

O M A N  D A I L Y

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SUNRISE 06:00 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:45 AM

DHUHR 12:00 PM

ASR 03:23 PM

MAGHRIB 05:55 PM

ISHA 07:05 PM



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INBRIEF

HIS MAJESTY GREETSSISI AND DUKE OF LUXEMBOURG

HM visits Belarus today

A new milestone in relations between the two friendly nations

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt on the occasion of the 6th of October Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President El Sisi and the Egyptian people on this auspicious occasion. His Majesty also expressed his wishes of further development and growth for Egypt. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of greetings to Duke Guillaume of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on his accession and being sworn in. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to Duke Guillaume.

SULTAN HAITHAM

CITY’S ICONIC TOWER



Al Ahly Sabbour Developments is set to reshape the skyline of Sultan Haitham City with the launch of the Wadi Zaha Iconic Tower, a RO 90 million mixed-use development poised to become the tallest tower in the city, and a new benchmark for luxury urban living in Oman. Strategically located at the heart of Wadi Zaha, overlooking a major park and valley, the iconic tower will feature a combination of residential units, hotel services, and leisure facilities. It will house the first luxury hotel and branded serviced apartments in Sultan Haitham City under the Villa Coconut Hotel & Residences by TLT Hospitality, along with restaurants, cafés, a rooftop pool, spa, and other premium amenities. **DETAILS ON P13**

CYCLONE SHAKHTI

IS NOW A STORM

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) confirmed on Sunday that Cyclone Shakhti in the Arabian Sea has weakened and been downgraded to a tropical storm, though its effects continue to pose risks along parts of Oman’s coast. According to the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre, the storm is currently located about 150 km from Oman’s coasts, with wind speeds around the centre ranging between 40–55 knots. The system is moving west-southwest and is expected to maintain this track in the coming days, with its centre drawing closer to Oman’s southeastern coastline between Sunday and Wednesday.

Camel trains head for highlands as ‘Khatla’ season begins

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

Camel herds began their climb from the coastal plains into Dhofar’s uplands this weekend, marking the start of Khatla — the post-khareef migration that resets grazing from lowland flats to mountain valleys once soils firm up after weeks of drizzle. Families of herders coordinated early-morning departures from several plains east and west of Salalah, moving in small, cooperative groups that shared navigation, watering stops and night watches. Classic corridors lead towards the Qara, Qamar and

Samhan ranges, with overnight halts in wadis chosen for fresh growth, safety and access to water. While Khatla is a well-loved tradition, this year carries a sharper focus on visitor behaviour. Community leaders and experienced herders have circulated a simple code for weekend sightseers: slow down near crossings, avoid honking, keep cameras at a respectful distance and leave no litter. The aim is to reduce stress on animals, prevent road incidents and protect the fragile vegetation that rebounds after the monsoon. The migration typically unfolds through October and can extend into



The migration typically unfolds through October. **Photo by Mohammed Amer al Maashani**

November depending on pasture and ground conditions. Herders say timing the ascent after the fog lifts cuts the risk of slips on saturated slopes and spreads grazing pressure more evenly across the escarpments-down in the monsoon, up once the land has stabilised. Local shopkeepers along feeder roads report a modest uptick in rural spending-fuel, water, bread, tea and camp supplies — on peak days when camel trains pass. Municipal officers view the movement as a complementary draw to post-khareef travel, nudging visitors beyond the coastal strip into Dhofar’s interior without turning Khatla

into a mass event. Safety remains a shared responsibility. Communities are advising visitors to use only designated pull-offs on mountain roads, avoid crowding narrow bends, and never attempt to feed or touch animals. Drone operators are urged to follow local rules and keep well away from herds to prevent spooking. Culturally, Khatla binds families and neighbours who move together in ‘cuts’ of five to ten households, pooling labour and experience. Social ties strengthen around the evening camp — stories, tea and quiet watches — while younger herders learn routes and animal care from veterans.

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK will go on a state visit to the Republic of Belarus today.

A statement was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court to this effect reads as follows: “In response to an invitation received by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik from President Aleksandr Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus, His Majesty the Sultan will go on a state visit to the Republic of Belarus on October 6-7. The visit comes within the context of promoting relations of cooperation between Oman and Belarus and pushing them towards wider horizons in a manner that meets the aspirations of the two countries.”

The state visit of His Majesty the Sultan to the Republic of Belarus represents a new milestone in the relations between the two friendly nations. It reflects the strength of existing ties and opens broader avenues for enhancing the strategic partnership and building bridges of mutual cooperation across various fields.

Relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus have witnessed continuous development since the establishment of diplomatic relations on July 23, 1992. The official visit of the President of Belarus to Oman in December 2024 marked a stage for enhancing cooperation and partnership between the two friendly countries.

In terms of trade exchange, base metals and their manufactures, along with electrical machinery and equipment, topped the list of imported goods. Imports of precision instruments and appliances, particularly in optics, photography, medicine, and surgery, also featured prominently, clearly indicating support for technical and health sectors.

Regarding exports, plant-based products hold a significant position, reflecting the diversity of local production and the enhancement of its competitiveness in regional and global markets. — ONA



Hamas calls for swift hostage-prisoner swap

CAIRO: Hamas on Sunday called for a swift start to a hostage-prisoner exchange with Israel, as negotiators from both sides prepared to meet in Egypt for crucial talks aimed at ending the nearly two-year war in Gaza.

Foreign ministers of several countries, including Egypt, said the talks were a “real opportunity” to achieve a sustainable ceasefire. “Hamas is very keen to reach an agreement to end the war and

immediately begin the prisoner exchange process in accordance with the field conditions,” a senior Hamas official said on condition of anonymity. The diplomatic push follows the Palestinian group’s positive response to US President Donald Trump’s road map for an end to the fighting and the release of captives in Gaza in exchange for Palestinians held in Israeli jails. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Sunday urged Israel to



A displaced Palestinian child stands by a fence, as he rests on the roadside in the central Gaza Strip. — Reuters

stop bombing Gaza ahead of the discussions in Egypt. “You can’t release captives in the middle of strikes, so the strikes will have to stop,” Rubio said. “There can’t be a war going on in the middle of it.” Negotiators are due to gather in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el Sheikh, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressing hope that the captives could be released within days. — AFP

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SHORT TAKES

Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani holds talks with Syed Naveed Safdar Bokhari

OMAN, PAKISTAN
EXPLORE TIES

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Sunday Syed Naveed Safdar Bokhari, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing joint cooperation in various fields that serve the aspirations of the two countries’ leaderships. —ONA

OMAN AT GCC
MEETING IN KUWAIT

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman participated on Sunday in the 26th Meeting of the Ministerial Committee tasked with following up on the implementation of resolutions related to the joint action of the GCC, which was held in the State of Kuwait. The Omani delegation was headed by Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers. The meeting discussed the latest developments in the implementation of the resolutions issued by the Supreme Council and the mechanism for their execution. — ONA

71% GROWTH IN
VEGETATION COVER

MUSCAT: The total development of vegetation cover in the Sultanate of Oman reached 3.38 million trees in 2024, compared to 1.97 million trees in 2023, representing a growth rate of 71 per cent. Furthermore, vegetation cover in the Dhofar Governorate accounted for 4.7 per cent of the governorate’s total land area.

Data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that the number of wild animals and birds decreased by 5 per cent, while the number of the Arabian oryx dropped by 25.9 per cent compared to the previous year. The total number of nature reserves in Oman reached 32, constituting 5.6 per cent of Oman’s total area.

The data also showed that the average maximum temperature in the Sultanate of Oman reached 32.9 degrees Celsius in 2024, compared to 32.8 degrees Celsius in 2023, while the minimum temperature remained stable at 25.4 degrees Celsius. The average maximum humidity recorded was 72 per cent, compared to 74 per cent in the previous year. Yanqul station in Al Dhahirah Governorate recorded the highest rate of solar radiation in May 2024, at 7,633.5 Watt-hours/m², while Salalah Airport station in Dhofar Governorate recorded the lowest rate in July 2024, at 2,172.5 Watt-hours/m². — ONA

SAYYID BADR
RECEIVES
CREDENTIALS
COPY OF
EGYPTIAN
AMBASSADOR

Sayyid Badr receives credentials copy from Yasser Mohammed Shaban

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Sunday received a copy of the Sayyid Badr receives credentials copy of Yasser Mohammed Shaban, Ambassador-designate of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Badr wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties. He also wished the bilateral relations further progress and growth. The meeting was attended by Najib bin Yahya al Balushi, Head of the Protocols Department, Shaikh Faisal bin Omar al Marhoon, Head of the Arab Department, and several officials from both sides. — ONA

Agriculture cities to boost
self reliance in food security

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

THREE AGRICULTURAL cities are currently in the pipeline with the aim of achieving self-sufficiency and boosting national production, according to Dr Masoud bin Suleiman al Azri, Director-General of Agricultural and Fisheries Marketing at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the 2025 Food Security Laboratory, Al Azri stated that a 35-square-kilometre plot of land has been identified in Saham for the Agriculture City project. He mentioned that the feasibility study for this project will be completed by the end of the year. These cities are expected to be significant milestones in the new Renaissance period, boosting national income, providing employment opportunities for local youth, and attracting more investments.

“In Saham, we have a 35-square-kilometre Agriculture City, and the study report will be ready by the end of this year in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing. We are working together to implement this project, which will incorporate agriculture, industry and housing in one location. These

cities will help Oman achieve food self-sufficiency, reduce imports, increase exports to other countries and enhance employment opportunities in line with Vision 2040,” Dr Al Azri added.

The total investments in the agriculture, fisheries and water resources sectors are estimated to be 400 projects with a total value of RO 1.7 billion across all three sectors, according to the feasibility study. Some of these projects are already operational. Dr Al Azri also mentioned that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in agriculture is increasing, with many investors from other countries showing interest.

