

OMAN

دولة عمان

DAILY

Observer

SUNRISE 05:58 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:42 AM

DHUHR 12:03 PM

ASR 03:27 PM

MAGHRIB 06:03 PM

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SINNER SURVIVES TO SINK QUALIFIER AS SWIATEK LAUNCHES BEIJING BID

SHORT TAKES

SAYYID BADR HOLDS TALKS IN NEW YORK

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met separately with Bakhtiyor Saidov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; Annalena Baerbock, President of the United Nations General Assembly's 80th session; Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines and Olivier Nduhungirehe, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda. The meetings discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields and emphasised the strong fraternal and friendly relations between the Sultanate of Oman and these countries and organisations. They also discussed areas of economic, investment and scientific cooperation, reviewed regional and international developments. **DETAILS ON P2**

36 DEAD, 40 INJURED AT INDIAN RALLY

At least 36 people were killed and about 40 were injured at a rally held by Tamil actor and politician Vijay in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, reports said on Saturday, citing the state's health minister. Large crowds had gathered for the meeting, part of Vijay's ongoing state tour for his political party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, the report said. Vijay is campaigning ahead of state elections that are to be held early next year. At least 44 doctors from the nearby districts of Tiruchirappalli and Salem were sent to Karur, the report added.

DHOFAR BLOSSOMS AGAIN



The Dhofar mountain ranges have welcomed the arrival of Sarb, the spring-like season that follows khareef, bringing with it a vibrant bloom of indigenous flowers and refreshing landscapes. Locally known as Sarb, this season runs from September 21 to December 21. Marked by mild weather, lush greenery and an abundance of natural beauty, it enhances farming, honey production, fisheries and traditional herding — making Dhofar an all-year destination for both nature and culture. **DETAILS ON P3**

Two Omani reserves listed on Unesco's biosphere programme

BEIJING: The International Coordinating Council of Unesco's Man and the Biosphere Programme (ICC-MAB) announced, at its 37th session held in Lin'an, Hangzhou, China, the inscription of the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Landscape and Al Sereen Nature Reserves as two new reserves on the World Network of Man and Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).

The step was the output of cooperation between the Environment Authority (EA) and

Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences (ONCECS), within the framework of promoting integration between environmental protection and community development and supporting the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to implement Oman Vision 2040.

The announcement is the first of its kind for the Sultanate of Oman, marking its official entry as a biosphere reserve, which currently comprises 759 reserves in 136



countries. These reserves serve as living laboratories for sustainable development and models of coexistence between humans and nature. Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Reserve spans a vast area of approximately 4,500 hectares in the Western Al Hajar Mountains.

It is home to diverse animal and plant species, most notably the Tapiscia and wild olive (Atam), both rare trees of high genetic importance. It is also home to the threatened Arabian ibex and

Arabian wolf. This is in addition to more than 71 bird species, including the Egyptian vulture and the golden eagle. Al Sereen Reserve is located in the Eastern Al Hajar Mountains, 45 km southwest of Muscat, on an area of 103,888 hectares.

The reserve boasts a unique ecological diversity, including towering mountains, springs and valleys. It is classified as a Category II protected area by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). — ONA

S&P affirms Oman's sovereign ratings at 'BBB-'

MUSCAT: Global credit rating agency S&P Global Ratings has affirmed its 'BBB-' long-term and 'A-3' short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings on the Sultanate of Oman, with a stable outlook. The transfer and convertibility assessment remains at 'BBB'. The affirmation reflects S&P's confidence in Oman's commitment to fiscal prudence and ongoing

structural reforms, even amidst expectations of lower oil prices in the coming years.

"We expect that the Omani government will remain committed to financial discipline throughout a potentially extended period of lower oil prices", S&P said, adding that while economic diversification is advancing, hydrocarbons still represent the mainstay of fiscal and

export revenues.

According to S&P's latest projections, Oman is forecast to post a modest fiscal deficit of 0.5 per cent of GDP in 2025, before achieving broadly balanced budgets over 2026–2028. The rating agency also expects the Sultanate of Oman to maintain a net general government asset position of about 8 per cent over 2025–2028. S&P's stable

outlook balances the benefits of Oman's fiscal and economic reforms against its structural exposure to fluctuations in oil prices. The agency's baseline scenario assumes Brent crude prices averaging \$60 per barrel in 2025, rising to \$65 per barrel between 2026 and 2028, compared with an average of \$84 per barrel over 2021–2024.

DETAILS ON P13

Israel expands assault on Gaza, kills 74 Palestinians

H a m a s s a y s i t h a s n o t r e c e i v e d T r u m p p l a n

HAMAS HAS not received US President Donald Trump's Gaza ceasefire plan, the Palestinian group said on Saturday, as Israeli forces expanded their assault on Gaza City. The comments came after Israeli newspaper Haaretz cited sources saying Hamas had agreed in principle to release all the Israeli captives in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and the gradual withdrawal of Israeli troops under Trump's plan.

Also included in the proposal were the end of Hamas rule in Gaza, and Israel agreeing not to annex the territory and drive out Palestinians living there, Haaretz reported.

"Hamas has not been presented with any plan," a Hamas official who asked not to be named said. In his comments to reporters last Friday in which he said "it's looking like we have a deal on Gaza", Trump offered no details of its contents and gave no timetable. Israel has not yet made any public response to Trump's comments.

President Trump is due on Monday to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who heads a hard-right governing coalition opposed to ending the Gaza.

Trump also said last Friday talks on Gaza with Middle Eastern nations were intense and would continue as long as required.

His special envoy, Steve Witkoff, said the US president



Palestinians, who fled northern Gaza after Israeli forces ordered residents of Gaza City to evacuate to the south, rest at their makeshift shelter in the central Gaza Strip, on Saturday. — Reuters

had presented proposals to the leaders of Middle Eastern countries this week that included a 21-point Middle East peace plan. In Gaza, meanwhile, the fighting continued. The Israeli military said its aircraft struck 120 targets across the strip over the past day as troops pressed deeper into Gaza City. The Palestinian Health Ministry said 74 people were killed in Gaza in the last 24 hours.

In a post on social media platform X, the military's Arabic

spokesman repeated calls for Gaza City residents to evacuate.

The UN World Food Programme estimates that some 350,000-400,000 Palestinians have left since Israel began its expanded ground offensive in Gaza City a couple of weeks ago, but hundreds of thousands remain.

Doctors Without Borders/ Medecins Sans Frontieres said late on Friday it had been forced to suspend its medical activities in Gaza City because

its clinics were encircled by Israeli forces. The group said the move was the "last thing" it wanted, saying that vulnerable people such as infants in neonatal care and people with life-threatening illnesses are unable to move and are in grave danger.

Four health facilities in Gaza City have shut down so far this month, according to the World Health Organization, and the UN says some malnutrition centres have also closed. — Reuters

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The pavilion’s unique design reflects a blend of tangible and intangible Omani cultural elements.

OMAN’S PAVILION
DRAWS STRONG
CROWD AT AMMAN
INTL BOOK FAIR

AMMAN: The Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion, honoured as the guest of honour at the 24th Amman International Book Fair, has attracted large numbers of visitors since its opening, drawing significant interest from writers, intellectuals and publishers worldwide.

The pavilion’s unique design reflects a blend of tangible and intangible Omani cultural elements, encapsulated under the theme: “The Sultanate of Oman... A long history, renewed knowledge... and knowledge that illuminates the path.”

Khalfan bin Mohammed al Abri, Director of the Book Fairs Affairs Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said Oman’s participation offers a valuable platform to showcase the nation’s heritage, customs and traditions. He noted strong interest from visitors, researchers, and scholars keen to explore Omani culture and the pavilion’s offerings.

Dr Mohammed Jamal, Editor-in-Chief of Jordan’s Wisam Magazine, expressed pride in hosting Oman as the guest of honour, highlighting Murshid magazine’s role in promoting reading and creativity among young audiences. Dr Nidal bin Ibrahim al Ahmad, Secretary-General of the Jordanian Ministry of Culture, praised the pavilion’s display of encyclopedias and manuscripts that chart Oman’s history, emphasising the cultural convergence between Oman and Jordan.

Dr Rawan bint Burhan al Khanjiyah, educational supervisor at Al Hasad Educational Schools, noted the significance of rare Omani manuscripts on Unesco’s list and appreciated the pavilion’s cultural richness, including tourism films and displays of Omani arts.

The writer Safaa bint Subhi al Hattab lauded the pavilion’s diversity and richness, expressing hopes that Oman’s cultural programme would receive enduring attention. — ONA

VOTING TO SELECT
TOGETHER WE
ADVANCE TOPICS



MUSCAT: Voting will begin tomorrow, Monday, to select the topics of discussion for the fourth edition of the ‘Together We Advance’ forum.

Organised annually by the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers in implementation of the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik regarding the importance of community participation in decision-making and enhancing the public engagement in shaping future directions, visions and strategies.

The Together We Advance forum serves as a national platform for dialogue and direct communication between the government and society, strengthening mutual trust and enhancing partnership.

It also provides an opportunity for citizens to learn about development programmes and government initiatives and express their opinions and suggestions in a constructive and inclusive environment. — ONA

First pilot oyster farming project in Masirah

MASIRAH: Oman has taken a pioneering step in aquaculture with the launch of its first pilot oyster farming project in the Wilayat of Masirah in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. Implemented by Blue Water Company since January 2025, the project marks a major milestone in diversifying food and economic sources, aligning with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Spanning two hectares, the farm comprises 3,600 baskets arranged along six sea lines.

Oyster seedlings imported into Oman are initially placed in small baskets for two months before being transferred to larger baskets floating at sea. The project uses the “Flip Farm” system from New Zealand, recognised as the most advanced in the world for oyster farming. One of the key operational



processes is regularly turning the baskets, which keeps oysters partially out of water to simulate natural conditions, strengthening oyster muscles and improving meat quality. At harvest, oysters are expected to weigh around 90 grams, with the first yield projected by the end of 2025.

Dr Issa bin Mohammed al

Farsi, Director of the Aquaculture Development Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said, “Aquaculture is one of the fastest-growing food production sectors globally.

With rising demand for fish and seafood, Oman is positioning aquaculture as a sustainable pillar

of food security and economic growth.”

He noted the environmental benefits of oyster farming, including water filtration that improves marine ecosystems, making the project a model for sustainable aquaculture.

Eng Lina bint Ali al Mohammed of Blue Water Company confirmed plans to expand the project, with an expected experimental yield of 39 tonnes by year-end. She said the initiative reflects Oman’s potential to become a regional leader in sustainable aquaculture.

The Masirah oyster farming project is not only a breakthrough for Oman’s fisheries sector but also a step toward meeting future food security needs and reinforcing Oman’s presence in the global aquaculture industry. — ONA

Sayyid Badr discusses
fostering bilateral relations

SAYYID Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met separately with Bakhtiyor Saidov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; Annalena Baerbock, President of the United Nations General Assembly’s 80th session; Ma. Theresa P Lazaro, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines and Olivier Nduhungirehe, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda.

The meetings discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields and emphasised the strong fraternal and friendly relations between the Sultanate of Oman and these countries and organisations.

They also discussed areas of economic, investment and scientific cooperation, reviewed regional and international developments and humanitarian issues emphasising the importance of dialogue, joint coordination to enhance security, stability and sustainable development in a manner that serves the common interests of friendly and sisterly peoples and countries.

The foreign minister also met with Shaikh Sabah Khaled Al Hamad Al Mubarak al Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of Kuwait to the United Nations in New York.

Sayyid Badr conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to his brother Shaikh Meshaal Al Ahmad Al



Sayyid Badr holds talks with his counterparts on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly’s 80th session

Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, and to the Crown Prince, alongside His Majesty’s best wishes for continued growth and prosperity for the brotherly Kuwaiti people, and for further progress and prosperity for relations between the two countries.

The Crown Prince asked the foreign minister to convey the greetings of the Emir of the State of Kuwait to His Majesty the Sultan, and his best wishes for His Majesty and the brotherly Omani people for further progress and prosperity, emphasising the deep-rooted relations between the two brotherly countries.

The Crown Prince also entrusted the foreign minister to convey his greetings and the greetings of the Emir of the State of Kuwait to His Majesty and their wishes for further progress and prosperity for the Omani people.

The meeting underscored the strong fraternal relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait, and the mutual commitment to developing and strengthening them to serve the interests of the two brotherly countries and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The meetings were attended by a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

Zakat conference urges unified council, AI
integration to boost role in Oman Vision 2040

SALALAH: The Third Zakat Conference and Exhibition concluded with key recommendations to strengthen Oman’s zakat system, including the establishment of a Zakat Committee Council to unify efforts and a Supreme Fatwa Committee to address contemporary challenges.

Organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the three-day conference in Salalah called for enhanced community awareness of zakat through specialised media programmes, greater use of modern technologies and artificial intelligence in zakat management, and closer alignment of zakat initiatives with priority development projects under Oman Vision 2040. Other recommendations included creating an academic chair for zakat and



Several agreements were signed during the third Zakat Conference in Salalah.

endowments, developing an electronic zakat platform, appointing a ‘Zakat Specialist’ in every governorate, and standardising annual planning and reporting processes. The conference also urged greater participation of women in zakat institutions, the creation of an electronic knowledge-sharing platform for zakat committees,

and leveraging international best practices to align zakat work with tax systems. The final day featured academic sessions on the legal dimensions of zakat collection, international zakat management experiences and institutional leadership, concluding with a keynote by Dr Shaikh Kahlan bin Nabhan al Kharousi, Assistant Grand Mufti

of the Sultanate of Oman, on the jurisprudence of zakat and its contemporary challenges.

Several agreements were signed to enhance institutional integration between public and private sectors, notably a cooperation pact between the ministry and Eltizam Financial Sharia Consulting Company, an MoU with Dhofar University for scientific and cultural collaboration, and another between the Zakat Committee and Aqar Nizwa Endowment to establish a permanent site for zakat exhibitions in Nizwa. The conference reflects Oman’s commitment to developing zakat on institutional and scientific foundations, strengthening public-private-academic partnerships and contributing to the nation’s holistic development in line with Oman Vision 2040. — ONA



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SHORT TAKES



GENERATIVE AI HACKATHON RUNS THROUGH OCT 29

MUSCAT: The Generative Artificial Intelligence Hackathon (Mulham), kicked off on Saturday and will continue until October 29.

The launch ceremony was held under the auspices of Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC).

Organised by the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies in cooperation with several partners from the public and private sectors, the competition aims to motivate young people to create creative technical solutions that address societal and economic issues, with teams competing to develop prototypes of digital projects in fields including cybersecurity, education and learning, and customer service.

The competition is organised within the framework of the plans and programmes carried out by the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, and in preparation for this year’s national symposium titled ‘Public-Private Partnership to Generate Job Opportunities’.

The competition is supported by Omantel, the National Bank of Oman, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), and the Programming Academy. The number of teams that applied for participation reached (130), of which 25 teams qualified. — ONA

DHOFAR BLOSSOMS AGAIN AS SARB FOLLOWS KHAREEF



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Dhofar mountain ranges have welcomed the arrival of Sarb, the spring-like season that follows khareef, bringing with it a vibrant bloom of indigenous flowers and refreshing landscapes.

Locally known as Sarb, this season runs from September 21 to December 21. Marked by mild weather, lush greenery and an abundance of natural beauty, it enhances farming, honey production, fisheries and traditional herding — making Dhofar an all-year destination for both nature and culture.

Following months of khareef’s mist, drizzle and cool air, Sarb transforms the governorate into a sunlit haven. Authorities have lined up spring events to sustain Dhofar’s tourism appeal beyond khareef, with visitors now enjoying calm seas, bright skies and lower humidity.

The roads, beaches, mountains and wadis of Salalah and its surroundings come alive during this period, often dotted with camels grazing in the open. For farmers and herders, the season is especially rewarding as it coincides with the harvest of crops nourished by the monsoon rains.

Daytime temperatures remain pleasant, dipping to around 20°C in the mountains and 26–28°C in the lowlands. The serene landscapes, coupled with diverse activities, make Dhofar an inviting family destination.

ARABIAN LEOPARD HUNTS ROCK HYRAX IN RARE DHOFAR FOOTAGE

SALALAH: The Arabian Leopard Project team at the General-Directorate of Environment in Dhofar Governorate has captured rare and exclusive footage of an Arabian leopard preying on a rock hyrax in the wild, using high-resolution camera traps.

This is the first documented evidence of such predation on this rare species, listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The footage underscores the success of Oman’s conservation strategies, which include establishing protected areas, raising environmental awareness, and implementing predation compensation measures.



This is the first documented evidence of such predation on this rare species.

The Arabian leopard has become a symbol of the success of long-term conservation efforts, reshaping public perception from seeing the leopard as a threat to viewing it as a national heritage.

This monitoring effort forms part of decades of work to conserve the Arabian leopard, its habitat, and its prey in the Dhofar Mountains.

Dr Mohammed bin Muhad al Maashani, Project Director, said, “These images are living proof of the integrity of the food chain and the balance of the ecosystem in Dhofar Governorate. This achievement supports Oman’s environmental strategy and the national plan to

protect threatened species at local, regional and international levels.”

