

# OMAN AND RWANDA AGREE TO BOOST INVESTMENTS



**HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK** held a meeting with President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda, at Al Maamourah Palace on Tuesday morning.

During the meeting, the two leaders reaffirmed the growing ties between their countries and their shared commitment to further strengthening cooperation across economic and investment sectors, in the interest of their peoples.

Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda announced their agreement to open resident embassies in both countries, establish a joint committee and a joint business council, and implement a technical cooperation programme, thereby strengthening diplomatic presence and establishing institutional mechanisms to advance and follow up on cooperation, while supporting the further expansion of the partnership between the two countries.

This was announced during a Joint Statement issued on the occasion of the official visit of the President of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman.

The joint statement reads as follows, “Upon the invitation of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda, paid an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman from September 7 to 8. **TURN TO P4**

- HM, PRESIDENT OF RWANDA REAFFIRM GROWING TIES
- TWO LEADERS AGREE TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION
- TO OPEN RESIDENT EMBASSIES IN BOTH COUNTRIES
- TO SET UP JOINT COMMITTEE, JOINT BUSINESS COUNCIL
- EXCHANGE VIEWS ON REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ISSUES

## Oman and Rwanda sign 2 agreements, six MoUs



**SALALAH:** The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda signed two agreements and six memoranda of understanding at Al Hosn Palace in Salalah, during the official visit of President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda to Oman. The agreements and MoUs aimed at deepening cooperation and partnership between the two countries.

The first agreement provides for mutual

visa exemption for holders of diplomatic, service and special passports, while the second covers the removal of double taxation. The memoranda of understanding encompassed agriculture, logistics, land and dry port development, supply chain services, investment promotion, labour, strategic partnership and investment activation.

**DETAILS ON P4**



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# OMAN, RWANDA REAFFIRM TIES



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq held a meeting with President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda at Al Maamourah Palace on Tuesday. — ONA

**HIS** Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq held a meeting with President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda at Al Maamourah Palace on Tuesday. During the meeting, the two leaders reaffirmed the growing ties between their countries and their shared commitment to further strengthening cooperation across economic and investment sectors, in the interest of their peoples.

The meeting was attended on His Majesty's side by His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance; Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi,

Head of the Private Office; Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Nasra bint Salim al Hashmi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Kenya and Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Rwanda.

The meeting was attended from the Rwandan side by Olivier Nduhungirehe, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Yusuf Murangwa, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Antoine Kajangwe, Minister of Trade and Industry, Solange Uwiuze, Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Juliana Muganza, CEO of Rwanda Development Board, Dan Munyuzza, Non-Resident Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman and other officials. — ONA

## OMAN AND RWANDA ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT TO OPEN RESIDENT EMBASSIES



**MUSCAT:** The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda announced their agreement to open resident embassies in both countries, establish a joint committee and a joint business council, and implement a technical cooperation program, thereby strengthening diplomatic

presence and establishing institutional mechanisms to advance and follow up on cooperation, while supporting the further expansion of the partnership between the two countries. This was announced during a Joint Statement issued on the occasion of the official visit of the President of Rwanda to the

Sultanate of Oman. The joint statement reads as follows: "Upon the invitation of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda, paid an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman from 7 to 8 September 2026. — ONA

## PRESIDENT KAGAME VISITS MUSEUM OF FRANKINCENSE LAND

**SALALAH:** President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda visited the Museum of the Frankincense Land in the Wilayat of Salalah on Tuesday, as part of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman. He was received upon arrival by Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, along with a number of ministry officials.

The President of Rwanda and his accompanying delegation toured the museum's halls, receiving a comprehensive briefing on its collections and exhibits, which showcase the cultural and historical heritage of the Sultanate of Oman and its enduring civilisational legacy across the ages.

In the History Hall, which comprises six main sections, the guest viewed exhibits reflecting the distinctiveness of Omani identity, beginning with the Geography of Oman section, which displays maps and essential information on Oman's terrain and environmental diversity, moving through the Oman in Ancient Times section, which documents archaeological evidence of early human settlement, the development of crafts and economic activities and the flourishing of the copper trade and relations with the civilisations of Mesopotamia, India and China.

The President of Rwanda also viewed the Land of Frankincense section, which highlights Dhofar's historical role as a major centre for frankincense production and export and the trade and cultural bridges it established reaching the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and Mesopotamia.

The guest's attention was drawn to the Islam and the People of Oman section, which displays manuscripts and documents chronicling the voluntary embrace of Islam by the people of Oman and their contributions to spreading its values and sciences. He also explored the Highlights of Omani History section, which presents key milestones in the country's political and civilisational journey.

In the Maritime Hall, the President of Rwanda toured seven sections illustrating the Omani people's enduring connection with the sea and their commercial relations with peoples around the world. He viewed models of traditional vessels and replicas showcasing their mastery of sailing ship construction and boat building.

He received explanations on the Navigation section, which highlights seafaring skills across the ages and the Trade section, which illustrates the network of historic ports — including Samharum, Al Baleed and Sohar — and their pivotal role in connecting the region to global markets.

The guest also viewed the Virtual Sea section, which simulates the environment of ancient navigation and the Renaissance section, which reflects the achievements made in the ports and maritime transport sector in modern Oman.

He also toured the Central Bank of Oman's numismatic exhibition, which showcases the Bank's various issues of banknotes and coins, alongside the historic Islamic coinage minted in the Sultanate of Oman up until 1970, in addition to commemorative coins issued by the Central Bank of Oman.

At the conclusion of the visit, the President of Rwanda signed the Distinguished Visitors' Book, expressing his delight at visiting the museum and its cultural and civilisational significance, and affirming its importance in fostering cultural cooperation between the two friendly countries. — ONA



The President of Rwanda and his accompanying delegation receiving a comprehensive briefing on cultural and historical heritage of the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



## President of Rwanda visits Razat Farm in Salalah



**SALALAH:** President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda visited the Royal Razat Farm in the Wilayat of Salalah on Tuesday, as part of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

He was received upon arrival by Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs and Eng Hilal bin Mohammed al Waeli, Head of Royal Horses, Camels, Farms and Gardens at the Royal Court Affairs.

At the start of the visit, the guest received a detailed briefing on the farm's history and objectives, along with its facilities and equipment that support agricultural and livestock

production in line with best practices and modern trends.

The farm also offers a unique agritourism experience, transforming agriculture into a tourism and economic attraction in line with Oman's efforts to develop the agricultural sector.

The President of Rwanda toured the farm's facilities, viewing the agricultural and livestock components, including coconut and banana plantations, and a variety of fruit and vegetable crops, as well as the farm's livestock. He also explored the farm's specialised facilities, including the veterinary clinic, laboratories, and the dairy production plant. — ONA

# President concludes visit



President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda and his accompanying delegation left the country following a two-day official visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The President was seen off by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said in Salalah on Tuesday.

## OMAN, RWANDA SIGN TWO PACTS, SIX MoUs



**SALALAH:** The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda on Tuesday signed two agreements and six memoranda of understanding at Al Hosn Palace in Salalah, during the official visit of President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda to Oman. The agreements and MoUs aimed at deepening cooperation and partnership between the two countries.

The first agreement provides for mutual visa exemption for holders of diplomatic, service and special passports, while the second covers the removal of double taxation. The memoranda of understanding encompassed agriculture, logistics, land and dry port development, supply chain services, investment promotion, labour, strategic partnership and investment activation.

The agreements and MoUs were signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance; Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Ali bin Talib al Maawali, Chief Commercial Officer at Oman Aviation Investment.

# Oman, Rwanda to boost investments

FROM PAGE 1

“During the visit, the two leaders held official talks on ways to strengthen bilateral relations and expand areas of cooperation in a manner that serves their common interests, reaffirming their commitment to continuing to develop the partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda.

“The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Rwanda underscored the importance of further strengthening bilateral cooperation and advancing coordination across areas of investment, transport, energy, mining, tourism, logistics and communications, and in the fields of banking and finance, encouraging partnerships between

the public and private sectors, and strengthening trade cooperation in a manner that contributes to increasing the volume of trade between the two countries.

“Among the key outcomes of the visit, the two sides agreed to establish resident embassies in both countries, create a Joint Committee and a Joint Business Council, and implement a technical cooperation programme, thereby strengthening diplomatic presence and establishing institutional mechanisms to advance and follow up on cooperation, while supporting the further expansion of the partnership between the two countries.

“His Majesty the Sultan and President Paul Kagame praised the growth of bilateral cooperation

between the two countries, particularly in the fields of transport, communications, and information technology.

“The visit witnessed the signing of an agreement on mutual visa exemption for holders of official passports, an agreement on the removal of double taxation, and several memoranda of understanding in the fields of political consultations, labour, logistics and inland and dry ports development, agriculture, investment promotion, and strategic partnership and investment activation term sheet.

“The two leaders exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common interest, reaffirming their commitment to supporting efforts

aimed at achieving security and stability and resolving disputes through peaceful means, in accordance with the principles of international law.

“President Paul Kagame praised the role of the Sultanate of Oman in supporting regional dialogue and peace, while His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq expressed his appreciation for the Republic of Rwanda for its role in achieving stability, and seeking to promote dialogue and peaceful solutions in its region.

“The President of the Republic of Rwanda expressed his appreciation for the warm hospitality and generous reception extended to him and his delegation, and extended an invitation to His Majesty the Sultan to visit Rwanda.” — ONA



# Tourism ties between Oman and Rwanda poised to grow

KABEER YOUSUF  
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

The number of Omanis visiting Rwanda has been on the rise, and with the new MoU's signed between the two, the number would shoot up, according to travel and tourism experts.

Speaking to the Observer, a source from the office said that the existing MoUs between the two nations are spread over multiple sectors and bilateral air services agreement which has entered into force, an MoU in the Field of ICT which was signed on April 8, 2025 to boost cooperation in ICT and digital economy, another MoU in transportation to launch direct Oman Air flights between Muscat and Kigali starting in June 2026, besides an MoU in airport city investments which is a cooperation between RDB and Oman Airports Management Company.

“Additionally, there are MoUs in logistics for collaboration on inland port development, operations, and supply chain services, and another MoU in ICT & Innovation for cooperation between Rwanda's and Oman's ICT ministries on data hosting, cloud services, and data



President Paul Kagame at the Museum of the Frankincense Land in Salalah on Tuesday

centre development, and we are looking for more areas for bilateral cooperation,” she added.

“With these MoU's taking effect, the bilateral tourism and travel relations as well as the trade and commercial ties would surge as the demand for Rwanda tourism spots has been of great demand among Omanis, not just for familial connections but for tourism reasons as well,” said Sunil D'souza, Executive Director, Oneic Travel

Group, who validated the reasons behind Rwanda becoming one of the most sought-after destinations for Omanis.

With direct flights now connecting Oman to East Africa, Rwanda is emerging as a new and unexpected destination for Omani travellers seeking adventure beyond beaches and deserts.

Starting in July 2026, SalamAir began operating twice-weekly direct flights between Muscat and Kigali,

with Oman Air set to launch its own service in June 2026. The new route makes it possible to reach Rwanda's volcanic highlands in under 5 hours — opening a gateway to wildlife, culture, and eco-tourism.

For Omanis used to mountains, wadis, and coastlines, Rwanda offers something completely different: rainforests, gorillas, and classic African safaris.

“The country's headline attraction is 'gorilla trekking in Volcanoes

National Park' as one third of the world's remaining mountain gorillas live here. Visitors hike through misty bamboo forests to spend one unforgettable hour with a gorilla family — an experience travel companies are already packaging alongside Oman's beach resorts as an “adventure + relaxation” honeymoon,” he adds.

Culture lovers can explore Kigali, one of Africa's cleanest capitals, visit the 15th-century 'King's Palace Museum', and learn about Rwanda's heritage at the Ethnographic Museum in Huye. Tourism officials from both countries say the new air link is designed to boost two-way travel. While Omanis head to Rwanda for wildlife and green landscapes, Rwandans can experience Oman's desert adventures, historic forts, souqs, and luxury beach resorts.

With sustainability at the heart of both Oman Vision 2040 and Rwanda's tourism model, the partnership also opens opportunities for eco-tourism packages focused on conservation.

Travel and tourism operators opined that 'As connectivity grows, Rwanda may soon become Oman's closest taste of the African wild.'

SHORT TAKES

HM receives thanks cable from Arab Towns conference participants

**SALALAH:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the participants in the 20th General Conference of the Arab Towns Organization and the 64th Executive Council, held in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, during the period from 7–8 September 2026.

The cable was sent on the occasion of the conclusion of the conference titled “More Innovative and Sustainable Cities”.

In the cable, the participants expressed their highest expressions of thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to the Sultanate of Oman for hosting this conference and for the generous hospitality and warm welcome, praising Oman’s role in promoting, developing, and humanising cities to enhance the quality of life.

The participants concluded their cable by praying to Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty the Sultan as an inspiring leader, and to grant the Sultanate of Oman continued progress and prosperity. — ONA

HM GREETES KIM JONG UN, PRESIDENT OF TAJIKISTAN

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Kim Jong Un, General Secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea, President of the State Affairs Commission, and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the Democratic People’s Republic of

Korea on his country’s National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to the General Secretary and the people of his country.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik also sent a cable of greetings to President Emomali Rahmon of

the Republic of Tajikistan, on his country’s National Day.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Emomali, and to the Tajik people further progress and prosperity. — ONA

CONFERENCE SEEKS TO ENHANCE COOPERATION AMONG ARAB COUNTRIES

**SALALAH:** The Sultanate of Oman hosted the 20th General Conference of the Arab Towns Organization during which the chairmanship of the organisation’s round was handed over from the city of Riyadh to Dhofar Municipality.

The conference was held under the theme ‘More Innovative and Sustainable Cities’.

The two-day conference, held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, concluded under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The conference aimed to enhance cooperation among Arab countries and facilitate the exchange of expertise to achieve sustainable development. The discussions focused on urban development, the digital transformation of cities and the challenges posed to the growth of Arab towns. — ONA



The conference was held under the theme ‘More Innovative and Sustainable Cities’. — ONA

Oman flays attacks on Saudi Arabia

**THE** Sultanate of Oman has condemned the attacks targeting civilian and economic facilities in several cities of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and expressed its solidarity with Saudi Arabia. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday, Oman voiced its rejection of attacks on civilians, civilian infrastructure and commercial vessels, as well as anything that threatens the safety and security of maritime navigation.



Trucks burn during an Ansar Allah attack at Al Wadiah border crossing near Al Wadiah, on the Saudi-Yemen border. — Reuters

Shura participates in Gulf seminar

**MUSCAT:** The Majlis Ash’shura participated via videoconferencing in the joint Gulf seminar for legislative councils of the GCC.

