

O M A N
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IN BRIEF

HIS MAJESTY’S GREETINGS TO ARMENIA, MALTA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Vahagn Khachaturyan of the Republic of Armenia, on his country’s Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere wishes of continued success to President Vahagn, and for the realisation of further aspirations sought by his country’s people. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Myriam Spiteri Debono of the Republic of Malta, on her country’s Independence Anniversary. His Majesty wished Malta further achievements across all fronts, and the relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries continued growth and progress.

REGISTRATION FOR HAJ SEASON FROM SEPTEMBER 28

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs has announced the opening of registration for pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman, for citizens and residents wishing to perform the Haj rites for the 1448 AH season, through the following electronic system ([www.hajj.om](#)), from September 28 to October 11, 2026. In a statement, the ministry said that Haj companies are prohibited from interfering in the registration of those wishing to perform the Haj rites, in order to ensure transparency and to allow eligible applicants the freedom to choose their Haj company. **DETAILS ON P2**

Enhancing knowledge-based economy

SPENDING ON RESEARCH AT ₮189 MILLION

THE results of the National Survey for Experimental Research and Development for 2025, conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), showed continued growth of experimental research and development activities in the Sultanate of Oman.

The total expenditure on experimental research and development activities reached approximately RO 189.42 million during 2025. This is equivalent to 0.48 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) at constant prices and 0.45 per cent at current prices, compared to RO 98.26 million in 2021, reflecting a growing interest in enhancing the innovation ecosystem and the knowledge-based economy.

The survey results revealed that the total number of workers participating in experimental research and development work in the Sultanate of Oman reached 35,539 workers during 2025. Males



This reflects a growing interest in enhancing the innovation ecosystem.

constituted 67 per cent of them, compared to 33 per cent for females. The data clarified that the private sector accounted for the largest percentage of total workers in experimental research and development activities at 42 per cent, followed by the government sector at 32 per cent, and the higher education sector at 26 per cent.

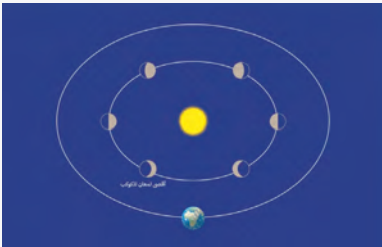
Regarding the distribution of workers by occupation, the results showed that researchers represent the largest category of total workers at 51 per cent. Their number reached 18,193 researchers in 2025, compared to 13,576 researchers in 2024, reflecting a notable growth in the number of research cadres.

At the level of expenditure by sector, the private sector accounted for the highest percentage of total expenditure on experimental research and development at 46 per cent, followed by the government sector at 31 per cent, and the higher education sector at 23 per cent.

The National Survey for Experimental Research and Development aims to provide accurate statistical indicators regarding human resources, expenditure directed towards experimental research and development activities, and their sources of funding in various sectors.

— ONA

VENUS TO REACH PEAK BRIGHTNESS ON TUESDAY



MUSCAT: The skies over the Sultanate of Oman will witness, on Tuesday, Venus shining at its maximum brilliance during its current evening apparition, with its apparent magnitude reaching approximately (−4.8), making it appear as the brightest planet in the sky and the third

brightest celestial body visible from Earth after the Sun and the Moon. Wissal bint Salim al Hinai, Chairperson of the Community Communication Committee at Oman Astronomical and Space Society, said that Venus is distinguished by its striking brightness in the sky.

Oman Air Boosts Khareef Connectivity by 16%, Bringing 270,000 Passengers into Salalah in a Record Season



OMAN AIR has concluded a successful 2026 Khareef season, increasing capacity to Salalah by 16% compared to 2025, enhancing regional connectivity through new services, and recording strong passenger growth throughout the period. Between mid-June and mid-September, the airline carried 270,000 passengers into Salalah, marking a 9% increase on 2025 and the highest passenger volumes seen in recent years. The strongest growth was recorded in June, when passenger numbers rose by 24% compared to the same period last year. To meet peak demand, Oman Air operated up to 15 flights per day to Salalah during August, including additional services operated by its larger Boeing 787-9 aircraft to provide increased seat capacity. In July, Oman Air also launched a three weekly Dubai-Salalah service, adding more than 4,900 seats per month and providing

thousands of additional guests with direct access to the governorate. The airline also operated scheduled charter services between Bahrain and Salalah during July and August, supporting inbound tourism and demonstrating the future potential of the route. “As a key partner in Oman’s tourism ecosystem, Oman Air is committed to stimulating visitor demand, strengthening connectivity and supporting local economic growth. During this year’s Khareef season, we expanded capacity and introduced additional services to provide travellers with more opportunities to visit Salalah,” said Nasser Al Sharji, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Air. “We would like to thank our guests for choosing Oman Air this Khareef season and for helping make it another successful year for tourism in Dhofar. Supporting domestic tourism remains a key priority, and we are proud to play

our part in connecting more people with the destinations, experiences and communities that make Oman unique.” Looking beyond the Khareef season, Oman Air remains focused on supporting Dhofar’s growth as a year-round tourism destination. Building on the success of its seasonal operations, the airline’s Dubai-Salalah service continues to connect the governorate with a key regional market, while further opportunities to expand connectivity are under evaluation. Oman Air is also working towards the resumption of its Moscow-Salalah charter service, which is expected to further strengthen inbound tourism. Through strategic network development and expanded access to Dhofar, Oman Air aims to attract more visitors throughout the year, support local businesses and communities, and contribute to the long-term growth of Oman’s tourism sector.



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SHORTTAKES



The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was headed by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information. — ONA

OMAN PARTICIPATES
IN ASBU EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL MEETING
IN TUNISIA

TUNIS: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Information, participated in the 115th meeting of the Executive Council of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), held in the Republic of Tunisia.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was headed by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information.

The meeting discussed a number of media topics pertaining to radio, television, engineering and new media programming, alongside matters related to the Arab Radio and Television Festival.

The meeting also addressed media support for the Palestinian cause, the Union's activities in the field of new media, radio, television and news programming exchanges, as well as preparations for organising the Arab Radio and Television Festival, to be held under the theme "The Pulse of the Image and the Echo of the Future" during September 20 to 24.

The meeting reviewed the report of the Arab Centre for Radio and Television Training in Damascus, which commended the Sultanate of Oman's contribution to the delivery of a number of in-person training courses in Muscat, in addition to the participation of Omani personnel in the training programmes conducted by the Centre and the training programmes of the Union's Academy for Media Training in Tunis.

The meeting further examined the importance of harnessing artificial intelligence technologies in media work and keeping pace with the rapid developments in this field, alongside the organisation of specialised training courses in artificial intelligence, thereby contributing to the development of media personnel's skills and the enhancement of their capacities to engage with modern technologies and employ them across various domains of media work.

The Sultanate of Oman's participation in the meetings of the Executive Council of the Arab States Broadcasting Union comes within the framework of strengthening Arab media cooperation and coordination, as well as exchanging expertise and experiences across different fields of media work. — ONA

Royal Hospital
successfully
implants
first remote
monitoring
sensor for heart
failure patients

MUSCAT: The National Heart Centre at the Royal Hospital has recorded a medical achievement, the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, as a medical team has managed to implant the first CardioMEMS sensor for the remote monitoring of patients with heart failure.

The sensor implantation procedure was performed by a specialised medical team comprising Dr Arif bin Ishaq al Balushi and Dr Amna bint Sulaiman al Busaidi, in a step reflecting the



trend toward employing modern medical technologies in the follow-up of heart failure patients and enhancing the healthcare provided to them.

The sensor enables wireless, direct measurement of pulmonary artery pressure through interventional catheterisation, without the need for open surgery, thereby contributing to continuous monitoring of the patient's condition and supporting timely therapeutic decision-making. — ONA

Registration for Haj 2027
to begin on September 28

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

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

Both citizens and expatriates can register their interest on <http://hajj.om>, the first entitlement results of which will be released on October 11, 2026; second on October 21. The last date to cancel the application is February 27-28, 2027; and the last date for air travel is fixed on March 14, 2027. However, the dates are subject to changes by Saudi authorities and will be communicated as and when it happens, the ministry officials clarified.

Detailing last year's Haj pilgrimage on the sidelines of the annual press briefing held at the Grand Millennium, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs spokesperson said that there has been a major shift for Haj 1448H, focused on safety, cost savings, and simplified procedures, following a record 98 per cent pilgrim satisfaction rate in 1447H.

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

One of the major announcements is the continuation of the strategic air transport contracting. The initiative, which saved RO 440,000 for air pilgrims last year, will be expanded. Taif Airport will be activated as a strategic alternative to Jeddah to cut bus travel time inside Saudi Arabia. The move successfully reduced land pilgrims from 5,122 to 3,034, improving health and security care. In 1447H, 10,966 Omanis flew compared to 3,034 by road.

Other key regulatory changes include:



Detailing last year's Haj pilgrimage on the sidelines of the annual press briefing. — ONA

Oman's quota will be fully managed by the Office of Haj Affairs with no separate organisers on Saudi Arabia's Nusuk Masar platform; each group must have a minimum of 20 pilgrims or pilgrims will be transferred to their second choice; and service staff registration will be limited to Omani citizens only. Each company must appoint one official and one media representative.

The reforms come after reviewing last season's challenges, which included late housing contracts, delayed data entry, unrealistic low package prices that led to irregular extra payments, and lack of coordination between companies.

The Oman Haj Mission reported high performance indicators for 1447H with 7,200 pilgrims: 99.9 per cent satisfaction with the <http://hajj.om> electronic registration system,

98.6 per cent for Haj company services, 98.6 per cent for religious guidance, 99 per cent for health services, and 99.9 per cent for security in Mina and Arafat.

"To improve the comfort provided to the pilgrims, major works were completed in Mina and Arafat camps: 250 additional washbasins, 75 toilets, 1,600 automatic fire sprinklers, modern lighting, new rest areas, modern flooring, and heat-insulating roofing over 22,800 sqm in Mina have been initiated well before the preliminary works for Haj is begun," he added.

The Ministry also launched initiatives including the 2nd Hajj Conference and Exhibition, a unified electronic dashboard for sharing contract data, and enhanced medical fitness where health checks are done directly at company offices.

Ministry of Labour reinforces labour stability

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

The Ministry of Labour is continuing efforts to strengthen labour market stability, promote fair employment practices and safeguard the rights of workers and employers through initiatives focused on labour dispute settlement, awareness, collective dialogue and worker welfare.

The ministry's indicators for the first half of 2026 show continued engagement with various aspects of labour relations, including mechanisms for resolving workplace

disputes and promoting awareness of rights and responsibilities.

According to the ministry's figures, 2,957 individual labour complaints and 2,908 collective labour complaints were recorded during the first half of the year.

The figures highlight the scale of interaction between the ministry and labour market stakeholders and the importance of effective mechanisms for addressing workplace disputes within the framework of applicable laws and regulations.

Labour awareness programmes also formed a significant part of



The ministry's indicators for the first half of 2026 show continued engagement with various aspects of labour relations.

the ministry's activities, with 6,335 beneficiaries recorded during the period. The programmes seek to familiarise workers and employers with their rights and obligations and provide information on procedures and channels for addressing labour-related concerns.

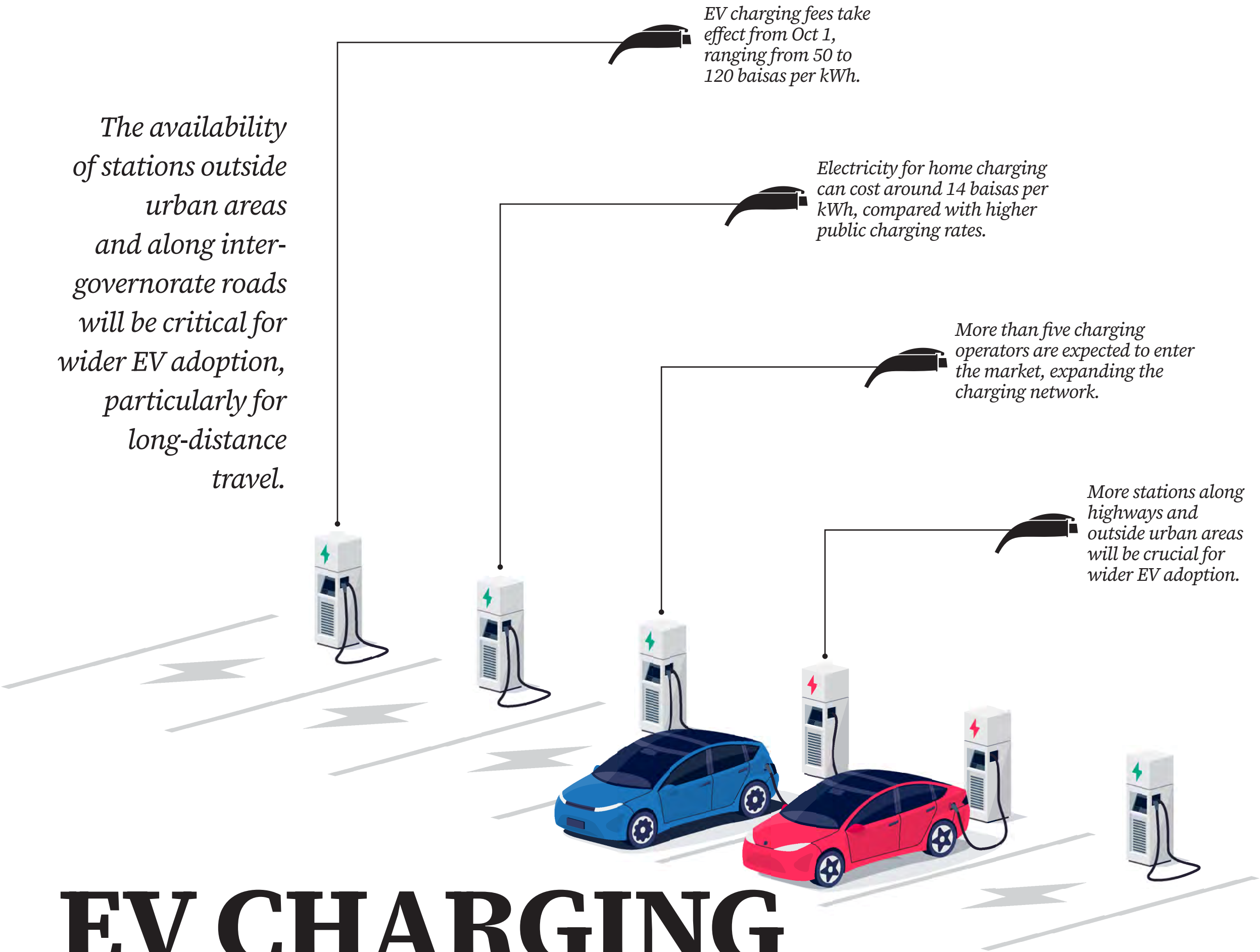
The ministry's awareness efforts are also aimed at preventing disputes by improving understanding of labour legislation and encouraging workers and employers to resolve workplace issues through established legal and institutional channels.

The ministry also continued to

support labour organisation and collective dialogue. During the first half of 2026, eight new labour unions were registered, providing workers with structured platforms to raise professional and workplace issues and engage in dialogue within the framework of the law.

The ministry recorded 106 collective negotiations during the period. Such negotiations provide an avenue for workers and employers to discuss issues of mutual concern and seek solutions through dialogue, contributing to workplace stability and continuity.

SPOTLIGHT



EV CHARGING MARKET GEARS UP

SAUD AL ANSARI

OMAN'S electric vehicle ecosystem is entering a new phase with the introduction of electric vehicle charging service fees from October 1. This is aimed at regulating the market, providing clarity for users and supporting sustainable investment in charging infrastructure.

