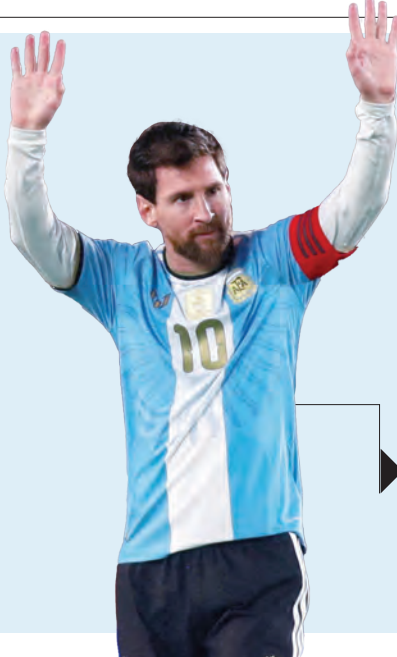


OMAN
Observer
DAILY

VOL. 45, NO. 328
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210


2010000387405



12
MESSI BIDS
FAREWELL TO
ARGENTINA
TEAM

IN BRIEF

HM CONGRATULATES
SAUDI ARABIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent two cables of congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and to Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, on the occasion of the Saudi national football team's winning the 27th Arabian Gulf Cup and the Kingdom's success in organising the tournament. In his cables, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments to the leadership and people of Saudi Arabia on this sporting achievement, praising the exemplary organisation of the tournament in this fraternal sports gathering, as well as the high sportsmanship and advanced technical performance displayed by the Gulf teams, and wishing Gulf sports further achievements.

MSX ADDED TO FTSE
RUSSELL WATCH LIST

The entry of the Omani capital market (Muscat Stock Exchange) into the FTSE Russell watch list represents an important phase in the course of the market's development and the enhancement of its presence on the global investment map. Being placed on the watch list means that the market has become subject to monitoring and evaluation by the institution to consider the possibility of reclassifying it in the future according to its approved market classification methodology and criteria. **DETAILS ON P13**

MOUERNING GAZA 'S DESTRUCTION



Palestinian children walk amid the rubble of buildings destroyed during the war, in Gaza City, on Wednesday. Palestinians sheltering among the ruins of destroyed cities recalled life before a war that displaced nearly the entire population and tore apart families. — **Reuters**

HM, King of Netherlands discuss regional developments



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of Netherlands discussed, during a telephone call on Wednesday, the relations of cooperation between the two countries and means of developing them to serve the joint interests. During the call, the two leaders exchanged views on a set of regional and international developments and issues, as well as the endeavours aimed at de-escalation and containing crises through dialogue, and diplomatic and political means. — **ONA**



Genomic sequence of
20,000 in first phase

FOUNDATION STONE LAID FOR NATIONAL CENTRE OF GENOMICS

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH on Wednesday celebrated the laying of the foundation stone for the National Centre for Genomics and Human Data (Omani Genome) in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, Muscat Governorate, at a construction cost exceeding RO 4.2 million. The centre will be built on a total area exceeding 10,000 square metres, and the project's implementation period will take 9 months, in addition to 45 days for equipment and preparation works. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health. Dr Khalid al Rasadi, Professor at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University, and Supervisor of the Omani Genome Programme, said that the project embodies the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Its importance, he said, lies in studying the composition of the genomic map of Omani society and establishing a reference database that enhances the Sultanate of Oman's standing as a scientific centre in genomic research, supports the knowledge economy, and advances strategic treatments. Dr Ali al Lawati, Adviser to the Minister of Health for Engineering Affairs, gave an introductory overview of the project from the engineering and technical standpoints. He said that given the importance of this national project, the centre has been designed and will be built according to the latest construction



Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, laid the foundation stone for the National Centre for Genomics and Human Data (Omani Genome) in the Wilayat of Al Seeb.

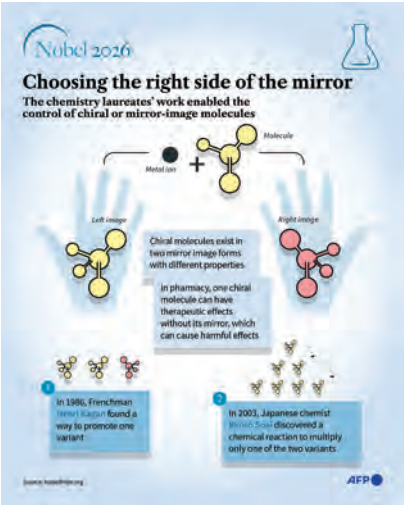
technologies and biosafety laboratory design standards, taking into account biosafety requirements, energy efficiency, smart building management systems, and future expandability. He noted that the centre will be equipped with the latest high-throughput whole-genome sequencing devices, and with an automated national biobank for sample preservation with a capacity of more than one million samples at ultra-low temperatures reaching 80 degrees Celsius below zero and in liquid nitrogen, with round-the-clock monitoring and surveillance systems and backup power that ensure the safety of samples for decades. Giving the details of the project, he said

that it is being established in the Wilayat of Al Seeb in Muscat Governorate on a total area of 10,625 square metres. The National Centre for Genomics and Human Data is the foundational infrastructure of the Omani Genome Programme, which aims in its first phase (2025-2030) to read the complete genomic sequence of 20,000 citizens representing the spectrum of Omani society and geography, and will expand in its next two phases to reach 100,000 participants by 2040, in order to build a reference genetic database for Omani society. This database contributes to supporting the precision personalised medicine system, providing therapeutic and preventive solutions tailored to the individual's genetic makeup, raising the efficiency of early detection of hereditary and chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer, enhancing premarital and newborn screening programmes, and providing decision-makers with accurate data and evidence to support future health planning. It also opens the door to discovering new therapeutic targets and drugs for hereditary diseases, and to international research partnerships and emerging biosciences industries that support the knowledge economy sought by Oman Vision 2040. The project embodies the ministry's commitment to investing in future technologies and fostering medical innovation, and will operate according to the highest standards. — **ONA**

Duo wins chemistry Nobel for solving molecular ‘mystery’

STOCKHOLM: France's Henri Kagan and Japan's Kenso Soai on Wednesday won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for solving the mystery of why only one form of certain molecules appears in nature, a discovery decisive for the manufacture of pharmaceuticals. The pair were honoured “for the discovery of non-linear effects and autocatalysis in asymmetric organic synthesis”, the jury said. Like hands, molecules such as amino acids exist as two mirrored variants, but only one of them is found in the proteins in the body's

cells, while the other is rarely found in nature. The fact that only one appears is a phenomenon known as ‘homochirality’, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences explained. “Henri Kagan and Kenso Soai have provided a solution to a chemical mystery that is over a century old: how homochirality can emerge spontaneously,” Heiner Linke, chair of the Nobel Committee for Chemistry, told a press conference. “The chemical reactions they have developed are spectacular,” Linke added.



Kagan, 95, is a professor emeritus at the Universite Paris-Saclay in France, while Soai, 76, is a professor at Tokyo University of Science. Soai, who was out shopping when he received the call from Stockholm, said it was one of “the most exciting days in my life”. The academy had not been able to reach Kagan to give him the news before the announcement. French President Emmanuel Macron congratulated him on his prize on X, calling his achievement “a tremendous source of pride for the country”.

The academy, in a separate statement, likened the chirality conundrum to a locksmith creating keys to order, but whenever they produce them, they get two mirrored variants. “Only one of them fits the lock - and the lock can be damaged if your customers try to unlock it with the other key.” One example of the potential danger of using the wrong key, or version, was the thalidomide scandal in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when thousands of children were born with defects. — **AFP**

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



The event sought to provide a precise and deep introduction to the methods and mechanisms of employing modern artificial intelligence technologies. — ONA

MoCSY explores AI usage in scientific resources

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), represented by the Literary Forum and in cooperation with Muscat College, organised a specialised event titled “Employing Artificial Intelligence in Scientific Resources.” The event was presented by Dr Arabi Madbouli, aiming to focus on modern digital transformations witnessed by the global scientific research system and how to leverage them locally.

The event sought to provide a precise and deep introduction to the methods and mechanisms of employing modern artificial intelligence technologies effectively and with high responsibility when dealing with scientific repositories and resources, alongside a broad review of practical applications and solutions supporting researchers and workers in the academic field throughout various stages and procedures of scientific research.

The detailed objectives of the event included empowering participants to understand the pivotal role that artificial intelligence has come to play in the quality and development of scientific production, developing advanced research skills for fast and smart access to sources and references, as well as training on utilising smart tools to read, analyse, and critique studies and research with high accuracy and efficiency.

The event also aimed to assist researchers in constructing and developing literature reviews and accurately tracking research gaps, while enhancing their capabilities in verifying the validity and reliability of information and sources, and consolidating an enlightened understanding of ethical aspects, publishing controls, and the responsible use of technology in academic circles.

— ONA

Six Omani-Bahraini agreements to expand trade



MANAMA: Omani companies signed six commercial agreements and memoranda of understanding with companies from the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The agreements were signed on the sidelines of the Sultanate of Oman’s participation in the “Made in the GCC 2026” forum and exhibition, a step reflecting the growing opportunities for trade cooperation between the two countries and supporting the access of national products to Gulf markets.

The move comes within the efforts of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, represented by “Oman Exports”, to open new markets for Omani companies and transform their external participations into export opportunities and sustainable trade partnerships.

These agreements and the Omani participation in the dialogue sessions come within the ministry’s endeavours to maximise the economic and knowledge returns from the Sultanate of Oman’s presence at exhibitions, forums and regional and international economic gatherings, by promoting national industries and products, enabling Omani companies to reach importers, distributors and trade partners, alongside highlighting national expertise and competencies and exchanging experiences in the fields of industry, innovation, finance, logistics services and supply chains.

—ONA

OMAN, INDIA DISCUSS BOOSTING ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

NEW DELHI: The 15th session of the Strategic Consultation Group meeting between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India was held on Wednesday in New Delhi. The Omani side was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Indian side was headed by Sripriya



The Omani and Indian delegations during the 15th session of the Strategic Consultation Group meeting in New Delhi. — ONA

Ranganathan, Secretary of the Ministry of External

Affairs for Consular, Passport and Overseas

Indian Affairs. The meeting included discussions on ways to activate the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the two countries, contributing to enhancing commercial and investment exchange and expanding horizons of joint economic cooperation. The two sides reviewed aspects of cooperation in the fields of civil aviation,

maritime transport, logistics and energy, alongside discussing several consular issues and bilateral agreements, and exchanging views on regional developments. The meeting was attended by Issa bin Saleh al Shaibani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of India, and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

OMAN ADOPTS NEW AIR ROUTE FOR HAJ PILGRIMS

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 7

THE MINISTRY of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) has announced that a new air transport route has been adopted for transporting pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman to the Holy Lands to perform the Haj rituals during the 1448 AH Haj season.

The decision, announced after coordination with the concerned authorities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in Oman and the airlines, will be put into practice to carry pilgrims to the Holy Lands and back. The ministry has advised ‘Haj operators’ to complete the necessary arrangements and facilitate Haj flights for pilgrims. Haj operators as well as this year’s Haj applicants have been informed of the decision, and the ministry is holding meetings with them to explain the approach and the reasons behind it.

TRAVEL LIGHT

Meanwhile, with the Umrah season in full swing and preparations for the next Haj season already underway, the ministry, along with the Ministry of Haj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia, has renewed its call to pilgrims to travel light.

“At the Grand Mosque in Mecca, every step counts, and carrying less luggage helps you perform your rituals with greater ease and peace of mind,” an ongoing campaign said. Officials say excessive baggage not only causes physical strain but also slows down movement in highly crowded areas such as the Mataf, the Masaa and the pathways between Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifah.

“Our guidance to Omani pilgrims has always been clear — pack only what is essential. The lighter your bag, the easier



Pilgrims fill the Grand Mosque in Mecca. — ONA

your worship will be,” an official from the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs told the Observer. “During Haj days, pilgrims have to walk long distances and often on foot. Keep necessary items only — one extra Ihram, a prayer mat and essential medicines. Leave the rest at your hotel in Mecca.”

The Saudi Ministry of Haj and Umrah has also issued a similar advisory as part of its awareness guide. “A key proposal centres around limiting the amount of luggage carried during the rituals. Excessive baggage can cause significant physical strain, increasing the risk of injury, particularly given the extensive walking involved. Maintaining a light load will help safeguard energy levels and facilitate ease of movement for all visitors,” the ministry said in its guide. Omani Haj companies have also introduced facilitation in baggage procedures, weight and ground services as part of additional service packages, while prioritising air travel to ensure the comfort and safety of pilgrims.

Veteran Haj operators in Oman echoed

the same advice. “Most pilgrims overpack and regret it later. Food is available, shops are everywhere, and clinics are free. The focus should be on worship, not luggage,” said a representative of Murshid, a Haj operator.

The ministries advise pilgrims to use a medium-sized hard-shell suitcase, not exceeding 70 cm, with proper locks and luggage tags, and a lightweight backpack for the days of Umrah and Haj.

Essential items recommended include Ihram garments, comfortable slip-on sandals, unscented toiletries, a small prayer mat, copies of documents, and medications in original packaging with a medical report in Arabic and English.

Pilgrims are also advised not to carry scented products during Ihram, new footwear, excess cash, expensive jewellery, or bulky bags.

“Commit to the specified gathering and travel time, minimise baggage and bring only essentials. This will ensure a more organised and comfortable experience for all participants,” he further said.

Workshop explores blockchain to curb fake certificates

MUSCAT: The activities of a regional workshop on utilising blockchain technology to verify the authenticity of academic certificates and protect them from forgery commenced on Wednesday at the Arab Open University in Muscat. The two-day workshop is organised by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences, in cooperation with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the Arab Open University. The opening of the workshop was held under the auspices of Eng Omar bin Hamdan al Ismaili, CEO of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA).

The workshop aims to introduce blockchain technology and its application domains in the education sector, review the project of the Unified Arab System for Certificate Verification based on this



The two-day workshop is being held at the Arab Open University in Muscat. — ONA

technology, explore ways for the Sultanate of Oman to join it, and build the technical capacities of work teams in universities and educational institutions in the field of digital certificate verification.

The opening ceremony included a speech by the Arab Open University delivered by Prof Mohammed bin Hamdan al Badi, Rector of the University, in which he pointed out the importance of blockchain technology in supporting

digital transformation in the education sector, as well as its utilisation in authenticating certificates and qualifications, verifying their validity, and protecting them from forgery. He emphasised the importance of scientific research, innovation and translating knowledge into impactful applications and projects, highlighting the university’s efforts through the Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre and the Centre of Excellence in

Artificial Intelligence, alongside building national capacities to understand emerging technologies and harness them to serve society’s needs.

Dr Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Abri, Secretary of the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences, delivered the Commission’s speech, in which he affirmed that this initiative is an extension of the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts in digital transformation, developing educational systems and services, and building national capacities. He noted that building a reliable system for certificate verification requires the integration of educational institutions, regulatory and technical entities, experts and decision-makers.

The workshop’s proceedings include sessions discussing the use of blockchain technology in education, educational data governance and cybersecurity.

— ONA

بنك Dhofar
BankDhofar



Lionel Messi,
Official Mastercard Ambassador

Visit [bankdhofar.com](#)

Limited-edition
Messi Mastercard.

Get your branded card
only in 2026



Get your card today
For more information



SHORT TAKES



The conference was held under the auspices of Shaikh Saud bin Mohammed al Hinai, Wali of Sohar. — **ONA**

FIRST CONFERENCE
ON JUVENILE
LITERATURE HELD

SUHAR: The proceedings of the first international conference titled “Readings in Juvenile Literature” kicked off on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Sohar, Al Batinah North Governorate. The two-day conference is organised by Sohar University in partnership with the Oman Society for Writers and Literati.

Dr Ali bin Salim al Man’ee, Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Conference, said that the event aligns with efforts to spread public awareness about the importance of scholarly research and culture, preserve a nation’s memory, revive heritage and enhance intergenerational integration, in addition to encouraging researchers and innovative talents to extend channels of communication with the community.

“The diverse scopes of the 35 specialised research papers being presented at the conference reflects the interdisciplinary nature of literature featuring the interests of children and young – which in itself constitutes a sphere lying at the intersection of language, literature, education, culture, identity, memory, science and technology”, Dr Ali said. This provides a broad platform for scholarly dialogue and a spectrum for the exchange of insights and expertise among researchers and specialists. — **ONA**

FIREFIGHTING CONTINUES AS
WILDFIRE SPREADS IN JABAL SHAMS

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 7

Firefighting operations are continuing in Jabal Shams after a wildfire spread through the Al Hajar West Starlight Reserve, prompting a coordinated response involving several government authorities.

The Environment Authority said on Tuesday that it was working alongside the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) to monitor and tackle the blaze.

Teams were deployed after the initial fire was reported and managed to bring it under control, while remaining hotspots were extinguished. An initial assessment found that the fire was most likely caused by a lightning strike, with no signs pointing to human involvement.

The situation changed on Monday evening when flames broke out again in another part of the area and over a wider stretch.

ROP Aviation was brought in to support the firefighting response, with operations continuing and Environment Authority



Firefighting operations under way in Jabal Shams, Al Hamra.

teams monitoring developments on the ground. The ROP confirmed that its aircraft were

supporting firefighting efforts at the natural reserve in the Jabal Shams area of Al Hamra.

State Council participates
in IPU General Assembly

THE STATE COUNCIL participated, as part of the Council of Oman delegation, in the 153rd General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), held in the city of Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania.