The event, organised by the Council of Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain in cooperation with the GCC Secretariat-General, discussed commonalities and exchanged parliamentary expertise. It aims to highlight the role of legislative councils in supporting joint Gulf action and developing legislation across various sectors.

On the sidelines of participating in the seminar, Dr Abdulaziz bin Rashid al Hashmi, member of the Council, presented a working paper titled “The Gulf Digital Economy: Legislation, Development of Technological Infrastructure, Enhancing GDP Contribution, Stimulating Investments, and the Safety of Digital Society”, addressing the main challenges facing legislative councils in regulating the Gulf digital economy, as well as the



The paper presented by Oman forms a road map for empowering the Gulf digital economy. — ONA

plans, strategies, and legislative system related to the digital economy in the Sultanate of Oman.

The working paper presented by the Majlis Ash’shura forms a strategic road map for empowering the Gulf digital economy through unifying legislation among GCC states. It also highlights the Sultanate of Oman’s

integrated trajectory, starting from digital transformation initiatives and the issuance of modern legislation such as the Data Law and the establishment of the Investment Court, through to the targets of Oman Vision 2040 and artificial intelligence.

The paper reviewed the Council’s oversight and legislative efforts

in preventing digital monopoly and monitoring national indicators to enhance investment attractiveness. It concluded by affirming the importance of preparing a unified Gulf legislative framework and establishing a joint coordination committee to ensure sustainable growth and the safety of the digital society. — ONA



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### Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender:-

| Tender No. | Tender Subject                                                                                                                      | Grade                                                                                                                                                                             | Last date for obtainment of Tender Document | Last date for Tender Submission | Tender Document Price (non-retundable) |                 |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------|
|            |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                             |                                 | Small and Medium Companies             | Local Companies |
| 435/2026   | Organizing and managing the International Conference on Empowerment and Social Investment in Autism and the accompanying exhibition | Companies specialized in the field of event and event organization services and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, with excellent or first degree | Thursday 17-09-2026 02:00 PM                | Wednesday 30-09-2026 10:00 AM   | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Wednesday 09/09/2026**.

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**“The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”**

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Recall

**ZWILLING Enfinigy and Enfinigy Pro Electric Kettles (1.5 L)**

September 9, 2026

| Brand of Commodity                                        | Year of Production            | Number of Affected Commodities       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ZWILLING Enfinigy / Enfinigy Pro electric kettles (1.5 L) | December 2019 - February 2026 | Approximately 181 in Oman (combined) |

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The handle may loosen or break during use, causing hot water to spill and creating a risk of scalding injuries.

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التاريخ : فبراير 2025

الاصدار : 04

الرمز: SOP-09-03

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi headed the Omani delegation at the Cairo Arab League session.

Oman attends 166th Arab League Council session

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the 166th regular session of the Council of the League of Arab States (LAS) at the level of foreign ministers, held in Cairo on Monday.

The Omani delegation was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, and included Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States, and a number of officials from the Foreign Ministry.

The Council discussed a number of political, security, and economic issues, most notably the latest developments in the Palestinian cause and the serious and rapidly evolving situation in the region, and its repercussions on the security and stability of Arab states and peoples. — ONA

136 take part in Quran Competition preliminary rounds



2,214 contestants registered for this year's competition.

JAALAN BANI BU HASSAN: As many as 136 competitors from the wilayats of Al Sharqiyah South Governorate took part in the preliminary rounds of the 34th edition of the Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition, organised by the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science at the Royal Court.

The preliminary rounds of the competition were held at the Sultan Qaboos Mosque in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan.

A total of 2,214 male and female contestants have registered for this year's competition, which comprises 7 levels of Holy Quran memorisation.

The competition aims to encourage Omanis to memorise the Holy Quran, groom a generation that masters Holy Quran recitation skills and enhance the Sultanate of Oman's presence in international Holy Quran competitions. — ONA

Bahla forum promotes traditional crafts, and cultural exchange

BAHLA: The World Heritage Volunteers Forum in Bahla is bringing together Omani and international youth in an effort to preserve traditional crafts, promote heritage awareness and encourage cultural exchange.

The forum, organised by the Bahla Volunteer Team under the World Heritage Volunteers 2026 initiative Working for the Future, focuses on traditional crafts associated with the local community, including pottery, woodworking and metalwork. The programme combines practical activities with lectures, field visits and community engagement to introduce participants to the knowledge and skills passed down through generations.

The forum, which began last week, continues until September 13, with the participation of 30 local and international youth volunteers from Oman, Iran, Egypt, Russia, India, Italy and Spain.



It is being held in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Ministry of Education, represented by the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority.

AL BURAIMI HONOURS STUDENTS SCORING 97PC AND ABOVE

AL BURAIMI: Al Buraimi Governorate honoured outstanding General Education Diploma students for the academic year 2025-2026, including students from government and private schools and holders of equivalent certificates who achieved scores of 97 per cent or higher.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidi, Governor of Al Buraimi. In his address, he said the students' achievement reflects the fruits of their hard



The honouring is part of Al Buraimi Governorate's efforts to support outstanding students.

work, perseverance and ambition, as well as their capabilities and determination to excel.

He described their success as an important milestone in their educational journey and expressed his appreciation to parents, teachers and administrative staff for their continued efforts and support in helping students overcome challenges and achieve excellence.

The Governor said students are at the heart of the development process and represent a valuable national

resource on which Oman relies to build its future. He wished the students continued success as they embark on their university education and pursue their academic and professional aspirations.

The honouring is part of Al Buraimi Governorate's efforts to support outstanding students, encourage them to pursue excellence and promote the value of knowledge as a key pillar in building individuals and achieving comprehensive development. — ONA

ICRC chief warns against normalisation of war

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH MUSCAT, SEPT 8

WARS must not be allowed to become a tolerated norm, and diplomacy and dialogue must remain at the heart of efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, Pierre Krähenbühl, Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said during his visit to Oman.

Speaking to the Observer on Sunday, Pierre warned that the Middle East is facing several overlapping and protracted conflicts with devastating consequences for civilians. He said the growing number of conflicts, coupled with their increasingly prolonged nature, was creating an ever-deeper humanitarian crisis across the region.

“People should not accept that wars are inevitable and should also not become accustomed to this multiplication of profoundly problematic impacts on human beings across the region,” he said.

Pierre said there appeared to be a growing tendency for wars to become a tolerated part of everyday life, stressing that this mindset needed to be challenged through stronger political action and renewed commitment to diplomacy.

“It feels like the wars are becoming a tolerated norm again in our lives, whereas we need diplomacy and dialogue to be at the heart of it. Both for conflict prevention and resolution,” he said.

He particularly recognised the Sultanate of Oman's continued emphasis on dialogue and diplomacy, describing Oman's approach as important at a time



PIERRE KRÄHENBÜHL  
Director-General, ICRC, during his interview in Muscat.

ICRC chief recognised Oman's continued emphasis on dialogue and diplomacy, describing Oman's approach as important at a time when the region is facing multiple crises

when the region is facing multiple crises.

“This is why I want to recognise the stance that Oman is taking, to keep dialogue, to keep and preserve the belief in the fact that diplomacy should be the first resort. This is what is also in the UN Charter: wars were supposed to be the last resort,” he said.

Pierre said the ICRC's strategic partnership with Oman has developed significantly over the past decade, including cooperation on humanitarian priorities in Yemen and dialogue on the organisation's work in crisis environments around the world. He said the ICRC highly values the support, consideration and trust it has received from Omani authorities.

The humanitarian consequences of prolonged conflicts, he said, extend far beyond the immediate loss of life. Families are being displaced, homes destroyed and relatives killed, injured or reported missing, while essential services such as healthcare, water infrastructure, bridges and education are also severely affected.

“Every day sees the incredibly deep and traumatic human cost of these different wars that affect the region,” he said, calling for greater political action to prevent further escalation and provide stronger protection for civilians.

The situation around the Strait of Hormuz also illustrates how the consequences of conflict can spread beyond national borders. Pierre said military operations, disruption to safe passage and economic losses affect not only Iran and Gulf countries but can have wider consequences for countries far beyond the region.

He also highlighted concerns for the marine environment, noting

that armed conflicts can result in carbon emissions, oil spills, contamination of water sources and damage to marine life. Disruptions to the movement of oil, fertilisers and other essential commodities can also create ripple effects in distant regions, including Africa.

Pierre said the ICRC has witnessed the consequences of long-running conflicts in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Colombia, Myanmar and Afghanistan. He expressed concern that humanitarian organisations have increasingly found themselves working in the same conflict zones for decades.

“The idea was maybe a conflict would last for a few months or a couple of years, and then the operation would be finished and we would move on to another place if there was a need. Now we have permanent entities; it feels endless,” he said.

He also praised Oman's engagement in seeking humanitarian solutions in Yemen, including its role in facilitating dialogue and the release of detainees, as well as its longstanding engagement in efforts related to Iran.

For individuals, Pierre urged people not to become indifferent to suffering or regard war as inevitable. He said solidarity, empathy, dialogue, humanitarian support and political action can all contribute to keeping human dignity at the centre of responses to conflict.

Pierre is currently travelling through the GCC countries and said the recent conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran has created a different outlook across the Gulf, with countries in the region themselves experiencing the direct and wider consequences of conflict.

WORLD

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz near the beach of Bandar Abbas, Iran. — Reuters

South Korea dispatches team to assess Hormuz security conditions

**SEOUL:** South Korea said on Tuesday it had sent a fact-finding team to assess the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, stressing no decision had been made about potential troop deployment to the strategic waterway. Traffic through the vital shipping route has been virtually paralysed since the US-Iran war began on February 28, disrupting global energy markets.

The South Korean defence ministry said it had “dispatched a fact-finding team to assess conditions on the ground in the Strait of Hormuz”. “The team was sent to examine the regional situation and security conditions, and its mission does not presuppose an actual deployment,” it said. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly pressured ally South Korea to provide help for the war in the Middle East. “No decision has been made regarding the deployment of troops,” the South Korean defence ministry said. The team is expected to return to South Korea as early as this week, the report said.

Earlier, South Korea said it was considering “contributions” to US security efforts along the strait, while stressing that no decision had been made. Tuesday’s announcement followed a warning from Tehran a day earlier that any South Korean military contribution to the conflict would have “serious consequences”. — **AFP**

Trial opens in France over deadliest Channel crossing disaster



French lawyer Emmanuel Daoud speaks to the press at the Judicial court in Paris. — AFP

**PARIS:** Fourteen people suspected of links to trafficking networks went on trial in France on Tuesday over the loss of at least 31 people including a seven-year-old child in the Channel in 2021, the deadliest accident involving asylum seekers trying to reach the English coast. The defendants are accused of playing a role in the sinking in which 27 people were confirmed to have died when their inflatable dinghy sank in the early hours of November 24, 2021. Four others are still unaccounted for.

The victims, aged between seven and 46, were mostly Iraqi Kurds but also included Afghans, Ethiopians, Egyptians and Vietnamese nationals.

Only two men survived the tragedy. The trial carries particular significance because of the high death toll and the sheer number of civil parties involved, 114 in all, including victims’ families.

“This is an important step for them, something that will not give them solace but something that will allow them some recovery as part of this long process of grief,” said Thomas Ricard, one of the lawyers for many of the victims’ families. Another lawyer, Emmanuel Daoud, called the proceedings a “trial of greed, cynicism and inhumanity.” — **AFP**

ICELAND SUMMONS US ENVOY AFTER TRUMP’S DISTURBING MAP

**STOCKHOLM:** Iceland’s foreign ministry said on Tuesday it had summoned the US ambassador after President Donald Trump posted a map that seemingly showed the island as part of the United States. “Minister for Foreign Affairs, Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir, summoned the US Ambassador yesterday to convey a clear message that the image was wholly inappropriate,” the ministry said in a statement.

Trump on Monday posted an

image to social media with a map of North America in which Canada, Greenland, Mexico, much of central America and the Caribbean, as well as Iceland, were coloured in with the US flag. The entire landmass was labelled “United States of America” and the image was posted without any further explanation.

Trump’s repeated threats to take control of Greenland, a Danish autonomous territory located fewer than 300 kilometres from Iceland, and his trade showdown

with Canada have already rattled Iceland. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, said that “the Greenlandic government and the Greenlandic people have said again and again that they do not wish to be American.” “We can certainly repeat that message today,” she told news agency Ritzau, commenting on the map while on a visit to Greenland.

Trump also posted a cartoon of himself playing in an ice hockey match against Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney. — **AFP**

12 countries to sanction Israeli WB settlements

**BRITAIN** ON Tuesday announced a trade ban on goods made in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank in coordination with France and Canada, the latest sanctions to target Israel as it faces growing diplomatic isolation. British Foreign Minister Ed Miliband said Britain could no longer simply “call out” injustice and suffering, but told the House of Commons that the country now had to “act” to oppose the expansion of settlements. “Today we refuse to be bystanders to further suffering and to the destruction of the two-state solution,” Miliband said, referring to Britain’s long-held support for the two-state idea, which Israel opposes.

Foreign ministers of 12 countries said on Tuesday they would back or consider restrictions on trade in goods with Israeli settlements in the West Bank that are illegal under international law. “The Government of Israel’s actions in the West Bank are undermining the possibility of a two-State solution,” the statement said. “Today, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK confirm their intention to introduce national and/or support European restrictions on trade in goods with settlements which are illegal under international law, or that they are actively considering these and other

Foreign ministers of 12 countries said on Tuesday they would back or consider restrictions on trade in goods with Israeli settlements in the West Bank that are illegal under international law. British Foreign Minister Ed Miliband said Britain could no longer simply “call out” injustice and suffering



Children look on at the entrance to their home in the Palestinian village of Duma, near Nablus. — Reuters

measures, in accordance with their national procedures,” it added.

Miliband, who became Britain’s foreign minister in July, also said Britain’s position is that the occupation in the West Bank is unlawful, and that London believes that there is ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in areas of the West Bank.

The impact on the £6 billion of annual bilateral trade is likely to be minimal, with details unclear of how the UK will differentiate between goods originating in West Bank settlements and products made in Israel.

Two prominent Israeli ministers reacted angrily to the move. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called

for the British ambassador in Tel Aviv to be expelled, while National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has asked Netanyahu to close the British Consulate in East Jerusalem, which is accredited to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Israeli President Isaac Herzog meanwhile accused Britain of interfering in Israel’s upcoming elections, due in late October.

The focus of recent concerns is Israel’s E1 settlement project in the West Bank not far from Jerusalem, which would cut across land the Palestinians seek for a future independent state and which Miliband said put the two-state solution at risk. Smotrich on Tuesday announced the advance of plans for 1,000 new homes in two other settlements in the West Bank.

