

O M A N عَمَان D A I L Y

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PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 06:10 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

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BENCIC SURPRISES HERSELF AS TOKYO WIN BRINGS 10TH TITLE

INBRIEF

HM GREET'S TURKMENISTAN, ST VINCENT AND GRENADINES

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Serdar Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan, on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to President Berdimuhamedow and the friendly people of Turkmenistan, wishing them further progress and prosperity. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of greetings to Dame Susan Dougan, Governor General of St Vincent and the Grenadines on her country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to Dame Susan Dougan. He wished the friendly people of St Vincent and the Grenadines lasting stability, further progress and prosperity.

NEUROSTIMULATION DEVICE IMPLANTED

The Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) has conducted Oman's first spinal neurostimulation device implantation in the lower spine. The surgery was an advanced technique used to treat some complex urinary disorders. It was performed by Dr Intisar bint Mohammed al Hashmiyah, a Consultant Urologist in the Department of Surgery at SQUH in the University Medical City, with the participation of an integrated medical team. The surgery, conducted in two stages that adhered to the latest international protocols, marks a breakthrough in the development of specialised urology services in the Sultanate of Oman.

WHERE THE SEA GLOWS BLUE

Over the weekend, thousands of people flooded the beaches, phones raised and hearts racing, eager to witness what social media has lovingly dubbed 'the sea's blue teardrops'. **DETAILS ON P20**

14 winners feted with 'Imtidad' youth awards

YOUTH FOUNDATION OF RENEWED RENAISSANCE: SAYYID THEYAZIN

UNDER THE auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Sultanate of Oman celebrated Omani Youth Day on Sunday at Sohar Fort.

Earlier, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said affirmed that Omani Youth Day is an occasion during which confidence in the youth of this cherished nation is renewed. In an address delivered on this occasion, he expressed his pride in their contribution and devotion, and in the awareness and sense of responsibility they embody towards Oman's present and future.

The text of the address is as follows: "Loyal youth of Oman, We celebrate Omani Youth Day on October 26, a day on which we renew our confidence in the youth of this dear homeland and express our pride in your contribution and devotion, and in the awareness and responsibility you demonstrate towards Oman's present and its future.

The continuity we celebrate this year is not merely the passage of time; it is an expression of the depth of belonging, the sustainability of giving, and the renewal of faith in the nation and its values. It is an unbroken thread between the past that laid the foundations, the present that is building, and the future we all aspire to for our beloved homeland, the Sultanate of Oman.

OUR DEAR YOUTH, The Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, believes that youth are the foundation of the Renewed Renaissance and its inexhaustible energy. From this firm belief have sprung programmes and initiatives that enhance your participation and provide you with an

Under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Sultanate of Oman celebrated Omani Youth Day on Sunday at Sohar Fort.

environment for creativity and innovation, so that you can be true partners in shaping the contours of Oman's promising tomorrow.

You have proved yourselves worthy of this trust in all fields, carrying the banner of the Sultanate of Oman in the arenas of science and knowledge, the arts and technology, and in sport and voluntary work. With your diligence you make an impact, with your enthusiasm you plant hope, and in your lived reality you embody the meaning of continuity, with all that it entails of sustained inspiration and responsibility.

True empowerment comes through self-belief, continuous work, and earnest striving for leadership. Live up to the trust, be sincere

in your endeavours, and be keen to ensure that the name of the Sultanate of Oman remains held high in every field you enter. Know that what you produce today in thought, creativity and mastery is the nation's provision for its future and for its Renewed Renaissance.

We believe in you, and we see in you the radiant face of Oman's future, which advances with steady steps towards a tomorrow of greater prosperity and innovation — a tomorrow you fashion with your resolve, safeguard with your values, and illuminate with your passion. And with every passing year, may the youth of Oman proceed with confidence towards ever-renewed glory." **SEE ALSO P2**

Labour incentives to boost work environment

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour has issued a new ministerial resolution introducing a comprehensive package of facilitations, fee reductions and exemptions aimed at improving the work permit system in the Sultanate of Oman. Ministerial Resolution No 602/2025 governs the issuance of work permits and practising work permits and is designed to simplify administrative procedures for employers while ensuring workers' rights are fully protected.

The decision extends the validity of work permits for non-Omani

employees from 15 to 24 months, addressing long-standing employer requests to align permits with the worker's residency period. This change is expected to reduce administrative burdens, save costs and provide greater workforce stability for businesses operating in Oman. Employers are now allowed to upgrade a worker's profession in the work permit from a lower to a higher category by paying only the difference in fees, without having to issue a new licence. This measure offers greater flexibility for businesses and streamlines

human resource planning, helping employers manage their workforce efficiently while maintaining compliance with Omani labour regulations.

The resolution also introduces targeted social exemptions. People with special needs, elderly individuals unable to care for themselves, those receiving family income benefits and individuals with health conditions requiring special attention will be exempt from paying licensing fees when recruiting domestic workers, private nurses, nannies, private drivers or

home health aides. This ensures that vulnerable groups can access essential services without incurring financial hardship.

In recognition of the important role played by civil society and humanitarian organisations, the fees for recruiting non-Omani workers for these organisations have been reduced from RO 141 to RO 101. Business owners who meet the Omanisation targets will also benefit from a 30 per cent reduction in fees, while fees will double for establishments that fail to comply. **DETAILS ON P13**

Abbas names successor 'in case of vacancy'

RAMALLAH: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has issued a decree outlining a succession plan "in case of vacancy," Wafa news agency reported on Sunday. The measure paves the way for his deputy, Hussein al Sheikh, to temporarily assume power, the Palestinian news agency said.

Under the decree, Al Sheikh, 64, would lead the Palestinian Authority for up to 90 days should Abbas be unable to perform his duties.

A Palestinian child looks through an opening in a makeshift fence near shelters in Khan Yunis. — **AFP**

A presidential election would be held within that period. The regulation would also apply in the event of a resignation, although no such move is currently expected by Abbas.

Al Sheikh, a close confidant of Abbas, was appointed vice-president earlier this year after the post was created in April.

Abbas, 89, succeeded Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) founder Yasser Arafat as president in 2005 after winning that year's

election. Meanwhile, Israel insisted on Sunday that it will maintain control of security inside Gaza despite signing up to a US-brokered ceasefire that foresees the deployment of an international security force.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told ministers that Israel would decide for itself where and when to strike its foes and which countries would be allowed to send troops to police the truce.

— Agencies

OMANI YOUTH DAY

14 winners feted with ‘Imtidad’ awards



Under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Sultanate of Oman celebrated Omani Youth Day on Sunday at Sohar Fort.



AHMED AL KAABI
SUHAR, OCT 26

UNDER The auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Sultanate of Oman celebrated Omani Youth Day on Sunday at Sohar Fort. The annual celebration, observed every October 26, was attended by ministers, dignitaries and professionals from the youth sector, as well as national institutions supporting youth development. This year’s celebration carried the theme ‘Imtidad’ (Extension), symbolising the connection between Oman’s rich history and the renewed spirit of its youth — a continuation of national initiatives that have empowered young people and highlighted their vital role in development. The artistic production also called ‘Imtidad’ presented an innovative musical experience blending Omani musical identity with a modern creative touch that evoked the past while celebrating youth energy and creativity. The musical piece, composed and directed by Omani artist Ameer Awadh

The annual celebration, observed every October 26, was attended by ministers, dignitaries and professionals from the youth sector, as well as national institutions supporting youth development.

and produced by the Oman Centre for Music, fused authenticity with innovation. It featured traditional Omani instruments such as the mizmar abu maqrun, barghoom, shabboura, hongu and yem, arranged in a modern orchestral form expressing the spirit of contemporary culture. The performance brought together a talented group of young and experienced Omani musicians who reflected, through their artistry, a living extension of the nation’s musical heritage. Before the main ceremony, Sayyid Theyazin reviewed the Omani pavilion’s award winning design at the London Design Biennale 2025 ‘The Memory Network’ by designer Haitham al Busafi, which earned the Best Artistic Design Award. The work explores social values and connections through a contemporary reinterpretation of traditional pottery, crafted with translucent materials reminiscent of digital data centres, symbolising the intersection between memory, heritage, and modernity. This international recognition reflects the Ministry’s strategic vision and continuous support for Omani creativity on the global stage. The event also honoured 14 winners of the 2025 Youth Excellence Award,

organised by the ministry’s Directorate-General of Youth. The award recognises outstanding youth contributions in community service and innovation across five fields: digital media, digital economy, environment, youth initiatives and entrepreneurship. Hajar bint Jumaa al Amriyah was awarded ‘Mindset Podcast’ award, and Haitham bin Musbah al Maqbali was awarded ‘Inspiring Paths / Nabd Sohar Media Team’ award. Maathir bint Khamis al Wahibiyah was awarded for the ‘Omani Agricultural Drone Pilot Training Initiative’ while Anwar bin Ahmed al Baimani awarded for ‘Qishoor’, Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Raisi for ‘Destination’, and Rihab bint Abdullah al Maamariyah for ‘The Blooming Garden’. In the youth initiatives, Hilal bin Said al Dhahli was awarded for ‘Hear Me’, Shaimaa bint Hassan al Fazariyah for ‘Still We Dream’, Dr Sumaya bint Salem al Wahibiyah for ‘Creative Mornings’, Hafsa bint Ali al Habsiyah for ‘Nutfat Al Khair’, and Jihad bin Khalid al Farsi for ‘Our Unique Print – Buthra Fund’. In entrepreneurship, Fatma bint Jafar al Lawatiyah was awarded for ‘Mangaka Bag’, Anwar bin Salem al Majizi for ‘Smart Developer’, and Eng Yousuf bin Ahmed al Ibrahim for ‘Dot Next Jadeer – Awj’.

During the celebration, seven partnership agreements were signed to expand youth centre branches across governorates, ensuring inclusive access for all youth groups. The agreements were signed with major national entities including Vale Oman, OMIFCO, Mohsin Haider Darwish Group, OQ Group, Sohar Aluminium, Sohar Port, and OQ Exploration & Production. In addition, several supporting organisations were honoured for their contributions to empowering Omani youth and promoting national initiatives. The ceremony featured a visual presentation conveying the message of Omani youth — inspired by the nation’s proud history and heritage — as well as a multimedia show that revived scenes from Sohar Fort’s storied past, symbolising belonging, ambition, and achievement. The youth emphasised that their vision aligns with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s guidance to engage young people as genuine partners in nation building under Oman Vision 2040. At the end of the event, HH Sayyid Theyazin toured the ‘Projects Corridor’ and ‘Talents Space’, where several innovative youth projects were showcased in sports, art and technology.

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SHORT TAKES



The signing of this agreement aims to maximise the benefits of cultural heritage and its contribution to economic growth. — ONA

CONTRACT TO OPERATE SAMAYIL FORT

SAMAYIL: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has signed a contract with Rawafed company to manage and operate Samayil Fort in the Wilayat of Samayil.

The signing of this agreement aims to maximise the benefits of cultural heritage and its contribution to economic growth.

Samayil Fort is one of the most important historical landmarks in the governorate, with significant cultural and heritage value.

The project will contribute to stimulating tourism by attracting visitors from both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. It also presents an opportunity to enhance the role of private sector in managing heritage sites.

— ONA

AL BATINAH FILM FESTIVAL STARTS TODAY

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The 3rd Al Batinah Film Festival, themed ‘Cinema and the Sea’, will be hosted by the Wilayat of Liwa from Monday to October 30, according to the Oman Film Society, the main organisers of the 4-day event.

The festival will showcase 319 films from 33 countries, including 198 feature films, 88 documentaries, 18 Artificial Intelligence films, and 15 films from Omani institutions. After rigorous preliminary selections, 62 films have been chosen to compete for awards in various categories.

The opening ceremony will take place at the Liwa Fort in Al Batinah North Governorate. Throughout the festival, artists and film stars from Oman, the Gulf states, and the Arab world will be in attendance.

Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Oman Film Society and Chairman of the Festival, mentioned that the selection of the Wilayat of Liwa as the host for the third Al Batinah International Film Festival is due to the region’s rich tourist and heritage attractions that benefit film-makers.

“This film festival is part of the ‘Make Your Film in Oman’ initiative by the Omani Film Society, which aims to promote the Sultanate’s locations as open studios for film-makers to utilise and invest in.

NDC launches health security readiness programme

MUSCAT: The National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies on Sunday inaugurated its tenth Parallel Programme, titled ‘Health Security: Reality and Aspiration’, under the distinguished auspices of Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College.

NDC Commandant articulated that the strategic ambition for health security encompasses a fundamental transition from reactive response to proactive preparedness, from treatment-focused approaches to prevention-oriented strategies, and from dependency models to self-sufficiency frameworks. He emphasised that sustainable health security extends beyond physical infrastructure and



The programme will continue through October 30. — ONA

medical facilities to encompass public awareness, knowledge development, intelligent governance systems, and the establishment of a robust national foundation comprising scientists and researchers capable of pioneering innovation in biomedical and preventive medicine.

The programme commenced with a comprehensive briefing detailing the principal objectives of the tenth Parallel Programme, which include assessing the current state of health security within the Sultanate of Oman, evaluating national readiness levels for responding to health emergencies and pandemic situations, and

identifying strategic priorities for building sustainable health security infrastructure aligned with the long-term objectives of the “Oman Vision 2040”.

The inaugural day featured multiple technical lectures and working papers presented by an array of distinguished experts, researchers and specialists from both within the Sultanate of Oman and international counterparts.

The programme will continue through October 30, representing a key component of the National Defence College’s ongoing national mandate to enhance and develop leadership competencies and strategic capabilities among senior government officials, along with high-ranking officers from the Sultan’s Armed Forces and other military and security units.

Respiratory virus cases on the rise among infants

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, OCT 26

THE Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is witnessing a surge in cases, particularly among children under six months, making them highly vulnerable to complications. Families in Barka were alerted through a letter from the office of the Wali, citing information from the Director-General of the Directorate-General of Health Services in Al Batinah South Governorate.

The advisory urged families to limit unnecessary gatherings, especially when respiratory symptoms appear, and to seek early medical attention if symptoms arise in young children.

Most respiratory viruses, including RSV, tend to peak during winter months.

“There is a notable increase in viral infections, particularly among paediatric patients, and RSV is a key concern,” said Dr Dilip Kumar Singvi, Specialist in Internal Medicine at Burjeel Hospital. RSV primarily affects the upper respiratory tract and sometimes the lungs.

It spreads through droplets when an infected person sneezes or coughs.



Doctors advise avoiding crowded places, staying hydrated, and using supportive treatments like paracetamol and antihistamines

Common symptoms include a runny nose, fever, cough, shortness of breath, wheezing and difficulty swallowing. Dr Singvi advised avoiding crowded places, isolating if infected, staying hydrated, and using supportive treatments like paracetamol and antihistamines, noting that antibiotics and antivirals are ineffective. Surveillance and research in Oman continue under WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Acute Respiratory Infection Surveillance Network, which monitors RSV and influenza-like illnesses. Studies from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital and

the Royal Hospital in Muscat show RSV as a leading cause of hospital admissions for infant bronchiolitis.

Co-infections with influenza and human metapneumovirus (hMPV) have been reported, highlighting seasonal patterns and genetic diversity of RSV-A and RSV-B strains.

Dr Mahmood al Rahbi, Head of Emergency at Samayil Government Hospital, emphasised the need for expanded laboratory surveillance beyond major hospitals, noting limited data among adults and the elderly and the absence of a national RSV vaccination programme.

Karim bin Bakhsh al Balushi, CEO of Al Raneen Private School, highlighted initiatives linking health and education sectors.

“The Ministry of Health’s plan for the 2025-2026 academic year sets a national model for preventive health, putting student well-being at the heart of education,” he said.

Early disease detection and health awareness not only create a safer learning environment but also align with Oman’s vision for a healthier, more capable generation.

“Investing in student health is investing in the nation’s future,” Al Balushi added.

EA adopts policies to keep pace with Oman’s Net-Zero targets

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA) said that it is adopting a set of innovative financial policies and strategic initiatives to keep pace with the Sultanate of Oman’s 2050 carbon neutrality objectives.

This approach, it explained, involves obtaining funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) along several tracks, which include boosting accreditation and readiness and developing proposals for projects, partnerships and international cooperation.

