine attractive financing options with comprehensive ownership benefits for an even more rewarding Mitsubishi experience.

NWS signs pact to acquire 50,000 green certificates

NAMA Water Services (NWS) has signed an agreement to purchase and redeem 50,000 International Renewable Energy Certificates (I-RECs), representing 50,000 megawatt-hours of renewable electricity, as part of its drive to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

The agreement was signed by Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, Chief Executive Officer of Nama Water Services; and Ahmed bin Salim al Abri, Chief Executive Officer of Nama Power and Water Procurement (Nama PWP).

Each certificate represents one MWh of renewable electricity, providing an internationally recognised and measurable mechanism for documenting clean-energy consumption and addressing emissions associated with electricity use.

The initiative forms part of Nama Water Services' Net Zero Roadmap and supports its near-term efforts to reduce indirect emissions from electricity consumption.

It complements a broader portfolio of projects covering renewable energy, energy efficiency and operational improvements.

Nama Water Services has adopted 2022 as the baseline



The pact was signed by Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services; and Ahmed bin Salim al Abri, CEO of Nama Power and Water Procurement.

year for measuring its emissions reductions. The company recorded total baseline emissions of approximately 325,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

“For us, net zero is not simply a target to be reached in 2050; it is a journey shaped by the decisions we make today”, Al Zakwani said.

“We are therefore translating our sustainability ambitions into practical initiatives with measurable impact – from reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency to managing resources in a

more efficient and sustainable manner”. The 50,000 certificates are expected to represent about 30 per cent of the electricity consumed by wastewater treatment plants in Muscat Governorate. The initiative is estimated to have an emissions-accounting impact of around 16,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Al Zakwani said Nama Water Services aimed to make sustainability an integral part of its operational and investment decisions.

“It should extend beyond

environmental impact to encompass business efficiency, operational resilience and the value we create for society and the environment”, he said.

The agreement supports the company's efforts to embed Environmental, Social and Governance principles across its operations by linking environmental objectives with measurable initiatives and performance indicators. Nama Water Services is also implementing projects covering energy efficiency, operational optimisation, renewable energy, the reduction of water losses and increased reuse of reclaimed water.

Its progress towards net zero is measured through performance indicators linked to the company's roadmap, enabling it to compare actual results against interim targets.

Al Abri said the agreement demonstrated the commitment of Nama Group companies to strengthening sustainability and accelerating the transition towards a low-carbon economy.

“International Renewable Energy Certificates are one of the effective mechanisms through which organisations can document their consumption of clean energy and contribute to reducing emissions associated with their operations”, he said.

BankDhofar’s 99.9% STP rate earns excellence award

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has received Citi's 2025 USD Dollar Payments Straight Through Processing (STP) Excellence Award after achieving a near-perfect 99.9% STP rate for treasury payments, underscoring the sophistication, accuracy and reliability of its payment infrastructure.

The recognition is particularly significant because straight-through processing measures a bank's ability to execute payments automatically from initiation through processing without requiring manual intervention. High STP rates are therefore closely associated with accurate payment instructions, robust systems integration, strong controls and efficient transaction processing.

Citi's STP awards recognise financial institutions demonstrating high levels of accuracy and efficiency in international payment processing. For banks handling significant cross-border transaction volumes, high automation helps reduce processing delays and manual intervention



BankDhofar's 99.9% performance means that virtually all qualifying treasury payments were processed automatically.

while strengthening operational controls and improving the customer experience.

BankDhofar's 99.9% performance means that virtually all qualifying treasury payments were processed automatically, attesting to the resilience of the Bank's technology architecture and the quality of

its operational processes. The achievement is especially relevant for corporate and institutional customers for whom speed, accuracy and certainty of settlement are critical to treasury and cash-management operations.

Significantly, the latest accolade builds on BankDhofar's earlier success in the same field. The Bank previously achieved STP rates of 99.9% for both commercial and treasury payments, earning Citi recognition for its 2023 performance.

The latest award also complements BankDhofar's wider investment in digital corporate banking. Its technology capabilities include API-based and Host-to-Host connectivity linking corporate ERP and treasury systems directly with the Bank's payment infrastructure.

These integrations support automated payment initiation, bulk processing, transaction updates, reconciliation and reporting while reducing manual intervention.

SHORTTAKES



The \$100-million financing agreement would accelerate the delivery of the commercial and community component of the sustainable urban development.