The United Nations, Palestinians and most countries regard settlements as illegal under international law. Israel disputes this. Britain in 2025 joined other countries to recognise a Palestinian state as a means to promote a two-state solution, and in June it sanctioned Israeli networks involved in financing, enabling and carrying out violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Israel-UK relations have become increasingly strained in recent years with London criticising Israel’s conduct in Gaza, the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and rising settler attacks on Palestinians. — **Reuters**



RUSSIA RENEWS DRONE STRIKES ON KYIV

**KYIV:** Russia pummelled Kyiv with drones and missiles early on Tuesday, resuming its air attacks after a brief halt for the visit of US peace negotiators, and killing three people, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. The attack caused fires in several districts across the Ukrainian capital, damaging at least 14 high-rise buildings, a dorm, a school, a clinic, warehouses and other sites, officials said. “Kyiv was exploding and burning,” Katarina Mathernova, the EU ambassador to Ukraine, said in a social media post.

In another strike, a Russian drone partially destroyed a Ukrainian TV channel building in Kyiv, injuring five people, President Volodymyr Zelensky said. The number of wounded in the city had reached 19 by midday, authorities said. Russia resumed its attacks after US envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff left Kyiv on Sunday following talks with Zelensky, as the Trump administration renewed its push to end Russia’s 4 ½ -year war in Ukraine.

Describing the attack as a complex one aimed at causing “as much harm to life as possible”, Zelensky said ballistic missiles were still “particularly difficult” to intercept. Ukraine’s air force said it downed nearly all cruise missiles and two ballistic missiles. — **Reuters**

ESCALATING VIOLENCE

Drone strike in central Sudan kills 12



A drone strike blamed on Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) killed 12 people outside a courthouse in the army-held town of Umm Rawaba in North Korodofan on Tuesday. The attack is the latest in an escalating wave of drone strikes by both the RSF and the Sudanese army, which have been at war since April 2023. The strike hit an area outside the courthouse where residents had gathered to complete legal and administrative procedures. — **AFP**

CLIMATE EXTREMISM

German police arrest suspect in sabotage



BERLIN: German police arrested a suspected militant climate activist over a spate of sabotage attacks on the power grid that had apparently aimed to disrupt power from coal-fired plants. Police in the city of Cologne said on Tuesday that officers had “apprehended the wanted 48-year-old suspect near the Weisweiler power plant” in NRW state. “The man was carrying additional explosive devices at the time of his arrest but offered no resistance,” they said. — **AFP**

DISASTER BATTLE

Nepal flood toll rises as rescuers struggle



The death toll from Nepal’s devastating flood rose on Tuesday to 1,357, with 5,326 people still missing, the country’s disaster authority said nearly two weeks after the disaster. Authorities have been trying to verify the number of missing people by collating data from across the country. “We have been compiling reports and verifying them. That is what has caused the increase in the number,” Prakash Pokhrel, assistant spokesman at the disaster authority, said. — **AFP**

OPINION

Growing older doesn’t mean we stop growing



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

THIS week, more than 876,000 students across Oman returned to classrooms for a new academic year. There are new subjects, new technologies and greater emphasis on artificial intelligence, leadership, innovation and the skills young people will need for a rapidly changing future.

At almost the same time, Oman has also been looking at something that receives far less attention: lifelong learning. It raises an interesting question. While we are busy preparing children for the future, are the adults around them willing to keep learning too?

Somewhere along the way, many of us quietly graduate from curiosity. We become experienced, form opinions and create routines that make life feel manageable.

Without noticing, “this is what I know” can slowly become “this is how it is.” Yet life rarely stays still long enough for that certainty to serve us forever. Relationships change, workplaces evolve, technology moves faster, children grow into people with minds of their own, and yesterday’s answers can stop fitting today’s questions.

Learning in adulthood is not simply about taking another course or adding another qualification to a CV. Sometimes the most important learning is far less visible. It is

realising that the way we communicate is no longer working, discovering that a parenting response inherited from our own childhood may need updating, learning to apologise without defending ourselves, to listen without preparing a rebuttal, or to admit that a pattern we once called ‘just who I am’ may be something we can change.

There is science behind this ability. Our brains remain capable of change throughout life through neuroplasticity, adapting in response to experience, challenge and learning.

Age may bring wisdom and accumulated knowledge, but it does not require us to become fixed. Remaining mentally flexible is less about knowing more, and more about staying open enough to revise what we think we know.

Children notice this more than we realise. We can tell them to be curious, brave, resilient and open-minded, yet they are also watching what happens when we are corrected, challenged or uncomfortable.

Do we become defensive, or remain interested? Do we treat mistakes as embarrassment, or information? Do we expect children to regulate emotions that we refuse to examine in ourselves? Do we ask them to embrace change while clinging tightly to our own familiar ways?

Perhaps this is where lifelong learning

The greatest education we give the next generation may not be the lessons we explain to them, but the evidence that growing older never has to mean we stop growing

becomes much bigger than education. It becomes a way of living. A person who remains teachable does not become less confident; they become less threatened by not having all the answers. They can hold experience without allowing experience to harden into certainty. They can say, “I used to think this, and now I see it differently,” without treating growth as an admission of failure.

As Oman prepares a generation for a future shaped by technologies we are still learning to understand, perhaps the adults have a curriculum too. Ours may not come with timetables, school bags or examinations, but the lessons are everywhere: in the conversations that keep going wrong, the relationships that ask us to soften, the children who challenge our assumptions, the workplaces that force us to adapt and the moments that reveal where an old version of us has reached its limit.

We spend years asking children what they learned at school today. Perhaps the more powerful question is one we should keep asking ourselves: what did life teach me today, and was I open enough to learn from it?

The greatest education we give the next generation may not be the lessons we explain to them, but the evidence that growing older never has to mean we stop growing.

PRAYING FOR RAIN AS FIRES, HAZE HIT BORNEO

MARIETTE LE ROUX & SATYA ADHI

Wildfires ravaging the Indonesian part of Borneo island are choking communities as far away as Malaysia with putrid haze, testing the resources and resolve of those having to endure them.

Blamed partly on one of the worst episodes of the drought-inducing El Nino weather phenomenon in decades, the disaster threatens millions of people’s access to necessities such as clean water and air - even education.

Here is the situation as seen from the perspective of three community leaders in Indonesia’s West Kalimantan province, one of the worst-affected regions:

Syarifah Hatifah, the 57-year-old vice-principal of a junior high school in provincial capital Pontianak, fears some of her nearly 600 students may be falling behind.

They are in the third week of the second school closure this fire season. It’s the longest closure Syarifah can remember in her 30-year career.

Hundreds of schools have been closed indefinitely in West Kalimantan due to air pollution, with about 200,000 students learning from home, according to the provincial education ministry.

The kids are being kept home for their health, Syarifah said in a classroom empty but for two teachers presenting classes online, both with dozens of students scattered across their screens.

“The hope is that at home, in terms of health, they can be protected... because they are inside the house. They don’t have to go through roads full of dust and smoke,” she said.

But Syarifah said not every child has stable Internet or access to a computer, making live sessions difficult for some.

“Sometimes... there is a power outage at their home, or they forget to charge their phones”, and some students live in faraway areas with patchy connectivity, she said.

The school’s teachers have been showing up every day as usual, giving lessons online in classrooms with no air purifiers. They work maskless so students can understand them clearly.

Syarifah said the school would offer extra lessons for free once in-person learning resumes.

“We hope that this haze will pass quickly. Usually after the rain falls, the haze will disappear,” she said. West Kalimantan’s wetter season usually starts around October or November. — AFP

Is the classroom enough?

WHAT first comes to mind when you hear the word “education”? Most of us imagine a familiar ladder: nursery, school, university and perhaps postgraduate study. We spend around twelve years in classrooms, pass examinations, collect certificates and eventually enter the labour market. This model was designed, a few centuries ago in Germany, for a world in which knowledge changed relatively slowly and careers followed reasonably predictable paths, that world no longer exists.

The combined pressures of polycrisis and artificial intelligence require more than educational reform. They demand a fundamental change in what we believe education is for, when it happens and how it creates value.

The term “polycrisis” first appeared in the work of French thinkers Edgar Morin and Anne-Brigitte Kern in the 1990s. It describes a condition in which several crises do not simply occur at the same time; they interact, reinforce one another and produce consequences greater than the sum of their parts. Historian Adam Tooze later helped bring the concept into contemporary debate.

Consider what our families and learners have experienced in only a few years: Covid-19 global health crisis, learning disruption, inflation, rising living costs, armed conflicts, displacement, climate disasters and rapid technological change. These are not separate chapters; conflict increases energy and food prices. Inflation puts education beyond the reach of poorer families. Climate disasters damage schools and displace communities. Interrupted education then deepens inequality and weakens societies’ ability to handle the next crisis.

The educational consequences are measurable. The World Bank estimates that the proportion of



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We therefore need education systems that are modular, flexible and resilient. Students should be able to build recognised qualifications over time through shorter learning blocks.

children in lower- and middle-income countries unable to read and understand a simple text by age ten increased from 57.1 per cent in 2019 to approximately 70 per cent in 2022. Unesco now reports that hundreds of millions of school-aged children face educational disruption because of conflict, displacement and other emergencies. This brings us to the most important question: what is education’s “job to be done” or JTBD?

I believe it is the engaging and continuously evolving process of quality learning and teaching knowledge that matters to people, planet and value. “People” means developing character, health, creativity, critical thinking, empathy and the ability to cooperate. “Planet” means learning how human choices affect natural systems and how communities can become more resilient. “Value” means acquiring the capacity to solve real problems, create useful work and contribute to society.

Measured against this purpose, the conventional twelve-year schooling model is becoming obsolete, not because schools or teachers are unnecessary, but because education can no longer be treated as a fixed journey that ends in early adulthood.

The old model is largely linear: Study first, work later and occasionally return for training. The emerging model must be circular: Learn, apply, reflect, unlearn and learn again. Education should accompany people throughout life, moving between classrooms, workplaces, digital platforms, communities and real-world projects.

Artificial intelligence and advanced technologies are making this transition even more urgent. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that one in four jobs worldwide is potentially exposed to generative AI. Its central conclusion, however, is not that machines will simply eliminate employment. In most occupations, AI is more likely to

transform tasks, skills and working conditions.

This distinction matters. If AI can retrieve information, draft reports, translate languages, analyse data and generate computer code within seconds, education cannot continue rewarding students mainly for remembering information or reproducing standard answers. Its value must move towards asking better questions, testing evidence, exercising judgement, working ethically with intelligent machines and doing what technology cannot do responsibly by itself.

Some call the possible point at which machine intelligence exceeds human intelligence the “singularity.” Whether or when that point arrives remains uncertain. The educational challenge is already here. When machines can perform more cognitive tasks, human value will depend less on competing with them and more on directing them towards meaningful ends.

This also changes the role of the teacher. A teacher should no longer be viewed mainly as a transmitter of information. Teachers must become designers of learning, mentors of judgement and guardians of intellectual integrity. Their human role becomes more important, not less.

We therefore need education systems that are modular, flexible and resilient. Students should be able to build recognised qualifications over time through shorter learning blocks. Schools should teach financial literacy, AI literacy, media literacy, sustainability, entrepreneurship and emotional resilience alongside strong foundations in language, mathematics, science, history and the arts. Assessment should reward application and original thought, not merely recall. Employers should become learning partners, while universities should remain connected to graduates throughout their careers.

# On London’s Brick Lane, a data centre sparks battle



ALEXANDRA BACON

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IN Brick Lane, the historic heart of London’s Bangladeshi community, residents oppose plans for a data centre in a disused brewery, citing the erosion of heritage and the need for social housing.

“This has really been the focal point of the British Bangladeshi community,” local councillor Paysal Ahmed said, recalling a time when his parents ran a restaurant beneath his childhood home in the Lane.

While many curry houses remain, the surrounding neighbourhood is transforming, in part to help power the capital’s digital infrastructure boom.

Part of a multi-million-pound redevelopment of the sprawling former Truman brewery site, the East End financial data centre is an unlikely addition to the graffiti-lined Brick Lane, where tourists spill between vintage shops and queue for bagels served through the night.

The 10-acre site will also be transformed by new offices and retail space, primarily serving the neighbouring financial district filled with skyscrapers.

Approval of the development by the UK government comes as a boom in water- and energy-hungry data centres - particularly as demand rises for facilities supporting artificial intelligence - fuels local opposition worldwide.

For Ahmed, the development uses land that could help house some of the roughly 31,000 residents on the waiting list for social housing in the Tower Hamlets district.

The redevelopment plans are for only 44 flats, including just six for social housing, prompting residents to recently protest outside the Ministry of Housing.

“My personal concern is about the need for

affordable social housing for young people and preserving the heritage, the special character, of the area,” said Susanna Kow, a member of the Save Brick Lane campaign.

According to planning documents, the Labour government gave “significant weight” to the benefits of additional data centre capacity, citing the need to “meet the escalating demand driving emerging technologies such as AI and increased digital services”.

The government’s housing department declined to comment on its decision in August to approve the plans, while the Truman Brewery has not responded to an AFP request for its reaction.

“We’ve been campaigning on planning issues and... the incursion of the city on the East End for quite a number of years,” said Jonathan Moberly, who is leading local opposition.

He said the project was part of a “growing national issue about the amount of power taken from the grid that can stop other developments happening, like housing”.

The International Energy Agency in April reported that the global electricity demand of data centres grew by 17 per cent last year.

It projects electricity consumption from these centres will double over five years to 2030.

“The UK already faces a projected daily water deficit of nearly five billion litres by 2050,” according to a report on the UK government website.

“National water resource plans... do not adequately account for the burgeoning demand from infrastructure such as AI data centres. This oversight risks intensifying water

Part of a multi-million-pound redevelopment of the sprawling former Truman brewery site, the East End financial data centre is an unlikely addition to the graffiti-lined Brick Lane, where tourists spill between vintage shops and queue for bagels served through the night

stress in already vulnerable regions.”

For industry consultant Mark Acton, the infrastructure is increasingly essential, particularly in London, a city where proximity can provide the ultra-fast response times needed for financial trading.

“Everything we currently do digitally comes from a data centre,” said Acton, who argued the facilities have become an easy target owing to what he said was a lack of understanding of their actual water and energy use.

If Britain is serious about sovereignty over its AI infrastructure, “you’ve got to have somewhere to put it”, Acton said.

But campaigners at environmental charity Global Action Plan argue that UK planning rules have not kept pace with the expansion of the sector or adequately accounted for environmental costs.

“It’s been a kind of Trojan horse for bad development,” Owen Espley, the group’s community campaigns manager, said.

“We need local knowledge and input to go into shaping developments to improve them and make sure that we get better data centres at the end of it,” he said.

Further down Brick Lane, Carol Burns, born and raised in the area, has no intention of going anywhere.