Under its general theme, “Enhancing Good Governance and Empowering Communities Through Inclusivity, Trust, and Opportunities for All,” the General Assembly discussed a number of issues related to governance, community participation, international peace and security, sustainable development, democracy, and human rights.

Dr Shamsa bint Masoud al Shaibani, Member of the State Council and Member of the IPU Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, affirmed in a speech delivered during her participation in the committee’s meeting the Sultanate of Oman’s support for efforts aimed at safeguarding human dignity and promoting peace, justice, equality, and fundamental rights and freedoms, pointing out that human beings represent the core and goal of development, as embodied in



The General Assembly discussed a number of issues related to governance, community participation and international peace. — **ONA**

Oman Vision 2040 through the priority of human and society.

She highlighted the importance of moving beyond talking about human rights to achieving a tangible impact on human life and translating recommendations into actionable and measurable programs that enhance child security, fairness of opportunities, safeguarding labour rights, empowering persons with disabilities, and enabling youth to participate in shaping their future, emphasising

that dialogue, understanding, and international cooperation represent the ideal path to addressing challenges and promoting peace and stability.

The State Council also participated in the 218th Session of the Governing Council of the IPU, which discussed several topics related to the IPU’s work, organisational and administrative matters, and electoral dues, as well as exploring ways to enhance cooperation among member parliaments.

The participation also included the meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP), which discussed exchanging expertise and practices in managing parliamentary institutions, developing working methods, and strengthening cooperation among parliamentary bodies and services.

The State Council delegation included Khalid bin Ahmed al Saadi, Secretary-General of the State Council, and Dr Aisha bint Said al Ghabshi, as part of the Council’s keenness to enhance its presence in international parliamentary forums, exchange expertise, and learn about best practices in parliamentary and legislative work.

The State Council’s participation reaffirms the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting dialogue and exchanging expertise among parliaments, as well as contributing to the discussion of issues of mutual interest, thereby enhancing the Sultanate of Oman’s presence in international parliamentary forums and supporting joint parliamentary efforts in service of peace and sustainable development. — **ONA**





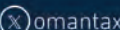
Announcement

The Tax Authority would like to draw the attention of taxpayers to file their VAT and Excise tax returns for the third quarter of the year 2026 in accordance with the tax return form which is available on e-service portal

[www.taxoman.gov.om](#)

And attach all required documents to it no later than: **30 October 2026.**

We hope all taxpayers comply with the deadline.



omantax taxoman



1020

SPOTLIGHT



BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

IN MANY OMANI HOMES, the arrival of a child is the moment a family waits for most. Yet the road to that moment passes through several stops: preparing for marriage, the cost of a wedding, the search for a home, the balance between career and parenthood, and, for some, a longer wait than expected.

The numbers suggest that road is changing. The birth rate among Omanis fell from 34.0 to 20.8 per 1,000 people between 2015 and 2025, according to Dr Ahmed al Busaidi, Secretary of the National Committee for Bioethics. These indicators, he said, “reflect a demographic shift with far-reaching strategic dimensions”.

How to support young families along the way was the question that brought doctors, academics, economists, social workers, scholars and government representatives together at the committee’s 13th Intellectual Forum at Sultan Qaboos University.

As Al Busaidi put it,

“Strengthening marriage, childbearing and family stability is not only an individual responsibility, but a shared national and ethical one.”

The forum examined late marriage and early divorce from a psychological and social perspective, and family counselling as an investment in successful marriages. It recommended mandatory, free guidance programmes for couples about to marry, a national framework to reduce wedding costs and curb extravagance, and a national campaign to promote easier marriage and family formation.

In a panel with the Ministries of Interior, Housing and Urban Planning, Social Development and Health, as well as the Social Protection Fund, participants explored how to support and facilitate marriage.

The forum recommended affordable housing for young families through interest-free loans or rent-to-own schemes, an endowment to support the Marriage Fund in partnership

“
Strengthening marriage, childbearing and family stability is not only an individual responsibility, but a shared national and ethical one
”

DR AHMED AL BUSAIDI
Secretary National Committee for Bioethics

with the private sector, with higher support and wider eligibility.

For some families, the wait is longer. The forum addressed medical factors affecting fertility and recommended developing reproductive health services, expanding fertility and infertility clinics, establishing a centre for research and treatment of delayed childbearing, and supporting research into the causes of infertility.

Working women hold a special place in this journey. The forum called for studying a ‘family-friendly work environment’ initiative offering flexible and remote work for pregnant and breastfeeding women, reviewing maternity leave policies, supporting on-site childcare and providing flexible retirement options for mothers, enabling women to have children while maintaining their academic and professional careers.

Support continues once the child arrives.

Malik al Harthi, Director-General of Entitlements at the Social Protection Fund, said

the social protection system aims to accompany individuals and families throughout their life cycle, from birth through family formation and growth, strengthening their social and financial stability. The forum also recommended studying higher child benefit allocations and financial incentives for young, low-income families as they grow.

Looking beyond the figures, Dr Shaikh Kahlan bin Nabhan al Kharousi, Assistant Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman and Deputy Chairman of the committee, said earlier forums had focused on improving human health and quality of life, while this one addresses preserving future generations by ensuring their existence and growth, describing human capital as a strategic strength for society.

The forum recommended a national strategy to strengthen family stability and raise fertility rates, with its indicators included in Oman Vision 2040 goals. The forum’s message is that families should not have to walk it alone.

SHORT TAKES



UK PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION VISITS MARITIME SECURITY

MUSCAT: A parliamentary delegation from the United Kingdom, headed by Emily Thornberry, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the British House of Commons and Labour Member of Parliament, visited the Maritime Security Centre on Wednesday.

The visiting delegation listened to a briefing reviewing the roles, tasks and responsibilities of the centre, as well as the efforts exerted in preserving the safety of the maritime environment and protecting it within territorial waters, thereby enhancing the maritime security and safety system. The delegation also toured the Maritime Security Centre and viewed its facilities, equipment, and modern technologies and systems, reflecting the level of readiness and efficiency in executing its assigned tasks and responsibilities. — **ONA**

MICROBIOLOGY CONFERENCE TO BE HELD ON OCT 12



MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) will host the 4th International Conference on Environmental Microbiology and Biotechnology Applications, which will kick off on October 12. The five-day event serves as an international scientific platform that will bring together researchers, academics, graduate students, early-career researchers and specialists in the fields of microbial ecology, biotechnology and related applications.

Twelve speakers from international universities and scientific institutions will give lectures on topics like microbial ecology, the microbiome and biotechnology. The conference sees the participation of researchers representing 28 countries across the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, Europe and other regions. The scientific programme of the conference features 159 contributions, consisting of 41 oral presentations and 118 scientific posters.

This year, the conference gains added momentum through the launch of the Middle-Eastern Society of Microbial Ecologists (MEsME) and the participation of the Society for Applied Microbiology. — **ONA**

SQU CAMPAIGN CHAMPIONS OMANI VALUES IN DIGITAL WORLD

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) organised on Wednesday the launch forum of the awareness campaign “Our Values, Our Digital Identity”. The event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU.

The campaign aims to enhance Omani values and identity in the digital environment, promote a culture of digital citizenship, raise awareness about the safe and responsible use of technology, and protect privacy and digital identity, alongside raising awareness about the dangers of cyberbullying, extortion and harmful content, and developing critical thinking in dealing with digital news and information.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Ali al Shihi, Wali of Al Seeb, affirmed that launching the campaign comes in response to the challenges posed by rapid digital transformations, pointing out that building a conscious personality and enhancing digital citizenship is a joint responsibility among the family, school, university, and cultural, media and community institutions.



Officials tour an exhibition of student artwork on the sidelines of the campaign launch at SQU. — **ONA**

Dr Wafa bint Said al Maamari, Associate Professor and Head of the Sociology and Social Work Department at the university, explained the importance of reinforcing values and ethics among students to safeguard their psychological and intellectual security, and preserve cultural identity as well as religious and national values, emphasising the importance of building a generation guided by knowledge, protected by values, and capable of distinguishing between beneficial and harmful content in the

digital world.

The campaign is based on a set of values, including belonging, safety, credibility, respect, responsibility, dialogue and balance, emphasising that digital citizenship transcends the proper use of technology to make an individual's presence in the digital world an extension of their values, identity and responsible behaviour in society.

The campaign will run for six months and will initially be implemented in four schools, targeting 500 male and female students and 140 parents through awareness, interactive, school and community activities. The campaign comes in partnership between the university, represented by the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the College of Arts and Social Sciences, the Parents’ Council in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, and the Cultural Citizenship Salon, with the participation of relevant authorities and institutions concerned with values, identity, upbringing and digital citizenship. — **ONA**

Make retirement options flexible for Omani women

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 7

A RENEWED discussion on retirement options for Omani women has emerged following social media calls for greater flexibility in retirement arrangements, including a proposal to allow women to retire after 20 years of service with a full pension.

The discussion has focused on the balance between women's contribution to the workforce and their responsibilities within the family, while also raising questions about the financial sustainability of the Social Protection Fund and the long-term structure of the country's pension system.

In response, the Social Protection Fund clarified that a woman's eligibility for a retirement pension is contingent upon specific criteria. These include reaching the age of 50 with at least 20 years of service, or completing 30 years of service regardless of age; an additional pathway exists for those reaching age 55 with a minimum of one day of service. This clarification follows calls from women to review certain retirement provisions — seeking regulations that account for women's specific circumstances and their professional and family trajectories — and opens the door to a broader discussion regarding the extent to which current legislation meets the needs of Omani women.

Under Oman's Social Protection Law, the normal retirement age is currently 60, while women have access to a number of early-retirement options depending on their age, length of service and the nature of their employment.

For women in regular employment, early retirement without pension deductions is available at the age of 55. Women may also opt for early retirement subject to applicable deduction rates at the age of 50 after completing 20 years of active service, or after completing 30 years of active service regardless of age.

However, completing 20 years of service does not, in itself, mean that a woman receives a full pension. The Social Protection Fund states that the retirement pension is calculated using a formula based on an annual entitlement rate of 2 per cent



Omani women work across sectors, from broadcasting and aviation to manufacturing and traditional crafts.

multiplied by the years of service and the salary used for pension calculation, subject to the applicable provisions.

The current framework already provides different retirement pathways depending on employment circumstances. Women working in hazardous or arduous occupations can qualify for early retirement without deductions from the age of 50, provided they have completed 20 years of service in such work. Special provisions also apply to women with disabilities and women working in military and security roles. The framework also includes transitional provisions for certain individuals who had completed 20 years of service under the previous pension system before the Social Protection Law came into force.

For some working women, the debate is less about leaving employment early and more about having a wider range of choices at different stages of their careers. “The important issue is having options that recognise the different circumstances women may face during their working lives,” said Mariam al Ghailani, a government employee. “Some women may prefer to continue working, while others may need greater flexibility because of family responsibilities. A balanced system should allow women to make informed choices.”

For women who have spent decades in the workforce, length

of service can also be an important consideration. “After many years of employment, women naturally begin to consider how they want to balance their professional experience with their family and personal priorities,” said Noura al Shehi, a private-sector employee. “Having clear retirement options would help women plan their future more effectively.”

Another perspective centres on the importance of ensuring that any changes remain financially sustainable. “Women want a retirement system that recognises their contribution, but they also understand that the system has to remain sustainable for future generations,” said Shaikha al Hinai, an education-sector employee. “The discussion should therefore look at different options rather than focus on a single retirement age or formula.”

Any proposal to introduce a full pension after 20 years of service would require consideration of its financial and actuarial implications, as pension systems depend on a balance between contributions, years of service, retirement periods and benefits.

The discussion, therefore, is not simply about reducing the number of years women spend in employment. It is about examining how retirement policy can balance individual choice, family responsibilities, continued participation in the labour market and the long-term sustainability of the social protection system.

The Social Protection Fund clarified that a woman's eligibility for a retirement pension is contingent upon specific criteria. These include reaching the age of 50 with at least 20 years of service, or completing 30 years of service regardless of age; an additional pathway exists for those reaching age 55 with a minimum of one day of service



مجيس للخدمات الصناعية ش.م.ع.م
Majis Industrial Services S.A.O.C

Tender Announcement

Majis Industrial Services S.A.O.C is pleased to announce eight public tenders, as per the details below:

Tender No.	Tender Description	Tender Fees (OMR)	Site Visit	Bid Submission Date	Focal Point
Majis/ 20/2026	S1 & S2 Effluent Storage Tank Roof Replacement	NIL	14/10/2026	28/10/2026	Mohammed Al-Jabri
Majis/ 23/2026	HSE Deficiency improvement works in CETRP, SWIP & RO Plant	NIL	12/10/2026	25/10/2026	Issa Al-Kalbani
Majis/ 25/2026	Replacement of CCWS Network Barricade	NIL	12/10/2026	25/10/2026	Mohammed Al-Jabri
Majis/ 26/2026	Revamping and Reinstatement of Solar PV at Majis RO Plant	NIL	15/10/2026	27/10/2026	Mohammed Al-Jabri
Majis/ 27/2026	Supply & Installation of Isolation Valves with Chambers and Pressure Transmitters in Process and Potable Lines	NIL	13/10/2026	27/10/2026	Mohammed Al-Jabri
Majis/ 28/2026	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Automatic Heavy-Duty Pinch Barrier	NIL	14/10/2026	28/10/2026	Issa Al-Kalbani
Majis/ 29/2026	Chemical Tank Inspection in CETRP & RO	NIL	13/10/2026	27/10/2026	Issa Al-Kalbani
Majis/ 30/2026	Refurbishment of concert Sewage Tanker Offloading Point ETP	NIL	12/10/2026	27/10/2026	Mohammed Al-Jabri

For more tenders details, interested bidders may visit our e-tendering platform <https://tendering.majis.om/DefaultTenders.aspx>

For inquiries, please contact:

Email: mohammed.al-jabri@miscoman.com

Phone: +968 7939 3663

Email: issa@miscoman.com

Phone: +968 99200321

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Members of the Republican Guards patrol outside the terminal at the Mekelle Alula Aba Nega International Airport on the outskirts of Mekelle. — Reuters

Eritrean troops deploy in Ethiopia’s Tigray region

ADDIS ABABA: Eritrean troops have deployed in recent days around a town in Ethiopia’s northern Tigray region, a local official and residents said on Wednesday, after two weeks of internal conflict threatening a wider regional war. Ethiopia accuses Eritrea of backing the rebels. Long-standing tensions between the two neighbours deepened last week when they severed diplomatic ties.

The Ethiopian army has successfully pushed back the Tigrayan rebels with the help of local militias and entered the regional capital of Mekelle at the weekend without a fight as the TPLF abandoned the city. Multiple sources said that Eritrean troops were in Adigrat, around 115 kilometres (70 miles) north of Mekelle on the way to the Eritrean border, and were pushing south.

Analysts say Eritrea is keen to prevent the war spilling into its territory should the TPLF be forced to retreat across the border. “The Eritrean army has entered Tigray in uniform, equipped with heavy weaponry,” said Gebreigziabher Beyene, commander of the Tigray Peace Force, the pro-government militia that has fought alongside the federal army. “This force is being struck by drones,” he said, adding Eritrea was “deliberately deploying its forces so that the fighting takes place inside Tigray rather than spilling into Eritrea”. — AFP

Attacks on oil tankers in Hormuz hit highest of any week

LONDON: Attacks on tankers sailing through the Strait of Hormuz hit their highest last week of any week since the Iran war began, according to maritime security sources tracking incidents, amid a bigger export push by Gulf producers. Attacks, attempted attacks and harassment activity including drone overflights, surveillance and hailing using VHF radio by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards have persisted in the strait, the US Navy-led Joint Maritime Information Centre (JMIC) said. “These actions continue to demonstrate Iran’s intent to assert presence along key transit lanes and maintain pressure on transiting vessels,” the JMIC said.

In the week of September 28-October 5, there had been at least 12 attacks on oil, liquefied natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas tankers around the Strait of Hormuz. That was the highest number of attacks in a single week since the US war with Iran began on February 28, the sources said.

Separate data collated by the UN’s shipping agency, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), showed nine incidents involving vessels in the same week. The UN body tends to take longer to verify and officially record incidents, maritime sources say.

The closest week in terms of comparable incidents was the week of July 13 when there were eight incidents. India’s foreign ministry said on Tuesday that 12 crew members were injured after an unknown projectile. — Reuters

MAYOR OF OPPN STRONGHOLD IZMIR JOINS ERDOGAN PARTY

IZMIR: The mayor of Izmir, Türkiye’s third city and an opposition stronghold, on Wednesday defected to the ruling AKP, in a huge symbolic victory for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Mayor Cemil Tugay’s decision to join the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was announced by Erdogan at a parliamentary group meeting in Ankara where he personally welcomed the mayor in a party-like atmosphere broadcast live on TV.

“Dear AKP family, I salute all of you on this precious day.. We’re setting out to get Izmir back on its feet,” said Tugay after Erdogan pinned a party badge onto his lapel. The scene sparked anger and disgust on the streets of Izmir, a secular resort city of 4.5 million residents on Türkiye’s Aegean coast. “If I were his mother, I wouldn’t be able to show my face in public.

Political analyst Berk Esen said Tugay’s defection was a “significant development” in a city that has been

the oppositions biggest stronghold for nearly three decades. “This is a continuation of AKP’s strategy to reverse its major defeat in the 2024 local elections through force and repression,” he said.