He added that the Environment Agency continues to work with partners and local communities to enhance protection, reduce human interference and combat poaching in leopard habitats.

The documentation highlights the importance of preserving the Arabian leopard’s natural prey, including rock hyraxes, Arabian gazelles, Nubian ibexes and Arabian partridges, which are essential to the species’ survival. Oman today stands as the last safe haven for this critically endangered big cat. — ONA

Oman urges global action on NCDs at UN Assembly

THE Sultanate of Oman participated in the high-level meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, held during the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, focusing on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

In its intervention at the plenary session, Oman emphasised that tackling health challenges requires a multi-sectoral approach addressing social, economic and behavioural determinants.

Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, highlighted Oman’s updated national health policies aligned with Oman Vision 2040. These include plain packaging for tobacco products, higher taxes on harmful goods, and food policy reforms.

He stressed that preventive health measures yield substantial economic returns and noted that Oman’s National Survey of Non-Communicable Diseases — with broad public participation — has helped shape comprehensive policies safeguarding both present and future generations.

Oman has made primary healthcare the backbone of a network exceeding 240 facilities, introduced early screening programmes, and launched innovative services such as the Virtual Health Center and artificial intelligence-powered health monitoring. The country has also been designated a World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Chronic Respiratory Diseases.

The health minister reaffirmed Oman’s commitment to strengthening international



Dr Al Sabti at the UN General Assembly’s high-level meeting on preventing and controlling NCDs.

cooperation for building equitable and sustainable health systems, ensuring that “no one is left behind” in health development.

Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation, addressed the first multilateral discussion on health systems and financing. He reiterated Oman’s focus on primary care, early detection of diseases and digital innovation, including lowering screening ages to 35 and using AI for diabetes management.

Dr Al Mandhari highlighted Oman’s commitment to mental health capacity building and the importance of preventive

interventions, noting that investments in such initiatives produce significant economic returns.

The meeting reviewed global progress in combating chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and respiratory illnesses, stressing the urgent need to accelerate prevention and strengthen multisectoral partnerships to achieve the target of reducing premature deaths by one-third by 2030.

Oman reaffirmed its strong commitment to advancing global health cooperation, developing effective public health policies and improving the well-being of communities worldwide. — ONA

Arab Youth unite for climate action as forum opens

SALALAH: The Arab Youth Climate Action Forum 2025 opened on Saturday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

Organised by the Madad Development Foundation with support from the Environment Authority, the forum runs until September 30 and gathers around 200 young participants from across the Arab world.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority (EA).

In his address, the EA reaffirmed Oman’s commitment to climate action and youth



Around 200 young participants from across the Arab world are taking part.

engagement in shaping environmental solutions. The Madad Development Foundation outlined the forum’s vision and objectives, while the United Nations Population Fund highlighted

its role in empowering youth and advancing sustainable development in the region.

The ceremony also featured a dialogue session titled ‘Youth as a Catalyst for Arab Climate Solutions in the World,’ with

experts and representatives of international organisations emphasising the pivotal role of youth in driving collaborative climate action.

The programme includes plenary sessions, interactive workshops and policy dialogues on pressing climate issues. Key topics will cover sustainable transportation in the Arab world, the role of digital transformation in climate adaptation, decarbonising the industrial sector, and advancing climate justice, biodiversity and the rights of indigenous peoples.

The forum aims to strengthen comprehensive and effective climate action across the Arab region. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

AVOID
SITTING
STILL
FOR
TOO
LONG

MANY people are forced to sit for long hours due to the nature of their work. If the posture is not right, it can strain your back.

Incorrect sitting posture leads to several health complications, including skeletal deformity and spinal deterioration. It also causes neck, shoulder and back pain, and reduces muscle and joint flexibility.

Proper sitting posture is the way the body is positioned to maintain a straight spine and the natural “S” shape of the spine, which helps distribute weight evenly. This posture involves maintaining the three natural curves of the spine — the neck, middle back and lower back — which promotes balance among the skeleton, muscles and ligaments.

Research has also linked prolonged sitting to a number of health problems. These conditions include obesity, along with others such as high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess abdominal fat and unhealthy cholesterol levels. Nutritionists say a lack of movement slows metabolism, even with regular exercise.

Prolonged sitting weakens muscle function, leading to lower overall calorie consumption, decreased insulin sensitivity, and the body starting to store excess calories for later.

Overall, research clearly indicates that reducing sitting time and increasing movement contribute to better health. You can start by simply standing instead of sitting when you have the opportunity, or you can devise ways to walk while you work. Exercising after work doesn't make up for eight hours of sitting in a chair, so it's essential to move every hour. The more you move, the faster you'll lose weight and improve your metabolism.

Some studies have revealed that people who spend 6-8 hours sitting every day have a 20 per cent higher risk of premature death. It's believed that prolonged sitting puts your body in “ready” mode, where your metabolism

slows and circulation is reduced due to flexed joints. Your ability to process blood sugar is also impaired, as inactive muscles don't absorb as much blood sugar, leading to an increased risk of heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.

Proper sitting isn't limited to employees only, but also includes schoolchildren. With the start of the new school year, mothers are looking for the best ways to help their children complete homework comfortably and without suffering. Proper sitting posture not only improves a child's concentration while writing but also protects them from back, neck, and foot pain, which can persist for years if they become accustomed to incorrect postures.

The number of jobs that require people to sit for work is increasing day by day. However, this behaviour has serious health consequences, according to contemporary medical research.

Healthy sitting involves adjusting the seat or chair so that the computer keyboard is straight and parallel to the floor, preventing repetitive strain injuries. Position your computer or monitor at eye level to prevent neck strain.

The arms and elbows must be in line with the seat. This is done by keeping the back straight and using a support pillow whenever possible. Keep a small distance between the back of the knees and the chair. Adjust the feet so that the legs are not crossed and the feet are firmly on the floor.

Adjusting the waist and thighs so that the body's weight is evenly distributed across the waist, maintaining a straight, sloping position.

One must also avoid sitting on the edge of the chair, with the spine bent. Be sure to change your sitting position from time to time, and avoid sitting in one position for long periods. After every hour of sitting, take at least a ten-minute break. Stretch the neck for long periods while looking at any screen. Sit in a position that fully supports the back, especially the lower back area.



SHORT TAKES



The strategic forum produced agreements on 57 projects worth more than RO 50 million.

MUSANDAM FORUM CHARTS RO 50M PROJECTS FOR 11TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

KHASAB: The Governorate of Musandam concluded its first strategic forum aimed at framing projects for the 11th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030), with wide community participation and input from public and private stakeholders. The three-day forum reviewed 119 proposed projects across five main axes: spatial economy and investment, environmental sustainability, infrastructure and well-being, development of national competencies, and quality of services with community participation. At the closing ceremony, sponsored by Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, officials highlighted the importance of aligning the governorate’s projects with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040. The forum produced agreements on 57 projects worth more than RO 50 million, distributed across the wilayats. Among the key initiatives is the National Competency Development Programme, launched in partnership with OQ Group, which will prepare Musandam for a new phase of growth. — ONA

TECHNOLOGY, CRAFTS 2025 EXHIBITION CONCLUDES IN MANAH



MANAH: The ‘Technology and Crafts 2025’ exhibition, organised by the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (PASME) in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, concluded on Saturday at the Oman Across Ages Museum in Manah. The three-day event featured 30 craft stalls alongside business centres and incubators from Bahla, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, and Samayil. The exhibition promoted Omani craft industries, supported craftsmen, highlighted their skills and products and created mechanisms to develop and showcase innovative craftwork. Rahma bint Mohammed al Harrasiyah, Acting Director of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, also spoke on the occasion. — ONA

Artists unite in purple tribute for Alzheimer’s

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Marking World Alzheimer’s Month, the Oman Alzheimer’s Society hosted an awareness programme titled “Just Purple: Artists for Alzheimer’s”, which ran from September 18 to 25 at Sheraton Oman. The initiative, part of global efforts to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and support families affected by dementia, brought together 13 artists and two photographers who showcased works inspired by memory, family bonds, and the impact of Alzheimer’s disease. The exhibition was inaugurated by renowned artist and photographer Prof Ibrahim Noor al Bakri. “The artists contributed works that reflected memory, Alzheimer’s and family connections. Many shared personal experiences with loved ones suffering from the disease, turning their emotions into powerful artistic



13 artists and two photographers showcased works for Alzheimer’s disease

expressions. We are deeply grateful for their contributions,” said Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Chairman of the Oman Alzheimer’s Society. Sheraton Oman supported the initiative by hosting the exhibition in its lobby and continuing purple-themed lighting until September 25. “We believe in being there for the community, and that is why we wanted to support the Society’s

OMAN CALLS FOR JUSTICE, CEASEFIRE AT OIC JEDDAH SUMMIT

JEDDAH: A delegation from the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC), led by Prof Rashid bin Hamad al Balushi, Chairman of the Commission, participated in the Emergency Meeting convened by the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah.



Oman Human Rights Commission delegation at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah

The meeting addressed the grave human rights and humanitarian consequences arising from Israeli aggression against Qatar. Prof Al Balushi underscored the need of upholding justice and peace, and called for the full implementation of the resolutions of the recent Arab-Islamic Summit in Qatar. He stressed that the silence of the

international community in the face of such violations emboldens their continuation and worsens their impact, calling for effective, coordinated measures. The Oman delegation included Minister Plenipotentiary Aqeel bin Alawi Ba Omar and Abdulaziz bin Ali al Saadi, Director of the Legal Affairs Department at the Oman Human Rights Commission.

Oman’s youth lead the way in Al Batinah North

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, SEPT 27

AL Batinah North is witnessing a surge of inspiring youth-led initiatives, reflecting the determination of young people to shape their communities and strengthen national identity. Supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and operating under the Directorate-General of Youth, Culture and Sports, these projects are transforming passion into impact across multiple fields. One standout initiative is Kaffa’ah – Towards Empowering Youth in Professional Crafts, led by Ibrahim al Matrooshi. The project revives both traditional and modern crafts while linking them to market opportunities. “Our workshops are not only about skills like wood carving or fragrance making,” said Al Matrooshi. “They prepare youth to transform crafts into sustainable businesses that benefit both culture and the economy.” Empowering women is the focus of the Hemam Nawaem Cultural Initiative, supervised by Sumaiya al Kumia. “We want women to be active contributors to cultural and social growth while preserving values and identity,” Al Kumia explained. In the health sector, “Let’s Be With Them Hackathon,” led by Anoud al Muzaini, raises cancer awareness and builds support networks for patients and survivors. Campaigns, marathons and dialogue sessions spread a simple yet powerful message: “Cancer is not the end of life,”

Al Muzaini stressed. Meanwhile, ‘Sayes’ introduces youth to politics through simulations, debates, and training. Guided by Rodayna al Balushi and Ibrahim al Matrooshi, it equips participants with leadership and critical thinking skills to become active citizens. Another standout project, Jahez (Ready), founded by Abdulrahman al Mazroui, prepares job seekers for the labour market through workshops such as Master the Art of Charisma and personal development sessions. “We want participants to leave not just with job skills, but with the mindset of leaders ready to serve their nation,” Al Mazroui noted. Equally impactful is “The Dream Continues,” created by Shaima al Fazari, which promotes reading competitions, cultural programmes and national forums. “Our journey shows that persistence leads to real results,” Al Fazari shared. According to Ahmed al Maqbali, Head of the Youth Department at the Directorate, the steady growth of such initiatives reflects the maturity and creativity of Omani youth. “Every year, we see more innovative projects seeking support. From culture to crafts, health, politics, and employment, youth are not waiting for change – they are creating it,” he said. With logistical and knowledge-based backing from the ministry, these initiatives highlight the resilience of Oman’s younger generation, showing that the future is already being shaped by their hands.



MoCSY supports the projects and transforms the passion of the youth in Al Batinah North.

شركة سياحة الصحراء ش.م.ع.ح

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

HOSPITALITY CO. S.A.O.G.

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

DIRECTORS' REPORT THE THIRD QUARTER ENDED ON AUGUST 31, 2025

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit an unaudited financial statement of the company for the third quarter that ended on August 31, 2025, along with related reports.

Revenue is RO 10,529,522 as against RO 9,817,704 in the corresponding period of the previous year whereas net Profit after taxes for the period is RO 2,051,315 as against RO 2,141,411 in the last year.

The total shareholders fund increased from RO 27,893,176 at the end of August 2024 to RO 28,712,444 at the end of August 2025 and as a result of this growth, the net assets per share has recorded RO 3.623.

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

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

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Financial Position

as at 31st August, 2025

	2025	2024
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Fixed Assets	13,751	14,972
Current Assets		
Inventories	23	30
Trade & Other Receivables	5,827	5,875
Receivable from related party	41	48
Bank and Cash	13,382	10,944
	19,273	16,897
Total Assets	33,024	31,869
Current liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	830	792
Payables to related parties	2,699	2,573
Lease liability	6	22
Tax liability	346	188
	3,881	3,575
Long-term liabilities		
Lease liability	-	7
Deferred Tax liability	405	373
Employees' end of service benefits	26	21
	431	401
Total Liabilities	4,312	3,976
Net Assets	28,712	27,893
Shareholder's Fund		
Share Capital	7,923	7,923
Legal Reserve	2,641	2,641
Retained Earnings	18,148	17,329
Total Shareholders' Equity	28,712	27,893

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

For 9 months ended 31st August, 2025

	2025	2024
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Turnover/Revenue	10,530	9,818
Gross Profit	2,523	2,638
Other Income	346	325
Administration & General Expenses	(451)	(439)
Operating Profit	2,418	2,524
Finance Charges	(5)	(5)
Profit before taxation	2,413	2,519
Taxation	(362)	(378)
Net Profit attributable to ordinary shareholders	2,051	2,141

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

WORLD

DIPLOMACYTENSIONS



Members of the United Nations Security Council vote on the resolution, in New York City. — Reuters

UN SANCTIONS ON IRAN LOOM AFTER VOTE TO DELAY FAILS

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations sanctions on Iran are set to be reimposed on Saturday, Britain’s UN envoy said after a Russian and Chinese Security Council resolution to delay them failed, prompting Tehran to warn that the West bore responsibility for any consequences. The decision to restore sanctions by Western powers is likely to exacerbate tensions with Tehran, which has already warned that the action would be met with a harsh response and open the door to escalation.

The Russian and Chinese push to delay the return of sanctions on Iran failed at the 15-member UN Security Council after only four countries supported their draft resolution. “This council does not have the necessary assurance that there is a clear path to a swift diplomatic solution,” Britain’s envoy to the United Nations, Barbara Wood, said after the vote. “This council fulfilled the necessary steps of the snapback process set out in resolution 2231, therefore UN sanctions targeting Iranian proliferation will be reimposed this weekend,” she said.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told a group of journalists and analysts that Iran had no intention to leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a reaction to the revival of the U.N. sanctions. “Iran will never seek nuclear weapons ... We are fully prepared to be transparent about our highly enriched uranium,” Pezeshkian said.

All UN sanctions on Iran were due to return at 8 pm EDT on Saturday after European powers, known as the E3, triggered a 30-day process accusing Tehran of violating a 2015 deal meant to prevent it from developing a nuclear weapon. Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons. Diplomats had said the resolution to delay sanctions for six months had been unlikely to pass, after last-ditch talks between Iran and Britain, France and Germany failed to break a deadlock. Nine countries voted no, while two abstained.

Following what it said was European states’ “irresponsible” reinstatement of the snapback mechanism, Iran recalled on Saturday its ambassadors to Germany, France and the United Kingdom for consultation, state media reported. Russia’s deputy envoy to the United Nations accused the Western powers of burying the diplomatic path.

“The US has betrayed diplomacy, but it is the E3 which have buried it,” Araqchi told the council, saying the snapback was “legally void, politically reckless and procedurally flawed.” “Diplomacy will never die, but it will be more difficult and more complicated than before,” he told reporters after the Security Council meeting.

The European powers had offered to delay reinstating sanctions for up to six months to allow space for talks on a long-term deal if Iran restored access for UN nuclear inspectors, addressed concerns about its stock of enriched uranium, and engaged in talks with the United States. The US representative at the council said Iran had failed to address E3 concerns meaning a return of sanctions was inevitable, although she left the door open for diplomacy. France said the return of sanctions was not the end of diplomacy. — Reuters

SEOUL HINTS AT US-NORTH KOREA MEETING THIS YEAR

SEOUL: A meeting between North Korea and the United States on the sidelines of this year’s APEC summit in South Korea “cannot be ruled out”, according to a Seoul foreign ministry official. Ties between Pyongyang and Washington have been in the deep freeze since a high-profile summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump in 2019 collapsed over sanctions relief and Pyongyang’s nuclear concessions. Since then, North Korea has

repeatedly declared itself an “irreversible” nuclear state, though Kim has recently signalled willingness to reopen a dialogue with Washington. A high-ranking official in South Korea’s foreign ministry said in New York that such talks could take place on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum, due to start in late October. “We cannot rule out the possibility,” the official said when asked about the prospective meeting. Trump is

expected to attend the forum, which will take place in the South Korean city of Gyeongju. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, gave no details of where US-North Korea talks might take place or what form they would take. North Korean state media quoted Kim this week as saying he had “fond memories” of the US leader and was open to future talks if Washington dropped its demand that Pyongyang give up its nuclear weapons. — AFP

New drone sightings over Denmark’s military base

UNIDENTIFIED drones flew over Danish military sites including its biggest base overnight following a slew of earlier sightings that Copenhagen has termed a “hybrid attack”, hinting at possible Russian involvement. Neighbouring Norway was also investigating “possible sightings of drones” early on Saturday near its biggest military base, Orland, where its F-35 fighter jets are parked. Copenhagen will host a European Union summit gathering heads of government on Wednesday and Thursday.