Sitting inside the shop her family has run since the 1800s - its walls covered with family photographs - Burns is proud to be part of London’s East End community.

“People are always trying to buy this place, but no. They’ll have to drag me out of here feet-first,” she said in her thick Cockney accent.

## ETHIOPIA BOOSTS DRONE PRODUCTION TO FIGHT REBELS

DYLAN GAMBA

Ethiopia has been manufacturing drones at two factories since last year and is now thought to have a fleet of thousands, analysts say, giving the government an edge against its multiple insurgent enemies.

Turkish drones were decisive during the country’s devastating civil war, when the federal army used them to push back rebels from the northern Tigray region who had come within 200 km of the capital, Addis Ababa.

Only the federal army has military drones in the country of 130 million people, and they have been deployed repeatedly against insurgents operating in several regions. Increasingly, they are made domestically.

In March 2025, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed inaugurated the SkyWin Aeronautics Industries factory in the capital, manufacturing “unmanned aerial vehicles for both civilian and military use”, according to the state’s Ethiopian News Agency, which said they were “designed and built by our own young professionals”.

Abiy said the aim was not “not to fuel conflict, but to prevent it” through “deterrence”.

But much of Ethiopia’s capability remains a mystery, and the authorities have refused access to the site for foreign media.

“One hall with some shiny drones tells us little about what the real production capabilities are, and where the technology, key components or possibly complete kits come from,” Pieter Wetzeman, a researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, said.

“My assessment would be that a substantial part of all that is imported,” he said.

Ethiopia has bought Türkiye’s top-end Akinci drones and the more basic Bayraktar TB2 models, as well as the cheaper Wing Loong from China and Mohajer-6 from Iran.

According to Jeremy Binnie of the defence and intelligence company Janes, the model displayed at the SkyWin inauguration, marked “SW01”, closely resembled a commercially available Chinese model.

“Mass-producing these could potentially significantly increase your military effectiveness if every brigade had two or three to enable it to find the enemy and call in and adjust artillery fire,” he said, adding that they could also be modified to carry small bombs.

A second factory, Aeroabay, was opened in late 2025, producing thousands of small weaponised drones that cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 each, according to Wim Zwijnenburg, a drone specialist for PAX, a conflict-resolution NGO. — AFP

# Who gets to be American!

FOR more than 150 years, birthright citizenship has meant that almost every child born on American soil begins life as an American citizen, regardless of where their parents came from.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly attempted to change that principle as part of a much wider effort to restrict immigration. But after the Supreme Court rejected his broader attempt to end birthright citizenship in June, his latest, narrower effort has now also been blocked by a federal judge.

The principle comes from the 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, which states that people born or naturalised in the United States and subject to its jurisdiction are citizens.

In June, the Supreme Court ruled that children born in the US to parents who are undocumented or temporarily in the country are citizens at birth. Trump later issued narrower orders targeting certain circumstances, including so-called “birth tourism”, but US District Judge Deborah Boardman blocked the latest attempt, writing that a presidential executive order cannot undo what the Supreme Court has already decided.

The issue goes far beyond a legal disagreement over the Constitution. Removing birthright citizenship would create a system in which two babies born in the same hospital could have completely different rights because of their parents’ immigration status.

It could also leave some children facing uncertainty over their nationality and, in particular circumstances, the risk of statelessness. Citizenship determines access to some of the most fundamental rights a person has: the right to live permanently in a country, obtain a passport, vote as an adult and participate fully in civic life. Children have no control over how their parents entered the United States. Making their citizenship dependent on their parents’ status would effectively make them carry the consequences



OMAN AL YAHYAI

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A woman holds a sign during a vigil for Haitian immigrant Pierre Damas Bel, who died by suicide following the removal of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian immigrants by the administration of US President Donald Trump, in Brooklyn, New York, US. — Reuters

of decisions they did not make.

The birthright citizenship battle also needs to be viewed alongside the administration’s broader immigration crackdown. The State Department is preparing to revoke B1 and B2 business and tourist visas issued between 2016 and 2026 to people who subsequently applied for asylum. Up to 200,000 people could potentially be affected, which would make it the largest mass visa revocation in US history.

The administration argues that people who entered as temporary visitors and subsequently sought asylum may have misused visas intended for tourism or business. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau has also criticised what the administration considers frivolous asylum claims. Supporters of tougher immigration controls argue that the government has a legitimate responsibility to prevent fraud and ensure that immigration rules are respected.

But seeking asylum after entering on a visitor visa does not itself prove that the asylum claim is fraudulent. Circumstances can change. Governments collapse, wars erupt, political opponents become targets and people can face persecution because of their religion, ethnicity, or political beliefs. Someone who originally intended to return home may later have genuine reasons to

fear doing so.

Revoking a B1 or B2 visa does not automatically cancel an asylum application or mean immediate deportation. Nevertheless, a mass revocation sends a troubling message to people relying on a system specifically designed to assess individual claims of persecution.

People fleeing Afghanistan, Sudan, Syria, or other countries affected by war and instability do not all have identical circumstances, and economic hardship alone generally does not qualify someone for asylum under US law. But those facing qualifying persecution deserve to have their individual claims examined fairly rather than being treated with suspicion simply because they entered the country through another legal route.

The Supreme Court’s decision on birthright citizenship therefore matters beyond immigration politics. It reinforces a basic limitation on presidential power: citizenship guaranteed by the Constitution cannot simply be rewritten through an executive order. America can debate how many immigrants it accepts and how its asylum system should operate. But deciding which American-born children deserve to be Americans is a very different matter.

# SPORTS

## ICEHOCKEY



Talal bin Faisal Ambusaidi and Al Firdous bint Ahmed al Kindi are attending the first phase of the International Ice Hockey Federation's MNA Developer Programme in Vierumäki from September 6 to 13.

## OMANI OFFICIALS JOIN IIHF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN FINLAND

AHMED AL KAABI  
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

Two Omani sports officials are taking part in an international development programme in Finland as the Oman Skating Sports Committee continues its efforts to strengthen national administrative and technical expertise.

Talal bin Faisal Ambusaidi, the committee's age-group supervisor, and Al Firdous bint Ahmed al Kindi, supervisor of women's skating sports, are attending the first phase of the International Ice Hockey Federation's MNA Developer Programme in Vierumäki from September 6 to 13.

The four-stage programme will continue until August 2027 and is designed to strengthen the administrative capabilities of IIHF member national associations. It covers sports management, organisational development and strategic planning while allowing participants from around the world to exchange expertise and establish sustainable professional networks.

The Omani participation reflects the committee's focus on investing in human capital and equipping national officials with the skills required to support the continued growth of ice hockey and other skating sports in the Sultanate of Oman.

### EMPOWERING WOMEN

Al Kindi said the participation of Omani women in international development programmes reflected their growing role in sport at the Gulf, regional and international levels.

"Omani women are no longer merely participants in skating sports; they have become active partners in developing the sport," she said.

She highlighted Oman's contribution to the IIHF Global Girls' Game, which secured a Guinness World Records title after 43 exhibition matches were staged simultaneously around the world.

Al Firdous al Kindi said the latest programme builds on several initiatives aimed at developing women's participation, including international workshops, overseas competitions and training courses for female referees.

"The year-long programme provides an important opportunity to develop administrative and planning skills, gain experience in managing sports federations and committees, and establish new channels of communication with participants from different continents," she added.

### BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

Talal Ambusaidi said his participation was driven by a desire to improve the committee's administrative operations and acquire expertise that could support the future development of ice hockey and skating sports in Oman.

He added that his journey through ice hockey, his achievements with the national team and the team's recent recognition by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth had provided further motivation to continue contributing to the sport.

Although the committee continues to operate with limited resources and does not yet have an international-size ice rink, Ambusaidi said these challenges had not diminished its ambitions.

He noted that the programme would provide an opportunity to examine economically viable, technically sound and administratively sustainable approaches to developing the committee's activities.

# Oman through to ACC Premier Cup semifinals

OMAN BOOKED their place in the semifinals of the ACC Men's Premier Cup 2026 despite suffering a 49-run defeat against an unbeaten United Arab Emirates in their final Group B encounter at the YSD-UKM Cricket Oval in Bongi, Malaysia, on Tuesday.

Despite the defeat, Sulakshan Kulkarni's men had done enough in their earlier matches to finish among the top two in Group B, edging through on net run rate (NRR). Oman finished with an NRR of +0.649 after a three-way tie with Qatar (+0.227) and Kuwait (+0.152), with all three teams earning four points each.

UAE, meanwhile, completed a perfect group campaign with four wins from four matches to finish at the top of Group B.

The runner-up finish means Oman will meet Group A winners and fancied Nepal in the semifinals on Thursday, September 10. Nepal topped Group A with six points and an NRR of +1.531, while Hong Kong finished second on six points with a lower NRR of -0.005.

On Tuesday, Oman captain Vinayak Shukla won the toss and elected to field, with his bowlers recovering well after initially struggling against a strong UAE start.

Having restricted UAE to 192, the target appeared within Oman's reach. But the chase unravelled almost immediately.

Oman lost Karan Sonavale for four in the first over and suffered a dramatic top-order collapse as Jatinder Singh, Mujibur Ali and Jay Odedra all departed cheaply.

Oman were reeling at 13 for four inside 3.1 overs, leaving the middle order with a mountain to climb. Hammad Mirza attempted to stabilise the innings with a 35-ball 17 before all-rounder Jiten Ramanandi produced the standout batting



Oman edged past Qatar and Kuwait with a better net run rate.

performance for Oman.

### FIGHTING KNOCK

Ramanandi played a fighting knock of 51 from 70 balls, striking six fours and a six, and helped Oman recover from their disastrous start. He found some support from captain and wicketkeeper Vinayak Shukla, who scored 14, but Oman were unable to build any substantial partnerships.

When Ramanandi fell at 107 for seven in the 26th over, Oman's hopes of chasing down the target were effectively extinguished.

Debutant Sanju Sajeev showed promise with an unbeaten 15 from 27 balls, but with little support from the rest, the UAE bowlers wrapped up the innings for 143 in 34.5 overs.

Left-arm spinner Aayan Afzal Khan was the architect of Oman's collapse, producing a

superb all-round performance to claim 5 for 34 after scoring a valuable 37 with the bat. He was named Player of the Match.

Khuzaima Tanveer struck early and returned 3 for 21, while Ibrar Ahmad and Adeeb Usmani took a wicket apiece.

Earlier, UAE openers Tanish Suri and Adeeb Usmani gave their team a solid platform with a 92-run opening-wicket stand. Suri top-scored with 48 off 53 balls, including six fours and two sixes, while Usmani contributed 40 from 65 deliveries.

However, Oman struck regularly after the opening partnership was broken by Nadeem Khan, who removed Suri. Hassnain Shah then sent back Usmani to leave UAE at 98 for two before Jay Odedra's spell turned the tables.

Skipper Harpreet Singh, Rahul Chopra and Sohaib Khan

fell in quick succession as UAE slipped to 105 for five.

Odedra was particularly effective, returning figures of 3 for 17 from 5.1 overs, while Shah claimed 3 for 48. Shakeel Ahmed also produced a disciplined spell, taking 2 for 29 from his 10 overs. Mujibur Ali and Nadeem Khan picked up a wicket each as Oman dismissed UAE for 192 in 48.1 overs.

Akshdeep Nath, who scored 33, and Aayan Afzal Khan, with 37, helped rebuild the innings before Oman again struck in the closing stages.

### CRUCIAL WINS SECURE LAST 4

While the result belonged emphatically to UAE, the bigger picture offered Oman considerable relief. Their two victories in the group stage, including the massive 131-run win over Singapore, proved crucial in their qualification campaign.

Oman had begun the tournament in commanding fashion by posting 316 for nine against Singapore before bowling them out for 185, a result that gave them a significant boost in the race for the knockout stages.

Their five-wicket victory over Qatar further strengthened their position before the loss to Kuwait on September 5 and Tuesday's defeat against UAE.

Oman will now have the opportunity to put Tuesday's setback behind them and focus on the much bigger prize on Thursday, when they battle for a place in the final.

**BRIEF SCORES:** UAE 192 all out in 48.1 overs (Tanish Suri 48, Adeeb Usmani 40, Aayan Afzal Khan 37; Jay Odedra 3-17, Hassnain Shah 3-48, Shakeel Ahmed 2-29) beat Oman 143 all out in 34.5 overs (Jiten Ramanandi 51; Aayan Afzal Khan 5-34, Khuzaima Tanveer 3-21) by 49 runs.

# Second division league to start early on Nov 20

RIYADH AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

The Oman Handball Association's (OHA) Competitions Committee has brought forward the start of the Second Division League for the 2026-27 season to November 20, moving it from the previously scheduled date of December 25.

The decision was taken during a meeting of the Competitions Committee chaired by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Dhahouri, OHA board member and chairman of the committee. The meeting reviewed preparations for the new season, the association's competition calendar and programmes, as well as arrangements for the various age-group and senior competitions.

The committee also approved the regulations and participation framework for the Junior League for players born in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Twelve clubs will take part in



the competition: Nizwa, Seeb, Muscat, Saham, Oman Club, Al Rustaq, Al Ittihad, Masirah, Majees, Al Amerat, Ibri and Al Khabourah.

The participating clubs will be divided into two groups, with the Junior League scheduled to get underway on September 25.

The committee also confirmed the participating clubs for the Youth League, which is open to players born in 2008 and 2009. Ten clubs will compete in the tournament: Nizwa, Seeb, Muscat, Saham, Al

Oruba, Al Ittihad, Oman Club, Al Amerat, Al Khabourah and Masirah.

As part of its preparations for the new season, the committee set the player registration window from October 4 to November 15. Clubs have been urged to complete their registration procedures within the designated period and comply with the regulations and eligibility requirements approved by the association.

The meeting also reviewed the overall competition calendar for the 2026-27

season, which features eight main competitions: the Junior League, Youth League, Super Cup, First Division League, Second Division League, Association Cup, Beach Handball League and Women's League.

Bringing forward the Second Division League is intended to create a more balanced competition schedule and provide clubs with greater preparation time ahead of the campaign.

A total of 29 clubs have confirmed their participation in the association's competitions for the new season.

They are Al Ittihad, Oman Club, Muscat, Masirah, Al Tali'ah, Nizwa, Al Salam, Al Nasr, Al Amerat, Al Musannah, Qurayat, Majees, Seeb, Al Suwaiq, Al Rustaq, Sohar, Mirbat, Ahli Sidab, Al Oruba, Al Khabourah, Al Shabab, Saham, Salalah, Al Nahda, Khasab, Taqah, Dhofar, Ibri and Al Bashair.