Opposition mayors were not changing ranks because they had changed their ideology or been successfully won over by the ruling party, many were doing it “out of fear,” he said. “We’ve had tens of opposition mayors arrested, many others threatened. — AFP

Fighting intensifies with attacks on Aden airport

YEMEN’S ANSAR Allah attacked Aden’s international airport with ballistic missiles and explosive-laden drones on Wednesday, the country’s Transport Ministry said, as fighting between the group and Saudi-backed government forces intensified. Battles have focused in recent days on areas around the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a shipping route that has become more crucial for energy exports since the conflict between the US and Iran restricted trade through the Strait of Hormuz.

This week, Yemeni government forces with Saudi-led coalition air support launched a counter-offensive to recapture strategic territory near the strait and around the town of Mocha that the Ansar Allah had captured in September, but it is unclear if their advance will hold. The fighting, a spillover from the wider US-Iran conflict, has revived a complex 12-year war in Yemen that led to one of the worst humanitarian crises globally and fragmented the Arab world’s most impoverished country.

The number of people displaced since the latest round of fighting began has risen to more than 200,000, the International Organization for Migration said on Wednesday. “People are running for their lives and finding nowhere safe to go,” said IOM Director General



People queue with cooking gas cylinders amid shortages of supply in Taiz. — Reuters

The number of people displaced since the latest round of fighting began has risen to more than 200,000. “People are running for their lives and finding nowhere safe to go,” said IOM Director General Amy Pope, who called for more funding amid rising needs for food and shelter

Amy Pope, who called for more funding amid rising needs for food and shelter. Both sides allege that hundreds of people have been killed in fighting, without providing details. The UN says three in four families are going hungry in parts of Yemen.

The Ansar Allah group has repeatedly targeted infrastructure including airports, oil refineries and pipelines in Saudi Arabia, a US ally. On Wednesday, the Saudi-led coalition said it had intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile north of the Saudi capital Riyadh. It said it was tracking the launch platform over Ansar Allah-controlled Sanaa and would destroy it, but gave no details of casualties or damage. Ansar Allah military spokesperson Yahya Saree said in a statement that the group had targeted King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh

with several drones. There was no immediate Saudi confirmation of an attack on the airport.

BATTLES OVER THE STRAIT

Any Ansar Allah stranglehold on the Strait could threaten shipping or global oil flows, and Saudi Arabia has been seeking international assistance to resist the group. Türkiye is sending mainly defensive and technical support, two officials said on Wednesday, after the Nato member and Pakistan pledged to implement a collective defence commitment under their newly formed alliance.

Fighting on the western front remains concentrated in the Dhubab district overlooking Bab el-Mandeb, with pro-government forces attempting an advance in the strategic hills to the east of that coastal plain, Yemeni military and government sources said. Fierce clashes have taken place, with the Ansar Allah claiming they have repelled attacks.

Hussam Radman, a researcher at the Sanaa Center, said pro-government forces including the Giants Brigade, a conservative group that has led the counter-offensive, are trying to take control of Dhubab and to advance in the mountains to its east. Control of those highlands would allow for government forces to more easily advance up the rest of the coast. — Reuters



ISRAEL STRIKES GAZA ON WAR ANNIVERSARY

GAZA CITY: Israel carried out new strikes in Gaza on Wednesday as it marked the third anniversary of the war, with Palestinian officials reporting three people dead. Loud bangs across the border in Gaza were audible from the site of the Nova music festival just as family members gathered at dawn to mourn the more than 300 revellers killed three years earlier.

In Gaza City, Al Shifa Hospital reported two people killed in an Israeli strike overnight. Gaza’s civil defence identified one of the dead as Mohamed Tamous and said he was a volunteer for the agency. In the southern city of Khan Yunis, Nasser Hospital said that a 60-year-old man, Hisham Ibrahim Abu Mustafa, was killed in an Israeli strike and that others were injured.

On the third anniversary of the first day of the war in Gaza, living conditions remain dire in the coastal Palestinian territory, despite a US-brokered ceasefire that came into effect in October 2025. “After three years of siege, killing and destruction, Israel has turned the Gaza Strip into an uninhabitable place,” said Gaza City resident Mahmoud Abu Hasira. — AFP

ALLEGATIONS PROBE

Sri Lanka arrests ex-first lady over graft



Sri Lanka’s anti-graft authority arrested former first lady Shiranthi Rajapaksa over allegations that her charity misused donations collected for a children’s hospital. The 73-year-old wife of former president Mahinda was remanded in custody until Tuesday by a Colombo magistrate. “The magistrate ordered her to be held in custody until October 13 and to admit her to the prison hospital because of an eye condition,” a court official said outside the Colombo Magistrate’s Court. — AFP

DIPLOMATIC PARTNERSHIPS

Ghana to apply to join BRICS, says FM



Ghana’s cabinet has approved a decision to formally apply to join the BRICS geopolitical and economic bloc, Foreign Minister Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa said during a visit by his Indian counterpart. “The Cabinet of President John Dramani Mahama has decided that Ghana should put in a formal application to join BRICS,” Ablakwa said. The group of emerging economies has expanded in recent years, focusing on bringing together countries in the global south. — AFP

CONTAMINATED WATER

Wildfire ash turns Spanish river black



A river running through a town in central Spain has turned black from wildfire ash and debris, contaminating the local drinking water and forcing residents to rely on emergency supplies. In the town of Casavieja in Avila province, where fast mountain streams flow into the Tietar River, the churning waters were inky black from ash-laden runoff. Residents queued at fountains and tanker trucks to fill canisters with clear drinking water, and authorities distributed water in bottles. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



A Bulgarian vessel carrying crew members from a ship damaged in a drone attack. — Reuters

BULGARIA ENDS SEARCH FOR MISSING CREW FROM DRONE-HIT SHIP

SOFIA: No survivors have been found from a ship that sank after a drone strike off the coast of Bulgaria, rescuers said on Wednesday, announcing the end of search operations. Drones hit two commercial vessels early on Tuesday in the Black Sea. One caught fire, and the other sank. Eighteen Turkish and Indian crew members were rescued from the ship that caught fire, but the crew members from the vessel that sank remain missing. Authorities have not said how many people are missing, but according to the Maritime.bg specialised website, 10 people were aboard the ship. “There is no trace of the sailors,” Rumen Nikolov, the head of the country’s Maritime Search and Rescue Coordination Centre, told reporters. The search stopped late on Tuesday and would not continue, he added. “The operation will not be resumed, because this is a search-and-rescue operation for people and vessels in distress,” he said. “What was found from the sunken ship was one overturned boat, three life rafts and debris from the ship’s equipment that was floating on the surface of the sea,” he added. Asked whether any debris from the drones had been recovered, Nikolov said: “I have no information about drone debris.” — AFP

POLAND SCHOOL STABBING INJURES 10



Ten people were injured in a knife attack at a school in Ostroleka, north-eastern Poland, police said on Wednesday, adding that the attacker had been detained. “A 19-year-old student from the school was detained near the town beach,” police spokesperson Katarzyna Kucharska said by telephone. “We have preliminary information about seven people being injured, but this is very tentative and may change. I have no information about any fatalities.” Police posted a photo on X showing a man they appeared to have apprehended lying face down in a wooded area. — Reuters

RUSSIA SAYS ‘NO EPIDEMIC RISKS’ AFTER REPORTED PLAGUE DEATH

MOSCOW: Russia’s health agency said on Wednesday that it saw “no epidemic risks” following the reported plague death of a laboratory technician in Siberia last week, as Moscow faced mounting calls for transparency. Russian news outlet People of Baikal reported last Friday that a 28-year old woman employed at a plague research institute in Siberia’s Irkutsk region had died of the disease —possibly after contracting it from a broken test tube.

Russian authorities have played down the reports, saying the woman died of pneumonia and the cause was “undetermined”. “The sanitary and epidemiological situation in the Irkutsk region... is calm,” health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor insisted in a statement, determining that “there are no epidemic risks for the population”. It highlighted that intensive investigations had detected “no emergencies”, and said the lab had complied with “proper control

when working with pathogenic microorganisms”. “More than 90 per cent of contacts have completed medical observation,” it added. “No health disorders associated with infectious pathology were detected,” it said, stressing that “the results of almost 5,000 laboratory tests did not reveal any dangerous pathogenic microorganisms”. It also highlighted that the woman in question had been “vaccinated and had immunity to dangerous infections with which she worked”. — AFP

20 killed after Russia’s heavy strikes on Ukraine

RUSSIA POUNDED Ukraine with waves of missiles and drones in one of its most “vile strikes” on Wednesday, President Volodymyr Zelensky said, killing at least 20 people, including children, and damaging industrial facilities and energy infrastructure. Zelensky said the strike coincided with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s birthday. The heaviest death toll was in Pryluky in the northern Chernihiv region, where a Russian missile obliterated a five-storey residential building. At least 14 people, including four children, were killed there, local officials said. “Today, as a birthday ‘gift’ to Putin, the Russian army destroyed a residential building in Pryluky...,” Zelensky said. “The Russians wanted to strike painfully and demonstratively.



Firefighters work at the site of private car garages hit by a Russian missile strike in Kyiv. — Reuters

said it had started to roll out partial emergency power cuts in five Ukrainian regions due to the attacks. Russia’s defence ministry said its targets included sites where Ukrainian defence company Fire Point manufactures and stores its Flamingo cruise missiles and medium- and long-range drones in Kyiv as well as regions of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kirovohrad, Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava and Kharkiv. Last week Zelensky said Ukraine had fired its first domestically made ballistic missile in combat, produced by Fire Point. In an interview with Reuters, he said he expected the company to have a longer-range FP-9 missile ready by the autumn. Fire Pointhas said that weapon will be able to reach Moscow. Zelensky said Ukrainian troops hit four targets in Russia over the past 24 hours, including two Russian oil facilities and a training ground in the Perm, Samara, and Astrakhan regions. Zelensky said Ukraine would hit Russia’s energy assets in response to Moscow’s escalating strikes on civilian infrastructure. Many Kyiv residents took shelter in the city’s deep underground metro stations as warnings of the upcoming attacks were shared by Ukrainian officials and military intelligence. Several loud explosions reverberated through the capital during the night. “The metro is better because we live on the 9th floor of a high-rise, and it’s really scary when you’re on the 9th floor and missiles are flying at you,” Lesia, a 49-year-old Kyiv resident, told Reuters. Ukrainian officials said Russian ballistic missiles as well as the drones had targeted Kyiv. Overnight air strikes on the southeastern city of Dnipro damaged an industrial facility, transport infrastructure in Zaporizhzhia and apartment buildings in Kremenchuk, regional officials said on the Telegram messaging app. — Reuters

The heaviest death toll was in Pryluky in the northern Chernihiv region, where a Russian missile obliterated a five-storey residential building. At least 14 people, including four children, were killed there, local officials said

Since the summer, Russia has used increasing numbers of the new high-velocity drones in round-the-clock attacks on Kyiv and other cities, with Ukraine’s air defences struggling to cope with their speed. The air force did not explain the jump in the interception rate and did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Zelensky said the Russian ballistic missiles remained the major challenge for Ukraine, adding that he and his team were “everyday looking for Patriot (missile interception) systems that can and must protect people’s lives”. Ukraine received a new €1.2 billion (\$1.34 billion) tranche from the European Union on Wednesday and will channel the funds towards defence needs, Prime Minister Sergii Korotshkyi said. The US-made Patriot system is the only weapon in Ukraine’s arsenal capable of stopping high-velocity ballistic missiles but tight global supplies have been drained by the Iran war as well as the Ukraine conflict. Ukraine’s energy ministry

France suspends use of stun grenades to police student protests

PARIS: The French government said on Wednesday it was pausing the use of stun grenades in its policing of student protests after a 15-year-old boy’s hand was blown off during a clash with riot police. Rights groups, students and some political opponents have accused the French police of using disproportionate force during a more than two-week-old wave of student protests that has exposed deep-seated public anger ahead of elections next year. Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said he had ordered the stun grenade suspension until there was more clarity around the events that took place in the northern city of Lens on Monday. Nunez said there was a “strong possibility” the firing of a non-lethal

stun grenade had caused the teenager to lose his hand. “I am suspending their use for the high school students’ movement until light has been shed on what happened in this case,” said the minister, who added that 18 investigations in total had been referred to the police inspectorate. The high school students are angered over dilapidated infrastructure, teacher shortages, overloaded schedules and a lack of funding in education. They blame the poor learning conditions for France’s worsening scores in the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which have fallen faster than the OECD average since 2015, according to the rankings. In reading, French 15-year-olds,



A protester holds a French flag behind a barricade to block the Boulevard Saint-Germain in Paris. — Reuters

the age when high school begins, scored 43 points lower in 2025 than a decade earlier, the biggest drop in the OECD. Their math scores also dropped the most. Protests showed no sign of easing on Wednesday, with more than 500 schools closed

a day after demonstrations swept across the country. Unions called for another day of street marches later in the week. French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu has acknowledged the “legitimate” demands of France’s students but also described the unrest

as the most violent student demonstrations in decades. Far-right and hard-left parties are frontrunners in the presidential race to replace Emmanuel Macron six months ahead of the election. Under pressure to tame public debt amid weak growth, the government has little spare cash to address the students’ complaints of understaffing, a lack of investment in ageing school buildings and inequality between regions. The left-wing CGT trade union, France’s second-largest, said it would rally behind the student union’s call for further street protests on Thursday. “The CGT will continue to shoulder its responsibilities in supporting the young people who have mobilised and protecting them from violence and police repression,” a CGT

statement said. In a sign the protests in France might spur unrest elsewhere in Europe, where budgets have been under pressure as governments respond to successive cost-of-living and energy crises, students in parts of Belgium have launched copycat actions. In the Belgian city of Liege in the southern French-speaking Wallonia region, at least 107 people have been arrested in connection with student protests this month, the Belga news agency reported. In Portugal, the main teachers’ union FENPROF launched an indefinite strike in mid-September against overtime, with teachers refusing to do any unpaid work beyond 35 hours a week mandated by law. — Reuters

OPINION

An economy the world can buy into



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

The writer is an environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development. [LinkedIn: @rumaithaalbusaidi](#)

AN ECONOMY the World Can Buy Into This week the world’s investors were told, in the careful language of an index review, that Oman’s stock market has never been closer to their reach.

A global index provider placed us on its watch list for promotion to emerging market status, the category many of our neighbours already occupy, and years of patient work by our regulators and our exchange deserved every bit of the celebration that followed.

Our climate plan, submitted to the United Nations this summer, sets out the economy we intend to build: a 33 per cent cut in emissions by 2035 on the way to net-zero by 2050, and at least 1 million metric tonnes of green hydrogen a year by 2030. The plan prices the 2035 cut at some \$31 billion of investment across energy, industry, waste, and agriculture over the coming decade.

Of that 33 per cent, 26 points are offered to the world as an invitation, conditional on international finance, technical support, technology transfer, and capacity building. In the negotiating rooms I have returned to for more than a decade, that invitation is answered from government to government, and it will continue to be answered there.

Promotion would open a separate door beside the negotiation: the funds that decide where the savings of millions of people are invested could buy into the economy the plan describes, company by company.

Last month I wrote in this column that implementation is a long chain of handovers between institutions that do not share a vocabulary. We have started preparing for the handover from climate targets to investment.

The national climate platform we launched at the summit in Belém last year was built to turn strategies into projects that development banks and commercial lenders can finance; in June the Green Climate Fund agreed to support the work of building a climate investment plan and a pipeline of projects ready for capital.

Much of what brought us to this threshold came from the state offering shares in its companies, and that work built the market we now have.

The next listings could come from the economy the climate plan describes, from solar and wind developers to the engineering and service firms growing up around our new industrial zones.

Whether many of them are private Omani

An Omani pension might one day own a share of a solar field in the desert, and the savings you keep might hold a piece of the grid that carries its power, so the value of the transition circulates through the country that hosts it.

firms, grown from supply contracts into companies an investor wants to back, will decide how much of this transition we come to own ourselves.

Some of the investors could be us. An Omani pension might one day own a share of a solar field in the desert, and the savings you keep might hold a piece of the grid that carries its power, so the value of the transition circulates through the country that hosts it.

With the world watching, we will also raise the standard we hold ourselves to.

The funds now looking at us will ask what our companies emit and how they will earn their living as the world’s demand for what we sell today changes, and an Omani company that can answer both with confidence will find capital easier to come by.

In March, the index provider will tell us whether our market has arrived.

No one has yet set a date for the morning that should follow, when a company born of our new energy economy lists on our exchange; it will be set here, by whoever in this country decides to build such a company and by those of us ready to own a piece of it.

CLIMATE CHAMPION AUSTRALIA DIGGING MORE COAL

KIRSTY NEEDHAM

Australia’s coal mines are expanding as exports boom, awkward timing for a nation preparing to champion clean energy as lead negotiator for the UN’s climate summit.

The Strait of Hormuz closure has forced Asian countries to buy more coal as an alternative to disrupted gas supplies, analysts and miners said.

Instead of falling, as predicted by the International Energy Agency in December, global coal demand will rise 1.2 per cent to a record 8.94 billion tonnes in 2026, the agency’s mid-year report forecast.

The second-biggest exporter of coal, Australia is best placed to fill demand caused by the Middle East conflict, it added.

Australia is president of negotiations for the UN Conference of the Parties, or COP31, to be held in Türkiye in November, where it will seek to highlight the peril of climate change to low-lying Pacific Islands, accelerate clean energy and mobilise investment.

Australia’s government said it has delivered AUS \$3.9 billion (\$2.7 billion) in climate finance from 2020 to 2025.

It is also shifting the population to renewable electricity, with a 2035 target to reduce emissions to 62-70 per cent below 2005 levels. A third of households already use rooftop solar.