RO 38.5 MILLION FINANCING BACKS YITI PLAZA

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

Sustainable Development and Investment Company (SDIC) has secured RO 38.5 million (\$100 million) in financing from the International Finance Corporation to develop The Plaza at The Sustainable City — Yiti.

SDIC, a joint venture between OMRAN Group and SEE Holding, said the \$100-million financing agreement would accelerate the delivery of the commercial and community component of the sustainable urban development. The IFC is the World Bank Group’s private-sector investment arm.

The Plaza is planned as the central commercial and social district of The Sustainable City — Yiti, featuring retail outlets, restaurants, wellness facilities, entertainment venues and community spaces.

The project is intended to serve residents and visitors while strengthening the city’s long-term commercial and lifestyle offering.

Saif bin Sulaiman al Yarubi, Chairman of SDIC, said the financing represented an important step in the development’s progress.

“As the development progresses, we remain committed to delivering a vibrant and sustainable destination that seamlessly integrates residential, commercial, hospitality and lifestyle experiences”, he said.

The project was designed to create long-term value for residents, visitors, investors and the Sultanate of Oman, Al Yarubi added.

EV maker MAYS signs \$17.9m Uzbekistan deal

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

OMANI electric vehicle (EV) company MAYS has signed a \$17.9 million agreement to supply 750 vehicles to Uzbekistan, marking a major export breakthrough for the home-grown automotive brand as it expands beyond the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreement was signed at the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Tashkent in the presence of Sayyidah Wafa hint Jabr al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Uzbekistan, MAYS founder Haider Adnan al Zaabi said in a post.

The transaction represents the company’s first publicly disclosed large-volume vehicle supply agreement in Central Asia. MAYS did not identify its Uzbek partner or disclose the vehicle model, delivery timetable, payment terms or whether the vehicles would be assembled in Oman.

“Proud to share that MAYS has signed a \$17.9 million agreement to supply 750 vehicles to Uzbekistan, marking another important step in our international expansion”, Al Zaabi said.

The agreement extends beyond vehicle deliveries and provides for localisation, technical training and the development of after-sales capabilities in Uzbekistan, according to the company.

These elements could give MAYS a more permanent



The transaction represents the company’s first publicly disclosed large-volume vehicle supply agreement in Central Asia.

commercial presence in the country rather than limiting the arrangement to a single export order. Representatives of the two sides visited proposed showroom sites in Tashkent and Fergana as well as industrial locations that could support the company’s future expansion across Central Asia.

MAYS did not specify whether localisation would involve assembly, component production or other manufacturing activity.

During the visit, the company also demonstrated its in-vehicle artificial intelligence system operating in the Uzbek language. MAYS is positioning the technology, which combines voice and visual interaction, as a key differentiating feature of its electric vehicles.

“Together with our Uzbek partners, we are building the foundation for localisation, training, after-sales capabilities, and a long-term presence in the market”, Al Zaabi said.

The company’s current Alive electric sport utility vehicle is listed with a 64-kilowatt-hour battery, a driving range of 500 kilometres and the ability to charge to 80 per cent in about 30 minutes.

Its advertised prices in Oman start at RO 10,900, although MAYS has not confirmed which version will be supplied under the Uzbek agreement.

MAYS began distributing its first locally branded electric vehicles to institutional customers in Oman in 2025, alongside plans to open a dedicated showroom in Muscat.

The company previously said it was preparing the brand for overseas markets after obtaining \$1.5 million in funding from a Shanghai-based investor.

The Uzbekistan agreement could provide an important test of MAYS’ ability to fulfil a large overseas order while establishing sales, servicing and technical-support operations outside its domestic market.

It also supports Oman’s wider ambition to develop technology-led manufacturing and expand non-oil exports.

Oman targets 10 million-barrel storage capacity at Al Duqm

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 30

Oman plans to raise its onshore crude oil storage capacity at Al Duqm to about 10 million barrels over the next three years as it seeks to establish the Arabian Sea port as a regional storage and trading hub.

OQ Group is also considering acquiring two very large crude carriers for use as floating storage at the Port of Duqm, Chief Executive Officer Ashraf bin Hamad al Mamari said. The vessels would add flexibility by allowing crude to be stored offshore alongside Al Duqm’s expanding network of onshore tanks.

Al Mamari said converting the two tankers for floating storage would take about six months after their purchase was completed.

The plans come as geopolitical tensions and disruptions affecting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz increase the strategic



OQ Group is also considering acquiring two very large crude carriers for use as floating storage at the Port of Duqm.

importance of energy infrastructure located on the Arabian Sea.