SHORTTAKES



Argentina's Lionel Messi embraces England's Harry Kane at the end of their Fifa World Cup 2026 semifinal at Atlanta Stadium, Georgia, US on July 15. — Reuters

KANE, HAALAND, MESSI ON BALLON D'OR SHORTLIST

**PARIS:** Harry Kane, Erling Haaland and Lionel Messi have all made the 30-man shortlist for the 2026 Men's Ballon d'Or, while Cape Verde's World Cup hero Vozinha has been nominated for the Yashin award, organisers France Football announced on Tuesday.

Kane had a stunning season with Bayern Munich and England, scoring 73 goals for club and country in 65 matches and helped secure a treble of Bundesliga, German Cup, and German Super Cup as well as leading his nation to the World Cup semifinals.

Haaland netted 58 goals in 64 games for Manchester City and Norway, while eight-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi had 75 goal contributions in 49 matches for Inter Miami and Argentina, who he helped to reached the World Cup final.

Also among those on the shortlist are Jude Bellingham, Kylian Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele and Lamine Yamal but not five-time winner Cristiano Ronaldo despite the Portugal forward lifting the Saudi Pro League title with Al Nassr.

The women's shortlist includes Poland's Barcelona quadruple-winner Ewa Pajor, Alexia Putellas, who featured for Barca and Spain but has now joined London City Lionesses, and Manchester City's prolific Jamaica striker Khadija 'Bunny' Shaw.

Cape Verde's Vozinha was nominated for the Yashin Trophy awarded to the best goalkeeper, with his standout World Cup performances putting him on the 10-man shortlist after he helped his country advance from the tournament's group stage.

He will compete against Spain's World Cup-winner Unai Simon and Argentina's Emi Martinez plus fellow African nominees Yassine Bounou and Edouard Mendy.

The 70th edition of the Ballon d'Or will be staged in London for the first time at a ceremony on October 26 as a tribute to Stanley Matthews, who won the first Ballon d'Or. — Reuters

LIVERPOOL'S MAC ALLISTER 'VERY SAD' NOT TO RECEIVE NEW CONTRACT OFFER



ALEXIS MAC ALLISTER  
Liverpool midfielder

**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool midfielder Alexis Mac Allister expressed sadness on Tuesday after not receiving a new contract offer, saying he had considered his transfer options as he spoke ahead of Wednesday's Champions League clash against Atletico Madrid at Anfield.

The 27-year-old Argentina international, who has two years left on his current deal, said Liverpool had informed him they could not offer new terms, unlike for fellow midfielders Dominik Szoboszlai and Ryan Gravenberch who extended their contracts earlier this year.

"I received the news that the club was not in a position to offer me a new contract which, of course, makes me very, very sad," he told reporters.

Mac Allister chose to remain at Anfield following the arrival of former Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola, citing "something special" during pre-season.

Iraola noted there was still time to negotiate, emphasising that he focuses on performance rather than contracts.

Mac Allister said there were options to leave in the close season but added: "I think right now I'm in the right club and I have the right mindset to give 100 per cent for this club." — Reuters



Germany's Alexander Zverev, Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina and Coco Gauff of the US celebrate after winning their US Open Round of 16 matches at Flushing Meadows in New York. — Reuters/AFP



Zheng stuns Swiatek to set up Rybakina quarterfinal

TOP SEED ZVEREV SECURES ANOTHER ROUTINE WIN

GAUFF OUTCLASSES COMPATRIOT JOVIC IN AMERICAN CLASH

RYBAKINA MOVES ONE WIN FROM WORLD NUMBER ONE

ANOTHER GREAT ESCAPE FOR OLYMPIC CHAMPION ZHENG

KHACHANOV, VAN DE ZANDSCHULP PREVAIL IN FIVE-SETTER

**ZHENG** QINWEN pulled off another US Open stunner on Monday, beating Iga Swiatek to book a quarterfinal with Elena Rybakina as men's top seed Alexander Zverev advanced safely to the last eight.

It was one more gritty comeback for Zheng, the Paris Olympics gold medallist and a former world number four now ranked 121st after struggling in the wake of elbow surgery last year.

Zheng had won the last seven games, saving a match point, as she shocked Madison Keys in her previous match.

After falling behind 5-0 in the first set against six-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek she again reeled off seven straight games.

She then broke Swiatek twice in the second set to clinch the win.

"I guess to come back from 0-5 (Saturday) is not lucky, that's all I can say," said Zheng, who had to come through qualifying to gain a main draw berth.

Zheng, the first qualifier to beat Swiatek at a major, said it took her some time to settle in on the cavernous Ashe court, noting it's been "a long, long time" since she'd been scheduled on a main show court.

"I just focus on point by point," Zheng said, adding that she was so focused on the rallies that she lost track of the score.

Swiatek, who fell to Zheng in the gold medal match in Paris two years ago, left the Arthur Ashe Stadium in tears, although she later downplayed the upset.

"You can lose a set from any score, so nothing special about that," she said.

Zheng is the first qualifier to reach the US Open women's quarterfinals since Emma Raducanu — who went on to win the title — in 2021.

She'll next face world number two Rybakina, the reigning Australian Open champion who cruised past a



China's Qinwen Zheng celebrates defeating Poland's Iga Swiatek in their Round of 16 match on day nine of the US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York. — AFP

hurting Naomi Osaka 6-1, 6-4 in just 66 minutes.

**NO 1 CALL FOR RYBAKINA** Rybakina is not only chasing a third Grand Slam title. If she beats Zheng to reach the semifinals she will seize the number one ranking from Aryna Sabalenka — even if the Belarusian wins a third straight crown.

"Of course I want it," Rybakina said.

But, she added: "I try to approach the same, fight to the end my next match — let's see what will happen."

Fourth-seeded Coco Gauff reached the quarterfinals for the first time since she won the title in 2023, beating 18-year-old United States compatriot Iva Jovic 6-1, 6-4.

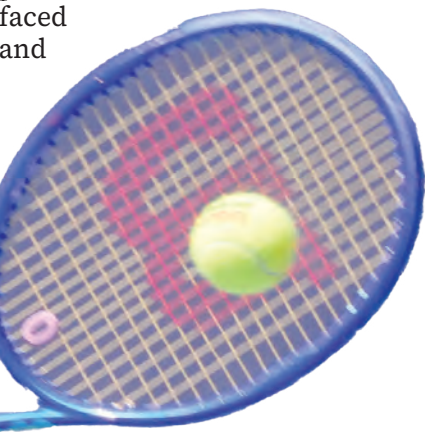
Gauff next faces fifth-seeded French Open champion Mirra Andreeva, a 5-7, 6-4, 6-3 winner over Anastasia Potapova.

**ZVEREV THROUGH** Zverev once again closed the action on Ashe, beating 21st-seeded Italian Luciano Darderi 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3).

The French Open champion has become a late-night fixture,

playing into the small hours in his first three matches, including two five-setters.

He was in control against Darderi, saving the lone break point he faced and



cruising through the first two sets before Darderi stepped things up to force the third-set tie-breaker.

Zverev wrapped it up quickly there, giving himself a match point with a forehand winner to the corner and finished up before midnight with an ace.

Zverev will play Botic van de Zandschulp for a place in the semifinals.

**FIVE-SETTER THRILLERS** The Dutch player saved a match point as he rallied from two sets down to beat France's Arthur Gea 3-6, 6-7 (0/7), 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 in a match lasting five hours and 13 minutes.

Van de Zandschulp is back in the quarterfinals for the first time since 2021, although he made waves in 2024 with a second-round upset of Carlos Alcaraz.

Alexander Blockx's dream debut continued with a gritty 6-3, 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 victory over Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo, which made the 21-year-old the first Belgian man to reach the US open last eight.

Blockx, who started the year ranked outside the top 100, said he was "close to retiring" because of sharp pain in an injured rib in the first set.

He next faces Karen Khachanov after the Russian beat 14th-seeded American Learner Tien 7-5, 4-6, 6-7 (6/8), 6-1, 6-4. — AFP

SPORTS



The pack rides during the third stage of Tour of Salalah from Wilayat of Sadah to Gravity Hill in Salalah on Tuesday. The Tour will conclude on Wednesday.

ARGENTINE STAYS IN CONTENTION AS LI NING STAR DOMINATE AHEAD OF LAST STAGE

# SEPULVEDA WINS STAGE 3, PELLAUD TOPS TOUR OF SALALAH

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH  
@anuroop.ath

**ARGENTINE** rider Eduardo Sepulveda of Li Ning Star staked strong claim to the overall title of Tour of Salalah 2026 by winning the 150 km third and penultimate stage from Wilayat of Sadah to Gravity Hill in Salalah on Tuesday.

Sepulveda completed the third stage in three hours 50 minutes and 28 seconds ahead of second-placed Colombian rider Edison Alejandro Callejas of Roojai Insurance Winspace (3:50:33) and Netherlands cyclist Adne van Engelen (3:50:39) of Terengganu Cycling Team.

Overnight leader Simon Pellaud (Li Ning Star) retained his golden jersey with a fifth-place finish at 3:50:52. Pellaud led teammate Sepulveda by 15 seconds for the overall lead with a consolidate time of 8:53:21 after three stages.

Roojai Insurance cyclists Callejas and Tegshbayar Batsaikhan of Mongolia were also in contention for the golden jersey staying 21 seconds adrift of Pellaud.

The Swiss rider also led the points classification with 37 points ahead of Callejas (24), Netherlands rider Jeroen Meijers of Victoria Sports Pro Cycling (23) and Sepulveda (23). Indonesian rider Dimas Nur Fadhl Rizqi (Jakarta Pro Cycling Team) continued to lead the young rider classification with overall timing of 8:57:06.

Meijers claimed the grey jersey for the aggressive rider in third stage.

**LI NING STAR LEAD TEAM SECTION**  
China's Li Ning Star kept the team lead with 26:41:44 ahead of Thailand's Roojai

Overnight leader Simon Pellaud (Li Ning Star) retained his golden jersey with a fifth-place finish at 3:50:52. Pellaud led teammate Sepulveda by 15 seconds for the overall lead with a consolidate time of 8:53:21 after three stages.



The top three winners on the podium after the third stage.

Insurance Winspace (26:42:33) and Rwanda's Team Amani 26:51:24 in third.

Victoria Sports Pro Cycling (26:54:02) from the Philippines and Guam-based EuroCyclingTrips – CCN (26:58:43) completed the top five among the teams.

Oman National Team (27:30:09) were placed 12th among the total of 15 teams in contention at the Tour.

The top finishers were crowned at the conclusion of the stage by Saif bin Sebaa al Rashidi, Chairman of the Oman Cycling Association.

**CONCLUDING STAGE**  
The sixth Tour of Salalah, organised by Dhofar Municipality in partnership with the Oman Cycling Association and held

from September 5 to 9, concludes with the fourth and final stage for 106 km.

The race will start in front of Taqah Castle, passing the Darbat Waterfalls and heading toward Darbat Roundabout; it continues past Darbat Castle to the Darbat Roundabout, then proceeds to Nashib Roundabout, Hamran Roundabout, and the Taqah Police Station, passing Madinat al Haq Roundabout before reaching the finish line at Khor Rori.

**TOUR OF SALALAH STAGE 3 RESULTS**  
(Read as rank, rider, country, timing)

- Eduardo Sepúlveda (Argentina) Li Ning Star 3:50:28
- Edison Alejandro Callejas (Colombia)

| STAGE 3<br>Salalah - Gravity Hill<br>150 km    |    |                                  |     |          |
|------------------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|-----|----------|
| TOUR OF SALALAH                                |    |                                  |     |          |
| HONORS SEP/09/2026                             |    |                                  |     |          |
| STAGE RESULT                                   |    |                                  |     |          |
| STAGE WINNER                                   | 11 | Eduardo SEPULVEDA                | ARG | 03:50:28 |
| 2nd PLACE                                      | 83 | Edison Alejandro CALLEJAS SANTOS | COL | 03:50:33 |
| 3rd PLACE                                      | 1  | Adne van Engelen, VAN ENGELLEN   | NLD | 03:50:39 |
| BEST TEAM                                      |    | Li Ning Star                     |     | 11:52:12 |
| LEADERB                                        |    |                                  |     |          |
| General Classification By Time                 | 14 | Simon, PELLAUD                   | SWS | 08:53:21 |
| General Classification By Points               | 14 | Simon, PELLAUD                   | SWS | 37       |
| Best Young Rider Classification                | 72 | Dimas Nur, FADHL RIZQI           | IDN | 08:57:06 |
| Most Aggressive Rider Classification           | 23 | Jeroen, MEIJERS                  | NLD | 8        |
| Team General Classification                    |    | Li Ning Star                     |     | 26:41:44 |
| TIMING PHOTOGRAPH AND RESULTS PROVIDED BY ZSMM |    |                                  |     |          |

- Roojai Insurance Winspace 3:50:33
- Adne van Engelen (Netherlands) Terengganu Cycling Team 3:50:39
  - Calum Johnston (United Kingdom) Li Ning Star 3:50:52
  - Simon Pellaud (Switzerland) Li Ning Star 3:50:52
  - Samuel Niyonkuru (Rwanda) Team Amani 3:50:56
  - Tegshbayar Batsaikhan (Mongolia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 3:51:44
  - Carter Bettles (Australia) Roojai Insurance Winspace 3:51:44
  - Hugo Lutz-Atkinson (United Kingdom) EuroCyclingTrips – CCN 3:51:50
  - Villaseñor Darius (Philippines) Victoria Sports Pro Cycling 3:53:27

MUSCAT  
STOCK  
EXCHANGE  
7,609.696

# BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL  
OMAN \$116.53  
BRENT \$98.51  
LIGHT \$93.95



## SHORT TAKES



Marsa LNG's 165,000-cubic-metre LNG storage tank is entering the final stages of completion.

## MARSA LNG STORAGE TANK NEARS COMPLETION

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

Marsa LNG has marked a key construction milestone at SOHAR Port and Freezone, with its giant 165,000-cubic-metre LNG storage tank entering the final stages of completion.

Senior executives representing project shareholders TotalEnergies and OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP), together with executive management from Energy Oman, formerly Energy Development Oman (EDO), toured the project site this week to review construction progress.

The delegation climbed to the top of the LNG storage tank, gaining a vantage point over the adjoining LNG processing train and dedicated marine jetty taking shape as part of the landmark bunkering development.

Designed by CB&I as a full-containment cryogenic structure, the tank will store LNG at around minus 160 degrees Celsius. Its inner container is fabricated from 9 per cent nickel steel, while a prestressed reinforced-concrete outer structure provides secondary containment.

Construction achieved a major engineering milestone in February when the tank's 631-tonne steel roof was air-raised about 40 metres into position atop the concrete walls.

The tank forms a key component of the one-million-tonne-per-year Marsa LNG complex, which is being developed to establish SOHAR as a major regional LNG bunkering hub.