Denmark has accepted a Swedish offer of Stockholm’s anti-drone technology to ensure the meeting can proceed without disruption. In Denmark, drones were confirmed at “several military sites”, a military spokesman said on Saturday, refusing to provide other details. Danish police said “one to two drones” were observed on Friday around 8:15 pm (1815 GMT) near and over the Karup military base, the country’s biggest base which houses all of the armed forces’ helicopters, airspace surveillance, flight school and support functions. Karup is also home to parts of the defence command.

Police spokesman Simon Skelkjaer said he could not comment on where the drones came from, adding: “We didn’t take them down.” Police were cooperating with the military in their investigation, he said. The Karup base shares its runways with the Midtjylland civilian airport, which was briefly



A mobile radar installation is seen at the Danish Military’s area on Amager, Denmark. — AFP

closed, though no flights were affected as none were scheduled at that hour, Skelkjaer said.

In Norway, the military was collaborating with police to determine if it was indeed drones that were observed. “The sightings are probably drones but the investigation will find out what it was. As of now, we’re handling it as a drone sighting,” a spokesman for Norway’s joint headquarters, Brynjar Stordal, said. “At least two drones” flew in a restricted area near the base “for around an hour” before they disappeared, he said. “They were not engaged by us.” Mysterious drone observations across Denmark and Norway since Monday have prompted the closure of several airports. They followed drone incursions in Polish and Romanian territory and the violation of Estonian airspace by

Danish police said “one to two drones” were observed near and over the Karup military base, the country’s biggest base which houses all of the armed forces’ helicopters, airspace surveillance, flight school and support functions

Russian fighter jets, which raised tensions in light of Russia’s ongoing attack of Ukraine.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said that “over recent days, Denmark has been the victim of hybrid attacks,” referring to unconventional warfare. Investigators have so far failed to identify those responsible, but Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said on Thursday the flights appeared to be “the work of a professional actor”. Frederiksen has pointed the finger at Russia. “There is one main country that poses a threat to Europe’s security, and it is Russia.”

Moscow said on Thursday it “firmly rejects” any suggestion that it was involved in the Danish incidents. Its embassy in Copenhagen called them “a staged provocation.” — AFP

OVER INCENDIARY ACTIONS

US to revoke Colombian president’s visa



The US State Department said it would revoke the visa of Colombia’s leftist President Gustavo Petro, who returned to Bogota on Saturday after being accused of “incendiary actions” during a pro-Palestinian protest in New York. The State Department said that Petro had “stood on a NYC street and urged US soldiers to disobey orders and incite violence.” “We will revoke Petro’s visa due to his reckless and incendiary actions,” it said. — AFP

ELECTION CONCERNS

Moldova bans pro-Russian party from vote



Moldova’s election authority excluded the pro-Russian political party ‘Greater Moldova’ from participating in Sunday’s parliamentary vote due to suspected illegal financing, officials said on Saturday. It is the second pro-Russian party to be excluded within days of the vote, amid concerns over alleged Russian interference, the country’s election process, and the future of Moldova’s EU aspirations. Greater Moldova leader Victoria Furtuna said the decision was biased and she would appeal it. — Reuters

VIOLENCE ESCALATION

Blast reported outside Ecuador prison



An explosion went off outside a prison in the Ecuadoran port city of Guayaquil, police said, following a week of riots that left around 30 prisoners dead. Burnt tires and the twisted frame of a vehicle were found at the site of the blast. “Specialised personnel have been deployed to the area in response to the alert about the explosion of a device outside the Guayas prison,” police told local media. — AFP

The New York Times

New treatment shows promise for Huntington’s disease



DANA G SMITH

The author is a reporter for The New York Times covering personal health

PRELIMINARY results from a small clinical trial to treat Huntington’s disease, a devastating neurodegenerative condition, are the first to show a substantial benefit in patients. The treatment involved a gene therapy injected directly into the brain. Over the course of three years, patients who received the treatment had 75 per cent slower progression of their symptoms compared with a control group of patients who did not receive any treatment.

“There have been a few trials that have shown some small signals if you squint,” said Dr Steven Finkbeiner, director of the Taube/Koret Center for Neurodegenerative Disease at the Gladstone Institutes in San Francisco, who was not involved in the trial. “But there has not been anything close to this.”

The findings were announced on Wednesday in a news release from uniQure, the company that sponsored the research. The data have not been peer reviewed or published in an academic journal and should thus be considered only as a preliminary indication of what the final results may show.

Huntington’s is a rare brain disease characterized by motor, cognitive and emotional symptoms, ultimately resulting in early death. It is caused by a mutation in a single gene, called huntingtin, and is thought to affect about 40,000 Americans. Everyone’s brain cells produce the huntingtin protein, but in people with the disease, the gene mutation prompts neurons to make

a toxic version. Those abnormal proteins accumulate and, over time, they damage and destroy brain cells.

The gene therapy directed neurons to produce a strand of RNA that attaches to and silences the huntingtin RNA, preventing the cells from making the faulty protein. The therapy was delivered via a genetically modified virus surgically injected into the brain. The virus carried a special piece of DNA that instructed the neurons to produce the silencing RNA. The virus is removed by the brain’s immune system after a week or so, but the DNA will stay in the patients’ neurons for the rest of their lives.

“What we are doing is reprogramming neurons to become mini factories that make their own drug,” said Dr Ed Wild, a professor of neurology at University College London, who was a principal investigator on the trial.

Huntington’s disease symptoms typically emerge in middle age and include involuntary jerky movements, particularly of the limbs, face and tongue. As symptoms progress, they can cause difficulty with walking, talking and swallowing. Cognitive and emotional symptoms, including depression and irritability, and problems with planning, attention and self-control, are also common. Patients may die within 10 to 30 years of symptom onset.

The new therapy appears to be remarkably effective. Twelve patients in the early stages of the disease who received the highest dose of the injection experienced a 75 per cent slower decline than those who received no treatment, as measured by a comprehensive assessment of their movement and cognition,

The new therapy appears to be remarkably effective. Twelve patients in the early stages of the disease who received the highest dose of the injection experienced a 75% slower decline than those who received no treatment as well as their ability to perform activities of daily living.

as well as their ability to perform activities of daily living. Twelve other patients who received a moderate dose showed a more modest benefit.

The therapy was injected into an area of the brain called the striatum, which is important for movement and is especially vulnerable to Huntington’s disease. Other parts of the brain, like the frontal cortex, are also affected by the disease, but the cells there were not directly targeted. As a result, the brains of the patients who were treated still produce the faulty protein, just not as much as they did before, especially in the striatum.

The treatment is not without risks. For one, it involves a 12-hour brain surgery. “It’s a risk to do neurosurgery in anyone, and when someone has a brain disease, sometimes their brains are more vulnerable,” Anderson said. For example, they are more likely to experience complications from anesthesia, like agitation or confusion. And if there is atrophy in the brain, it can make it harder for the surgeon to inject the right area and not accidentally go off target.

A few weeks after the surgery, some patients showed signs of inflammation and increased pressure in their brains. Wild said these issues resolved on their own or were treated with anti-inflammatory drugs. Amy Gray, president and CEO of the Huntington’s Disease Society of America, said it was “definitely an exciting time” for patients and their families. But, she added, “As other trials in the past have failed in Huntington’s, there’s measured optimism for us in the community.”

Trump vows justice, not revenge

PRESIDENT Donald Trump celebrated the indictment of James Comey, the former FBI director, declaring that justice had finally been served. “It’s about justice, really,” Trump told reporters. “It’s not revenge.” But as the president engages in a wide-ranging retribution campaign against his political opponents, his own words and actions suggest otherwise. Even on Friday, Trump illustrated how much vengeance was at the heart of his second-term agenda. “They did it with me for four years,” he said of Democrats. “They went after me.”

While Trump has attempted, at times, to distance himself from the investigations into his political opponents or feign indifference to the outcomes — “If they’re not guilty, that’s fine,” he said over the weekend — he has more often justified his quest for revenge by accusing Democrats of weaponizing the Justice Department against him first.

The cases against Trump for mishandling classified documents and attempting to overturn the 2020 election were brought by a special counsel, a semi-independent prosecutor appointed when an investigation may raise the appearance of a conflict of interest for the Justice Department. Then-Attorney General Merrick Garland took great pains to show independence from the Biden White House.

In Comey’s case, Trump fired the US attorney who refused to file charges against the former FBI director, then replaced him with his former personal lawyer, who overrode the objections of career prosecutors. Comey was indicted on Thursday — just before the statute of limitations expired — on one count of making a false statement and one count of

obstructing a congressional proceeding, in connection with his testimony before a Senate committee in September 2020.

Only 14 of the 23 grand jurors who heard the presentation of charges voted to indict Comey, barely clearing the 12-vote threshold, according to the magistrate judge who oversaw the proceedings. For nearly a decade, Trump has targeted Comey, furious at him for leading an investigation into potential ties between Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign and Russians seeking to influence the election. His anger about that investigation has become so central to Trump’s political identity that “the Russia, Russia, Russia hoax” — Trump’s shorthand for the investigation — has become a rallying cry among his supporters.

The indictment of his longtime foe gave Trump both a political and personal victory, and was the latest example of how the president has upended the Justice Department, which under Trump’s direction has abandoned the principle of political independence that has guided the government’s pursuit of law and order for the last 40 years.

“That’s just been a fundamental tenet since Watergate,” Stacey Young, a former Justice Department lawyer and the executive director of Justice Connection, an organization composed of former department officials. “And the reason behind that is because DOJ’s powers to investigate and prosecute are immense. They can destroy or alter lives.” Young added: “I can’t think of a clearer or more egregious example of a president trampling over institutional norms and constitutional requirements,” referring to Comey’s



President Donald Trump speaks to reporters while leaving the White House.

indictment.

As a candidate, Trump promised to usher in an administration of retribution, and he has made clear that he expects the Justice Department to mete out punishment to his perceived enemies. The department has also issued a subpoena for records related to the travel history of Fani Willis, the Georgia district attorney who charged Trump in a sweeping election interference case.

The scope of the investigation is unclear, as is whether Willis is a target of the inquiry. But the subpoena suggested that the Trump administration was investigating another one of the president’s longtime foes.

White House officials said the president was focused on restoring integrity to the justice system. “The indictment against Comey speaks for itself, and the Trump administration looks forward to fair proceedings in the courts,” Abigail Jackson, a White House spokesperson, said in a statement.

But even some of Trump’s allies acknowledged how central the president’s own feelings were to the work of the Justice Department. “It shouldn’t be a great surprise that he is prepared to be as tough as his opponents, and that’s what you’re up against,” said Newt Gingrich, a former Republican House speaker and an ally of the president’s.

During his first term, Trump was impeached by the House twice, once for seeking election assistance from Ukraine and once for inciting an insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021. The Senate acquitted him both times. And after leaving office, the Justice Department indicted him in two separate cases: one for his efforts to overturn the 2020 election and another for his handling of classified documents.

The president on Friday denied that there was a “list” of people he was targeting but predicted that more indictments were coming. He has made clear in recent days that there are others he would like to see the Justice Department pursue.



TYLER PAGER

The writer is a White House correspondent, covering President Trump and his administration

While Trump has attempted, at times, to distance himself from the investigations into his political opponents or feign indifference to the outcomes, he has more often justified his quest for revenge by accusing Democrats of weaponizing the Justice Department against him first.

OPINION

Do we need dementia-friendly hospitals?



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

At a recent workshop, a nurse shared her experience with a 78-year-old patient who had Alzheimer’s disease. He had been admitted with a chest infection, but during his stay, he became increasingly distressed and confused. At times, he shouted, refused help from nurses, and even tried to leave his bed. It is possible that the constant beeping of machines and loud conversations from other patients made him more disoriented and fearful. What was meant to be a routine admission to treat his infection turned into an overwhelming experience for both the patient and the staff caring for him. Sadly, this situation is not uncommon. It raises an important question: how can we make hospitals more friendly for people with dementia? Over the last fourteen years, I have worked with people who have Alzheimer’s and other dementias. Such patients, when hospitalised, often have frightening experiences. The unfamiliar surroundings, bright fluorescent lights and the busy environment worsen their disorientation. Patients may remove IV lines or refuse medication not because they are stubborn,

but because the surroundings feel unsafe and incomprehensible. In some cases, nurses in the wards are unable to communicate clearly with patients, either because of a language barrier or a lack of training in effective communication with such patients. This results in conflict between the patient’s relatives and the nurses, who get accused of being uncaring. Research shows that people with dementia admitted to general wards are at greater risk of worsening confusion, falls and longer hospital stays. Their physical illness may be treated, but their cognitive and emotional needs are often overlooked. This gap in care places additional strain on healthcare staff and family members, who may witness their loved ones becoming more agitated or withdrawn during admission. Several institutions around the world are setting up dementia-friendly hospitals to make care safer, calmer and more humane. This does not necessarily mean building new facilities but making a few changes to accommodate patients’ needs. A dementia-friendly hospital includes designing quieter wards where unnecessary alarms are minimised. Soft lighting and colour-coded hallways are used to reduce

Research shows that people with dementia admitted to general wards are at greater risk of worsening confusion, falls and longer hospital stays

confusion. Clear, simple signs with symbols and words, colour coding, and familiar imagery would help patients find their way in the hospital. When possible, each patient will be assigned the same nurse to care for them to avoid unnecessary anxiety. Staff would be trained in effective communication skills that focus on speaking slowly, using simple language, allowing the patient extra time for responses, and checking understanding. Having familiar faces and voices helps orient the patient and reduces distress. At a dementia friendly hospital, a family member would accompany the patients during their hospital stay, assist the staff in identifying the patient’s routines, preferences and communication style. This is likely to reduce patient distress and agitation as they feel safe with a familiar person. He or she would be more informed about any changes to the care plan and learn a few practical skills that would improve the quality of. With rising numbers of people with Alzheimer’s and other dementias around the world, it is time to make their hospital stay more peaceful and dignified.

NEPAL’S NEW PM
FACES UPHILL BATTLE
AFTER UNREST

PAAVAN MATHEMA

After Nepal’s deadliest unrest in decades, caretaker Prime Minister Sushila Karki is working to forge her cabinet, restore order and prepare for elections within six months. Karki, a 73-year-old former chief justice, faces the challenge of balancing her limited mandate with public pressure for reforms, especially on corruption and accountability. Karki, who has named seven ministers so far, faces multiple challenges ahead. The interim government’s core task is to hold credible polls on March 5, 2026. Narayan Prasad Bhattarai, spokesman for the Election Commission, said there “might be challenges”, but insisted “six months is enough time”. Deep public distrust in Nepal’s established parties and a changed political landscape will complicate the task. “The 2026 elections will have huge stakes and bring with them the threat of political violence,” wrote Ashish Pradhan of the International Crisis Group. Pradhan said that if the election timetable slips, people could feel “they have no recourse but to take to the streets again”. Youth anger over corruption fuelled the protests, with viral videos contrasting their hardship with the wealth of the ruling elite. Nepal ranks 107 out of 180 on Transparency International’s corruption perceptions index. Karki has said she is “determined” to tackle corruption, and has launched a hotline to report government bribery. The World Bank says a “staggering” 82 per cent of Nepal’s workforce is in informal employment, with GDP per capita at just \$1,447 in 2024. Every day, over 2,000 Nepalis leave the country to seek employment abroad, according to the International Labour Organization. More than 56 per cent of the 30 million people are aged under 30, and jobs for the young are hard to find. The government has formed a panel to probe protest violence. Nirajan Thapaliya, from Amnesty International Nepal, said it must be an “impartial investigation”. Some protesters were seen brandishing rifles on the second day of the unrest, with weapons allegedly seized from the police. K P Sharma Oli, the ousted prime minister, has blamed “infiltrators” for inciting bloodshed and alleges the rifles came from another source. “Averting financial collapse - the state was already facing troubling economic headwinds prior to the protests - is sure to consume much of the interim government’s attention,” Pradhan says. — AFP

Meeting Muscat’s
‘Mr Loads of Money’

HARRY Enfield is a famous English TV comedian. He plays various characters. His “Mr Loads of Money” character was one of those comedy characters so ridiculous you thought he couldn’t possibly exist in real life. Loud, brash, waving wads of cash in people’s faces, he was the walking, shouting embodiment of the nouveau riche. The joke, of course, is that in truth we’ve all met one. Sometimes it’s a neighbour. Sometimes it’s a friend posting a photo on Facebook with a glass of champagne in front of someone else’s parked Ferrari. Now I’d always thought Oman was immune to this sort of thing. Omanis, in my experience, are usually understated, modest. Even the wealthy ones don’t flaunt it. No Rolexes thrust under your nose. No “look at me” with photos of themselves stood in front of a Rolls on social media. That was until last week, when I met a genuine, flesh-and-blood, Mr Loads of Money in Muscat.