The Environment Authority plays a leading role as a partner in devising environmental projects that are eligible for funding, notably through the development of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). It also works in cooperation with

global bodies like the Green Climate Fund to develop the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (NAP), which seeks to identify priority needs, devise a national strategy for financing of the NAP and cooperate to open up pathways for green financing.

The Environment Authority has signed a cooperation programme with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), with the aim of facilitating access to green financing and supporting the parties concerned, to enable them to communicate directly with the GCF and focus on nature-based solutions. The Environment Authority lays emphasis on land reclamation and mangrove restoration projects due to the projects’ dual role in adaptation and



EA plays a leading role as a partner in devising environmental projects that are eligible for funding, notably through the development of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). — ONA

carbon sequestration.

The EA also keeps updating the Climate Affairs Management Regulation, with the aim of better monitoring the performance of companies and establishments (in terms of impact mitigation and adaptation), in addition

to providing an efficient framework that supports transition to green practices.

Eng Khalid bin Mohammed al Balushi, Acting Director-General of Climate Change at the Environment Authority, said that the Accreditation and Readiness Programme is a mechanism that requires

national bodies to gain accreditation or to work through accredited entities to build national capacities, by enabling local institutions to become direct points of access that are accredited by the GCF.

A banking establishment in Oman has been selected as an accredited institution by the GCF.

Its role includes coordinating project funding requests and benefiting from the GCF “Readiness Programme”, through which this banking establishment seeks to obtain grants from the GCF to enhance its ability to develop climate projects and devise national adaptation plans and national action plans for green growth.

Eng Al Balushi pointed out that the establishments

concerned rely on partnerships to enhance access to financing and project implementation opportunities like “international cooperation”, which involves working with international organisations accredited by the GCF (like the Food and Agriculture Organization or the GGGI) to submit joint project proposals and to engage the private sector through the attraction of private financing for climate projects.

The Green Climate Fund encourages the use of public resources to improve risk forecasting for private investments.

For Oman, climate finance gains significance for four main reasons that are linked to the country’s economic and environmental transition.

SPOTLIGHT

OMAN’S SCHOOLS GO DIGITAL

“
Educational
platforms help
students acquire
modern technical
skills, from
working with
cloud software
and digital
design tools
to employing
artificial
intelligence in
learning.”

**AISHA AL
HAJRI**
Teacher

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

WITH THE RAPID advancement of technology, education in Oman is entering a transformative phase. Schools across the country are steadily embracing e-learning platforms that promise flexibility, inclusivity and innovation — yet the shift from traditional teaching to digital learning still presents significant challenges.

In line with Oman Vision 2040 and its emphasis on sustainable and innovative education, the Ministry of Education has introduced a comprehensive national e-learning road map to regulate and govern the digital learning environment. This initiative ensures that technology integration across schools is systematic, consistent and aligned with the country’s educational goals.

At the heart of this transformation is the Noor e-learning platform, a unified national digital repository that allows students to access high-quality interactive educational content anytime, anywhere.

Teachers can manage virtual classrooms, assign tasks, and communicate effectively with students and parents — creating a safe and dynamic online learning ecosystem. “Educational platforms help students acquire modern technical skills, from working with cloud software and digital design tools to employing artificial intelligence in learning,” said teacher Aisha al Hajri.

Ahmed al Battashi, another educator, highlighted that digital education has revolutionised the delivery of knowledge. “Interactive experiences powered by AI and electronic testing systems are equipping students with the digital competencies needed to meet labour market demands,” he said.

Despite its promise, e-learning still faces challenges. Some students struggle with connectivity issues, delayed submissions, or login difficulties — especially in areas with weaker Internet access. Teachers note the need for continuous training and technical support for both educators and parents. Meanwhile, concerns persist about maintaining engagement and discipline in a virtual environment.

Some parents have expressed reservations about e-learning, fearing that digital lessons cannot fully replicate classroom experiences. Others, however, see positive outcomes — including improved academic performance, discipline and consistent teacher follow-up.

The ministry has emphasised the importance of integration with the official ‘Noor Education’ platform, prohibiting the use of unsupervised private systems to prevent content fragmentation and ensure curriculum alignment. Clear regulatory frameworks have been established to protect students’ data privacy and uphold educational quality.

The first phase of the Noor platform was launched during the 2024–2025 academic year, covering four governorates — Muscat, Dhofar, Al Dakhiliyah and Al Batinah North — and 140 public schools (10 per cent). The second phase expanded to 30 per cent of schools, with full nationwide implementation planned for the 2025–2026 academic year.

The ministry believes the initiative’s success depends on collaboration among educators, parents and students. Local private initiatives have also contributed by developing complementary e-learning platforms, adding diversity and innovation to Oman’s digital education landscape.

These efforts are expected to place Oman at the forefront of regional e-learning innovation, fostering cooperation among Gulf nations and empowering students with future-ready digital skills.

“The success of this transformation depends on the unity of all stakeholders,” said one education official. “Together, we are building an educational system that matches the needs of tomorrow.”



SHORT TAKES



The forum proceedings were inaugurated under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North. — ONA

FORUM EXPLORES EMPOWERMENT OF OMANI YOUTH

SUHAR: Sohar University hosted the ICCA Uni Forum on Sunday through a strategic collaboration between the academic institution, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), and the Oman Convention Bureau at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The forum proceedings were inaugurated under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, featuring participation from distinguished academics, industry specialists, and conference professionals from throughout the Sultanate of Oman and international markets.

This initiative aims to create career pathways for Omani youth within the conferences and exhibitions sector while strengthening collaboration between academic institutions and the business events industry. The forum further seeks to establish Oman's position as a premier conference tourism destination both regionally and globally while developing a generation of qualified national professionals capable of supporting the strategic objectives outlined in "Oman Vision 2040." Anju Gomes, Senior Regional Director for the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) in the Middle East, emphasised the organisation's global leadership in developing the meetings and conferences industry, noting the sector's substantial annual contribution to global GDP and its creation of millions of direct and indirect employment opportunities worldwide.

She further stated that hosting forums of this calibre in Oman demonstrates the nation's expanding presence within the global conference landscape and strengthens its economic competitiveness in the international business tourism market. — ONA

WALKATHON TO SUPPORT CANCER PATIENTS HELD



The walkathon raised awareness and supported cancer patients

SALALAH: The Oman Cancer Association (OCA) in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, organised the 14th edition of its annual 'Walkathon', aimed at raising awareness and supporting cancer patients.

The 400-metre march saw enthusiastic participation from diverse segments of society.

The event focused on promoting the importance of early cancer detection and encouraging community engagement in physical activity. In addition to the march, a variety of activities were organised for families and children.

Zain Al Abidin bin Ali al Ajili, OCA's Vice-President in Dhofar, highlighted the association's commitment to hosting the march each year as part of its awareness programmes. He noted that the Hafa Beach Market was chosen for its unique blend of tradition and modernity, which attracts a wide audience.

This year's edition featured several new additions, including an awareness corner, a health services corner, family and children's competitions, and an international athletics bag corner. — ONA

Women seeks to spread environmental awareness

MUSANDAM: The Environment Authority (EA) organised a special training activity for girls and women as part of the Marine Mammal Survey Project in Musandam Governorate.

The initiative comes within the EA's efforts to enhance community environmental awareness and promote women's participation in specialised environmental activities.

The three-day event included three creative workshops: painting on eco-friendly bags, transforming oil containers into artistic pieces featuring whale and dolphin illustrations, and crafting keychains and bracelets with environmental symbols.



The three-day event included painting and crafting keychains and bracelets with environmental symbols.

The programme concludes with an exhibition showcasing the artistic creations of the participants. Eng Aida al Jabri, Director of the Marine Mammal Survey Project

in Musandam, explained that this activity is part of the project's accompanying initiatives, which aim to study the biodiversity of marine mammals along the governorate's coasts.

She added that engaging women and girls at this stage helps expand community awareness about the importance of these species and their role in the marine ecosystem.

Al Jabri affirmed that through this initiative, EA seeks to establish a network of women and girls who contribute to spreading environmental awareness and fostering a sense of responsibility towards protecting marine mammals and preserving their

natural habitats. She praised the high level of creativity and enthusiasm demonstrated by the participants during the workshops.

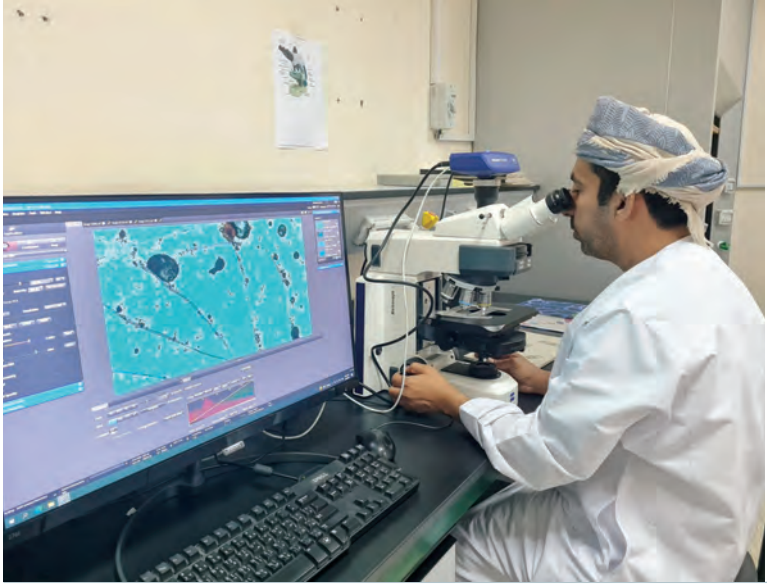
The event concluded by emphasising the importance of continuing such community-based programmes that connect art with the environment, instilling in future generations the values of sustainability and responsibility towards the nation's natural resources reflecting the Environment Authority's commitment to supporting national efforts to protect wildlife and conserve biodiversity in the Sultanate of Oman.

Nizwa varsity researchers among top 2% of scientists

STANFORD University has recognised 21 researchers from the University of Nizwa as being among the top 2 per cent of scientists globally for 2025. This prestigious international ranking highlights the most influential researchers in their respective fields, based on comprehensive metrics such as the number of research citations, the quality and impact of scientific publications, and the recognition they receive from the global research community.

Prof Ahmed bin Sulaiman al Harrasi, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nizwa for Postgraduate Studies, Scientific Research and External Relations, described the achievement as a testament to the university's sustained efforts to promote high-quality research and innovation. He noted that the inclusion of these researchers in Stanford's list reflects both the depth and the breadth of scientific inquiry being undertaken at the university, across disciplines ranging from health sciences to engineering, environmental studies and social sciences.

"This recognition is not only an acknowledgment of individual excellence," Prof Al Harrasi said, "but also a reflection of the University of Nizwa's commitment to building a robust research ecosystem that fosters



The ranking enhances Oman's visibility on the international academic stage



The achievement is a testament to Nizwa University's sustained efforts to promote high-quality research and innovation

collaboration, innovation and knowledge creation."

He emphasised that the university has invested significantly in research infrastructure, international collaborations and programmes that support young researchers, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the global scientific community.

Prof Al Harrasi further highlighted that the ranking enhances the Sultanate of Oman's visibility on the international academic stage and underscores the importance of scientific research in driving sustainable development.

He stated that the university will

continue to support its researchers, develop innovation pathways and encourage knowledge production, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to position Omani universities among the world's leading institutions in research, innovation and knowledge-based development. The University of Nizwa's inclusion in the list demonstrates a growing global recognition of the quality and impact of Omani research, inspiring the next generation of academics to pursue excellence and contribute to both national development and the wider international research community. — ONA

Symposium highlights Oman's cultural heritage

MUSCAT: The German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech) hosted a national symposium titled 'Living Heritage: A Human Story and the Sustainability of Knowledge', shedding light on Oman's efforts to preserve and promote its intangible cultural heritage.

Held under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, and in the presence of Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, the event was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to mark the International Day of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The symposium brought together researchers, academics, postgraduate students and professionals specialising in



An exhibition displayed photographs by Omani artists

intangible cultural heritage to explore its cultural dimensions and the shared responsibility of government and private institutions in its preservation and documentation.

The event sought to highlight the importance of intangible heritage in sustainable development, public health and education, while emphasising the need for digital documentation and alignment with Oman's educational philosophy. The programme featured two working sessions. The first, 'Intangible Cultural

Heritage: Policies and Initiatives', included three key presentations.

Khulood al Rashdi, Head of the Intangible Heritage Department at the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, presented a paper on 'Indicators of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Oman within Sustainable Development Dimensions.'

Eng Majed Al Muhanna from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia discussed 'The Relationship Between Culinary Arts, Traditional Knowledge and

Sustainable Development.'

Lieutenant Commodore Hilal bin Ali al Hinai from the Royal Navy of Oman concluded the session with insights from the 'Glories of the Seas 2025' maritime voyage, highlighting intangible cultural heritage milestones recorded during the journey.

Ahmed bin Rashid al Shehi from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth outlined the ministry's ongoing efforts in safeguarding and documenting intangible heritage.

Salim bin Darwish al Hasani from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources discussed traditional knowledge systems related to Omani fishing and seafaring practices. Sultan bin Ali al Hasani from Al Batinah Stud Farm presented research on the intersection of traditional horse breeding and healthcare practices, showcasing the link between heritage and well-being. — ONA

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Ground staff walk past an Indigo airlines aircraft taxiing in the apron at the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata. — AFP File

INDIA, CHINA
TO RESUME
DIRECT FLIGHTS

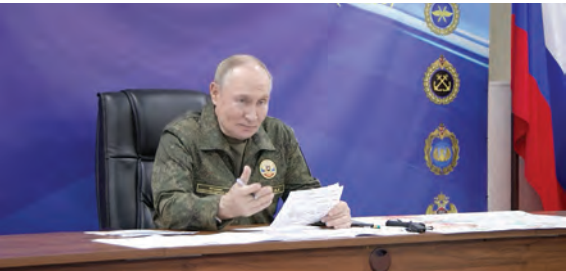
KOLKATA: India and China resume direct flights on Sunday after a five-year suspension, a move important both for trade and a symbolic step as Asia’s giants cautiously rebuild relations.

India’s government said the resumption of flights will boost “people-to-people contact” and aid the “gradual normalisation of bilateral exchanges”.

India’s largest commercial carrier, IndiGo, is set to operate the first daily flight to mainland China, departing Kolkata at 10 pm Sunday for Guangzhou. There are already regular flights between India and Hong Kong, while additional services from the capital New Delhi to Shanghai and Guangzhou will begin in November.

“The direct air link will reduce logistics and transit time,” said Rajeev Singh, head of the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Kolkata, and said it would benefit businesses. India’s eastern port city of Kolkata has centuries-old ties with China dating back to British rule, when Chinese migrants arrived as traders. — AFP

RUSSIA TESTS NEW
NUCLEAR POWERED
CRUISE MISSILE



Russian President Vladimir Putin visits the army command centre in the course of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in an unidentified location. — Reuters

MOSCOW: Russia has successfully tested its nuclear-powered Burevestnik cruise missile, a nuclear-capable weapon Moscow says can pierce any defence shield, and will move towards deploying the weapon, President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday.

The test, alongside a nuclear drill last week, sends a message that Russia, in Putin’s words, will never bow to pressure from the West over the war in Ukraine as US President Trump takes a tougher stance against Russia to push for a ceasefire.

Russia’s top general, Valery Gerasimov, chief of the general staff of Russia’s armed forces, told Putin that the missile travelled 14,000 km and was in the air for about 15 hours when it was tested on October 21. Russia says the 9M730 Burevestnik (Storm Petrel) - dubbed the SSC-X-9 Skyfall by Nato - is “invincible” to current and future missile defences, with an almost unlimited range and unpredictable flight path.

“It is a unique ware which nobody else in the world has,” Putin, dressed in camouflage fatigues at a meeting with generals overseeing the war in Ukraine, said in remarks released by Kremlin. — Reuters

SAFETY CONCERNS

Airport shut again due to weather balloons



Flight operations at Vilnius Airport in Lithuania were temporarily suspended for the second consecutive night and the third time within a week due to the sighting of weather balloons nearby, according to the airport operator. For safety reasons, traffic was suspended for several hours on Saturday night due to the balloons flying towards the largest airport in Lithuania, the airport operator said. The airspace over Vilnius Airport was reopened at 3:30 am on Sunday, it added. — dpa

YEAR-LONG
FUNERAL
STARTS FOR
THAILAND’S
FORMER
QUEEN SIRIKIT

BANGKOK: Thousands of grieving Thai royalists lined the streets of Bangkok on Sunday, saluting a procession bringing former queen Sirikit’s body to lie in state for a year-long funeral at the capital’s Grand Palace.