The opening ceremony of the Food Securities Lab was held under the auspices

of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. The two-week event involves experts from both government and private sectors sharing their knowledge as part of ongoing efforts to enhance the food security system and achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Asma al Hinai, Manager of the Vision 2040 office at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, explained that the Lab is focusing on five pillars: attracting more investment opportunities, addressing issues in current projects, ensuring sustainability, including finance and insurance, digitisation and the digital economy in agriculture, food security, strategic vision and human resources in the sector.

Additionally, projects are being revised to support farmers and fishermen.

Regarding the Public-Private Partnership, Ameen Mohammed, Managing Director of SeaPride LLC, stated that the private sector has received strong support from the government, with streamlined documentation processes and increased business opportunities in Oman. Fisheries play a key role in Oman Vision 2040, with a focus on value addition, regulatory measures such as minimum catch requirements, and diversification into aquaculture.

Omani publications shine at Riyadh Book Fair

RIYADH: Omani books and manuscripts are captivating audiences at the Riyadh International Book Fair, which runs until October 11.

The Sultanate of Oman’s participation reflects its deep-rooted cultural and intellectual heritage and underscores its prominent standing in the Arab literary landscape.

This year, Oman’s pavilion brings together several key cultural institutions, presenting a diverse array of works on literature, history, religion and science.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) showcases a rich selection of publications, including the Omani Encyclopedia and notable poetry collections such as Diwan Al Nabhani, Diwan Al Satali, Diwan Al Ghashri and Diwan Abu Muslim Al Bahlani. Visitors can also explore historical works like Al Fath Al Mubeen fi Tarikh Al Busaidi, Al Sha’a Al Sha’i bi Al Lama’an fi Dhikr A’immat Oman by Ibn Ruzaik, and Oman Across History by Shaikh Salem bin Hamoud al Siyabi, alongside publications on marine sciences and medicine.

Mohammed bin Obaid al Maskari from the ministry noted that this year’s participation ensures a strong literary and cultural

The Omani pavilion continues to draw academics and researchers from across the Arab world.

representation. “We aim to provide a diverse range of Omani works that appeal to Saudi and Arab readers and highlight the depth of Omani thought and creativity,” he said.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs is displaying an extensive collection of works on Quranic studies, jurisprudence, creed, Hadith and philosophy, available in several languages to reach a wider audience.

Badr bin Hilal al Ismaili highlighted visitors’ growing interest in the ministry’s

multilingual publications, praising their quality and scientific value.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism features over 50 titles covering Oman’s archaeological and cultural legacy, including series on heritage crafts, underwater antiquities, World Heritage Sites and fort restoration. Ahmed bin Khalifa al Ghafri emphasised that the ministry’s participation promotes Oman’s cultural landmarks and showcases its documentation efforts in the heritage sector.

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) presents 60 academic titles in Arabic and English across religious, literary and historical fields, along with seven peer-reviewed journals.

Yahya bin Said al Hajji said the university’s participation aims to enhance academic presence and promote research output.

The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) contributes 49 publications highlighting Oman’s documentary and historical heritage. Salem bin Saleh al Siyabi noted the strong visitor interest in documentary works and explained that the NRAA’s presence reinforces its role in preserving Oman’s scientific and archival legacy. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



This year’s celebration has been themed ‘Recasting teaching as a collaborative profession’

OMAN JOINS THE WORLD IN MARKING TEACHERS’ DAY

MUSCAT: Represented by the Ministry of Education, the Sultanate of Oman is joining hands with the rest of the world in celebrating World Teachers’ Day, which falls on October 5 every year. Since the role of the teacher is to nurture and groom generations to prepare them for the future, it has been a tradition among local, regional and international institutions to honour teachers and express appreciation for their mission in serving their respective communities. This year’s celebration was held under the theme ‘Recasting teaching as a collaborative profession’, expressing gratitude for the role of teachers in establishing society in a manner that promotes cooperation and partnership. Through specialised training programmes, the Ministry of Education aims to enhance teaching standards and equip teachers with the skills to use modern technologies in preparing educational content. — ONA

86% OF WADI SAL DAM IN JALAN BANI BU ALI COMPLETE



JAALAN BANI BU ALI: The Wadi Sal Dam Groundwater Recharge Project in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, has reached an implementation rate of more than 86 per cent. With a cost exceeding RO 3 million, the project is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to maximise the benefits of seasonal rainfall, as Wadi Sal village is a gathering point for many secondary valleys. The project represents a major source of water feeding the wilayats and villages of the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali. — ONA

Pomegranate season paints Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in shades of red and green

TEXT & PHOTO BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Since mid-August, farmers in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar have been busy harvesting pomegranates in what is being hailed as one of the best seasons in recent years. Pomegranates hold pride of place among the mountain’s agricultural treasures, symbolising both prosperity and heritage. Visitors to the mountain now find its terraces transformed into a tapestry of green trees studded with ruby-red pomegranates. From sunrise, farmers — young and old — head to the orchards to pick the ripe fruits, which are then transported along winding mountain roads to nearby villages and major markets such as Nizwa. According to data from the Ministry



Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is home to around 27,000 pomegranate trees.

of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the region is home to around 27,000 pomegranate trees thriving across the mountain terraces, with each tree yielding an average of 170 fruits. The season’s success is attributed to the plentiful summer rains, which helped eliminate pests and replenish groundwater levels, ensuring sufficient irrigation for the orchards. Renowned for their taste

and aroma, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar’s pomegranates enjoy a strong reputation across Oman and the Gulf region. Each year, the harvest attracts thousands of visitors who come not only to enjoy the cool mountain climate, but also to purchase the fruits directly from the farmers. Scientific studies identify three main varieties of pomegranates grown in the area. The ‘sweet pomegranate’, known for its juicy texture and delightful flavour, dominates with nearly 25,000 trees. The ‘Qasam’ variety, though less watery, is equally cherished for its taste, while the ‘Al Qabsi’ type — introduced from Tunisia — is recognised by its deep red peel and striking appearance.

The trees are distributed across various villages: Seeq (5,500 trees), Al Shurajjah (5,000), Hail Al Yaman (2,500), Wadi Bani Habib (2,500), Al Manakhir (1,500), Al Aqar (900), Al Ain (900), Al Qash’a (1,000), Salut (300) and Al Suwgra (700). Additionally, about 6,200 pomegranate trees are cultivated in home gardens, serving as both a food source and a means of income for local families. Beyond its agricultural fame, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar also offers a wealth of geological wonders. The region’s towering peaks, rising nearly 3,000 metres above sea level, bear witness to millions of years of Earth’s history. Layers of ancient limestone reveal fossils of coral, sea sponges, oysters and fish bones.

Tunisia and Oman seek healthcare cooperation

MUSCAT: Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, received Dr Mustafa al Ferjani, Minister of Health of the Republic of Tunisia, in his office on Sunday. During the meeting, the two ministers discussed matters of mutual interest and reviewed the features of the healthcare journeys in both countries, highlighting key achievements in this field and exploring avenues to broaden the scope of partnership and cooperation between them. The two sides held an official session of talks, exploring ways to



Dr Hilal al Sabti holds talks with Tunisian Health Minister

develop health sector cooperation between the two countries and activate prospects for this cooperation to serve the joint interests.

The session addressed means of improving the efficiency of healthcare services, facilitating the seamless and secure exchange of data, enhancing the capabilities of human resources, keeping pace with global medical advancements, achieving drug security, and strengthening the capacity to combat pandemics and cross-border diseases. As part of the visit, the Tunisian minister was briefed on topics including the ‘One Health’ approach, primary healthcare and the experience of using

artificial intelligence for retinal eye screenings. During his visit to the Emergency Management Centre at the Ministry of Health, the guest learned about the centre’s operational mechanisms and Oman’s experience in managing health crises and disasters. He also visited the National Heart Centre at the Royal Hospital, during which he toured its various departments and clinics, and received an explanation of its specialisations and the therapeutic services it provides. — ONA

Al Noor unveils Arab forum for the visually impaired

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

AL NOOR Association for the Blind announced the launch of the groundbreaking ‘Al Noor in Culture’ Forum, along with a fresh cultural and visual identity, during a press conference held at its headquarters in Muscat. The event was attended by media representatives, artists, intellectuals and officials from various institutions. The forum, aligned with the efforts of the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, marks the first event of its kind in the Arab world dedicated to people with visual impairments. It will bring together over 100 participants from 14 Arab countries to showcase the creative talents of visually impaired individuals across literature, music, theatre and fine arts. Dr Raed Al Farsi, Chairman of Al Noor Association and Head of the Forum, described the initiative as a ‘qualitative leap in empowering visually impaired individuals,’ adding: “Through this forum, we aim to deliver the message of visually impaired creators to the local and Arab community and highlight their talents beyond stereotypes.” Since its establishment in 1997, Al Noor Association has focused on the



Press conference to announce the launch of ‘Al Noor in Culture’ Forum

The forum, aligned with the efforts of the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, marks the first event of its kind in the Arab world dedicated to people with visual impairments.

cultural and social empowerment of people with visual impairments in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. Imran al Rahbi, Head of the Events Committee, said the forum will run from October 19 to 23, featuring seven specialised sessions, theatrical and musical performances, and an art exhibition with participation from artists in Oman and across the Arab world, including Egypt, Iraq and Algeria. Mohammed al Arfi unveiled the forum’s new visual identity, featuring four vibrant icons representing theatre, music, literature and art — symbolising the creativity and energy of visually impaired youth. Khamis al Salti, Chairman of the Organising Committee and a visually impaired individual, expressed optimism about the forum, saying it provides a ‘valuable

platform for people with disabilities to express their talents and ambitions.’ He stressed the importance of creating spaces that unite individuals with disabilities, enabling them to discover and develop their potential while celebrating excellence and creativity. The closing ceremony will be presided over by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, underlining Oman’s strong commitment to empowering people with disabilities. Organisers said the ‘Al Noor in Culture’ Forum will serve as a pioneering Arab platform for creativity and empowerment, strengthening the cultural presence of visually impaired individuals and amplifying their voices to decision-makers across the region.