The tariffs were determined after assessing the economic and operational aspects of charging stations, including service costs and the sustainability of operations.

Under the approved tariff, charging fees will be 50 baisas per kilowatt-hour for chargers up to 90 kW, 90 baisas for chargers ranging from 91 to 180 kW, and 120 baisas per kilowatt-hour for chargers rated at 181 kW and above. The tariffs were determined after assessing the economic and operational aspects of charging stations, including service costs.

A hybrid vehicle owner, Abdulwahad bin Ibrahim al Farsi, hoped the rates would be reviewed and reduced and added that the regulated tariff would bring greater

organisation and clarity to the market.

“Regulating the charging tariff is an important step in organising the market, but we hope the current rates will be reviewed and reduced, as lower charging costs would encourage more people to consider electric and hybrid vehicles and support their wider adoption in Oman,” he said.

Electric vehicle expert Issa bin Mubarak al Qatiti said the difference between a charger’s rated capacity and the actual power delivered to a vehicle is important when considering charging speed.

A charger rated at 180 kW does not necessarily deliver 180 kW throughout the charging process, as charging speed depends on the vehicle, battery, state of charge, temperature and energy management system. Under suitable conditions, charging may take around 30 minutes, while in other circumstances it could take considerably longer, approaching two hours.

Oman’s charging sector is gradually expanding, with more than five operators expected to enter the market. This is likely to increase charging points, enhance competition and provide users with more options.

The availability of stations outside urban areas and along inter-governorate roads will be critical for wider EV adoption, particularly for long-distance travel. Al Qatiti highlighted stations along major routes, including the Qurayat station on the road towards Sur, which can help motorists avoid significant detours.

Charging costs also differ significantly between home and public charging. According to figures cited by Al Qatiti, some public stations could charge up to 120 baisas per kWh, while others may charge around 90 baisas. By comparison, electricity for home charging can cost around 14 baisas per kWh, making home charging more economical for users able to install chargers at home.

However, public stations remain essential for long-distance journeys and motorists without home charging facilities. Faster chargers also involve higher investment, equipment and operating costs, reflected in higher service fees, while offering shorter waiting times.

As a result, users will need to balance charging speed and cost. A motorist

who does not require rapid charging may choose a lower-capacity charger, while long-distance travellers may prefer faster charging to reduce waiting time.

Al Qatiti also warned that rapid growth in EV numbers without a corresponding expansion in infrastructure could create congestion at high-demand stations, increasing waiting times and affecting the user experience. New operators and wider investment will therefore be important in keeping pace with the expected growth in EV numbers.

Although public charging is more expensive than home charging, EVs can still offer economic advantages over conventional vehicles through potentially lower energy and maintenance costs.

The new tariff provides a clearer framework for both users and operators, allowing consumers to estimate costs while giving operators a pricing model to assess investment in charging infrastructure.

With the tariff coming into effect, the next phase will depend on balancing three key factors — charging speed, service cost and station availability.



Regulating the charging tariff is an important step in organising the market, but we hope the current rates will be reviewed and reduced, as lower charging costs would encourage more people to consider electric and hybrid vehicles and support their wider adoption in Oman.

ABDULWAHAD
BIN IBRAHIM
AL FARSI



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ISSA BIN
MUBARAK
AL QATITI

SHORT TAKES



The conference addressed issues related to climate action and sustainable development.

MENA YOUTH URGE GREATER ROLE IN CLIMATE ACTION

MANAH: The Regional Youth Conference on Climate in the Middle East and North Africa (RCOY MENA 2026) concluded at the Oman Across the Ages Museum on Saturday, calling for stronger youth participation in climate action and greater support for developing countries.

The conference recommended that climate action in developing countries remain nationally determined and led, taking into account differences in national circumstances and development priorities.

It also called for adequate financing, technology transfer and capacity building, in line with the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities.

Organised by the Madad Youth Foundation and the Green Opportunities team, the conference brought together more than 500 young people from over 22 countries.

Participants called for greater youth participation in national climate pathways and urged the establishment of measures to protect environmental and water infrastructure, as well as climate workers, in conflict zones.

The conference also recommended prioritising national adaptation plans in least developed and conflict-affected countries and providing the technical support needed for their development and implementation.

It further stressed the need to strengthen regional cooperation on transboundary water basins among riparian states through permanent negotiation mechanisms rather than ad hoc agreements. The conference highlighted the importance of strengthening mitigation efforts in developing countries through adequate funding, technology transfer and capacity building, while taking into account national circumstances and development priorities.

The closing ceremony was sponsored by Shaikh Mahmoud bin Rashid al Saadi, who is in charge of running the affairs of the Governor of Al Dakhiliyah. The ceremony also witnessed the announcement of the winning projects in several fields related to innovation and climate action.

The ‘Water It Mindfully’ game project won the Climate Change Makers Award, while ‘Carbon Down’ received the Best Innovative Climate Solution Award. The ‘Clean Sea and Sustainable Life’ project won the Best Awareness and Marketing Campaign Award.

The ‘EcoGrid 2030’ project won the award for Best Engineering Model Supporting Sustainable Development, while ‘Every Drop Counts’ was named Best Sustainable Digital Innovation. The ‘Bring Me Back to Life Again’ campaign received the Best Sustainable Impact Award.

In the Green Entrepreneurial Projects Prospects Challenge, ‘Planet Champions’ won first place, followed by ‘Land and Face’ in second and ‘Renew’ in third. — **ONA**

RO 19.2m education projects underway in Dhofar

SALALAH: Dhofar Governorate is implementing a series of construction, expansion and maintenance projects worth more than RO 19.2 million to enhance school infrastructure and improve the educational environment.

Dr Maysoon bint Bakhit al Shahri, Director-General of Education in Dhofar, said the Directorate General is overseeing a range of projects across the governorate to expand school capacity and meet the current and future needs of students and educational staff.

She said the total value of the projects stands at around RO 19.224 million, covering the construction of new schools, additions, restoration, maintenance and other improvements.

Integrated school buildings account for the largest share, at around RO 13.161 million. The projects include modern schools with increased capacity in several wilayats, particularly in areas experiencing growing demand for educational services. Some projects are under implementation,



The projects cover construction of new schools, restoration, maintenance and other improvements.

while others are at the stages of issuing operating orders or completing budget procedures.

The directorate is also following up on 16 school expansion projects worth more than RO 3.229 million. These include new classrooms, teachers’ halls, laboratories, service facilities and

playgrounds, along with associated modification and maintenance works. Some projects have been completed and handed over, while work continues on others according to their implementation schedules.

Al Shahri said government schools in Dhofar have 6,715 teachers during the 2026-27 academic year, including 2,320 male and 4,395 female teachers. The number of students stands at 70,686, comprising 34,904 boys and 35,782 girls, distributed across 243 schools and 74 other educational institutions.

She said procedures for appointments, transfers, distribution of new teachers and filling vacancies had been completed according to actual requirements. An orientation programme for new teachers also covered more than 1,200 teachers.

The directorate has also completed preparations for 21 schools scheduled for external review by the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education through integrated support and follow-up plans. — **ONA**

CBD AND MBD FACE-LIFT PROJECTS ON TRACK

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

THE RUWI Central Business District (CBD) and Muttrah Business District (MBD) are undergoing a comprehensive urban redevelopment and facelift, with Muscat Municipality confirming that work on the 360,000-square-metre footprint is progressing. The project, spearheaded by Muscat Municipality, aims to revitalise Muscat’s original financial core in line with Greater Muscat Master Plan (GMMP) and reverse decades of commercial migration toward the west

“This redevelopment is about bringing life back to where Muscat’s business story began,” said Haitham al Bahrani, Adviser at Muscat Municipality. “By upgrading infrastructure, improving walkability, and integrating public transit, we are ensuring CBD and MBD areas remain competitive and relevant for the next 50 years. The goal is to make these districts places people want to work, shop and spend time in again.”

Anchored by the “Blue Spine” Muscat Metro Hub, a key pillar of the plan is transit.

The Ruwi CBD Clock Tower area has been officially earmarked as the final terminus station for the upcoming Muscat Metro line.

The 55-kilometre “Blue Spine” rapid transit corridor will connect Ruwi directly to Al Khuwair Downtown, Muscat International Airport, and Sultan Haitham City in Al Maabela, creating a transit-oriented core for the capital.

“The Clock Tower area is being



The project aims to revitalise Muscat’s original financial core in line with Greater Muscat Master Plan (GMMP).



This redevelopment is about bringing life back to where Muscat’s business story began

HAITHAM AL BAHRANI
ADVISER
AT MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

reimagined as a walkable, open-air lifestyle district. Plans include a new commercial boulevard, green areas, and recreational spaces. The natural wadi channel running through Ruwi is also being revitalised and integrated as a managed water and park feature,” he adds.

To support this shift, the project includes over 101,000 square metres of new pedestrian walkways, dedicated bicycle tracks, and major road realignments and relocation of underground utilities.

In addition, smart infrastructure, self-service kiosks, public seating, and modern restrooms are deployed around these areas.

To encourage reinvestment, the government is relaxing zoning rules in the old financial district. Building owners can now add 3 to 5 floors to existing structures. Because many buildings are decades old, owners can also conduct structural audits to either demolish and rebuild completely or add vertical capacity to modernise ageing layouts.

While intensive roadwork and utility relocation have caused short-term disruptions to foot traffic and ground-floor retail, property experts say the overhaul is vital to help Ruwi and MBD compete with newer suburbs like Airport Heights and Ghala.

Al Batinah North Waqf investments exceed RO 170,000 in 2026

STAFF REPORTER
SUHAR, SEPT 20

Waqf investments implemented in Al Batinah North Governorate exceeded RO 170,000 in 2026, reflecting growing efforts to develop endowment assets and enhance their financial sustainability.

Najeeb bin Salim al Rahili, Assistant Director at the Directorate of Endowments and Religious Affairs in Al Batinah North Governorate, said the governorate is continuing efforts to develop the Waqf system, grow and invest endowment funds, and ensure that Waqf assets fulfil the objectives set by their founders.

Al Rahili who spoke during a dialogue session on the development of Waqf investments in Al Batinah North, said



NAJEEB AL RAHILI

The approach is aimed at growing Waqf funds and diversifying investment opportunities to achieve sustainable returns while preserving the underlying assets

the investment growth reflects the Ministry’s increasing focus on moving beyond the preservation of endowment assets towards their development and the maximisation of returns.

He said the approach is aimed at growing Waqf funds and diversifying investment opportunities to achieve sustainable returns while preserving the underlying assets. This would strengthen their ability to support beneficiaries and finance the charitable and philanthropic purposes designated by endowers.

Al Rahili also highlighted significant growth in new Waqf assets during the year, with their value reaching approximately RO 2.5 million. He said the addition represents an important expansion of the governorate’s endowment asset base and will enhance

its future capacity to generate sustainable returns.

He stressed that increasing Waqf assets and investing them effectively are key pillars in developing the endowment sector. Such efforts contribute to financial sustainability, improve management efficiency and transform endowment assets into productive resources capable of generating social and economic benefits.

Al Rahili pointed to the growing shift in Oman’s Waqf sector towards modern management and sustainable investment, including the effective use of available resources and development of endowment assets based on sound economic and administrative principles.

He said these efforts are aligned with Oman Vision 2040, particularly

its objectives related to financial sustainability, resource development, community partnership and the effective utilisation of Waqf as a component of Oman’s social economy.

He noted that the implementation of more than RO 170,000 in Waqf investments, together with the addition of approximately RO 2.5 million in new assets in one year, demonstrates the scale of efforts to activate and develop the endowment sector.

Al Rahili said the Ministry will continue to develop Waqf investments, identify new opportunities and diversify Waqf portfolios and assets to maximise returns and generate greater benefits for society while safeguarding the trust placed by endowers in the institutions managing their endowments.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Michelle Bachelet Jeria speaks with the media, at UN headquarters in New York City. — Reuters

CHILE’S BACHELET WITHDRAWS FROM RACE TO LEAD UN

GENEVA: Former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet announced on Saturday that she is withdrawing her candidacy to become the next secretary-general of the United Nations, ending a bid that had struggled to gain traction among Security Council members. Bachelet, 74, announced her decision in a video posted on Instagram, saying, “I will now continue, with the same determination as always, my international work.”

The two-time Chilean president and former UN human rights chief had positioned her campaign around defending multilateralism and international law at a time she said both were under sustained pressure.

Bachelet’s exit leaves seven candidates in the race to succeed Secretary-General António Guterres, who will conclude his second five-year term on December 31, 2026. It is still possible for more candidates to enter the contest. Her withdrawal comes just a day after a third informal straw poll, held on Friday, showed her support had all but collapsed. The same poll put Costa Rica’s Rebeca Grynspan in the lead.

The UN Security Council will eventually formally recommend a single candidate to the 193-member General Assembly for election. — Reuters

EGYPT’S SISI MEETS CIA CHIEF IN CAIRO

CAIRO: US Central Intelligence Agency Director John Ratcliffe met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi on Sunday in a rare visit to Cairo, as the United States warned of rapid escalation in the Middle East war. Sisi’s office said the meeting, attended by Egypt’s spy chief Hassan Rashad, discussed the wars in Iran, the Gaza Strip and Sudan, as well as attacks on Gulf countries and threats to maritime security.

Sisi stressed “the paramount importance of settling regional crises through political and diplomatic tracks,” according to a presidency statement. It comes after the US State Department warned Americans against travel to the region, as hostilities rage between Saudi Arabia and Yemen’s Ansar Allah. “This military conflict has the potential to escalate rapidly,” it warned.

Ratcliffe’s visit comes days after de facto Saudi leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met Sisi in Cairo. The pair urged safe and secure maritime navigation through Bab Al Mandab, after the Ansar Allah seized the Yemeni coast in a lightning offensive.

Cairo is a key US ally in the region and one of the top recipients of US military aid. It has repeatedly positioned itself as a stabilising force in a turbulent region, keeping open lines of communication with rival sides, including Israel, Hamas and Iran. Sisi’s office said Ratcliffe on Sunday “lauded Egypt’s pivotal role in supporting efforts aimed at reaching peaceful, comprehensive settlements to regional crises”. — AFP

IRAQI COURT OPENS TRIAL OF SIX FRENCH IS SUSPECTS

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi court on Sunday opened the trial of six French nationals accused of belonging to IS, with a member of the Supreme Judicial Council telling the court that the suspects could face the death penalty if convicted of crimes committed against Iraq and the Iraqi people. Two court legal sources said the defendants were among 47 French IS detainees transferred from prisons in northeast Syria last year as part of a broader relocation process overseen by US forces and Iraqi authorities.

The French Embassy in Baghdad did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Officials from the embassy were present at the Baghdad criminal court, according to a witness inside the court. The six men, who are being tried under Iraq’s counter-terrorism law, arrived at the court in a prison van escorted by a convoy of Humvees carrying Iraqi special forces personnel. The men were dressed in yellow prison jumpsuits. The presiding judge adjourned the hearing until October 5 to allow defence lawyers time to review the

case file. Abbas al Maliki, a court-appointed lawyer representing one of the defendants, said that his client was being tried on charges of membership of IS. The United States announced in January that it had begun transferring IS detainees from Syria to Iraq. Iraq’s Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said in February that discussions were being held with other countries to repatriate their citizens and that Baghdad had sought international financial support to deal with the influx of prisoners. — Reuters

N Korea fires 2 ballistic missiles off east coast

NORTH

Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea off its eastern coast on Sunday, South Korea’s military said, with the second flying more than 600 kilometres. The launches came days after Pyongyang reasserted its status as a nuclear-armed state and rejected a United Nations resolution demanding it halt its nuclear activities.