Members of the royal family are venerated in Thailand, treated by many as semi-divine figures and lavished with glowing media coverage and gold-adorned portraits hanging in public spaces and private homes nationwide.

Former queen Sirikit, the mother of the current King Vajiralongkorn and wife of the longest-reigning monarch, died on Friday at the age of 93.

Sirikit’s body was carried in a slow-moving ambulance from Chulalongkorn Hospital late on Sunday afternoon, flanked by motorbike outriders on a 10-kilometre procession to the Grand Palace.

Crowds of nurses clasped their hands and bowed as the convoy

passed, while other spectators clutched portraits of the queen or wept as ranks of saluting police officers fell to one knee.

“I want to send her off for the last time, on her last journey, as one of her children - as a Thai who loves and respects her,” 56-year-old Boontham Kornwaen said outside the hospital.

The former queen’s body will lie in state at the seat of the Thai royalty for one year before cremation. — AFP

Thailand-Cambodia peace
deal co-signed by Trump

US President Donald Trump co-signed a truce between Thailand and Cambodia during the first stop on his Asia tour on Sunday, touting new trade deals with the countries after they agreed to prolong a ceasefire along their border.

Five days of clashes erupted along Thailand and Cambodia’s jungle-clad frontier this summer, as a territorial dispute triggered open combat, killing more than 40 people and forcing 300,000 to flee their homes.

Thailand and Cambodia agreed an initial truce in late July after intervention by Trump, as well as Chinese diplomats and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) bloc.

A new joint declaration was signed by Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, as well as Trump and Anwar, after the US leader landed in the Malaysian capital.

“This is a momentous day for all of the people of Southeast Asia, as we sign a historic agreement to end the military conflict between Cambodia and Thailand,” Trump said.

The deal, sealed with a firm handshake between the Thai and Cambodian leaders, contains broad rhetoric confirming both countries’ “unwavering commitment to peace and security”.

It also says they will organise de-mining efforts along their border, withdraw heavy weapons and allow access to ceasefire monitor teams



Women carry national flags to celebrate the signing of a ceasefire agreement between Cambodia and Thailand in Kuala Lumpur, at the National Olympic Stadium in Phnom Penh. — AFP

organised by the Asean regional bloc.

Thailand has promised to release 18 Cambodian soldiers it has held in captivity for the past three months.

Soon after the agreement was signed, the White House announced trade deals with Thailand and Cambodia.

A non-binding memorandum of understanding with Thailand outlines increased cooperation on trading rare earth minerals, which are vital to tech products and of which China is the world’s leading

producer.

The headline of the Cambodian trade deal confirms the 19 per cent levy the country had already secured this summer, a let-off from the 36 per cent Trump had been threatening in his global tariff blitz.

The Thai-Cambodia truce has generally held since July 29.

But the countries have traded allegations of ceasefire breaches, and analysts say a comprehensive peace pact adjudicating the territorial dispute at the core of the conflict remains elusive. — AFP

A new joint declaration was signed by Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet



CARGO CRASH RECOVERY

A crane hoists the main fuselage section of an ACT Airlines Boeing 747-400 cargo aircraft, wet leased by Emirates SkyCargo, out of the water in Hong Kong, after it veered off an airport runway on October 20 during landing, hitting a security patrol car and then skidding into the sea, leaving two men in the vehicle dead. — AFP

LIBERATED AT LAST

Sudan’s RSF takes army HQ in Darfur city



Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said they had seized the army headquarters in El Fasher, the last major urban centre in the western Darfur region outside their control. The RSF claimed it had “liberated the Sixth Division... and broken the backbone of the Islamic Movement Army,” referring to the national army it has been battling since April 2023. The takeover of the army headquarters could not be independently verified and the army and its allied forces did not respond to requests for comment. — AFP

NEW ADDITION

East Timor joins Asean as new member



East Timor joined the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean) bloc as its 11th member state on Sunday, after 14 years of campaigning. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, whose country currently chairs Asean, said East Timor’s accession ‘completes the Asean family - reaffirming our shared destiny and deep sense of regional kinship’. “Within this community, Timor-Leste’s development and its strategic autonomy will find firm and lasting support,” Anwar told an Asean summit in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Crews clean the main diversion channel for floodwaters in preparation for the arrival of Hurricane Melissa, in Kingston, Jamaica. — AFP

HURRICANE MELISSA STRENGTHENS NEAR JAMAICA

KINGSTON: Hurricane Melissa was cutting a deadly path through the Caribbean on Sunday, strengthening into a Category 4 storm as it crawled along a worryingly slow course towards Jamaica and the island of Hispaniola.

Melissa has already been blamed for three deaths in Haiti this week, as its outer bands brought heavy rains and landslides to the impoverished nation.

In the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, a 79-year-old man was found dead after being swept away in a stream, local officials said on Saturday. A 13-year-old boy was missing.

“You feel powerless, unable to do anything, just run away and leave everything behind”, Angelita Francisco, a 66-year-old homemaker who fled her neighbourhood in the Dominican Republic, said through tears.

Floodwater had inundated her house, causing her refrigerator to float away as trash bobbed around the home.

The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said on Sunday that Melissa had intensified into a Category 4 hurricane, packing winds of about 225 kilometres per hour and moving at 5 mph.

The storm was expected to set off “life-threatening and catastrophic” flooding and landslides in parts of Jamaica and southern Hispaniola, the NHC said, forecasting “continued rapid intensification... followed by fluctuations in intensity”.

Melissa was “expected to be a major hurricane when making landfall in Jamaica on Monday night or Tuesday morning; and southeastern Cuba late Tuesday”, it added.

As of Sunday, Melissa was about around 190 kilometres southeast of Jamaica’s capital Kingston and 450 kilometres southwest of Guantanamo, Cuba.

The Dominican Republic’s emergency operations centre said nine of 31 provinces were on red alert on Saturday due to risk of flash floods, rising rivers and landslides.

Melissa could bring 15 to 30 inches of rain in portions of southern Hispaniola and Jamaica, with isolated areas expected to receive as much as 40 inches, the NHC said.

Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness on Friday urged residents of flood-prone areas to heed warnings and be prepared to evacuate.

— AFP

KAMALA HARRIS SAYS MAY ‘POSSIBLY’ RUN AGAIN FOR WHITE HOUSE

LONDON: Former US vice president Kamala Harris said in a British television interview previewed on Saturday that she may “possibly” run again to be president.

Harris, who replaced Joe Biden as the 2024 Democratic presidential candidate but lost to Donald Trump, said that she had not yet decided whether to make another White House bid.

But the 61-year-old insisted she was “not done” in American politics and that her young grandnieces



would see a female president in the Oval Office “in their lifetime, for sure”. “I have lived my entire career a life of service and it’s in my bones; and there are many ways to serve”, Harris said in an interview set to air in full on Sunday.

“I’ve not decided yet what I will do in the future, beyond what I am doing right now”.

The comments are the strongest hint yet that Harris could attempt to be the Democratic party nominee for the 2028 election. — AFP

Three dead in Russian drone attack on Kyiv

UKRAINE’S President Volodymyr Zelensky called for new strong sanctions against Russia and its allies after Russian drones killed three and injured 31, including six children, in an overnight air attack on Kyiv.

The attack destroyed two high-rise apartment buildings and Kyiv’s Mayor Vitali Klitschko said on the Telegram messaging app that seven of the injured, including two children, were taken to city hospitals.

Debris from destroyed Russian air weapons fell onto a nine-storey apartment building in Kyiv’s leafy Desnianskyi district, sparking a fire that engulfed several storeys, the mayor said.

“Every Russian strike is an attempt to inflict as much damage as possible on ordinary life”, Zelensky said on Telegram.

“Of course, additional tariff and sanctions restrictions are needed against Russia and all those helping it stay afloat”, he said.

Ukraine’s state emergency service said 13 people were rescued from the building’s upper floors.

Kyiv and its surrounding region were under air-raid alerts for about 1-1/2 hours before the air force called them off at around 00:30 GMT.

Ukrainian military officials said on Telegram that Russia had launched 101 drones on Ukraine overnight, 90 of which were downed.

Zelensky said Russia has used nearly 1,200 attack drones, more than 1,360 guided aerial bombs and over 50 missiles of different types against Ukraine over the past seven days.

Both sides deny targeting civilians in their strikes on each other’s territory. But thousands, mostly Ukrainians, have been killed in the war that Russia started with its full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump’s administration has prepared additional sanctions it could use to target key areas of Russia’s economy if President Vladimir Putin continues to delay ending Moscow’s war in Ukraine, according to a US official and another person familiar with the matter.



Workers fix wires in front of a damaged house following what Russian-installed authorities described as an overnight Ukrainian missile strike in the Donetsk region. — Reuters

US officials have also told European counterparts that they support the EU using frozen Russian assets to buy US weapons for Kyiv and Washington has held nascent internal conversations about leveraging Russian assets held in the US to support Ukraine’s war effort, two US officials said.

Meanwhile, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk does not expect lasting peace in Ukraine as long as Russian President Vladimir Putin is in power, he told British newspaper The Sunday Times.

The conflict threatens to become a ‘permanent forever war’ unless something drastic changes in Russia, he said in the

interview published on Sunday.

“Now the main question is how many victims we will see,” he said.

“I have no doubts that Ukraine will survive as an independent state,” Tusk said.

According to the Polish head of government, Russia is facing dramatic economic difficulties, not least due to the new US sanctions against Russian oil companies.

However, the Russians have a great advantage over the West and Europe in particular: “They are ready to fight ... in wartime, this is absolutely the crucial question,” Tusk said. — Reuters

Two suspects in Louvre jewel heist arrested near Paris

PARIS: Suspects have been arrested over the brazen jewellery heist at the Louvre, just as one of them was about to fly out of France, the Paris prosecutor said on Sunday.

Two men in their 30s and originally from the capital’s Seine-Saint-Denis suburb — which includes some of the country’s most deprived areas — were detained on Saturday evening, according to Le Parisien newspaper, which first broke the story.

They were known to French police and one of the suspects was about to fly to Algeria from Charles de Gaulle airport, the newspaper said.

There was no indication on Sunday that any of France’s stolen crown jewels had been recovered.

Paris prosecutor Laure Beccau did not say how many people were arrested or give any more details about them. In a statement, she deplored the fact that information

about their arrest was leaked.

“This revelation can only hinder the investigative efforts of the 100 or so mobilised investigators, both in the search for the stolen jewellery and for all the perpetrators. It is too early to provide any specific details”, Beccau said.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez, under public pressure to deliver results a week to the day after the robbery, congratulated investigators in a tweet, but gave no more detail.

Four hooded thieves made off with eight precious pieces worth an estimated \$102 million from the Louvre’s collection on October 19, exposing security lapses at the world’s most-visited museum.

They broke in using a crane to smash an upstairs window during opening hours and escaped on motorbikes.

News of the robbery reverberated around the world, prompting soul-searching in France over what some



Police stand near the pyramid of the Louvre museum after reports of a robbery in Paris. — Reuters

regarded as a national humiliation.

The stolen treasures included a tiara and an earring from the jewellery of Queen Marie-Amélie and Queen Hortense from the early 19th century.

The crown of Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoleon III, was found damaged outside the museum. The thieves apparently dropped the piece, made of gold, emeralds and diamonds, as they made their getaway.

Built in the late 12th century, the Louvre Palace used to be the official residence of the kings of France, until Louis XIV abandoned it for Versailles. It was turned into a museum for the royal art collection in 1793, four years after the French Revolution.

Its huge collection of masterpieces, including the Mona Lisa and the Venus de Milo statue, brought in 8.7 million visitors last year. — Reuters

OPINION

Global ratings shape Oman’s higher education



SANDHYA
RAO MEHTA

The writer is an
Associate Professor,
Sultan Qaboos
University

THE recently held QS Arab Forum for universities had good news for Oman’s higher education sector. While the flagship Sultan Qaboos University climbed in rank from 362 to 334, four other universities also improved their performance. These include Sohar University, University of Nizwa, Dhofar University and GUTech (German University of Technology). QS (Quacquarel Symonds) is an internationally accepted forum that provides comparative data on university performance worldwide. Such data are based on a number of factors such as academic reputation, faculty-student ratio and research output, among others. Participation in these rankings is voluntary, but such participation is important in that it establishes international credentials and offers global recognition. It is also a way to improve aspects in which an institution may be deficient. For example, the ranking of a university in the QS is based on a global survey of faculty members. In this way, rankings are decided by the stakeholders, like faculty, but also by other objective criteria like publishing history and citations.

Internationally, rankings help students to decide on the universities they would like to attend. According to one survey, more than 60 per cent of students internationally looked at the QS rankings before applying to universities, particularly at the graduate and doctoral level. High rankings also help to bring more funding for an institution. As top ranked institutions bring in the best students and faculty, they also become research hubs, with an increase in research productivity. In many cases, both public and private funding is important for universities to engage in projects targeting the community. But it is more than just the prestige of being at the top that spurs universities to participate in global rankings. Effectively, this is an important way in which an institution can compare itself to others with similar demographics and improve its metrics through implementing changes in policies. By highlighting specific areas of weakness, universities take measures to make investments in various areas. These may include innovative teaching facilities and strengthening research programmes. Additionally, if the performance on the

Over 60 per cent of students internationally looked at the QS rankings before applying to universities, particularly at the graduate and doctoral level

criteria of research impact or international visibility is ranked average, the university would take steps to introduce initiatives to improve global collaboration and focus on an international outlook. University rankings are often seen to be controversial as they use the same yardstick to compare institutions of higher education across the world. This reduces all universities to one template, removing all specific criteria of demography, teaching and learning contexts, and individualised outcomes. While this is a valid concern and is being continually addressed by the ranking platforms, it is important that universities continue to participate in such projects. Focusing on areas of development will help both, the institution and the community, to take necessary steps to align education with international standards. University rankings continue to be important as they enhance institutional reputation and facilitate continuous improvement. They also influence national education policy and strategy. Rankings provide transparency, motivation, and accountability, all of which are important in a competitive academic world.

IVORY COAST VOTES
AS OUATTARA’S
LEGACY LOOMS

Ivory Coast voted in a presidential election that unfolded on Saturday without major disruption, with incumbent and strong favourite Alassane Ouattara, 83, claiming credit for nearly 15 years of economic growth and relative stability while hinting it will be his final campaign. Turnout appeared weak at many polling stations in Abidjan, the commercial capital. In more than a dozen opposition strongholds outside Abidjan, voting was impeded by protesters blocking roads and burning or stealing election materials, according to a team of observers from the national human rights council. The army said 30 polling stations in the centre-west region of Hautassandra were vandalised, but 97 per cent were secure. More than 8 million people were registered to vote. Polling stations were due to close at 6 p.m. local time, and counting began right away in the Abidjan districts of Abdjame, Cocody and Yopougon, according to Reuters witnesses. Provisional results are expected within five days. A runoff will be held if no candidate wins more than 50 per cent of the vote. A former international banker and deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Ouattara took power in 2011 after a four-month civil war that killed around 3,000 people. The war was triggered by the refusal of his predecessor, Laurent Gbagbo, to acknowledge defeat in the 2010 election. Gbagbo and Tidjane Thiam, former CEO of Credit Suisse, were deemed ineligible to run this year, and the remaining opposition candidates lack the backing of a major political party, making Ouattara the clear favourite. Announcing his candidacy in July, Ouattara said a fourth term would be one of “generational transmission”. This week he acknowledged that “it’s not easy to work at the same pace” now that he is in his 80s. Ivory Coast’s median age is 18. As polling stations opened at 0800 GMT in the Adjame district of Abidjan, even Ouattara’s supporters said he should be nearing the end of his career. “He has really changed the image of Ivory Coast, but this should be his last mandate. We need to pass the torch to the new generation,” said Souamane Cisse, a 44-year-old driver. Schoolteacher Fatou Fofana, 48, also said it was time for younger leadership, provided the transition is peaceful. There is no clear choice for a successor in the ruling party. “It needs to come at the right time,” Fofana said. “We need security.”