وزارة الإعلام
Ministry of Information

ELECTRONIC BIDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Information shall be electronically bidding vehicles and elements of the printing press through on Mazad Oman (www.mazad.om) in accordance with the following statement:

Statement	Place of Inspection	Date and Timing of Inspection	Date of Electronic Bidding
Vehicles	Madinat Al Ilam	Wednesday 08/10/2025 Thursday 09/10/2025	From Wednesday 12/10/2025 To Thursday 13/10/2025
Elements of the Printing Press	Stores of the Ministry of Information in Ruwi	Between 8:00 am & 1:00 pm	

You may acquaint yourself with the terms and sign up through www.mazad.om

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SPOTLIGHT



THE RISE of artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming education, shifting it from rote learning to a dynamic process of self-discovery.

Smart systems now anticipate and adapt to learners' needs, offering personalised learning experiences. But experts warn: balancing technology with human guidance is vital to preserve creativity, empathy and critical thinking.

Eng Yousef bin Abdullah al Maawali, an AI specialist, explains that AI enables customised learning environments by analysing

individual strengths and adapting instruction accordingly.

“AI tools are mirrors reflecting human potential, but they also raise questions about limits to freedom and imagination in education,” he says. He stresses that teachers remain indispensable as mentors guiding students to think independently, while AI acts as a supportive tool rather than a substitute.

SOME OF THE KEY INSIGHTS FROM EXPERTS INCLUDE:

PERSONALISED LEARNING: AI can design tailored lessons and interactive platforms, helping students learn in diverse ways suited to their skills.

RISK OF OVER RELIANCE: Over-dependence on AI could limit exploration and critical thinking, making education a pre-planned process.

TEACHER'S ROLE: Teachers must remain central, fostering dialogue, creativity and resilience in students.

Khalid bin Al Safi al Huraibi highlights a historical perspective: the word ‘algorithm’ comes from the Arab scholar Muhammad ibn Musa al Khwarizmi, whose work shaped mathematics and science.

“We are inheritors of a legacy of innovation,” he says. He stresses teaching AI early, as seen in initiatives like iSchool in the Arab region, and cites

“

AI tools are mirrors reflecting human potential, but they also raise questions about limits to freedom and imagination in education.

ENG YOUSEF BIN ABDULLAH AL MAAWALI,
AI specialist

Finland and Singapore for integrating AI into curricula to boost problem solving and creativity rather than rote memorisation.

At the national level, the Ministry of Education promotes programming, robotics, and AI in schools, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship among youth. Al Huraibi emphasises that AI should inspire curiosity, not replace human insight.

Dr Kamal al Sabbahi warns about risks to privacy and the deeper challenge of preserving intellectual independence. “AI must be used wisely,” he says, calling for policies that protect children's data while

encouraging critical thinking. Teachers should guide students to learn with AI, not passively through it.

Saad bin Rabie al Araimi adds that AI's ability to personalise learning comes with a trade-off: reduced human interaction may affect empathy and emotional intelligence. “Education must integrate AI without losing the human connection that shapes self-awareness,” he notes.

As AI becomes inseparable from education, experts agree: the future lies in harmonising algorithms with human guidance — ensuring technology enriches learning while safeguarding the human spirit. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, led the opening ceremony

RO 2M CONCRETE FACTORY OPENS

NAKHAL: A precast concrete factory was opened on Sunday in the Wilayat of Nakhal, Al Batinah South Governorate, to enhance local content and keep pace with modern construction requirements. The project was carried out by Global Precast Industries LLC company. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning.

Eng Ibrahim bin Salim al Siyabi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the factory, said that the unit, whose construction cost RO 2 million, was built on an area of 24,000 square metres. The project was developed by the Al Siyabi International Group. Al Siyabi explained that the factory sets a milestone in the march of the construction sector in Oman, due to the fact that it utilises advanced technologies. — ONA

GenoBusiness to spotlight resources

MUSCAT: The third Economic Forum for Genetic Resources (GenoBusiness 3) will take place in Dhofar Governorate on November 2-3, attracting broad international participation.

Organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation through the Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre (Mawarid), the forum aims to explore the economic value of biodiversity and genetic resources in Oman.

The event will promote investment in knowledge-based industries, link scientific research with entrepreneurship, and foster local and international

partnerships to build a sustainable and vibrant economy. It will gather leading experts, researchers and entrepreneurs from biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, personal care and perfumery sectors, alongside representatives from academic and research institutions. Intellectual property rights and their protection will be key topics of discussion.

Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Yahyai, Director of Mawarid, said: “The forum focuses on four main themes: food, medicine, elegance and sustainability.

Over two days, specialised sessions and presentations will

feature international experts from the Netherlands, Italy, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Singapore, South Africa and Sri Lanka, along with wide participation from Omani researchers and innovators.”

An accompanying exhibition will showcase innovative products and ideas related to genetic resources, particularly those from Dhofar Governorate.

Dr Al Yahyai added: “Geno-Business 3 is a leading national platform to transform genetic resources into value-added products, contributing to Oman’s knowledge-based economy.” — ONA



جامعة السلطان قابوس
Sultan Qaboos University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell used furniture in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used furniture in auction yard and receive the bidding on Tuesday & Wednesday (07-08/10/2025) from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used furniture, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used furniture, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items on Sunday & Monday (12-13/10/2025) from 09:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- The Used furniture are sold in their current condition and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 14/10/2025.

Notes:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- Entering the auction stores through Gate No (2).
- For more information contact on 24141272.



Oman unveils heritage at Madrid event

MADRID: The Cultural Illuminations from the Sultanate of Oman event was launched at the Arab House in Madrid, highlighting Oman’s rich artistic and cultural heritage.

The event is organised by the Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Bait Al Zubair and the Cultural Club. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, and attended by Diego Martinez, Secretary of State at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The evening featured a captivating performance by the Oriental Takht Band of the Royal Oman Orchestra and the inauguration of a photography exhibition ‘Pictures from the Land of Oman.’ A memorandum of understanding was also signed between Bait Al Zubair and Casa Árabe in Madrid. — ONA

Programme highlights workers’ fundamental rights

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 5

THE General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW) wrapped up its field programme entitled, ‘Mechanisms for Reducing Human Trafficking Crimes in Tourism Establishments’.

The programme was organised in cooperation with the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking (NCCHT), the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and the Sectoral Union for Tourism, in a step that reflects institutional integration and partnership in confronting this crime.

The programme included a number of tourism establishments, targeting both worker and employer representatives. It aimed to raise participants’ awareness of the indicators of human trafficking crimes and methods of prevention, and to equip them with practical mechanisms for monitoring practices associated with human trafficking and addressing them within legal frameworks. This ensures a safe and fair working environment that protects both workers and visitors to tourism



The programme included a number of tourism establishments, targeting both worker and employer representatives.

establishments alike.

In this regard, Jasim bin Hamood al Maliki, General Manager of the GFW and member of the NCCHT, stated: “Omani legislation has been keen to protect workers’ fundamental rights, particularly those relating to the freedom to choose work, ensuring workers are not compelled to work, protecting wages from unjustified deductions, regulating the maximum daily and weekly working hours, and guaranteeing the workers’ right to access justice. However, recent international reports indicate a growing phenomenon of labour exploitation,

which has become a danger to all societies, taking on new forms of victim exploitation. Forced or compulsory labour is a type of human trafficking, meaning the coercion of a person to perform a certain task under the threat of penalty, duress, or inhumane treatment, in order to restrict their freedom and drain their energy for the illicit gain of others.

From this standpoint, the role of trade unions is pivotal in monitoring the compliance of labour relations with legislation, in advising workers, in submitting complaints on behalf of workers who are afraid to do so themselves, and in their role of raising worker awareness and supporting national statistics. “This is the foundation from which the GFW proceeds in implementing this programme, by strengthening the role played by trade unions in this matter as the first line of defence in combating forced labour and all forms of human trafficking,” he said.

He added, “The GFW plays a central role in combating this crime through integration with the national effort to counter the crime, supporting and participating in the plans of the relevant committees.”



وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

**إعلان مزاد إلكتروني
E-Auction Announcement**

Electronic Auction Announcement for the Sale of Government Movable Assets – 2025 (Third Round)

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology announces the organization of an electronic auction for the sale of government movable assets through the website of Safqa Auctions (www.safqauctions.om) in accordance with the following details:

ITEMS FOR SALE	INSPECTION LOCATION	AUCTION START DATE & TIME AUCTION CLOSING DATE & TIME	INSPECTION DATE
Scrap, iron barriers, poles, and damaged/unused guiding signboards	Directorate of Roads – Haima (Al Wusta Governorate)	Auction Start Date & Time Sunday, 19 October 2025 8:00 AM Auction Closing Date & Time Monday, 20 October 2025 12:00 PM	15 – 16 October 2025 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Scrap, iron barriers, poles, and damaged/unused guiding signboards	Directorate of Roads – Ibri (Al Dhahirah Governorate)		
Scrap, iron barriers, poles, and damaged/unused guiding signboards	Road Department Warehouses – (Al Buraimi Governorate)		
Electrical appliances, electronic devices and office furniture	Khasab Port – (Musandam Governorate)		
Sunken vessel	Shaleem and Hallaniyat Islands – (Dhofar Governorate)		

Terms and Conditions for Participation

- Registration on the electronic auction website: www.safqauctions.om.
- Deposit Payment: An electronic deposit of OMR 1,000 (One Thousand Omani Rials) must be made through the website (refundable if no purchase is made).
- The buyer must settle the payment for the purchased items via electronic transfer through the website within 48 working hours after winning the bid.
- A Value Added Tax (VAT) of 5% and an auction commission fee of 2% will be added to the total purchase value.
- The buyer must remove the purchased items within one week from the date of winning the bid. A storage penalty fee of 5% per day will be applied for any delay beyond the specified period. The Ministry bears no responsibility for any loss or damage to the items after this period.
- Sold items are non-refundable and non-negotiable, and no requests for reconsideration will be accepted.
- Neither the Ministry nor Safqa Auctions shall bear any responsibility if the pictures or descriptions of the items differ from the actual condition. Buyers are responsible for physical inspection during the allocated inspection day, as all items are sold “as-is”, with no liability for defects discovered after the sale.
- Safqa Auctions reserves the right not to award the auction to the highest bidder without providing reasons, in case the bid does not reach a suitable price.
- The deposit will be forfeited in the following cases:
 - If the buyer fails to settle the payment within the specified period.
 - If the buyer fails to remove the purchased items within the specified period.

Important Notes

- All items are sold strictly on an “as-is” basis.
- The company reserves the right to cancel the auction without providing reasons.
- For more details, please visit: www.safqauctions.om
- For inquiries: Call **96916169, 91798145, or 94443325**
- For inspections during official working hours: Call **91798145 or 94443325**

 Safqa Auctions	 Registration Link	 Khasab Port Musandam Governorate	 Road Department Warehouses Al Buraimi Governorate	 Directorate of Roads – Ibri Al Dhahirah Governorate	 Directorate of Roads – Haima Al Wusta Governorate
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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Syria's interim President Ahmed al Sharaa visits a polling station, in Damascus. — AFP

SYRIA SELECTS NEW MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

DAMASCUS: Members of local committees in Syria began on Sunday selecting members of a transitional parliament, with a third of the members appointed directly by interim leader Ahmed al Sharaa. A correspondent witnessed dozens of members of the local committees queueing at Syria's National Library, formerly called the Assad National Library, to cast their vote.

According to the organising committee, more than 1,500 candidates — just 14 per cent of them women — are running for the assembly, which will have a renewable 30-month mandate. Sharaa is to appoint 70 representatives out of the 210-member body. The other two-thirds will be selected by local committees appointed by the electoral commission, which itself was appointed by Sharaa.

Under a temporary constitution announced in March, the incoming parliament will exercise legislative functions until a permanent constitution is adopted and new elections are held. Speaking from the library on Sunday, Sharaa appeared to acknowledge criticism of the process, saying that while “it is true that the electoral process is incomplete... it is a moderate process that is appropriate for the current situation and circumstances in Syria”. — AFP

MADAGASCAR FORCES BLAME PROTESTERS



Protesters run for cover after security forces fired tear gas canisters, in Antananarivo. — AFP

ANTANANARIVO: Madagascar's security forces on Sunday accused protesters of violence during the deadly ongoing youth-led unrest, saying their response was provoked by the crowd's behaviour. The Indian Ocean island has seen near-daily rallies over alleged misgovernance and water and power cuts, with protesters clashing with security forces in the capital Antananarivo.

“Certain individuals engaged in violent acts and did not comply with the instructions of the security forces,” said the joint command, which counts the army, police and gendarmerie within its ranks.

Calm returned to Antananarivo on Sunday, with only churchgoers and worshippers seen gathering as they came to and from services. The scene was in stark contrast to the day before, when thousands took to the streets demanding President Andry Rajoelina's resignation, prompting police to fire volleys of tear gas to disperse the crowd.

Pro-government supporters also held a rally in the capital, though it drew fewer participants than the opposition protest. The president sacked the government on Monday in an attempt to placate public anger. — AFP

BLOCKED ROADS

Almost 1,000 trapped on Mount Everest



Rescue efforts were underway on Sunday to clear access to campsites on Tibet's eastern slope of Mount Everest, where nearly 1,000 people have been trapped by a blizzard that has blocked roads. Hundreds of local villagers and rescue teams have been deployed to help remove snow blocking access to the area, which sits at an altitude above 4,900 metres. Some tourists on the mountain have already been brought down. — Reuters

COOPERATION WITH UN NUCLEAR WATCHDOG 'NO LONGER RELEVANT', SAYS IRAN

TEHRAN: Iran's top diplomat said that cooperation with the United Nations nuclear watchdog was no longer relevant following the reimposition of international sanctions on the Islamic republic. “The Cairo agreement is no longer relevant for our cooperation with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency),” Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said, referring to a September deal with the UN agency. The deal had set up a framework to resume cooperation and allow the

watchdog to inspect Iranian sites, after Tehran suspended cooperation following Israeli and US strikes on its key nuclear sites in June. But the agreement lost its significance to Iran as Britain, France and Germany — signatories to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal — triggered the return of the UN sanctions over Tehran's non-compliance. “The three European countries thought they had leverage in their hands, threatening to implement a snapback,” Araghchi said during a

meeting with foreign diplomats in Tehran. “Now they have used this lever and seen the results... the three European countries have definitely diminished their role and almost eliminated the justification for negotiations with them.” Iran accused the IAEA of failing to condemn attacks conducted by its arch-enemies on its nuclear installations, despite it being a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). — AFP

Hamas calls for swift Gaza hostage exchange talks

HAMAS on Sunday called for a swift start to a hostage-prisoner swap with Israel, as negotiators from the two warring sides were set to meet in Egypt for crucial talks aimed at ending the nearly two-year war in Gaza. Foreign ministers of several countries, including Egypt, said the talks were a “real opportunity” to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire. “Hamas is very keen to reach an agreement to end the war and immediately begin the prisoner exchange process in accordance with the field conditions,” a senior Hamas official said.

The diplomatic push follows the Palestinian group's positive response to US President Donald Trump's road map for an end to the fighting and the release of captives in Gaza in exchange for Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

Negotiators are due to hold talks in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el Sheikh, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressing hope that hostages held in Gaza could be released within days.

Netanyahu said that he had instructed negotiators to go to Egypt “to finalise the technical details”, while Cairo confirmed it would also be hosting a delegation from Hamas for talks on “the ground conditions and details of the exchange of all Israeli detainees and Palestinian prisoners”.

An Israeli government spokesperson said the country's delegation would be leaving, with



Palestinians carry bags, wooden pallets and empty cardboard boxes as they leave a food distribution point near the Netsarim corridor. — AFP

The diplomatic push follows the Palestinian group's positive response to US President Donald Trump's road map for an end to the fighting and the release of captives in Gaza in exchange for Palestinians held in Israeli jails

talks slated to start on Monday — the eve of the second anniversary of the October 7, 2023 attack that sparked the war.

The White House said Trump had also sent two envoys to Egypt — his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and Middle East negotiator Steve Witkoff. “During communications with mediators, Hamas insisted that it is essential for Israel to halt military operations across all areas of the Gaza Strip, cease all air, reconnaissance, and drone activity, and withdraw from inside Gaza City,” a Palestinian source close to Hamas said, adding the group would “also halt their military operations” in parallel.

Palestinians seized 251 hostages during the October 7 attack, 47 of whom are still in Gaza. Of those, the Israeli military believes 25 are dead.

According to Trump's plan, in return for the hostages, Israel is expected to release 250 Palestinian prisoners with life sentences and more than 1,700 detainees from the Gaza Strip who were arrested after the war began.

But Trump has warned he will “not tolerate delay” from Hamas, urging the group to move quickly towards a deal “or else all bets will be off”. Trump said on Truth Social that Israel had agreed to an initial line of withdrawal in Gaza and that this had been shared with Hamas. “When Hamas confirms, the Ceasefire will be immediately effective, the Hostages and Prisoner Exchange will begin, and we will create the conditions for the next phase of withdrawal,” he posted, alongside a map of the proposed line. — AFP

LANDSLIDES AND FLOODS KILL 64 IN NEPAL, INDIA

KATHMANDU: Landslides and floods triggered by heavy downpours in Nepal and neighbouring India have killed more than 60 people, officials said on Sunday, as rescue workers raced to reach cut-off communities in remote mountainous terrain. Torrential downpours have lashed Nepal since Friday, leaving rivers in spate and many areas in the Himalayan nation inundated.

Landslides have blocked several highways and disrupted flights, leaving hundreds of travellers — many returning after celebrating the Hindu festival of Dashain — stranded. Prime Minister Sushila Karki said government agencies were “fully prepared for rescue and relief”. “Your safety is our utmost concern. Do not hesitate to seek necessary assistance,” she said in an address, adding that the government has declared Sunday and Monday public holidays and urged people not to travel unless necessary. — AFP



PRIZED SPECIES

Bangladesh warships to protect hilsa fish



Bangladesh's defence force said it has deployed warships and patrol aircraft as part of a special surveillance operation to protect a prized fish from illegal fishing during its spawning season. Bangladeshi authorities said that they had imposed a three-week ban on fishing to safeguard the spawning areas. The force's Inter-Service Public Relations said that 17 navy warships and patrol helicopters had been deployed to enforce the ban and protect the fish. — AFP

SEVERE WEATHER

Thousands evacuated, typhoon lashes China



Hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated from their homes as Typhoon Matmo lashed China's southern coast. The powerful storm made landfall in Guangdong province. The National Meteorological Centre recorded winds of more than 150 kilometres per hour. Authorities evacuated 197,000 people from their homes on Hainan Island and 150,000 from Guangdong province. Public transportation, construction sites and businesses were also shuttered in coastal cities, including Haikou, Wenchang, Zhanjiang and Maoming. — AFP

NEWGOVERNMENT



Andrej Babis answers to media during the press conference at the ANO headquarter. — AFP

BABIS PLEDGES LOYALTY TO EU AS CZECH TALKS BEGIN

PRAGUE: Czech billionaire ex-premier Andrej Babis vowed loyalty to Europe as he met the president to start talks on a new government on Sunday, a day after his movement topped a national vote. Final results showed that Babis’s ANO (Yes) party won 34.5 per cent of the vote on Friday and Saturday, earning 80 seats in the 200-member parliament of the EU and Nato member of 10.9 million people.