South Korea’s military said the first missile was launched at around 3:00 pm from the Wonsan area and flew around 450 kilometres into the East Sea, a body of water also called the Sea of Japan. “Our military detected an additional short-range ballistic missile launched from the Wonsan area of North Korea towards the East Sea at around 5:50 pm,” South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The second missile “flew more than 600 kilometres, and South Korean and US authorities are conducting a detailed analysis to determine its exact specifications,” it said.

The JCS said South Korea, the United States and Japan had been “tracking and sharing relevant developments from the initial stage of the launch”. Japan lodged a “stern protest” with North Korea



People sit near a television screen showing footage of a North Korean missile test at a train station in Seoul. — AFP

The JCS said South Korea, the United States and Japan had been “tracking and sharing relevant developments from the initial stage of the launch”. Japan lodged a “stern protest” with North Korea over the launches, condemning them as a threat to regional peace and security

over the launches, condemning them as a threat to regional peace and security, the Kyodo news agency cited the government as saying. South Korea’s presidential National Security Office convened an emergency security meeting following the first launch and assessed its impact on national security, the presidential office said. The government called on Pyongyang to “immediately cease” its ballistic missile launches, describing Sunday’s firings as a “grave act” that violated UN Security Council resolutions. The launches came eight days after North Korea fired multiple

short-range ballistic missiles towards the East Sea as part of what it later described as a joint firepower drill. That exercise involved long-range artillery and missiles, with the weapons “hitting the targets with 100 per cent accuracy”, state media reported.

North Korea accused “hostile forces” of seeking to end the country’s nuclear programme during this week’s General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). A foreign ministry spokesperson said the IAEA resolution “has no effect on the DPRK’s position as a nuclear weapons state”, using the acronym for North Korea’s official name. The North’s status as a nuclear power is “guaranteed by the actual nuclear deterrent and irreversibly and permanently fixed by the supreme law of the state”, the spokesperson said.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, recently said the country’s nuclear-armed status was “absolute” and called those hoping for its denuclearisation “idiots”. US President Donald Trump said in August that North Korea possessed 57 “very powerful” nuclear weapons, while South Korea has put the figure at between 80 and 120. — AFP

PALESTINIAN SHOTS DEAD ISRAELI IN THE WEST BANK

RAMALLAH: Violence flared in the occupied West Bank on Sunday when a suspected Palestinian gunman shot dead an Israeli man, police said, and Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian motorist who the military said was attempting to run them over. The gunman opened fire from his vehicle at Israelis gathered at a spring near the settlement of Neve Tzuf, near Ramallah, according to the Israeli military and police.

Medics who arrived at the scene of the shooting said they found a man in a car suffering from critical gunshot wounds. He was pronounced dead at hospital, police said. The gunman was located a few hours later at a hospital in Ramallah and arrested, police said.

Shortly after the shooting, the military said that its forces “eliminated” a Palestinian driver who had attempted a ramming attack on soldiers near the settlement of Ganim, further north in the West Bank. No soldiers were hurt, it said. Reuters was not able to immediately verify the soldiers’ account.

The West Bank violence has included a sharp rise in attacks by militant settlers on Palestinians, as well as sweeping Israeli military raids and Palestinian attacks on Israelis. — Reuters

FLAMES BATTLE

Forest fire hits tourists town in Andes



A massive forest fire was burning in central Colombia near the popular tourist town of Villa de Leyva. The flames were visible from the central square of the Andean town, known for its colonial architecture and cobblestone streets, which attracts more than a million tourists each year. Colombian President Abelardo de la Espriella posted on X: “We will deploy all state resources to fight this fire and protect its inhabitants, its heritage, and its natural wealth.” — AFP

SEARCH OPERATION

Indonesia recovers one from capsized ship



Indonesia’s search and rescue agency said on Sunday it had recovered one more victim from the wreck of a passenger ship that capsized and sank in the Java Sea last weekend. “The victim was found by divers during a search inside the ship’s hull,” the agency said, adding that the victim will be airlifted out for identification. The search and evacuation operation will be continued using divers and also air support, the agency said. — Reuters

TRAGIC ACCIDENT

Sudan mine collapse kills 10, injures 21



A gold mine collapsed in northern Sudan, killing at least 10 people and injuring 21 others, two survivors said on Sunday after overnight rescue efforts. Shafts of the Awmy mining area near Sudan’s border with Egypt collapsed on Saturday. By Sunday morning, “10 bodies had been recovered and 21 injured miners pulled out”, said one of the survivors who was working at the mine when it collapsed, requesting anonymity for security reasons. — AFP

TENSELECTIONS



Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party top candidate Stefan Evers votes during the state election in Berlin. — Reuters

MERZ UNDER PRESSURE AS TWO MORE STATES GO TO THE POLLS

SCHWERIN: German voters went to the polls on Sunday in two state elections that look likely to heap more pressure on struggling Chancellor Friedrich Merz, whose future has been in the balance since the far right’s triumph in another regional vote this month. The elections in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, a largely rural state in the formerly communist east, and the capital Berlin follow the September 6 election in Saxony-Anhalt, where the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) came close to the rare feat of winning an absolute majority.

Regional elections would not usually draw much interest outside Germany, but the AfD’s success in Saxony-Anhalt, which it sees as the first step towards winning federal elections due in 2029, has sent shock waves through Europe.

In just over a decade, the party, which wants to take tough action to deport foreigners with no right to stay in Germany, restore energy ties with Russia and quit the euro, has transformed itself from a fringe Eurosceptic movement to the country’s most popular party.

Opinion polls indicate it is unlikely to repeat its victory in Saxony-Anhalt. But they are both expected to underscore the advances it has made in recent years and raise fresh questions over the “firewall” strategy, under which the other main parties refuse to enter coalition agreements with it.

For Merz, whose approval ratings have plunged as low as 14%, according to the latest polls, the result was the most recent in a series of blows that have raised doubts in his conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party about whether he can continue to lead.

In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the CDU looks likely to suffer its worst-ever election result, with the most recent opinion poll by the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen on Friday putting it at just 6% and at risk of failing to clear the minimum threshold to enter the state parliament.

In Berlin, the Wahlen poll showed the far-left Left Party moving ahead of the CDU, threatening the conservative hold on the mayor’s office. Even in liberal Berlin, however, the AfD has made strong gains, moving into third place.

The poll put the Left Party on 22%, the CDU on 20%, the Greens on 15% and the SPD on 12%. The AfD sits on 18%, while the far-left BSW, the only party that has said it might work with the AfD, is just under the parliamentary threshold on 4%. — Reuters

LUXEMBOURG DEPLOYS DETECTION ASSETS FOLLOWING DRONE SIGHTINGS

BRUSSELS: Luxembourg’s government said on Sunday that additional detection assets have been deployed to strengthen airspace monitoring, after Luxembourg Airport temporarily suspended services late on Friday due to the sighting of drones. “To strengthen airspace monitoring and analysis capabilities, additional detection assets have been deployed, including resources provided by foreign partners,” the government said in a statement. “These supplementary systems have contributed to further consolidating airspace surveillance and contributed to a better assessment of the situation by the

competent authorities,” it added. The government also said that on Saturday evening police “received several reports concerning the suspected presence of drones within national airspace” but that “following verifications, no situation required an operational intervention by the authorities”. Luxembourg’s authorities launched an investigation after flight operations had been temporarily suspended on Friday evening following the visual sighting of “unidentified and unauthorised drones”. Prime Minister Luc Frieden told reporters on Saturday that his country had been “confronted with

something new for Luxembourg, the presence of potentially bigger drones in the Luxembourg airspace”. “We have observed this over the past few days, which led to the precautionary measure last night,” he said. On Sunday, Luxembourg’s government said its drone assessment cell is continuing work with partners to ensure monitoring of the situation. Luxembourg Airport said that it imposed the suspension as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of passengers, airline crews, airport personnel and aircraft. The airport did not provide details on the origin of the drones or say who was operating them. — Reuters

Ukraine launches biggest Moscow drone attacks

UKRAINE LAUNCHED what Moscow’s mayor called the biggest drone attack yet on the Russian capital on Sunday, as Russians voted on the final day of a parliamentary election that President Vladimir Putin has cast as a test of support for the war in Ukraine. The drone strikes killed two people in the Moscow region and two more in the Russian-held part of Ukraine’s Kherson region, including an election official, according to Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin and election authorities. A facility at Moscow’s oil refinery, which has been targeted before, was also damaged.

“The biggest attack by enemy drones has been repelled,” Sobyenin said on Telegram. “This unprecedented attack was clearly planned with the aim of disrupting the elections. The enemy did not succeed.”

The State Duma vote, the first since Russia launched its full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022, is expected to see the ruling United Russia party easily retain its dominance in a political system critics say does not tolerate dissent. The Kremlin is likely to present the outcome as evidence of public backing for Putin’s policies and for the war, now in its fifth year with no sign of ending soon.

The election authorities say the three days of voting have proceeded smoothly despite cyberattacks reported on Saturday. Turnout was at over 50% by early afternoon Moscow time, Interfax news agency reported, citing the Central Election Commission. Those who did run from the liberal Yabloko party, which has polled in the single digits in recent years but hoped to tap into



Emergency services personnel work in a damaged multi-storey residential building hit by a Ukrainian drone strike in Kotelniki in the Moscow region. — Reuters

The drone strikes killed two people in the Moscow region and two more in the Russian-held part of Ukraine’s Kherson region, including an election official. A facility at Moscow’s oil refinery, which has been targeted before, was also damaged

war fatigue, said they feared for their freedom after courts handed long jail terms to two senior party figures before the vote for comments about the conflict. Discrediting the army or spreading what authorities regard as fake news is punishable by lengthy prison sentences.

In a small act of defiance, Yabloko’s leader, Nikolai Rybakov, demonstrably spoiled his ballot paper, writing his party’s name and the slogan “For peace”. The Kremlin says national unity and some censorship are necessary during what it calls its special military operation in Ukraine. It casts the conflict — Europe’s deadliest since World War Two — as part of an existential struggle with a hostile West. Moscow says Ukrainian intelligence services and other enemies are stepping up efforts to stir unrest inside Russia. Russian electoral officials said

on Saturday that an online voting system in Moscow had come under cyberattack. Kyiv, which has suspended elections under martial law, has dismissed the Russian vote as a “pseudo election”. Putin on Friday also accused Ukraine of trying to interfere in the election, citing what he said was a Ukrainian strike that killed an election official in her home in the Russian-controlled part of Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia region on Tuesday.

Despite what experts see as the election’s predictable outcome, the NEST think-tank in Berlin, co-founded by Kremlin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky, whom Russian authorities have designated “a foreign agent”, said the vote could still produce awkward moments for the Kremlin at a time of economic strain. “The consequences of the war are increasingly being felt within the country, and accumulated anxiety and frustration may translate into votes for the systemic opposition parties that the Kremlin has allowed to remain on the ballot,” it said in a note.

The Communist party and the New People party could attract votes the authorities would prefer to go to United Russia. Both parties have consistently voted in line with United Russia on major issues. Putin said before the election that the vote would underline support for Russian troops fighting in Ukraine. “Your choice, and your will, will once again demonstrate that millions of people stand behind our soldiers, that we are a united people bound together by shared values, historical memory, and love for our homeland, and that no one will succeed in dividing or intimidating us,” said Putin. — Reuters

Oman, Armenia boost ties through trade, tourism and transport

This year, Armenia celebrates the 35th anniversary of independence. On September 21, 1991, the Armenian people voted to restore their independent statehood and reaffirm their right to freedom, sovereignty and self-determination. Despite the challenges and hardships of the past 35 years, Armenia continues its journey towards building a strong, democratic and prosperous state.

Today, amid profound geopolitical transformations, Armenia is adapting politically and economically to a rapidly changing world. These challenges remind Armenia that peace and stability are a shared responsibility, requiring international cooperation and mutual respect to ensure that all peoples can live and prosper in peace and dignity.

Guided by this vision, Armenia has prioritised relations with the Arab world, establishing diplomatic ties with all Arab states and close cooperation with the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council. These relations

Armenia and Oman are stepping up cooperation across trade, tourism and transport, with direct flights and stronger economic and cultural links on the agenda

are further strengthened by historic Armenian communities across the region, which have contributed to their societies for centuries and continue to serve as important bridges between peoples.

Notably, Oman was the first Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia in 1992, opening a new chapter in the centuries-old cultural and civilisational ties. A major milestone in the Armenian-Omani bilateral relations was the establishment of the resident Embassy of Armenia in Muscat last September, followed by its official opening on March 18, 2026 in the presence of the foreign ministers of the two countries.

Today, both the countries are actively expanding mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, agriculture, transport and logistics, information technologies, tourism, renewable energy, education and culture. These efforts are already producing tangible results. Bilateral trade has grown significantly



Armenia has prioritised relations with the Arab world, establishing diplomatic ties with all Arab states.

in recent months, with Armenian fruits entering the Omani market and further expansion of both trade volumes and product varieties expected to grow. Tourism is another promising area. Following the reciprocal removal of visa requirements, the next objective is to establish regular direct flights

between Armenia and Oman, further strengthening tourism and people-to-people contacts. Armenia is actively working with Oman on expanding cultural, scientific and educational cooperation through joint exhibitions, academic exchanges, research initiatives and cultural performances further enhancing ties between the societies and peoples. Relations between Armenia and Oman have always been founded on mutual respect, friendship and shared values of peaceful coexistence, tolerance and cooperation. Armenia has consistently supported efforts to promote peace and stability in the Middle East, while highly appreciating Oman’s important role in this regard.

Guided by the principles of peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness, Armenia has consistently worked to establish peace in the South Caucasus. Armenia is confident that its partners in the Gulf are also closely following initiatives aimed at expanding regional connectivity and infrastructure.

OPINION

A new world map reshapes how we see the globe



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

A RECENT near-unanimous vote in the United Nations to adopt a recalibrated world map hardly raised a few eyebrows, given the overstimulated world in which we live today. However, this adoption marks a large shift in the way that the globe can be viewed. It also points to how maps reveal equations of power, access and representation. The UN’s objective of “promoting map projections that more accurately reflect the true size of continents” is a long-standing demand from countries in Africa which felt, and could prove, that the relative size of their continent and of Europe was disproportionate. For the last 400 years, the Mercator map has been commonly used. This was a map created by a Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator in 1569 to aid European sailors who explored the ‘new lands’ and travelled across the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. For various technical reasons like reproducing the curvature of the globe on a flat surface, the areas near the equator seemed smaller than those in the north. This also made the poles seem stretched and larger than they really are. This map has been used for hundreds of years, and today’s digital maps also follow it.

The repercussions of disproportionate depiction of the globe are more than a drawing defect. They have consequences that include historical, economic and political fallout, which we continue to see today. An important effect of this traditional map is the psychological impact. For example, Africa is depicted as being similar in size to Greenland, while it is in fact 14 times bigger. According to experts, this reduced the importance of this large continent, its natural resources and its huge potential, reducing investments and opportunities. This is asserted by an official release by the United Nations which quoted Togo’s foreign minister Rober Dussey as saying: “Maps shape our understanding of the world. They guide education, nourish the imagination, and influence collective perceptions.” This ‘Equal Earth Map’, created by members of the African Union, has its own limitations, as it makes other parts of the globe seem small, especially the northern part of Russia. The use of this map is not mandatory, but just recommended, and may not make much difference to maps in textbooks and official documents. The important outcome of this discussion at the UN, however, is to reignite an interest in cartography and recognise how maps are more than visual representations of oceans, mountains and rivers.