— Reuters

Oman should consider
Universal Basic Income

THERE are moments in a nation’s journey when a bold leap is not only desirable but necessary. Oman stands today at such a moment—one that invites us to reflect on the past five years, marked by resilience in the face of oil shocks and a global pandemic, and to consider how we can collectively chart a more inclusive, dynamic, and just economic future. For Oman, at this precise historical moment, there could scarcely be a more opportune time to launch a version of Universal Basic Income (UBI). A well-designed UBI could help energise domestic demand, reduce income insecurity, accelerate savings and investment by households, and reinforce the social contract between government and citizens.

While no nation has yet implemented a full, permanent UBI for all adults at a subsistence level, a rich suite of pilot programmes and studies offers encouraging evidence. A comprehensive review by the UBC Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries found that a basic income programme applied globally could boost GDP by about 130 per cent, with every dollar spent generating \$4 to \$7 in broad economic impact. A systematic review of cash transfer programmes similar in structure to UBI has associated the scheme with better nutrition, lower mortality, improved mental health outcomes and no significant drop in labour force participation. Yet the literature cautions: design matters deeply. Funding mechanisms must be sustainable; the level of payment must be meaningful; and the implementation must avoid perverse incentives or undue inflationary pressure. Firstly, it will stimulate



AHMED
AL MUKHAINI

The author is a
policy analyst

By introducing a universal basic income today, Oman can accelerate real GDP growth, encourage active citizen participation, strengthen economic resilience, and, above all, reinforce the social contract

consumption and demand. When households receive consistent income support, they are able to spend, save and invest—with vigorous multiplier effects. Secondly, it will strengthen the social contract and equity. UBI sends a strong message: the citizen is recognised, valued and protected. Thirdly, UBI can provide a stabilising baseline for young entrepreneurs, informal workers, gig economy participants and those undertaking new sectoral opportunities. Finally, it will ensure resource efficiency and clarity compared to traditional subsidies: Existing subsidy regimes — on fuel, utilities or industry — often have leaks or abuses, and may distort economic incentives. To succeed, Oman’s UBI programme would need to be well-paced and sustainable. To achieve that, five implementation features need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, the UBI programme must have a pilot deployment. It should initially target vulnerable populations. Thirdly, the economic supply side must be reinforced. Ensuring that increased demand is matched by productive capacity in local SMEs, services and the non-oil economy to avoid inflation. Fourthly, the UBI programme should then be progressively updated. Fifthly, and finally, regular monitoring and evaluation are imperative. Monitoring employment behaviour, consumption patterns and fiscal impact will be critical to refine the model. Furthermore, to safeguard against inefficiencies, leakage, or misuse of funds, Oman’s version of UBI need not be a monolithic cash transfer. A hybrid model—combining direct cash via bank transfer and digital

coupons earmarked for essential goods or services—offers a balanced alternative. While cash can be saved or invested, digital coupons can be directed efficiently. These non-cash digital coupons would be designed to preserve purchasing power while directing consumption toward key sectors such as local agriculture, tourism, education services, or Omani-made goods. Moreover, to align with broader economic objectives—such as revitalising domestic commerce—the system could introduce time-bound coupons. These would carry an expiration period, creating a nudge toward immediate spending and stimulating circulation of capital within local markets. This approach channels liquidity precisely where it’s needed—into small shops, essential services, and productive consumption—while still leaving space for individual choice. The time-bound element ensures that the basic income does not become a deferred asset but instead acts as a continuous economic catalyst, reinforcing demand, supporting businesses, and sharpening the impact of fiscal interventions. By using this intelligent mix of delivery mechanisms, Oman can simultaneously preserve economic dignity and agency for its citizens while ensuring fiscal prudence and targeted impact—a model worthy of national confidence and international observation. By introducing a universal basic income today, Oman can accelerate real GDP growth, encourage active citizen participation, strengthen economic resilience, and, above all, reinforce the social contract. This is not simply generous welfare; it is smart economic governance. It is a bridge to future prosperity and a signal that in Oman, the citizen is central.

Tribute to hands that shape tomorrow



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and a
communications
professional

ON a quiet morning, as the sun lifts above the sea and the smell of frankincense flows through the air, something remarkable is happening — not in the skies, but in the hearts of Oman's youth. Some mornings in Oman begin not only with the sunrise, but with a spark in young hearts.

They are everywhere, in classrooms where ideas whisper louder than air conditioners, in coffee shops where dreams are drafted on napkins and in villages where innovation meets tradition. They are not merely inheriting Oman's story; they are rewriting it. Every generation of youth tells a story about its time. The story the youth of Oman are telling is one of balance between the wisdom of the past and the urgency of the future.

Youth speak the language of creativity and carry in their hearts the rhythm of old songs. They are global citizens with Omani souls deeply connected to their roots, yet confident enough to spread their wings.

In a world where culture can be lost, Omani youth are proving that tradition is their compass. Across the shining deserts, the whispering wadis and the rolling waves, a new spirit of Omani youth is rising — a spirit of ambition that never sleeps, of dreams that reach beyond the horizon and of a generation that believes in the power of change.

Omani youth are the voice of the present

and the heartbeat of the future. They are the ones transforming challenges into opportunities and dreams into reality. They are not waiting for the future to come; they are creating it.

What makes Omani youth truly extraordinary is their deep connection to their roots. Their journey forward is guided by the wisdom of the past and the standing values of honesty, respect, courage and unity — values that have shaped Oman for centuries.

They walk proudly in the footsteps of their ancestors — explorers, traders, poets and leaders — carrying that same adventurous spirit into the modern world. In every heartbeat of a young Omani, there is both heritage and hope, both tradition and transformation.

Yes, the road is not always easy. The world is changing fast and new technologies, competitive job markets, and global challenges test their resilience. Yet Omani youth face these challenges with courage and optimism. They see obstacles not as barriers but as opportunities to grow, learn and lead.

With strong faith, family support and national pride, they continue to rise above difficulties and move forward with determination. Oman's future shines brightly because its youth carry the light of hope and progress. Each young dreamer, thinker and

Every generation of youth tells a story about its time. The story the youth of Oman are telling is one of balance between the wisdom of the past and the urgency of the future

doer contributes to a stronger, more vibrant nation. Their energy fuels innovation, their voices inspire change and their unity strengthens the bonds of community.

If truth be told, with eyes set on the future and feet firmly grounded in tradition, Omani youth are writing their own stories of progress, pride and purpose. Look closely and you will see the future of Oman in every young pair of hands holding a pen or a tool. You will hear it in every hopeful conversation, in every late-night idea shared among friends.

The youth of Oman are not waiting for their time to come, because their time is now. As they rise, they carry with them the light of a nation that believes in them. The story of Oman has always been a story of courage, and its next chapter is already being written by its youth.

Oman's heroes wear no crowns and carry no swords — only vision, courage and hope. The youth of Oman are the flame that will light the nation's way forward. They remind us that the true wealth of a country is not found in its oil or its gold, but in the determination of its young hearts.

As they rise, they carry all of Oman with them, the mountains watch, the sea listens and the nation smiles. The future is not coming; it is already here, in the hands of Omani youth.

US SHUTDOWN THREATENS CONGRESS SPENDING POWER

DAVID MORGAN

As Republican and Democratic lawmakers trade blame for the US government shutdown, some have begun to worry that the impasse is ceding their authority over federal spending to an increasingly assertive President Donald Trump.

The White House during the shutdown has frozen billions of dollars in funds meant for Democratic-led jurisdictions, sought to lay off thousands of federal workers and shifted money around to guarantee that military personnel and gun-carrying law enforcement officers will not see their pay disrupted. Nonpartisan observers said that further marginalises Congress at a time when Trump is already pushing the boundaries of presidential power in other areas, like military action and international trade.

“That’s like an existential threat for congressional power,” said Molly Reynolds, a government expert at the nonpartisan Brookings Institution think tank. “How do you negotiate a longer-term spending deal, something that goes more than just a couple of weeks, when you don’t believe the executive branch is going to implement whatever choices it is that you put into that law?”

The US Constitution assigns the power of the purse to Congress and not the president. Trump’s fellow Republicans narrowly control both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The shutdown began on October 1, the first day of the 2026 federal fiscal year, because congressional Republicans and Democrats had failed to agree on legislation to fund government services.

Democrats have said they will not vote to resume federal funding unless Congress also addresses subsidies for 24 million Americans due to expire at the end of the calendar year. Republicans have said Congress first must pass a temporary spending bill that would allow the government to reopen. A Reuters/Ipsos poll found that 50 per cent of Americans blame Republicans, while 43 per cent blame Democrats. Though Democrats have framed the fight over healthcare costs, some have said they are reluctant to pass a spending bill without assurances that Trump will not simply ignore it.

“We can’t do an appropriations deal and have the president then just start firing more people and cutting programmes,” Democratic Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia said.

Republicans often have remained silent this year as Trump has unilaterally raised tariffs, taken military action and shifted spending, actions that typically would be the domain of Congress. Some Republicans said they understand the concerns raised by the Democrats.

“If I were the Democrats, I’d be requiring a lot of public commitment or statutory language to be sure that it is a hard commitment,” Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina told reporters.

Democrats have focused much of their invective on White House budget director Russell Vought, chief architect of the White House funding strategy. — Reuters

Product scorecards and Europe’s green deal

THE future of the European Green Deal is looking bleak. An upcoming vote on the European Commission’s “Omnibus” package – expected within days – promises to confirm the rollback of the Green Deal’s disclosure pillar, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

The battle lines are familiar. On one side are those focused above all on boosting Europe’s growth and competitiveness, heeding former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi’s warning that “inaction” in these areas threatens the EU’s sovereignty. On the other side are those committed to protecting the environment and human welfare – goals supported by a large majority of EU citizens and businesses. In other words, this is a clash between prosperity and principle.

But it need not be this way. As a new policy paper from HEC Paris shows, Europe can achieve its sustainability goals without sacrificing competitiveness. The key is to shift the focus of disclosure rules from companies to products.

The logic is simple. If disclosure standards apply to what is sold, not who is selling it, then every product, whether made in Boston, Berlin, or Beijing, would be subject to the same rules. At a time when the United States is pushing for sustainability-reporting carve-outs for American companies, this ensures a level playing field, with European firms no longer carrying heavier compliance burdens than their foreign competitors.

Critics might claim that this scheme would be impossible to implement, because product-level sustainability information is currently woefully inadequate. But the HEC Paris paper, drawing on multi-disciplinary expertise and input from a range of stakeholders, offers a solution: a single, standardised digital scorecard for every product, listing key sustainability indicators, such as carbon footprint, impact on biodiversity and human-rights record.

Akin to food nutrition tables,



Europe can achieve its sustainability goals without sacrificing competitiveness.



BRIAN
HILL

The writer is
Research Director
at the French
National Centre for
Scientific Research
(CNRS), is Professor
of Economics and
Decision Sciences
and Academic
Director of the
Inclusive Economy
Centre at HEC Paris
Business School

product-sustainability scorecards would provide clear, objective information in a manner that facilitates direct comparison. The scorecard system would be far easier to navigate than the current thicket of sustainability labels – of which there are now more than 450, each with its own opaque rules. Ultimately, it would do for product sustainability what harmonised billing information did for electricity markets, and what the CSRD claims to do for corporate reporting: deliver clarity.

As such, scorecards would contribute to more sustainable decisions by regulators, policymakers, businesses and consumers. Moreover, by leveraging upstream data, the scorecard system would alleviate the reporting burden on firms. Many large companies are already requesting more product-level data from suppliers. A standardised scorecard would generalise and automate this information exchange, with sustainability credentials flowing freely along supply chains. Once sustainability scorecards were integrated into accounting, payroll and inventory software, reporting would become almost frictionless.

Firms would face no legal obligation to report, making the proposal politically feasible at a

time of strong US opposition to reporting requirements. But the system design ensures that refusing to do so would not protect a firm from scrutiny. The scorecard would clearly show where information is missing, displaying instead best-to-worst-case ranges for the product and producer type, which would be visible to consumers of end products.

Decades of behavioural research shows that, when a lack of transparency is explicitly presented, people interpret it negatively. If a firm refuses to share information about its human-rights record, consumers will assume that it is not good. In a market where those consumers can easily see its competitors’ records, silence is not just conspicuous – it is costly. Given this, firms, wherever they are based, will quickly learn that they are better off disclosing.

While Europe’s competitiveness concerns are understandable, one must not forget that inaction on social and environmental challenges also carries high economic costs. According to the European Environment Agency, intense heat, floods and other extreme weather cost the EU €44.5 billion (\$51.8 billion) in annual economic losses in 2020-23.

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SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Oman's youth team is scheduled to play its second friendly against Iraq on Tuesday at Seeb Sports Stadium.

IRAQ DEFEAT OMAN IN FRIENDLY MATCH

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Oman national U-20 football team lost its first friendly match against Iraq 1-0 in a game held at the Seeb Sports Stadium, as part of the ongoing preparatory camp in Muscat Governorate, which began on October 19 and will continue until the 29th. This camp comes within the framework of the team's preparations for the AFC qualifiers leading to the next Asian Cup finals. Meanwhile, the Iraqi youth team is also holding a similar camp in Muscat in preparation for upcoming competitions, including the same qualifiers, having begun its training last Thursday.

The first half saw a balanced performance from both sides. Oman tried to control the game through short passes and attacks from the wings, while Iraq relied on long balls and quick counterattacks that posed some danger. Oman missed a valuable chance to score when striker Hussam al Naabi fired a powerful shot that went just wide of the right post. The first half ended goalless despite Oman's slight advantage in possession.

In the second half, the intensity increased and the match became more competitive. Iraq started pressing high from the early minutes, taking advantage of passing errors in midfield. Their player, Ali Al Akbar Amir , managed to score the only goal of the match with a strong strike. Oman pushed forward in search of an equaliser, but the Iraqi defence remained well-organised and thwarted most attacks, sealing a 1-0 win for Iraq.

Oman's youth team is scheduled to play its second friendly against Iraq on Tuesday at 6:15 pm at Seeb Sports Stadium, marking the end of both teams' training camps. Under the leadership of coach Hamad al Azzani, the Omani side will aim to bounce back from the loss by correcting mistakes, improving attacking efficiency, and making better use of scoring opportunities, while Iraq will look to secure a second win and continue fine-tuning its technical aspects ahead of the upcoming qualifiers.



Oman and Iraq players in action.

Al Shamsi wins bronze at Asian Youth Games

SPORT REPORTER

OMAN added a new athletic achievement at the 3rd Asian Youth Games in Bahrain as runner Al Yazan al Shamsi claimed the bronze medal in the 800 metre race with a time of 1:58.79 in a thrilling finish against Saudi competitors. His compatriot Raed al Balushi finished fifth in the 200 metre final, clocking 21.97 seconds.

In taekwondo, Mutasim al Maskari exited in the round of 16 after a narrow 1-2 loss to Mongolia's Timuulin Tmenmjanni despite winning the first round 3-2 before losing the next two by a slim margin. He had earlier advanced with a 2-1 victory over Afghanistan's Abdulbasit Sufi Zad following a strong comeback in the decisive round that ended 12-0. His team-mate Qaboos al Balushi was eliminated after losing 0-2 to Japan's Notani Koja following a nose injury that affected his performance.

The Omani equestrian team continues its participation in the individual events with hopes of achieving positive results in the upcoming competitions. The games feature more than 5,000 athletes from 45 Asian nations competing in 24 sports and 253 events held across major venues, including Isa City, Khalifa Sports City, the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre, the Endurance Village, and Sama Bay area.

SWIMMING BEGINS TODAY

Swimmer Mohammed bin Khamis al Wahaibi will begin his campaign on Monday in the 50 mete freestyle at 11 am Muscat time. If he qualifies, he will compete in the final at 8:30 pm. He will also race in the 100 metre freestyle and 50 metre backstroke on Tuesday before concluding his participation on Wednesday in the 100 metre backstroke.

ATHLETE AND OFFICILAS' REACTIONS

Al Shamsi expressed his happiness after winning bronze saying his goal was gold but the competition was strong and that he considers the bronze an important milestone in his first Asian Games appearance. He dedicated the medal to his country Oman, the Olympic Committee, his coaching and management staff, and his family, promising to keep working



Al Yazan al Shamsi claimed the bronze medal in the 800 metre race with a time of 1:58.79 in a thrilling finish against Saudi competitors.

hard for more achievements.