And I’m still chuckling about it. It all started with a watch. My wife bought me a beautiful pre-owned piece in Muscat. But later I realised it was missing the original authenticity cards. For watch lovers, that’s catastrophic. Without them, the resale value drops like a stone. So, back we went to the shop. The salesman, a polite but slippery chap, insisted he’d told us about the missing cards at the time of purchase. He hadn’t. After a bit of verbal fencing, he suggested we speak to the owner. Enter the boss. An elderly gentleman, seated behind a vast desk, plush leather chair, Arabic coffee at the ready. He greeted us warmly and asked how I’d like the refund. I suggested putting it back



Harry Enfield’s ‘Mr Loads of Money’ was one of those absurd comedy characters you’d never imagine could exist in real life



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former School Principal and Author

on my wife’s credit card, less any bank commission. Straightforward enough. But then came the twist. He leaned back and declared with an exaggerated air of confidence in front of his slippery sales assistant, all the while waving the receipt in the air, “The bank won’t refund to a credit card if the transaction was made more than a week ago.” Having run businesses myself, I knew this wasn’t true. So I told him. Politely. And that’s when the fireworks began. His face turned crimson. His voice rose. My calm insistence that he was simply “mistaken” only made him angrier. Then, in a moment of pure comedy, he plunged his hand into the pocket of his dishdasha and yanked out a wad of cash so thick it could have propped up a bank vault. Ten thousand rials, at least. With theatrical fury, he peeled off the

refund and slapped it into my hand. But he didn’t stop there. He kept the rest of the money in full view, waving it around as if auditioning for Harry Enfield himself. All that was missing was Harry’s catchphrase: “Loads a money!” There he was. My first ever Omani Mr Loads of Money. No fake Rolex. No rented Ferrari. Just a mountain of cash and a burning desire to show it off. I tried not to laugh. But the sight of this furious man brandishing his fortune like a stage prop was too much. He refunded my money in full. But he also gave me the best comedy sketch I’ve seen in years. Some people know the price of everything and the value of nothing. But me? I walked away with my refund and a story that Harry Enfield himself would have killed for. And that, my friends, is priceless.

Progress... with more than a touch of madness!



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

If you're my age, you will look around you now and see so many things that were never even thought of when you were younger, and if not inconceivable, then unbelievable seems inadequate. Online shopping would never have been a 'thing' as my generation would never have trusted it, but through the likes of Amazon, Temu and Shien, just to name a few, there is an entirely different perspective 'out there' now. We all do Internet banking now, don't we? And it's not proven to be as untrustworthy as we thought it would be. In fact, dare I say it, it's a giant step forward. Look around you and see how many electric vehicles are on the roads; only a few years since Elon Musk's Tesla took EVs from mobility scooters and golf carts to the world's roads and highways. I even drive an EV now, and I love the very different, fun driving experience. The Internet, though, has been the genesis, the how and why of so much we do, see and experience today, and to be honest, I still don't understand how it works. However, I am eternally grateful for the development of PCs that has rid me of the frustrations of writing assignments and articles either by hand or at a typewriter, which was remarkably unforgiving of misspellings and layout errors. How much Tippex, a titanium dioxide

correction fluid, did I use in those days? I'll never know! The Internet was always the 'stuff of dreams' that became a reality on the back of significant investment by the United States Defence 'industry' during the 1960s and 70s, with the integration of the wider scientific community through the National Science Foundation, a decade later. Several different versions of 'closed' networks achieved success. However, security concerns held back progress on what was originally known as the 'Internetwork' until 1974, when Vinton Cerf used the name 'Internet' when setting out operational protocols. The forerunners of today's global public data networks subsequently reached half a million global subscribers, and the Internet has continued to evolve ever since, without a backward step. Social media, selfies, telling the world everything you do, influencers, are so far removed from how individuals, societies, and global awareness have evolved in ways that we could never have believed, From the days of having 'penpals' in exotic places, and writing letters to family and friends, to sending postcards back home on the rare occasions we travelled, shaking off this need for privacy and discretion has been a 'challenge' to my generation. I still find it difficult to be relaxed for Facebook pics,

The Internet, though, has been the genesis, the how and why of so much we do, see and experience today, and to be honest, I still don't understand how it works

though I am becoming more relaxed about some of its sharing elements. I do wonder sometimes if the younger generation needs to 'share' all they do, but hey, I'm told not to be so 'old' about it! The growth of computers, especially the access to personal devices, was the stuff of comic books, and I recall buying my first 'home computer' in the early '80s, which utilised cassette storage and drives. However, the personal device marketplace was facilitated by the first microprocessors, invented by Italian American engineer Federico Faggin and Intel, in 1971. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak launched the Apple 1 in 1976, but it was the upgraded Apple 2, in 1977 that gave wings to personal computers, though, the launch of the Apple Mac, at halftime of the 1984 Superbowl, took the PC industry stratospheric, and mobile phones were to follow soon after, with 2G in 1991, 3G in 2001, 4G in 2009 and 5G in 2019. And to conclude, taking us all the way from the sublime to the ridiculous... Vaping: Who would have ever thought we would see people sucking rocket fuel from plastic boxes? Not me! Glycol, glycerine and nicotine. What a cocktail of thinking, and among all the progress we can be proud of, this is a special, and not in a good way, kind of madness!

SARKOZY JAILING REIGNITES DEBATE OVER JUSTICE

GABRIEL STARGARDTER AND JULIETTE JABKHIRO

Former president Nicolas Sarkozy's prison sentence has deepened divisions in France over judges' handling of political wrongdoing, months before far-right chief Marine Le Pen attempts to overturn an embezzlement conviction and run for top office. A Paris court jolted the political sphere last Thursday when it handed Sarkozy a five-year sentence for criminal conspiracy over attempts to raise campaign funds from Libya. He will soon become the country's first post-war president to be imprisoned. Ludovic Friat, the president of the USM, the largest union representing French prosecutors and judges, said the ruling demonstrated that no one was above the law - even if some might choose to question the court's motivation. "There will clearly be a before and after this decision," he said. "In high-profile political-financial trials, some inevitably see judges stepping onto the political stage. What I regret is that... too often, this becomes a smokescreen that diverts attention from the offences actually committed." As Sarkozy left court, he reiterated his innocence, and said the ruling would undermine faith in France's judiciary. "What happened today... is of extreme gravity in regard to the rule of law, and for the trust one can have in the justice system," he said. Sarkozy's prison sentence is enforceable immediately, with the former president given a short time to put his affairs in order, but not allowed to avoid prison pending an appeal, as some French politicians have done in the past. Appeals can take years, fuelling a sense of impunity for those in power, so judges are increasingly handing out "provisional execution" sentences that start immediately, lawyers and politicians have said. "For several decades, there has been a growing democratic demand for integrity among elected officials," Judith Allenbach, the president of another judicial union, said. She said 89 per cent of jail terms over two years were enforced ahead of any appeals process and that judges were enacting laws passed by parliament mandating tougher sanctions for this type of crime. In a sign of the tensions, the Paris prosecutor's office said on Saturday it had launched investigations into threatening messages directed at the head judge in this week's ruling on Sarkozy. The lead judge in Le Pen's conviction earlier this year also received threats and was placed under police protection. Le Pen, the far-right leader of the National Rally (RN) party, was given a "provisional execution" in March, when she was convicted of embezzling EU funds. She got a five-year political ban that bars her from running in the 2027 election. The justice ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Bareges' remarks. — Reuters

On climate change, the market is wrong again

AS business, government and nonprofit leaders debate the future of climate action ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Brazil, the global economy remains vulnerable to acute and chronic climate-driven shocks whose impact could be more severe than that of the 2008 global financial crisis. At a time when many governments and businesses continue to underestimate and underprice physical climate risk, we must remember that neither financial markets nor regulators are always right. What if their current complacency about climate risks is catastrophically wrong? The 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath showed how fast our expectations can be shattered. In the mid-2000s, deregulation and simplification were the norm: balance sheets were run thin, and profits and losses ran high. Financial engineering boomed as risks were packaged, diluted and obfuscated, and as credit was given where it hadn't been earned. In the face of all this, expressions of concern were drowned out by the din of transactions. But the signs were there. The fundamentals were not right. By late 2008, the global economy was teetering on the brink of collapse. In the space of days, longstanding banking giants were swept away. Only government bailouts prevented the entire financial system from melting down. The post-crisis banking sector looks very different than the one that preceded it. Owing to tougher rules and tighter oversight, good governance and resilience restored trust in the banking sector. Long-term investors – pension funds and insurance companies – patiently endured years of expensive recovery before value was restored and dividends resumed. If the banks had gone, so, too, would those holdings, and most of today's financial system with them. The post-crisis era was marked by collective humility and acceptance of systemic risk. This was reflected in the Financial Stability Board's recognition in 2015 of climate change as perhaps the greatest systemic threat of all.



US satellites show that the intensity of extreme weather events is now double the average recorded in the 2003-20 period.



FIONA WATSON

The writer is Vice President of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development

Ten years later, however, our systems and processes remain ill-equipped to measure and manage the systemic risks posed by climate change. With the focus on climate issues slipping down investors' agendas, this is a dangerous lapse. From broken supply chains and damaged assets to infrastructure shocks, public health crises and community disruption, many businesses are already feeling the profound impact of climate change. Nor is the problem confined to headline-grabbing disasters. Subtle, chronic effects are quietly eroding value, often in ways that our systems are ill-equipped to detect or manage. Once again, the fundamentals are not right. Data from Nasa underscores this point. US satellites show that the intensity of extreme weather events is now double the average recorded in the 2003-20 period. This trend has tragic consequences. In Africa, for example, 23 million people faced acute hunger in 2023, owing to record droughts. The global economy is also taking a beating. Research by the World Economic Forum finds that weather-related damage to businesses, infrastructure, and other fixed assets may have almost tripled since 2000. The bill for the last decade topped \$2 trillion, with costs in 2022-23 alone reaching \$451 billion.

Yet rather than take steps to mitigate these risks, many investors, corporations and governments continue to incentivise activities that compound them. Leading companies must battle to convince their boards and investors to buy into forward-looking strategies. Banks – the traditional stewards of opportunity – are struggling to manage lending risk associated with new and emerging technologies. The business case for pre-emptive resilience and innovation just isn't clear enough to overcome the allure of the status quo. In other words, markets are getting things very wrong once again. One exception is the insurance industry. Experts at pricing risk, these firms are learning fast. Between 2023-24, climate-related disasters forced insurers to shell out \$143 billion in claims payments. More and more of them are doing the math and concluding that climate coverage simply doesn't add up. They must either hike premiums to exorbitant levels or exit the disaster-risk market altogether. The latter scenario is all too likely. Günther Thallinger, a board member at the global insurer Allianz, recently warned that: "entire regions are becoming uninsurable" as key asset classes degrade "in real time." ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Al Seeb lost to Kazma (73–82) in a game that witnessed clear fluctuations in performance

SEEB, AL BASHAYER SUFFER DEFEATS IN DUBAI TOURNEY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Al Seeb and Al Bashayer basketball teams began their campaigns in the 37th edition of the Arab Club Basketball Championship for Men, hosted by Dubai, with defeats against Kuwait’s Kazma and Syria’s Al Wahda, respectively.

In the first match, Al Seeb lost to Kazma (73–82) in a game that witnessed clear fluctuations in performance. Al Seeb impressed in the first and fourth quarters but fell behind in the second and third, which allowed Kazma to seize control and secure the win by a margin of points. Al Seeb’s offence was led by professional player Jawad Atkuya, who scored 27 points, alongside teammate Tosho Tejono with 26 points. For Kazma, Philip Green stood out with 17 points, and Johnson added 15 points.

The match began strongly for Al Seeb, who ended the first quarter ahead (22–19). However, repeated defensive errors, especially against Kazma’s zone defence in the second quarter, cost them many chances, as they managed only 10 points compared to 25 for Kazma, finishing the half trailing (32–44). Kazma extended their dominance in the third quarter, adding 20 points to Al Seeb’s 13, widening the gap to (64–45). Although Al Seeb bounced back with a strong offensive showing in the fourth quarter, scoring 28 points against Kazma’s 18 it wasn’t enough to overturn the deficit, ending the game (73–82).

In the second match, Al Bashayer fell narrowly to Syria’s Al Wahda (74–79) in a fiercely competitive contest marked by balanced performances across all four quarters. Both teams exchanged baskets and control, but Al Wahda managed to secure victory in the final minutes with a five-point lead.

For Al Bashayer, professional player Samja Heni led the charge with 24 points, followed by Idris Mansour with 17, while Ahmed al Halhili and Rote Munyong contributed 11 each. On the other side, Al Wahda’s standouts were Majed Ahmed and Carlos Anthony, both scoring 15 points.

The game began with Al Bashayer trailing in the first quarter (13–23). Their performance improved slightly in the second, but Al Wahda maintained control, ending the half (38–27). In the third quarter, Al Wahda extended their lead with 21 points to Al Bashayer’s 19, making it 59–46). Al Bashayer delivered their best offensive effort in the fourth quarter, scoring 28 points equal to Al Wahda, but it was not enough to close the gap, ending the match in defeat (74–79).



Al Bashayer fell narrowly to Syria’s Al Wahda (74–79) in a fiercely competitive contest marked by balanced performances across all four quarters

Oman Club edge Al Shabab, Al Nasr held by Dhofar



Dhofar and Al Nasr fans during the southern derby match

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

OMAN Club earned a valuable 1–0 victory over hosts Al Shabab in their third-round Jindal League clash at the Seeb Sports Stadium.

The match began with Al Shabab pressing hard, nearly taking the lead in the 4th minute through Ahmed al Riyami, but his shot went wide. Gradually, Oman Club found their rhythm in midfield and created some opportunities. The biggest chance of the half came in the 41st minute when Al Riyami’s strike for Al Shabab rattled the crossbar.

In stoppage time of the first half, Walid al Musallami stunned the crowd with a spectacular long-range effort from midfield that sailed past goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini, putting Oman ahead with a wonder goal.

The second half saw Al Shabab throw

men forward in search of an equaliser, but Oman’s organised defence and goalkeeper Abdulaziz al Hasani stood firm. Both managers made substitutions to freshen up their sides, yet the scoreline remained unchanged until the final whistle. Oman Club walked away with all three points.

With this win, Oman Club climbed to 6 points in sixth place, equal with Al Shabab, who also have 6 points but slipped to fifth in the table, losing ground in the chase for the top spot.

SOUTHERN DERBY ENDS IN STALEMATE
Al Nasr and Dhofar shared the spoils with a 1–1 draw in a highly anticipated southern derby at the Al Saada Sports Complex, played in front of a large crowd as part of the third round of the Jindal League. The first half was evenly balanced, with both sides trading attacks but failing to score. Jordanian international Munther Omar Abu Amara came close for Dhofar from a free kick, only to be denied by goalkeeper

Ibrahim Al Rajhi. Al Nasr responded with a series of attempts, the most dangerous being Hussein al Shahri’s strike in the 30th minute that narrowly missed. The half ended goalless, with Mohammed al Habsi’s header for Dhofar drifting just wide. After the break, Al Nasr pressed forward and broke the deadlock in the 56th minute through Mulham al Sunaidy, who finished off a well-worked move with a confident strike past Mazin al Kasbi. Dhofar hit back quickly, however, as Mohammed al Habsi leveled in the 62nd minute, converting a cross inside the box.

The final minutes saw Al Nasr waste chances to reclaim the lead through Al Shahri and Yemeni forward Omar al Dahhi, while Dhofar’s attempts fizzled out. The match ended in a fair draw, granting both sides a point.

Al Nasr’s tally rose to 7 points, placing them third, while Dhofar lifted their total to just 1 point, leaving them in 11th and far from the leading pack.

Oman Handball to mark 9th appearance at Zagreb

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

The International Handball Federation (IHF) confirmed the dates of the 2026 IHF Men’s and Women’s Beach Handball World Championship which will take place in Zagreb, Croatia, from 23 to 28 June 2026.

The upcoming globe event in 2026 will mark the first time Croatia will host the prestigious global event, which will be staged on the scenic shores of Lake Jarun, offering players and fans a unique blend of high-level competition and the country’s natural and cultural charm. Also, the next edition of the world beach handball event will mark Oman’s ninth appearance in these championships.

Oman’s team under direct supervision of the national experienced head coach, Hamood al Hasani, will begin their preparatory programme upon approval by the national team committee. Oman’s rich history at the World Championship began



Oman’s team will begin their preparatory programme upon approval by the national team committee

with a debut came in 2004 in Hurghada, Egypt. Since then, the team has been a regular participant, with notable finishes including 4th place in 2009 (Taipei), 8th place in 2012 (Musannah, Oman), 6th place in 2014 (Brazil), and 7th place in 2016 (Hungary).