Ras Markaz at Al Duqm enables crude oil to be stored and exported to international markets without passing through the strait.

The Ras Markaz crude oil storage and export terminal is operated by Oman Tank Terminal Company, a subsidiary of OQ Group.

The proposed expansion forms part of efforts to transform Al Duqm’s infrastructure from facilities serving primarily domestic requirements into a regional platform for oil storage, aggregation and trading.

OQ said in its 2025 annual report that it had signed a memorandum of understanding with Iraq’s State Oil Marketing Organisation to develop a crude storage facility at Ras Markaz with an initial capacity of 10 million barrels.

The agreement also covers cooperation in marketing Iraqi crude in international markets. OTTCO has separately signed an agreement with Dutch storage company Royal Vopak to establish a joint venture that will develop and operate integrated energy-storage facilities in the Special Economic

Zone at Duqm.

The planned increase in storage capacity coincides with the continued expansion of Al Duqm’s industrial and energy ecosystem.

OQ8, the operator of the Duqm Refinery, said in September that processing rates were expected to reach about 255,000 barrels per day in 2026, equivalent to 110 per cent of its design capacity of 230,000 barrels per day.

The refinery recorded revenue of about \$7 billion in 2025. Combining onshore tanks, potential floating storage and partnerships with regional and international energy companies would allow Al Duqm to serve producers and buyers seeking alternatives to routes through the Strait of Hormuz.

The plans could strengthen Al Duqm’s role as a crude aggregation point and logistics centre while helping Oman derive greater commercial value from the port’s location outside the strait.

CHINA ECONOMY

China factory activity returns to growth



China’s official manufacturing PMI rose to 50.1 in September from 49.8 in August, ending two months of contraction as weather disruptions eased and artificial-intelligence demand supported production.

New orders reached 50.5 and production 51.7. A private survey showed activity at a five-month high, although weak consumption continued to cloud the outlook. — Reuters

OIL MARKETS

Oil rises as US-Iran talks stall



Oil rose on Wednesday as stalled US-Iran negotiations and tight fuel markets outweighed recovering Middle East supplies.

November Brent gained 0.6% to \$103.16 a barrel, while the more-active December contract reached \$97.10. WTI rose 0.9% to \$90.20. Brent was heading for a 14% monthly gain, its strongest since July, while WTI was set to rise about 4%. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold slips before US inflation data



Gold prices fell on Wednesday and headed for a monthly loss as investors awaited US inflation data for signals on further Federal Reserve interest rate increases.

Meanwhile, spot gold declined 0.2% to \$4,170.63 an ounce, taking its September loss above 6%, while US futures rose 0.5%. Silver dropped 0.8%, palladium lost 0.3% and platinum was little changed. — Reuters

OPINION

Government tenders key to sustaining Omani small businesses



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI.

In recent months, there have been increasing appeals from self-employed Omani business owners seeking access to some of the tenders issued by relevant government authorities. This comes at a time when many of them are experiencing a slump in business opportunities awarded by government entities, while also bearing the burden of various taxes and fees imposed on small businesses.

As a result, a number of self-employed individuals have been forced to close their businesses in recent years after struggling to maintain their operations, partly because of regulations requiring them to employ an Omani national even for relatively small-scale activities.

The lack of access to government tenders has been a recurring concern among self-employed individuals and entrepreneurs. However, this situation has recently begun to change with the issuance of Financial Circular No 1 of 2026 by the Ministry of Finance.

The circular directs ministries and other authorities to award certain specialised works and services valued at no more than RO 5,000 (approximately \$13,000) to self-employed Omani nationals who are not employed elsewhere. Self-employed individuals and small and medium-sized

enterprises (SMEs) constitute an important component of economies around the world. We hope this will also become increasingly evident in Oman through policies that support, facilitate and stimulate the activities of these businesses.

Many self-employed Omanis have created employment opportunities for themselves and contribute to stimulating local markets and broadening the country’s private-sector base. Therefore, it is important for the relevant authorities to establish a comprehensive set of policies and mechanisms to support these enterprises and enable them to register on the government tendering platform to compete for available opportunities.

Current policies provide for allocating at least 10 per cent of the total value of various government purchases and tenders to SMEs, in addition to arrangements relating to exemptions from certain fees and temporary guarantees, as well as reductions in the cost of purchasing tender documents.