The repercussions of disproportionate depiction of the globe are more than a drawing defect. They have consequences that include historical, economic and political fallout, which we continue to see today

The physical boundaries of countries change, largely because of political considerations, and most immediately, owing to environmental factors. In fact, the lines on a map are being literally re-drawn as boundaries of deserts end, frozen landmasses thaw and areas of tornado formation shift. Environmentalists suggest that the Tropic of Cancer is shifting, as increasing heat patterns make areas around it drier. The tropics, known for lush vegetation and incessant rain, are now getting drier and less green, perhaps needing a redefinition of the term. The Sahara Desert, easily spotted on the map, has also increased by 10 per cent since the 1920s, although this has yet to be officially marked. This is in addition to the information we already have about the permafrost in the Arctic and Antarctica thawing, creating more water bodies than mountains. The environmental impact of these changes in the direction of rivers has been recently felt in the disastrous flooding in Nepal, which was the result of breaking glaciers far up in the Himalayas. Perhaps the only takeaway from this is that the world map, like so much else in the world today, is more than a static entity and is subject to all the political, economic and environmental stressors that are indicative of this century.

ZIMBABWE FARMERS EYE BLUEBERRY BOOM

MARY TARUVINGA

Under the morning sun, women moved briskly through neat rows of bushes, plucking blueberries for Zimbabwe’s export market thrown wide open by new trade deals with China. Managers of the Forrester Estates farm about 100 kilometres north of Harare want to more than double their planting area to 50 hectares next year to capitalise on the booming demand. “The funding, that’s the problem,” farm manager Albert Chakala said. The southern African country dispatched its first shipment of blueberries to China in July after a phytosanitary agreement signed a year ago and Beijing’s scrapping of tariffs on imports from 53 African countries in May. “The crop that we have is not enough to satisfy our market,” Chakala said. Each new hectare of blueberries requires an upfront investment of between \$50,000 and \$55,000, mainly for irrigation, planting material and other infrastructure, he said. Lack of access to affordable finance is one of the biggest barriers to growth for many of Zimbabwe’s farmers, according to the Horticultural Development Council (HDC), which represents growers and exporters. Yet, the promise of new global markets clashes sharply with Zimbabwe’s ongoing monetary realities, where a scarcity of foreign exchange routinely leaves farmers unable to fund the very expansion needed to meet demand. “We are expanding bit by bit, according to what we are getting back from what we sell,” Chakala said. Zimbabwean blueberries already reach European, British and Middle Eastern markets, but China - one of the world’s largest consumers of the fruit widely promoted for its purported health benefits - offers a potentially transformative new destination for the farmers who can afford to scale up. Zimbabwe is Africa’s third-largest blueberry producer after Morocco and South Africa, and one of the world’s fastest-growing blueberry producers, according to the HDC. This year, the industry expects to export about 12,000 tonnes from around 850 hectares, up from 9,500 tonnes produced from 650 hectares last year, CEO Linda Nielsen said in a statement in June. To support growth to meet the potential offered by China’s hunger for blueberries, the sector was engaging with the government over more competitive export financing. — AFP

Oman rediscovers its place in the world

YEARS ago, the Oman daily newspaper argued in an editorial that the Sultanate of Oman should look east when building its economic and strategic partnerships. The idea was based on the need to rethink the map: countries, like individuals, can remain tied to familiar paths even after their interests and the world around them have changed. Asia was, and remains, a logical choice for Oman as it seeks to diversify its sources of income and move beyond an economic model long dependent on oil. Asia offers emerging economies and vast, diverse markets, while Oman has centuries of trade and interaction with the continent across the Indian Ocean. Today, however, the same map that points Oman eastwards also points south and west towards Africa. The recent visits of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Botswana and Angola should therefore be viewed as part of an emerging Omani economic direction. They suggest a deliberate attempt to broaden Oman’s economic horizons and seek partners, markets and opportunities beyond the circles in which its trade and investment have traditionally been concentrated. Africa should no longer be viewed through the old stereotype of a continent defined simply by untapped natural resources, poverty and political instability. There is no single ‘African economy’. The continent comprises more than 50 countries with widely differing political and economic experiences, rapidly expanding cities, growing markets and



ASIM AL SHAIDI

The author is the Editor-in-Chief of Oman Arabic

Asia remains a logical choice for Oman as it seeks to diversify its sources of income and move beyond an economic model long dependent on oil

enormous infrastructure needs. At a time when growth is slowing in parts of the developed world, many African countries are still building economies that require capital, energy, ports, technology, services and modern management expertise. Oman’s approach, at its best, is based on long-term relationships and balanced interests rather than political influence or unilateral gain. Oman neither seeks spheres of political influence through its economic strategy nor wishes to enter the rivalries of major powers. What suits its character better is building partnerships in which both sides see tangible benefits. Such an approach could prove particularly valuable in Africa. This also corresponds with Oman’s own economic needs. An economy seeking to reduce its dependence on oil cannot remain confined within national borders. It needs new markets, overseas investments and companies capable of competing in different environments. This direction also restores the Indian Ocean to its rightful place in Omani economic thinking. We have perhaps grown too accustomed to viewing Oman solely through the Gulf. Seen from the sea, however, another Oman emerges — one whose history was shaped by interaction with India, East Africa and the wider Indian Ocean world. Muscat, Suhar, Qalhat and the ports of Dhofar once belonged to an economic space far broader than the Arabian Peninsula. Oman’s relationship with Africa gives this vision particular historical depth. Omani engagement with East Africa was once extensive economically, politically and socially, reaching its height when Zanzibar became a centre of government

under Sayyid Said bin Sultan. Invoking that history today, however, should not mean attempting to recreate its political model. Its value lies in reminding us of the depth of Omani-African connections and of an era when the Indian Ocean, before modern borders were drawn, formed a shared space for commerce, migration and human exchange. Botswana and Angola may also represent the beginning of a new reading of Africa. Significantly, Oman’s recent engagement has moved towards southern Africa rather than concentrating solely on East Africa, where its historical ties are strongest. This suggests that contemporary interests are following opportunity rather than history — and that is a healthy sign. Good economic policy benefits from history without becoming its prisoner. Political will has opened the door through high-level visits, agreements and memoranda of understanding. But these are only the beginning. The next stage requires Oman to develop much deeper knowledge of African markets, regulations, risks and opportunities. Old stereotypes about Africa remain present in the minds of many Omani investors and must be replaced by informed economic understanding. Years ago, ‘looking east’ was about expanding Oman’s economic horizons. Perhaps the idea must now become broader: Oman needs to rediscover its entire geographical position.

Translated by Badr al Dhafri
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The school that never closes...



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and
communications
professional

WE SPEND years being told to go to school. We wake up early, carry a bag, sit in a classroom, listen to the teacher, study for the examination and then graduate. After all this, one day, we leave the school gates behind, but that was never the end of our education. What if the most important school is the one that has no classrooms, no textbooks, no timetable, and no graduation ceremony?

Life is a school that never closes. We learn our first lessons long before we know what the word learning means. A child watches a parent and learns how to speak, how to behave, how to care and how to respond to the world. They fall while learning to walk and discover that falling does not mean staying on the ground, so they try again.

Perhaps that is our first lesson in resilience. As we grow older, the teachers change. A friend may teach us the meaning of loyalty, a stranger may teach us kindness, a difficult colleague may teach us patience, a demanding manager may teach us responsibility, and a difficult decision may teach us courage.

And sometimes, our greatest teacher is a mistake we desperately wish we had never made. There is no textbook for learning how to overcome disappointment. No examination prepares us for losing someone we love. No certificate teaches us how to

make difficult decisions, rebuild after failure, forgive, lead, adapt or find courage when we are afraid.

Yet somehow, life teaches us all of these things. In fact, learning does not end when school ends. It simply takes a different form. Life itself becomes the classroom.

Every stage brings a new lesson, and every experience leaves something behind. Sometimes it gives us knowledge; sometimes wisdom. Sometimes it changes what we know, and sometimes it changes who we are.

Our first job teaches us that knowledge alone is not enough, but we must also learn how to work with people, communicate, take responsibility and deal with challenges. A difficult project teaches us perseverance; a mistake teaches us to pay attention to details; a failed attempt teaches us that the first answer is not always the right one.

Becoming responsible for others teaches us that leadership is not about having authority, but about having the courage to support, guide and sometimes put others before ourselves.

A lesson can describe failure, but losing something we worked hard for teaches us how disappointment feels and how to begin again. We may study time management, but managing a job, a family, responsibilities and unexpected problems teaches us what it really means to value time.

One of life’s greatest surprises is that our teachers do not always look like teachers. Sometimes they are people who have lived longer than us and generously share their wisdom. Sometimes they are younger people who introduce us to a completely different way of thinking

One of life’s greatest surprises is that our teachers do not always look like teachers. Sometimes they are people who have lived longer than us and generously share their wisdom. Sometimes they are younger people who introduce us to a completely different way of thinking. Sometimes they are people we meet only once!

A conversation with an elderly person can teach us about patience and perspective. A child can remind us how curiosity works. A colleague can introduce us to an idea we had never considered. Even someone with whom we disagree can teach us that the world does not have to be seen through only one pair of eyes. The lesson is not always in what people tell us. Sometimes it is in watching how they live.

Lifelong learning is not necessarily about collecting certificates or degrees. It can be as simple as learning how to listen better, becoming more patient, understanding another culture, developing a new skill, reading a book, trying something unfamiliar or admitting, “I don’t know, but I would like to learn.”

When we begin to look at life this way, ordinary moments become extraordinary classrooms. Life is the school, experience is the curriculum, people are the teachers and every day is another lesson.

PACKING FOR A POPE... BEHIND THE SCENES ON FOREIGN TRIPS

CLÉMENT MELKI

Papal trips mean vast crowds, high-level diplomatic meetings and a formidable amount of behind-the-scenes preparation, from delicately balanced agendas to complex security protection for the head of the Catholic Church.

Pope Leo XIV’s visit to France from September 25 to 28, which includes events at the Notre-Dame Cathedral and the Champs-Élysées, will involve some 15,000 members of the security forces.

The groundwork for this visit — the first papal trip to Paris since 2008 — was laid well before it was officially announced.

Countries invite the pope, but whether or not he visits is based on a range of pastoral and political considerations.

The complex decision “depends heavily on the international context”, a Vatican source said.

The Vatican takes into account social and political circumstances, from conflicts to humanitarian crises, as well as the situation of the local church and the history of previous visits.

But each pope has his own wish list and the choice of destinations also reflects the papacy’s geopolitical priorities.

For example, “John Paul II travelled extensively to eastern European countries to denounce Communism,” the source said.

In his 12 years as pontiff, the Argentinian Pope Francis favoured the “peripheries” of the Church, from Iraq to Mongolia and Papua New Guinea, while US-born Leo seems more inclined towards Europe and major international institutions.

Since the Vatican does not have an official aircraft, the Holy See charters a commercial plane from Italian national airline ITA for the outbound journey, while the return flight is generally operated by the host country.

On board, the pope occupies seat 1A, at the front left of the cabin. Beside him, in seats bearing the Holy See coat of arms, sit cardinals, his private secretaries, and a doctor.

Dressed in dark suits and ties, some 40 officers from the Vatican Gendarmerie and Swiss Guard provide close protection. In the rear of the cabin travel the media: approximately 80 journalists, photographers and cameramen.

Media outlets pay for their correspondents’ tickets, which generally cost several thousand euros. On the outbound journey, the pope walks down the plane, greeting the journalists individually. He sometimes shares a few personal anecdotes and some correspondents give him presents - from football shirts to food.

On the return trip, the pontiff holds one of the most closely watched press conferences in the world: a sky-high briefing at 10,000 metres in a cabin cluttered with cameras, microphones and tripods. The luggage includes the pope’s personal belongings, speeches prepared weeks in advance, and security equipment.

“Everything has to be meticulously planned, almost down to the second.” — AFP

On religion... who gets to interpret it?

RELIGION

IN our societies has never been a matter of belief alone. For much of our history, it was one of the languages through which society understood itself: family, authority, property, obedience, justice. It told people where they stood in relation to others, what was theirs, and what was owed of them.

Nor did religion belong to one political camp. Rulers invoked it, and so did those who rebelled against them. Conservatives appealed to it; reformers did too. Some found in it a duty to obey. Others found a duty to resist injustice. The argument, often, was not between religion and its opposite, but within religion itself. What does justice require? Who deserves obedience? Where does a ruler’s authority end? When does dissent become sedition, and when does silence become a sin?

Religion, then, did not give society a single answer. It also provided the language in which answers were contested.

With the modern state came another source of legitimacy. The individual — with rights, freedoms and interests — became a basis on which law could justify itself without deriving every rule from religion. Equality, for instance, could stand as a principle in its own right.

But this did not enter an empty space. It entered societies with settled ideas about family, guardianship, obedience and duty; about what was permitted and forbidden. The new did not simply replace the old. The two came to operate together. Sometimes they agree. Sometimes they pull in opposite directions. At times they inhabit the same law.

The Sultanate of Oman offers a clear example.

The country’s Basic Law makes justice, equality and equal opportunity pillars of society. It states that the state guarantees equality between women and men, and that citizens are equal in public rights and duties.

Yet Oman’s Personal Status Law approaches marriage from a different premise. It makes the guardian part of the marriage contract. A woman’s guardian



HAMED S
AL GHAITHI

The writer
is an Omani
evolutionary
biologist, translator
and editor

concludes the contract on her behalf, whereas an adult man of sound mind needs no guardian.

The tension is clearer when a guardian refuses to allow a woman to marry a man she has chosen. The remedy is not that she becomes her own guardian, as a man effectively is. In circumstances set out by law, guardianship may instead pass to the judiciary. The guardian’s authority can be limited or transferred. The principle itself remains.

This is where the matter becomes interesting.

On one side stands a modern civic principle: men and women are equal before the law. On the other stands a legal structure derived from jurisprudence in which a woman occupies a different position from a man in marriage. When the two meet, one does not always defeat the other. More often there is an accommodation. The religious concept survives; the way it is exercised is reorganised.

The same tension appears in Oman’s relationship with international law. The Sultanate of Oman acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but entered reservations concerning parts dealing with marriage and the family where it considered them inconsistent with Islamic law.

The point is not simply that the state has violated one principle or upheld another. What matters is that the state itself reveals two sources of legitimacy that do not always coincide: equality on one side, the Sharia on the other.

From this follows the question that interests me most: who has the right to interpret religion when society changes?

This is not merely a dispute over texts. Disagreement within religion is as old as religion itself. The harder question is which interpretation can become law. Which reading may a judge enforce, a legislator entrench, and the state make binding?

Once a matter moves from books of jurisprudence and social custom into statutory law and the courtroom, the state has done more than apply an old religious rule. The location of authority has changed. What once belonged, in part,

to the jurist, the family or the community now belongs, in part, to the judge, the legislature and the institution. The concept may keep its old name. But the person speaking in its name is no longer the same.

That is why the familiar opposition between religion and the state tells us less than we think.

A modern state may preserve a religious concept, reshape it, narrow its effects or enlarge them. Law can entrench an inherited rule, but it can also transform that rule from within. Religion does not stand entirely outside the state. Nor does the state stand entirely outside religion.

Part of the difficulty Arab thought has had with modernity may lie in the assumption that history moves in a straight line: religion recedes as the state advances; inherited forms weaken as the individual gains ground. History is rarely so tidy.

People’s lives may change while an old concept remains. A word may survive while its meaning shifts. Authority once exercised by a father, a guardian or a jurist may pass to the courts and the state, even while the argument used to justify it remains religious.

People’s circumstances also change faster than the concepts through which they understand them. A woman studies, works, owns property and participates in public life on the same footing as a man, then reaches one part of her life where the law approaches her through a different conception of her place.