The team also competed in Thailand (2017), Russia (2018), and most recently in China (2023), where they finished 15th. Oman had also qualified for the 2020 edition in Italy, which was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The 2026 edition will be the sixth time the Beach Handball World Championships are held in Europe, following Spain (2008), Turkey (2010), Hungary (2016), Russia (2018), and Greece (2022).

A total of 32 teams (men and women) will compete for world glory.

Among the qualified teams, Oman’s national beach handball team will proudly represent Asia after winning the 10th Asian Beach Handball Championship which was hosted in Muscat in last May. They will be joined by

Iran, the continental runners-up, as Asia’s two representatives. Oman had managed to blank Iran 2-0 in the final summit clash of the Asian event. The opening half concluded at 21-18 while the deciding half finished at 14-10.

As many as ten men’s teams secured qualification including: Oman and Iran from Asia, host and defending champion Croatia, and six European powerhouses including Germany, Spain, Hungary, France, Portugal, and Denmark along with Italy. Qualification is still pending for teams from Africa, Oceania, South America, Central and North America, and the Caribbean.

In the women’s category, nine teams confirmed their slots including: Asia’s Vietnam and the Philippines, alongside Europe’s Spain, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Greece, defending champions Germany, and the hosts Croatia. The remaining qualifiers from Africa and the Americas will be determined in due course.

SHORT TAKES



Saif al Rushaidi during his participation in the UCI meeting

AL RUSHAIDI ELECTED TO WORLD CYCLING BODY PANEL

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Oman’s veteran sports administrator Saif bin Subaa al Rushaidi has been elected as a member of Cycliste Internationale (UCI) Management Committee for the 2025–2029 term, representing Asia. Prominent French cycling figure David Lappartient was reelected for a third term as the UCI President. The elections were held on the sidelines of the 194th UCI Congress in Kigali, Rwanda, coinciding with the UCI Road World Championships.

Saif al Rushaidi, who is the current chairman of the Oman Cycling Association (OCA) and Vice-Chairman of the Asian Cycling Confederation, was behind the Sultanate of Oman’s big leap in hosting major cycling events like Tour of Oman and Tour of Salalah.

The OCA chief affirmed that his election to the top panel is a source of pride and a significant milestone for Oman.

Commenting on his election, Al Rushaidi expressed pride in this achievement, describing it as a historic milestone for Oman, the Arab world and Asia. “Winning this position at the UCI is a source of pride and an important achievement that demonstrates the ability of Arab sports administrators to contribute meaningfully to international sport,” he said.

“Reaching this prestigious position within the UCI is the result of many years of hard work. I will devote all my experience and expertise to serving cycling in Oman, the Arab world, and across the continent,” Al Rushaidi added.

David Lappartient was re-elected as UCI President at the head of a renewed Management Committee. The 194th Congress of the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) – an Elective Congress – took place in Kigali, Rwanda, during the first UCI Road World Championships organised on the African continent. The UCI Congress brought together representatives of 117 UCI-member National Federations from five continents.

President of the International Federation since the UCI Congress in Bergen, Norway, held in September 2017, and re-elected in Leuven, Belgium, in September 2021, David Lappartient was re-elected for a third four-year term at the head of the institution. The only candidate for the presidency, he was re-elected by acclamation.

Al Rushaidi secured a seat, receiving 30 out of 40 votes, surpassing his sole competitor, the UAE’s Mansour Juma Nasser.

Four Vice-Presidents were elected: Enrico Della Casa (Italy), Amarjit Singh Gill Darshan Singh (Malaysia), Katerina Nash (Czech Republic), and José Manuel Pelaez (Cuba). New members from across the continents also joined the committee.

Oman’s Ahmad al Harthy has to settle for P11 FIA WEC start in Japan

BMW M4 LMGT3 racer only 0.081 seconds away from Hyperpole berth

Team confident of a strong LMGT3 challenge in Fuji



Ahmed al Harthy during Fuji race

Al Harthy aims to shine at Fuji speedway today

HUNDREDTHS OF a second were all that made the difference in qualifying at Fuji Speedway on Saturday, to restrict Ahmad al Harthy to an 11th place start on the LMGT3 class grid for tomorrow’s penultimate race of the FIA World Endurance Championship season. On the bubble of reaching the top 10 Hyperpole shoot-out in Japan for the bulk of the 12-minute session, the Omani’s quickest time of the run was a lap of 1m41.456 seconds. With just a minute or so remaining he was ninth on the timing screens, but was ultimately shuffled back to 11th.

As usual, Al Harthy – who is supported by OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, Oman LNG, BMW Oman, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), and Experience Oman – is looking for a strong race day with team-mates Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde. Not least as the No.46 BMW LMGT3 achieved a podium finish at Fuji last year from 12th on the grid.

The build-up for tomorrow’s six-hour race started on Friday, 26th September, with opening practice where the Team WRT trio started off with the fifth fastest time, a lap of 1m41.679



Team WRT BMW M4 car during the practice

seconds, before then placing 15th in session two as more focus turned to work on race set-up.

Saturday race began with the usual third practice run and the team posted a time of 1m41.523 seconds to conclude the outing 12th quickest in session, but only 0.7 seconds away from the fastest ahead of the afternoon’s qualifying.

Al Harthy started off the grid determining session with an initial lap of 1m52.094 seconds and then improved to 1m44.914 seconds on his next attempt. With just four minutes of the session to go the Omani jumped into the top 10 with a time of

1m41.770 seconds, but so close were the times just a few tenths of a second were making the difference between four or five places.

On his penultimate lap Al Harthy went ninth fastest, a lap of 1m41.456 seconds, but he was almost immediately edged back to 11th place – missing out on the Hyperpole top 10 shoot-out by a miniscule 0.081 seconds.

“Our one lap pace, compared to our competitors, is what we delivered in qualifying. It’s very difficult to push more than I did, I feel I gave it close to 100 per cent from my end. In terms of the race itself, we hope to have a stronger race car and we’re

looking forward to tomorrow.

The aim, as always, will be to make strong progress and then see how the race unfolds from there.” Al Harthy said.

The penultimate race of the FIA WEC season, the 6 Hours of Fuji, is scheduled to get underway at 11.00 local time on Sunday, 28th September. Live timing and live coverage will be available at the official championship website [www.fiawec.com](#)

2025 FIA WEC LMGT3 DRIVER STANDINGS (AFTER RD6):

- 1st Riccardo Pera / Richard Lietz / Ryan Hardwick, 95pts
- 2nd Alessio Rovera / Francois Heriau / Simon Mann, 76pts
- 3rd Ben Keating / Daniel Juncadella / Jonny Edgar, 66pts
- 10th Ahmad al Harthy / Valentino Rossi / Kelvin van der Linde, 40pts

2025 FIA WEC LMGT3 TEAM STANDINGS (AFTER RD6):

- 1st Manthey 1st Phorm (Porsche 911 GT3 R), 95pts
- 2nd Vista AF Corse (Ferrari 296), 76pts
- 3rd TF Sport (Corvette Z06), 66pts
- 10th Team WRT (BMW M4 LMGT3), 40pts

Nissanka ton in vain as India edge Sri Lanka in Super Over

DUBAI: Defending champions India survived a scintillating century by Pathum Nissanka to edge out Sri Lanka in a Super Over after their Asia Cup match ended in a tie on Friday.

India, who had already booked their place in the final against Pakistan, posted an impressive 202-5.

In reply, however, Nissanka hammered 107 off 58 balls to lead Sri Lanka’s chase which also ended on 202-5 in the last Super Four contest of the regional tournament in Dubai.

Sri Lanka managed just two runs from their Super Over which was bowled by

Arshdeep Singh.

Kusal Perera sliced the first ball to deep point and Dasun Shanaka’s dismissal from the fifth ball marked the end of the innings.

It took India skipper Suryakumar Yadav just one ball to settle the match which meant his side remain unbeaten in six matches ahead of the final against arch-rivals Pakistan on Sunday at the same venue.

Nissanka stood out with his first T20 century laced with seven fours and six sixes and his 127-run second-wicket partnership with left-hander Perera, who made 58.

Mystery spinner Varun



Chakravarthy broke the stand with the wicket of Perera as slow bowlers got India back into the game.

With 12 to get off the last over, Harshit Rana dismissed Nissanka on the first ball and restricted Sri Lanka to 11, sending the match into a Super Over.

Put in to bat, India posted a challenging total after opener Abhishek Sharma hit 61 off 31 balls.

The left-handed Abhishek set the tone with a 59-run second-wicket stand with Suryakumar, who fell after a scratchy 12.

Abhishek, who has a strike-rate of over 200 in the

regional tournament, reached his third successive fifty with two straight boundaries to take the attack to the opposition.

Skipper Charith Asalanka cut short Abhishek’s blitz before Tilak Varma and wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson put on 66 for the fourth wicket.

India lost two more wickets including Samson for 39 but Varma, who hit 49, and fellow left-hander Axar Patel with 21, steered the team past 200. Tournament favourites India and Pakistan will clash for the third time in the tournament with relations strained between the teams. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Canada's Magdeleine Vallieres celebrates winning the gold medal in the women's elite road race. — Reuters

VALLIERES WINS WOMEN’S ROAD RACE WORLD TITLE

KIGALI: Canada's Magdeleine Vallieres won the women's road race on a long, gruelling course over the hills of Kigali at the cycling world championships on Saturday.

The 24-year old broke late on the 167 km run over 11 circuits of the Rwandan capital to win ahead of New Zealand's Niamh Fisher-Black and Spain's Mavi Garcia in third.

Starting the day ranked 131st in the world, Vallieres got away from the other medallists on the last of the 15.2 km laps of the circuit on a testing cobbled climb and crossed the summit finish alone completely exhausted.

"I can hardly believe it," said Vallieres after by far her biggest career win. "I just got in the right break," she explained after finishing 23 seconds clear.

"I prepared well, I knew I was on good form, so I tried. I told myself I didn't want to have any regrets. And I don't," said Vallieres.

"It's great to win here, and with the worlds next year in Montreal, it's been perfect. It was my dream to win it, and now it's come true - it's crazy."

Tour de France champion Pauline Ferrand-Prevot started as favourite but was heavily tracked by her rivals as they mistakenly allowed a small group to get over a minute ahead.

Ferrand-Prevot eventually trailed home alongside American Chloe Dygert almost two minutes down.

"This kind of thing often happens in a world championships. I'm more disappointed for the team than myself," said Ferrand-Prevot, the Frenchwoman who won the Olympic mountain bike title in Paris.

Dutch rider Anna van der Breggen dropped back with 30 km to go while last week's time-trial champion Marlen Reusser made a brave but doomed solo effort to counter-attack. These are the first cycling worlds to be held in Africa. The winners are awarded a rainbow jersey that they wear for the year, a much coveted prize in a race where riders represent their nation rather than a professional team.

The men's race is on Sunday and is extremely long at 267.5 km. It includes 33 climbs over 15 loops and one longer, even harder circuit with an extra cobbled climb. Favourite Tadej Pogacar said the humidity and altitude were potentially decisive factors. "We're quite high here and you can feel it, not so much walking around, but on the bike. Also, the air quality here in the city is not the best," he said. — AFP



Atletico Madrid's Norwegian forward #09 Alexander Sorloth heads the ball and scores his team's second goal during the Spanish league football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Real Madrid CF at the Metropolitano stadium in Madrid. — AFP

Atletico thrash Madrid 5-2 in gripping derby

JULIAN ALVAREZ struck twice to earn Atletico Madrid an emphatic 5-2 derby victory over La Liga leaders Real Madrid on Saturday, ending their rivals' perfect start to the season.

Xabi Alonso's side had won all six of their opening games but Diego Simeone's Atletico overran them at the Metropolitano stadium, taking the lead through Robin Le Normand.

Kylian Mbappe and Arda Guler netted to put Real Madrid in front but Alexander Sorloth levelled for Atletico at the end of a thrilling first half.

Alvarez fired home from the penalty spot and then bent home a free-kick, with Antoine Griezmann grabbing the fifth late on to seal an important win after a shaky start to the campaign, with Atletico rising provisionally to fourth.

Led by a flying Mbappe, Real came into the derby as the only side in the league with a 100 per cent record. Although he French superstar scored again to reach eight league goals for the season, Atletico attacked relentlessly



Madrid's Kylian Mbappe in action with Atletico's Marcos Llorente. — Reuters

and deserved their victory.

Giuliano Simeone, coach Diego Simeone's son, took advantage of slack Madrid defending to whip in a cross which Le Normand headed home after 14 minutes to open the scoring.

The visitors reacted well and Mbappe levelled with a crisp finish after breaking in down the right.

Atletico were taking the game to Real Madrid, with Alonso's side content to spring forward on the counter, trying to utilise the pace of Vinicius Junior and

Mbappe. The Brazilian winger created Madrid's second goal, turning brilliantly in the box to break away from Marcos Llorente and Le Normand, before crossing for Guler to strike. Alvarez, who netted a hat-trick against Rayo Vallecano in midweek, curled a shot around Thibaut Courtois but against the box as Atletico continued pushing forwards.

Atletico defender Clement Lenglet scored but the goal was ruled out for handball, with the Frenchman using his forearm to deflect it home.

In first-half stoppage time Atletico pulled level, with Sorloth, lurking behind Dean Huijsen, planting a header beyond Courtois.

The Norwegian striker celebrated with Atletico fans, who embraced him — a risky move when already on a yellow card, but he was not dismissed.

Atletico moved in front for the second time in the match when Guler gave away a penalty for a high foot on Nico Gonzalez, catching the Rojiblanco player's head.

Alvarez, who had a penalty controversially disallowed in a Champions League shoot-out the last time these sides met, beat Courtois from the spot, even though the Belgian went the right way.

Courtois saved from Sorloth but despite getting a hand to Alvarez's free-kick, he could not keep it out as Atletico pushed two goals clear.

On as a substitute Atletico talisman Griezmann wrapped up a superb victory for his team, rolling the ball past Courtois as the home fans rocked in delight and the players did a lap of honour, after only their third league win of the season. — AFP

Sinner survives to sink qualifier as Swiatek launches Beijing bid

BEIJING: Jannik Sinner survived a scare to sink French qualifier Terence Atmane at the China Open on Saturday as Iga Swiatek launched her title bid and home player Zheng Qinwen returned from injury.

The world number two Italian beat Atmane 6-4, 5-7, 6-0 and will face 57th-ranked Fabian Marozsan of Hungary in the quarter-finals in Beijing.

"It was a very tough match today," four-time Grand Slam champion Sinner said. "I felt like he was serving great."

Sinner said he lost concentration during the second set but quickly

recovered to steamroll past 68th-ranked Atmane in the decider.

"I started off very well in the third set then I saw (Atmane) struggling a bit physically," he said.

"It's not how you want to win a match but very happy to be again in the next round."

Atmane declared it would be a fight with two aces in the first game and made Sinner work for the first set.

The Frenchman sent down six more aces in the second and broke the 24-year-old Sinner to force a deciding set.

With Atmane flagging, Sinner raced to victory.

In the women's draw,



Italy's Jannik Sinner hits a return to France's Terence Atmane during their men's singles match at the China Open tennis tournament in Beijing. — AFP

qualifier Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus stunned 14th-ranked Naomi Osaka of Japan, the four-time major champion.

The 31-year-old world no. 130 fought back to win 1-6, 6-4, 6-2.

SWIATEK ON SONG

It was more routine elsewhere as world number two Swiatek breezed past China's Yuan Yue, cruising into round three with a 6-0, 6-3 victory.

The top seed from Poland next faces Colombia's Camila Osorio, ranked 83rd.

Swiatek broke early to set the tone for a one-sided

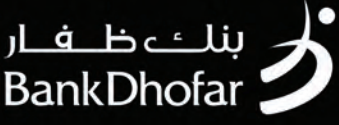
match against Yuan, winning the first set without dropping a game when the Chinese wildcard fired long.

Cheered on by her home crowd, the world no. 110 made a better fist of it in the second set but Swiatek wrapped things up when Yuan returned into the net.

The crowd had more to cheer when fan favourite Zheng marked her return to competition by beating Colombia's Emiliana Arango 6-3, 6-2.