Brigadier Retired Said bin Mohammed al Hajri, Deputy Head of the delegation and President of the Oman Athletics Association, praised Al Shamsi's performance, noting that the achievement confirms that investment in youth is paying off and that this medal marks the beginning of greater continental and international success.

He added that the result reflects the continuous support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), dedicating the victory to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, with hopes for further success in the future.

National coach Ahmed bin Khamis al Siyabi said Al Shamsi's result came from

consistent effort and that he has great potential and could have placed higher, but a delay in accelerating after the first lap affected the final result. He added that this was the athlete's first major continental participation and that with more experience, he will become one of the top runners in Asia. The medal will serve as motivation for him and his team-mates to keep performing at their best.

BOOST FOR EQUESTRIAN TEAM

Sayyid Mundhir bin Saif al Busaidy, President of the Oman Equestrian Federation, met with the national equestrian team during a dinner organised by the Oman Olympic Committee, where he expressed pride in their participation, encouraged them to stay focused and confident, and urged them to deliver their best performances in the upcoming events.

Qurayat, Sohar, Mirbat and Saham win at HM Hockey Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

The preliminary rounds of the 55th edition of HM Hockey Cup 2025 concluded on Sunday with the final round of matches, which saw victories for Qurayat, Sohar, Mirbat and Saham. These results finalised the lineup of teams advancing to the playoff stage that will determine qualification for the finals.

In Group 2, Qurayat continued their dominant form with a commanding 6-0 victory over Oman Club at the Oman Hockey Stadium in Al Amerat, securing the top spot in the group with a perfect record of 9 points from three matches. Oman Club remained in second place with 3 points.

In Group 1, Saham edged past Al Salam 2-1 in a closely contested encounter that remained competitive until the final moments. Saham raised their tally to 6 points to claim second place behind group leaders Sohar, while Al Salam stayed at 3 points.

At the Sohar Sports Complex, Sohar put on



Al Ittihad and Mirbat players in action.

an attacking display, overwhelming Majees 6-1.

Sohar opened the scoring early through Muhannad al Maamari from a penalty corner in the 9th minute to end the first quarter 1-0.

In the second quarter, Sohar doubled their lead through Ahmed al Amri in the 17th minute, before Omar al Maamari added a third in the 23rd minute to close the half 3-0.

The team maintained its pressure in the third quarter, with Said al Noufli scoring the fourth (32'), Wael Sanqour adding the fifth (34'), and

Yaqoub al Amri completing the sixth goal by the end of the quarter. Majees managed a consolation goal through Turki al Busaidy (55') in the final quarter, ending the match 6-1 in Sohar's favour.

With this victory, Sohar topped their group with 9 points, while Majees finished last with no points.

In Group 3, Mirbat secured second place after defeating Al Ittihad 2-1 at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. Mirbat took an early lead through Raed bin Zahir al Barakah (16'), ending the

first quarter 1-0. In the third quarter, Al Ittihad equalised through Ammar bin Imad (40'), but Mirbat had the final say when Ahmed bin Zahir al Barakah scored the winner in the 56th minute. Mirbat finished with 6 points in second place, while Al Ittihad remained on 3 points.

Following these results, the playoff stage will be held on Tuesday, October 28, with Sohar, the Group 1 leader, facing Saham, the runner-up, at the Sohar Sports Complex. Qurayat, the Group 2 leader, will meet Oman Club, the runner-up, at the Oman Hockey Stadium in Al Amerat, while Dhofar, the Group 3 leader, will face Mirbat, the runner-up, at the Cultural Complex in Salalah. Meanwhile, Masirah, the Group 4 leader, will play against Al Rustaq, the runner-up, also at the Sohar Sports Complex. The final rounds of the competition are set to begin on Sunday, November 2, featuring Ahli Sidab, Seeb, Al Amerat, and Salalah clubs, alongside the winners of the upcoming playoff matches.

SHORT TAKES



Ibri player controls the ball

DHOFAR, SUR TO ROUND OF 16 IN HIS MAJESTY’S CUP

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

Dhofar Club staged a remarkable comeback to claim a 3–1 victory over Nizwa and secure their spot in the Round of 16 of His Majesty’s Football Cup, in a thrilling knockout match played this evening at Nizwa Sports Complex.

The match began with a high tempo from the home side, as Nizwa took the lead early on when Dhofar defender Naif Faraj mistakenly turned the ball into his own net, giving Nizwa a 1–0 advantage and sparking celebrations among their fans, Nizwa maintained the upper hand throughout much of the first half, creating several dangerous chances to double their lead but failing to capitalise on them.

Dhofar, on the other hand, struggled to find their rhythm in the opening stages but managed to create four clear opportunities that did not find the back of the net, thanks to strong goalkeeping from Nizwa, However, in the dying minutes of the first half, Dhofar were awarded a penalty, which Naif Faraj confidently converted redeeming his earlier mistake and levelling the score 1–1 before halftime.

The second half saw an open and balanced contest, with both teams pushing forward in search of a decisive goal, Nizwa tried to regain control, while Dhofar relied on their experience and composure to absorb pressure and launch quick counterattacks.

In another match, Sur Club secured a narrow 1–0 victory over Ibri, with Saud Khamis scoring the decisive goal after a balanced contest between the two sides, the win sends Sur through to the Round of 16 of His Majesty’s Cup, where they will face Bahla Club in a much anticipated encounter as Sur aims to continue its strong run in the prestigious tournament.



Oman’s national junior golf team at the Bahrain Asian Youth Games.

TEAM OMAN SWINGS INTO FINAL STAGES AT ASIAN YOUTH GAMES

MANAMA: Oman’s national junior golf team has advanced to the final stages of the Asian Youth Games (AYG) 2025, currently taking place in Bahrain.

After two highly competitive rounds, the talented trio secured their place among Asia’s best, marking another milestone for Omani golf on the international stage.

Representing Oman are Mahir Sampat, Adam al Barwani, and Pransh Jagwani, who have showcased remarkable composure, consistency, and competitive spirit throughout the tournament. Competing against elite junior golfers from across the continent, Team Oman continues to build on its growing reputation and success.

Earlier this year, the same team clinched the Team Gold Medal at the GCC Golf Championship in Saudi Arabia — a historic triumph that underscored Oman’s emergence as a rising force in regional golf. Their strong performance at the Asian Youth Games further cements their standing as one of the most promising junior squads in the region.

Organised under the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), the Asian Youth Games serve as a premier platform for young athletes to gain international experience and exposure across multiple sporting disciplines.

Soomar wins second round of Sprint Rally

HAITHAM SOOMAR, on Mitsubishi Evo 7, clinched the title of the second round of the Sprint Rally, which was held in the Al Jafnain and Al Mesfah area, after a fierce competition with Zakariya al Aufi, on Mitsubishi Evo 9, and Saif al Harthy, a Can-Am .

Champion Haitham Soomar and his renowned navigator Taha Soomar finished the race in 49 minutes and 18 seconds, just 20 seconds ahead of racer Zakaria al Aufi and his navigator Ammar al Balushi. Saif al Harthy came in third place, just 33 seconds behind.

The rally, which was organised by the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), included two stages that were repeated three times.

Nine competitors participated in the official start. Hafidh al Numani participated in the rally on a Can-Am bike finished the race in fourth place behind Saif al Harthy meanwhile Salem al Touqi and his navigator Issa al Wardi took fifth place in a Mitsubishi Evo 7, while renowned racer Zakariya al Amri took sixth place in a Can-Am. Musab Soomar and his navigator Nasr al Qasmi finished seventh on Kia Rio.

Luck was not on the side of veteran rally driver Faisal al Rashidi and his navigator Yaqdhan al Rashidi this time, who were withdraw from the race after their Subaru Impreza suffered technical malfunctions during the race. Racer Bashar al Qasmi and his navigator Bassam al Qasmi also left the race in his Yaris due to technical Issues.

The competition was fierce between the leading trio of Soomar, Al Aufi and Al Harthy during the first and second stages in Al Jafnain and Al Mesfah, and Haitham Soomar was able to win by a small margin over the rest.

As the competition intensified in the final stages, each driver tried to put a foot in the door for the round title, but a happy ending smiled on competitor Haitham Soomar and his navigator Taha Soomar, who recorded the fastest time and won the round title, just a short distance ahead of driver Zakariya al Aufi and his co-driver Ammar al Balushi, followed by competitor Saif al Harthy.

Anwar bin Ali al Zadjali, adviser to the Oman Automobile Association, crowned the race winners and top finishers.



The competition was fierce between the leading trio of Soomar, Al Aufi and Al Harthy during the first and second stages.

Seeb Edge Bashundhara in AFC Opener

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

Oman’s Seeb club registered a thrilling 3-2 win against Bashundhara from Bangladesh in their opening match at 2025/26 AFC Challenge League Group B tie on Saturday night at Jaber Al Mubarak Al Sabah Stadium. The win meant Seeb are leading the group with the hosts Kuwait who managed to defeat Lebanon’s Al Ansar FC wit the same result.

The AFC Cup 2022 champions, under the guidance of Serbian coach Nicola, resumed back to the training sessions in Kuwait on Sunday after the opening match. Last season’s quarterfinalists, will meet in their second match the hosts Kuwait team on Tuesday while the concluding match is scheduled against Lebanon’s Al Ansar, who ended a four-year drought in claiming a record 15th Lebanese league title in 2024/25, on Friday.

Seeb began the match strongly with an early goal scored by Nasser al Rawahi in the 7th minute while Raphael Augusto equalised for the opponent before the first half end in the 41st minute. Raqeeb Hussain put his team Bashundhara ahead for the first



Seeb began the match strongly with an early goal scored by Nasser al Rawahi in the 7th minute.

time in the match in the 53rd minute while Zaher al Ghbari returned Seeb to the origin point as he scored the second goal in the 60th minute to make it 2-2. In the last 15 minutes of the match, Oman former national team player Abdulaziz al Maqbali netted the winner for Seeb in the 76th minute to deliver crucial three points for his team.

The match started at a high tempo as Bashundhara threatening early through Dorielton, whose close-range effort in the second minute was brilliantly saved by Seeb’s goalkeeper Ahmed al Rawahi. But it was Seeb who struck first through Nasser al Rawahi who managed to score in the 7th minute, chesting down a precise long pass from Arshad al Alawi

before coolly slotting the ball past Mehdi Srabon.

Bashundhara responded with determination and were rewarded four minutes before halftime when Raphael Augusto equalised in the 41st minute, controlling a rebound from Saad Uddin’s shot and finishing neatly to make it 1-1. The Bangladeshi side carried their momentum into the second half, taking the lead in the 53rd minute. A clever pass from Dorielton found Rakib Hossain, who cut inside from the right flank and unleashed a dipping strike that found the back of the net, putting Bashundhara 2-1 ahead. Just seven minutes later, Seeb restored parity through Zahir al Ghbari, who met Hassan al Ajmi’s cross at the far post and fired home to level the score at 2-2. The decisive moment came in the 76th minute when another dangerous delivery from Al Ajmi caused havoc in the box. Ali al Busaidi smartly laid the ball off to veteran striker Abdulaziz al Maqbali, who volleyed home the winner from close range to seal all three points for the Omani side. Bashundhara continued to press late in the game, but Seeb’s defense, marshalled by Mohammed al Musallami and Yasser al Balushi, held firm to secure the victory by 3-2.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham in action with FC Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong. — Reuters

MADRID BEAT BARCA 2-1 IN CLASICO

MADRID: Jude Bellingham's goal helped Real Madrid beat Barcelona 2-1 to win a tense Clasico and move five points clear of their bitter rivals at the top of La Liga on Sunday.

Champions Barcelona won all four times the teams were pitted against each other last season but in his first Clasico as Real Madrid coach, Xabi Alonso snapped that run.

Kylian Mbappe, who later missed a penalty, fired Madrid in front and although Fermin Lopez levelled for the visitors at the Santiago Bernabeu, Bellingham netted a second for the hosts before half-time which proved decisive.

Barca playmaker Pedri was sent off in the final stages for a second yellow card as tensions spilled over in the Spanish capital.

Madrid's victory means they have won nine of their opening 10 league games and Alonso's side proved against Barca they can triumph on the big occasion, following their derby humbling by Atletico Madrid in September.

Hansi Flick's team were led on the touchline by his assistant Marcus Sorg, as the German coach was suspended following a red card last weekend as they scraped a victory over relegation-battling Girona.

Barcelona were without several regular starters, including Raphinha, Robert Lewandowski and Dani Olmo among others, while Lamine Yamal still does not appear fully fit after a groin injury but started.

The teenager wound up Madrid fans in the week by claiming Los Blancos "steal" and "complain" and his name was greeted with a chorus of jeers when read out before kick-off.

Barcelona had more of the ball in the first half but it was largely sterile possession and Madrid created the most dangerous opportunities.

The hosts were awarded an early penalty when Yamal appeared to bring down Vinicius Junior. However it was cancelled after a VAR review as it was the Brazilian initiated the contact.

Madrid fans' ire at the officials grew when Mbappe blasted home from outside the area but the goal was ruled out for a millimetric offside against the French superstar.

Mbappe did not have long to wait before he could celebrate in earnest, after superb work by Bellingham sent him through on goal.

The forward, the division's top goalscorer, netted his 11th league goal of the campaign with a lethal low finish past Wojciech Szczesny.

The goalkeeper made a good save from Dean Huijsen while Bellingham and Fede Valverde went close as Madrid took control. — AFP



Kazakhstan players celebrate with the championship trophy. — Faisal al Balushi

Kazakhstan claims men's title, Uzbekistan triumph in women's category

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

THE ASIAN Rugby Emirates Sevens Trophy, hosted for the first time by the Sultanate of Oman, concluded on Sunday evening at the Royal Oman Police Stadium in Al Wattayah, organised by the Oman Rugby Committee on October 25–26, with the participation of 18 national teams representing 15 Asian countries. The event drew enthusiastic crowds and ended under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, President of the Oman Olympic Committee.

In the men's category, Kazakhstan clinched the championship title after defeating India 27–0 in the final match. India finished second, while Afghanistan took third place.

In the women's category, Uzbekistan claimed the title after a thrilling 12–7 victory over Iran, which finished second, with South Korea taking third place.

FINAL DAY OF COMPETITION
The second and final day featured intense and exciting matches. The Oman national team suffered a heavy defeat to Lebanon 0–38, but bounced back with a historic 19–0 victory over Kyrgyzstan, followed by another win against Palestine 12–5 to close

their campaign on a high note.

Other results included Kyrgyzstan defeating Palestine 12–7, Bahrain beating Qatar 25–5, Jordan overcoming Iran 12–7, Kazakhstan thrashing Afghanistan 41–0, India defeating Saudi Arabia 17–0, Iraq winning 36–0 over Kyrgyzstan, and Lebanon sweeping Palestine 41–0.

Bahrain continued its fine form with a narrow 10–7 win over Jordan, Afghanistan edged Saudi Arabia 17–12, and Lebanon crushed Iraq 34–0.

OMAN NATIONAL TEAM AND HISTORIC DEBUT
Oman's squad for the championship included head coach Brian Hopkin, assistant coach Ali Al-Dhakhri, team manager Mohammed Al-Hashami, and physiotherapist Donna Hopkin.

The players were: Imad al Marjabi (captain), Haitham al Harthi, Majid al Dhakhri, Ahmed al Balushi, Rashid al Rashdi, Faisal al Falaiti, Zakariya al Falaiti, Asid al Rawahi, Julian, Dwight, Ahmed Mohammed, Mahmoud Sabri, and Finlay.

A CONTINENTAL EVENT ELEVATING OMAN'S SPORTING STATUS
Hosting this championship for the first time in history marks a significant milestone for Oman and demonstrates the growing confidence the Asian Rugby Federation has

in the Sultanate of Omam's ability to organise international sporting events to the highest standards. The championship also serves as a qualifying stage for the Asia Rugby Series 2026, reinforcing Oman's reputation as a leading sports and tourism destination in the region.

The Oman Rugby Committee aimed through this event to promote rugby culture across the Sultanate of Oman, working closely with the Ministry of Education to encourage students to attend matches and learn about the sport. The committee has also set out a strategic plan with the Asian Rugby Federation to train Omani coaches and referees, enhance technical and organisational standards, and expand the local fan base — laying the foundation for Oman's competitive presence in continental and international rugby in the near future.