The tension is not between two sealed worlds. It sits inside the same society, sometimes inside the same person.

So the most important question is not whether religion will survive or fade, or whether secularism will defeat it. Such questions reduce religion to a body of belief that expands or contracts. They miss its presence in the language through which societies understand what is permitted and forbidden, right and duty, justice and authority.

The more useful question is this: when people’s lives change, who has the authority to reinterpret the concepts that once ordered those lives — and which interpretation acquires the force of law?

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Al Nadabi crossed the finish line carrying the Omani flag after negotiating rugged mountain terrain in northern Vietnam.

Al Nadabi completes gruelling 100 km Sapa Ultra

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

Omani endurance runner Yaqoob bin Khalfan al Nadabi battled heavy rain, muddy trails and punishing climbs to complete the 100 km race at the Vietnam Mountain Marathon (VMM) in Sapa, adding another demanding international finish to his trail running career.

Al Nadabi crossed the finish line carrying the Omani flag after negotiating rugged mountain terrain in northern Vietnam, where slippery surfaces and steep gradients intensified the physical demands of the ultramarathon.

His journey took him through mountain villages, terraced farmland and remote trails, with wet conditions making an already challenging course more difficult. Completing the distance required sustained endurance and concentration across successive climbs and descents.

Organisers list the race's actual distance at approximately 101 km, with 5,500 metres of cumulative elevation gain. Starting in Sapa and finishing at Topas Ecolodge, the course crosses mountain ridges, valleys and bamboo forests, taking competitors through some of the region's most demanding terrain.

The challenge extends beyond covering the distance. Repeated ascents place considerable demands on endurance, while steep, slippery descents require careful footing and concentration. Entry requirements reflect the difficulty of the event, with runners required to have previously completed a timed mountain ultramarathon of at least 50 km with significant climbing.

The 13th edition of the Vietnam Mountain Marathon took place from September 17 to 20.

RED WARRIORS GEAR UP FOR GULF CUP 27

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

THE Oman national football team delegation will travel to Jeddah on Monday to participate in the 27th Gulf Cup, which will be held in Jeddah from September 23 to October 6. The delegation will be headed by Sayyid Sulaiman bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Chairman of the Oman Football Association, accompanied by Qutaiba bin Said al Ghailani, Vice-Chairman of the Association and General Supervisor of the national team.

The tournament features eight teams divided into two groups, with 15 matches to be played at King Abdullah Sports City and Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Sports City Stadium.

Oman's national football team intensified preparations at King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah ahead of the opener against Iraq on Wednesday.

The coaching staff focused on improving understanding among the players, while tactical sessions on quick passing and movement in tight spaces aimed to help the team find solutions under pressure.

Meanwhile, the Gulf Football Federation has announced 77 prizes for fans attending the Gulf Cup 27, including 75 iPhones and two BYD cars.

Tickets will automatically be entered into electronic draws after each match, provided holders enter the stadium and register their tickets before the end of the 10th minute.

More than 350 volunteers are supporting the organisation across fan services, crowd management, media, protocol, transportation and stadium operations.

Omani officials are well-represented at Gulf Cup 27, with Qutaiba al Ghailani serving on the Competitions Committee, Ibrahim al Hosni on the Referees Committee, Dr Hamad Al Hadhrami on the Appeals Committee, Ali al Khanbashi on the Technical Studies Committee and Mustafa al Hosni serving as a Match Commissioner.

An Omani refereeing team, led by international referee Qasim al Hatmi and assisted by Hamad al Ghafri and Nasser Ambusaidi, will also take part in the tournament.

Oman will be aiming for a third Gulf Cup crown after winning the title in 2009 on home soil and again in 2017 in Kuwait. Hosts Saudi Arabia will target a fourth



The Gulf Football Federation has announced 77 prizes for fans attending the Gulf Cup 27, including 75 iPhones and two BYD cars.

Gulf Cup title on home soil. The hosts have previously won the tournament three times, in 1994, 2002 and 2003, and will look to make the most of home advantage.

Record champions Kuwait enter the tournament seeking an 11th title. The Blue Wave have lifted the Gulf Cup 10 times, with their most recent triumph coming in 2010.

Iraq will seek their fifth Gulf Cup title after their latest triumph in 2023 when they hosted the tournament in Basra. With four titles, Iraq are the second-most successful team in the competition's history.

Qatar will target a fourth Gulf Cup title after previous triumphs in 1992, 2004 and

2014.

Defending champions Bahrain will aim to retain the trophy after securing their second Gulf Cup title in the previous edition. They will face Qatar, the UAE and Yemen in Group B.

The UAE will be looking to revive their Gulf Cup campaign and challenge for a third title. The Emirati side previously won the trophy in 2007 on home soil and in 2013 in Bahrain.

Yemen enter the tournament with renewed ambitions after securing their first-ever Gulf Cup victory in the previous edition, beating Bahrain 2-1. They will seek another milestone in a demanding Group B campaign.

Oman Club Centre win Handball Development Festival

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

Oman Club Handball Development Centre were crowned champions of the 2026 Handball Development Centres Festival after defeating Nizwa 16-11 in the final held on Saturday at the auxiliary hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Organised by the Oman Handball Association (OHA) through its Development Centres Committee, the festival brought together seven centres representing Oman Club, Nizwa, Seeb, Ibri, Al Shabab, Sohar and Yanqul.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Jaber bin Mohammed al Shabibi, Director of the National Teams Affairs Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), in the presence of Salim bin Mohammed al Saadi, Oman



Oman Club players celebrate after being crowned champions of the 2026 Handball Development Centres Festival in Boshier. — Ammar al Musafir

Handball Association board member and chairman of the Development Centres Committee, along with committee members and representatives of the participating centres.

The teams were divided into two groups. Group One included Oman Club, Al Shabab, Yanqul and Ibri, while Group Two featured Seeb, Sohar and Nizwa. Oman Club and Al Shabab progressed from the first group, with Seeb and Nizwa advancing from the second.

Oman Club and Nizwa eventually reached the final,

where Oman Club secured the title with a 16-11 victory. Al Shabab finished third after Seeb withdrew from the third-place play-off.

Several individual awards were also presented during the closing ceremony. Oman Club's Yahya bin Ahmed al Riyami was named Best Goalkeeper, while Majid bin Ayyad al Maashari won the Best Playmaker award. Aseel Khalid, also from Oman Club, received the Best Left Back award.

Seeb's Nawaf bin Adil was named Best Right Back, while his teammate Mulham al Balushi won the Best Pivot award. Oman Club's Qais bin Salim al Wahibi was named Best Right Wing, with Seeb's Omar bin Younis al Busaidi receiving the Best Left Wing award.

The festival also recognised the referees who officiated the matches and honoured all participating centres.

The event was organised to develop young players, identify

promising talent and strengthen their technical and sporting abilities. It also gave players valuable competitive experience and provided coaches with an opportunity to assess their progress and identify players for possible selection to the Development Centres national team.

Al Shabibi praised the players' technical and physical performances, highlighting their enthusiasm and desire to improve.

“We were pleased with the good technical and physical levels we witnessed, as well as the enthusiasm and strong desire among the players to develop their skills,” he said.

He added that the centres represent “an important foundation for building a new generation of handball players”, describing the participants as “a genuine nucleus for the future of clubs and national teams”.

SHORT TAKES



Oman Volleyball team in a match during West Asian event

AL MAAMARI
SELECTED FOR FIVB
COACHING COURSE

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

Omani national coach and international lecturer Jamal bin Mohammed al Maamari has been selected by the FIVB (International Volleyball Federation) to deliver the FIVB Level 1 Coaches Course in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), marking a significant milestone in his coaching career and another recognition of Omani expertise in volleyball development.

The five-day coaching course will be held in Abu Dhabi from Monday and will run until Friday (September 25), bringing together 35 participants seeking to develop their coaching knowledge and qualifications under the FIVB coaching education programme. The assignment represents al Maamari's first international engagement as an FIVB lecturer following an accomplished career on the court and on the sidelines, during which he has achieved notable results with clubs and national teams at various levels.

Throughout his coaching career, al Maamari has coached several Omani clubs, including Al Salam, Majees and Seeb, achieving success in domestic and international competitions. He also worked with Oman's national teams across different age categories, in addition to the senior national team. A notable milestone in his career came with his first professional coaching experience abroad with Al Ain Club in the UAE, where he guided the team to the UAE Cup title, marking his first major achievement as a professional coach outside Oman.

Speaking to Oman Observer, coach Jamal said that the FIVB Level 1 Coaches Course in Abu Dhabi will combine theoretical lectures and practical sessions.

"The course will provide the participants with a comprehensive foundation in modern volleyball coaching methods. The course is designed to equip coaches with the technical knowledge and practical skills required to keep pace with the latest developments in volleyball and the evolving demands of the coaching profession," he added

"This also will reflect the experience I had managed to accumulate through years of coaching, education and professional development, as well as my involvement in the development of volleyball players and teams in Oman," he added. A career built on continuous development Al Maamari is a graduate of Sultan Qaboos University, where he studied Education with a specialisation in English Language.



JAMAL
AL MAAMARI
Omani
national
coach and
international
lecturer

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

The Wilayat of Ibri is gearing up to host the Oman Skate Ball Tournament 2026, bringing together 10 national teams for three days of competition at the Ibri Sports Club Indoor Hall from September 23 to 25.

Organised by the Oman Skating Sports Committee under the supervision of the World Skate Ball Federation, the tournament will feature around 100 players representing Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, Iran, India, Pakistan, Belarus and Poland.

The international line-up gives the tournament a broad geographical reach, with teams

from Asia, Africa and Europe competing in the fast-paced sport, which combines skating speed with passing, shooting and tactical team play.

A team of certified international and Omani referees will officiate the matches, while 20 administrators and 20 volunteers will support the organisational and operational requirements of the event. The official opening ceremony will take place at 10 am on September 23 under the auspices of Tahir bin Mabkhout al Junaibi, Governor of Al Dhahirah. The opening will be followed by the first round of group-stage matches, with the competition continuing through the final rounds and awards ceremony



The tour aims to introduce the participants to Oman's deep-rooted history and rich cultural heritage.

on September 25. Khalil bin Eid al Waili, head of the tournament's media committee, said the event represented an important step in the development of skate

ball in the Sultanate of Oman. "Hosting 10 national teams in Ibri reflects the steady growth of skate ball in Oman and the confidence of our international partners in the country's

organisational capabilities. The tournament is not only about competition; it will also give Omani players valuable exposure to different schools of play and allow visiting delegations to experience Al Dhahirah's heritage and the warmth of Omani hospitality," Al Waili said.

He added that the tournament would support efforts to attract more young people to skating disciplines while strengthening sporting and cultural ties between Oman and the participating countries.

The organising committee is also scheduled to hold a pre-tournament press conference attended by Ahmed Hassan Taelib, President of the World Skate Ball Federation; Eng

Saud bin Nasser al Aufi, Chairman of the Oman Skating Sports Committee; media representatives and officials from the participating delegations.

The press conference will outline the technical regulations, competition format and organisational arrangements, as well as the teams' preparations ahead of the opening matches.

Participating teams and international delegations have begun arriving in the Sultanate of Oman ahead of the tournament. The group-stage contests will begin immediately after the opening ceremony, leading to the final rounds and the crowning of the 2026 champions on September 25.

Pakistan leads tent pegging
qualifier, Oman is third

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

PAKISTAN CLAIMED first place in the second competition round of the World Cup Qualifying Tournament for Tent Pegging 'Oman 2026 - Group C' on Saturday, with Iran finishing second and hosts Oman taking third place.

The championship is being held at the Al Wattayah Equestrian Arena of the Royal Oman Police Mounted Unit, and is organised by the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation under the supervision of the International Tent Pegging Federation.

The qualifying tournament has brought together national teams competing for places at the Tent Pegging World Cup, with riders seeking strong results across a demanding programme that combines speed, accuracy, coordination and horsemanship.

Saturday's second round began at 7 pm and featured a programme centred on sword events, including the Individual Sword, Pairs Sword and Teams Sword competitions.

The Individual Sword competition was contested over one round using a six-centimetre peg. The Pairs Sword event consisted of two rounds, beginning with a six-centimetre peg before moving to a four-centimetre target in the second round.

The Teams Sword competition was conducted over three rounds. The first round used a six-centimetre peg, while the second and third rounds required riders to tackle four-centimetre targets, placing greater demands on precision and concentration.

Pakistan produced a strong performance throughout the day's competitions to secure first place in the second round, while Iran finished runner-up. Oman completed the podium in third place, giving the hosts a positive result on home ground.

The second-round results add further interest to the qualification battle, with the participating teams aiming to maintain consistency across the different disciplines and secure strong positions as the championship progresses.

Oman is represented by five riders: Hamad bin Saif al Raisi, Hamad bin Nasser al Riyami, Nasser bin Rashid al Siyabi, Waleed bin Zahir al Shraiqi and Hisham bin Ali al Bakri.

The national team is managed by Mohammed bin Salim al Maliki, with Hilal bin Hassan al Balushi serving as coach. Obaid bin Lahiq al Quraini is the team coordinator, while Khamis bin Khada Bakhsh al Balushi is responsible for team affairs.

The competition at the Al Wattayah arena provides the riders with an opportunity to test their skills against international opposition in a demanding format that requires precise timing and close coordination between rider and horse.

For Oman, the third-place finish in the second round keeps the hosts involved in the qualification contest as the championship



A shot of the Pakistani national team players at the World Cup qualifying tournament for tent pegging.



A group photo of the top three finishers from the second round of the championship.

continues. The national team will look to build on its performance in the remaining competitions and strengthen its position in the qualification campaign.

The staging of the Group C qualifier in Oman also highlights the country's continued involvement in international

tent pegging and its role in hosting major equestrian events.

The sport combines traditional horsemanship with speed, accuracy and technical skill, requiring riders to maintain control of their horses while accurately striking the targets.

10 nations to compete in Ibri Skate Ball Tournament from Sept 23

SPORTS

SPAINDERBY



Atletico Madrid’s Canadian forward,Jonathan David celebrates scoring his team’s second goal. — AFP

ATLETICO MADRID
BEAT REAL MADRID
2-1 IN TENSE CLASH

MADRID: Atletico Madrid edged 10-man Real Madrid 2-1 in a La Liga derby clash on Sunday to leave Jose Mourinho’s side trailing leaders Barcelona by six points.

Dean Huijsen was sent off early in the second half for Los Blancos before Alejandro Grimaldo and Jonathan David’s goals earned Diego Simeone’s Atletico victory, with Antonio Rudiger pulling one back late on.

Atletico rose to second, five points behind Barca and one ahead of Real Madrid, who chalked up a second defeat of the campaign.

The game hinged on Huijsen’s red card early in the second period, for pulling down Giuliano Simeone in the box which led to a penalty, tucked away by Grimaldo to set Atletico on their way.

Mourinho started with Aurelien Tchouameni in midfield over Bernardo Silva, opting for defensive clout over creativity.

There was more tension than footballing quality in the first half, with neither side capable of creating any clear chances.

The main talking point was an incident between Jude Bellingham and Atletico defender Cristian Romero.

The England international threw himself into a tackle and Romero trod on his leg, with Bellingham booked initially, but after a VAR review the referee removed the card and issued it to the Atletico man.

Madrid were also unhappy with a heavy tackle by Lee Kang-in on Federico Valverde which went unpunished just before half-time.

It was a scrappy battle, intense but lacking excitement comparative to the star power on the pitch, especially in Madrid’s front line, with Vinicius Junior, Kylian Mbappe and Bellingham kept quiet.

The game burst into life early in the second half when Huijsen pulled back Giuliano Simeone’s arm as the forward ran through on goal and Atletico were awarded a penalty.