Babis said he would seek backing for his government from the far-right Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) movement, which earned 7.8 per cent for 15 seats, and right-wing newcomers, the Motorists, with 6.8 per cent and 13 seats. A self-proclaimed “Trumpist”, Babis won over voters with pledges of welfare and halting military aid to Ukraine, which made pundits worry the country might shift towards EU mavericks Slovakia and Hungary if he takes over.

“We have discussed the election result and our image in Nato and the EU. I keep seeing negative information... and I think it’s not fair,” Babis told reporters after meeting President Petr Pavel on Sunday morning. The 71-year-old, Slovak-born Babis stressed he was pro-European and wanted “Europe to work well”. But a day before the vote, Babis said the Czech Republic should help Ukraine through the EU, not directly as up to now. “Every year, we send 2.5 billion euros in the budget to Brussels. And of course Brussels is helping Ukraine. And the new proposal for the new budget includes a large sum for Ukraine. So I think we are there,” Babis said. Asked by a Ukrainian reporter whether he would support Kyiv’s accession bid, Babis said the country was “not prepared for the EU”. “We have to end the war first,” he added.

The Together grouping of outgoing Prime Minister Petr Fiala, a staunch supporter of Kyiv battling a Russian invasion since 2022, scored 23.4 per cent for 52 seats in the vote. Also entering parliament are the junior coalition STAN party with 11.2 per cent and 22 seats, and the Pirate Party with 9 per cent and 18 seats. Babis has also pledged to review a Czech-led international drive to supply artillery shells to Ukraine, launched by Fiala’s government, and “discuss it with (Ukrainian) President (Volodymyr) Zelensky” if necessary.

In the European Parliament, ANO is part of the far-right Patriots for Europe bloc, which Babis co-founded with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. — AFP

TRUMP AUTHORIZES TROOPS TO CHICAGO AS JUDGE BLOCKS PORTLAND DEPLOYMENT

CHICAGO: US President Donald Trump authorized deployment of troops to Chicago after a federal agent shot an allegedly armed motorist there on Saturday, while a judge blocked the Republican leader’s attempt to send the military into Portland, another Democratic-run city. The escalating crisis across the country pits Trump’s increasingly militarized anti-crime and migration crackdown against opposition Democrats who accuse him of an authoritarian power

grab.

“President Trump has authorized 300 national guardsmen to protect federal officers and assets” in Chicago, White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said in a statement, after weeks of the Republican threats to send troops to the Midwestern city over the wishes of local leaders. “President Trump will not turn a blind eye to the lawlessness plaguing American cities.” Illinois Senator Dick Durbin called the move a “shameful chapter

in our nation’s history,” adding that the “President is not intent on fighting crime. He is intent on spreading fear.”

Chicago and Portland are the latest flashpoints in the Trump administration’s rollout of raids, following the deployment of troops to Los Angeles and Washington. The raids have seen groups of masked, armed men in unmarked cars and armored vehicles target residential neighborhoods and businesses, sparking protests. — AFP

Russian air attack damages energy facilities in Ukraine

RUSSIA rained missiles and drones on Ukraine in a mass overnight attack, officials said on Sunday, killing at least five people and damaging civilian infrastructure including energy facilities across numerous regions. Moscow has stepped up attacks particularly on Ukraine’s energy grid and gas production sites in recent weeks as the fourth winter of war approaches, and as diplomatic efforts to end the fighting have stalled.

Four of the victims in the overnight attacks were family members killed when their residential building in the western region of Lviv bordering Poland was destroyed, local prosecutors said. An industrial park in Lviv’s regional capital was also set ablaze and parts of the city had been left without power, said mayor Andriy Sadovyi, who had urged residents early on Sunday to stay inside as authorities battled multiple fires.

A correspondent heard explosions booming across the dark morning sky as air defences engaged targets from several directions. The attack on Lviv was the largest of the war on the Lviv region, said governor Maksym Kozytskyi, adding it involved 140 drones and 23 missiles.

In the village outside Lviv where the family members were killed, rescue workers dug through heaps of rubble. Only the foundation of their building remained. Volodymyr Hutnyk, a local official, said 10 other nearby homes were damaged beyond repair.

In southeastern Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia, one person was killed and 10 others wounded in a combined strike that left more than 73,000 customers without power, said governor Ivan Fedorov. Service had been restored to more than 20,000 by early afternoon, he said.

Civilian infrastructure was also damaged in the regions of Ivano-Frankivsk, Vinnytsia, Chernihiv, Kherson, Kharkiv and Odesa, said Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko.

Ukraine’s energy ministry said energy facilities had been damaged in Zaporizhzhia and the northern Chernihiv region. Ukrainian state gas and oil company



Rescuers work at the site of a house destroyed during a Russian strike, on the outskirts of Lviv. — Reuters

Naftogaz said Russia had struck and damaged gas infrastructure, but did not offer any details.

Russia’s Defence Ministry said on Sunday its forces had struck Ukrainian military-industrial facilities as well as gas and energy infrastructure overnight.

“Another deliberate act of terror against civilians,” Svyrydenko wrote on X. “Moscow continues to strike homes, schools, and energy facilities - proving that destruction remains its only strategy.”

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russian forces had fired more than 50 missiles and nearly 500 drones. Nato member Poland said it scrambled aircraft early on Sunday to ensure its air safety. “Polish and allied aircraft are operating in our airspace, while ground-based air defence and radar reconnaissance systems have been brought to the highest state of readiness,” Poland’s operational command said in a post on X.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that if the United States supplied Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine for long-range strikes deep into Russia then it would lead to the destruction of Moscow’s relationship with Washington.

Less than two months since US President Donald Trump met Putin at a summit in

Alaska, peace looks even further away with Russian forces advancing in Ukraine, Russian drones allegedly flying in Nato airspace and now Washington talking about direct participation in striking deep into the world’s biggest nuclear power.

Trump has said he is disappointed with Putin for not making peace and has cast Russia as a “paper tiger” for failing to subdue Ukraine. Putin last week hit back, questioning if Nato was not the “paper tiger” for failing to stop Russia’s advance.

US Vice President JD Vance said last month that Washington was considering a Ukrainian request to obtain long-range Tomahawks that could strike deep into Russia, including Moscow, though it is unclear if a final decision has been made.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that the US will provide Ukraine with intelligence on long-range energy infrastructure targets in Russia, as it weighs whether to send Kyiv missiles that could be used in such strikes.

Two officials confirmed the Journal report. But one US official and three other sources said that the Trump Administration’s desire to send long-range Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine may not be viable because current inventories are committed to the US Navy and other uses. — Reuters

Georgia prime minister vows sweeping crackdown after ‘foiled coup’

TBILISI: Georgia’s Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze vowed opposition arrests after police used force against opposition protesters who tried to enter the presidential palace in what he termed was a coup bid during a controversial election. Saturday’s local polls were the ruling populist Georgian Dream party’s first electoral test since a disputed parliamentary vote a year ago plunged the Black Sea nation into turmoil and prompted Brussels to effectively freeze the EU-candidate country’s accession bid.

The central election commission said Georgian Dream had secured municipal council majorities in every municipality and that its candidates scored landslide wins in mayoral races in all cities. The normally low-key local elections have acquired high stakes after months of raids on independent media, restrictions on civil society and the jailing of dozens of

opponents and activists.

On Saturday, tens of thousands of anti-government demonstrators flooded Tbilisi’s Freedom Square after the opposition urged a “last-chance” election-day protest to save democracy.

A group of protesters later tried to enter the presidential palace, prompting riot police to use tear gas and water cannons to repel the crowd.

The interior ministry said it had opened an investigation into “calls to violently alter Georgia’s constitutional order or overthrow state authority” and arrested five protest leaders who face up to nine years in prison.

Among those arrested was a world-renowned opera singer and activist Paata Burchuladze who read out at the rally — to loud applause — a declaration claiming “power returns to the people,” branding the government “illegitimate” and



Protesters face riot police during an opposition rally on the day of local elections in central Tbilisi. — AFP

announcing a transition.

The pro-opposition Pirveli TV reported that the 70-year-old, was detained in the intensive care unit of a Tbilisi hospital, where he was being treated for a heart attack. “Several people have already been

arrested — first and foremost the organisers of the attempted overthrow,” Prime Minister Kobakhidze told journalists. “No one will go unpunished... many more must expect sentences for the violence they carried out against

the state and law-enforcement.”

The government has “foiled an attempted coup planned by foreign intelligence services,” he said earlier without giving details.

“This political force will be completely neutralised and will no longer be allowed to be active in Georgian politics,” he said, referring to Georgia’s main opposition force, jailed ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili’s United National Movement.

Saakashvili had urged supporters to stage a “last-chance” election-day protest to “save Georgian democracy.” Georgian Dream has vowed to ban all major opposition parties.

Rights groups say some 60 people have been jailed over the past year. Amnesty International said the elections were “taking place amid severe political reprisals against opposition figures and civil society”. — AFP

OPINION

Why human translators still matter in the age of AI



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor at SQU

WORLD

Translation Day was celebrated on September 30 with a variety of events, workshops and seminars. This time, one of the most discussed topics was, of course, the role of Artificial Intelligence in translation. Is it even worth learning how to translate when machines can do it in a fraction of the time that it takes humans to translate a text?