A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION AND A PROMISING BEGINNING
Oman succeeded in hosting the championship to world-class standards, earning praise from all participating teams for its organisation and hospitality.

The tournament represented a historic turning point for Omani rugby, serving as a launchpad for future regional and international events, and affirming the Sultanate of Oman's growing presence on the Asian and global rugby stage.

Bencic surprises herself as Tokyo win brings 10th title

TOKYO: Belinda Bencic said she surprised even herself by winning a second title of the season in Tokyo on Sunday, a year after returning to tennis from having a baby. The Swiss beat the Czech Republic's Linda Noskova 6-2, 6-3 in the Pan Pacific Open final, following up her success at the Abu Dhabi Open in February.

Bencic gave birth to a daughter in April last year and returned to the WTA Tour six months later. The 28-year-old said she did not expect her comeback to "go this fast and this well".

"I'm really enjoying my time back on tour and I think it's showing in the results," she said.

"I couldn't be more happy and I'm definitely surprised. This was definitely not planned."

Bencic was ranked 421 in the

world at the start of the season but has climbed to 13 and is projected to rise even higher after her Tokyo win.

It gave her the 10th WTA title of her career and came 10 years after she last appeared in the Pan Pacific final, where she lost to Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska.

Bencic won Olympic gold in Tokyo in 2021.

She said she was not sure when she launched her comeback if she would be able to return to the upper echelons of tennis.

Her performance at the Australian Open, where she beat former world number one Naomi Osaka on the way to the last 16, convinced her to continue.

"It's hard work but it's a lot of self-belief and a lot of mental belief as well," said Bencic, who reached a career-high



Switzerland's Belinda Bencic poses with the trophy. — Reuters

ranking of four in February 2020.

"I'm really happy to have this confirmation with myself that I'm able to try to even beat my best ranking from before."

MAGIC MISO SOUP
Bencic, the number five seed, had to work hard for her victory in Tokyo, coming through three-set matches against Karolina Muchova and Sofia Kenin to reach the final.

She said she was "feeling exhausted" after Saturday's semifinal but recovered with some Japanese miso soup and sushi.

"Miso soup, I swear, it's great for recovery," she said.

"It helped me a lot, I felt so much better after."

Bencic was relentless against number six seed Noskova, who was looking for her first title this season and had a much less demanding

route to the final.

The 20-year-old won her quarterfinal when Anna Kalinskaya retired injured early in the second set and was given a walkover in the semifinal when Elena Rybakina pulled out with a sore back.

Noskova, who squandered 10 break points in the final, said the lack of match practice cost her.

"I definitely didn't have such control over all the points or all of my balls as I did a couple of matches ago," she said.

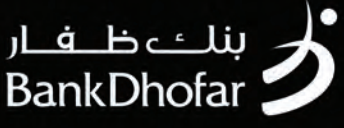
"I've never gone through a situation where I didn't really play for whole matches before reaching a final."

The tournament was weakened by nine withdrawals before the first round began, including world top 10 players Jasmine Paolini and Jessica Pegula. — AFP



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SHORTTAKES

Under the pacts signed with Algeria's state-owned Alnaft, Petrogas will evaluate the hydrocarbon prospects of the Touggourt and Berkine basins in southern Algeria.

Omani upstream firm makes inroads into Algeria's oil, gas sector

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 26

UNDERSCORING the growing global reach of Omani upstream energy players, Petrogas E&P — the exploration and production arm of the well-diversified Omani business conglomerate Mohammed Al Barwani Group — has secured contracts to assess the hydrocarbon potential of two key basins in Algeria.

The agreements expand Petrogas E&P's international footprint, which already includes operations in the Netherlands and Egypt, alongside assets in Oman and exploration acreage in the United Kingdom and Denmark.

Under the pacts signed with the state-owned Algerian Agency for the Valorisation of Hydrocarbon Resources (Alnaft), Petrogas will evaluate the hydrocarbon prospects of the Touggourt and Berkine basins in southern Algeria.

The agreements were signed by Alnaft President Samir Bekhti and Petrogas CEO Kingsuk Sen during the North Africa Petroleum Exhibition and Conference (NAPEC 2025), held recently in the Algerian city of Oran.

The agreements cover geological, geophysical and reservoir studies across the Hassi Touniat and El Borma-Hassi Keskassa perimeters. The findings will inform the design of an investment strategy once the basins' hydrocarbon potential is confirmed.

"These studies will help unlock new reserves and enhance the productivity of existing fields facing technical challenges", Alnaft President Samir Bekhti was quoted by local TV channel AL24 News as saying. He described the initiative as part of Algeria's drive to "optimise every barrel" from its mature basins.

Earlier this year, Petrogas received a five-year prequalification certificate from Alnaft, allowing it to participate in Algeria's upcoming bid rounds.

Oman Ministry of Labour eases work permit rules

THE Ministry of Labour has issued a new ministerial resolution introducing a comprehensive package of facilitations, fee reductions, and exemptions aimed at improving the work permit system in the Sultanate of Oman.

Ministerial Resolution No. 602/2025 governs the issuance of work permits and practising work permits and is designed to simplify administrative procedures for employers while ensuring workers' rights are fully protected.

The decision extends the validity of work permits for non-Omani employees from 15 to 24 months, addressing long-standing employer requests to align permits with the worker's residency period.

This change is expected to reduce administrative burdens, save costs, and provide greater workforce stability for businesses operating in the Sultanate of Oman.

Employers are now allowed to upgrade a worker's profession in the work permit from a lower to a higher category by paying only the difference in fees, without having to issue a new licence.

This measure offers greater flexibility for businesses and streamlines human resource planning, helping employers manage their workforce efficiently while maintaining compliance with Omani labour regulations.

The resolution also introduces targeted social exemptions. People with special needs, elderly individuals unable to care for themselves, those receiving family income benefits, and individuals with health conditions requiring special

The move is part of the Ministry's broader efforts to create a balanced, transparent and stable labour environment.

Ministerial Resolution No 602/2025 aims to streamline procedures for employers, ensure fair regulation of labour relations and align work permits with the length of residency for expatriate workers.

attention will be exempt from paying licensing fees when recruiting domestic workers, private nurses, nannies, private drivers, or home health aides.

This ensures that vulnerable groups can access essential services without incurring financial hardship.

In recognition of the important role played by civil society and humanitarian organisations, the fees for recruiting non-Omani workers for these organisations have been reduced from RO 141 to RO 101.

Business owners who meet the Omanisation targets will also benefit from a 30 per cent reduction in fees, while fees will double for establishments that fail to comply. This

initiative underlines the government's commitment to promoting employment for Omani citizens and supporting social responsibility among businesses.

The resolution further introduces a ceiling of RO 500 for late renewal fines per worker, easing the financial burden on employers and encouraging timely compliance.

It provides additional exemptions from fees and fines in specific circumstances, such as the death of a worker or employer, repatriation of workers, changes in visa status, or when a worker files a labour complaint after contract expiry. These measures help balance the rights and obligations of both employers and employees.

The Ministry has also allowed employers and individuals to reclaim licensing fees or issue a new licence for a nominal charge of RO 1 per worker in cases including failed medical examinations, visa refusal, repatriation within 90 days, or

administrative cancellations.

Fines will be waived in cases such as chronic illness, withholding of passports by government authorities, bankruptcy, liquidation, or worker imprisonment. Officials emphasised that these reforms form part of a broader strategy to modernise Oman's labour system, enhance efficiency, and create a more flexible and transparent labour market.

By simplifying procedures, reducing financial burdens, and providing social support, the Ministry aims to protect workers' rights, support employers, and ensure sustainable economic and social growth.

Through these measures, the Ministry reaffirms its commitment to fostering a balanced labour market that serves both business needs and social welfare, while prioritising the protection of vulnerable groups and ensuring safe and organised access to essential services across the Sultanate of Oman.

— ONA

OMAN, LEBANON BOOST ECONOMIC TIES

MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, met on Sunday with Dr Amer Bisat, Lebanon's Minister of Economy and Trade, to discuss ways of strengthening economic and investment cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Lebanese Republic.

Held at the Ministry's headquarters, the meeting focused on expanding trade, investment and industrial collaboration to serve mutual interests. Both sides explored new initiatives to enhance economic integration, increase trade exchange and establish direct sea and air shipping lines between the two countries.

Discussions also covered maximising the benefits of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area Agreement, encouraging joint projects between Omani and Lebanese companies; and developing re-export opportunities.

The ministers also reviewed a proposal to establish a joint Omani-Lebanese Business Council aimed at deepening ties between the private sectors of both nations. — ONA



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Public Auction Announcement

Majis Industrial Services S.A.O.C is pleased to announce a public auction for the sale mixed scrap, as per the details below:

Type of Auction	Date & Time of Site Visit	Site Visit Location	Last Day for Bid Submission
Mixed Scrap	Wednesday 5 November 2025 10:00 AM	SWIP & CETRP – Sohar Port	Monday 10 November 2025

For inquiries, please contact:
Email: mohammed.al-jabri@miscoman.com
Phone: +968 7939 3663

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Located at 150 Spring Street, the 860 square-foot (80m²) boutique stands at the intersection of craft and modernity.

AMOUAGE UNVEILS
NEW SOHO
FLAGSHIP BOUTIQUE
“BRICKFIELD”

MUSCAT: At first glance, it feels like a mirage. Among SoHo’s historic cast-iron buildings and early nineteenth-century façades, a new presence glows quietly on Spring Street.

Behind its crimson woodwork and golden reflections, the Amouage Soho Flagship Boutique, titled “Brickfield”, reveals itself as a space where the red sands of Oman’s desert meet the metal and light of New York.

Located at 150 Spring Street, the 860 square-foot (80m²) boutique stands at the intersection of craft and modernity. Designed by Renaud Salmon, Amouage Chief Creative Officer and Héroïne, the Paris-based retail architecture studio, the space forms a poetic dialogue between earth and metal, a tribute to both the Omani desert and the industrial spirit of Manhattan.

Following the success of The Amouage SoHo Petite Boutique, which introduced the House’s sensorial storytelling to New York in 2024, the new SoHo Flagship Boutique marks a permanent presence for Amouage in Manhattan, expressing the cultural, artistic and architectural essence of the House.

“With the Amouage SoHo Flagship Boutique, we wanted to create a dialogue between two cities that share the same soul”, says Renaud Salmon. “The red bricks of Soho and the red clay of Oman are born of the same earth. Both are shaped by hand, both tell a story of craft and transformation”.

FROM THE DESERT TO THE CITY

Close your eyes. Imagine Tanuf, the lost city of red clay rising from the Rimal Al Sharqiya. The wind stirs the dust, the walls shimmer with light. This is where the journey begins. Now imagine the same sunlight striking the façades of Soho, reflecting on steel and glass.

Between these two landscapes, one mineral and one metallic, lies the story of Brickfield, the Amouage Soho Flagship Boutique.

The space unfolds as a journey through duality, where the raw, organic textures of Oman’s desert merge with the polished geometry of Manhattan.

Every material was chosen to express this balance between tradition and modernity, earth and architecture, silence and reflection.

A FAÇADE THAT CAPTURES THE LIGHT

The experience begins on the street. The boutique’s historic façade, protected, retains its nineteenth-century structure while revealing a contemporary spirit.

MCDONALD’S
OMAN
REOPENS
DARSAIT
BRANCH

MUSCAT: McDonald’s Oman is delighted to announce the reopening of its Darsait branch after a comprehensive and total renovation. It underlines the ongoing commitment of McDonald’s Oman to deliver best-in-class experience to its customers in Oman.

The newly renovated restaurant brings in latest international dining standards to Oman that significantly improves customer experience through a modern and



The newly renovated restaurant brings in latest international dining standards to Oman.

much bigger dining area. Families can enjoy a seamless experience with self-ordering kiosks and table service. With the installation of state-of-the-art digital menu board, the Drive Thru experience is enhanced further while remaining super convenient and the restaurant continues to provide delivery services. With all these significant changes the restaurant is designed to make the customer journey easier, faster and more enjoyable that fits their lifestyle.

New World Autos to
launch iCaur in Oman

NEW World Autos has entered into an exclusive distribution agreement with iCaur, Chery Group’s next-generation automotive brand, marking iCaur’s official debut in Oman.

The signing ceremony, held at Chery Group’s global headquarters in Wuhu, China, was attended by the senior management team of both companies, including Si Fenghuo, Global CEO of iCaur, Zhang Xiaolong, General Manager of Chery International MENA Region and Abdullah Bin Mohammed Saud Bahwan, CEO, Saud Bahwan Group.

This landmark partnership brings together two organisations that share a unified vision, to redefine the driving experience for a new generation of automotive enthusiasts who value intelligent design, expressive performance and distinctive personality.

Set to make a debut in Oman soon are two of iCaur’s most



Set to make a debut in Oman soon are two of iCaur’s most anticipated models – the V27 and 03T.

anticipated models — the V27 and 03T. Each is a showcase of iCaur’s design philosophy, blending advanced engineering and a deep understanding of modern drivers.

The iCaur 03T, an off-road SUV crafted for explorers, combines a 429-horsepower engine with i-AWD intelligent four-wheel drive, achieving 0–100 km/h in just 4.8 seconds. Designed to conquer Oman’s

diverse terrains, it features 8+X all-terrain driving modes and Land Rover–grade adaptive suspension, delivering a perfect balance between power and precision.

The V27 REEV, iCaur’s first mid-to-large SUV, merges retro-inspired elegance with cutting-edge technology. Powered by the brand’s acclaimed golden REEV hybrid powertrain, it offers extended range confidence

without compromising performance. With bold proportions, refined detailing and commanding presence, the V27 embodies modern sophistication for those who lead with distinction.

The collaboration that is built upon Chery Group’s world-class R&D and New World Auto’s impressive legacy of automotive leadership, aims to introduce a new standard of customer experience in Oman’s automotive landscape.

Supporting this commitment, iCaur’s regional spare parts hub, a 12,000-square-metre facility serving the Middle East enables rapid 24-hour delivery of critical parts to Oman. This massive infrastructure underlines iCaur’s promise of reliability, convenience and peace of mind.

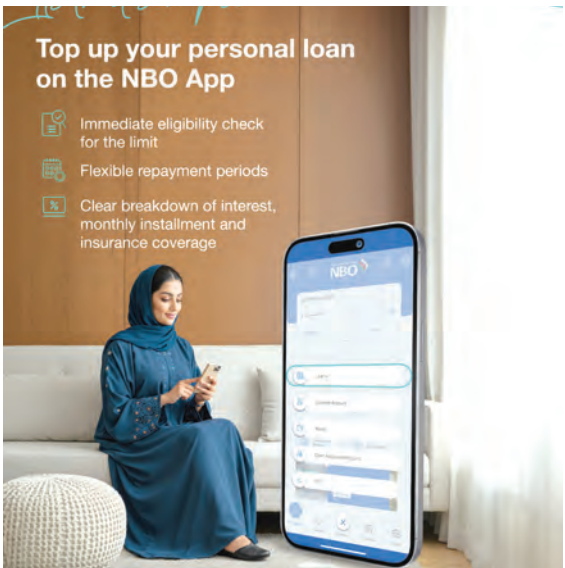
Additionally, New World Auto’s nationwide service network, comprehensive parts warehouses and skilled technical teams will ensure that iCaur customers always enjoy an ownership experience defined by efficiency, transparency and trust.

Seamless loan top-up service via the NBO app

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) personal loan top-up service, available exclusively through the NBO app, comes to enhance customer experience by allowing eligible customers with existing salary-related loans to apply for additional financing easily, without the need to visit a branch.

Through this digital solution, customers can instantly check eligibility, apply for a loan top-up and receive approvals in significantly less time than traditional processes.

With key steps such as credit checks and insurance coverage fully digitised, the end-to-end service eliminates paperwork and manual verification, ensuring faster turnaround and a smoother customer journey.



The NBO app’s loan top-up feature represents a step forward in redefining how banking integrates into daily life, enabling customers to manage their finances more efficiently and proactively.

By embedding advanced technology into NBO’s services, the bank is creating a more inclusive, agile and resilient banking experience.

The service reflects NBO’s broader digital strategy to enhance operational efficiency, support financial inclusion and deliver customer-first solutions that align with evolving lifestyle needs.