Huijsen was dismissed after a VAR review and Grimaldo beat Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois from the penalty spot.

Mourinho reacted immediately by replacing the underwhelming Vinicius and Arda Guler and sending on club record signing Yan Diomande and Rudiger.

It was Atletico who struck next, though, with Canada international David tucking away Giuliano Simeone’s raking low cross on 59 minutes for his third goal in three matches.

The hosts came close to getting a third but Courtois made an excellent save to deny Julian Alvarez and Ibrahima Konate reacted brilliantly to head Grimaldo’s effort from the rebound off the line.

Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak saved from Diomande and Bellingham rowed with Giuliano Simeone as Madrid’s frustrations showed, impotent to change the course of the game.

Madrid pulled a goal back in the final stages with Rudiger heading Bernardo Silva’s cross past Oblak. However, it was too little too late for Mourinho’s side. — AFP



Real Madrid’s Kylian Mbappe in action with Atletico Madrid’s Giuliano Simeone and Marcos Llorente. — REUTERS



Oman have been drawn in Group B with Malaysia and Hong Kong, China, with the top two advancing to the quarterfinals.

Oman’s Asian Games
campaign opens with
volleyball, shooting

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

OMAN’S national teams continue their campaign at the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 on Monday, with the men’s 10m Air Rifle qualifiers and the opening beach volleyball match taking centre stage.

Hamed bin Said al Khatri and Khalid bin Mohammed al Kalbani will compete in the men’s 10m Air Rifle qualification at 9.45 am Japan local time (4.45 am Muscat time). Oman B, represented by Ahmed al Hosni and Khalfan al Maamari, will begin its beach volleyball campaign against Thailand at the Hekinan Ryokuchi Beach Court at 3 pm local time (10 am Muscat time).

The pair will later face Iran and Timor-Leste on September 23 and 26 respectively as they seek a positive start and a place in the next round.

Oman Olympic Committee Secretary-General Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakhalef said the national teams had arrived with “legitimate ambitions” and a determination to reflect the progress of Omani sport.

“Oman’s participation confirms its commitment to an effective presence at continental and international sporting events and to strengthening the standing of Omani sport within the Asian Olympic Movement,” he said.



Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakhalef, OOC Secretary-General

Bamakhalef added that the Games offered Omani athletes valuable competition against Asia’s best, while helping them gain experience, improve performance and assess the progress made through previous preparation programmes.

He said the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) and national sports associations had provided training camps, warm-up events and technical, physical and psychological support. Early-arrival camps in Japan had also helped the hockey and sailing teams adapt to local conditions.

“Our ambitions are not limited to medals. Participation is also about developing

athletes, gaining experience, setting personal bests and building a stronger foundation for future competitions,” he added.

Bamakhalef said Oman’s appearance at the opening ceremony carried sporting, cultural and national significance.

“Raising the Omani flag reflects our pride in our national identity and Asian belonging. An Omani athlete represents not only himself or his sport, but also his country, people and culture.”

In Sunday’s women’s 10m Air Rifle qualification at the Aichi Prefectural General Shooting Range, Al Anoud al Khalili finished 43rd with 619.3 points, while Amina al Tarshi placed 49th with 614.9.

China’s Wang Zifei led qualification with 636.8 points, ahead of South Korea’s Ban Hyojin on 634.9 and India’s Sonam Uttam Maskar on 634.1.

Meanwhile, Olympic Council of Asia President Shaikh Joaan bin Hamad al Thani, and International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry visited the Oman delegation to review administrative arrangements and athletes’ requirements.

Oman’s weightlifting and cricket teams are due to arrive on Monday, while the fencing squad reached Japan on Sunday. The men’s cricket team will make its historic Asian Games debut after qualifying alongside Nepal, Malaysia and Hong Kong, China.

Oman have been drawn in Group B with Malaysia and Hong Kong, China, with the top two advancing to the quarterfinals.

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BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



Based on the IPO figures, a 5 per cent stake would amount to about 260 million shares.

MORE ASYAD SHIPPING SHARES HEADING TO MARKET

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

Asyad Group expects to sell at least 5 per cent more of Asyad Shipping Company before the second anniversary of the company's stock market listing, lifting its public free float to the 25 per cent regulatory minimum.

In a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange, Asyad Shipping said the sale remains subject to market conditions and approval from the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

The company is consulting the regulator on the options and timing. The commitment stems from a dispensation the FSA granted at the time of the company's 2025 initial public offering. Asyad Group SAOC sold 1,041,748,856 shares to the public, equal to 20 per cent of issued share capital. That was below the 25 per cent minimum free float that would otherwise have applied.

The regulator allowed the IPO to proceed on the understanding that a further 5 per cent would be offered later.

Asyad Shipping said it expects the requirement to be met before the second anniversary of its MSX listing on March 12, 2025.

Based on the IPO figures, a 5 per cent stake would amount to about 260 million shares.

The filing did not say how the shares would be offered, whether through a secondary public offering, a private placement or another route. It also gave no indication of pricing.

The company said it would update the market when there is material development in this regard.

The listing formed part of Oman Investment Authority's divestment programme.

MSX advances towards Emerging Market status

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

MUSCAT Stock Exchange (MSX) is entering a new phase of development as improvements in liquidity, accessibility, investability and market infrastructure bring Oman progressively closer to the standards associated with Emerging Market status, according to its chief executive.

Haitham al Salmi, CEO of MSX, said the evolution of a capital market from Frontier to Emerging Market begins well before an international index provider formally changes its classification.

"A market begins to transform long before its classification changes", Al Salmi said in an opinion piece published on September 16.

"This happens gradually — as accessibility improves, liquidity deepens, governance standards evolve, the investable environment expands and international investors increasingly view the market as part of the global investment opportunity set".

His comments come amidst growing attention to Oman's potential progression towards Emerging Market classification following five years of capital-market reforms and development initiatives.

Al Salmi said MSX's transformation has focused on modernising market infrastructure, improving investor accessibility, strengthening governance and disclosure, supporting liquidity, broadening

Recent analysis by Oman Investment Bank found that Oman currently satisfies five eligibility tests assessed by the institution in relation to potential FTSE Russell Emerging Market classification, including requirements concerning qualifying securities, investable market capitalisation, liquidity and qualitative market criteria.



Haitham al Salmi, CEO of MSX.

the investor base and creating conditions conducive to new listings and investment instruments.

Recent analysis by Oman Investment Bank found that Oman currently satisfies five eligibility tests assessed by the institution in relation to potential FTSE Russell Emerging Market classification, including requirements concerning qualifying securities, investable market capitalisation, liquidity and qualitative market criteria.

Al Salmi cautioned that the assessment is independent and that any formal classification decision rests with the relevant international index provider.

Nevertheless, he said the findings illustrate how far the Omani market has progressed structurally, arguing that international classification should be viewed as the outcome of sustained market development rather than an objective in itself.

"International recognition is undoubtedly important. Ultimately, however, classification should be the result and not the sole objective, of market development", he said.

An Emerging Market upgrade could potentially raise Oman's visibility among international institutional investors and broaden the pool of global capital tracking the market.

Al Salmi noted that this process can begin even before formal reclassification as institutional investors monitor markets approaching international benchmarks.

MSX is consequently turning its attention towards the next stage of growth: attracting more listings, expanding sector representation, deepening liquidity, diversifying investment instruments and drawing greater volumes of long-term domestic and international institutional capital.

The exchange also sees a growing role for Oman's capital market in connecting the Sultanate of Oman's economic diversification programme with global investors, particularly as emerging industries and expanding companies seek capital to finance growth.

"It is not simply about moving from one classification to another", Al Salmi said. "It is about building a capital market that reflects the scale of Oman's economic ambitions". For MSX, he added, international recognition would therefore represent both validation of reforms already undertaken and a platform for a new phase of market depth, competitiveness and institutional participation.

Bankable projects, verifiable data key to Oman's green finance push

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

The Gulf does not lack capital for climate investment as much as it lacks a deeper pipeline of projects that meet international investors' requirements, according to sustainability executive Arooshi Dahiya.

"The pipeline problem in the Gulf isn't capital — it's bankable, investment-grade projects", Dahiya, CEO of sustainability technology company Oren, said following her participation in Oman Climate Week.

She said Oman has strong sovereign commitment and genuine resource advantages, particularly in solar energy and green hydrogen, but international investors require a track record of properly structured and de-risked transactions before committing capital at scale.

Dahiya identified stronger local project-preparation facilities, blended-finance structures that allow concessional capital to absorb early-stage risk and a consistent green taxonomy among the measures that could help investors compare an Omani green asset with opportunities in Europe or Southeast Asia on comparable terms.

Her comments followed a September 15 Oman Climate Week panel on mobilising climate finance for a resilient and low-carbon future. The official programme placed financing gaps, public and private capital, green investment, blended



Stronger project preparation, risk-sharing structures and auditable climate data could help turn Oman's green investment potential into larger flows of international capital.

AROOSHI DAHIYA
CEO - Oren

finance, bankable projects and adaptation finance at the centre of the discussion. The panel also included representatives of Muscat Stock Exchange, the World Bank Group and Development Bank; and was moderated by the Green Climate Fund.

The issue is becoming more immediate as Oman works to turn climate policy into an investable project pipeline.

In June 2026, the Green Climate Fund approved a 36-month readiness programme aimed at strengthening Oman's climate-finance architecture. The GCF said Oman has developed a strong climate-policy framework but faces challenges in coordinating climate finance, developing investment pipelines and mobilising resources.

The programme is intended to develop a Climate Investment Plan and Financing Framework, establish systems for pipeline management and climate-finance tracking, and support the preparation of GCF project proposals.

Recent market activity also shows that international demand can be strong when an Omani green asset reaches investors in a financeable form.

Oman Electricity Transmission Company's inaugural five-year green sukuk raised \$750 million in 2025 and attracted orders exceeding \$2.25 billion. Around half of the issuance was placed with institutional

investors in the United States and Europe, according to Oman Investment Bank.

OETC's audited financial statements say the proceeds are being used to finance and refinance eligible capital expenditure under its green-financing framework.

For Dahiya, however, financing, project bankability and data quality should not be treated as separate problems.

"They're sequential, not separate and data is upstream of the other two", she said.

Weak climate-risk information, she said, makes it harder for underwriters to verify what a project or company is reporting and can feed directly into the price of risk.

"Weak climate-risk data doesn't just mean 'less information' — it means underwriters can't verify what they're being told, so they price in a risk premium for uncertainty itself, on top of the actual project risk", Dahiya said.

She described the highest-leverage improvement as disclosure infrastructure that is "correct, complete and auditable by design", rather than disclosure treated mainly as a compliance exercise.

That logic also shapes her view of artificial intelligence.

"The most valuable role for AI here isn't prediction — it's assurance", she said.

For capital providers, Dahiya said three questions matter: whether a

reported number is correct, whether the information is complete and whether it can be traced back to its source document.

She said AI could help automate Scope 3 emissions estimation and cross-reference disclosures against standards such as IFRS S2 or GRI while retaining a clear audit trail rather than creating a black-box output that investors have to accept on trust.

The need for traceability becomes particularly important in sustainability-linked loans, where financing terms can be tied to agreed ESG performance targets.

Dahiya said lenders need confidence that a target reported in one year is based on the same methodology, boundary and data lineage as in the previous year, and that it can be independently verified if challenged.

AI-enabled audit trails could allow reported figures to be traced to their underlying sources and recalculated consistently, she said. Without that traceability, sustainability-linked loans risk remaining a niche product or facing greenwashing concerns that could weaken confidence in the wider market.

For Oman, the next phase of sustainable finance may therefore be less about demonstrating that capital exists and more about expanding the number of projects that investors can assess, verify and finance with confidence.

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DUQM SUMMER
PODCAST SERIES

MUSCAT: Development Bank Sustainability and ESG Analyst Amna al Balushi joined SEZAD’s Duqm Summer Series for a podcast on decision-making in a fast-changing business environment. *Leading Without a Playbook* examines how women leaders respond as tariffs shift, supply chains come under pressure, geopolitical tensions rise and artificial intelligence reshapes business. Decisions cannot always wait for a complete picture. Joining Al Balushi are Dr Fathiya al Rashdi, Vice President for Program Affairs, Royal Academy of Management; Dr Misida al Jahwari, Assistant Professor, Organisational Change & Human Resource Management, Sultan Qaboos University; and Dr Aisha al Sarihi, Economic Expert, Ministry of Economy. Al Balushi brings an environmental governance and financing perspective to the podcast. Her contribution comes as Oman moves from setting emissions targets to working out how the required changes will be funded. Oman’s updated Net Zero Strategy targets a 33% reduction in emissions from 2024 levels by 2035. It identifies a seven per cent mandatory reduction and a further 26% voluntary reduction linked to securing the resources needed for delivery, including finance. For many businesses, reaching those targets requires investment in emissions reduction or energy efficiency before any savings are realised. Banks and other financial institutions will influence how quickly those investments move forward. Omani exporters face an added consideration. The EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism entered its definitive phase in January this year and applies to selected carbon-intensive products. European importers are also seeking more emissions information from overseas suppliers. Many Omani manufacturers will not face a carbon charge directly but customers or lenders can ask them to provide information they have never produced before. The quality of that information can affect financing and access to export markets. Al Balushi said environmental performance was becoming part of how Omani companies compete internationally.

NBO
PROMOTES
SMART
FINANCIAL
HABITS WITH
ITS YOUTH
ACCOUNT

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to supporting the evolving financial needs of younger generations, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) continues to offer its Youth Account, providing customers aged 13 to 17 and students aged 18 to 25 with practical banking tools to save, manage their everyday spending and become more financially independent. For customers aged 13 to 17, the account provides access to everyday banking services and a dedicated Debit Card with parental spending controls. Parents and



guardians can monitor and manage their children’s accounts

through the NBO app, giving young customers the opportunity to gain practical experience in managing their money within a secure and supervised environment. Customers aged 18 to 25 can independently manage their finances through the NBO app, with access to a Debit Card, digital transfers, bill payments, e-commerce transactions and ATM withdrawals. The account has no minimum balance charges and also provides access to NBO Reward Points, alongside a range of discounts and offers.

Sohar International, Saudi
fintech barq sign pact

REINFORCING

its commitment to advancing financial innovation and strengthening cross-market connectivity, Sohar International has signed a cooperation agreement with barq, a Saudi financial technology services company, to explore new opportunities at the intersection of banking and digital financial services. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of Money20/20 in Riyadh, bringing together leading fintech companies, financial institutions and investors from across the region and beyond. The agreement was signed by Khalid al Guthami, Country Chief Executive Officer of Sohar



The pact was signed by Khalid al Guthami, Country CEO of Sohar International’s KSA branch, and Saad Almuhana, Co-Founder and Deputy CEO of barq.

International’s KSA Branch and Saad Almuhana, Co-Founder and Deputy CEO of barq, in the presence of Ahmed Mohamed Alenazi, Founder and CEO of barq. Commenting on the agreement, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi,

Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said, “The evolution of financial services across the region is increasingly being shaped by the convergence of banking, technology and customer-centric innovation. At Sohar International, we are

focused on building a globally connected financial platform that enables greater access to opportunities across markets and supports the changing needs of our customers and partners. Our cooperation with barq reflects this approach, bringing together complementary capabilities to explore solutions that can contribute to a more connected and digitally enabled financial ecosystem across Oman, Saudi Arabia and the wider region”. “We are keen to extend barq’s partnerships to financial institutions that share our ambition to improve the customer experience and harness the opportunities created by digital transformation”, said Ahmed Mohamed Alenazi.