But environmental campaigners are unhappy at the nation’s export of fossil fuels. Coal is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

A 19-year coal mine extension approved by New South Wales state last week will create 809 million tonnes of emissions — 98 per cent when the coal is combusted overseas, authorities said.

“Climate harm does not stop at the border, and neither does the responsibility for it,” the state’s former fire commissioner turned climate activist, Greg Mullins, said.

An industry outlook shows Australia’s annual thermal coal exports rose by 8 million tonnes to 213 million tonnes in 2025-2026.

COP31 president of negotiations, Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen, said Australia is building more renewable energy at home and abroad to create energy security less exposed to global conflict.

“Short-term increases in demand for coal as a result of an international supply shock should not be seen as a reversal of this direction,” he said.

“The exposure to volatile fossil fuel prices and vulnerable supply routes reinforces the need to move faster on renewable energy, storage and electrification,” he said. — AFP

For Nepal’s quake relief, waive remittance fees

THE FLASH floods that struck Nepal on August 26 claimed more than a thousand lives and destroyed livelihoods, homes, farms, and public infrastructure. With reconstruction and the economic recovery now underway, support for the survivors can travel fastest through payment networks and family ties—as is usually the case when disasters strike developing countries.

By waiving fees on these remittances for at least two months, money-transfer companies and banks could help Nepal move from rescue and relief toward reconstruction. Struggling Nepali families would receive more than two and a half times the \$49.6 million that the United Nations is trying to raise through its emergency appeal.Nepal is among the world’s most remittance-dependent economies. Remittances exceeded \$16 billion in the last fiscal year, equivalent to more than a quarter of GDP. More than 3.5 million Nepalis work abroad, and the global Nepali diaspora numbers more than six million—one-fifth of the country’s population. These expatriates are sending financial help to families in the affected districts, as are people and charitable organisations of many nationalities. But these transfers will be worth more, and will bring greater relief, if they are allowed to move free of charge.

Remittances are a lifeline. Families use this income for groceries, medicines, and health care. For a flood-displaced household, such transfers are what put a meal on the table and pay for antibiotics that a relief camp cannot supply. Even in normal times, a share of remittance income goes directly into housing. In the weeks ahead, remittances will help rebuild houses, school buildings, and village roads. They



NGOZI
OKONJO-IWEALA



DILIP RATHA

The authors are Director-General of the World Trade Organization and CEO of Ratha Global, an advisory and analytical services firm, respectively

In fact, the revenue forgone in the near term by waiving fees could bring new customers, increase transfers through formal channels, and earn lasting goodwill from families rebuilding homes, farms, and livelihoods.



People look at a house, damaged during the August 26 flash flood, at Trishuli in Nepal’s Nuwakot district. — AFP file photo

will keep children in the classroom, help businesses cope, and restore livelihoods by restocking destroyed shops, replacing lost livestock, and replanting flooded fields.

The remittance industry has waived fees before in response to natural disasters, including after Haiti’s earthquake in January 2010, Pakistan’s floods in 2010, the Philippines’ typhoon in November 2013, and Nepal’s earthquake in April 2015. During the three months following the earthquake, remittances to Nepal increased by 18-26 per cent from the previous quarter, and it is estimated that a fee waiver was worth \$40-50 million per month to Nepali families.

Some of Nepal’s own money-transfer companies have already led the way this time, but only for a short period. What is needed now is for the international money-transfer operators and banks that handle the bulk of Nepal’s inbound remittances to do the same.A fee waiver would be worth even more this year than it was in 2015. According to Nepal Rastra Bank, remittances to Nepal averaged \$1.5 billion per month during the last two months, up nearly 25 per cent from a year earlier. If remittances continue at this pace and rise by a further 20 per cent over the next two months—in line with

the 18-26 per cent surge seen after the 2015 earthquake—the total would reach about \$3.6 billion. A fee waiver would then amount to \$126-144 million, assuming an average fee of 3.5-4 per cent for sending \$200. And since actual fees can rise to 6-12 per cent on some remittance services, the potential savings may be even larger. In addition to being several times greater than the UN’s appeal to raise nearly \$50 million, such a contribution would be timely and targeted, because the money would be disbursed directly from overseas relatives to the households that know where it is needed. It is also highly likely that a fee waiver would further increase remittance volumes through formal payment networks.

The cost borne by money-transfer companies and banks that choose to help Nepalis in their time of need is entirely manageable. In fact, the revenue forgone in the near term by waiving fees could bring new customers, increase transfers through formal channels, and earn lasting goodwill from families rebuilding homes, farms, and livelihoods. After a disaster of this scale, keeping more of every remittance in the hands of Nepali families is the right thing to do—and sound business.

© Project Syndicate, 2026

The wisdom of the crowd



SONIA AMBROSIO

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

THE BEAUTY of democracy, viewed as a contemporary philosophy of aesthetics and power, lies in its transformative political force. It pools together perspectives to correct biases and facilitate better collective decisions. A democratic process illustrates that social reality is not static.

In its dual nature, democracy serves as both a system of collective self-governance among political equals and an aesthetic-moral framework that elevates human agency, treating individuals as free and granting every citizen an equal say.

A slightly larger share of Brazilian voters has just backed radical leadership, a consequence of growing political polarisation.

In the first round of the presidential election, the population chose far-right candidate Flavio Bolsonaro, the eldest son of incarcerated former president Jair Bolsonaro, who secured 47.03 per cent of the vote, while current president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva secured 45.16 per cent.

Because neither candidate secured an outright majority, Brazil is heading to a highly polarised runoff election scheduled for October 25. Since Brazil adopted a two-round system for presidential elections in 1989, the candidate who won the first round has always gone on to win the runoff. The senator, Flavio Bolsonaro, defied financial scandals and other precarious claims.

Political analysts attribute shifts in

Brazilian voting behaviour, notably in 2026, to a resurgence and increasing anti-PT sentiment, which is driving support for right-wing candidates. Bolsonaro has focused his campaign on an antipetismo sentiment, while the left-wing Workers' Party (PT), led by President Lula da Silva, spent time and effort on already known arguments.

Whoever wins the presidency will face a Congress that has just broken records in the country's democratic process, with far-right candidates advancing in numbers and translating it into extremism. If Flavio Bolsonaro wins, he will have the full force, backed by the Congress and the Senate, in addition to getting four appointments to the Supreme Tribunal Federal (STF), which is the highest constitutional court in Brazil; it serves as the ultimate guardian of the Brazilian Constitution. The legislature, executive, and judiciary will be in the hands of the far right.

After last Sunday, the incarcerated former president Jair Bolsonaro sees his wife Michelle and son Carlos elected senators, another son, Jair Renan, elected a federal deputy, and his eldest son Flávio now in pole position to become president. Should Flávio win in three weeks' time, he has vowed to negotiate an amnesty for his father or pardon him.

The results of the first turn have shown strong rejection of climate change and intolerance towards indigenous people, because the elected candidates see the

In its dual nature, democracy serves as both a system of collective self-governance among political equals and an aesthetic-moral framework that elevates human agency, treating individuals as free and granting every citizen an equal say

indigenous population as ones that must integrate into the broader society. When fundamental rights and radical policies are torn down, the approach to governance will not be paternalistic.

Political maturity demands responsibility. Voters must bear the weight of their decisions.

According to academics and human rights reports, incitement and extremist cells have risen in parts of the country, and there is fierce opposition to progressive cultural policies.

Sunday's results point to a geopolitical realignment. The right-wing movement in Brazil explicitly aligns itself with a broader conservative wave sweeping through Latin America and maintains close coordination with US political figures. Over the past 18 months, seven right-wing or far-right candidates have won presidential elections across Latin America.

Flávio is running an explicitly pro-US and anti-BRICS campaign modelled heavily on his father's platform. During campaign interviews, Flavio stated that he would reconsider Brazil's BRICS membership and has left the door open to an outright withdrawal. A Bolsonaro presidency aims to pivot Brazil away from its alignment with China and Russia, choosing instead to build close strategic, economic, and military ties with the Trump administration.

The wisdom of the crowd falters once the illusion of popular sovereignty dissolves.

Bangladesh nuclear plant draws hope and worry

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM

Bangladesh is preparing to switch on its first nuclear power plant, a long-delayed project promising relief from chronic electricity shortages - even as some fear living beside it.

The 2.4-gigawatt Rooppur nuclear plant, a \$13-billion project more than a decade in the making, has transformed the once sleepy nearby village of the same name, bringing Russian workers, new businesses and jobs.

Once fully operational, its two reactors are expected to supply more than 10 per cent of electricity demand in the South Asian nation of 170 million people, which has been hit hard by the fuel crisis sparked by the conflict in the Middle East. For Md Zahedul Hasan, managing director of state-owned Nuclear Power Plant Company Bangladesh, the giant complex represents the culmination of a decades-old ambition to bring nuclear power to the country.

The plant's first reactor is scheduled to be turned on by the end of this year, and the second unit "will be operational within a year", Hasan said at the site on the banks of the Padma River, 150 km west of Dhaka. Bangladesh's power sector is dominated by fossil fuels, particularly natural gas, with coal, oil and renewables making up the rest.

The project, built with Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom, has also brought an unlikely Russian enclave to rural Bangladesh.

Thousands of Russian workers have spent years building and installing equipment, with a residential complex, shops and restaurants springing up around them.

Shop signs appear in Bangla, English and Russian, while some restaurants serve borscht soup alongside local dishes. Alexander Vladimirovich Skvortsov, a Russian installation technician, said he had a choice between working in Türkiye or Bangladesh. He chose Rooppur, moving there with his family in 2024.

"When I first saw the construction site at Rooppur, I realised how much work lay ahead on this project... honestly, Rooppur changed me and my life," he said.

The project has also transformed the local economy. Md Emon Khan, 28, left his garment-factory job in Dhaka and returned to Rooppur, where he now sells vegetables and fruit to workers.

"I can speak a bit of Russian, and they can speak Bangla, too," he said.

Plant officials say stringent safety measures have been followed and lessons from previous nuclear accidents were incorporated into the project. Standing near a radiation monitoring tower and an alarm post, 15-year-old Mohammad Nafiz said he saw little to fear.

"We are glad that Rooppur is known to the world, and my friends and I hope that we will work at the plant after graduating from engineering schools," he added. — AFP

Women and equal citizenship in Oman

THROUGHOUT THE course of history, most notably in Oman, women have been equal players in and contributors to human development and civic activities. However, as channels of social mobility evolve, or rather morph, a tug of war emerges between complementarity and competition in women's and men's roles. Oman cannot afford to alienate any of its citizens, especially women.

Women's contribution has always extended beyond formal office. Cultivating land, sustaining households, transmitting knowledge and organising community support are part of the work through which societies endure. Today, that contribution also encompasses medicine, engineering, enterprise and public administration. Greater participation in planning and representative institutions would recognise women as citizens entitled to help determine the direction of a country they already help sustain.

The tension arises when greater visibility is interpreted as encroachment. A woman's professional advancement or candidacy may be judged against expectations about where she belongs, rather than what she can contribute. Complementarity becomes restrictive if it assigns women supporting responsibilities while reserving public authority for men. Genuine partnership requires room for both to exercise judgement, compete fairly and lead.

The strongest case for women's empowerment is therefore one of human rights and equity. Women's entitlement to participate does not depend on proving that they are more caring, less corrupt or economically more useful than men. It rests on equal citizenship and human dignity. Development gains strengthen this case; they do not create the right.

Oman's constitutional framework provides a clear foundation. Article 15 of the Basic Statute establishes



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

Women's contribution has always extended beyond formal office. Cultivating land, sustaining households, transmitting knowledge and organising community support are part of the work through which societies endure

justice, equality and equal opportunity as pillars of society and commits the state to equality between women and men. Article 21 affirms equal public rights and duties and prohibits discrimination on grounds including gender. These principles should guide institutional practice as well as legislative language.

The legal perspective extends to Oman's commitments under CEDAW. Article 7 addresses equal participation in political and public life, including elections and public policymaking. Article 14 specifically recognises rural women's participation in development planning. Involvement in decisions is thus integral to equality, rather than an optional reward for social advancement.

Yet formal eligibility has not delivered sustained elected representation. In the 2023 Majlis Ash'shura elections, 32 women contested seats, but none was elected. Municipal elections returned four women in 2012, seven in 2016 and one in 2022. Such fluctuations call for examining the conditions under which women compete, rather than repeatedly asking whether women are ready.

Those conditions include access to campaign resources and influential networks, time available alongside work and caring commitments, and public expectations about leadership. Family and tribal connections can support women or favour male candidates; their effects differ between communities. Equity requires understanding and removing disadvantages that identical eligibility rules leave untouched.

The economic argument follows naturally. Oman invests in women's education and professional capabilities. Restricting their influence over development priorities limits the use of that investment. A woman entrepreneur can identify obstacles to local enterprise; an engineer can scrutinise infrastructure proposals;

a healthcare professional can question service accessibility. Their knowledge can help councils test assumptions before resources are committed.

The social argument concerns whose experience reaches decision-makers. Transport, public spaces and service timetables can affect residents differently because their responsibilities differ. In some communities, women representatives can also hear concerns that other channels miss. They nevertheless represent the whole constituency. A 2009 study found that most parliamentary contributions by Omani women members addressed broader political or economic issues, rather than matters traditionally classified as female.

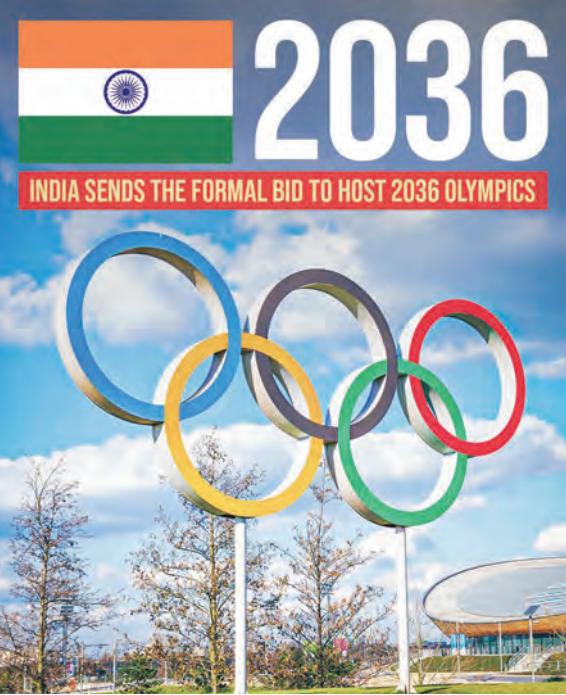
The June 2026 Royal directive allocating 11 additional Majlis Ash'shura seats for women, one per governorate, provides a foundation for continuity while preserving competition for ordinary seats. Its promise should be supported through access to information, substantive committee work and leadership opportunities. Municipal representation merits comparable attention.

Action must begin before election day. Community leaders should give capable women access to networks and endorsements. Employers should accommodate public service, while families share caring responsibilities. Candidate preparation should develop policy knowledge and campaigning skills. Institutions should address intimidation and discriminatory treatment, and involve women early in planning, when priorities can still change.

Voters should trust women with responsibility and assess their performance fairly, without requiring every candidate to prove the worth of her entire gender. Oman's task is to remove impediments, widen opportunity and allow women's contributions to carry real authority. Equal citizenship deserves that trust.

SPORTS

SEVENCOUNTRIES



INDIA, QATAR, S AFRICA AMONG NATIONS WHO WANT TO HOST 2036 OLYMPICS

PARIS: India, Qatar and South Africa were confirmed on Tuesday among the seven countries interested in hosting the 2036 Summer Olympics.

Germany, Hungary, Turkey and South Korea make up the rest of the current list issued by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Other countries have until October 31 to declare an interest. In March 2027, the IOC Executive Board will draw up a shortlist of the interested parties, who will then enter dialogue with the Olympic body.

The IOC said that the 2036 hosts would be assessed on factors such as funding, and political and public support.

“Wherever the Games take place, one thing must never change: athletes have to be at the heart of everything we do,” IOC President Kirsty Coventry said in a statement. “That is why, for every future host, delivering the best possible experience for the athletes must always be the starting point,” the Zimbabwean former swimmer added.

GENERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

India has stated its intention to host an Olympics for the first time, centred on Ahmedabad, the key city in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s home state of Gujarat.

Ahmedabad will host the 2030 multi-sport Commonwealth Games, seen as a major rehearsal for an Olympics. The city is also home to the world’s largest cricket stadium.

The Indian Olympic Association said on Wednesday that hosting the 2036 Games would be a “generational opportunity” for the world’s most populous nation.

“For India, hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games would be a generational opportunity to place sport at the heart of national life,” the Indian Olympic Association said in a statement. Hosting the Games in India, the national association said, would be a “chance to enter a new era of universality” for the Olympic movement, “connecting the Olympic and Paralympic movements with one of the world’s youngest, most dynamic and digitally connected populations”.

Indian Olympic Association President PT Usha said it looked forward to presenting the country’s bid to the Future Host Commission “for the first time at the end of October”.

South Africa hosted the 2010 football World Cup and the 1995 Rugby World Cup but has never played host to an Olympics.

Qatar hosted the 2022 football World Cup, although the awarding of that tournament was later mired in allegations of corruption within football’s world governing body Fifa.

An Olympics in the Gulf would have to be moved to later than its traditional July-August slot due to the heat. The German National Olympic Committee voted last month to select Munich as its candidate city for a Games that will take place a centenary after the infamous 1936 Berlin Olympics which were overseen by the Nazi regime.