There is also a need to expand the geographical reach of government tender opportunities, while increasing their value and annual allocation, so that business owners can feel that the contracts awarded to them are sufficiently substantial to cover their annual operating expenses. Success in this area would encourage entrepreneurs

A number of self-employed individuals have been forced to close their businesses in recent years after struggling to maintain their operations, partly because of regulations requiring them to employ an Omani national even for relatively small-scale activities.

to organise and expand their commercial activities. Such measures could help stimulate their businesses in the future within the framework of Oman Vision 2040.

At the same time, these entrepreneurs need access to financing for raw materials, support for employees’ wages and assistance in obtaining vehicles and equipment.

Consideration should also be given to transportation and operating costs, as well as ensuring that their financial dues are paid on time. It is equally important not to overlook the impact of taxes and fees on self-employed individuals and small businesses. They should not be burdened with excessive responsibilities if they are expected to remain commercially viable.

These businesses already have to meet rent, wage, electricity, insurance and other obligations, all of which represent significant fixed costs that can be difficult to sustain, particularly when additional fees and taxes are imposed.

These initiatives should be measured by a citizen’s ability to establish a business, secure contracts, execute them successfully, receive payments on time and generate sufficient profit to remain operational and grow.

The next phase therefore requires a shift from the concept of “supporting the enterprise” to “ensuring its ability to survive and grow”.

Asia’s seaborne thermal coal market is shrinking very slowly

CLYDE RUSSELL

The market for seaborne thermal coal in Asia is engaged in the slowest of races as a mild decline in demand competes with an equally gentle decline in supply in the coming years.

This means that the longer-term outlook for prices will largely be driven by which of supply and demand dips at a slightly faster pace than the other. Asia dominates the seaborne trade in the type of coal most commonly used to generate electricity, accounting for nearly 90% of the volumes in recent years.

The continent’s seaborne imports peaked at 898.2 million metric tonnes in 2024, according to data compiled by commodity analysts Kpler, before dropping slightly to 856.3 million in 2025.

They are on track to decline again in 2026 as top importers China and India moderate demand amid higher prices as part of the wider fallout from the US-Israeli war against Iran.

The picture of moderating demand and supply was a common theme at this year’s CT Asia conference on the Indonesian resort island of Bali, the largest coal industry gathering globally.

But rather than being gloomy, most coal market participants see the gradual shrinking of the seaborne thermal coal market as largely positive.

The view is that the sharp rise in the prices of crude oil, refined products and liquefied natural gas (LNG) as a result of the constrained exports from the Middle East has definitely extended coal’s lifespan in Asia.

Seaborne thermal coal comes largely from the world’s biggest exporter Indonesia and Australia, and both producers aren’t subject to shipping chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz in the Middle East. The next biggest suppliers to Asia, South Africa, Russia and the United States do suffer from higher freight costs, but are also viewed as producers that are relatively reliable.

However, the main issues on the supply side are in Indonesia, which is increasingly a policy-driven market rather than one that responds to price and demand fundamentals.

There are two main factors to look at in Indonesia, the first being the total volume of coal that the government authorises miners to produce.

OUTPUT, DOMESTIC DEMAND

Indonesian coal output hit a record high in 2025 of around 790 million tonnes, prompting the government to institute cuts for 2026 as part of an effort to limit exports and thereby lift prices by tightening the seaborne market.

It’s not clear exactly how much coal will be mined this year, but the consensus was it will drop by around 60 million tonnes.

Coal industry representatives at CT Asia also said in off-the-record conversations that they believed the government is keen to cap coal production at around 700 million tonnes per annum. — Reuters

Ministers intervene in takeovers of defence firms

MINISTERS have intervened in a flurry of foreign takeover attempts on British defence firms in the past year over concerns the bids posed a threat to national security.

The government unit that scrutinises takeovers “called in” 24 proposed bids from foreign buyers between the first quarter of 2025 and end of the first quarter of 2026, according to a Freedom of Information Request made by the Cabinet Office.

Of these, ten deals probed by the Investment Security Unit (ISU) targeted the UK’s defence sector.

Nine of these were from foreign private equity or investment banks and one fell under the sovereign wealth fund or state-owned vehicle category.

“The UK is a recognised leader of quality in terms of our defence manufacturing capability and that does make us a very attractive place for people to come and buy”, said Robert Gardner, global co-lead geopolitical risk and national security at Hogan Lovells.

“Clearly, that needs to involve a national security layer to ensure that we’re not arming our adversaries or giving up control of data to those who would use it against us”. Defence topped the list of probed foreign private equity acquisitions, followed by critical suppliers to the government.