Hyundai Oman’s car interest rate starts from 1.99%

MUSCAT: Hyundai Oman has announced an attractive new retail offer, giving customers an opportunity to drive home a new Hyundai with an interest rate starting from just 1.99%*, along with a range of additional ownership benefits. Designed to make Hyundai ownership more accessible and rewarding, the campaign combines an attractive financing option with benefits that help customers reduce their ownership costs and enjoy greater peace of mind.



Under the campaign, customers can benefit from interest starting from 1.99%* along with 5 years/50,000 km periodic

maintenance service, first-year insurance and registration. Customers can also enjoy savings of up to RO 500* on selected models. The offer provides customers with an excellent opportunity to choose from Hyundai’s diverse range of vehicles, catering to different lifestyles and mobility requirements. From stylish and practical sedans to versatile SUVs, Hyundai offers customers a combination of contemporary design, advanced technology, comfort and convenience.

Toyota Motor Corporation Honours Saud Bahwan
Automotive with Prestigious ‘Gold Distributor Award’



Mr. Masaru Shimada, Executive Advisor - Toyota Motor Corporation presents the ‘Gold Distributor Award’ to Mr. Mohammed Saud Bahwan, Chairman - Saud Bahwan Group and Mr.Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, CEO - Saud Bahwan Group in recognition of Saud Bahwan Automotive’s operational excellence for 2025.

TOYOTA Motor Corporation has once again awarded Saud Bahwan Automotive with its highest regional honor, the prestigious ‘Gold Distributor Award’ based on the results across various customer centricity pillars and priority initiatives for the year 2025. This distinction celebrates the distributor’s continuous operational excellence and places Saud Bahwan Automotive among an elite tier of Toyota distributors globally. The award was presented by Mr. Masaru Shimada, Executive Advisor - Toyota Motor Corporation, to Mr. Mohammed Saud Bahwan, Chairman - Saud Bahwan Group. The recognition highlights Saud Bahwan Automotive’s consistent excellence across a comprehensive evaluation framework by Toyota Motor Corporation. The distributor achieved top results in Sales, Service and Spare Parts operations, while successfully driving key customer-centric programs, best-in-



town activities, carbon neutrality initiatives and regional after-sales commitments. Commenting on this milestone achievement, Mr. Mohammed Saud Bahwan, Chairman - Saud Bahwan Group, stated: “Receiving the Gold Distributor Award once again is a profound moment of pride for the entire Saud Bahwan Automotive family. This award is a direct result of the deep trust and loyalty our customers have demonstrated over generations. We express our heartfelt gratitude to our customers for their ongoing confidence and to Toyota Motor Corporation for their unwavering guidance and partnership. As we look ahead, we remain fully dedicated to strengthening these relationships by taking every aspect of customer experience and satisfaction to new heights.” Over 50 years of partnership, Toyota has evolved from a

premier Japanese automotive brand into a cherished household name across Oman. Saud Bahwan Automotive has nurtured this bond by maintaining customer satisfaction as the foundation of its business philosophy. To ensure seamless accessibility for every vehicle owner in the Sultanate, Saud Bahwan Automotive has established an unmatched operational footprint. Continuous investments in modern facilities, an expansive nationwide branch network, innovative marketing and comprehensive after-sales care ensure that world-class automotive support is always within reach for Toyota customers in Oman. Building on this success, Saud Bahwan Automotive will continue advancing its service delivery, setting new benchmarks for quality, service excellence and customer care in Oman.

SHORTTAKES

Oman payment platforms move towards integrated services

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

Oman’s digital payments sector is expanding its use of integrated platforms that connect online transactions, point-of-sale (POS) services and remote payment collection as businesses seek to manage transactions across multiple channels. AmwalPay, an Omani licensed PSP by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), has developed a platform bringing together a payment gateway in Oman, POS solutions and payment links, allowing businesses to process and monitor transactions across websites, applications and physical outlets.

The development reflects a broader shift towards omni-channel payments, with payment providers increasingly seeking to connect previously separate transaction channels and give merchants a consolidated view of payment activity and settlements. AmwalPay said its payment gateway can be integrated with business websites, mobile applications

KHUZI ABDULLAH AL RAWAS

Co-Founder and CEO of AmwalPay

and e-commerce stores. Its Shopify integration, alongside WooCommerce connectivity and application programming interfaces (APIs), enables businesses to connect payment processing with existing digital systems.

The company also offers Pay by Link, which allows merchants to send payment requests through WhatsApp, email and SMS without requiring customers to make payments through a physical terminal.

The service can support remote payment collection in sectors including hospitality, travel, retail and professional services.

Connecting online payments, POS transactions and payment links within a single system can also help businesses consolidate their payment records across different channels.

The platform provides unified reconciliation, allowing finance teams to match transaction and settlement records within a common environment rather than manually combining reports generated by separate payment systems.

Khuzi Abdullah al Rawas, Co-Founder and CEO of AmwalPay, said the development of locally built financial technology could contribute to strengthening Oman’s technology capabilities.

“We believe Oman can be a source of technology and innovation, building companies that compete through expertise and the quality of their work”, Al Rawas said.

10 million threshold for strategic projects

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 20

OMAN has set RO 10 million as the general minimum investment threshold for a project to be treated as strategic in special economic zones and free zones, while defining qualifying sectors, potential incentives and licensing deadlines under the Executive Regulation of the Law of Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, issued by Royal Decree 38/2025.

A project is considered strategic, and may be granted a single approval, if it meets the investment threshold and contributes to at least one of four areas: transfer of knowledge and modern technology, enhancement of local content, greater self-sufficiency or economic security, or growth in Oman’s annual exports.

In all cases, the project must also fall within investment fields identified by the board of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) in light of approved national plans and strategies.

The OPAZ board may waive the RO 10 million threshold where the nature or strategic importance of a project warrants an exception. Strategic projects may also receive additional incentives by decision of the Council of Ministers, based on a proposal from the OPAZ board.

These may include exemption from land rent or usufruct charges for up to 10 years from the start of actual operations, exemption from prescribed Omanisation ratios for up to four years from the same date, full or partial exemption from fees, and other advantages proposed by the board according to the nature of the project.



The regulation identifies activities of a “special nature” for the purposes of extending income-tax exemptions.

The regulation also identifies for the first time the activities considered to be of a “special nature” for the purposes of extending income-tax exemptions.

They include heavy manufacturing such as petrochemicals, metals and basic metal industries; green industries covered by national clean-energy transition and net-zero carbon plans, including renewable energy, green hydrogen and its derivatives; port logistics and cargo handling; advanced technology, data centres, artificial intelligence and innovation; strategic infrastructure; food-security projects; pharmaceuticals, medical and biotechnology projects; and recycling.

Under the 2025 law, enterprises and operators are exempt from taxes imposed under the Income Tax Law for 10 years from the date activity begins, with the exemption capable of being extended for two further 10-year periods for activities of a special nature.

The exemption is granted by decision of the Minister of Finance.

The exemption does not apply to banks and financial institutions, insurance and reinsurance companies, projects providing telecommunications services, contracting companies, or companies and establishments operating in land and maritime transport.

Administrative offices, commercial representation and import-export activities may also fall within the special-nature category where they add value to the national economy.

Service providers are included provided the contract term is at least 15 months when the exemption application is submitted. The OPAZ board may also designate other projects that demonstrate added economic or strategic value. On licensing, OPAZ must decide a complete application within seven working days. If it does not respond within that period, the application is deemed approved.

Refusals must be reasoned

and may be appealed to the OPAZ chairman within 60 days. The regulation also allows licences to be issued automatically following electronic verification of the required information, documents and applicable requirements.

Licences are valid for three years and may be renewed for similar periods, with renewal applications submitted 30 days before expiry.

Applications for the single approval available to strategic projects must be decided within 30 days of submission of all required documents. In this case, however, the absence of a response within that period is deemed a rejection.

The regulation also tightens implementation requirements for investors. If a project fails to begin activity within its timetable and any extension granted, both the project licence and the allocation of land or property are deemed cancelled, without prejudice to the rights of other parties connected with the project.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry portfolio grows 45%

MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s (OCCI) investment portfolio grew 45 per cent to RO 67.1 million between 2022 and 2025, strengthening its ability to fund programmes supporting the private sector, its chairman said.

The portfolio increased by about RO 20.7 million from RO 46.4 million at the end of 2022, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI’s Board of Directors, told the “Partners in Achievement” forum on Sunday.

Al Rawas said the growth strengthened OCCI’s financial position and its capacity to implement initiatives aimed at improving private-sector competitiveness and expanding business and investment opportunities.

The forum reviewed the chamber’s achievements during its 2022–2026 board term and honoured members of its sectoral



Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI’s Board of Directors, speaks during the “Partners in Achievement” forum on Sunday.

committees for their contributions to improving the business environment. OCCI also unveiled the design of its planned

headquarters at Madinat Al Irfan in Muscat Governorate.

The building will include smart workspaces and modern conference and event halls to accommodate trade delegations and economic gatherings. Its design is targeting LEED and WELL certifications covering sustainability, indoor environmental quality and users’ well-being.

Al Rawas said the project reflected the expansion of OCCI’s responsibilities and services as the chamber sought to strengthen the private sector’s role in economic development.

OCCI introduced 35 regulations and updated three others in 2026, bringing the total number of new and revised regulations to 38. The measures are intended to improve internal operations, governance, transparency and

institutional oversight.

The chamber has also expanded the role of its governorate branches, which serve as links between businesses, government agencies, investors and private-sector organisations.

OCCI branches conducted about 604 activities, including workshops, seminars, exhibitions, conferences and meetings, between 2023 and April 2026. They also held 1,723 meetings with government agencies, businesses and investors during the period.

Al Rawas said the Sohar Investment Forum was among the chamber’s major initiatives supporting economic development outside Muscat.

The 2024 and 2026 editions attracted more than 1,750 participants from 32 countries and presented 145 investment opportunities worth about RO 1.3 billion.

LNG TRADE

Russian LNG exports to China rise



Russia exported 5.153 million tonnes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to China during the first eight months of 2026, up 28.31 per cent year-on-year, Chinese customs data showed. The shipments were valued at \$2.669 billion, rising 13.19 per cent.

Russia exported a record 9.799 million tonnes of LNG to China in 2025, marking an 18.3 per cent annual increase. — Reuters

TRADE TALKS

US, China discuss AI, critical minerals



US and Chinese officials are set for talks covering artificial intelligence, tariffs and critical minerals ahead of a summit between Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Vice Premier He Lifeng will lead discussions in New York.

Negotiators are expected to address the existing trade truce, rare-earth supplies and potential safeguards governing AI. — Reuters

ENERGY DEAL

Venezuela signs pact with TotalEnergies



Venezuela’s interim government has signed a memorandum of understanding with TotalEnergies, according to local media. Interim President Delcy Rodriguez signed the agreement on Saturday.

The deal is the latest in a series involving international oil companies and Venezuela’s new government, as the country seeks to attract energy investments. — Reuters

OPINION

A new voice for the Global South: The 18th BRICS Summit



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

TO understand the significance of the recent 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, India, we must understand the Global North and Global South Framework. Fundamentally, this framework is a broad political and economic term that reflects the world’s unequal power dynamics and the historical distribution of power. The more industrialised, high-income and historically powerful economies, like the USA, Canada, most of Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Israel, are referred to as the Global North. The developing and emerging economies across Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, most of Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific are broadly referred to as the Global South. This classification is not about their geographical location, north or South of the equator; it is a framework of wealth, power, history and representation. The north-south framework gained prominence as attention to widening disparities across these countries grew. In 2006, BRICS began as a dialogue between Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It held its first meeting in Russia in 2009 and since then, the members have convened for a summit once a year on a rotating basis. India hosted the recent BRICS summit in New Delhi on September 12-13, 2026. Originally, BRICS consisted of 5 members; with new members like Egypt, Ethiopia,

Saudi Arabia, Iran, the UAE and Indonesia, they are now a group of 11 member nations. Adding new members has made BRICS more geographically representative of a broader region of nations. The recent 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi was a diplomatic success in the narrow sense that its 11 members adopted a consensus declaration despite major internal disagreements. Substantively, however, it showed that BRICS is becoming a more visible platform for the Global South without yet becoming a cohesive geopolitical or economic alternative to Western-led institutions. At the 18th BRICS Summit, held under India’s Presidency, leaders adopted the New Delhi Declaration, which reaffirms mutual respect and understanding, sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, collaboration and consensus. During BRICS, the leaders discussed payment connectivity issues, local-currency arrangements and the possibility of an alternative transaction infrastructure. They also discussed the member nations’ options in case of escalating geopolitical tensions or other unexpected financial restrictions. Despite their discussions, the dollar’s strength and role are undeniable, rooted in payments technology: deep capital markets, liquidity, legal predictability, network effects and widespread investor trust. BRICS cannot quickly replace these underpinnings. The

The recent 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi was a diplomatic success in the narrow sense that its 11 members adopted a consensus declaration despite major internal disagreements. Substantively, however, it showed that BRICS is becoming a more visible platform for the Global South without yet becoming a cohesive geopolitical or economic alternative to Western-led institutions.

BRICS conference was strategic for India, as it offered an opportunity to project itself as the voice of the Global South and engage in dialogue with China, Russia and the Gulf States. Another significant moment was the Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to India after seven years. The BRICS summit gave Asia’s two largest powers, China and India, a chance to discuss unresolved boundary disputes, strategic distrust, trade imbalances and broader competition for influence in Asia. BRICS strengthened the group’s claim to represent developing-country concerns in global governance. It exposed the limits of consensus diplomacy: members could agree on general principles but not on strong, enforceable, or clearly targeted positions on major conflicts. It did not create a credible alternative world order, a unified foreign-policy bloc, or a viable substitute for the dollar-based financial system. The key outcome of the 18th BRICS summit was a demand for reforms in the IMF, World Bank, and the UN System. It pushed practical, though early-stage, work on payments, local currencies, digital cooperation and economic resilience. Overall, the New Delhi BRICS summit succeeded because it preserved BRICS unity despite internal disagreement and strengthened the group’s collective claim to represent the aspirations of the Global South.