The world number nine last played at Wimbledon in July, when she was beaten in round one by Czech player Katerina Siniakova. — AFP

BUSINESS



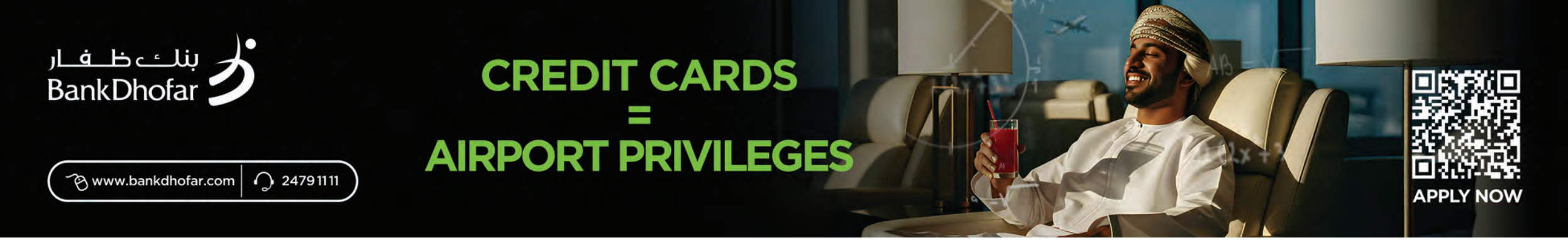
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STABLEOUTLOOK

S&P AFFIRMS OMAN’S SOVEREIGN RATINGS AT ‘BBB-/A-3’

Global credit rating agency S&P Global Ratings has affirmed its ‘BBB-’ long-term and ‘A-3’ short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings on the Sultanate of Oman, with a stable outlook. The transfer and convertibility assessment remains at ‘BBB’.

The affirmation reflects S&P’s confidence in Oman’s commitment to fiscal prudence and ongoing structural reforms, even amidst expectations of lower oil prices in the coming years.

“We expect the Omani government will remain committed to financial discipline throughout a potentially extended period of lower oil prices”, S&P said, adding that while economic diversification is advancing, hydrocarbons still represent the mainstay of export revenues.

According to S&P’s latest projections, Oman is forecast to post a modest fiscal deficit of 0.5% of GDP in 2025, before achieving broadly balanced budgets over 2026–2028. The rating agency also expects Oman to maintain a net general government asset position of about 8% over 2025–2028.

S&P’s stable outlook balances the benefits of Oman’s fiscal and economic reforms against its structural exposure to fluctuations in oil prices. The agency’s baseline scenario assumes Brent crude prices averaging \$60 per barrel in 2025, rising to \$65 per barrel between 2026 and 2028, compared with an average of \$84 per barrel over 2021–2024.

Oman’s efforts to reduce reliance on oil are beginning to bear fruit. Initiatives include the reorganisation of government-related entities (GREs), asset sales aimed at stimulating the private sector and the introduction of the region’s first personal income tax (PIT). Although PIT revenues are expected to be minor initially, they mark an important step in diversifying revenue streams.

“Measures that reduce the impact of oil price volatility — such as fiscal reforms, expenditure controls and private sector development — are steadily strengthening Oman’s economic resilience”, S&P noted.

If oil prices fall significantly, S&P expects the government could offset fiscal pressures through measures such as curtailing capital spending (currently about 1.7% of GDP) and adjusting non-obligatory transfers to savings funds.

On the growth front, S&P forecasts average GDP growth of 2% annually between 2025 and 2028, supported by both hydrocarbon and nonhydrocarbon sectors. Non-oil activities — including construction, manufacturing and services — are now estimated to comprise around 73% of GDP, underscoring the gradual shift towards a more diversified economy.

Oil production is projected to rise to 1.2 million barrels per day by 2028, but weaker prices are expected to narrow current account receipts, resulting in average current account deficits of 1.9% of GDP over the forecast period. S&P anticipates these deficits will be largely financed by foreign direct investment, which has averaged about 10% of GDP in recent years.

GCC tourism surges, adding \$247 billion to GDP in 2024

THE travel and tourism sector contributed around \$247.1 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states by the end of 2024, marking a 31.9% increase compared with 2019.

According to the GCC Statistical Centre, the sector’s share is projected to reach 13.3% of the region’s GDP by 2034, equivalent to \$371.2 billion, underscoring its growing role as a key driver of economic, social and environmental development across the Gulf.

The data was released in a report titled ‘Tourism in the GCC: A Gateway to Development and Sustainable Transformation’ issued on World Tourism Day (September 27). It highlights the industry’s importance in job creation, with the sector’s contribution to employment valued at \$4.3 billion in 2024, up 24.9% from 2019. By 2034, travel and tourism are expected to generate around 1.3 million new jobs.

The sector is also strengthening youth and women’s participation in the labour market. Women accounted for 13% of the

The tourism sector’s share is projected to reach 13.3% of the GCC’s GDP by 2034, equivalent to \$371.2 billion

GCC countries have advanced efforts in eco-tourism and sustainability by expanding natural reserves

workforce in 2024, a rise of 73.2% compared with 2019.

On the environmental front, GCC countries have advanced efforts in eco-tourism and sustainability by expanding natural reserves. Protected areas — land and marine — now represent 19% of the GCC’s total territory as of 2023, an increase of 7.5% from the previous year.

The report also noted a sharp rise in intra-GCC tourism. The number of travellers moving between Gulf states reached 19.3 million in 2024, a 52.1% increase from 2019. These trips accounted for 26.7% of all international tourist arrivals in the region. — ONA

Al Batinah North posts strong economic momentum

Al Batinah North Governorate is seeing sustained growth in commerce and investment as Oman encourages governorates to take a larger role in trade, industry and FDI attraction. The governorate’s Directorate-General of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion completed 141,218 transactions in the first half of 2025, compared with 112,388 transactions in full-year 2024, signalling a faster pace of activity.

Shaikh Jamal bin Abdullah al Hinai, Director-General of the Directorate in Al Batinah North Governorate, said 94,020 commercial transactions were processed via the Oman Business platform. In standards and metrology, the Directorate completed 8,293 transactions, conducted 255 product tests, calibrated 424 scales, carried out three technical visits and registered three laboratories.

Total commercial and industrial services reached 96,675 transactions in H1 2025. Intellectual property services totalled 2,053 transactions, up from 1,410 in 2024, reflecting growing awareness of IP protection.

The Oman Business

The governorate completed 141,218 transactions in the first half of 2025

platform offers more than 50 e-services, including commercial registration, licences and permits, commercial agency registration, certificates of origin, IP services, company liquidation and registry cancellation. A Know Your Customer (KYC) feature enables foreign investors to register remotely from outside Oman using biometric verification and 140+ checks by matching a live face scan to a passport photo. An Investment Guide helps investors review documents, fees and requirements before applying.

With competitive fundamentals, modern infrastructure and an investor-friendly climate, Al Batinah North Governorate is well positioned to attract further local and foreign investment.

Working with other government entities, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) is addressing investor challenges and encouraging uptake of opportunities in the governorate’s industrial cities.

By end-Q2 2025, cumulative commercial records held by investors reached 5,088, while 311 investment licences were issued in the same period.

To strengthen Oman’s global investment appeal, the Invest Oman Lounge provides one-stop services for investors and the Invest Oman Platform lists curated opportunities — including 36 opportunities in Al Batinah North Governorate with aggregate capital of about RO 188.889 million — underscoring the strategic drive to position the governorate as a leading destination for future investment. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Oman to host WLGA Middle East LPG Summit in November

OMAN TO HOST WLGA MIDDLE EAST LPG SUMMIT IN NOVEMBER

MUSCAT: Oman will host one of the world’s largest gatherings of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) stakeholders when the World Liquid Gas Association (WLGA) convenes the Middle East LPG Summit & Expo 2025 from November 10–11 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

The event, held under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, is organised by WLGA, the Paris-based global body representing the LPG industry. The Oman Energy Association (OPAL) is the Strategic Partner, while National Gas Company (NGC) and India’s Bharat Tank are Platinum Sponsors.

Expected to attract more than 2,000 participants, the summit will bring together government officials, business leaders and technical experts to discuss the future of LPG in the context of energy transition and sustainable growth. Running alongside the conference, the Middle East’s largest LPG-focused exhibition will feature exhibitors from over 30 countries showcasing cutting-edge technologies and solutions. The exhibition will be open free to the public.

Among the highlights of the two-day programme are strategic discussions on energy transition, innovation and industry challenges; technical workshops led by WLGA experts; and the launch of the Women in LPG Global Network (WINLPG) Oman Chapter. WINLPG, founded in 2015, is a global initiative with more than 4,000 members across 15 national chapters, aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion in the sector.

An exclusive networking dinner at OCEC will also provide delegates with opportunities to forge new partnerships and strengthen industry collaboration.

James Rockall, Managing Director and CEO of WLGA, said: “We are proud to welcome the industry to the WLGA Middle East LPG Summit & Expo 2025 and look forward to uniting global stakeholders at this important regional event”.

Established in 1987, WLGA represents more than 300 companies across 125 countries and holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

A press conference unveiling further details of the summit and expo is scheduled for October 9 at Crowne Plaza Muscat, with participation from key stakeholders.

For more information, visit: <https://middleeastlpgsummit.com>.

Sohar Islamic reaffirms commitment to Islamic finance

MUSCAT: Reflecting its deep-rooted commitment to advancing Islamic finance and supporting platforms that encourage dialogue and collaboration, Sohar Islamic – Sohar International’s Islamic window, served as the Main Sponsor of the 3rd Zakat Forum, held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. Organised from September 23 to 25, the forum was inaugurated on Wednesday, September 24, with Shaikh Salim Mustahil al Maashani, Adviser in the Diwan of Royal Court, as Guest of Honour, alongside the esteemed presence of

Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. By sponsoring the forum for the third consecutive year, Sohar Islamic reaffirmed its role as a trusted partner in promoting Islamic finance and fostering meaningful dialogue on issues of social and economic importance.

The forum focused on the role of Zakat committees in advancing Oman Vision 2040, particularly in strengthening identity, citizenship and social solidarity. Discussions also highlighted the importance of building partnerships with the public and private sectors, training committee employees



on best practices and sharing successful experiences from Oman and abroad. Sohar Islamic’s sponsorship aligned with these national priorities, underscoring its support for initiatives that enhance

community development and sustainable growth. Speaking on the occasion, Fahad Akbar al Zadjali, Head – Islamic Banking, Sohar Islamic, said, “The Zakat Forum is more than

a gathering of thought leaders – it is a testament to the transformative role Islamic finance plays in shaping equitable societies. For banks like Sohar Islamic, platforms such as this serve as opportunities to foster awareness, encourage collaboration and drive innovation across the industry, while advancing knowledge-sharing, promoting Islamic financial literacy and ensuring Sharia-compliant solutions remain central to sustainable growth. Our presence at the forum reflects our belief that Islamic banks must move beyond transactional services to act as enablers of progress,

advocates of inclusivity and contributors to long-term development”. Through its participation, Sohar Islamic engaged with policymakers, scholars and practitioners on the evolving landscape of Zakat and Islamic finance. The bank also showcased its diverse portfolio of Sharia-compliant products and services tailored to modern financial needs. By connecting with participants from diverse backgrounds, Sohar Islamic demonstrated the relevance of Zakat within today’s economies and the positive role Islamic finance can play in advancing community well-being.

Ominvest showcases IR leadership at MEIRA 2025

OMAN INTERNATIONAL Development and Investment Company SAOG (Ominvest) has concluded a high-impact participation as the strategic partner of the MEIRA Annual Conference & Awards 2025, held in Muscat on September 24–25. This flagship event brought together over 1000 attendees, including CEOs, senior investor relations professionals, institutional investors, listed companies and regulators from across the GCC and beyond.

Under the theme ‘Elevating Impact: The New Era of IR in the Middle East’, this year’s conference served as a timely platform to reinforce the importance of transparent communication, regulatory alignment and strategic investor engagement in today’s evolving capital markets landscape. With the Sultanate of Oman playing host to the flagship MEIRA event for the first time in several years, Ominvest’s role as strategic partner underscored its leadership in driving professional standards in IR, both locally and regionally.

Throughout the two-day event, Ominvest delegates participated in high-profile engagements, including two panel sessions and investor discussions. On Day 1, Azza al Habsi, AVP of Economic Research & Emerging Trends at Ominvest moderated Oman Vision 2040 and Investment Opportunities panel, which explored the rise of Oman’s capital markets and its crucial role in attracting foreign investment. On Day 2, Ominvest’s Chief Legal, Compliance and Governance Officer, Sarah Lashko, spoke at the Strengthening Corporate Governance through Effective IR panel, discussing the rising importance of ESG-linked governance disclosures in investment decisions amongst other important topics.

Beyond the formal agenda, the Ominvest delegation actively engaged in bilateral meetings and side sessions, reinforcing



its commitment to open dialogue and knowledge exchange. The company also leveraged the platform to highlight its ongoing transformation and portfolio growth across key sectors, including financial services, insurance and fintech.

Waleed al Yarubi, Chief People, Corporate Communication and Sustainability Officer, commented: “This year’s MEIRA Annual Conference 2025 underscored a powerful truth, Investor Relations is the strategic pillar of corporate growth. Ominvest’s role as Strategic Partner reflects its conviction that Oman is entering a new phase of capital market maturity. We leveraged this forum to not only share our journey of ongoing transformation and portfolio growth but also to engage stakeholders on the crucial link between effective IR and robust corporate governance. Our commitment is to set a regional benchmark for stakeholder transparency, positioning Ominvest and Oman as a preferred destination for discerning global investors”.

Andrew Tarbuck, Chairman of MEIRA, added: “We are deeply grateful for Ominvest’s strategic partnership and

their instrumental role in this year’s conference. Their contribution across thought leadership panels and investor discussions demonstrated the importance of aligning corporate disclosure with long-term investment strategies. It is partnerships like these that help strengthen the regional IR ecosystem and enhance trust between issuers and the investment community”.

The MEIRA Conference 2025 comes on the back of increased IR momentum in Oman, driven in part by increased capital markets activity in recent years. Ominvest’s participation followed its co-hosting of the MEIRA Oman Chapter roundtable in May 2025, delivered in partnership with the Muscat Stock Exchange. The Group’s presence at the annual event also reinforced its broader communications objectives – to showcase Oman’s private sector leadership, attract international capital and promote best practice in stakeholder transparency.

Ominvest will continue to work closely with MEIRA, listed companies and regulators to champion high-impact IR practices and position Oman as a maturing capital market within the region.

Top Autos, Deep Way to launch e-trucks



Top Autos LLC has recently entered into a strategic distribution agreement with Deep Way, marking a significant milestone in advancing green mobility in Oman. This partnership will see the introduction of Oman’s first-ever electric heavy-duty trucks, aligning with Oman’s vision 2040, for sustainable transportation and reduced carbon footprints.

Founded just four years ago, Deep Way has already sold over 5,000 electric trucks in China and is now expanding aggressively across the GCC countries. With its brand promise of creating a new intelligent transportation era, Deep Way is committed to redefining mobility with its cutting-edge electric drive

solutions and intelligent design.

Deep Way trucks stand out for their highly innovative and efficient drive systems, industry-leading integrated chassis design, compact battery and transmission layout and intelligent torque distribution. The trucks boast ultra-low wind resistance, top-tier cockpit technology and large-capacity CATL lithium iron phosphate

batteries, offering impressive ranges of 340 km to 440 km.

Speaking on the partnership, Abdullah Bin Mohammed Saud Bahwan, CEO, Saud Bahwan Group, said, “At Top Autos LLC, we have always believed in bringing world-class, future-ready mobility solutions to Oman. Our agreement with Deep Way reflects our strong commitment to supporting

Oman’s Green Mobility initiative. Deep Way’s pioneering technology, combined with our extensive infrastructure, nationwide reach and passion for the highest levels of customer satisfaction, will enable us to deliver a reliable and sustainable transport solution across Oman.”

Lin Facai, CEO, Deep Way, said “Partnering with Top Autos LLC is a major step in Deep Way’s journey to expand into the GCC, especially Oman. Top Autos LLC’s rich experience in diverse areas of operations, its impressive and large-scale infrastructure, skilled workforce and its inspiring customer-first philosophy offer us with the ideal foundation to successfully introduce our innovative range of electric trucks in Oman.”

CBOREPORT



OMAN MANDATES BANKS TO DISCLOSE CLIMATE-RELATED RISKS FROM 2026

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 27

Commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman will be required to begin disclosing climate-related risks and practices starting from the 2026 financial year, according to the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

The move is part of a broader effort by the country's apex bank to integrate climate risk into financial stability oversight, the CBO said in its newly published 2025 Financial Stability Report.

While affirming that Oman has not yet experienced significant climate-induced financial disruptions, the Central Bank cautioned that the Sultanate of Oman remains vulnerable to physical risks arising from rising temperatures and extreme weather events such as cyclones and flash floods.

"These events pose potential threats to critical infrastructure, economic productivity and the insurance sector. The increasing severity and frequency of such events may impact asset valuations, damage collateral and elevate underwriting and operational risks for financial institutions", the report noted.

In addition to physical risks, the Central Bank highlighted transition risks associated with the global shift towards decarbonisation.

"Oman's hydrocarbon-reliant sectors may face tightening international environmental regulations, carbon pricing adjustments and shifting investor sentiment. These pressures could lead to a revaluation of carbon-intensive assets and weaken the credit profiles of affected corporates — particularly if banks lack granular data to assess their exposures", it warned.

Compounding these concerns, the report noted, is the absence of climate scenario analysis across the banking sector, which could heighten vulnerability to abrupt changes in policy or market expectations.