The Turkish Olympic authorities hope to go one better than in the bidding for the 2020 Summer Olympics when Istanbul came second to Tokyo. The 2028 Summer Olympics will take place in Los Angeles, while Brisbane has been awarded the 2032 edition. — AFP



Oman players block a smash from Algeria during their opening match at the 24th Arab Men’s Volleyball Championship in Amman.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 7

OMAN’S MEN’S national volleyball team made a winning start to the 24th Arab Men’s Volleyball Championship, defeating Algeria 3-1 at the Arena Hall in Amman on Tuesday.

Oman secured the victory with set scores of 25-21, 23-25, 28-26 and 25-19, recovering from a second-set setback to claim their first win in the six-team tournament.

The opening set went Oman’s way as they established an early advantage with a 25-21 victory. Algeria responded in the second, edging a closer contest 25-23 to draw level and put the match back in the balance.

The third set proved pivotal. With neither side able to settle it within the usual 25 points, Oman eventually prevailed 28-26 to regain the lead. That narrow success left them one set away from victory, while Algeria needed to win the fourth to force a deciding fifth set.

Oman completed the job with a 25-19 win, their widest margin of the match, to seal the encounter and begin their Arab campaign on a positive note.



An Oman player in action against Algeria during their opening match at the 24th Arab Men’s Volleyball Championship in Amman.

ENCOURAGING START

The result provides an encouraging start for Tunisian head coach Nizar Chekili’s side following their recent Asian championship campaign in Japan. Oman prepared for the Arab competition with a training camp at Sohar Sports Complex, focusing on physical readiness and addressing technical shortcomings.

The team also entered the tournament with the experience of winning the second West Asia Men’s Volleyball Championship in Muscat in July, when they defeated Qatar in straight sets in the final.

The Arab championship brings together Oman, hosts Jordan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain. Each team plays five matches under a single round-robin format, with the final standings determining the gold, silver and bronze medallists.

Oman are seeking to improve on their fourth-place finish in the previous edition, having claimed bronze at the 22nd championship.

Oman were scheduled to face Saudi Arabia in their second match on Wednesday, October 7. They will next meet Kuwait on Friday, October 9, followed by hosts Jordan on Sunday, October 11, before concluding their campaign against Bahrain on Wednesday, October 14.

Omani players shine at junior tennis championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 7

Omani players made a strong start to the Junior Tennis Championship 2026, with Reema al Hashmi and Emmad al Rahbi recording two victories each as competition began at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Tuesday.

Organised by the Oman Tennis Association, the tournament brings together 46 boys and girls of different nationalities and continues until Thursday, October 8. It follows the mini tennis, Under-9 and Under-10 competitions held earlier this month.

In the girls’ Under-14 category, Reema defeated Russia’s Ekaterina Krutkova 9-5 before overcoming Kazakhstan’s Zhibek Nurgaliyeva 9-1. Kazakhstan’s Salima Sadykova also beat Krutkova 9-4, while Thalya El Khouly registered a 9-4 victory over Nurgaliyeva.

Talya al Busaidi opened her



Reema al Hashmi and Emad al Rahbi recorded two victories each.

girls’ Under-18 campaign with a 9-2 win against Sadykova, while Areen al Zakawi defeated Salma al Riyami 9-5. Sara al Maskari came through one of the closest matches of the opening day, beating Aaminah Khanzadah 9-7 in the girls’ Under-12 competition. Savannah defeated Mia El Khouly 9-1, while Jocelyn Belford overcame El Khouly 9-0.

In the boys’ Under-14 event, Munther al Amri recorded a 9-0 victory over Kushagra. Emad al Rahbi matched that score



In boys’ U18 category, Abdulrahman al Rahbi beat Britain’s Euan Belford 9-1.

against Nidhal Abdullah before defeating Said al Muttawa 9-1 to complete his second win.

Abdulrahman al Rahbi beat Britain’s Euan Belford 9-1 in the boys’ Under-18 category, while Mutaz al Mazroui overcame Bader al Hinaï 9-4.

The boys’ Under-12 results included a 9-2 victory for Rudraash over Elyas, a 9-1 win for Hood al Hashmi against Saeed al Marjibi and a 9-4 success for Al Bian over Muhannad al Najjar. Russia’s Iurii also defeated India’s



NATIONAL COACH MOHAMMED AL FALAHI

Kushagra. National coach Mohammed al Falahi praised the Omani players’ performances and highlighted the participation of around six young Omanis from Suhar in the junior competition for the first time.

He said, the Omani players have shown a very good and encouraging standard. This year, we have around six players from Suhar, all Omanis, making their first appearance in the junior competition.

Al Falahi noted that players from Suhar had previously participated in open tournaments, with the current event providing opportunities for younger competitors.

He said growing participation gave players a wider range of opponents, allowing them to build on their training through competitive matches.

WCWINNER



Spanish World Cup winner and former Barcelona winger Pedro Rodriguez retired at the age of 39.

FORMER SPAIN, BARCA WINGER PEDRO RETIRES FROM FOOTBALL

BARCELONA: Spanish World Cup winner and former Barcelona winger Pedro Rodriguez retired from football on Wednesday at the age of 39.

The forward won the 2010 World Cup with Spain as well as three Champions League titles with Barca, two of those in 2009 and 2011 as part of Pep Guardiola’s team which dominated that era of the sport.

Pedro also won five La Liga titles with the Catalan giants, was a Premier League winner at Chelsea, before heading to Roma and finally Lazio.

“I feel that the moment has come. The moment to take a step forward and begin a new stage in my life,” said Pedro in a post on social media.

“I leave proud of having lived my dream and of all the people who were by my side to make it come true.”

Born in Tenerife, Pedro joined Barcelona’s youth academy as a teenager and made his first-team debut in 2008.

Under Guardiola, he became a key figure in the side that won an unprecedented six trophies in 2009. Pedro netted in the 2011 Champions League final win over Manchester United and scored 99 goals for Barcelona in 321 games, playing with Lionel Messi, Andres Iniesta and Xavi Hernandez among other stars.

“Being part of the best Barca side in history was a privilege, we won everything and amazed the world,” said Pedro in his farewell video.

As well as lifting Spain’s first World Cup trophy Pedro also won the 2012 European Championship with La Roja.

“One day, almost without believing it, I became a world champion and a starter in a World Cup final,” said Pedro, who earned 65 caps and scored 17 goals for his country.

Arriving in 2015 at Chelsea, he won the Premier League in 2017, as well as the FA Cup and Europa League in the subsequent two seasons.

Pedro’s final club was Lazio, whom he left at the end of last season after more than 200 appearances for the Serie A side. — AFP

ALCARAZ RETAINS JAPAN TITLE ON INJURY RETURN

‘DESTINED’ DJOKOVIC WINS CHINA OPEN TO EXTEND UNBEATEN RECORD



Spain’s Carlos Alcaraz celebrates with the Japan Open trophy after winning the final against Czech Republic’s Jiri Lehecka. — Reuters



Serbia’s Novak Djokovic poses with a print of his hand, a mini figure of himself and the trophy during a press conference after winning the China Open final against Australia’s Alex de Minaur. — Reuters

CARLOS ALCARAZ said he “didn’t want to take anything for granted” after winning his first title since returning from a four-month injury layoff in Tuesday’s Japan Open final.

In Beijing, tennis great Novak Djokovic credited his “never-die spirit” for carrying him to the 102nd title of his career as he won the China Open on Tuesday when his opponent Alex de Minaur retired injured from the final.

In the Tokyo final, the top seed and defending champion beat world number 19 Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 to lift his first trophy since the Qatar Open in February. It was his second singles tournament since coming back from a wrist injury, following a run to the US Open quarterfinals.

Alcaraz also played at the Laver Cup team event in London last week. The world number three said he “wanted to earn everything” but did not know how quickly he would refine his form.

“I don’t want to take anything for granted,” he said. “I didn’t know if I was going to win a tournament this soon or if I was going to win a tournament this season.

“I just want to arrive at a tournament, give my best, try to play my best and let’s see how the tournament goes.”

Alcaraz’s win gave him his third title of the year including the Australian Open, and the 27th of his career. It came hours after world number one Jannik Sinner announced that he had brought a premature end to his season due to an ongoing knee injury.

“I think at this tournament I was way far from my best level, but in terms of finding solutions and playing the best level that I could in the most important moments, I think it was a great week,” said Alcaraz.

“I’m really happy about lifting the trophy in the second official tournament since the injury. “Hopefully it’s not going to be the last one this season,” he added.

Alcaraz is scheduled to play in the Shanghai Masters starting Wednesday.

He pulled out of last year’s tournament at the last minute after winning in Tokyo, blaming “physical issues” and taking aim at tennis’s packed schedule.

Alcaraz went into the Tokyo final with a 3-1 career head-to-head record against Lehecka, who was looking to win his first title of the year. Alcaraz had his service broken immediately by a confident-looking Lehecka, who gave his top-seeded opponent no time to settle. The Spaniard broke back in a long tussle midway through the first set and followed that up with a brutal display of power tennis in the next game.

Lehecka proved a tough nut to crack though, and Alcaraz needed to pull out a pair of spectacular drop shots to clinch the first set in a tie-breaker. Lehecka continued to give Alcaraz problems, but the defending champion went a break up midway through the second set and made no mistakes to close out the victory.

PERFECT RECORD

In Beijing, the 39-year-old Serbian extended a perfect record to 34 wins in as many matches for his seventh title in Beijing — his first since 2015. Djokovic said afterwards that

in more than two decades as a professional player, “the grit and the dedication and the kind of never-die spirit that really is always with me” have carried him through.

Tennis is “quite a cruel sport” with players competing in knock-out tournaments year-round, Djokovic told reporters, adding that the stakes and pressure of performing in front of fans made the sport “so demanding and so special”.

“You can feel so much weight on your shoulders, but it is what I have been destined to do,” he said. In front of a jam-packed stadium, Djokovic won the first set in the tie-break 7-6 (7/3) and was down a game in the second set when the Australian ended the match early.

“I always want to visualise myself with the trophy, particularly here in Beijing,” Djokovic said during the trophy ceremony.

“But I was also quite aware that reality is a little bit different these days,” he said, adding that it had been a challenging year with “physical and health issues”.

“I was just trying to find the good feeling on the court,” he said. The first set was a physical battle that lasted more than one hour, and both men needed medical timeouts before the second.

De Minaur, the world number nine, won the first game of the second set before retiring due to a left adductor strain.

The 27-year-old had walked back onto the court after his medical timeout with a white wrap around his left thigh. “I don’t feel great,” De Minaur told the crowd afterwards. “I want to say sorry to the amazing fans that came to watch... I didn’t want to finish like this.” — AFP

Seeb set for Arab basketball challenge in Beirut

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 7

Seeb Club are gearing up for the 38th Arab Club Basketball Championship, which will take place in Beirut, Lebanon, from October 9 to 20, featuring a strong field of leading clubs from across the region.

The Omani side have been drawn in Group A alongside Lebanon’s Sagesse SC and Central Club, Syria’s Al Ahli Aleppo, Bahrain’s Manama Club and Qatar’s Al Rayyan.

Seeb began preparations on September 1 with a gradual training programme. The opening phase focused on rebuilding fitness and improving the players’ physical readiness before attention shifted to technical skills, tactical organisation, defensive and attacking systems and

transitions.

The final stage of preparation centred on implementing the coaching staff’s plans, improving cohesion and preparing the players to face the different tactical approaches they are expected to encounter during the championship.

The team’s preparations were affected by the delayed arrival of the head coach, with assistant coach Muammar bin Najem al Rasbi overseeing training for a month. The programme entered a more specialised phase following the completion of the technical staff.

Despite the relatively short preparation period and the strength of the opposition, Seeb’s coaching staff have continued working to raise the team’s overall level and ensure the players enter the competition in



Seeb began preparations on September 1 with a gradual training programme.

the best possible condition.

Group A is considered among the championship’s toughest, featuring clubs with considerable experience

and strong technical capabilities. However, Seeb will approach each match separately as they seek to deliver a performance that reflects the development of Omani basketball.

The tournament will also offer the players valuable exposure against teams from different basketball schools, while helping them improve technically, tactically and mentally.

Seeb will open their campaign against Syria’s Al Ahli Aleppo on Saturday, October 10, at 4.30 pm Omani time. They will then face Lebanon’s Al Markaziya on Sunday at 7.30 pm. Their third match will be against Qatar’s Al Rayyan on Tuesday, October 13, at 5 pm, before taking on Bahrain’s Manama on Thursday, October 15, at 7.30 pm. Seeb will conclude their group-stage campaign

against Lebanon’s Sagesse on Friday, October 16, at 10 pm.

The delegation is headed by Juma al Muharrami, while Samir al Busaidi serves as team manager. The technical staff is led by head coach Musallam Haddad, assisted by Maher al Amri and Muammar al Rasbi. Suhail al Busaidi is part of the administrative staff, while Ali al Jabri serves as the team therapist and Mansour bin Mubarak al Salti is responsible for media duties.

Seeb’s squad comprises Mazin al Hadidi, Marwan al Hadidi, Noah al Amri, Abdulrahman al Shueibi, Aymen al Muharrami, Rashid al Zuhaibi, Ahmed al Sinani, Abdulrahman al Omari, Al Waqqas al Hinai, Azzan al Ajmi, Azd al Hilali, Markus Samir Letscher Giles and William Andre Stanford.

SPORTS

LIONEL

MESSI brought the curtain down on his 21-year international career on Tuesday, bidding farewell to adoring Argentina fans in an emotional final appearance for the former world champions in Buenos Aires.

In a perfectly scripted finale, the 39-year-old widely regarded as the greatest football player in history signed off with his 126th international goal in front of 85,000 supporters as Argentina cruised to a 3-0 victory over Benin.

Messi, playing in his record-extending 208th international, also provided the assist for the opening goal scored by veteran Nicolas Otamendi, with Nico Paz also scoring.

But the match was a footnote to the occasion itself, which saw Messi savoring the adulation of the Monumental Stadium crowd one last time for an event which had been billed as ‘The Last Tango’.

“It was a huge source of pride for me to defend this jersey for more than 20 years,” Messi told fans in a post-match address.

“Not coming anymore is going to be deeply painful. I swear I’d like to play for the rest of my life, because playing for the Argentina national team is the most beautiful thing that can happen to you.”

Messi though said he had no regrets about his decision to retire, citing Argentina’s grueling World Cup campaign, which took place as his late father was seriously ill, as a factor.

“Even though I want to be here all my life, I feel that this is the moment. The last World Cup was too much, everything I had to live through,” said Messi.

Beforehand, Messi wiped away tears as the bus carrying him and his Argentina teammates made its way through crowds of well-wishers en route to the stadium.

Messi took the field alongside his three children and received affectionate waves from his wife, Antonela Roccuzzo, and his mother, Celia Cuccittini, who were watching from a VIP box.

Shortly before kick off, a giant Argentina jersey bearing the word ‘Gracias’ (Thank You) above the football superstar’s No 10 was laid out on the pitch as the crowd roared their approval.

Messi welled up again as Falklands War veteran Fabio Santana sang the national anthem beside a banner which read — ‘The Malvinas are Argentine’ — the same banner held aloft by players after their 2-1 World Cup semifinal win over England.

The match was halted in the 10th minute — in tribute to Messi’s famous shirt number — for a minute-long ovation to the former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star.

He crowned the occasion with a goal from the penalty spot in the 71st minute.

‘GAVE IT MY ALL’

At the final whistle a drone show lit up the night sky above the stadium, showing Messi’s image and thanking the eight-time Ballon D’Or-winner for his career.

Messi’s farewell came two and a half months after Argentina’s World Cup final defeat to Spain in New Jersey, where Messi exited in tears after making little impression in an ill-tempered 1-0 loss.

“I gave it my all; I have

nothing left to give, and besides, there are great young players coming up who deserve their chance,” Messi wrote at the time.

Before Tuesday’s game, the University of Buenos Aires awarded Messi an honorary doctorate in a ceremony at the Argentine Football Association (AFA) headquarters.

Messi, who has in the past spoken of his regret at not studying more, expressed pride at the distinction.

“To be able to say that I am an honorary doctor!,” he joked.

Outside the Argentina Football Association headquarters, fans unfurled a huge Argentine flag with his image inscribed ‘The joy of my life’.

Former Barcelona teammate Neymar paid tribute to the departing champion on X.

“It’s not just Argentina that thanks you, the world thanks you for everything you did for football. Thank you for making me love football even more,” he said.

UNIQUE PLAYER

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni, who was at the helm as Messi finally achieved his dream of winning football’s biggest prize the World Cup in 2022, said there would never be another player of his ability.

“He is unique,” said Scaloni, whose played alongside Messi for a year in the national team.

“I have never seen such a set of skills in any other player in all my life.”

An emotional Scaloni, who cried during the national anthem, said to have been given the opportunity to coach a team with Messi in it was beyond his wildest dreams.

“I owe him a debt of eternal gratitude, for everything he gave to us,” said the 48-year-old.

“I told him in front of everybody, with the little energy that I still had: never in my life did I imagine I would coach the best footballer in history.”

Messi remains under contract with Inter Miami until 2028, although following the death of his father, Jorge, two months ago, he revealed he may hang up his boots for good sooner than anticipated.