The simple answer is yes. That is because translation is more than just a mechanical replacement of one word or phrase into another language. There are many nuances that technology cannot capture, at least not just yet.

Some famous examples of mistranslation include the literal translation ‘eat your fingers off’ in Chinese, for ‘finger licking good’, the catchphrase of a famous fast food chain. Another was a multinational bank’s phrase ‘assume nothing’ which was translated into ‘do nothing’ in many countries, leading to major losses for the bank.

Context and tone matter equally in translation. The French ‘bon jour’ can be easily translated into ‘hello’. But it can be said in so many different ways.

Change the tone, and the meaning can easily change, from humour to irony and more. The most consequential example of inaccurate translation from history is of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 in New Zealand.

The English version used the term ‘sovereignty’ which the local Maoris translated into ‘governance’ as there was no concept of total control in their community. This led to decades of misunderstanding and misrule.

If humans can mistranslate, machines can do it more. This is because AI depends on pre-existing data, phrases and word combinations. It does not create finer nuances and subtle distinctions.

In diplomacy and commercial activities, finer details are sometimes more important than the broad strokes. In law, medicine and politics, one word can make all the difference.

This is true even in literature. Readers are often inclined towards work written in their mother tongue, mainly because other languages sound foreign and artificial. Imagine machines trying to re-create the magic of Rumi or Shakespeare.

Translators have a powerful role to play

Machines rely on existing data and word patterns, but they cannot grasp tone, context or cultural nuance — the subtle distinctions that only human translators can truly capture

in society today as they negotiate multiple cultures. They are trained to decide when to be serious, when lyrical, and when humorous. It is doubtful that machines can evoke such timely emotions.

Of course, that does not mean that technology should be abandoned. AI has opened the doors of many cultures and civilisations.

It has made data more easily and promptly available. Some mechanical work of translating routine documents has definitely become easier. But even those need to be verified by humans before they can be finalised.

As with everything in AI, the trick is to work along with it, not against it. Taking an initial translation as a first draft to work on it, giving it the nuance, context and cultural accuracy it requires, is a necessary and important task left to humans.

Translation plays a pivotal role in today’s global world.

Even as technologies grow more fluent and complex, human skills and feel for the language remains central to a translation, one that machines may never be able to duplicate.

UK POLICE TO GET JOURNALIST SAFETY OFFICER

Every police force in the United Kingdom now has a dedicated officer for the safety of journalists, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has said. Known as a journalist safety liaison officer (JSLO), they are a dedicated point of contact for reporters when they face abuse and threats of violence.

The DCMS said the officer in every UK force is part of a ‘strengthened partnership’ between the media, police and the UK government.

“Too often, journalists are put in harm’s way while fulfilling their vital role of delivering accurate news to the public,” said Media Minister Ian Murray.

“It is only right that they feel supported and protected so they can focus on carrying out their jobs to the highest standard.

“By appointing journalist safety liaison officers in every police force, I hope reporters will feel reassured knowing they have a direct point of contact if issues arise.”

The government has worked with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) to make sure every force has a JSLO, which already existed in Scotland and Northern Ireland. All 43 forces in England and Wales now have a JSLO and the British Transport Police and Counter Terror Policing do as well.

The DCMS said the officers can provide safety guidance ahead of high-risk reporting, such as protests, and ensure crimes against journalists are consistently recorded and addressed.

The officers were appointed as part of the government’s national action plan for the safety of journalists.

Safeguarding Minister Jess Phillips, who co-chairs the national committee for the safety of journalists, said: “I know first-hand what it feels like to be on the receiving end of threats and intimidation. But I also know my experience is not unique - too many people who put themselves in the public eye to do their jobs face the same.

“My broader work on safeguarding has shown me how important it is to protect those who speak out, and that must include journalists.

Their work underpins our democracy and they must be able to do it free from fear.”

Deputy Chief Constable Sam de Reya, the NPCC’s media and communications lead, said: “Policing is proud to support this work and we will continue to play our part in ensuring that journalists are protected and empowered to do their jobs without fear or intimidation.” — *dpa*

The future of Venezuela

VENEZUELA, a nation once defined by its vast oil wealth and vibrant political landscape, now navigates a period of deep uncertainty.

Its trajectory is shaped by internal forces, historical legacies, and external pressures. The presidential election held on July 28, 2024, exposed the fragility of the political system, attracting criticism for its lack of transparency and fairness. The controversy surrounding the vote underscores the nation’s ongoing turmoil and has drawn renewed global attention to its crisis.

The modern political story of Venezuela traces back to the Bolivarian Revolution launched by Hugo Chávez in 1998. His rise to power marked a decisive shift, using the country’s oil revenues to fund ambitious social programmes and challenge Western influence. While this populist vision earned him strong support among the poor, it deepened social divisions and left the economy dependent on oil.

After Chávez’s death in March 2013, Nicolás Maduro inherited a divided electorate and a declining economy. His presidency has since been marked by the erosion of democratic norms, the suppression of dissent, and frequent protests often met with force. Expanded sanctions have further isolated the regime and worsened the economic collapse.

The internal political climate remains unstable and fraught with humanitarian distress. The integrity of Venezuela’s democratic institutions faces scrutiny, particularly after the 2024 election. International observers, including the United Nations Panel of Electoral Experts and the Carter Center, expressed serious concerns about the declared results. The disqualification of opposition leader Maria Corina Machado and the arrest warrant for her campaign manager, Edmundo González, who fled abroad after unofficial tallies suggested his victory, exemplify the government’s treatment of dissent. Human rights defenders and journalists face intimidation, censorship, and



A member of the National Militia holds a Venezuelan flag during a military drill following President Nicolas Maduro’s call to defend national sovereignty amid rising tensions with the US in Caracas. — Reuters



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arbitrary detention.

Years of hyperinflation, corruption, and economic mismanagement have devastated living conditions, causing severe shortages of food and medicine. Despite limited improvement between 2021 and 2024, the humanitarian crisis endures. According to the UNHCR and R4V Platform, nearly 7.9 million Venezuelans have left their homeland — the largest displacement in Latin American history.

Regional actors have taken varied positions. Colombia, under President Gustavo Petro, restored diplomatic ties with Caracas and offered to mediate between the government and opposition to ease tensions and manage migration. Brazil, under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, has grown more cautious, reflecting unease with Venezuela’s tightening authoritarianism.

The United States has long played a defining role in Venezuela’s trajectory. For decades, relations were bound by oil interests and investment, but with the rise of Chávez and later Maduro, Washington turned to pressure and isolation. Sanctions became central, targeting officials, institutions, and the state-owned oil company PDVSA. The stated goal was to limit regime revenue and encourage democratic

reform, though critics argue these measures have deepened civilian suffering.

During his presidency, Donald Trump declared in 2017 — and again in 2019 — that he would not rule out a ‘military option’ against Caracas. Though no action followed then, his stance resurfaced dramatically in 2025. Recent months have seen a series of US military operations in the southern Caribbean, including September 2025 strikes on vessels allegedly linked to Venezuelan criminal networks, resulting in multiple casualties and regional alarm.

Trump justified these actions as part of a campaign against transnational drug cartels, but many viewed them as a direct show of force toward Maduro’s government. A parallel naval build-up near Venezuelan waters and new tariffs on countries importing Venezuelan oil have revived fears of confrontation and reinforced the image of Washington’s hardening posture.

Diplomacy has oscillated between confrontation and cautious engagement. The US backed opposition leader, Juan Guaidó, and under the Biden administration, it eased some oil sanctions in exchange for electoral commitments. These efforts reflect attempts to balance strategic interests with humanitarian concerns. Yet the outcome has been continued isolation for Venezuela, persistent economic hardship, and growing anti-American sentiment among its ruling elite. The future of US-Venezuela relations remains uncertain — caught between the call for democratic transition and the reality of a deeply entrenched regime.

Today, Venezuela stands at a crossroads. Years of economic decay and political repression have left deep scars, while external intervention has often compounded the suffering of ordinary citizens. Real recovery depends not on sanctions or military pressure, but on inclusive dialogue, fair elections, and the collective will of Venezuelans to reclaim their future through dignity and self-determination.

Serve the soul of humanity...



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is an author, translator and communications professional

ON Every street and in every city around the world, silent battles are being fought against hunger, loneliness, fear, and injustice. Most of us pass by them every single day, unaware or unsure of how to help. Yet somewhere, somehow, a helping hand reaches out. A meal is served, a blanket is wrapped around an exhausted body, and a stranger is seen — not as a burden, but as a fellow human being.

That hand, that heartbeat of compassion arriving at just the right moment is charity. It is the soul of humanity.

Charity is not reserved for the wealthy or the powerful. True charity might look like a student sharing his lunch with a classmate who has none. It might be a retired teacher tutoring children for free. It is the person who stays to listen when everyone else walks away.

Charity is not always about giving what is extra; it is about giving what matters: time, care, and presence. It is the mother donating baby items she can barely afford because she knows another mother is struggling more. It is a community coming together after a storm — not because they were asked, but because they could not imagine not helping.

Charity doesn't always look like kindness.

Sometimes, it looks like justice: standing up, speaking out, marching forward. You don't have to be extraordinary to do this. You just need to care enough and act. Charity doesn't ask for perfection; it simply asks for your presence. Be the person who reaches out, who believes in good deeds, who makes kindness a habit.

In a world that often celebrates success over service, charity reminds us what truly matters. It tells us that the worth of a life is not in what we keep, but in what we give. When the world feels heavy, when disaster strikes, injustice rises, or sorrow hangs in the air, charity is the first light to break through the clouds. And it always starts with you.