In response, the CBO in 2023 directed all banks to submit implementation plans by June 2025 and to begin disclosing climate-related risks and practices from Fiscal 2026. At the same time, the Bank began coordinating with national environmental bodies to "support the classification of banks and borrowers by energy intensity".

The Central Bank reiterated that climate change is emerging as a significant structural threat to global financial stability.

Asyad Shipping unveils 'OMAN 3165' expedition

ASYAD SHIPPING, part of Asyad Group, is sponsoring "Oman 3165" Expedition that was launched at the Royal Geographical Society in London, coinciding with World Maritime Day under the theme "Our Ocean, Our Commitment, Our Opportunity".

Held under the auspices of Badr bin Mohammed Badr al Mantheri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom, the event convened representatives of IMO member states, alongside prestigious scientific institutions, educational institutions, universities and Asyad Shipping's strategic partners.

The Oman 3165 Expedition is an unprecedented two-month maritime journey along Oman's entire 3,165-kilometre coastline. Set to unfold in two phases: the first from November to December 2025 and the second from January to February 2026, the journey will be led by renowned explorer Mark Evans in a Greenland-style solo kayak built, propelled solely by paddling, currents and waves. Designed to be carried out under the strictest sustainability standards and free from carbon emissions, the expedition will stand as the first of its kind in the region and a global showcase for marine sustainability.

More than a journey, the



The Oman 3165 Expedition is an unprecedented two-month maritime journey along Oman's entire 3,165-kilometre coastline.

"Oman 3165" Expedition is a multimedia narrative of Oman's legacy and enduring relationship with the sea. Through podcasts, field research and artistic collaborations, it will chronicle the nation's centuries-old seafaring heritage, highlight the biodiversity of its marine and coastal ecosystems and amplify the voices of communities and young Omanis working for a sustainable

future. By transforming the sea into an open laboratory, the initiative underscores Oman's active contribution to global conversations on climate change and ocean stewardship, while protecting fragile coastal and marine ecosystems. Educational content, including a dedicated podcast series, will later be shared with schools worldwide, extending the expedition's impact to classrooms and

raising global awareness of the importance of safeguarding our oceans.

Capt Khalil al Hooti, Vice President of Marine at Asyad Shipping, commented:

"The "Oman 3165" Expedition embodies the meeting point of Omani seafaring heritage and environmental responsibility. By supporting this initiative, Asyad Shipping underscores its commitment to placing sustainability at the heart of its operations while enhancing Oman's profile on the international maritime stage. This journey strengthens Oman's candidacy for International Maritime Organisation membership and reflects our shared ambition to achieve net-zero by 2050 through bold investments in green hydrogen, renewable energy and advanced shipping technologies. It underscores the Sultanate of Oman's role as a steward of Oman's maritime heritage and a visionary partner in shaping the future of global shipping".

The launch of the "Oman 3165" Expedition will serve as a strategic platform for international collaboration on sustainability and as a clear signal that Oman is charting a course to redefine its maritime role, not only as a historic gateway on global trade routes, but as a trusted regional voice and responsible global partner in protecting the world's oceans.

OMANI MARBLE ORDERS SURGE BEYOND \$7M AT MARMOMAC

VERONA: concluded its participation in the 59th edition of Marmomac, the leading international exhibition for stone, architectural design, and stone technology, held in Verona, Italy, amid strong global demand for Omani marble. Nour bint Mohammed Al Rawahi, Head of Marketing at the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), revealed that preliminary results from the Sultanate's pavilion show commercial orders from Omani companies exceeding \$7

million, with 80 potential contracts in discussion. These include export agreements for Omani marble destined for major high-cost construction projects within Europe and beyond.

She highlighted the keen interest of investors and business owners visiting Oman's pavilion, noting a desire to expand and localise their businesses within Oman, particularly in Madayn's industrial cities. Visitors expressed appreciation for Oman's competitive

advantages, including its strategic geographic location, streamlined investment facilities, and a fully integrated business environment conducive to diverse projects.

Mahmoud bin Sulaiman Al Yazidi, Head of the Export Promotion Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, emphasized that global stone markets are expanding rapidly, with demand for marble products on the rise. — ONA

Crowdfunding records 81 per cent growth in project financing

MUSCAT: Crowdfunding platforms in Oman are witnessing strong growth, reflecting rising investor confidence and the sector's emergence as an innovative financing option built on modern fintech solutions.

According to data from the Financial Services Authority (FSA), licensed crowdfunding platforms financed 43 projects worth RO 2.28 million in Q2 2025, up 81% from the same period in 2024, when 23 projects worth RO 1.26 million were funded. The surge underscores the growing

participation of qualified investors and their trust in these platforms.

Since the launch of the first crowdfunding platform in 2022, total financing through licensed platforms in Oman has reached RO 14.9 million by the end of Q2 2025. The figures highlight crowdfunding's expanding role in supporting startups and SMEs, offering alternatives beyond the traditional banking system and channelling capital into innovative ventures.

The number of active



platforms has now risen to seven, providing entrepreneurs and investors with more diverse options. Authorities expect crowdfunding to contribute to economic diversification and strengthen Oman's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The FSA stressed its commitment to investor protection and market transparency by enforcing strict regulations on platform operators, including due diligence, disclosure verification, investment limits

and compliance with anti-money laundering standards. It also runs continuous awareness and education programmes for market participants.

The regulatory framework for crowdfunding was introduced in early 2021, laying the groundwork for a secure and transparent market.

The first licensed platform was launched in 2022, followed by others, creating a trusted digital environment to support entrepreneurs and SMEs. — ONA

SMOOTH FLOW

Iraq resumes Kurdish oil exports



Iraq has resumed crude exports from the Kurdistan region after more than two years, ending a halt caused by legal and technical disputes, state media reported. Exports via the Iraq-Türkiye pipeline restarted, with the State Oil Marketing Organisation (SOMO) receiving 190,000 barrels per day for export and 50,000 bpd for domestic use. The halt followed a 2023 International Chamber of Commerce ruling that gave Baghdad exclusive rights to market Iraqi oil. — AFP

FED PRESSURE

Dollar at risk if Trump sways Fed



The US dollar faces downside risks if political pressure from President Donald Trump pushes the Federal Reserve towards a more dovish stance, according to Daleep Singh, vice chair and chief global economist at PGIM Fixed Income. Trump's criticism of Fed Chair Jerome Powell, his attempt to remove Fed Governor Lisa Cook and the appointment of adviser Stephen Miran have fuelled concerns that the central bank could ease monetary policy too aggressively. — Reuters

COUNTERING THREATS

Germany planning stricter rules



Germany is to enhance its capabilities in countering the threat of illegal drone overflights, Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt has said following a week of scares in northern Europe. "I aim to lay down in the air security law that the military will be able to provide domestic assistance to the police," Dobrindt said on Saturday. The minister said his aim was to set up a drone competency centre combining the federal and state governments and the military. — dpa

OPINION

Monetising innovation: Oman’s next economic frontier



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

INNOVATION COMES from Oman’s pivotal moment in its economic journey. For centuries, the development of Oman was built upon oil and gas, however, the breaches in the oil and gas sector and the pivot towards sustainability beg the answers to these questions: What next? What can sustain the Sultanate of Oman? There lies the next economic opportunity; monetising the privately held innovative resources of the country. Oman has touched the tip of the iceberg, as it is now seeking to invest and generate bankable solutions to these innovative and economic monetisable resources that create jobs, sustain inward investment and help make the Oman economy stronger.

THE BUSINESS OF IDEAS
A prominent issue Oman is now facing, as well as many other nations, is the gap stagnation; the gap between innovative thinking and implementation. Oman is ignoring the current perception at the global forefront and is instead focusing and investing on and devising policies to make its country more exploitable phenomenon. As it is apt to focusing investment on the advancement of the influencing constituents of invention profitability, the country stands to gain handsomely. The policy actively seeks to create elastic linkages between technology and investment, capital. Oman vision 2040 seeks to invest and fundamentally transform learning, the economy and the engineering sector of Oman.

THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM
One of the signs of progress is the growth of Oman’s startup ecosystem. Oman Future Fund, Riyada and Invest Oman, for instance, have contributed to supporting entrepreneurs, especially in fintech, renewable energy, logistics and agritech. These initiatives offer seed financing, training and network access, easing the turbulence associated with the fragile early

years of a startup.
The concern, though, is how these startups can expand and compete in the region or globally? Fostering a climate of ‘calculated risk’ is one of the needed answers. Progress does not occur without risk and the innovation of failure is welcomed. This futuristic scenario captures the essence of the cultural defiance many young Omanis face. Leaving the safety net of government jobs to pursue an entrepreneurial journey is a challenge.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
Besides the monetisation of innovation, Oman’s digital transformation agenda is also another driver for it. The 5G rollout, cloud computing proliferation and government investment in AI are creating a springboard for an industry reset. Emerging is, for instance, the supply chain and logistics sector driven fintech for SMEs, blockchain-based supply chain solutions and Omani-centric integrated e-commerce platforms.
The presence of a youthful population skilled in ICT, supported by government investment in digital infrastructures, facilitates the implementation of a number of initiatives, technological, economic and otherwise. However, to effectively monetise these initiatives, it is important to diversify and extend beyond the boundaries of the Sultanate of Oman, taking advantage of the country’s strategic position to the Gulf, Asia and Africa.
One recurrent issue in developing economies is the gap between educational institutions and the business world, otherwise known as the ivory tower syndrome. There is a plethora of quality research being conducted in the universities in Oman and there is a risk a significant portion of it may be confined to unpublished manuscripts as opposed to marketable commodities. The strengthening of IP, the establishment of technology transfer vehicles and the connection of researchers with

Oman is ignoring the current perception at the global forefront and is instead focusing on and devising policies to make its country more exploitable phenomenon. As it is apt to focusing investment on the advancement of the influencing constituents of invention profitability, the country stands to gain handsomely

business entrepreneurs are all endeavours that aim to bridge this gap.
This cooperation has the potential to change the academic landscape in Oman by introducing research that enables post-academic businesses, providing the country with new patents and international strategic partnerships, while at the same time enriching the private sector and economically diversifying the country by providing Oman a new exportable commodity: knowledge.

A CHANGE IN THE CULTURE
The most vital transformation is changing the culture. The successful monetisation of an innovation goes beyond engineers and financiers — the story must be told and sold; and risks taken. It means unshackling one’s mind from job creation to value creation, from the confines of a national economy to a global one. Thankfully, an increasing portion of Oman’s youth appears to be moving in this direction. After attaining international education and contact with global systems, many reemerge prepared to tackle pertinent problems in Oman using entrepreneurial approaches.

THE FUTURE
Monetisation of innovation is a substantial investment to make and must be treated with the same fervour as an extreme endeavour. Oman has levelled the terrain with suitable policies, scaffolding and other adjacently supportive institutions. The upcoming phase will be Oman’s ability to scale achievements, pool international collaborative resources, as well as eliminate cases where budding entrepreneurs are treated as anomalies. Should Oman succeed, its position in the global economy will not be the same. It will no longer be viewed merely as a country fortunate to have an abundance of natural resources, but as an oasis that nurtures the intermingling of ideas and industries and turns innovation into prosperity.

POWERING AHEAD: IEA’S OUTLOOK FOR MENA ELECTRICITY



NAJAH
AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate

The International Energy Agency (IEA) recently released its report *The Future of Electricity in the Middle East and North Africa*, projecting that electricity demand across the region will rise by nearly 50 per cent by 2035. For Oman, the findings present both challenges and opportunities. Rising consumption, driven by urban growth, industry and cooling needs, will

require major investment in new capacity. At the same time, the Sultanate of Oman has the resources and policy frameworks to become a regional leader in renewable power. The IEA highlights that between 2000 and 2024, electricity consumption in MENA tripled, reflecting how quickly demand is accelerating. Looking ahead, almost 40 per cent of the projected growth will come from two essential services — air conditioning and desalination. For Oman, where cooling is vital and desalination provides the bulk of potable water, this link between electricity and daily survival could define the nation’s energy future.
Today, more than 90 per cent of MENA’s electricity is generated from oil and gas. The IEA notes that oil-fired generation is set to decline, while natural gas and renewables expand. For Oman, this raises a strategic question: whether to continue burning gas for domestic power or to prioritise its use for exports and industry, meeting more of the domestic demand with solar and wind.
The report foresees solar PV capacity in MENA increasing around ten-fold by 2035 under current policies, with renewables expected to supply about a quarter of the region’s electricity generation. Oman is well positioned to capture this growth. With some of the highest solar irradiance levels in the world, it has already advanced large projects such as the Manah and Ibri solar plants. These developments show how Oman can shift from dependence on hydrocarbons to leadership in renewables and perhaps even supply power across borders in the future. But the transition is not only about generation. The IEA warns that future grids must be more flexible and resilient, able to handle variable renewable supply and heavy summer peaks.

#IAmTourism: people drive responsible tourism

TOURISM STORIES often focus on destinations — iconic landscapes, headline attractions and record visitor numbers. But the most decisive factor in a visitor’s experience is human: the receptionist who solves a problem, the guide who brings a heritage site to life, the young graduate who chooses to build a career in hospitality rather than treat it as a stopgap. If we want responsible tourism, we must start with responsible jobs — good training, fair opportunity, clear career paths and partnerships that make those things real.

Oman Group’s #IAmTourism strategy was launched with this conviction. Framed around four practical pillars — Educate, Attract, Retain and Partner — it aims to turn tourism into a profession of choice for Omanis, not a last resort. Between 2022 and 2025, the programme has built awareness in schools, opened structured entry routes into hotels and tourism businesses, invested in leadership development and coordinated government, education and industry around a simple idea:
Educate — We cannot recruit people into careers they do not understand. Through school roadshows, classroom modules delivered with the Global Travel & Tourism Partnership (GTTP) and college collaboration, #IAmTourism shows young Omanis what real tourism work looks like: creative, technology-enabled, team-based and connected to national pride. Teachers and career advisers are engaged, too — because they influence choices well before graduation.
Attract — Interest needs a doorway. Programmes such as Midhiyaf (training plus hotel placements), MASARAT (graduate development



DR SALIM
AL FLAITHI

Group Head of Human Capital Business Partners, Oman Tourism Development Company

with job rotations and mentoring) and GIFTed (pathways for people with disabilities) give clear, supported routes into the sector. The message is simple: if you’re motivated to serve and to learn, there is a structured path for you — and it doesn’t require leaving Oman to progress.
Retain — Keeping talent is as important as finding it. SHIFT and LIFT build supervisory and managerial capability through blended learning and workplace projects, while GIFT focuses on advancing women into leadership.
Partner — No single organisation can fix a system problem. #IAmTourism works with the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, leading hotel groups and global partners such as WTTC and GTTP. Partnerships align policy, training and real jobs — turning good intentions into daily practice.
• Career identity is strengthening. The narrative is shifting from “temporary job” to “professional pathway”. School engagement and role-model storytelling make a visible difference to how families view the sector.
• Entry barriers are lower. Structured programmes provide paid, mentored experience — critical for young people who cannot afford unpaid internships or trial-and-error job hunting.
• Retention is improving. When newcomers receive coaching, progression plans and recognition, they stay. Leadership programmes are not a luxury; they are the backbone of workforce stability.
• Inclusion is moving from slogan to practice. Initiatives for women and people with disabilities widen

the talent pool and reflect the values visitors increasingly look for when they choose where to travel.
1. Make workforce part of your responsibility agenda. Environmental action and cultural stewardship matter — but so does job quality. Track not only how many roles are created, but who accesses them, who advances and who stays.
2. Tell a better story about tourism work. Young people choose futures they can visualise. Use real practitioners and real workplaces, not stock photos, to show what modern hospitality does and why it matters.
3. Build bridges, not bottlenecks. Align schools, colleges and employers around shared standards and shared incentives. A three-month placement with mentoring beats a year of classroom theory on its own.
4. Invest in first-line leaders. Supervisors determine daily experience. Equip them to coach, resolve conflict and grow people and then retention will follow.
5. Design for inclusion from day one. Programmes like GIFT and GIFTed prove that accessibility and gender equity are not add-ons — they’re performance multipliers.
No strategy eliminates every challenge. Skills must keep pace with new technologies and collaboration must outlast political cycles. Yet Oman’s approach offers a practical blueprint: Educate early, Attract through fair entry routes, Retain by growing leaders and valuing well-being and Partner across government, education and industry. Responsible tourism starts with responsible jobs. When we invest in people, the whole destination improves — one welcome, one service recovery, one promoted supervisor at a time.