Messi’s departure comes four years after his greatest triumph in international football, leading Argentina to victory at the 2022 World Cup to end the country’s 36-year wait for a third title, cementing his status as Diego Maradona’s heir. — **AFP**



Emotional Messi bids adieu to Argentina

21

208 APPEARANCES

126 GOALS

6 WORLD CUPS

34 WORLD CUP APPEARANCES

21 WORLD CUP GOALS

39 COPA APPEARANCES

2 COPA AMÉRICA TITLES

14 COPA AMÉRICA GOALS



MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,828.058

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$105.98
BRENT \$102.28
LIGHT \$90.34



SHORTTAKES



The companies will jointly assess upstream blocks and assets with discovered resources, development projects and producing fields.

OQEP, KAZMUNAYGAS TARGET UPSTREAM INVESTMENTS

MUSCAT: OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) has signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Kazakhstan’s national oil and gas company, KazMunayGas (KMG), to identify, assess and pursue potential upstream investments in Oman, Kazakhstan and international markets.

Signed during His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s visit to Kazakhstan, the agreement establishes a framework for cooperation in exploration, field development and producing assets, strengthening energy investment ties between the two countries.

Ashraf bin Hamed al Mamari, Chairman of OQEP, signed the agreement with Askhat Khasenov, Chairman of the Management Board and Chief Executive Officer of KazMunayGas.

The companies will jointly assess upstream blocks and assets with discovered resources, development projects and producing fields. Potential investments could include participating interests, equity stakes and other interests in upstream assets, alongside joint ventures and other partnership structures.

The agreement also provides for joint technical studies and cooperation on bids, licences, tenders and strategic partnerships.

“This agreement marks an important milestone in OQEP’s growth journey as we continue to expand our portfolio in Oman and internationally,” Al Mamari said.

“Our cooperation with a leading national energy company such as KazMunayGas reflects our commitment to building effective partnerships and investing in promising opportunities with strong economic potential.”

The companies will explore technical and commercial opportunities in field development, production optimisation, enhanced oil recovery, mature fields, gas development and associated infrastructure.

They will also exchange expertise and best practices in subsurface disciplines, operations, health, safety and environment, project execution, digitalisation, governance and capability development.

Oman enters FTSE Russell upgrade watch list

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 7

OMAN has cleared the market-size and securities-count thresholds required for Secondary Emerging Market status, prompting FTSE Russell to place it on its Watch List for possible reclassification from Frontier.

The decision, announced on October 6, puts Oman under review for a potential upgrade. It remains classified as a Frontier Market, with FTSE Russell’s next country-classification update due in April 2027.

In its April interim review, FTSE Russell said Oman met all nine Quality of Markets criteria required for Secondary Emerging status but fell short of the minimum investable market capitalisation and securities-count requirements.

At that time, Oman had two Mid Cap and three Small Cap securities meeting the eligibility requirements for the FTSE Global Equity Index Series. Secondary Emerging classification requires at least three eligible Large or Mid Cap securities and at least five eligible securities across the Large, Mid and Small Cap categories.

FTSE Russell has now confirmed that Oman meets both the Quality of Markets criteria and the minimum size and securities-count requirements.

The decision follows a sharp expansion in the Muscat Stock Exchange in recent years. The MSX30 rose from 3,943 points in the third quarter of 2021 to 7,567 in the third quarter of 2026, while market capitalisation increased from RO 22 billion to RO 39.2 billion.

Trading activity grew even more sharply. The value traded during January–September rose from around RO 650 million in 2021 to RO 9.7 billion in 2026.

MSX Chief Executive Officer Haitham al Salmi said in a media



The decision, announced on October 6, puts Oman under review for a potential upgrade.

“The FTSE Watch List decision is an important recognition of how far Oman’s capital market has come. It reflects years of coordinated reform across the Muscat Stock Exchange, the Financial Services Authority, Oman Investment Authority and market participants. It is also the beginning of a new phase rather than the end of the journey.”

AZZA AL HABSI
Vice-President, Economic Research & Emerging Trends at Ominvest

interview earlier this month that an eventual upgrade could attract around RO 175 million into the market, although the final amount would depend on Oman’s weighting in the relevant FTSE indices.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with the Observer, Azza Al Habsi, Vice-President – Economic Research & Emerging Trends at Ominvest, said the decision recognised the progress made in developing Oman’s capital market.

“The FTSE Watch List decision is an important recognition of how far Oman’s capital market has come. It reflects years of coordinated reform across the Muscat Stock Exchange, the Financial Services Authority, Oman Investment Authority and market participants. It is also the beginning of a new phase rather than the end of the journey.”

Al Habsi said the next priority was to broaden trading activity and encourage sustained participation by international institutional investors.

“The market today is significantly larger and more liquid than it was even two years ago. The priority now is to build on that progress, so that trading activity broadens across a wider range of companies

and international institutional investors participate on a sustained basis.

The greatest value of an emerging-market upgrade lies in how it strengthens the structure of the market over time, not only in the initial index-related inflows.”

She said increased visibility could help attract private-sector listings, widen the investor base and strengthen the exchange’s role in providing long-term capital to businesses.

“The initiatives already under way, including the listing pipeline, the planned central counterparty and the development of new products, position the market well to achieve that. If this momentum continues, the FTSE process will carry economic significance well beyond the index itself, and will lay the foundation for the next milestone.”Her emphasis on broader liquidity comes as MSX trading remains concentrated in a relatively small number of companies. A capital-markets analysis reviewed by the Observer showed that five stocks accounted for around 75 per cent of traded value in September.

That concentration means the impact of a future reclassification would extend beyond the initial inflows from funds tracking FTSE indices.

University innovation targets investment in Oman

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 7

Oman’s Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, Riyadh, brought together between 150 and 200 participants for a seminar exploring how university research and innovation can be turned into start-ups capable of attracting investment and reaching the market.

The “Entrepreneurship and Startups in the Education Sector” seminar examined opportunities to commercialise scientific research, strengthen the education sector’s contribution to a knowledge-based economy and support economic diversification.

Held in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the event carried the theme “From Idea to Impact: Building an Entrepreneurship and Startup Ecosystem within a Sustainable University Environment”.

Discussions focused on aligning



Discussions focused on aligning education and research outputs with market needs and turning knowledge and innovation into commercial opportunities.

education and research outputs with market needs and turning knowledge and innovation into commercial opportunities.

Riyada aims to build a more integrated pathway from ideas and research within universities and colleges to company formation, investment, growth and market access. The initiative seeks to help student and research projects develop into viable businesses.

“The seminar represents a pivotal strategic shift in transforming universities from mere centres of knowledge transfer into hubs that turn initiatives into sustainable projects with long-term impact,” said HH Sayyid Nadir bin Nasr al Said, Entrepreneurship Specialist at Riyada.He said the authority was working with higher education institutions, investors and

incubators to harness young people’s potential and generate economic benefits.

Nawf al Wahaibi, Innovation Specialist at Riyada, said entrepreneurship centres, incubators and accelerators within academic institutions played an important role in connecting research with the wider business ecosystem.She said these links could help researchers and university entrepreneurs enter the market more easily.

Riyada supports that process through visits to academic institutions in Oman and abroad to identify best practices, strengthen university entrepreneurship programmes and connect them with the authority’s support services, she added.

Representatives from government bodies, academia, the private sector, investment funds, business incubators and innovation centres attended the seminar. They discussed funding, incubation and partnerships to

help university projects move from experimentation and development to commercial activity.

Iman al Shakaili, Acting Director of the Business Incubators and Accelerators Department at the Research and Innovation Authority, said the authority aimed to turn graduation projects and student work into start-ups or tangible products. She said its work also focused on addressing fundamental problems, including those without an immediately clear commercial pathway.The seminar examined how educational institutions could generate projects capable of attracting investment by supporting idea incubation, prototype development and closer alignment with market and investor requirements.

Participants highlighted the need to give students and researchers access to funding, mentoring and business support, while strengthening cooperation among universities, government bodies and the private sector.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Under the global theme ‘The Extra Mile’, the week recognises the employees and wider community.

Al Mouj Muscat celebrates customer experience week

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat, Oman’s premier lifestyle and waterfront destination, is putting the people behind its customer experience in the spotlight as it marks Customer Experience Week 2026.

Under the global theme “The Extra Mile”, the week recognises the employees and wider community whose everyday actions help create a destination where people feel welcomed, heard and valued.

It also reflects a broader approach to customer experience at Al Mouj Muscat, built on the belief that the quality of a destination is shaped not only by its places and amenities, but by the interactions and relationships people experience within it.

Ahmed al Massan, Acting CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: “Exceptional customer experience starts long before an interaction with a customer. It begins with culture and with creating an environment where people feel heard, trusted and empowered to make a difference.

When organisations invest in their people, that translates into better experiences, stronger relationships and ultimately greater long-term value. At Al Mouj Muscat, going the extra mile is therefore not about isolated gestures; it is about making care, accountability and the willingness to do better part of how we work every day.”

Observed in more than 60 countries, Customer Service Week recognises the people behind exceptional service and the contribution they make to organisations and communities.

Al Mouj Muscat is bringing employees and residents together through a programme focused on recognition, shared experiences and new ideas.

The week includes perspectives from Charles Bennett, President of the CXSA Institute, on the evolution of customer experience across the GCC, alongside Dr Adhari al Zaabi, whose work spanning cancer research and AI-driven healthcare brings a different perspective on the importance of putting people at the centre of decision-making.

The programme also creates opportunities for employees and residents to connect, while encouraging teams to contribute ideas that can improve experiences across the destination. The CEO Prize will award the strongest employee-led customer experience idea, reinforcing the role individuals can play in driving meaningful change.

Hawra al Lawati, VP for Customer Experience at Al Mouj Muscat, said: “The moments people remember are often the simplest ones: a question answered clearly, a request followed through, a familiar face who knows their name. Customer Experience Week gives us time to recognise the colleagues who create those moments every day and to listen closely to our residents and teams.”

SOHAR ISLAMIC SUPPORTS FOURTH ZAKAT CONFERENCE AS MAIN SPONSOR

MUSCAT: Reflecting its commitment to advancing Islamic finance as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth and sustainable social development, Sohar Islamic, the Islamic banking window of Sohar International, participated as the Main Sponsor of the fourth Zakat Conference and Exhibition, organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs from September 27 to 29, 2026, in the Wilayat of Suhar, Al Batinah North Governorate.

The sponsorship underscores



Sohar Islamic’s broader role in supporting the development of an effective and sustainable Zakat ecosystem, strengthening institutional capabilities and promoting the contribution of Islamic financial principles to

Oman’s long-term development priorities.

Held under the auspices of Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority, and in the presence of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the conference brought together more than 600 participants, including representatives from nine Gulf, Arab and international countries, alongside government officials, specialists, researchers and stakeholders in Zakat affairs.

Frankincense processing plans advance in Oman

OMAN’S Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Amouage are advancing plans for local frankincense processing and distillation, aiming to retain more economic value within the country while strengthening sustainable harvesting and technical expertise.

The initiative seeks to connect harvesting in Dhofar with essential oil production and higher-value fragrance applications, developing an integrated frankincense value chain.

A delegation led by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, recently visited dsu-firmenich in Grasse, France, Amouage’s technical partner for frankincense essential oil production.

The delegation included Ahmed bin Mohammed al Araimi, Oman’s Ambassador to France; Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidi, Chairman of Amouage; and Marco Parsiegla, the company’s Chief Executive Officer.

The visit examined how frankincense resin harvested in Oman is distilled into essential oil meeting the quality standards required for fine perfumery. The findings will help shape an operational blueprint for



The initiative seeks to connect harvesting in Dhofar with essential oil production and higher-value fragrance applications, developing an integrated frankincense value chain.

future distillation at Ayn Dawkah, a visitor centre and manufacturing facility under development at Wadi Dawkah.

The initiative builds on a partnership announced in June 2026 between the ministry and Amouage to establish sustainable frankincense harvesting at Wadi Gazelle in Dhofar Governorate. Since then, Amouage has established an operating centre, recruited and trained

a local harvesting team to recognised international standards, and completed its first harvest, collecting approximately 60 kilograms of resin within three weeks.

Alongside Amouage’s stewardship of Wadi Dawkah in partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the work at Wadi Gazelle provides two sources of sustainably harvested frankincense for the developing value chain.

Nesto Oman chooses Jetour T1 and T2 for staff fleet

MUSCAT: Jetour Oman, distributed in the Sultanate of Oman by MHD Automobiles LLC, has entered into a fleet agreement with Nesto Hypermarket Oman for 12 vehicles, including the Jetour T1 and T2. The vehicles will be used by Nesto staff across its operations in Oman.

The agreement reflects Nesto Oman’s confidence in Jetour and marks a further step in the brand’s growth in the Sultanate of Oman. The Jetour T1 and T2 combine distinctive design with the versatility sought by drivers whose vehicles serve both their professional and personal lives.

Their selection for Nesto’s staff fleet demonstrates the appeal of models that offer a sense of aspiration while meeting practical,



The vehicles will be used by Nesto staff across its operations in Oman.

everyday needs.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said: “We are pleased to welcome Nesto Oman as a Jetour fleet customer. Its decision to select the T1 and T2 for staff use is a meaningful expression of confidence in the brand. We value this partnership and look forward to providing Nesto with the service and support it requires throughout its ownership journey.”

Nesto Hypermarket Oman is part of the UAE-based Western International Group. Since opening its first hypermarket in Al Maabala in 2015, Nesto has expanded across Oman, serving communities with a broad range of groceries, household products, apparel, electronics and everyday essentials.

Bank Muscat launches Al Ula Academy to advance leadership excellence

MUSCAT: As part of its continued commitment to supporting national development and strengthening its partnership with the Government sector, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has launched “Al Ula Academy” in collaboration with the University of Oxford.

The academy aims to provide a platform for leadership development, knowledge exchange and exposure to global best practices.

The Academy commenced with its inaugural programme, “Leadership Excellence,” held over two days from October 6-7, 2026. The programme brought together a distinguished group of government officials, reflecting Bank Muscat’s



The academy aims to provide a platform for leadership development, knowledge exchange and exposure to global best practices.

commitment to deepening its partnership with this vital sector and supporting institutional

development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The launch builds on the

longstanding partnership between Bank Muscat and the Government sector, founded on the exchange of expertise and knowledge. Al Ula Academy provides a platform for collaboration and continuous learning, bringing together international expertise and local perspectives and providing participants with an opportunity to explore the latest global leadership practices and their relevance to the Sultanate of Oman.

The inaugural programme covered a range of key themes, including the foundations of effective leadership, leadership styles and models, and the role and challenges of leadership in today’s environment. It also addressed practical leadership frameworks,

building high-performing teams, and communication strategies for effective execution.

Through real-life case studies and interactive learning, participants had the opportunity to translate leadership concepts into practical approaches that can be applied in the workplace.

They explored how different leadership styles can be applied to different situations, while strengthening self-awareness and personal impact. The programme also covered influencing and persuasion skills and leading teams through change. These areas are particularly relevant in supporting effective leadership and institutional development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

SHORTTAKES

OMANI SPACE
START-UPS EYE
2.5 M REVENUE

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 7



**GHAYADAH
AL JABRI**
Seven Omani space technology start-ups that graduated from the country's first national space accelerator are forecast to generate combined annual revenue of around RO 2.5 million and create about 40 jobs by 2029. Ghayadah al Jabri, of Ankaa Space & Technologies, the programme's executing partner, said companies that completed the Oman Space Accelerator Programme (OSAP) had already attracted more than RO 90,000 in investment.

Running the programme annually could lift projected annual revenue to RO 4 million and employment to 70 jobs by 2029, she said. Introducing three proposed support measures could increase those figures to RO 5 million and more than 90 jobs, doubling the revenue forecast for the first cohort alone. The forecasts, drawn from an OSAP impact report, discount revenue projections and apply a 65 per cent attrition rate.

OSAP is owned by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology through the National Space Programme. Ankaa manages the programme, coordinates training and engages stakeholders, while UK-based Exotopic is its design and delivery partner.

The accelerator aims to turn space technology ideas into Omani companies capable of attracting investment, in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the National Space Policy.

Al Jabri said the programme received 34 applications through the Makeen platform. Fifteen were shortlisted, 10 were selected for the first cohort and seven graduated in January 2026. More than 40 per cent of applications focused on artificial intelligence and data analytics or Earth observation. Half came from entrepreneurs and academic teams, with many projects still at the concept stage.

Oman urged to align clean power with AI ambitions

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 7

OMAN can turn its expanding renewable-energy base into a competitive advantage in artificial intelligence by more closely coordinating clean power development with data-centre, digital and investment policies, according to a sustainability expert at the Oman Net Zero Centre.

Dr Nasser al Ruzaiqi said Oman has already assembled many of the ingredients required for a distinctive AI ecosystem, but the next phase should focus on connecting these initiatives rather than pursuing them independently.

Writing in *Majan Rua'a*, a publication of The Majan Council, Al Ruzaiqi argued that Oman has an opportunity to build national AI and data infrastructure "on the back of its energy transition rather than in spite of it".

"What this moment calls for is not caution but coordination," he wrote, noting that government, telecommunications, special economic zone and clean-energy entities are already advancing complementary elements of the same national ambition.

Oman's emerging ecosystem includes the Oman Digital Triangle of interconnected data-centre hubs, the AI Special Economic Zone, Otech's sovereign cloud and AI initiatives and O-Green's renewable-energy



**DR NASSER
AL RUZAIQI**
*Sustainability
Expert - Oman Net-
Zero Centre*

platform. O-Green is particularly significant to the power-compute equation. Its Continuous Renewable Energy Project across Duqm and Mahout combines 2.7 GW of solar, wind and battery storage to provide 770 MW of firm, dispatchable electricity. O-Green is also targeting 200 MW of AI-ready data-centre capacity by 2028.