Investment control partner at Mayer Brown, Mark Hills, said there would likely be a “high degree of overlap” between the two. He added defence sits in “crosshairs” where it is “a strategic priority for the UK from an industrial policy perspective, but it is also an area where there are clear and obvious concerns with foreign ownership over the defence supply chain”. The figures came as former prime minister Keir Starmer attempted to put the UK’s defence sector on firmer footing in one of his final acts as prime minister. In the long-awaited defence investment plan, Starmer coughed up just half the amount of funding military officials had been lobbying for with a £15 billion package.



ASRAAM missiles stand on the back of a truck as former Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves meets with defence suppliers at RAF Northolt on March 6, 2025 in Ruislip, Britain, in this file photo. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

In the long-awaited defence investment plan, Starmer coughed up just half the amount of funding military officials had been lobbying for with a £15 billion package.

“One of the decisions ministers have to make is on the balance between protecting national security and being able to sell some of the strongest sectors we have in the UK overseas”, Gardner said.

The ISU was established ahead of the National Security and Investment Act officially coming into force on January 4, 2022. The figures also revealed a handful of bids from state-owned operations to artificial intelligence and data infrastructure companies faced government scrutiny.

The figures reflect a wider rise in foreign takeovers on the London market over the past year as some of London’s biggest listed companies have fallen into the sights of foreign buyers.

A government spokesperson said: “The Government routinely scrutinises acquisitions to ensure they do not pose a risk to the UK. All acquisitions are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Meanwhile — Manufacturers in the UK have overcome a gloomy economic outlook across the country as business boosted

production to levels not seen in almost two years, new data has revealed.

According to S&P Global’s monthly survey of output across manufacturers, business activity continued to increase in what was the ninth consecutive month of growth in the sector.

The purchasing managers’ index (PMI) an aggregate score outlining growth trends came to 51.9. This was above the 50-figure threshold for neutrality in output. Manufacturers also said that output and new orders rose at faster rates than in the previous two months though small-scale manufacturers suffered a “mild downturn” in production volumes.

The positive PMI reading reflects manufacturers’ relative optimism about the UK economy, with firms still expecting further increases to output over the next 12 months despite fears of further trade breakdowns and extra tax hikes.

Director at S&P Global, Rob Dobson said: “Increase in production levels has hit a near-two-year high”.

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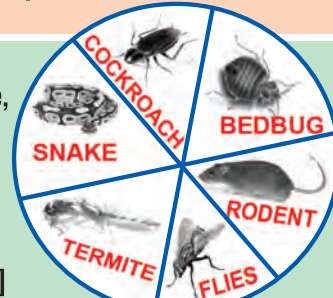
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ART/LIFE



LIFE THROUGH SHAHD AL HUSSAINI 'S EYES

> 20

HUMAN INTEREST

AFTER 50,000 KM, BRITISH WALKER FACES FINAL HURDLE



The 57-year-old had originally hoped to use a service corridor in the Channel Tunnel on foot, but he said the authorities seemed “set against” this idea. — AFP

After 28 years and 50,000 km, British adventurer Karl Bushby faces one hurdle in his bid to trek home from South America without using transport: the Channel.

“We thought we got permission to swim from the coast of France. Turned out that is not the case”, the former paratrooper said while walking towards Cap Blanc-Nez in northern France, within sight of England’s white cliffs.

“There was some internal confusion. So, right now we’re scrambling in kind of semi-panicked state”. Bushby, 57, had hoped to walk through a service corridor in the Channel Tunnel, but said authorities appeared “set against” the idea.

He instead resigned himself to swimming from Calais, despite hating it.

“I say I swim like a cat dropped in a bathtub. It’s not funny. It’s bad. But you just do what you’ve got to do”, he said.

Earlier in his journey, he spent 30 days crossing the Caspian Sea by swimming and floating, resting on a boat without advancing.

He hopes to secure permission to cross the Channel, one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes, before October 1, when winter weather would make the attempt too risky.

Setting off in November 1998, Bushby imposed two rules: never use transport to advance and return home, near Hull in northern England, only on foot. He pushes a cart carrying his belongings, nicknamed “the Beast”.

His journey has been interrupted repeatedly. Moscow long refused him a visa after he crossed the Bering Strait between Alaska and far eastern Russia on foot, something he says nobody had previously done.

Visa difficulties, the 2008 financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic account for 14 of his 28 years on the road, he estimates.