SOUTH KOREA PUTS CRITICAL MINERALS, ENERGY AT FOREFRONT

KYU-SEOK SHIM

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung hosted the country’s first summit with the leaders of five Central Asian countries last week, putting critical minerals, energy and supply-chain cooperation at the centre of Seoul’s push to deepen ties with the resource-rich region. The summit brought together the leaders of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and capped three days of bilateral meetings that produced more than 70 agreements and memorandums of understanding spanning energy, mining, infrastructure, technology and investment. Speaking at a business forum after the summit, Lee said South Korea was seeking to expand cooperation beyond resource imports and deepen industrial partnerships. “Beyond simple raw materials trade, we must strengthen cooperation across the entire critical minerals value chain, from exploration and refining to high-value materials processing and finished-product manufacturing”, Lee said. He said Seoul would support those efforts through South Korean-led rare metals centres in Central Asia, aimed at promoting joint research and workforce training. The summit marks a new phase in Seoul’s engagement with Central Asia, as the resource-poor country seeks to diversify supplies of crude oil, uranium and other strategic minerals, while expanding opportunities for its companies. The meeting established a framework for regular biennial leaders’ summits, with Kazakhstan set to host the next gathering in Astana in 2028. South Korea and Kazakhstan last week signed agreements covering nuclear energy, crude oil and critical minerals and upgraded ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership. Meetings with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also produced accords covering strategic minerals, energy, infrastructure, trade, investment and digital technologies. At the business forum, SK Group Chairman Chey Tae-won highlighted opportunities to expand cooperation. “We will expand critical minerals cooperation beyond simple development to encompass the entire supply chain, from refining to materials production”, Chey said. Chey also called for stronger cooperation in renewable energy and nuclear power. South Korea has pursued deeper economic ties with Central Asia and other Eurasian partners under its New Northern Policy launched in 2017, seeking to diversify supplies of energy and strategic minerals while creating new opportunities for South Korean companies. — Reuters

Priority industries drive Oman’s transformation

MANUFACTURING represents one of the key pillars of economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman, contributing to value addition, expanding the production base, creating new economic opportunities and strengthening the competitiveness of the national economy. In this context, Oman’s Manufacturing Strategy 2040 seeks to drive a structural transformation of the manufacturing sector by encouraging the development of new and more technologically advanced industries, while at the same time improving the productivity, quality and efficiency of existing factories. At the heart of this transformation are 30 priority industries and activities identified at the four-digit level of the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). These industries are intended to act as strategic drivers for the wider manufacturing sector and to support the long-term vision of developing a more diversified, competitive and value-added industrial base. Based on the nature of their main inputs, the priority industries can broadly be grouped into three categories: knowledge-driven industries, capital-intensive industries and natural resource-based industries. Knowledge-driven industries represent an important pathway towards developing a more technology-intensive and innovation-oriented industrial base. These industries focus particularly on health and human care, as well as environment and sustainability. They include pharmaceutical products, medical and health equipment, perfumes and cosmetics, renewable energy equipment such as solar panels and wind turbines, green hydrogen and recycling activities covering metals, steel, aluminium, glass, plastics and construction materials. These industries are characterised by greater reliance on research and development,



ENG JASIM SAIF AL JADEEDI

The writer is Director - Technical Office of Under-Secretary for Commerce and Industry; Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Email: Jasim.AJadeedi@tejarah.gov.om

Oman’s Manufacturing Strategy 2040 seeks to drive a structural transformation of the manufacturing sector by encouraging the development of new and more technologically advanced industries, while at the same time improving the productivity, quality and efficiency of existing factories.

specialised skills, advanced technologies and strong quality-control systems. Their development can therefore contribute not only to industrial output, but also to innovation, resource efficiency, technology transfer and the creation of new high-value economic activities. The second category comprises capital-intensive industries, particularly those associated with electromechanical and transport equipment. These include structural metal products, shipbuilding and ship repair, electric motors and electrical equipment, insulated wires and cables, air-conditioning equipment, pumps and valves. These activities are important for strengthening Oman’s industrial and engineering capabilities and can create stronger linkages with major projects in energy, infrastructure, construction, logistics and other sectors. Their increasing adoption of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies also highlights the growing need for advanced technical, engineering and digital skills. The third category comprises natural resource-based industries, whose principal inputs are derived from agriculture, petrochemicals, metals such as aluminium and steel, minerals and other natural resources. These industries are organised around three main areas: food, oil and gas and metals and minerals, while furniture is treated as a separate activity. This category reflects Oman’s abundant natural resource base and its significant contribution to industrial development. However, the greater opportunity lies in moving beyond the production of basic and lower-value products towards more sophisticated downstream manufacturing. Such a shift can increase domestic value added, diversify the industrial base, strengthen linkages across local supply chains and enhance Oman’s integration into regional and global value chains.

This approach reflects an important direction for Oman’s industrial development: combining the country’s natural resource advantages with technology, knowledge, innovation and industrial skills. Natural resources provide a strong foundation, but long-term competitiveness will increasingly depend on the ability to transform these resources into higher-value products and to develop the capabilities required to compete in increasingly sophisticated markets. At the same time, industrial transformation should not focus solely on establishing new factories. Existing manufacturing capacity represents an important national asset and requires continued investment in productivity, product quality, energy efficiency, modern technologies and international standards. Improving the performance of operating factories can help increase competitiveness, reduce production costs, strengthen local supply chains and expand the ability of Omani companies to serve both domestic and international markets. Technology and human capital will also be central to this transformation. The expansion of knowledge-driven and capital-intensive industries requires specialised engineers, technicians, researchers, digital specialists and other skilled professionals. As manufacturing becomes increasingly automated and connected, education, technical and vocational training and skills development must evolve in line with the changing needs of industry. Ultimately, the 30 priority industries provide a strategic framework for directing investment and industrial development towards activities capable of generating greater economic impact. They bring together Oman’s natural resource strengths with opportunities in advanced manufacturing, electromechanical industries, transport equipment, health, environmental activities and other knowledge-intensive fields.

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ART/LIFE



AN OMANI HOME BECOMES A KEEPER OF MEMORY

> 20

POP CULTURE

SHEERAN BREAKS SILENCE ON GAZA AFTER CRITICISM



Pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrate near Lincoln Financial Field ahead of Sheeran’s concert. — AFP

Ed Sheeran said the situation in Gaza is “unjustifiable”, following a wave of criticism that he had failed to back his opening act who was booted from the tour after making pro-Palestinian comments.

The singer, who had previously maintained an apolitical stance, broke his silence on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in his first show since the controversy involving rapper Macklemore.

“What is happening in Gaza is catastrophic and unjustifiable and disproportionate”, Sheeran said in Philadelphia. Macklemore had declared “Free Palestine” at a New Jersey concert this month, drawing backlash from owners of US stadiums hosting future dates of Sheeran’s Loop Tour.

The artist has denied being behind the decision to remove the rapper, instead blaming the tour promoter. Four supporting acts subsequently walked out on the “Shape of You” singer, issuing public statements citing their support for Palestinians.

The groups that quit the tour included Sheeran’s backing band as well as performer Finneas.

“I’ve had to take and make difficult decisions and I am making mistakes; and I’m so so sorry”, Sheeran told his audience.

Sheeran had been accused by critics of failing to stand up to the stadium owners, led by Robert Kraft and was targeted by boycott calls.

A few dozen pro-Palestinian protesters rallied peacefully outside Lincoln Financial Field ahead of the concert, waving Palestinian flags and chanting “Free, free Palestine”. Some of the fans streaming into the stadium said they had hesitated about coming due to the controversy, but ultimately decided to attend and enjoy the music.

“He could have easily walked away from all of this and he stood up, and he spoke up”, said one fan after the show. But others like Brandon Ateke changed their plans. The 18-year-old Brown University student accused Sheeran of “complicity” with Kraft and others in silencing Macklemore.

“I decided to not attend the concert and instead attend the protest to bring light to the genocide going on in Gaza today”, he said.

The stadium was close to capacity, despite an uptake in ticket resales this week and a sharp drop in prices. On Saturday, a pro-Palestinian group urged artists, fans and crew members to stay away from Sheeran’s concerts.

“We now extend our call for boycotting Ed Sheeran’s entire world tour, including the upcoming Latin American dates and the as-yet-unannounced European leg”, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) said.

He later brought on five musicians who he said had learned his songs in three days, thanking them for joining him “in a week when no one wants to stand on stage with me”. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



OPENING NIGHT

US author George R R Martin attends the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art opening night celebration in Los Angeles. — AFP



RUNWAY READY

A model is prepared backstage before Chinese designer Yuhan Wang’s Spring/Summer 2027 collection show on the third day of London Fashion Week. — AFP



GASTRONOMY

A customer tastes a paprika product during the Paprika and Gastronomy Festival in Kalocsa, Hungary. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Arabian sunbird



Exploring Wadi Al Sahtan

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OASIS ANNOUNCES NEW 2027 WORLD TOUR



British Musicians and Oasis singers Liam Gallagher and Noel Gallagher. — AFP

British rockers Oasis last week announced a new world tour in 2027 after the sell-out success of their surprise comeback last year, with 38 shows planned across Britain, Europe and the US.

Brothers Liam and Noel Gallagher will play 11 dates in their hometown Manchester, alongside shows in Glasgow, Munich, Paris, Amsterdam and Boston.

The tour will begin in Glasgow in May and end with four September shows at Knebworth, north of London, where the band played legendary gigs in 1996.

The group behind Britpop hits “Wonderwall”, “Don’t Look Back in Anger” and “Supersonic” had been teasing another reunion tour for weeks.

They announced it on social media with the caption “start the celebrations!”. “After a period of reflection, ‘The Most Damaging Pop Cultural

Force In Recent British History’ has declared itself fit for purpose and will once again return to lift the spirits of the people”, the band wrote.

“It shall be a sight to behold”. Fans must register for a chance to buy tickets when sales open between September 25 and 27. Successful applicants will receive access codes, a system intended to reduce queues and ticket touting.

The Gallaghers announced the end of their infamous 15-year feud in August 2024, triggering a scramble for reunion tickets. More than two million people attended 41 shows across Europe, Asia, Australia and South America, generating about £300 million (\$400 million).

Sudden price increases and soaring resale costs drew criticism from fans and prompted an investigation by Britain’s competition watchdog. — AFP



A JOURNEY INTO FIN’S HIDDEN CANYON

DR KHALED ABDUL MALAK

ON June 29, our adventurous trio consisting of Rami, Hamood and myself embarked on a long-planned exploration across a wadi that had been recommended to us by our friend Abdullah quite some time ago.

My curiosity about this place had been sparked over fifteen years ago when I first caught sight of the ends of this intriguing canyon from the valley below the Al Tri cave, which is perched high in the mountains towering over the village of Fins.

Our adventure began early in the morning as we had arranged to rendezvous at Al Amerat precisely at 6:30 am, with plans to travel together in Hamood’s trusty vehicle.

The weather gods were kind, providing us with clear skies and a promise of no rain for our escapade. True to our schedule, we gathered at a charming little coffee shop in Al Amerat, a venue where I routinely indulge in a breakfast tradition of sizzling parata bread complemented harmoniously with cheese and eggs.

With our appetites satisfied, Rami and I secured our cars and climbed into Hamood’s car to set off on our journey.

Preparation is key for such adventures so the previous night I took it upon myself to meticulously study Google Earth images.

This helped us determine the most strategic starting point that would lead us smoothly into the heart of the wadi bed.

Our drive took approximately two hours and fifteen minutes until we reached the spot pinpointed by our satellite navigation.

Upon arrival, we donned our backpacks packed with essential gear, including ropes, a reliable drill, sturdy anchors, canyoning equipment, nourishing snacks and refreshing drinks — all in readiness for the day that lay ahead.

Our expedition commenced with a challenging descent down an ancient, steep trail leading us directly to the entrance of the canyon.

As we proceeded, the path gradually transitioned into a more manageable slope along the right bank of the canyon, nestled a few



Three adventurers venture into a little-explored wadi near Fins, following a rugged trail to a mysterious cave filled with stalactites, stalagmites and hidden chambers

hundred meters below. The panoramic views unfolding before us were nothing short of breathtaking and offered a refreshing perspective as this was our maiden trek on this particular side of the wadi.

Our previous excursions had taken us along the opposite stretch, providing access to Al Tri cave — a locale that holds a special place in my heart as one of the country’s hidden gems.

During our trek, an intriguing cave caught our attention — a discovery previously hinted at by Abdullah.

Almost an hour into our hike, we stumbled upon its entrance that lay slightly above our walking trail. We decided to leave our bags at the entrance which was characterised by a low ceiling.

Just a few metres inside, the cave opened up, offering ample headroom and more freedom of movement.

Our entry startled its tiny winged inhabitants into a flurry of motion, disrupting their peaceful dwelling. Inside this natural

wonder, we were treated to an awe-inspiring display of dry calcite formations — stalactites and stalagmites.

Continuing deeper about 100 metres into this subterranean marvel, we encountered a raised mound that required us to crouch beneath its constricting ceiling.

Reaching the end of this narrow tunnel led to a pleasant surprise — a chamber still alive with speleothems of dripping water.

This sacred space inspired us to capture numerous photographs before retracing our steps back to continue towards our ultimate goal — the wadi’s mysterious onset.

The cave’s high humidity left us drenched as we made our way out. The venture through the tunnel had covered roughly 130 metres in depth.

Returning to our path proved challenging as the trail seemed to fade into ambiguity for a short span, consuming about 30 valuable minutes while we worked to rediscover our course.

FEATURES



WHAT THE HOUSE KNOWS :
AN OMANI HOME BECOMES
A KEEPER OF MEMORY

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

A house remembers. It remembers the people who have passed through its rooms, the objects they treasured, the clothes they wore and the celebrations that brought families together. It remembers stories repeated across generations and traditions absorbed through everyday life.

This idea lies at the heart of What the House Knows, a group exhibition opening at Stal Gallery in Muscat on September 20. Bringing together seven artists, Saleem Sakhi, Sarah al Aulaqi, Hassan Meer, Anwar Sonya, Mohammed al Zadjali, Wael Hamdan and Hafsa al Tamimi, it explores the Omani house as a keeper of identity, belonging and cultural memory.

“What the House Knows explores the Omani house as a space of belonging and continuity. What does a house remember? It holds the traces of those who have lived within it: patterns and objects, memories, stories, celebrations and traditions”, says Volodymyra Sobolevska of Stal Gallery.

The house is among the first places where culture is learned through observation, participation and the familiar rhythms of life.

Across the exhibition, figures, clothing, ornament and architecture

become ways of examining how heritage survives through lived experience.

Hassan Meer moves between origins, generations and childhood imagination. His works range from the symbolic beginning represented in Adam and Eve to the relationship between generations in the Father and Son diptych. Elsewhere, he turns towards childhood memories and the mysterious legends associated with Oman’s mountains.

“Since my childhood, here in Oman, I have always thought and wondered about the powerful effects these mysterious legends have in controlling and directing the course of man’s life”, Meer says.

Hafsa al Tamimi considers motherhood and beginnings, exploring the mother as a source of memory and belonging.

Her work reflects on the roots that shape an individual and the place to which one continually returns.

Anwar Sonya transforms an Omani wedding into a monumental canvas measuring 500 by 170 centimetres. Presented for the first time at Stal Gallery, it is filled with figures, patterned garments and the movement of celebration.

The work reveals an unexpected side of an artist long associated with Impressionism. Bold geometric shapes

and repeated forms bring a distinctly Cubist influence to the composition.

“The painting Omani Wedding deserves attention because it allows us to see an important artist at a point of change”, Sobolevska says. “Sonya has spent much of his career developing a highly recognisable Impressionist style. Here, he presents an Omani wedding as a stylised figurative painting with a strong Cubist influence”.

Elsewhere, clothing becomes a means of reading identity. Saleem Sakhi’s portraits foreground the colours and patterns of traditional Omani dress, including the kumma, dishdasha and richly patterned garments worn by women.

Clothing carries information about place, occasion and tradition.

Sarah al Aulaqi examines material culture through Dhofari traditional cloth, head jewellery and the burqa, alongside Omani tailoring. Her work reveals the cultural knowledge held within textiles and adornment, where craftsmanship carries meanings beyond appearance.

Mohammed al Zadjali turns to patterns within traditional Omani interiors. Repeated motifs connect generations, preserving something familiar even as they are interpreted anew.

For Wael Hamdan, memory resides

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within architecture. His Domes of the City collection considers spaces connected to the experience of place and home. Buildings may outlast their inhabitants, but their meaning emerges through human presence. Walls witness routines, gatherings, departures and returns.

Here, the exhibition’s title becomes most literal. A house may be silent, yet it is never empty of meaning. Heritage is continually lived through what people wear, the spaces they inhabit and the knowledge passed quietly between generations.

The exhibition turns its central question towards the visitor: What does your own house know? Which objects hold memories? Which traditions have shaped you without you noticing? And what will remain when the generation that remembers their origins is no longer there to tell the story?

The artists offer no single answer. Their works explore how a home holds traces of those who came before while shaping those who come next.

What the House Knows opens at Stal Gallery, Muscat, on September 20 at 7 pm and runs until October 5, 2026. Free guided educational tours led by Volodymyra Sobolevska will introduce visitors, students and researchers to the techniques, creative processes and stories behind the artworks.