The project was more than 55 per cent complete at the end of June and is targeting start-up in the first quarter of 2028. Marsa LNG is 80 per cent owned by TotalEnergies and 20 per cent by OQEP. Alongside the liquefaction train and storage infrastructure, the development includes dedicated LNG bunkering facilities designed to serve shipping in the Gulf and Sea of Oman.

# Economy expands 2.4 pc in 2025, inflation remains low

THE Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has issued the new edition of its Annual Report, providing a comprehensive assessment of the Sultanate of Oman's macroeconomic and financial developments during 2025, while highlighting the outlook for 2026. The report reviews the domestic economic environment, highlighting trends in real activity, inflation, fiscal and external positions and the performance of the banking sector.

Oman's macroeconomic environment remained supportive in 2025, with economic activity continuing to expand at a robust pace, despite external headwinds. This provided the Government with the necessary policy space to advance structural reforms. Investment continued to be an important driver of growth, supported by continued progress in strategic projects across both the public and private sectors. Inflation remained low, reflecting the credibility of the peg and stable domestic conditions. Fiscal and external balances recorded modest deficits, while public debt continued its declining path. The banking sector remained well-capitalised, liquid and resilient, supported by sound asset quality, prudent risk management practices and limited exposure to external shocks.

Real GDP growth accelerated in 2025 to 2.4 per cent (from 1.6 per cent in 2024), supported by both the hydrocarbon and nonhydrocarbon activities. Non-hydrocarbon activities expanded by 3.1 per cent, driven by continued growth across key sectors. Agriculture and fisheries recorded the strongest growth at 10.2 per cent, reflecting ongoing efforts to strengthen food security and expand domestic production, while construction activity grew by 2.0 percent, on the back of continued investment and development projects. Services activity continued to record solid



Oman's macroeconomic environment remained supportive in 2025, with economic activity continuing to expand at a robust pace, despite external headwinds

Real GDP growth accelerated in 2025 to 2.4 per cent (from 1.6% in 2024), supported by both the hydrocarbon and non hydrocarbon activities

growth at 3.1 in 2025, benefitting from strong domestic demand and broad-based expansion across key service sectors. Over the medium term, economic activity is expected to strengthen further, buoyed by continued expansion across non-hydrocarbon sectors and sustained investment activity.

Inflation in Oman remained low and well contained, reflecting the effectiveness of the exchange rate peg as a credible nominal anchor and the relatively limited pass-through of global price pressures into the domestic economy. Average inflation recorded a modest increase of 1.0 per cent in 2025, up from 0.6 per cent in 2024, indicating the presence of mild inflationary pressures, while remaining at manageable levels supported by stable domestic demand conditions and strong coordination between monetary and fiscal policies.

In 2025, Oman's fiscal position remained resilient, notwithstanding lower oil prices. The government successfully implemented the State Budget while balancing fiscal sustainability objectives with continued investment in growth-enhancing initiatives. Fiscal balance recorded a modest deficit of 1.1 per cent of GDP. Public debt continued its downward trajectory, with debt-to-GDP

ratio declined to 34.6 per cent in 2025 from 35.4 per cent in 2024. Continued fiscal consolidation and strengthened macroeconomic fundamentals further improved in Oman's sovereign credit profile, contributed to the restoration of investment-grade status.

The external sector remained broadly resilient despite a more challenging external environment in 2025. The current account balance recorded a modest deficit of 1.2 per cent of GDP. This shift was primarily driven by a 15 per cent decline in hydrocarbon exports, reflecting lower oil prices, which fell by 13 per cent during the year, as well as stronger import demand associated with major investment and development projects. Importantly, Workers' remittances increased by 3.1 per cent in 2025, broadly reflecting the continued expansion of economic activity and favourable labour market conditions. Meanwhile, the financial account remained supportive of external stability in 2025, with stable net FDI inflows, while Portfolio outflows largely reflected increased foreign asset holdings by the financial sector.

The Exchange rate peg has continued to serve as appropriate nominal anchor in light of Oman economic structure, while supporting investor confidence and FDI. — ONA

## Kistos Holdings secures 20 per cent stake in Blocks 3 & 4

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, SEPT 8

UK-based independent energy company Kistos Holdings is set to establish a presence in Oman's upstream energy sector following the ratification by Royal Decree of its acquisition of a 20 per cent working interest in the producing Blocks 3 & 4 from Japan's Mitsui E&P Middle East BV.

Royal Decree 78/2026, issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on September 3 and published in Official Gazette on September 6, formally approves Mitsui's assignment of its 20 per cent rights and obligations under the petroleum agreement governing Blocks 3 & 4 to Kistos Energy Middle East.

Following the transfer, the participating interests in Blocks 3 & 4 comprise CC Energy SAL as operator with 50 per cent, Tethys Oil AB with 30 per cent, and Kistos Energy Middle East with 20 per cent. The transaction marks Kistos' first entry into Oman and the



Located in eastern Oman, Blocks 3 & 4 cover around 29,000 sq km and encompass seven producing fields.

wider Middle East, adding long-life, onshore producing assets to a portfolio spanning the UK, Norway and the Netherlands. The company views Oman as a platform for further regional expansion.

Kistos agreed in December 2025 to acquire Mitsui's 20 per cent interest in Blocks 3 & 4 together with a 5 per cent interest in Block 9 for an aggregate \$148 million, funded from existing cash. Of this, \$100 million was allocated to Blocks 3 & 4 and \$48 million to Block 9, subject to customary closing adjustments.

The transaction has an economic effective date of January 1, 2025. Located in eastern Oman, Blocks 3 & 4 cover around 29,000 sq km and encompass seven producing fields. Kistos says the assets have demonstrated strong exploration potential, including two successful exploration wells drilled during the first half of 2025.

Kistos and its partners envisage drilling another 13 exploration wells by end-2029, targeting around 8 million barrels of

prospective resources net to Kistos, with a further 40 million barrels of net follow-up potential.

Together, Blocks 3 & 4 and Block 9 account for around 6 per cent of Oman's gross daily hydrocarbon production, according to Kistos.

The combined acquisition was expected to add 25.6 million barrels of oil equivalent of 2P reserves net to the company and around 9,000–10,000 boepd of net production.

Andrew Austin, Executive Chairman of Kistos, commented: "Royal Decree on Blocks 3 & 4 marks Kistos' official entry into the MENA region, with the overall transaction with Mitsui in Oman doubling the Company's current production and 2P reserves, providing geographical diversification to our portfolio and a platform for further growth."

The associated acquisition of Mitsui's 5 per cent working interest in Block 9, a producing 4,000-sq-km concession in northwestern Oman operated by Occidental, remains subject to completion.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Oman's hospitality industry takes centre stage as HORECA Oman returns with 150+.

HORECA OMAN  
DRIVES HOSPITALITY  
GROWTH

MUSCAT: Oman returns to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre for its fifth edition, reinforcing its role as a dynamic platform supporting the continued growth of the country's hospitality and foodservice industries.

Organised by Hospitality Services in collaboration with Al Nimr Expo, the event will once again bring together the full hospitality ecosystem under one roof, welcoming over 8,000 professional visitors and more than 150 exhibitors across 5,500 square metres of exhibition space.

Joumana Dammous Salamé, managing director of Hospitality Services, said: "HORECA Oman continues to evolve as a meaningful meeting point where professionals connect, exchange ideas and explore new opportunities. Our ambition is to provide a platform that supports innovation, nurtures talent and contributes to the long-term development of the industry".

Emphasising the strategic importance of the event, Salim al Hashmi, CEO of Al Nimr Expo, stated: "HORECA Oman plays a key role in supporting the development of the hospitality ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman. By bringing together industry professionals, innovators and emerging talents, the exhibition contributes to strengthening sector capabilities and advancing standards of excellence".

Featuring a comprehensive exhibition gathering suppliers of food and beverage products, hotel and kitchen equipment, hospitality technologies, design solutions and related services, HORECA Oman offers visitors a 360-degree view of the latest trends and business opportunities shaping the sector.

Over three days, the event will host a vibrant programme combining panel discussions, networking sessions and live demonstrations designed to foster dialogue among industry stakeholders.

Through HORECA Talks, professionals will gain valuable insights into emerging trends, operational challenges and growth prospects for the hospitality and foodservice landscape in Oman and the wider region.

A series of competitions will place local talent and rising stars in the spotlight. The Hospitality Salon Culinaire and Junior Chef Competition will showcase culinary creativity and technical expertise, while the Art of Service Competition highlights excellence in hospitality operations.

The HORECA Oman Barista Competition, Latte Art Competition and Mocktail Competition celebrate beverage innovation, alongside the Bed Making Competition, which tests precision and professionalism in housekeeping skills.

NATIONAL  
FINANCE,  
INJAZ RENEW  
PARTNERSHIP

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its commitment to nurturing the ambitions and entrepreneurial potential of the Sultanate of Oman's youth, National Finance, the nation's largest finance and leasing company, has renewed its longstanding partnership with Injaz Oman to support the 2026-2027 edition of 'The Company' programme and competition, serving as the Main Sponsor for the 'University' category.

Recognised as one of the most



anticipated programmes among aspiring young entrepreneurs, 'The Company' programme provides participants with a

dynamic platform to strengthen their entrepreneurial capabilities, acquire essential business skills and transform innovative ideas into viable enterprises.

Having supported more than 200 student companies from universities, colleges and high schools across its previous editions, the programme takes participants on a journey from the initial stages of an idea through to establishing, operating and confidently scaling their businesses.

Lexus RZ500e: Electrified  
luxury, rewarded beyond

LEXUS

Oman brings a dedicated set of ownership privileges to the all-new RZ500e, the brand's first SUV Battery Electric Vehicle in the region. As part of the ongoing Lexus Benefits Campaign "Crafted Beyond Measure... Rewarded Beyond Expectations", customers who take home the RZ500e can enjoy one year of vehicle registration, a 5-year or 50,000 km service package covering five services at 10,000 km intervals and NUKHBAH Loyalty Points worth RO 100, valid until October 7, 2026 (Terms & Conditions Apply.)The RZ500e is Lexus' first dedicated Battery Electric Vehicle marking a new chapter in a journey towards electrification that began in 2005.

At the heart of the RZ500e is a newly developed battery and motor system, offering stronger performance, greater efficiency and a longer driving range, while a low centre of gravity and reinforced body structure bring added stability and confidence to every drive.

The RZ500e's DIRECT4 all-wheel-drive system works in the background to keep power balanced across all four wheels, delivering smooth acceleration and a stable, assured feel through corners.

Inside, the cabin is engineered for calm: extensive sound insulation keeps road



Electrifying luxury, crafted beyond measure and meet the all-new Lexus RZ500e.

and wind noise to a minimum, allowing occupants to enjoy a quiet, refined ride from the moment they step in. The interior continues this sense of understated luxury, with premium materials and a thoughtfully laid-out cabin.

Beyond its refined design and quiet cabin, the DIRECT4 system continuously adjusts

torque between the front and rear axles, adapting to speed, steering angle and road conditions to keep the drive stable and precise, whether accelerating or cornering.

This is paired with Vehicle Dynamics Integrated Management, which enhances control and confidence in changing conditions.

Milano by Danube unites 500+ Oman traders

MUSCAT: At its annual traders meet in Muscat, Milano by Danube outlines its Global Direct strategy, showcases key products and creates new business opportunities for its dealer network

Milano by Danube brought together more than 500 traders and business partners from across Oman at its annual Traders Meet at Hilton Muscat Al Bandar, as the company addressed the growing impact of geopolitical tensions and global supply-chain disruptions on international trade.

The gathering came at a time when businesses across the region are navigating rising freight



SAHIL SAJJAN

Director, Milano  
by Danube.

costs, changing shipping routes and uncertainty around the international movement of goods. Against this backdrop, the event focused on Milano by Danube's evolving sourcing and supply-chain strategy, with discussions around how the company is working to create greater flexibility, efficiency and resilience while continuing to support its dealer network across Oman. From Global Disruption to Supply-Chain Resilience

The current geopolitical environment has highlighted how quickly disruptions in one part of the world can affect businesses and consumers elsewhere.

For companies dependent on international sourcing, longer shipping routes, freight volatility and uncertainty around delivery timelines have made supply-chain resilience increasingly important.

Anis Sajjan, Vice Chairman, Danube Group, said, "The biggest lesson from the current global situation is that supply chains cannot be treated as a back-end function anymore.

They have become a strategic part of the business. When shipping routes change or costs increase overnight, you need the flexibility to respond.

Amouage debuts its first signature boutique in Indonesia

Amouage, the Omani High Perfumery House, has opened its first boutique in Indonesia at Plaza Indonesia, bringing its distinctive universe to one of Southeast Asia's leading luxury destinations.

Conceived as a destination for discovery, the boutique introduces visitors to the House's creations, craftsmanship and distinctive identity through an experience designed to unfold beyond the fragrance itself.

A SPACE SHAPED BY STONE, LIGHT AND SCENT

Compact in scale yet open in character, the new boutique draws on the country's

mountains, horizons and distinctive archways, introducing an immersive space that reinterprets Oman through a contemporary architectural lens.

Every element has been conceived to create a journey through the House, where landscapes become part of the fragrance storytelling and experience.

Travertine walls evoke the rugged textures of Oman's mountain ranges, while walnut wood and brushed copper introduce warmth and refinement throughout the interior.

Digital installations are seamlessly integrated into the architecture, emerging from



Inspired by the Sultanate of Oman's majestic landscapes and heritage, the new space offers an immersive expression of Oman through High Perfumery.

within the stone to frame individual creations. Display tables, conceived as inverted pyramids, echo the country's dramatic topography, their grooved surfaces lending rhythm and depth to the interior.

At the heart of the boutique, the Gift of Kings installation unfolds beneath a radiant central orb, with fragrances arranged in rays inspired by the Omani sun.

Layers of arches create shifting perspectives throughout the space, while gentle illumination traces the silhouette of distant mountain peaks, recalling the changing light that shapes the Sultanate's landscapes from

sunrise to dusk.

Within this setting, visitors are invited to explore the breadth of the House's olfactive universe, from the Odyssey Collection and The Essences to its latest creations and personalised fragrance experiences.

A NEW CHAPTER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The opening at Plaza Indonesia, a vibrant landmark at the heart of Jakarta's luxury and lifestyle scene, establishes Amouage's first standalone presence in Indonesia, introducing the House to one of Southeast Asia's most dynamic luxury markets.

SHORTTAKES



A total of 1.55 million passenger cars were sold in China in August 2026, down around 24% year-on-year.

CHINA CAR EXPORTS OUTPACE DOMESTIC DEMAND

**BEIJING:** China’s car exports stayed in high gear, albeit at a slower pace, in August as automakers led by BYD shipped a record number of vehicles overseas, in sharp contrast to a sluggish domestic market, where sales fell for the 11th month in a row.