During those interruptions, he lived elsewhere, including Mexico, before resuming at the exact point where he had stopped.

Approaching England, Bushby recalls the early adventure nostalgically, particularly his trek through the Andes and the difficult crossing of the Darien jungle between Colombia and Panama.

“Then slowly but surely it becomes a job. You get older, it gets harder”, he said.

A documentary about his journey is in preparation. Once home, he plans to focus on the film and giving talks.

“I’ve got to try and get established in the grown up world again, because I’m going to arrive home with nothing”, he said.

But first, he must find a way across the Channel, the last barrier between him and the home he left nearly three decades ago. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



CULTURE

Students in traditional Punjabi dresses take selfies after their performance during the ‘Giddha’ folk dance competition at a university in Amritsar, India. — AFP



MUSIC

Horn players perform from windows for Bordeaux’s arts festival opening in France. — AFP



FURRY FRIENDS

Dogs enjoy their meal during the Grand Dinner for Dogs, organised by French chef Thierry Marx, at the Carnavalet Museum in Paris. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Wood warbler



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GREECE TO RETURN
REMAINS OF BULGARIAN TSAR



Greece is to return to Bulgaria the remains of one of the last tsars to rule the country before it was conquered by the Byzantine Empire. — AFP

Greece will return to Bulgaria the remains attributed to Tsar Samuel, one of the country's last rulers before its conquest by the Byzantine Empire, Bulgarian Prime Minister Rumen Radev announced on Tuesday.

Sofia has long sought the remains of Samuel, who reigned from 997 to 1014. They were uncovered during excavations launched in 1965 at a basilica on an island in a lake shared by Greece and Albania.

The handover will take place on Saturday at the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, during a ceremony hosted by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

"The memory of Tsar Samuel today unites the two countries instead of dividing them", Radev said, thanking Mitsotakis for his "political courage".

Samuel's reign was marked by constant conflict with the Byzantines. He is said to have

died of shock after 15,000 soldiers were returned to him blinded on the orders of Byzantine emperor Basil II following a catastrophic defeat.

The remains will travel by military plane to Sofia for a public ceremony and procession to the Church of Saint Sofia, where they will be laid to rest.

The agreement also provides for reciprocal transfers of historical, religious and cultural objects.

Athens will hand over remains from two other sarcophagi, attributed by Bulgarian authorities to Samuel's son and successor, Gavril Radomir and other royal relatives.

Greece will receive 48 objects taken from the diocese of Serres and Nigrita during the First World War and held at Sofia's National Historical Museum, the Greek culture ministry said.

— AFP



US actor Tom Cruise and English actress Emma D'Arcy. — AFP

TOM CRUISE
TRADES STUNTS FOR
SATIRE AS TOXIC
TYCOON 'DIGGER'

TOM Cruise is taking on one of his riskiest roles in decades, tackling climate change and corporate greed in "Digger", which sees him play an embattled, ageing tycoon.

Backed by a reported \$130 million budget and an advertising blitz, the dark comedy from multi-Oscar-winning Mexican director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu hits screens from Wednesday.

Taking a break from his usual action roles, Cruise is barely recognisable as a mining and oil magnate facing an environmental crisis. The original screenplay sees him wrestle with his conscience and critics of his wealth and business.

"It is the culmination of all my skills", Cruise, 64, said earlier this month. "It's the most challenging character ever".

Following the London premiere on September 22, initial online reaction was mixed, suggesting the melodramatic performances and Inarritu's acidic parody of billionaires and climate campaigning will divide audiences.

Cruise has spent most of this century making action movies, particularly as Ethan Hunt in the eight-film "Mission: Impossible" series, alongside "Top Gun: Maverick" and the "Jack Reacher" films. He will also appear in a "Days of Thunder" sequel later this year.

For film critic and author A S Hamrah, who has written extensively about Cruise's work, the last roles that harnessed his full range date back to the 1990s.

"I think Tom Cruise is looking



Mexican filmmaker Alejandro G Inarritu. — AFP

back on his career and realising he's ageing and that, on the one hand, he still has to do things like 'Top Gun II' and 'Days of Thunder II', but on the other he hasn't really been in any serious film since 1999", he said.

That year brought Paul Thomas Anderson's "Magnolia" and Stanley Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut", in which Cruise appeared opposite his former wife Nicole Kidman.

Hamrah suggested Cruise may also be seeking opportunities to work with directors he admires, including Inarritu, whose films include "Amores Perros" and "The Revenant".