Al Ruzaiqi said Oman's abundant solar and wind resources give it a credible answer to an increasingly important question for hyperscale data-centre investors: whether facilities can be supplied sustainably and at predictable costs over the long term.

Drawing lessons from Ireland, Singapore, Finland and Sweden, he advocated a policy framework that links data-centre expansion explicitly to power availability and sustainability.

One option would be for the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, OPAZ and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to require large data-centre projects to demonstrate a contracted power-supply plan before

receiving approval. Such an approach could also give the Oman Net-Zero Centre a formal role in data-centre planning from the design stage.

Future data-centre capacity could additionally be linked to measurable efficiency standards covering power and water use, liquid cooling and renewable-energy sourcing.

Renewable developers and data-centre operators could meanwhile be encouraged to conclude long-term power purchase agreements, providing revenue certainty for generators while securing reliable clean electricity for computing facilities.

Al Ruzaiqi stressed that infrastructure alone would not capture the full economic opportunity. Continued investment in Omani AI talent, startups and specialist companies will be necessary to ensure the new capacity generates domestic value rather than merely hosting overseas computing workloads.

"Oman now has all five of the pieces" required to progress, he said, pointing to its digital-economy ministry, special-zone authority, national telecom operator, renewable-energy platform and international investor base.

"The work ahead is simply to connect them," Al Ruzaiqi concluded, arguing that deliberate institutional coordination could transform those individual strengths into a competitive and sustainable national AI ecosystem.

CAA
STRENGTHENS
AVIATION
COORDINATION

MUSCAT: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) brought together leaders of Oman's civil aviation sector to strengthen coordination, improve operational readiness and support an efficient response to changing conditions.

Chaired by Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the meeting focused on closer cooperation

among the sector's institutions and aligning their roles and responsibilities with the National Aviation Strategy 2040.

Al Abri said a coordinated approach was essential to strengthening the civil aviation system, highlighting the authority's commitment to partnership and continuous communication across the sector. "We are committed

to working as one sector, with integrated roles and concerted efforts, and ensuring that communication and coordination channels remain continuous and effective," he said. "The integration of the civil aviation system is the foundation for enhancing its readiness and ability to efficiently respond to various changes and challenges," Al Abri added.

Private 5G targets industrial efficiency gains in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 7

Private 5G networks could help Oman's oilfields, ports and logistics operators reduce downtime and improve coordination by linking equipment, workers and operational data, with industry executives calling for pilot projects to establish measurable returns before wider deployment.

The technology offers a way to bring functions such as remote monitoring, equipment tracking and live video onto a common communications platform. Its commercial value will depend on how effectively networks address operational needs and perform in Oman's varied industrial environments.

In an exclusive interview with *Observer*, Bader al Zidi, Chief Executive Officer of Vodafone Oman, said that adopting systems proven overseas would require local adaptation, drawing on the knowledge of workers and businesses using



5G's combination of capacity, speed, low latency and mobility could support multiple industrial applications on one platform.

them. "Technology has the capability, but we need to understand the end-user needs, and we need to also understand the environment they work in so then we can deliver the value they expect," he said.

Speaking at the Connected Futures forum in Muscat, Al Zidi and Chief Commercial Officer Dr Ali al Lawati outlined applications across oil and gas, public safety, ports and logistics, shifting the discussion from network coverage towards productivity, safety and

operating costs.

Al Lawati said 5G's combination of capacity, speed, low latency and mobility could support multiple industrial applications on one platform. Operators currently use a mixture of technologies, including Wi-Fi, WiMAX and TETRA, to meet different communications requirements.

In oil and gas, potential applications include connecting rigs and wells, monitoring operations remotely, inspecting facilities with drones and supporting predictive maintenance. Data from equipment could help operators identify developing faults and plan interventions before failures disrupt production.

For ports and logistics businesses, connected machinery and asset tracking could improve visibility over cargo movements and equipment use.

Al Lawati also identified digital twins — virtual representations of physical assets or operations — as an application that could become

easier to support through 5G connectivity.

Public safety applications include transmitting live video from field teams to command centres, allowing responders to assess conditions and coordinate emergency action. Wireless video surveillance could also serve locations with limited fixed connectivity.

Al Lawati highlighted standalone 5G and edge computing as components of industrial deployments. Processing data closer to equipment and workers can support faster decisions at a site, while dedicated networks can be designed around an operation's coverage, access and performance requirements.

Al Zidi said matching those capabilities to local conditions would be essential.

"We cannot just copy and paste or bring exact use cases as they are. We need to understand the knowledge of the end users; we need to understand the environment they operate in," he said.

MONETARY POLICY

RBI raises interest rate to 5.5 per cent



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised its benchmark repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.5 per cent, marking its first increase in four years. Citing persistent fuel and food inflation above target alongside robust 7.1 per cent GDP growth, all committee members voted to shift policy toward gradual tightening while raising annual consumer inflation forecasts to 5.2 per cent. — Reuters

GLOBAL MARKETS

US 30-year bond yield hits 24-year high



The US 30-year Treasury yield surged to a 24-year peak of 5.7041 per cent as global bond markets resumed a sharp selloff. Escalating investor anxiety over government debt burdens, high inflation, and rising crude oil prices dampened sentiment ahead of the US Federal Reserve's meeting minutes and crucial upcoming Treasury bond auctions testing institutional investor demand. — Reuters

ENERGY MARKETS

Oil prices stabilise as exports balance risks



Crude oil futures held steady with Brent above \$100 a barrel as expanding exports offset regional geopolitical risks and approaching weather disruptions in US oil-producing areas. Increased flow through Saudi Arabia's key pipeline helped boost tanker shipments, though analysts note market remains fragile due to continued shipping attacks across Middle Eastern maritime routes. — Reuters

OPINION

Strong MSX performance boosts investor returns



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

THE Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) delivered a strong performance in 2025 compared with a number of Arab and international stock markets. The MSX30 Index rose by approximately 28.2%, representing the strongest performance among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) stock markets. Dividend yields also reached 5.2% in 2025, a level described in data issued by the Union of Arab Securities Authorities as the highest among Arab stock exchanges. During the first nine months of 2026, the market maintained its strong momentum, with the MSX30 Index closing at around 7,567 points at the end of September, representing an increase of approximately 29%. Market capitalisation also rose to around RO 39.23 billion (\$101.9 billion) by the end of September. This strong performance recently earned the Muscat Stock Exchange recognition as the Arab stock exchange with the highest dividend yield, reflecting its positive performance and growth across key market indicators. The MSX was honoured during the 2026 Annual Conference of the Union of Arab Stock Exchanges, recently hosted by the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange. According to the MSX, trading value exceeded RO 9 billion (\$23.4 billion) from

the beginning of the year through the end of September, representing growth of more than 300% compared with the corresponding period of 2025. Average daily trading value in 2026 also reached approximately RO 52 million, an increase of more than 150% over the 2025 average. These figures point to significant growth in market liquidity and investor activity. The recognition from the Union of Arab Stock Exchanges also highlights the MSX's growing presence in Arab capital markets, alongside its efforts to enhance market efficiency, develop infrastructure, increase liquidity and broaden its investor base. These developments are strengthening the competitiveness of the Omani market and enhancing its regional and international standing. The strength of the MSX, therefore, has not been limited to the rise in its benchmark index. Its appeal has also stemmed from a combination of share-price appreciation and relatively attractive dividend distributions. Despite the market's strong gains, it has continued to offer notable dividend yields compared with a number of regional markets. For investors, this highlights the importance of total returns – the combination of capital appreciation and dividend income. Improved corporate earnings and greater

This strong performance recently earned the Muscat Stock Exchange recognition as the Arab stock exchange with the highest dividend yield, reflecting its positive performance and growth across key market indicators.

market liquidity can further support investment returns and confidence. The MSX has consequently maintained its strong position among GCC markets in terms of performance since the beginning of 2026. Successful stock-market investment, however, depends on several factors, including share-price appreciation, dividend distributions and adequate liquidity, particularly during periods of substantially increased trading activity. It is equally important to recognise that strong performance by a stock exchange does not mean that all listed shares will rise. The performance of individual stocks depends on factors such as corporate earnings and dividend prospects, debt levels, business growth and price-to-earnings ratios, rather than simply movements in the overall market index. Financial markets are also influenced by oil prices, global interest rates, domestic liquidity, foreign investment flows, geopolitical developments and broader economic conditions. Listed companies therefore need to focus, as far as possible, on sustaining earnings growth and maintaining or increasing dividend distributions. Such fundamentals remain important to preserving investor confidence and strengthening companies' positions in an increasingly competitive capital-market environment.

ENHANCING CORPORATE ESG REPORTING IN OMAN



KARL JACKSON
karl.jackson@crowe.om

The writer is an assurance and ESG partner with Crowe Oman.

IN collaboration with the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), Crowe Oman published its second annual report which analysed the December 2025 ESG disclosures of approximately 100 MSX listed companies. Whilst the report concluded that quality of ESG was improving and that, in the majority of instances, reporting against the mandatory 30 metrics was sound, a deeper analysis shows

that the top companies still have a way to go to reach international standards of complete, transparent and credible ESG reporting, which will become standard in Oman only in early 2030 when the FSA mandated IFRS Sustainability Standards must be adhered to. Focusing on the top 20 listed SAOG companies that account for 85 per cent of the MSX market capitalisation, we see four notable gaps. The first, and most overarching, is the lack of assurance to provide readers of ESG reports with credibility over the disclosures. Only two of the top 20 sought independent partial/limited assurance. Next up is completeness. Of the top 20, eight were companies that owned significant subsidiaries, of which only four of them included the subsidiaries in their ESG reporting and only to a limited extent. Whilst all companies have duly reported their own Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions, only eight of the top 20 made any attempt to report the Scope 3 carbon emissions from their up and downstream activities. For banks, with loans to high carbon emitting borrowers, the Scope 3 financed emissions will dwarf any direct emissions reported under Scope 1 and 2. The final gap is the near complete lack of reporting of the impact of climate change on the activities of the companies, where impacts can be positive as well as negative and may lead to business opportunities in addition to the more obvious risks and challenges. Such impacts are typically differentiated between the direct physical impacts of climate change and the wider secondary transitional impacts, such as legal, regulatory and changing consumer preferences, like the loss of business of traditional petrol stations, as home charging of the ever increasing number of electric vehicles becomes the norm. One question to be asked is, how many of the leading flagship Omani companies will rise to the challenge and decide to lead the way and proactively enhance their ESG reporting voluntarily, rather than wait for the FSA mandated December 2029 IFRS deadline. In our opinion, such an initiative would be well received by the foreign investors that the Government is trying attract to the Oman capital markets.

Four in five FTSE firms have only had male bosses

WITH the emphasis on gender equality, a new report has found that four out of five companies across the FTSE 100 and S&P 100 have never had a female chief executive, as boards fail to promote them into positions of power in their career. Across the two nations, 80 per cent of firms have never had a woman lead the companies, according to the latest tracker from Women in Work, despite many being appointed to board roles. Just 38 out of 200 companies across the two indices have appointed a female chief executive since 1997, half which have recorded appointments in the last ten years. While appointments have accelerated in the past decade, just nine companies in London's top index currently have a female chief executive including BP, Aviva and Vodafone Group.

Pavita Cooper, chair of the 30 per cent club UK, said these figures are not due to a lack of talent among women in corporate, but instead a failure among companies to promote them into "power roles". "This gap is not about talent. It's a promotion gap. There are not enough women being promoted up into the jobs from which you can succeed to be CEO," said Cooper. "The problem is, they're not in what we call power roles. They are not in the divisional jobs. They're not running the biggest part of the bank." Cooper argued the gap appears during the middle of a woman's career, as progress into senior operational roles can be stalled by time taken out of employment. Between the age of 35 and 44, 70 per cent of women step out of the workplace for caring responsibilities, according to findings from Octopus Money, despite it typically being the period many find their earnings and career progression peaking. Cooper said: "Between the age of 30 to 40, when most people are having to really lean into the key



Financial markets data and information are displayed on screens inside the LSEG (London Stock Exchange Group) headquarters in Paternoster Square, London. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

point in their career, women are also raising families. And then, for women who are kind of getting to that very top job, you will have kids about to go to university, you might be caring for your own parents." Cooper also called out "the ambush" of return to office mandates which are sweeping the City (the financial district of London) despite staff uproars, arguing the loss of flexibility hits parents in particular. Last month, Barclays staff revolted against a tightened working from home policy which would see thousands of staff in London's Canary Wharf office three days a week. "Wealthy men on Wall Street telling women they have got to go back to the office five days a week isn't helpful," she said. Elsewhere, with the autumn Budget scheduled for 28 October, there is speculation on tax hike, particularly on the much-hated Inheritance tax where receipts

have reached a new high as frozen thresholds and rising asset values drag more households into the tax net. Inheritance tax (IHT) receipts have hit £3.8bn so far this financial year, surpassing the £3.7bn recorded at the same point last year, according to the latest data from HMRC. Total receipts reached £8.5bn in the 2025/26 financial year. The rise comes as frozen tax thresholds pull more people into higher tax bands, while assets including houses and stocks rise in value. The nil-rate band has remained at £325,000 since 2009, while house prices have steadily climbed, particularly in the South-East. Average house prices in the region hit £381,000 in August, while London prices reached £554,000. Head of personal finance at AJ Bell, Sarah Coles, said frozen bands are "cutting deeper" in the face of higher house prices, meaning many Brits can no longer "escape this much-hated tax."

CLASSIFIEDS

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

PROCUREMENT manager, 30+ years experience in infrasturcture/ construction. Available immediately. Muscat: 91867257, sachink2030@gmail.com

Indian male, MBA Msc, 15+ years experience in Oman in HR, Admin, welfare, sales & marketing in lead role with manufacturing, construction, trading and oil & gas companies in Oman. Holds valid Oman D/L. Seeks job opening +968 77518551, email: Mathewjobyjohn678@gmail.com

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8 Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR Phone : 96896965333 Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT-JOB SEEKER: M.Com, 14+ years' accounting experience, including Oman experience. Expertise in Financial Reporting, Budgeting,Cash Flow. Seeking Chief/Senior Accountant,Ass. Finance Manager position in Oman. Mob:+968-90813494

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

INDIAN Male, BSc, 20 years experience seeks suitable position as System Administrator / System Engineer. Contact: 93642216

LOOKING for warehouse in charge / site supervision job with 14 years' experience in Oman for site coordination installation work. Valid Oman license. Experience in furniture handling of site installation. Contact no. 79994705

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc.... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

FOR RENT

10000 sqm plus area of open yard fully blacktop with compound wall, wide gate & CCTV for immediate rent in Jifnain. Contact: 99853040

4 Ready made office space for rent in Bank Melli Iran building MBD area Ruwi, opposite Centre point. Contact: 99011352.

SIT. WANTED

QUALIFIED Hotel Management graduate from India with a Bachelor's degree and hands-on experience in Food & Beverage and Guest Services. Trained with leading hospitality brands including DoubleTree by Hilton, Grand Hyatt and Taj Gateway. Skilled in customer service, F&B operations, order management, teamwork and problem-solving, with a positive attitude and strong commitment to service excellence. Available for immediate joining in Oman. Kindly contact 91124083, 78021569

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

Car Rental & Lease

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

SIT. WANTED

Male B.com with 30 + years experience in HR, Accounts, Adminstration, Executive/ Personal assistant boles. Holding a valid Oman D/L. Seeking a suitable job. Available to join immediatel. Contact: 92558734.