Charity is hope, wrapped in action. It is not just feeling sorry, but doing something. Not just noticing pain, but easing it. Not just saying, "Someone should help," but realising that you are that someone. That is the secret of charity: it doesn't wait for perfect conditions. It shows up despite them. It says, "Even if I can't change the world, I can change this moment for someone." And often, that's enough. Charity is not just about giving things away; it is about planting seeds. Every donation, every act of service, every moment of kindness is a seed that can grow

True charity might look like a student sharing his lunch with a classmate who has none. It might be a retired teacher tutoring children for free. It is the person who stays to listen when everyone else walks away

into something greater: dignity, opportunity, second chances.

Imagine a girl with a donated textbook becomes the doctor who saves lives. A boy who eats because of your generosity grows into a man who feeds others.

A refugee given shelter becomes a builder of homes for the homeless. We must remember that we rise by lifting others.

This is how communities grow stronger, how children grow wiser, and how hope grows louder.

You don't need millions to make a difference. You just need a heart that refuses to stay silent in the face of need. Charity begins with the decision to care, to act, to give. Whether it is a coin, a kind word, a shared meal, or an open door.

As Mother Teresa said, "It is not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." Charity teaches gratitude, deepens empathy, and reveals the best version of who we are meant to be.

Imagine a world where every person gives what they can — time, kindness, skills, love. Imagine how bright that world would be.

Because when you give with your heart, you don't just change a life — you lighten it. And in that light, we all find our way.

DO IT TODAY OR REGRET IT TOMORROW



ISHWAR DESHMUKH

The writer works at Indian School Salalah

Life's journey is exceedingly long, but the decades of our lives will shortly come to an end. Time flies, and nothing will stop anyone. In life, having family, friends, teachers and neighbours by your side is a kind of contentment. Sometimes, we don't need to ask for too much. Giving happiness to parents, friends and close ones is a kind of bliss. I am sure you all will agree with me that, as long as all these are around us, life is full of safety, security and enjoyment. When one reaches a certain age, one gets a realisation that few of the teachers, friends and parent's departure have conveyed the message that life has already entered the countdown system.

In school, we all must have experienced the influence of bonding with our teachers is still fresh in our minds.

The way they inspired, guided, shaped our characters and motivated us by playing the role of a mentor and at times a parent at our childhood and adolescence age. Our teachers made each day within the school environment a valuable and non-repeatable experience. One can only cherish the memories, if he/she had a healthy relationship with the teachers and classmates in school with the unique style of teachers teaching and making lesson more exciting and interesting, with friend's classes, recess with fun, sports days, various intramurals and other events, sharing the tiffin, reading story books during the classes and the memorable vacations. One must enjoy his/her schooling to the fullest as these days will not come back in life and moreover, you will have nothing to cherish about your schooling days otherwise, you will regret the unavoidable end of the schooling years or graduation with the feeling of that the time with them was finite and should have been enhanced. Till date, we miss our teachers/friends and the delightful life in the campus of school. The school years are short-term and the relationships forged within them are momentary.

Life is short and full of uncertainties and our grandparents/parents have limited time. Age is catching, illness and ailments are knocking on the door. Nowadays, they have passed away is also becoming a common rather than shocking news.

We cannot get that time back. Let's not regret by failing to spend time with them, resulting in deep regret later in life. We spend a lot of time with our parents in childhood; quality of time becomes more important in adulthood for building significant relationships. I personally suggest that we spend quality time, create memories, and build strong connections with parents before it's too late. We must take good care of our parents while they're still healthy and don't wait until it's too late to regret.

Lastly, even in your hectic life schedule, make sure that your parents know they are loved and cherished, not just on Fathers/Mother's Day, they need your best time before it's too late.

Why working class matters for the world

A Spectre is haunting the West – the spectre of a working class whose political home has been foreclosed. For decades, seduced by the “third way” siren songs of Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Gerhard Schröder, centre-left forces jettisoned the language of class struggle.

But in their rush to become respectable and prove themselves more efficient and fairer managers of capitalism, they ceased to speak of exploitation and chose to ignore the inherent antagonism – even violence – of the capital-labour relation. They banished workers’ words, mannerisms, way of being, and aspirations from political discourse altogether. And then they denigrated their former constituents as “deplorables.”

When downward mobility and impecunity take over large hinterlands where a once-proud working class now feels abandoned, and from which the established parties avert their eyes, a yearning for a new dignity-restoration project – for a narrative that pits a collective “us” against a powerful “them” – takes shape. A decade ago, a venomous storyteller with a century-long experience of filling such voids stepped into the new one: the xenophobic far-right.

Movements and leaders that centrists clumsily labelled “populist” did not create this yearning – they merely exploited it with the cynicism of a seasoned monopolist spotting an untapped market. From the working-class areas of south Piraeus, a stone’s throw from where I am writing this, to the formerly “red” suburbs of Paris or Marseille, we can see voting blocs shift from communist and social-democratic parties to those created by the political heirs of Mussolini and Hitler. Like their forbears, these political chameleons pose as the standard-bearers for a disenfranchised working class.

Meanwhile, in the United States, white supremacists, Christian fundamentalists, technofeudal lords, and fed-up former Democratic voters vibrate together passionately in a coalition that has won the White House twice.

The comparison, which many are making with the interwar period, can lead us astray if we are not careful, but it is pertinent. And



The political chameleons pose as the standard-bearers for a disenfranchised working class.



YANIS VAROUFAKIS

The writer is a former finance minister of Greece, is the leader of the MERA25 party and Professor of Economics at the University of Athens

while the left's tendency to call all conservative or centrist opponents fascists is inexcusable, the fact remains that fascism is now in the air. How could it be otherwise? When working-class people were abandoned all over the West, it was easy to restore their hope with the promise of a national rebirth built upon a fictional Golden Age.

Once the bait was taken, the next step was to divert their wrath from the socioeconomic forces that had driven them to poverty to some nebulous cabal – “globalists,” the “deep state,” or some George Soros-directed plot to “replace” them in their own land. Riding high on the passion thus inspired, ultra-right politicians begin taking aim at liberal elites, bankers, rich foreigners abroad, and wretched aliens at home – people who can be portrayed as usurpers of the Golden Age and obstacles to national rebirth. With the sustainable-development agenda under severe strain, leading thinkers examine the initiatives and innovations that are delivering results.

Then (and only then) comes the dismissal of the class struggle, ruling out political representation of the working class's economic interests. The wrath at the US owners who close their local factory and ship it wholesale to Vietnam is redirected against Chinese workers. The fury at the bank that foreclosed

on the family home becomes hatred for Jewish lawyers, Muslim doctors, and Mexican day labourers. Anyone who reminds them that capital accumulates by devouring, displacing, and eventually ditching the labour of people like them is treated like a national traitor.

In the 2020s, just as in the 1920s, the ultra-right rose on the back of this process. It did not happen overnight. The process of losing the working classes, initially to hopelessness and eventually to the fascist mindset, began with the end of Bretton Woods in 1971.

But what triggered the transformation of the far right from a protest movement within conservative politics into an autonomous force that takes power, shamelessly demolishes bourgeois liberal institutions, and embarks on a project of annihilating “cultural Bolshevism” – a term dear to Joseph Goebbels' heart?

Two developments stand out. First, the 2008 global financial crisis, our generation's 1929 moment, led the centrists in power to impose harsh austerity on the working class while extending “socialist,” state-sponsored solidarity to Big Business. Second, as in the 1920s and 1930s, centrists and non-fascist conservatives feared and loathed the democratic left more than the authoritarian right.

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SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Ahmed al Obaidi, Harib al Abdali, and Brig Abdulmalik al Mazroue with the commemorative award at Power Camp Oman.

TAEKWONDO CONCLUDES WITH GRAND SUCCESS AT A’SOUND GLOBAL SCHOOL

MUSCAT: The highly anticipated ‘Power Camp Oman: Taekwondo’, held from October 2 to 5 at A’soud Global School (AGS) in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, Muscat Governorate, concluded with resounding success, marking a milestone for the taekwondo community in Oman and the wider region.

Hosted and organised by Pro Academy Oman and Power Events LLC in collaboration with A’soud Global School, the camp brought together world-class athletes and expert coaches, offering participants of all levels an exceptional training experience.

The camp featured taekwondo luminaries including Bianca Cook, 3-time World Champion and Olympic Medalist; Aaron Cook, 3-time European and World Champion; and Yasser Akeel, Iraqi National Team Coach. Over four intensive days, participants took part in high-level training sessions, technical workshops, and motivational talks, gaining invaluable insights from some of the sport’s finest practitioners.

Brigadier Abdulmalik bin Ghassan al Mazroue, President of the Oman Taekwondo Committee, graced the event, underscoring its importance in advancing taekwondo in Oman and pledging continued support to both athletes and organisers.

Reflecting on the event, Bianca Cook said, “Power Camp Oman was a fantastic opportunity to connect with passionate athletes and share our knowledge. The enthusiasm here is incredible, and we can’t wait to return for future camps.”

Aaron Cook added, “We’ve fallen in love with Oman and its talent. This camp has set a new benchmark for taekwondo training in the region, and I’m proud to be part of this journey witnessing the bright future of Omani taekwondo.”

Ahmed al Obaidi, President of Power Events (US), remarked, “Our mission with Power Camps worldwide is to promote taekwondo culture by bringing champions directly to the youth. Oman has exceeded all our expectations – the talent and passion here are remarkable. We look forward to many more collaborative events with AGS.”

The success of Power Camp Oman reflects the seamless collaboration between Pro Academy Oman, Power Events, and A’soud Global School, supported by the strong commitment of the local taekwondo community.