Shawn Robbins, founder of US cinema consultancy Box Office Theory, said Cruise's career demonstrated a willingness to venture beyond his comfort zone.

"Younger audiences may associate him with being a risky stunt performer and actor, but he's always prepared to go outside the box", he said, citing "Vanilla Sky" and "Jerry Maguire".

"We have to put Digger in a separate category from the typical Tom Cruise blockbuster. It's something all of its own", he added.

The film also raises questions about how far Cruise personally embraces its political messages, which take aim at unsustainable lifestyles, virtue-signalling consumer behaviour and hypocritical politicians.

"I think that like Leonardo DiCaprio, I think he's concerned about climate change and the environment", said Hamrah, author of "Last Week in End Times Cinema" and a critic at n+1 magazine.

Beyond its political themes, the film could offer Cruise another opportunity to pursue an elusive best actor Oscar, with a performance markedly different from the action roles that have defined much of his recent career.

Asked whether the role might bring him into contention, Robbins said: "It could be an awards season player". — AFP

FEATURES



Shahd uses painting and sketching to document the world around her.



Shahd works across painting, sketching and other creative forms.



Al Hussaini at work in her studio.

LIFE THROUGH SHAHD AL HUSSAINI'S EYES

HIBBA AL KINDI

AT 23, young Omani artist Shahd al Hussaini is not particularly interested in defining herself by one medium, subject or even one creative pursuit.

Instead, she allows herself to experiment. “If I were to describe myself, I just love experimenting with everything”, she says. “Even with sports and nature, I’ve tried almost everything here”. From climbing and wake surfing to boxing, martial arts and weightlifting, Shahd’s interests regularly take her in different directions. The same is true creatively, where she has experimented with sewing, music and different forms of art. “I just jump from thing to thing”, she says. “But painting is what stuck with me”. Perhaps part of the reason is that painting gives Shahd a way to express what she does not always put into words.

“I’m not much of a talkative person, so it’s like an alternative to talking”, she says. “I feel like I don’t have a lot to say, so I move to painting”. A recent graphic design graduate, Shahd says she has always had an affinity for creating. One of her earliest memories is collecting leaves, rocks and soil at around 12 or 13 and arranging them into artworks.

“I feel like my love for nature and art started in those days and has stayed with me until now”, she says. During the pandemic, at around 16 or 17, Shahd began focusing more seriously on painting, working primarily with acrylics and painting almost every day. “I think that’s when I really started developing”, she says.

Around the same period, she created an Instagram account to share her work and keep a record of her progress. The account has since grown to more than 3,000 followers.