Passenger vehicle exports jumped 77.5% from a year earlier to 894,000 units in August, easing from an increase of 88.2% a month earlier, data from the China Passenger Car Association showed on Tuesday.

A total of 1.55 million passenger cars were sold in China in August 2026, down around 24% year-on-year. Sales at home fell 23.7% to 1.55 million vehicles, worsening from a decline of 21.1% in July. Electric vehicle and plug-in hybrid sales, accounting for 64.7% of total domestic sales, shrank 10.1% on year in August, widening a 3.9% drop a month earlier. Meanwhile, export growth in the segment accelerated to 154.7% from 147.8% in July.

China’s vehicle exports are forecast to reach 12 million units this year, according to Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA).

Annual exports are expected to climb further to between 18 million and 20 million units by 2030, he said. The export boom has raised regulatory concerns that the cut-throat competition battering carmakers, suppliers and dealers domestically could spread to overseas markets.

Last week, Chinese regulators issued new guidelines for automakers’ overseas operations, warning against frequent or steep price cuts and other non-compliant practices that could harm consumers or tarnish brand reputations.

— Reuters

Oman highlights AI, big data in statistical development

**THE** Statistical Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) began its 17th session in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. The Sultanate of Oman is represented at the three-day session by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Participants in the session include heads and representatives of national statistic offices in Arab countries and officials from the United Nations and Arab, regional and international organisations, in addition to experts and specialists.

Dr Rania al Mashat, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the ESCWA, said, “This ESCWA session is being held at a time when the need is increasingly arising for reliable, timely, well-documented and comparable data in the backdrops of the rapid economic and social transformations, the digital revolution and the challenges posed to statistical systems through conflicts, disasters and displacements”.

Dr Rania stressed that such challenges give rise to new opportunities to enhance the capacity of statistical systems to respond to different conditions. She noted that the current phase of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers an opportunity to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For his part, Dr Mustafa Saad Badawi, Head of the Population Statistics and Censuses Sector in the Arab Republic of Egypt, said that statistical work is undergoing rapid transitions that



Oman is represented by NCSI at the ESCWA session being held in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar

The current phase of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers an opportunity to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

extend beyond technology. These developments, he observed, cover the nature of demand for data, its sources and uses and the environment in which national statistical agencies operate.

Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of the National Centre for Statistics and Information, said that the Sultanate of Oman’s hosting of the ESCWA Statistical Committee’s 17th session reflects Oman’s commitment to consolidate Arab statistical cooperation and exchange expertise and experiences in a manner that ultimately leads to more integrated, flexible and

responsive statistical systems that are capable of adapting to rapid changes.

Al Barwani pointed out that the rapid progress in artificial intelligence, big data and digital resources is opening up broad vistas for statistical institutions to develop data collection, processing and analysis, in addition to accelerating the production of indicators.

He also highlighted the Sultanate of Oman’s experience in using modern technology and artificial intelligence in implementing the AI-powered Household Income and Expenditure Survey project.

— ONA

Around 400 young Omanis register for fourth TMAKON edition

BUSINESS REPORTER MUSCAT, SEPT 8

Oman Oil Marketing Company SAOG and the Youth Centre have launched the fourth edition of the TMAKON programme for independent freelancers, aimed at developing the skills of young Omanis and enhancing their readiness to enter the freelance market through a journey combining training, development and practical application.

The programme attracted around 400 young men and women during the registration stage. Its fourth edition covers 15 fields: design and creative arts; photography and visual production; marketing and content creation; media and social media; management and entrepreneurship; technology and artificial intelligence; engineering and architecture; crafts and creative industries; culinary arts and food ventures; finance, law and governance; analysis and innovation;



With 15 fields and around 400 young participants, TMAKON is strengthening Oman’s freelance talent ecosystem.

trade and sales; tourism and guiding; training and skills development; and electronic gaming.

The fourth edition will be delivered through three progressive stages, taking participants from training and skills development to launching their freelance careers and achieving practical empowerment.

The programme will conclude with a final exhibition showcasing its most outstanding outcomes and the work developed by participants.

Held at the Youth Centre, the launch event included remarks by Amira al Balushi, Programmes

Director at the Youth Centre and a representative of Oman Oil Marketing Company. It also featured an introduction delivered by TMAKON alumni and a presentation outlining the implementation approach, training workshops and different stages of the fourth edition.

Amira al Balushi, Programmes Director at the Youth Centre, said: “The fourth edition of TMAKON reflects the growing interest among young Omanis in freelance work and the importance of providing training opportunities that help them develop their capabilities and prepare for market requirements.

Through the diverse fields covered by this edition, we aim to help participants strengthen their skills and transform their talents into viable professional opportunities with the potential to grow and succeed”.

Dr Ahmed bin Murad al Balushi, Manager of Corporate Affairs at Oman Oil Marketing Company, said: “The

strong response to the fourth edition of TMAKON demonstrates the breadth of talent and ambition among young Omanis. We believe that supporting them in building independent and sustainable career paths represents an investment in their future and in the development of the wider community”.

“The programme provides participants with a clear journey that begins with training and skills development and extends to entering the freelance market with greater confidence and readiness. We look forward to following their progress and seeing the ideas and projects they will present at the final exhibition”.

Through TMAKON, Oman Oil Marketing Company and the Youth Centre continue their efforts to develop young talent and provide practical opportunities that help young Omanis grow their businesses and strengthen their presence in the freelance market.

GOLD STEADY

Gold subdued ahead of US inflation



Gold prices inched lower on Tuesday, as oil gained and investors hunkered down for key inflation data this week for clues on the Federal Reserve’s interest rate outlook.

Spot gold fell 0.3% to \$4,390.50 per ounce by 08:16 GMT, after trading as high as \$4,442.70 earlier in the session, while US gold futures for December delivery dropped 0.9% to \$4,435.00.

— Reuters

OIL ON FIRE

Oil climbs on prolonged conflict fears



Oil prices extended gains to multi-week highs on Tuesday as risks of a prolonged conflict in the Middle East grew after Iran threatened to retaliate against any new US attacks on its assets, heightening worries over supply disruption. Brent crude futures were up \$1.25, or 1.3%, to \$98.25 a barrel by 06:30 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$93.70 a barrel, up \$2.22, or 2.4%. — Reuters

CURRENCY MARKETS

Yen surge shakes carry trade



A blistering rally in the Japanese yen ahead of an expected interest rate hike from the Bank of Japan next week is upending the long-established and lucrative carry trade, as investors rethink the path ahead for the volatile currency.

Early hints of capital repatriation and expectations of a faster pace of monetary tightening by the BOJ along with US pressure. — Reuters

OPINION

Towards sustainable insurance and reinsurance pricing



MURTADHA M J  
IBRAHIM  
AL JAMALANI

The writer is an  
insurance expert &  
economist researcher

It is often said that motor insurance premiums have increased in the Omani market. However, it is important to look at the complete picture rather than focusing solely on the premium amount. The issue is not merely about insurance pricing; it is about an integrated framework covering pricing, underwriting, claims management, reinsurance, risk management, solvency, corporate governance and market competition.

The motor insurance risk today is no longer the same as it was in the past. The cost of vehicles and spare parts, labour and repair costs, medical treatment, bodily injury compensation (Ta'arish), blood money compensation (Diya) and court awards have all increased.

In addition, technological developments and the increasing complexity of modern vehicles, changes in driver behaviour, increased traffic volumes and the development of modern roads and infrastructure are factors that may affect the frequency and severity of accidents and, consequently, the overall cost of claims.

Therefore, motor insurance pricing should be based on the actual cost of risk and reliable statistical and actuarial data, rather than simply comparing current premiums with historical premium levels.

**Price competition and underwriting practices**

Historically, the motor insurance market has experienced intense price competition, together with agent and broker commissions and distribution costs.

Therefore, comparing current premiums with historical premiums alone does not necessarily reflect the true technical cost of

the risk. From a technical and commercial perspective and in the interests of all stakeholders — policyholders, insurance companies, shareholders and regulators — there is a need for a fair and transparent mechanism for determining motor insurance prices that balances policyholder protection with the financial sustainability of insurance companies. At certain times, some insurers may adopt.

Underwriting practices whereby motor insurance policies are priced at low levels primarily to generate immediate cash flow, rather than to reflect the true technical cost of the underlying risk. While such practices may provide short-term liquidity, they do not necessarily serve the interests of all stakeholders.

They can encourage unhealthy price competition, erode technical underwriting performance and, ultimately, undermine the long-term sustainability of the insurance industry.

**Technical rate and commercial rate**

As the Sultanate of Oman follows a market Economy, while at the same time third-party motor liability insurance is compulsory, it is important that the relevant regulatory authority has an appropriate regulatory role in determining or approving the Pure Technical Insurance Rate, based on reliable statistical and actuarial data and the actual cost of the risk.

The Commercial Insurance Rate, however, should remain the responsibility of each insurance company and its Board of Directors, taking into account its underwriting policy, market supply and demand, the company's efficiency and operating costs, while ensuring a fair and sustainable return or profitability.

Motor insurance pricing should be based on the actual cost of risk and reliable statistical and actuarial data, rather than simply comparing current premiums with historical premium levels.

It is important to emphasise that the objective is not to eliminate competition or standardise commercial prices, but rather to establish a sound technical foundation that prevents unsustainable pricing and protects the long-term stability of the market.

Therefore, the issue should not be limited to regulating motor insurance pricing. There is a need to consider establishing an integrated framework governing Insurance & Reinsurance Business Practices.

**Such a framework should cover:**

Underwriting and pricing, risk management, technical provisions and reserves, reinsurance arrangements, capital management, claims management, commissions and distribution costs, disclosure, corporate governance and fair competition.

It would also be appropriate to consider establishing an Insurance Underwriting Code of Conduct setting out clear professional principles and business practices, establishing mechanisms for fair and responsible competition, clarifying the responsibilities of Boards of Directors and executive management; and limiting underwriting practices that could adversely affect policyholders, shareholders, or the long-term sustainability of insurance companies.

**Professional competition, not price competition alone**

The objective is not to restrict competition, but to ensure that competition is professional, fair and sustainable; and is based on underwriting discipline, risk management, efficiency, quality of service and innovation — rather than price reductions alone.

SOUTHEAST ASIA DRIVES CHINA'S CLEAN-TECH EXPORT BOOM

GAVIN MAGUIRE

Countries across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) making record purchases of Chinese-made clean-tech products in 2026.

According to energy think tank Ember, ASEAN countries have spent more than \$20 billion on Chinese clean-tech products so far this year, around 50% more than during the same period in 2025.

The surge has made Southeast Asia the largest market in Asia for Chinese clean-tech components and positioned the region as an increasingly important destination for China's expanding manufacturing sector.

Demand is broad-based, covering energy-storage batteries, solar panels, electric vehicles (EVs), grid equipment and heating and cooling systems.

Southeast Asian countries have spent nearly \$7 billion on energy-storage batteries, about \$1.6 billion on grid components and roughly \$6.3 billion on EVs. Heating and cooling equipment accounted for another \$1.2 billion.

The Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam have been among the strongest buyers. Each has roughly doubled its spending on Chinese solar imports compared with a year earlier, reflecting the region's rapidly growing investment in renewable energy.

This growth is particularly important for Chinese exporters as they face increasing trade tensions and barriers in Europe and North America. While Europe has traditionally been a major destination for China's clean-tech exports, Southeast Asia could provide a longer-term source of demand.

The region's economic development is supporting this trend. Southeast Asia is home to roughly 700 million people, while its economies are growing at around 5% annually.

Rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and digitalisation are driving electricity demand and encouraging governments to expand power grids, renewable-energy capacity, EV adoption and domestic manufacturing.

These priorities require many of the products China produces at large scale, including solar modules, batteries, EVs and electrical equipment. As a result, Southeast Asian demand could continue rising for years.

The trend also has important implications for global emissions. — Reuters

French AI Mistral raises \$3.5 bn amidst strategy shift

MISTRAL, a French artificial intelligence company, has been promoted as one of Europe's best hopes of competing against American and Chinese firms in developing the rapidly advancing technology.

But in recent months, the Paris-based startup has found it harder to keep pace. Mistral has struggled to match the financial resources or the technical output of its international AI competitors.

The company is now shifting its strategy.

On Tuesday, Mistral said it had raised 3 billion euros, or about \$3.5 billion, to help make the change. The company is moving away from solely developing AI models that compete so directly with companies such as Anthropic, OpenAI and DeepSeek. Instead, Mistral will also build data centres and other infrastructure that businesses can use in Europe and elsewhere to deploy AI.

Mistral is trying to take advantage of growing concern among many businesses and governments in Europe and elsewhere about overdependence on American technology. Companies such as Anthropic and OpenAI charge customers a premium to use their AI systems but provide little access to the underlying data or models. President Donald Trump's decision in June to use an export ban to briefly limit international use of Anthropic's most advanced model also caused alarm.

Founded by three French AI researchers with experience at Google and Meta, Mistral started by developing open-source models that businesses can freely download and customise.

Mistral has now raised about 6 billion euros since it was started in 2023. The latest round, which



ADAM  
SATARIANO

The writer is  
Technology report-  
er for The New York  
Times



Mistral is trying to take advantage of growing concern among many businesses and governments in Europe and elsewhere about overdependence on American technology.

was led by Samsung Electronics, values the company at about 21 billion euros. The Scaleup Europe Fund, which has money from the European Union, also contributed.

Mistral's funding levels are huge for a startup in Europe, which has far less venture capital and a smaller tech industry than the United States does, but are still small in comparison with its overseas rivals.

Anthropic has raised roughly \$125 billion and is exploring an initial public offering that could value the company at \$2 trillion. OpenAI has raised roughly \$180 million and was valued in March at more than \$850 billion.

Building the most advanced AI models requires huge amounts of money for computing power, data centres and other infrastructure.

Mistral first outlined its strategy shift last month. Johan Bergqvist, Mistral's chief financial officer,

said the new money would be used to continue developing frontier AI models, as well as to provide infrastructure and engineering help for companies and governments to integrate AI into their operations. Organisations will be able to use Mistral's models or open-source models made by other companies, including Chinese firms such as Z.ai.

Mistral's strategy centres on demand for AI "sovereignty," in which companies and governments in Europe want more control over how the technology is built and used inside their operations.

Mistral is building data centres in France and Sweden, as organisations seek ways to keep their data stored in Europe.

"We see companies increasingly reaching out to us because they want to be in control of their own AI transformation", Bergqvist said.