By leveraging technology at the heart of its banking model, NBO is setting new standards for seamless, technology-driven experiences.

BankDhofar and Taageer Finance forge strategic partnership

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the Sultanate of Oman’s second-largest bank by branch network, has signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Taageer Finance Company SAOG, one of Oman’s leading non-banking financial institutions.

This strategic alliance aims to deliver innovative, customer-focused financial solutions that set new benchmarks for convenience, security and efficiency.

The partnership underscores both organisations’ shared vision to accelerate Oman’s financial services transformation by leveraging advanced technologies such as Open Banking, Direct Debit and Virtual Account-based collections.



The partnership underscores both organisations’ shared vision to accelerate Oman’s financial services transformation.

These innovations will empower customers with seamless, secure and integrated services while ensuring strict adherence to data privacy and regulatory compliance.

“Through this collaboration, BankDhofar reaffirms its commitment to driving digital transformation and creating tangible value for customers, by joining forces with Taageer Finance, we aim to unlock synergies that enhance convenience, efficiency and security for individuals, SMEs and corporates alike”, said Maryam bint Yousuf al Balushiyyah, AGM & Head of Large Corporates & Stressed Assets.

BankDhofar has consistently led the way in digital banking

innovation in Oman. Its robust digital ecosystem integrates open banking principles, direct debit, salary payments and virtual account capabilities to deliver a unified, customer-first experience. Flagship solutions include:

Business Digital Banking Platform consolidating multiple accounts under a single user ID and streamlining payroll, bulk transfers, utility payments and account management and Intilaqa Digital Onboarding App — enabling paperless account opening and KYC verification via secure video calls.

Integration with national systems such as Mala’a further enhances efficiency, compliance and customer trust in digital-first processes.

SHORTTAKES



There are now around 282,764 enterprises in Oman.

SURGE IN OMAN’S PRIVATE ENTERPRISES REACHES 12.1% IN Q2

MUSCAT: The number of active private enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 12.1 per cent in the second quarter of 2025, totalling around 282,764 enterprises, compared to 252,312 during the same period in 2024, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Small enterprises led this growth, expanding by 14.3 per cent to reach 251,158, up from 219,776 a year earlier. Medium-sized enterprises saw a modest rise of 0.1 per cent to 1,851, while large enterprises grew by 1.6 per cent to 718. Conversely, the number of micro enterprises fell by 3.1 per cent to 29,037, down from 29,980 in the second quarter of 2024.

Despite the overall increase in enterprise numbers, the total added value of all enterprises dipped slightly by 0.8 per cent to approximately RO 8.15 billion, compared to RO 8.21 billion a year earlier.

Small enterprises continued to play a vital role in the national economy, contributing 3.8 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), equivalent to RO 817 million, compared to RO 787.5 million in the same period last year. Their added value rose by 3.6 per cent to RO 673.2 million, while medium-sized enterprises posted a 1.2 per cent increase, reaching RO 625.9 million.

Large enterprises recorded a 2 per cent decline in added value, falling to RO 6.03 billion from RO 6.15 billion in the second quarter of 2024.

Employment across the private sector also saw an upward trend. The total number of employees in private enterprises reached approximately 1,802,972 during the second quarter of 2025, up 1.2 per cent from 1,781,643 a year earlier.

Employment in small enterprises grew by 3.9 per cent to 696,622 workers, while medium-sized enterprises saw a 1.2 per cent increase to 152,827 employees. — ONA

Oman Cables unveils sustainability academy

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 26

UNDER the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman Cables Industry (SAOG) inaugurated the Global Sustainability Academy — a pioneering platform dedicated to advancing sustainability, innovation and knowledge exchange across Oman and the wider region.

The first initiative of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, the Academy reflects Oman Cables’ long-term strategy to embed sustainability into every layer of its operations.

It provides an iconic hub for more than 30,000 employees worldwide, as well as stakeholders, partners and local communities, to exchange ideas, deepen expertise and implement practical solutions that support Oman’s energy transition and economic diversification goals.

Situated at Al Rusayl Industrial City in Muscat, the headquarters of Oman Cables Industry and Prysmian Middle East, Russia and Türkiye, the Academy blends on-site and digital learning to strengthen sustainability competencies across its workforce.

Its facilities include Oman’s first solar flower, solar carports and wind turbines — all built with recycled and circular materials.

These features provide hands-on learning environments that promote climate action, efficient resource use and technological innovation.



The first initiative of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, the Academy reflects Oman Cables’ long-term strategy to embed sustainability into every layer of its operations.

Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, hailed the launch as a model for public-private collaboration: “The Global Sustainability Academy represents the kind of partnership that translates national vision into practical progress.

By embedding sustainability and innovation within industry, it strengthens the foundations of Oman’s knowledge-based economy and empowers Omani talent to lead the transition towards a more competitive, low-carbon future”.

Cinzia Farisè, Chairman of Oman Cables Industry, said the Academy marks a defining moment in the company’s sustainability journey: “Establishing the Global Sustainability Academy is a

major step in how Oman Cables sees its future — as a sustainable solutions provider driving the energy transition, promoting inclusion and contributing to Oman’s industrial and human capacity growth.

It connects our global expertise with local talent to build lasting value for Oman’s industrial progress and its transition towards a sustainable economy”.

Coinciding with the inauguration and Omani Youth Day, Oman Cables also announced JOLT — Junior Omani Leaders of Tomorrow, an international leadership and development programme.

Delivered under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and supported by Prysmian, Sultan Qaboos University and Politecnico di Milano Graduate School of

Management, JOLT will prepare young Omani engineers for leadership roles in advanced manufacturing and clean energy industries.

Participants will undergo global training and assignments across Prysmian’s international network, fostering a new generation of Omani professionals equipped to steer the nation’s industrial growth.

As part of Prysmian Group’s Global Sustainability Academy network, the Oman facility represents a strategic milestone linking the Sultanate of Oman’s industry to an international platform of knowledge, skills and innovation.

This collaboration brings global know-how into local practice, accelerating Oman’s sustainability transition and contributing directly to Oman Vision 2040 and the Net Zero 2050 objectives.

Hadatha Centres bridge cybersecurity, innovation and economy

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, OCT 26

THE Hadatha Centres for Cybersecurity Industry, launched under the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), are not merely research centres but drivers of innovation and business development in cybersecurity.

“This centre is not merely a technical project — it is an intellectual and scientific space designed to nurture creativity and accelerate entrepreneurial ideas in the field of cybersecurity”, said Aziza bint Sultan al Rashdiyah, Assistant Director General for Cybersecurity Programmes at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Speaking at the launch of the



Officials at the launch of the Hadatha Centre in Middle East College, Muscat.

third Hadatha Centre, Al Rashdi described the initiative as one of the national programmes that embody Oman’s vision towards a secure and sustainable digital economy.

The centres, she said, represent a critical bridge between research and market, where innovation translates into economic and security value.

The Hadatha Centre initiative operates under the National Cybersecurity Programme (Hadatha), itself one of the core pillars of Oman’s National Digital Economy Programme, which aims to boost the contribution of the digital economy to the local GDP.

There are currently three Hadatha Centres for Cybersecurity Industry operating in Oman. The first was launched at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS Muscat), followed by the Hadatha Centre at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and most recently at Middle East College in Muscat.

“As global reports indicate that cybercrime losses may exceed ten trillion dollars annually by 2030 and that the global cybersecurity market could surpass five hundred billion dollars, the need for innovation has

become urgent”, said Al Rashdi.

“In a time when digital threats are accelerating and cyber challenges are intensifying, local innovation in cybersecurity has become a necessity, not a luxury”, she said, noting that over eighty per cent of global organisations now view in-house cybersecurity innovation as a priority, yet fewer than forty per cent have the capacity to turn ideas into real solutions.

“This gap between need and capability”, Al Rashdi explained, “highlights why Oman must invest in homegrown innovation.

The Hadatha Centre represents a practical step towards accelerating local innovation and converting it into economic and security value. Its success will depend on effective partnerships, continuous investment and linking research

with market needs”.

Al Rashdi added that the Ministry is also collaborating with the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Oman to integrate artificial intelligence and advanced technologies into future cybersecurity solutions. “This will strengthen the cybersecurity industry and the digital economy”, she said, adding that such efforts will “enhance Oman’s position as a regional leader in cybersecurity innovation”.

According to Amal bint Saeed al Mashaikhiyah, Senior Cybersecurity Innovation Specialist at the National Cybersecurity Centre, the Hadatha model is built on “a specialised innovation framework designed to connect Oman’s academic, industrial and government sectors into a single ecosystem”.

TRADE EXPANSION

US signs trade, mineral deals with Asean



US President Donald Trump signed trade and critical mineral agreements with Thailand, Malaysia and Cambodia during the Asean summit in Kuala Lumpur. The deals aim to address trade imbalances and strengthen supply chain resilience amidst China’s tighter export curbs on rare earths.

The reciprocal agreements will help reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers between the United States and its Southeast Asian partners. — Reuters

GOODS TENSIONS

Trump raises tariffs on Canada by 10%



US President Donald Trump announced a 10% tariff hike on Canadian goods after reacting to a World Series ad from Ontario criticising US trade policies.

The ad featured former President Ronald Reagan warning about tariffs. Trump, calling it misleading, ended trade talks with Ottawa and posted the tariff increase on Truth Social, escalating trade tensions with America’s key northern ally. — Reuters

LEGAL DISPUTE

Exxon challenges California climate laws



Exxon Mobil filed a lawsuit against California over new laws mandating disclosure of greenhouse gas emissions and climate-related risks.

The company claims Senate Bills 253 and 261 violate its First Amendment rights by forcing it to share views it does not endorse.

Exxon asked a federal court to block California from enforcing the disclosure requirements. — Reuters

OPINION

The hidden costs of AI data centres



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies.



V CH MADHU SUDHANA RAO KONDAVEETI

The writer is a USA-based AI researcher.

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence has become the crown jewel of the digital economy. From OpenAI’s ChatGPT to Microsoft’s Copilot and Google’s Gemini, billions of daily interactions are powered by complex algorithms running on massive AI data centres. Yet behind every intelligent output lies a growing web of physical infrastructure — consuming electricity, water and hardware at an accelerating rate. While investors hail AI as a trillion-dollar opportunity, the real costs — measured in megawatts, dollars and environmental strain — are only beginning to surface.

Training and operating modern AI systems are energy-hungry processes. OpenAI’s GPT-4 reportedly required tens of thousands of Nvidia A100 GPUs, consuming roughly 1.5 gigawatt-hours of electricity during training — equivalent to powering 150 average US homes for a year. Even a single ChatGPT prompt consumes about 0.3 watt-hours — nearly ten times that of a Google search. Multiplied across one billion queries daily, that translates to roughly 300 megawatt-hours per day — enough to power 10,000 US homes.

According to the International Energy Agency, global data centre electricity demand could more than double from 460 terawatt-hours in 2022 to over 1,000 terawatt-hours by 2026, rivalling Japan’s total power consumption.

Utilities in the US and Europe warn that surging AI demand may challenge regional grid stability and delay decarbonisation plans.

Behind every teraflop of computation lies another hidden cost: water. A 2023 University of California–Riverside study estimated that training GPT-3 consumed over 700,000 litres of freshwater, equivalent to producing 370 BMW cars or filling an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Each user interaction adds to that footprint: roughly 500 millilitres of water for every 20–50 ChatGPT prompts, primarily used for evaporative cooling. In water-stressed regions such as Iowa and Arizona, where Microsoft, Meta and Google operate major AI campuses, rising demand is already prompting higher water tariffs and community concern. AI facilities differ from conventional cloud data centres in one critical way — density.

Racks filled with GPUs draw 50–80 kilowatts each, nearly 10 times the power of traditional configurations. This creates exponential, not linear, cost behaviour. Unlike linear growth, hyperscale AI facilities experience steep efficiency drops — from transformer losses to thermal limits — making each incremental megawatt more costly to deploy.

The hidden costs extend far beyond electricity. Each Nvidia H100 GPU costs \$25,000–\$40,000. With hundreds of thousands installed per site and a 2–3-year refresh cycle, hardware replacement alone can exceed \$1 billion annually for mega facilities. Retired GPUs and servers require secure recycling, often costing \$200–\$300 per unit. The cooling demands of 5,000–7,000 litres per megawatt-hour expose operators to drought surcharges

While investors hail AI as a trillion-dollar opportunity, the real costs — measured in megawatts, dollars and environmental strain — are only beginning to surface.

and reputational risks. Even minor inefficiencies, when scaled across a gigawatt campus, can translate into hundreds of millions of dollars in additional operating and environmental costs. AI’s economic promise must now be matched by accountability — a shift towards Responsible Intelligence.

Data centres should be treated not just as technical assets but as environmental and fiscal entities. It is necessary to incorporate mandatory disclosure of Energy Usage Effectiveness (EUE), Water Usage Effectiveness (WUE) and lifecycle carbon data for every major AI model.

Companies must use model compression and knowledge distillation to cut energy per inference by up to 80%. Build near hydro, solar, or nuclear museogrids.

Google’s Hamina, Finland, site already repurposes waste heat to warm local homes; governments should extend tax incentives for carbon-neutral facilities, require sustainability disclosures above defined computational thresholds; and educate users to optimise prompts and adopt lightweight assistants, which can collectively save gigawatt-hours each year.

Though AI data centres have become the steel mills of the digital age, their exponential costs and externalities reveal a paradox: intelligence that risks outpacing its sustainability. As nations and corporations race towards the 1-gigawatt frontier, success will belong not to those who build the biggest, but to those who can pursue genuinely sustainable intelligence.

SMART OMAN: REDEFINING GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

OMAN’S quiet revolution in digital governance is redefining the meaning of investment readiness. Long gone are the days when establishing a business required multiple visits to ministries and stacks of paper documents.

Today, with platforms such as the Oman Business Platform, Etamid and Baladiyati, Oman is positioning itself among the region’s most digitally agile economies — one that offers convenience, transparency and speed to investors.

The real breakthrough lies in how Oman has approached digital transformation not as a cosmetic upgrade but as a deep administrative reform. The integration of over fifty government services into one electronic portal under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has significantly streamlined company registration and licensing.

For many investors, the ability to register a business remotely and pay fees online represents a decisive shift from the traditional bureaucratic culture that once deterred foreign participation.

Muscat Municipality’s initiatives reinforce this transformation. The Etamid platform for excavation permits, for instance, has reduced approval times from six months to just ten working days.

The Unified Municipal System, meanwhile, promises to connect municipal services across all governorates, bringing consistency and efficiency to local governance. These are not isolated projects but part of a nationwide strategy under Oman Vision 2040 to create a fully integrated digital ecosystem.

What sets Oman’s model apart is its inclusivity. By digitising municipal and investment procedures, the government has empowered small and medium enterprises to compete on equal footing with larger players. Access to services no longer depends on physical proximity to the capital or personal networks but on the reliability of online systems. This democratisation of access is reshaping how businesses interact with government, encouraging entrepreneurship across all regions.

However, true digital transformation is a long journey. Some investors still encounter fragmented systems and uneven processing speeds between governorates. These issues stem not from lack of intent but from the challenge of aligning multiple agencies under one digital framework.

The key to sustaining progress will be interoperability — ensuring that every platform, from company registration to environmental clearance, communicates seamlessly.

Yet Oman’s progress remains remarkable when viewed in regional context.

How far have regulators bent to Chancellor’s will?

THE government is waging an all-out war against red tape. But opinion in the financial district of London (known as the ‘City’) is divided about whether it will actually work.

Since coming into power last July, Labour government has placed financial regulators in its firing line, accusing them of putting barriers to economic growth. It fired the Competition and Markets Authority’s chair in January, axed the Payment Systems Regulator and plans to rein in the Financial Ombudsman Service’s remit.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves told trade body the British Private Equity & Venture Capital Association’s conference in September, “I’m really proud of some of the things we’ve done on regulation. We’ve committed to reducing the regulatory burden that businesses face by 25 per cent and every cabinet minister recognises their responsibility there.

It’s going to be a lot easier in the UK. It’s already got easier”. Reeves said though there was “more to do” and she wanted to “take out more regulators”, there had been a “massive step change” at the CMA since the government changed its leadership.

“I previously had businesses all the time, particularly in tech, raising concerns around the CMA”, she said. “That has changed a lot”.