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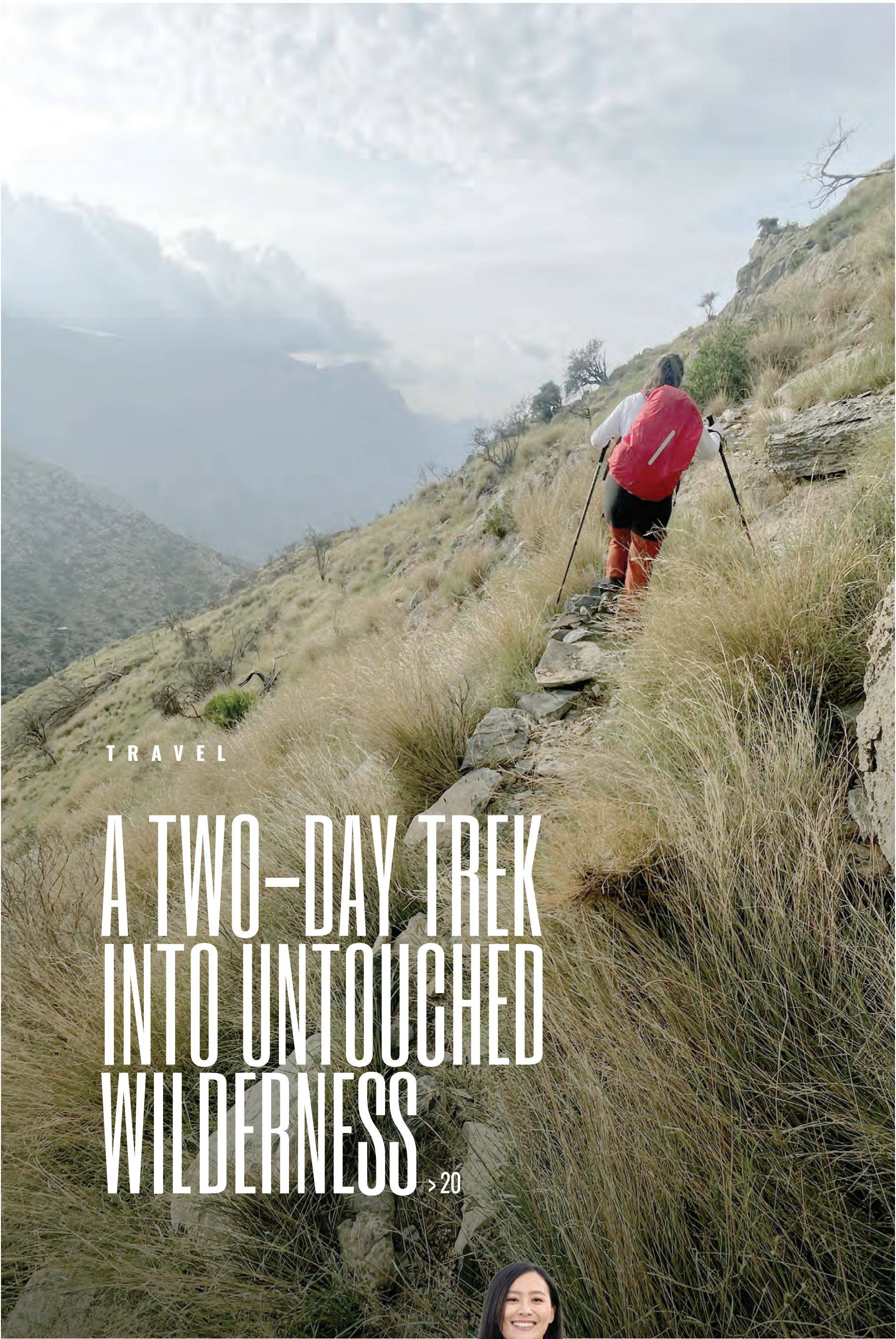
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ART/LIFE



T R A V E L

A TWO-DAY TREK
INTO UNTOUCHED
WILDERNESS

> 20



ENTERTAINMENT

Raye performs on the ‘TODAY’ show as part of the Citi Concert Series in New York City. — Reuters

FILM

Chinese actress Fala Chen poses to promote the film “Ballad of a Small Player” during the 73rd San Sebastian International Film Festival. — AFP



CULTURE

Zulu King Misuzulu kaZwelithini joins people gathering to commemorate King Shaka’s Day Celebration near the grave of late Zulu King Shaka at Kwadukuza. — AFP

ART

Top Madrid
museum opens
Gaza photo
exhibition



ONE OF SPAIN’S best-known art institutions opened an exhibition on Tuesday featuring photographs taken by photojournalists in war-torn Gaza, aiming to awaken “sleeping consciences” in a country that has already been at the forefront of highlighting the humanitarian calamity in the Palestinian territory.

The temporary show at Madrid’s Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, *Gaza Through Their Eyes*, shows residents of Gaza receiving humanitarian aid, children attending improvised schools amidst ruins and families enduring daily life in the midst of widespread destruction.

The museum organised the free exhibition in collaboration with UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees and it will remain on display in the main hall until October 19.

Spain has been one of the most vocal critics in Europe of the offensive in Gaza. Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has called for Israel to be barred from international sporting events and has approved an arms embargo on the country, in response to the conflict.

“These photos document the bombings and devastation in the Gaza Strip, the forced displacement of the population and the targeting of civilian infrastructure”, said Raquel Martí, head of the Spanish branch of UNRWA.

Guillermo Solana, the museum’s artistic director, added that the organisers hoped the images would serve “as a wake-up call for those who still refuse to see and turn away from what is happening”.

To protect the safety of the participating photojournalists, the 27 photographs on display are unsigned. Israel has barred foreign reporters from Gaza, forcing international media to rely solely on local journalists and photographers.

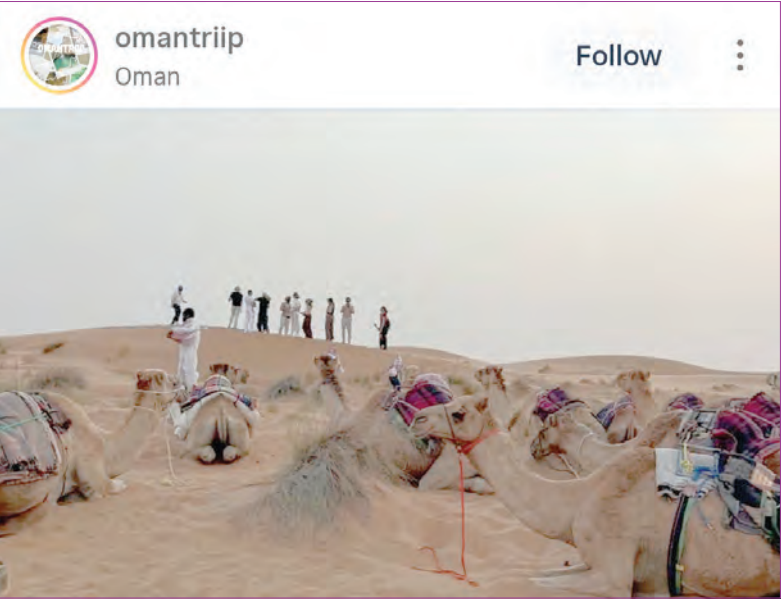
Irene Khan, the UN’s special rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, has accused Israel of targeting journalists in Gaza in an effort to cover up what she calls “genocide”.

Press freedom group Reporters Without Borders reports that over 210 journalists have been killed in Gaza since Israel launched military operations in the coastal enclave in response to the October 7, 2023 attacks by Hamas. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Around the Old Village



Beauty of Remote Places

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Burberry riffs on music festival fashion for crochet-heavy summer collection



BURBERRY presented hippie-inspired crochet dresses, fringed jackets and tailored suits in acid green, yellow and pink on Monday, drawing on counterculture fashions from the British music scene for its spring/summer 2026 collection. A Black Sabbath soundtrack gave a rock’n’roll edge to the catwalk in a huge tent in London’s Kensington Palace Gardens, with models’ boots and sandals crunching on a brown sand floor — evoking the mud of music festivals, a theme Burberry has riffed on this summer. The show, closing London Fashion Week, was the sixth collection by creative director Daniel Lee and the third since Joshua Schulman became CEO and overhauled the British brand’s strategy to bring sales back to growth. Fashion buyers saw in it further evidence of the changes Schulman has made: making

sure the marketing — from social media campaigns to the biannual runway shows — tells a coherent story about British culture and focusing on recognisable Burberry products like outerwear. “Burberry has sharpened its focus on its most powerful assets — the trench, the check and outerwear”, said David Thielebeule, fashion director at US department store Bloomingdale’s. Under Schulman, Burberry’s advertising has drawn on Britain’s outsized influence on music, featuring artists from Oasis frontman Liam Gallagher to 90s producer and DJ Goldie and hip hop musician Loyle Carner. “Burberry’s collection felt like a confident embrace of a younger client, rooted firmly in British culture and the energy of music festivals”, said Simon Longland, director of fashion buying at Harrods. — Reuters



Are Persian rugs becoming a relic of a lost golden age?



ONCE a symbol of cultural prestige, Iran’s handmade rugs are no longer selling as fast as they once did, as sanctions weigh on an already troubled economy and buyers’ tastes change. Commanding more than \$2 billion in export revenues in its heyday of the early 1990s, the industry now struggles to scrape together around \$40 million, marking a dramatic collapse of more than 95 per cent. The reimposition of sanctions in 2018 meant the age-old craft lost what was traditionally its largest market — the United States. “In the years when the unkind and cruel US sanctions on the hand-woven carpet sector were imposed... we lost the US, the buyer of more than 70 per cent of Iranian hand-woven carpets”, Zahra Kamani, head of Iran’s National Carpet Centre, said. In 2017, just before the sanctions were revived, rugs were still considered one of the country’s key non-oil exports, with a revenue of more than \$400 million. But Iran’s customs organisation said that during the last year of the Persian calendar that ended in March, exports stood at just \$41.7 million. Exports went to 55 countries that year, topped by Germany, the United Arab Emirates, Japan and China. In the interim, competitors such as India, China, Nepal and Pakistan have seized the opportunity, seeking to fill the gap in the global market.

- ‘HIGH PRICE TAG’ -

Some of those rugs even make their way to Iran, where, according to Kamani, at least two million people, including women in rural areas, depend on the carpet-weaving

industry for their livelihood — sometimes earning as little as a few dollars a day. Carpet trader Hamed Nabizadeh said that “Iran is importing carpets from other countries, such as India, Turkey and China. We are losing a part of our domestic sales volume in the Iranian market due to these imports”. For decades, Western tourists would pass through Iran, picking up rugs as souvenirs or gifts. But with the country’s tourism industry also hit by travel warnings and hostile relations, fewer foreigners are visiting, translating to fewer rug sales. Nabizadeh moreover says that even the tourists who come “might not be interested in our work as consumer tastes have changed” and “the price tags are quite high”. “It is somewhat difficult for even someone living in a European country to buy a silk carpet for, say, \$30,000 to \$40,000. The transportation of the carpet is also quite challenging for tourists”, he added. Experts attribute the market slump to a tangle of economic and political factors. Broad international sanctions have cut off vital markets, while flawed domestic currency and foreign-exchange policies — especially those restricting repatriation of export revenues — have crippled competitiveness. Compounding the issue, rising production costs and weak government support have squeezed the industry.

- REVITALISING INDUSTRY -

Iranian officials insist that the revival of the industry and the art of carpet-weaving, which dates back to the Bronze Age of Persia, is possible.

“We have lost some international markets, but we hope that with the country’s trade and currency laws we can resuscitate this industry”, Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA in June. “We are trying to promote and facilitate exports for the country’s customers with newly signed agreements”, he added. For Nabizadeh, the way out of this crisis is to pay more attention to “current trends in decoration”. “We should produce carpets based on those trends and not be too prejudiced that the carpet must have the same old shapes and patterns”. He cited “attracting online customers through social media” and “creating strong branding for carpets” as other possible solutions. But with the collapse of the national currency against the dollar, even the domestic market is at risk of evaporating. “Even though I always wanted handwoven carpets for my dowry and my family had promised me that, they couldn’t afford them. Instead, we opted for factory-made ones”, said Shima, a 31-year-old bride-to-be. “It is an age-old marriage tradition that the bride should provide the carpets of the house”, said Shima, who did not wish to provide her full name to maintain her privacy. “However, many families are choosing factory-made rugs these days because of their lower prices or do not buy carpets altogether if they are of the more needy classes”. Now, with Iran increasingly losing domestic customers and global markets dominated by lower-cost imitations, the Persian rug risks becoming a relic of a lost golden age, with its legacy hanging by a thread. — AFP

FEATURES



A TWO-DAY TREK INTO UNTOUCHED WILDERNESS

BY RUMPA MITRA
Instagram: @rumpa_mitra

IF YOU 'VE spent time in Oman, you'll know that many trails across the country remain largely untouched by most travellers. As August drew to a close, my hiking season officially began.

I chose to explore with Hamdoon, my seasoned guide, renowned for his passion for discovering uncharted paths. I particularly enjoy hiking with him, as he often opts for lesser-known trails rather than the popular ones. We carefully selected a perfect day — partly cloudy with a gentle breeze — ideal conditions for exploring one of the many scenic routes in the West Al Hajar Mountains of Oman.

This expedition marked my first attempt at a long, two-day trek in Oman's rugged terrain. My backpack was packed with essentials: a sleeping bag, tent, rain jacket (given the forecasted rain), a warm jacket for the night, six litres of water and sufficient food for the journey. Hamdoon's pack carried a substantial load. The primary goal was to build stamina in these intense conditions, preparing for more long-distance trails and venturing into less trodden paths.

By 8:30 am, we arrived at Jabal Hatt, parked our vehicle and adjusted our backpacks before setting off at 9 am. That initial moment — the start of our trek — always fills me with a thrill.

Leaving civilisation behind, walking towards emptiness, offers an unrivalled sense of freedom. As hikers, we seek this exhilaration: the absence of network signals, no immediate help nearby, only nature and solitude surrounding us. The trail begins at the far end of Jabal Hatt Road, just past the resort.

The trail began gently, rocky and gradually ascending. About thirty minutes in, we reached a junction with signs pointing in different directions. Though initially planning to go towards Birkat Al Sharaf, Hamdoon's experience guided us towards Balad Sayt, which was unmarked but recommended. The overcast weather made the ascent easier. We soon reached a viewpoint offering breathtaking views: the village of Balad Sayt below, Snake Canyon winding through, Jabal Hatt on the right, Al Huwaib on the left and beyond, Al Wajma. From above, the view reshaped my perspective, reminding me of the world's interconnectedness. A perfect spot for a memorable photo.



After a brief photography session, we continued along the cliffside trail, heading towards the mountain behind Al Huwaib village. The ascent began in earnest, with the sun gradually piercing through the clouds, illuminating the rugged terrain. We crossed three mountains before reaching the trail's highest point at 2,355 metres. Reaching the summit is always a rewarding experience and this time was no different: a gentle breeze greeted us and the panoramic views were breathtaking, even with the clouds adding a touch of mystery.

Our plan for the day was to camp on the mountain. Hamdoon pointed out a suitable spot from the top — a flat area near a small mosque, which marked our campsite. We descended towards the mosque, discovering that the landscape transformed into lush grass — a surprising sensation given Oman's usual rocky, arid terrain. The greenery felt almost magical, like discovering Aladdin's cave. During our walk, we found rainwater harvesting tanks — a testament to the villagers' resourcefulness — and filled our water bottles, quietly expressing gratitude to those who had arranged this precious resource in such a remote location.

Reaching the campsite, I admitted to myself that I was exhausted. It was my first camping experience in Oman's mountains and I was pleasantly surprised to find the mosque well-equipped with essential supplies for an overnight stay. I pitched my tent outside the

mosque, while Hamdoon preferred to sleep inside, being more accustomed to spending nights in such settings. After preparing dinner, we took the time to appreciate the view.

By then, we'd covered approximately 11 kilometres — with another 10 ahead the next day before reaching our final destination. We decided to rest at the mosque to conserve energy for the continued journey.

The next morning, waking to the birdsong and gentle breeze was a sublime experience. There was no rush, only peaceful stillness. I took some time sitting inside my tent, gazing at the stunning landscape. All I wanted was more mountains, more trails — an endless craving for adventure.

After a quick breakfast, we packed up and headed towards Misfat Al Abriyeen instead of retracing our steps to Jabal Hatt. The trail was mostly downhill, with the sun shining brightly, highlighting the importance of hydration. We passed rainwater harvesting tanks and relished the refreshing rainwater. We soon encountered



a family with children, an elderly man and a donkey carrying supplies, greeting us warmly.

Continuing our adventure, finally, we arrived at a small village where an elderly man welcomed us warmly. Sitting in the shade, he offered us Omani coffee and dates. We shared some trail food with him and in that quiet, simple exchange, a genuine connection blossomed. It wasn't about words or laughter but about human kindness and shared respect — a true reflection of the journey's spirit.

The final stretch brought us to Misfat Al Abriyeen, one of Oman's most picturesque villages. As we descended along the winding paths, the sight of flowing falaj channels filled us with joy. We took a moment to sit beside the water, laughing about our struggles and triumphs from the past two days. I knew these memories would stay with me forever.

With help from a local villager, we arranged transportation back to our car. Before leaving, we stopped at the famous Rogan café in Misfat for a well-deserved meal. The flavours, the warmth — it was the perfect ending to an unforgettable adventure.

This two-day trek left an indelible mark on my heart, a reminder that the most profound experiences often lie off the beaten path. If you're inspired to explore this trail, I highly recommend contacting Hamdoon al Hashmi on Instagram ([@7amdoon](#)). His guidance will ensure your journey is truly memorable.