— The New York Times

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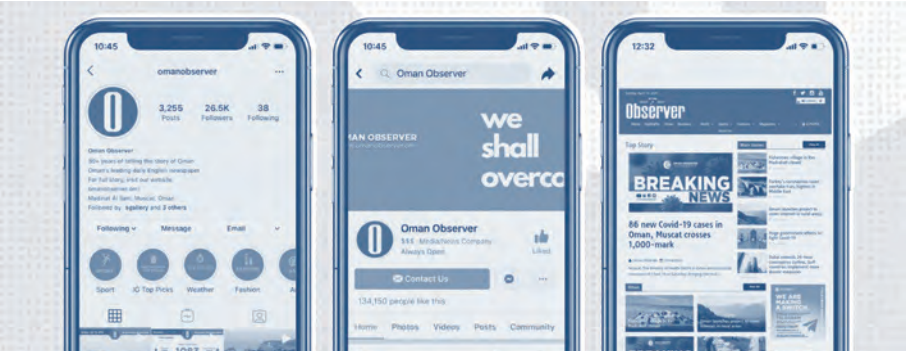
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# ART/LIFE



## LITTLE LION, BIG BUSINESS: AN OMANI BOY’S ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY

> 20

### ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

#### ARE OMAN’S CITIES READY FOR WHAT COMES NEXT?



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

Whenever a new technology comes along, we usually talk about what it can do for us today. We do not always stop to ask what our cities might need if that technology becomes part of everyday life.

Oman’s new electric vehicle charging fees, which take effect on October 1, brought me back to a question I first asked seven years ago.

Electric cars were only beginning to gain attention in the Middle East then, but I was already wondering what would happen when charging them was no longer unusual.

Who would pay for it? Where would drivers plug in? Would our homes, offices, shopping centres and motorways be ready?

Now we have part of the answer. Using a public charger will cost between 50 and 120 baisa per kilowatt-hour, depending on its power. The charges make prices clearer and give companies a reason to invest in more stations.

Parking is a good example. Muscat has had building regulations since at least the 1970s, introduced a major building order in 1992 and regulated public parking in 1997. Oman’s 2026 Urban Planning Law now specifically includes car parks, their dimensions and the facilities required around buildings.

What once seemed like spare ground beside a building eventually became something cities had to plan, measure, manage and sometimes charge people to use.

Electric transport needs the same forward thinking. Roads that can charge vehicles while they are moving are real, although they are still being tested and may be expensive to introduce widely.

Trials abroad have placed wireless charging equipment beneath the road. It sounds far-fetched, but so would the idea of holding a piece of metal and glass in our hands and using it to speak to someone on the other side of the world.

Then there is the question of what comes after electric cars.

Electric air taxis capable of carrying passengers are already being tested. Dubai is preparing special landing and charging sites known as vertiports.

Should Oman start seriously considering where similar facilities might safely fit? Should new districts leave flexible spaces before land becomes scarce and rebuilding becomes costly?

This does not mean covering Muscat with “dronepads” tomorrow. We cannot prepare for every invention someone imagines.

But we can design buildings, car parks, electricity networks and regulations that are easier to adapt when useful technologies become real.

The charging fee should start a much bigger conversation. Clean energy is not simply about replacing petrol pumps with plugs.

It is about imagining how people will travel, where their energy will come from and what our cities will need to support them properly.

The future rarely arrives all at once. A well-planned city makes room for it before it fully arrives.

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



#### AWARDS

Actor Ellen Burstyn reacts as she receives the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement award at the 83rd Venice International Film Festival, in Venice.

— Reuters



#### FILM FESTIVAL

Italian director Paolo Strippoli attends the red carpet event of “L’estranea” presented in competition at the 83rd International Venice Film Festival.

— AFP



#### FASHION

A slow shutter speed exposure shows a model displaying a creation from the AM/JASMINE collection by Liang Chen and Claire Jialing Chen during the China Fashion week.

— AFP

INSTA PICKS



Masirah Island's outstanding Marina



White-Spectacled Bulbul

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ANGELINA VISITS BOXING CLUB IN UKRAINE’S NORTHEAST

Hollywood star and humanitarian Angelina Jolie made a surprise visit to a boxing club in the heavily-shelled Ukrainian city of Kharkiv during her latest trip to the country, the country’s boxing federation and the club’s owner said on Monday.

The film star, who in the past served as a UN special envoy for refugees, had visited the war-torn country at least twice since Russia launched its full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022.

A photo posted by the Boxing Federation of Ukraine shows Jolie and her son, Knox, posing at a boxing gym.

“The famous actress Angelina Jolie visited the Spadkoyemets boxing club in Kharkiv”, the federation said in a post on Instagram.

“Her son Knox, together with Ukrainian defenders, held a Muay Thai training session at the club”, it added.

The second-largest city in

Ukraine, Kharkiv lies close to the border with Russia, whose forces have pummelled the city with artillery since the start of the war in early 2022.

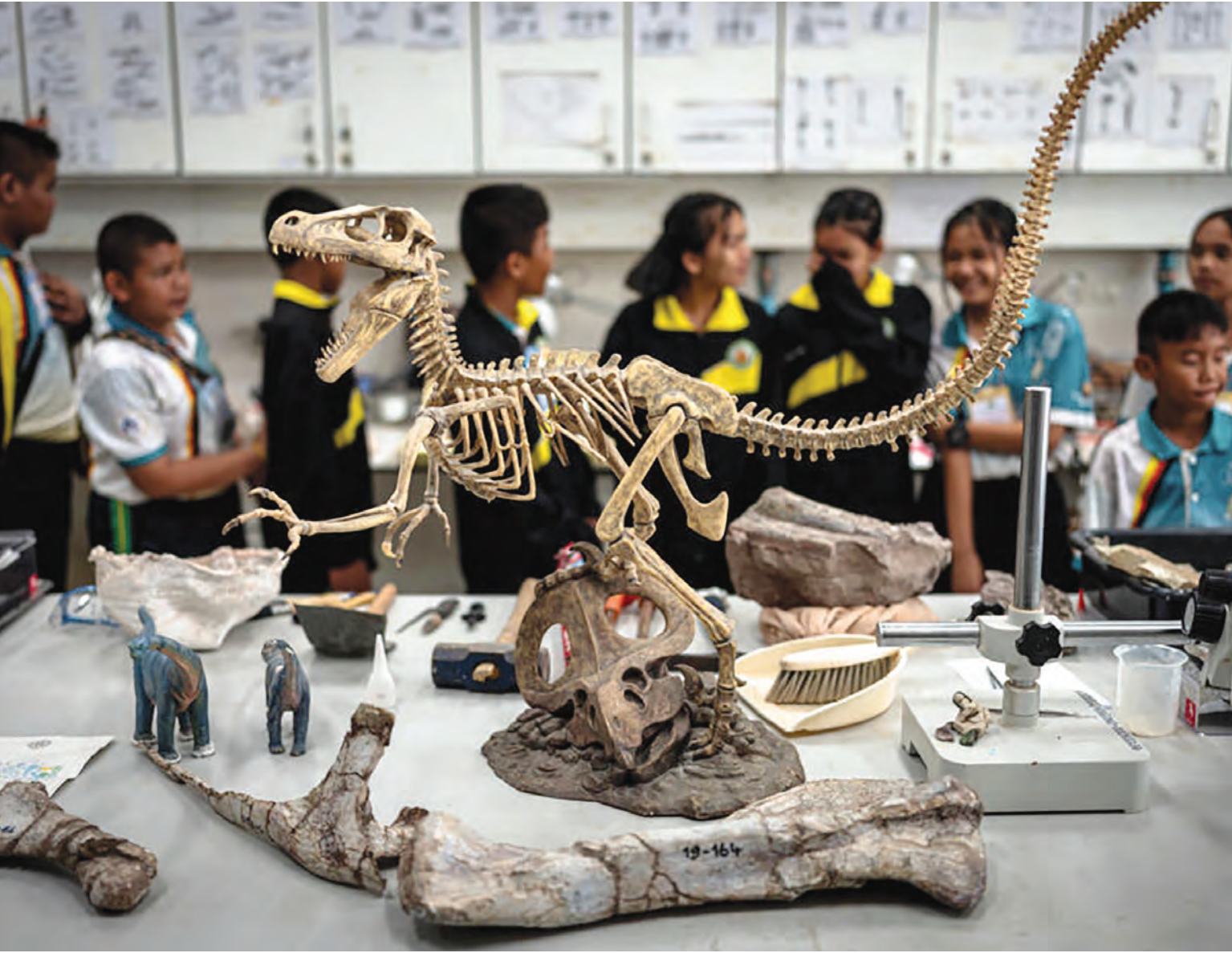
It is a daily target for Russian drone and missile attacks.

The Spadkoyemets club’s owner, Pavlo Chyshko, said he had “had no idea” he would be meeting with Jolie after he received a gym booking for Sunday.

“To everyone who asked me — this is not a joke, not AI. It just happened completely by chance: Angelina Jolie, to our great delight, dropped by our gym”, Chyshko said in a video posted on Instagram.

“She complimented us, said she liked our gym and we thanked her. She asked my son how long he’d been doing sports”, Chyshko said.

“That’s real class. And her son is just the same. He shook hands, back and forth... It was really cool!”, he added. — AFP



‘Jurassic Park’ shines light on dinosaur evolution

A dinosaur statue stands guard outside a temple, a hint at the ancient giants buried deep in the earth below making up northeastern Thailand’s “dinosaur rush”. Researchers have found a trove of dinosaur fossils across the region, which holds the country’s richest deposits, offering insight into the creatures that roamed the planet millions of years ago.

Prehistoric specimens from the region’s sun-baked soil were identified this year as two new species — Southeast Asia’s largest dinosaur Nagatitan chaiyaphumensis and the long-necked Uragasaurus kalasinensis.

They are the latest discoveries in a series that researchers at Mahasarakham University — which leads the field — hope will result in Thailand’s 16th species within months. “Thailand really is the hotspot for research and discovery” in Southeast Asia, said Richard Cloutier, a professor of palaeontology visiting from Canada’s Universite du Quebec a Rimouski.

While China, Mongolia and Russia remain major fossil-hunting grounds, experts say the part of the Earth that is now Thailand offers important clues to dinosaur evolution.

“The timeframe of our discoveries fills a geological gap or missing link present in records of other countries”, said Suravech Suteethorn, deputy director of the university’s Palaeontological Research and Education Centre.

“Our local dinosaurs are like missing jigsaw pieces that help establish evolutionary connections, particularly around the Jurassic and Cretaceous period transition, approximately 140 million years ago”.

**NEXT BIG FIND**

Many of the specimens confirmed this year were unearthed a decade or more ago, but needed research and verification before being identified. There are more waiting to be tested. At the university, shelves groan with jagged pieces of spines,



necks and legs that to an untrained eye resemble battered stones.

Countless more fossils remain in the ground, including at Phu Wiang National Park, two hours away, where Suravech and his veteran paleontologist father — and boss — Varuvudh work on a dig.

Under a makeshift roof offering protection from the monsoon rains, the pair are slowly uncovering the giant neck of a fossil they hope to confirm soon as Thailand’s newest dinosaur.

Suravech was tight-lipped about the find, but said it would “wow” people. “These new discoveries indicate the grandeur and richness

of our country in the past”, he said.

**DINOSAURS ON A BUDGET**

Northeastern Thailand is particularly well placed for dinosaur discoveries, said Thitiwoot Sethapanichsakul, a PhD student at University College London who co-authored the Nagatitan paper in the journal Scientific Reports.

Its dry climate and sparse vegetation leave fossil-bearing rocks exposed, while its geology contains sedimentary layers of the right age to preserve dinosaur remains.

“I think the current ‘dinosaur rush’ in Thailand is hopefully just the beginning”, he said. — AFP

FEATURES

# LITTLE LION, BIG BUSINESS: AN OMANI BOY'S ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY

BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

It has always been said that a child's confidence is built not only by what they are told, but by what they are trusted to do on their own. That is how the story of a young Omani boy, Laith, began. As a child, Laith would help his mother, who runs a decoupage business, pack orders and prime boxes for her to finish. Watching her business grow, particularly during busy seasons such as Eid, the start of the school year, Mother's Day and Teacher's Day, planted a question in his mind: "When do I get to run a business like you? When will I have that much money?". His mother did not dismiss the question. Knowing his interest in handmade crafts and wool, they started small. While he was in Grade 1, he bought toys wholesale and sold them during Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha, initially relying only on family, neighbours and word of mouth.

**THE REJECTION THAT LIT THE FIRE**  
The turning point came not from a success, but a rejection. His mother once registered him for an exhibition organised by Oman's Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises. However, when organisers asked whether he had a website, retail outlet or Instagram account, the answer was no. His participation was declined. His mother says that rejection became the real spark. Within days, she opened an Instagram account under Laith's own name rather than hiding him behind a separate brand. Together, they designed a logo featuring a small lion, reflecting the meaning of his name, Laith, which means "lion" in Arabic. They bought a larger batch of merchandise and photographed it themselves. Laith learned to calculate costs, selling prices and profit margins. Mathematics came naturally to him, his mother says and when calculations became more complicated than what he had learned at school, he simply reached for a calculator.

**THE ORDER THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING**  
A major milestone came with an order for 300 giveaways from a private preschool. "That was the

real launch", his mother says. "The real spark". The boy who would normally rather play or watch television remained at his seat until the order was completed. His father and younger sister joined in, helping him pack the large order. Soon, orders began arriving from across Oman, including Suhar, Saham, Samayil and Nizwa. Laith also learned what to do with unsold stock. By the following Eid Al Fitr, he had created "Eid Gathering Boxes" and "Friday Gathering Boxes", curated sets combining leftover toys with small activities.

**MORE THAN BUYING AND SELLING**  
For his mother, the business is ultimately about much more than selling toys. It has become a way for Laith to learn independence, responsibility and how to understand customers. At school exhibitions, he prices products, negotiates and closes sales himself. At public events, his mother deliberately stays nearby but remains quiet, allowing him to speak directly with customers. "This is his business", she says. "He has to be the one running it". He has also learned to read the market. At school events, for example, he tends to stock more affordable products so that more children can buy something. After each sale, he separates his capital from his profit rather than spending immediately. When enough money accumulates, the family reinvests it into new stock, particularly ahead of Eid. His first major personal purchase was an 80-rial swivel office chair, bought simply because he had earned the money himself.

**BOUNDARIES AROUND BUSINESS**  
Despite his growing venture, ordinary childhood boundaries remain in place. Screen time is limited to an hour and a half a day, while business-related research and reference videos generally take no more than 30 minutes and are supervised. The Instagram account remains accessible on both parents' phones, allowing them to monitor comments and activity. Laith may have his own business, but he is still learning, growing and, most importantly, being given the space to do it himself.



*From helping his mother pack orders to running a small toy business of his own, young Omani entrepreneur Laith is learning that business is about more than making money. With his parents' guidance, he is gaining valuable lessons in independence, responsibility, customer service and reinvestment, one order at a time.*