Reeves also talked up improvements at the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) which “is becoming more growth orientated” under Nikhil Rathi’s leadership.

The FCA brought in external consultants in 2022 to help clear its backlogs in dealing with firms’ applications. The regulator’s data shows there has since been a gradual improvement in processing time. For example, only two-thirds of regulators under the 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directive were done on time in the first quarter of 2024/25 but a 100 per cent are now. Such improvements have not gone



ANDY JALIL andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

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Rachel Reeves poses with the red box in Downing Street shortly before delivering the budget. — Reuters

unnoticed by financial services veterans. “The signs are changing now that competitiveness is part of the regulatory statutory objectives for the regulators”, former Newton boss Baroness Helena Morrissey told the Master Investor podcast last month. “But it needs to speed up and show how and why you expect businesses to be internationally competitive.

“We have moved a very long way and this pendulum has swung, obviously as it should have done, from the light touch regulation that there was prior to the global financial crisis. But we’ve now got to the point where people are afraid of their own shadows”.

However, many people predict that rolling back the rulebook won’t have a significant impact. The PSR, for example, accounts for only three per cent of the FCA’s budget. No job cuts have been announced as its responsibilities transition back to the organisation with which it already shared buildings and staff.

The Financial Reporting Council launched an Innovation and Improvement Hub on September 15 that it said would “drive regulatory

innovation and market growth”. It had already set up an audit sandbox and scalebox, but while it has invited firms to join the scalebox, none has officially accepted. The scheme also won’t launch fully until 2026.

Furthermore, Technology minister Peter Kyle, in a speech last month, urged UK regulators to adopt AI in a bid to cut approval times for businesses, as Britain seeks to keep pace in the global race for tech leadership.

Kyle pledged 2.7 million in government funding to help regulators trial AI systems across sectors including drones, aviation, nuclear power and clean energy. He argues the move could accelerate investment, reduce red tape and make the UK more attractive to fast-growing firms.

Funding will be allocated to five regulators, including Ofgem, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Office for Nuclear Regulation. Projects include using AI to analyse accident reports more quickly, build a “one-stop shop” for regulatory guidance and test new approaches to nuclear waste management.

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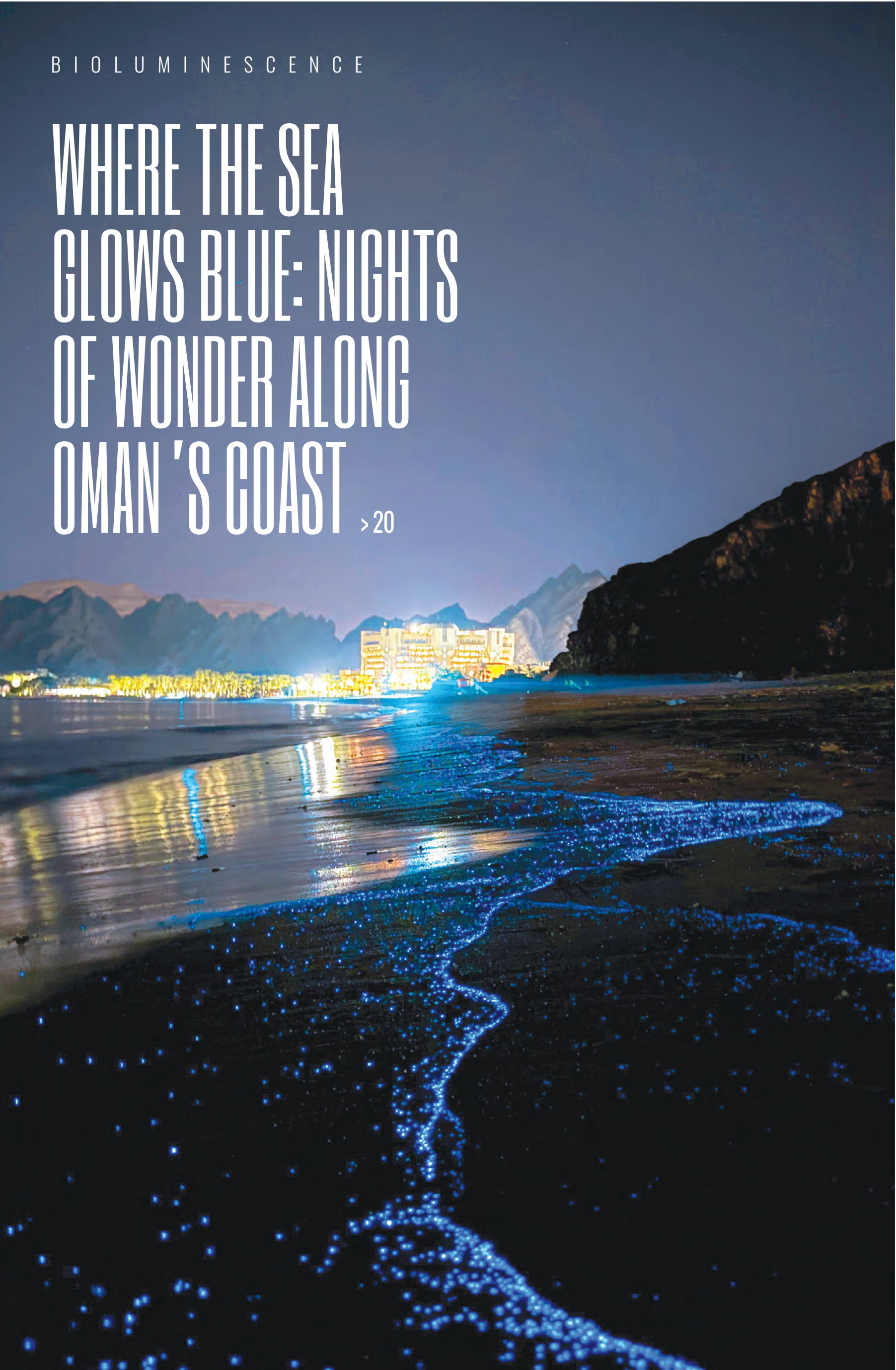
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ART/LIFE



BIOLUMINESCENCE

WHERE THE SEA GLOWS BLUE: NIGHTS OF WONDER ALONG OMAN'S COAST

> 20

FICTION

Booker Prize launches first children's fiction award



The Booker Prize has announced its ‘most ambitious endeavour’ in 20 years with the launch of its first prize for children’s fiction.

The foundation will launch the literary award in 2026 with the winner to be chosen by a combined panel of child and adult judges and awarded £50,000 (\$66,600).

The Children’s Booker Prize will see an author selected annually from 2027 to celebrate the “best contemporary fiction” for children aged eight to 12 years old. The foundation will also gift 30,000 copies of the shortlisted and winning books with the aim of engaging and growing a “new generation of readers by championing the best children’s fiction from writers around the world”.

Children’s author Dame Jacqueline Wilson, best known for “The Story Of Tracy Beaker”, praised the new award and described it as a “marvellous idea”.

She said: “Now, more than ever, children’s books need a huge boost. It’s so dismaying that only 30 per cent of today’s children enjoy reading for pleasure — and yet there are so many exciting and enjoyable children’s books out there, many sinking without trace.

“I think a Children’s Booker Prize, like the Booker Prizes for adult fiction, will become a talking point, signposting more children, parents, carers and teachers to the best new children’s literature”.

The prize will be open to authors worldwide, both for books written originally in English and for those translated into English, as long as they are published in the UK and/or Ireland within the eligibility period.

Gaby Wood, chief executive of the Booker Prize Foundation, said: “The Children’s Booker Prize is the most ambitious endeavour we’ve embarked on in 20 years — and we hope its impact will resonate for decades to come.

“It aims to be several things at once: an award that will champion future classics written for children; a social intervention designed to inspire more young people to read; and a seed from which we hope future generations of lifelong readers will grow.

“In other words, the Children’s Booker Prize is not just a prize — it’s part of a movement: a cause that children, parents, carers, teachers and everyone in the world of storytelling can get behind.

As with the Booker Prize and International Booker Prize the shortlisted authors will each receive £2,500 and the winning author £50,000.

— dpa

QUICK FEATURES



VINTAGE

Visitors look at classic cars displayed at the Ceylon Motor Show in Colombo.

— AFP



HOLLYWOOD

Steven Foster, US actor Ben Foster and Gillian Kirwan Foster attend the AFI premiere of “Christy” at the TCL Chinese Theatre in California.

— Reuters



MUSEUM

Tourists pause in front of the entrance of Freddy Mercury House and Museum in Stone Town, Zanzibar City.

— AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Cultural treasures



Kids talk

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We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Sleeping under the dinosaurs: A night at the museum returns



Children participate in a flashlight tour in the fossils exhibit during 'A Night at the Museum' at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. — AFP

It's nearly 10 pm on Friday night and a group of children shine their flashlights on the imposing skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus rex.

Though the scene seems like something out of a movie, it is in fact a whimsical sleepover at the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Once a month and for a not insignificant fee, parents and kids can once again spend the night at the venerable institution — a programme that had been suspended since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We live really close to this place. So we can come here anytime we want", said eight-year-old Jake Nelson. "It's crazy to sleep (here) — like, I don't know who would come up with this crazy idea".

Jake, nestled into his sleeping bag on a cot underneath the museum's gigantic suspended

model of a blue whale, said he was "so happy to be here".

The museum first launched its "Night at the Museum" programmes in 2006, riding the success of the movie of the same name, released that year, starring Ben Stiller as a security guard who realises that the animals and fossils come to life overnight.

The return of the sleepovers is good news for the museum and its visitors.

"They were an iconic part of our itinerary here and very sought after by all of our visitors", Aaron Anleu, senior director of visitor service, said.

"Unfortunately, during the pandemic, we had to pause the experience for a few years, but we really wanted to take a pause and understand how we can make this experience exciting and memorable for our visitors and now we're here".

— AFP



The Al Musannah Home celebrates Oman's rich heritage

NESTLED in the corners of an Omani Majlis, redolent with the aroma of history, a local heritage enthusiast has transformed part of his home into a living window onto Omani history.

The exhibition, hosted by Qari Village in Al Musannah, Al Batinah South Governorate, stands as a beacon of cultural preservation, allowing visitors to experience the legacy of past generations while inspiring a commitment to safeguarding Oman's rich heritage.

The exhibition boasts a remarkable and diverse collection.

Traditional swords, daggers and shields sit alongside Omani mandos, pottery, ceramics, ancient coins and historic photographs.

Visitors can also admire ancient agricultural tools, traditional Omani clothing, women's jewelry and copper household utensils — each artefact narrating a vivid story of everyday life in bygone eras. Together, they provide a tangible link between the present and the past, celebrating the craftsmanship and daily experiences of Omanis through history.

Salem bin Ali al Balushi, the visionary behind the exhibition, explained that his passion for heritage began 20 years ago with a hobby of collecting coins and silverware.

Over time, his collection grew into a wider pursuit of artefacts that reflect Omani culture and history. "I wanted to revive an important era in Omani history and provide a space where our community, especially the younger generation, could connect with their roots", Al Balushi said.

The exhibition has also become an educational resource for students from schools across the governorate.

By observing traditional tools, clothing and ancient weapons firsthand, students gain a deeper understanding of the lives and values of their ancestors, helping to strengthen their cultural identity and pride. "It's one thing to read about history in books, but seeing these artefacts brings it to life", Al Balushi noted.

Assembling the collection

A HOME THAT BREATHES HERITAGE IN AL MUSANNAH



The exhibition, hosted by Qari Village in Al Musannah, Al Batinah South Governorate



I wanted to revive an important era in Omani history and provide a space where our community, especially the younger generation, could connect with their roots

SALEM BIN ALI
AL BALUSHI



was not without challenges. Al Balushi faced hurdles in locating artefacts and communicating with citizens who owned them, negotiating their inclusion while respecting their historical and personal value.

"All difficulties were overcome thanks to the citizens' cooperation and understanding of the noble purpose of this exhibition", he said, emphasising the communal spirit that made the project possible.

Looking ahead, Al Balushi expressed his vision for the future: transforming this small exhibition into a full-fledged museum housing an even broader collection of Omani artefacts. "I hope one day it will contain everything that pulsates with Omani history, serving as a testament to the endless love Omanis have for their heritage", he said.

The exhibition at Qari Village is more than a display of objects; it is a journey through time, a reminder of the enduring connection between Omanis and their cultural roots and an inspiration for future generations to preserve and cherish their rich heritage. — ONA

FEATURES

BIOLUMINESCENCE

WHERE
THE SEA
GLOWS
BLUE

*Nights of wonder
along Oman’s coast*



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

OVER the weekend, thousands of people flooded the beaches, phones raised and hearts racing, eager to witness what social media has lovingly dubbed ‘the sea’s blue teardrops’.

What began as a scientific curiosity has turned into a national spectacle.

Under the velvet sky of Muscat’s late October nights, the sea itself seems to breathe light. Along the quiet curves of Al Bustan beach and the rugged edges of Bandar Al Khairan, waves lap the shore in surreal neon blue, a shimmer so otherworldly it looks borrowed from a dream.

As the tide rolls in, it leaves behind fleeting trails of light, as though the ocean has chosen to reveal a secret it has kept within its undercurrents for ages. This month, that secret has set Oman’s coast ablaze, not with fire, but with fascination.

The spellbinding phenomenon drew an unprecedented number of crowds to the beach to the point where the Royal Oman Police (ROP) were called in to manage the traffic and ensure safety as carloads of visitors wound down the narrow roads to Al Khairan. Officers also worked to protect the tranquility of nearby residents whose usually serene nights have been lit up, both literally and figuratively, by the luminous phenomenon.

But for many, the journey was worth every minute. Families, photographers and curious onlookers stood shoulder to shoulder along the shore, gasping as each wave flared into a radiant electric blue before melting back into darkness. Some laughed in disbelief. Others stood silently, wonder-struck, phones forgotten for a rare few moments of bedazzlement.

On TikTok and Instagram, Oman’s coastline has become a trending canvas of light. Reels capturing the shimmering surf have gone viral, their captions poetic and playful: “Avatar has come to Muscat”, one

Massive crowds flock to Oman’s shores to witness the rare bioluminescent bloom of *Noctiluca scintillans* — a microscopic organism that makes the sea glow blue when disturbed

user wrote, comparing the glowing sea to the deep blue hues of James Cameron’s Na’vi creatures. Others simply posted the videos with a string of blue heart emojis, no words needed.

The phenomenon has taken over explore pages and stories, sparking a flood of memes, edits and photo montages. The hashtag #BlueTearsOman has become a digital diary of awe, documenting a rare moment where science and beauty collide.

Behind the glow lies a fascinating organism, *Noctiluca scintillans*, or simply *Noctiluca*.

According to Dr Khalid bin Abdullah al Hashmi, from Sultan Qaboos University’s Department of Marine Science and Fisheries, this microscopic phytoplankton is a natural part of Oman’s marine ecosystem. Its seasonal blooms occur twice a year, around September to October and again in January to February, when cooler waters and nutrient-rich conditions create the perfect environment for it to thrive.

“It’s among the less harmful species”, Dr Al Hashmi explains. “It doesn’t produce toxins, but when it decomposes, it consumes oxygen from the water, which can sometimes lead to fish deaths or mild odors due to the release of ammonium”.

As for the mesmerising light show, Dr Saud bin Muslim al Jufaili, Head of the Marine Science and Fisheries at Sultan Qaboos University, says it’s all thanks to bioluminescence, a natural chemical reaction. When the algae are stirred by movement, a wave crashing, a boat gliding, or even a hand sweeping through the water, a molecule called luciferin reacts with an enzyme named luciferase, producing a burst of blue light.

“It’s the ocean’s way of sparkling back when touched”, Dr Al Jufaili marks.

While breathtaking, scientists advise caution. Swimming during these blooms isn’t always safe, especially for people with asthma or allergies, as tiny particles can become airborne and irritate the lungs. Still, from a distance, the sight remains one of nature’s purest forms of enchantment.

The glow, fleeting as it is, will fade soon, disappearing as sea temperatures rise and nutrients shift. Yet for now, as night falls and the waves whisper ashore, Muscat’s beaches remain bathed in light, a living reminder that sometimes, the most magical things on Earth are born from nature’s science.



PICTURES BY
HISHAM AL JAHWARI