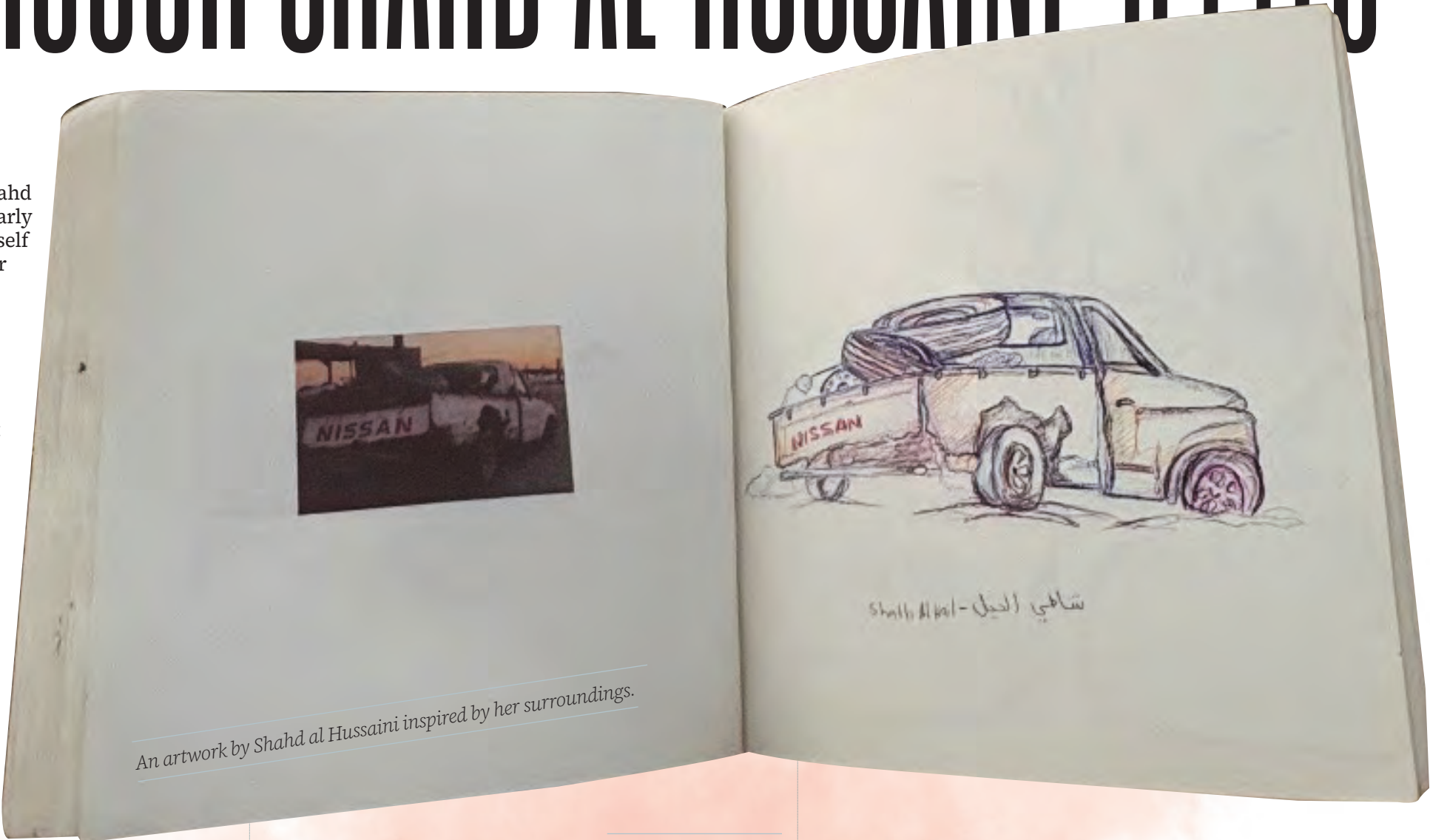
In 2024, she participated in her first exhibition at Muscat Art, where encountering artists from different parts of the world encouraged her to explore further. “It wasn’t only about people getting to know my art; I was also getting to know other people’s art”, she says. “I thought, ‘Okay, I want to learn more about art. I want to do more’”.

Her earlier work leaned towards surrealism, bringing realistic and imaginary elements together. By the time she exhibited at Makan Studios, however, Shahd was spending more time outdoors, particularly hiking and climbing.

“I started exploring nature more. I was going out into nature a lot, going to the mountains, climbing and hiking, and you could see that starting to enter my artwork”, she says. This eventually led to Oman Through My Eyes, a sketchbook project documenting more than 20 locations across Oman through ink and watercolour.

“Throughout that year, everywhere I went, I would sketch what I saw”, she says.

The project later continued into her work for Muscat Art



An artwork by Shahd al Hussaini inspired by her surroundings.



For 23-year-old Omani artist Shahd al Hussaini, art has become a way of documenting the places she visits, the experiences she collects and the world around her. From Oman’s mountains and coastlines to everyday moments, her work reflects a curiosity that extends well beyond the canvas.

in 2025, drawing on her appreciation for Oman’s natural landscapes. “I love the mountains and the coastlines in Oman”, she says. “You feel like you’ve entered another world. You feel free”. Among the artists who influence her is Claude Monet, whose Impressionist brushwork she admires. She also points to Salim al salami, particularly his use of colour, whose work she returns to for inspiration. Behind her willingness to explore has also been the support of her family. “My parents are really supportive with everything”, she says. “Every new idea I get, every new experience I want to experience, they’re always there”. Now working full-time in marketing and graphic design, Shahd admits balancing a creative career with her personal work is not always easy. “When you finish a creative job, it’s hard to go back home and still have the motivation to create”, she says. Instead of heading straight home, she often walks or runs to reset. Visiting exhibitions and looking at other artists’ work also help keep her inspired. Her advice to creatives in a similar position is to make room for interests outside their work. “Find something to add to your routine that isn’t in the creative field”, she says. For Shahd, that could mean climbing a mountain, going for a run or picking up another new interest. And for new artists hesitant to share their work, Shahd draws from her own experience. “What made me more excited to continue was when I started posting my art”, she says. “When you get good feedback from people, it really encourages you to develop and continue”. Her advice? “Just go for it. Show yourself”. You can follow her work on Instagram at @shahds.art.