INDIAN male civil engineer with more than 30 years experience in different ministers, seek immediate suitable position. Contact: 94158080

EXPERTISE in Financial Reporting, Budgeting,Cash Flow. Seeking Chief/Senior Accountant,Ass.Finance Manager position in Oman.Mob:+968-90813494

EXPAT construction professional with M.Tech (Structural Engineering) & MBA (Construction Management) , 23 + experience in airport, building, infrastructure & water supply projects in HSE (safety) Quality Control, Contract Management, Tendering & Billing, Site Management available Oman or GCC : +096872400358: engrsanjeeva@yahoo.com

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN lady, 2.5+ years expeirience as bussiness analyst looking for opportunities in Oman. Domain exoerties in Mine Operation, logistics, Agriculture, HRMS and E-Commerce with MSc Data Analytics degree. Contact: 95328870

INDIAN Male Finance Graduate with 20+ years' experience in Trading, Shipping & Logistics , Warehousing , Real Estate Management seeks an immediate suitable position. ERP systems: Odoo, Orion, E-Promise & Dolphin. Contact : 95271876

SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com Mobile: 95544641

OMAN DAILY

Observer

FREE*
CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

* NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels

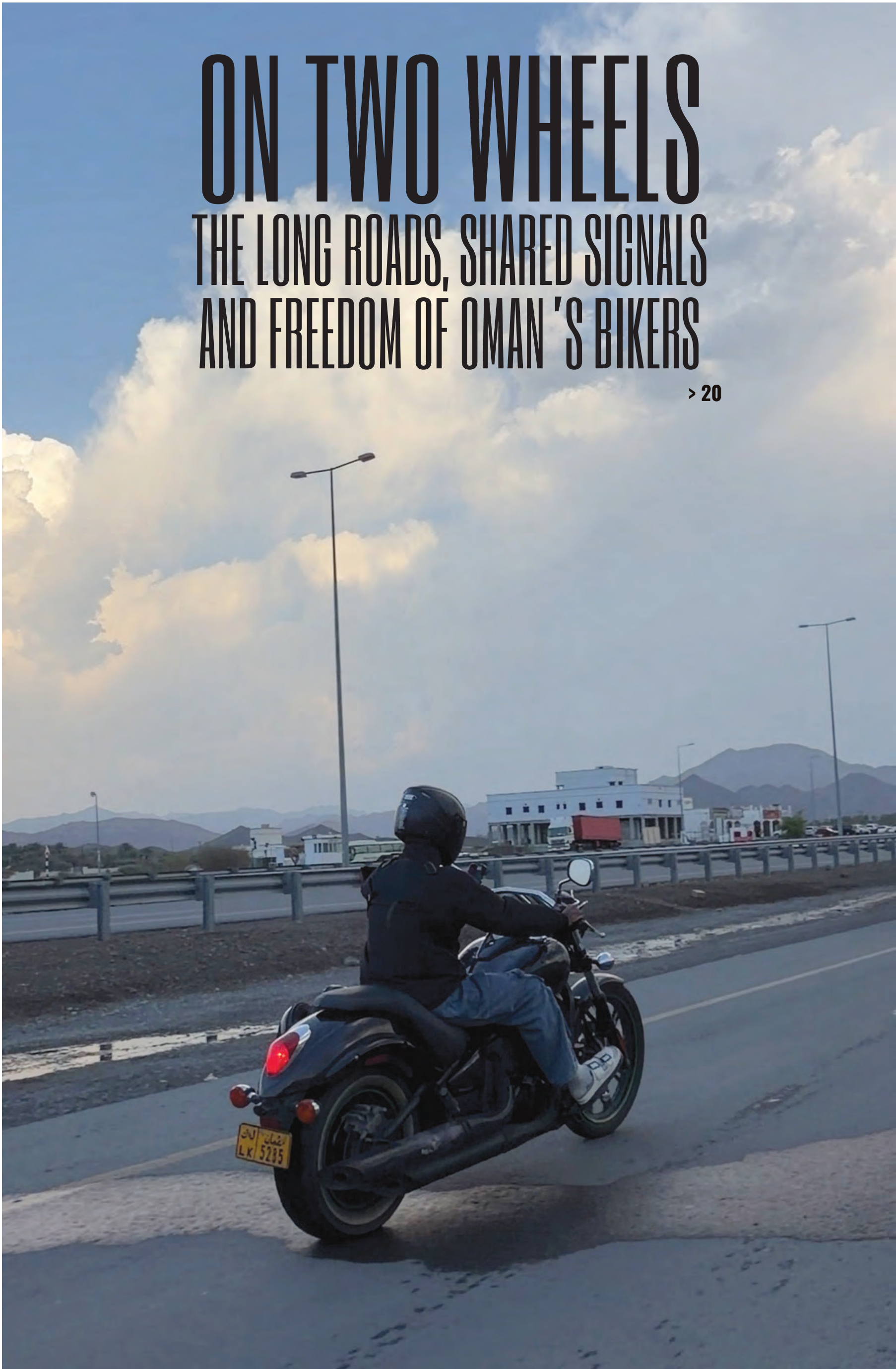


To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info



ART/LIFE



ON TWO WHEELS THE LONG ROADS, SHARED SIGNALS AND FREEDOM OF OMAN'S BIKERS

> 20

HOLLYWOOD LEGENDS EVA MARIE SAINT DIES AT 102



US actress Eva Marie Saint presented the Oscar for Best Costume Design during the 90th Annual Academy Awards in 2018. — AFP

Eva Marie Saint, the Oscar-winning actress who starred in Hollywood classics “On the Waterfront” and “North by Northwest,” died on Tuesday, her publicist said. She was 102.

Her representative Jeff Sanderson said she died of natural causes at home in Los Angeles, surrounded by family and loved ones.

Over seven decades, Saint worked with influential film-makers including Alfred Hitchcock and Elia Kazan, building a celebrated career in film and television that earned her an Oscar and an Emmy. Her film debut in Kazan’s 1954 crime drama “On the Waterfront” won her the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. Playing Edie opposite Marlon Brando’s troubled boxer, Saint was catapulted to Hollywood fame.

Her restrained performance contrasted with Brando’s intense method acting, and critics later recognised it as a standout in a film initially celebrated for its male roles.

“He was adorable — really adorable, but a little frightening,” she recalled. “I felt that he could see right through me.”

Saint went on to star opposite Cary Grant in Hitchcock’s “North by Northwest,” playing a double agent whose glamour concealed her dangerous work.

She was considered a surprise choice, but credited Hitchcock’s meticulous attention to her appearance with helping her inhabit the character.

“He worked with me from the outside in,” she said, explaining that her hair, makeup, clothes and accessories gave her “the sense of a spy lady.”

Saint also starred opposite Paul Newman in Otto Preminger’s “Exodus” in 1960 and Warren Beatty in John Frankenheimer’s “All Fall Down” two years later. Despite her success, she stepped back to raise her family with director Jeffrey Hayden. Their eldest son, Darrell, was born two days after her Oscar win.

She returned to blockbuster cinema as Superman’s adoptive mother in 2006’s “Superman Returns,” and later appeared in “Winter’s Tale” and “Marianne in Ecstasy.”

Television remained her preferred medium. She won an Emmy in 1990 for playing a wealthy widow in the miniseries “People Like Us.”

Born on July 4, 1924, in Newark, New Jersey, Saint credited her Quaker parents with instilling discipline. She entered Bowling Green State University intending to become a teacher, but graduated in dramatic arts after discovering theatre. She later trained at New York’s Herbert Berghof Studio and the Actors Studio.

Her marriage to Hayden lasted 65 years, until his death in 2016. Saint believed age enriched her craft.

“You’ve gone through different emotional experiences in your own life, and hopefully, you understand things better,” she told Turner Classic Movies.

“And that makes you a better actress.” — AFP

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



BOOKS

A person sits between inflatable sculptures and bookshelves ahead of the official opening of the Frankfurt Book Fair in Frankfurt, Germany. — AFP



PEOPLE

A worker takes a break for tea and breakfast at the seafront in Lamu Old Town on Lamu Island, Kenya. — AFP



FASHION

A model presents a creation for Ujoh Women’s Spring/Summer 2027 collection fashion show as part of the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



The village of Balad Sayt



Frozen in a moment of pure elegance

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

SLEEP-DEPRIVED JAPANESE COMPETE FOR BEST-RESTED



Attendees take part in a sleep competition organised by a mattress brand in Tokyo. — AFP

Self-described elite “competitive sleepers” competed to nap the fastest and deepest in a Tokyo contest organised by a mattress company.

Dubbed “Matt Race”, the competition saw dozens of participants fitted with sleep-tracking devices lie on mattresses for up to 90 minutes on Monday, competing for a top prize of over two million yen (\$14,000).

“Japan is often described as a country suffering from sleep deprivation, and people here are very diligent,” said Riichiro Nakama, creative director at organiser Koala Sleep Japan.

Inside a dimly lit room, participants slept with monitors attached to their heads, some cradling stuffed toys.

“By turning it into an event like this, I think we can get people to sleep together, raise

interest in sleep,” Nakama said.

OECD data showed in 2021 that Japanese people slept an average of seven hours and 24 minutes a day, the least among OECD nations. Experts cited long working and commuting hours and a busy nightlife economy as contributing factors.

“It was over in an instant. I almost wish I could have slept a little longer,” participant Chisato Honda, 32, told AFP.

“It was a happy competition,” he added.

The winner was chosen based on how quickly and soundly they slept.

“I want to live on my own, so I think I’ll use the money for the moving costs,” said winner Suimii, who gave only her nickname.

“I also want a bed like a princess’s, so I think I’ll buy that bed.” — AFP



Oscar-winning actress Mikey Madison plays Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen. — AFP

Jeremy Allen White confronts Facebook’s ‘frightening’ ambition

JEREMY Allen White finds the power of social media frightening — an anxiety he confronts in his latest film, “The Social Reckoning.”

The actor stars alongside Oscar winner Mikey Madison in Aaron Sorkin’s drama about the investigation behind “The Facebook Files,” a trove of internal statements and data leaked in 2021.

White plays then-Wall Street Journal reporter Jeff Horwitz, whose investigation into Facebook’s practices was aided by whistleblower Frances Haugen, portrayed by Madison.

“I’ve got a lot of fears about, like, what these companies want ultimately,” White said.

“They want all of our time. They want all our attention. They want all of our engagement. They want the way we communicate to be with their tools.”

The actor described it as “a frightening concept that we don’t know where the ceiling is here. You know, they have billions and trillions of dollars. What else?”

“The Social Reckoning” serves as a sequel of sorts to 2010’s “The Social Network,” which chronicled Facebook’s origins. Starring Jesse Eisenberg, that film followed Mark Zuckerberg from a socially struggling student to the creator of an online ecosystem for making friends.

White, 35, opened a Facebook account during high school, when “it seemed innocent enough, I guess, at the time.”

But he remembers friends experiencing stress and insecurity over follower counts and who followed whom.

“Now it’s kind of like how we value everything in this world,” he said.

Madison, 27, who won an



Jeremy Allen White at the premiere of “The Social Reckoning” in New York. — AFP



Mark Zuckerberg, pictured here last week in Washington, is the central figure in the drama. — AFP

Academy Award for “Anora,” has stayed off social media. She said she shares “a lot of the same sensibilities” and concerns

expressed by White.

In the new film, Jeremy Strong portrays Zuckerberg as an adult: still socially awkward, but now a globally powerful figure whose platform generates billions of dollars.

The drama depicts how company practices contributed to the radicalization of some users, according to the investigations.

Following the public revelations, Facebook’s parent company rebranded as Meta. The findings also sparked lawsuits, some seeking compensation running into millions of dollars.

For companies handling billions in revenue, however, White said “the sums are kind of irrelevant.”

He hopes the film will “get people to speak about the damages that can be caused by companies like Facebook.”

“I hope people ask their friends, their family members, ask themselves about their own relationship to social media platforms,” he said, including their information sources and mental health implications.

Wunmi Mosaku, who plays a fictionalized Zuckerberg adviser, shares those hopes for the film, which opens Friday.

“Social media is very much responsible for the climate that we’re in and the environment that we’re raising our children in,” she said.

The actress, 40, said the film raises questions demanding answers.

“What are the governments going to do? Who are we beholden to? Are we just going to keep going on this journey that the billionaires are pulling us along, or are we going to put regulation in place?”

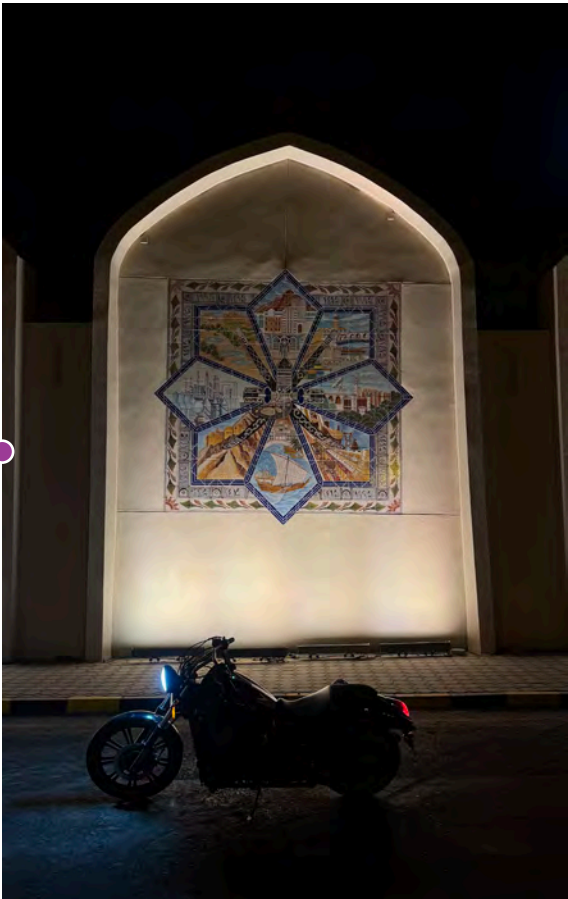
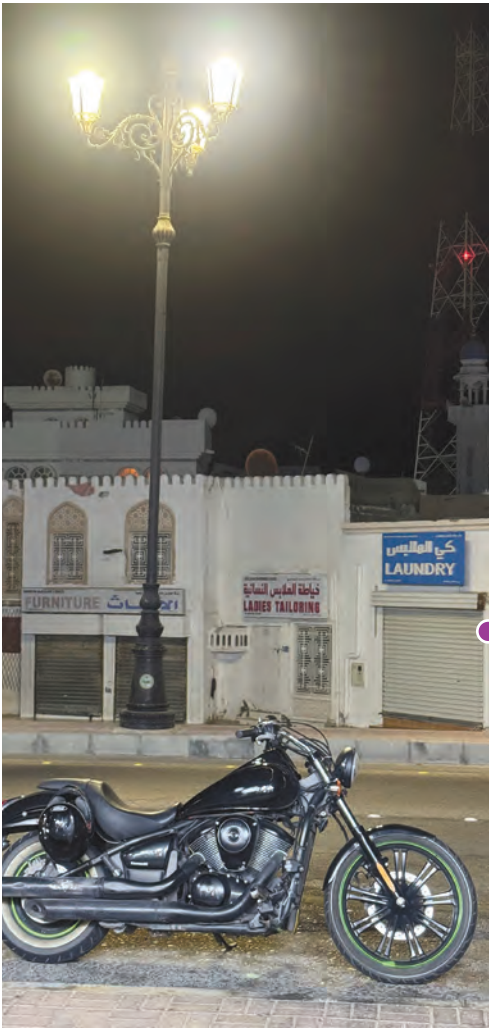
“Who are we allowing to feed into us and manipulate what media we consume, which bubbles we’re in?”

“It’s very upsetting.” — AFP

FEATURES

ON TWO WHEELS

THE LONG ROADS, SHARED SIGNALS AND FREEDOM OF OMAN'S BIKERS



HAMDAN AL JAHDHAMI

FOR some, a long journey means spending hours behind the wheel, counting the kilometres until reaching the destination. For bikers, however, the road itself is part of the destination.

The sound of the engine, changing scenery and the open road create an experience that is difficult to describe to anyone who has never travelled on two wheels. For many riders, a short ride around Muscat is enough to clear the mind, while others prefer longer routes across Oman.

For one biker from Barka, favourite destinations include Dima W'attayeen in Al Sharqiyah North, as well as Suhar, Al Qurum and Muttrah. A typical long ride may begin in Barka, continue towards Dima W'attayeen, and return to Barka on the same day.

The attraction of long-distance riding is also visible on social media. Social media activist Mohammed al Nasri, known as Abu Al Reesh, recently shared an Instagram reel documenting his journey to Salalah during the khareef season, highlighting the appeal of experiencing Oman's long roads on two wheels.

The journey to Salalah requires preparation, patience and awareness of changing road and weather conditions. During khareef, fog, rain and reduced visibility can create additional challenges, making responsible riding particularly important.

PREPARATION BEFORE THE JOURNEY
A long motorcycle journey should never begin simply by starting the engine and heading out. Riders should check their tyres, brakes, lights, indicators, chain and essential fluids before departure.

For Oman's bikers, the road is part of the destination. From Muscat to Salalah, journeys on two wheels offer freedom, discovery and friendship, while careful preparation and responsible riding help make every kilometre worthwhile.

Fuel levels should also be checked, with fuel stations and rest stops considered when planning the route.

The rider's equipment is equally important. A properly fitted helmet, protective gloves, riding jacket, suitable trousers and appropriate footwear can provide important protection. For longer journeys, carrying drinking water, basic first-aid supplies, a fully charged phone, identification and essential personal items is also useful.

Weather conditions should be checked before departure, as rain, fog and strong winds can quickly make a familiar route more difficult.

Most importantly, a long journey should never be treated as a race. The objective is to arrive safely, not to reach the destination as quickly as possible.

THE STRENGTH OF RIDING TOGETHER
Group riding can make long journeys more enjoyable, but it requires discipline and communication. Before setting off, riders should agree on the route, meeting points, fuel stops and what to do if someone becomes separated.

A group should ideally have a designated ride leader and a sweeper, or rear rider, who remains at the back. The leader manages the route and pace, while the rear rider helps ensure that no one is left behind.

Hand signals are another important part of group riding. Since motorcycles are noisy, groups often agree on signals before starting. For example, some riders use two taps on the top of the helmet to indicate that police or a checkpoint is ahead. Other signals may indicate slowing down, increasing speed when safe, stopping,

pulling over or changing direction. The exact gestures may differ between groups, but the important point is that every rider understands them.

THE ROAD IS NOT A COMPETITION
Long-distance riding can test concentration and endurance. Fatigue can affect reaction time and judgement, making regular breaks essential, especially on journeys covering several hundred kilometres.

A rider travelling from Barka to Al Sharqiyah North and returning on the same day needs to manage energy as carefully as fuel. The same applies to riders heading towards Salalah, where the long distance and increased traffic during khareef require extra caution.

Motorcyclists should also remember that other road users may not always anticipate their movements. Staying visible, maintaining a safe position and avoiding unnecessary manoeuvres are important parts of responsible riding.

For many bikers, the motorcycle is more than transportation. It is a way to discover Oman, meet people and build friendships. Experienced riders can also help newcomers learn about preparation, route planning, group discipline and road awareness.

Oman offers a remarkable variety of roads and landscapes, from the coast and mountains to the desert and the green scenery of Dhofar during khareef.

For bikers, every route can become a new story. The best journey is not necessarily the fastest or the longest. It is the one where the engine is switched off at the end of the day, the helmet comes off, and the rider can say: the road was long, but it was worth every kilometre.