Winners of the ‘Power Camp Oman: Taekwondo’, held at A’soud Global School in Al Seeb.

ROYAL CAMEL CORPS DOMINATE FINAL DAY

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

‘BINT AL TAYLAH’ owned by the Royal Camel Corps recorded the best overall time among 5 km rounds at Al Felaij track in Barka, while **‘Al Barq’** owned by the Royal Camel Corps achieved the fastest timing among 6 km rounds.

At Al Bashayer track in Adam, **‘Al Aalami’** owned by Majid al Darai clocked the best overall time among 5 km rounds, while **‘Al Asimah’** owned by Ali al Jahafi registered the fastest timing among 6 km rounds.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) concluded the second camel race of the 2025–26 annual on Sunday with vibrant and competitive races held simultaneously at Al Felaij track in the Wilayat of Barka and Al Bashayer track in the Wilayat of Adam, attracting around 600 participating camels across both venues.

Under the auspices of Shaikh Said bin Saud al Ghafri, Chairman of the Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF), the final day concluded with the crowning of main-round winners, reflecting the high calibre of Omani-bred camels and the growing enthusiasm of owners and trainers nationwide.

Each venue featured the same competitive programme comprising six rounds for the Elythaa category, three years old, for 5 km. Three rounds for the Thanaya category, five years old, for 6 km. And three rounds for the Al Hawl category, six years and above, for 6 km.

The Oman Camel Racing Federation announced that the third event of the 2025–26 season will be held in Thamrait, Dhofar Governorate, from November 17 to 23, featuring competitive races, camel beauty contests (Mozainah) and camel milk competitions (Mohalabah).



Shaikh Said al Ghafri, OCRF Chairman honours second day winner in Barka



First day race with human rider in Barka for 2 km

The fourth event, representing the third official race meet of the season, will follow from October 30 to November 1 at both Al Felaij track in the Wilayat of Barka and Al Bashayer track in the Wilayat of Adam, continuing the momentum of national competitions across key racing venues.

Read as round, camel’s name, owner, time

THE 2ND DAY RESULTS AT AL FELAIJ TRACK IN BARKA
Elythaa – 5 km
1, Bint Al Taylah, Royal Camel Corps, 8:13.46
2, Mekhlah, Aish bin Salim al Jahafi, 8:12.11
3, Sibay, Aish bin Salim al Jahafi, 8:13.92

4, Wudhuh, Salim bin Said al Amri, 8:20.96
5, Mutaalah, Aish bin Abdullah al Jhafli, 8:11.54
6, Najd, Ali bin Abdullah al Hinai, 8:16.47
Thanaya – 6 km
1, Al Barq, Royal Camel Corps, 10:07.18
2, Thann, Salim bin Mohammed al Rashdi, 10:03.87
3, Al Noorah, Mohammed bin Hamad al Hinai, 10:04.45
Al Hawl – 6 km
1, Al Nawras, Royal Camel Corps, 10:29.44
2, Shebah, Saeed bin Nasser al Harthy, 10:05.58
3, Al Motaz, Nasser bin Hamad al Amri, 10:26.96

THE 2ND DAY RESULTS AT AL BASHAYER TRACK IN ADAM
Elythaa – 5 km
1, Hajr, Mohammed bin Sultan al Maliki, 8:01
2, Maazah, Swaibeq bin Mohammed al Harsousi, 8:03
3, Al Aalami, Majid bin Ali al Darai, 8:00
4, Shawahen, Mubarak bin Mohammed al Harsousi, 8:04
5, Tharwah, Rashid bin Salim al Ghilani, 8:09
6, Dghash, Salim bin Humaid al Junaibi, 8:08
Thanaya – 6 km
1, Omsyah, Abdullah bin Shuteat al Jahafi, 10:04
2, Tanbeeh, Al Hamdi bin Salim al Darai, 9:57
3, Moshghel, Mohammed bin Shlwaih al Junaibi, 10:01
Al Hawl – 6 km
1, Al Asimah, Ali bin Mohammed al Jahafi, 9:59
2, Ghazr, Omar bin Said al Jabri, 10:06
3, Al Milyon, Salim bin Mohammed al Saeedi, 10:20

Strong start for Sohar and Saham in first division

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

Sohar started its journey in Group 2 of the First Division Volleyball League with a well-deserved 3–1 victory over Masirah in the match held at the Sohar Sports Complex.

Sohar began the match by taking the first set with a four-point margin (25–21), followed by another close win in the second set (25–23). Masirah managed to recover in the third set, winning comfortably by 11 points (25–14), but Sohar bounced back powerfully in the fourth set with an identical margin (25–14), sealing the match and preventing Masirah from forcing a decisive fifth set. The match featured strong technical performances from Sohar’s players, who displayed great coordination in both attack and defense. Meanwhile, Masirah put on a solid performance at times but suffered from weaknesses in blocking, which cost them the match despite winning one set.

MATCH STATISTICS
Official statistics showed Sohar’s superiority in most technical aspects, as the team collected 89 points compared to 83 for Masirah. Sohar recorded five ace serves versus



Sohar and Masirah players in action

only two for their opponent. Both teams committed eight service errors each, while Sohar led slightly in blocking with 10 blocks compared to 9 for Masirah. Sohar made 26 errors to Masirah’s 27, reflecting the closeness of the competition despite Sohar’s 3–1 victory.

KEY PLAYERS
From Sohar, Mohammed al Jabri stood out with an impressive performance, contributing effectively to his team’s win by scoring 20 points, including 17 attack points with a 53 per cent success rate, along with two blocks and one ace serve.



Saham and Al Shabab players

On the other side, Motasim al Harthy was Masirah’s standout performer, leading his team with 21 points, including 17 attack points with a 59 per cent success rate, and four blocks, showcasing his scoring ability despite his team’s defeat.

SAHAM DEFEAT AL SHABAB
In the second match, also held at the Sohar Sports Complex, Saham defeated Al Shabab by the same score of 3–1. The set results were 25–15, 25–12, 17–25, and 25–21. Saham started strongly, winning the first two sets by comfortable margins (10 and 13 points, respectively). Al

Shabab responded in the third set, taking it by eight points, but Saham sealed the victory in the fourth set with a four-point difference. The match was of an overall moderate technical level. Saham’s coach managed to utilize his players’ abilities effectively to secure the win, while Al Shabab was unable to maintain the momentum it gained in the third set.

MATCH STATISTICS SAHAM VS AL SHABAB
Statistics showed Saham collecting 92 points compared to 73 for Al Shabab. Saham achieved five ace serves compared to three, while both teams recorded eight service errors each. Saham also led in blocking with nine blocks versus eight. Additionally, Saham made fewer errors (22) compared to Al Shabab’s 35, which played a decisive role in securing the 3–1 win.

LEAGUE SYSTEM
The Oman Volleyball Association has adopted a new format this season, dividing participating teams into two groups, from which several will advance to the second stage of the league. Group Two includes Sohar, Masirah, Saham, Al Shabab and Majees.

SHORT TAKES

ARAB BEACH VOLLEYBALL LOGO UNVEILED

SPORTS REPORTER



The official logo for the 30th Arab Men's and 20th Arab Women's Beach Volleyball Championships Round Two.

The Oman Volleyball Association has announced the launch of the official logo for the 30th Arab Men's and 20th Arab Women's Beach Volleyball Championships (Round Two), which will be hosted by the Sultanate of Oman from October 13-19, 2025, at Al Qurum Beach in Muscat Governorate, with the participation of elite Arab national teams.

The logo carries symbolic and aesthetic meanings that reflect the spirit of the championship and Oman's status as a promising maritime and sporting destination.

The colours of the logo were carefully selected to represent strength, energy, boldness, courage, and the colours of Oman's national flag, as well as hope, renewal, prosperity, and positivity.

The design highlights a volleyball with shades inspired by the blue sky, the radiant sun, and the golden sands of Omani beaches, forming a visual expression of the Sultanate of Oman's unique natural environment. The symbolism of the logo incorporates elements from the sport, such as spiking and serving, alongside local environmental motifs like mishili (coconut) trees found along Al Qurum Beach and the blue sea waves, creating an artistic blend that connects sport with Oman's maritime identity. This launch comes as part of a series of organisational and logistical preparations leading up to the championship, which is expected to attract widespread Arab attention and see strong participation from regional beach volleyball teams.

MUSANDAM GOVERNOR MEETS MARINE SPORTS COMMITTEE



The meeting highlighted opportunities to strengthen Musandam's position as a premier destination for marine events, both locally and internationally.

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, met with the Omani Committee for Marine Sports, in the presence of the committee's chairman and secretary, to discuss ways of enhancing cooperation in promoting and developing marine sports and related activities across the governorate. The meeting highlighted opportunities to strengthen Musandam's position as a premier destination for marine events, both locally and internationally, given its unique natural environment and outstanding coastal sites suitable for hosting world class competitions and water based festivals.

Discussions also covered the possibility of organising various championships and marine events as part of the 'Musandam Winter' season, in addition to introducing training programmes for the youth of the governorate in disciplines such as diving, sailing, rowing and powerboat racing enabling them to play an active role in Oman's growing marine and sport tourism sector.

Sayyid Ibrahim reaffirmed Musandam's full support for such initiatives, commending the committee's efforts in promoting marine awareness and organising professional sporting events that enhance the national presence in this vital field, also praised the committee's contribution to developing Omani talent and empowering young professionals in marine sports management and operations.

The meeting comes as part of Musandam Governorate's efforts to strengthen institutional partnerships with national sports bodies, develop infrastructure for marine activities and expand the governorate's economic and tourism diversification initiatives.

Oman all set for Doha to chase WC dream

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

THE Oman national football team delegation will depart on Monday to Doha as the Red Warriors chasing their historic qualification for the Fifa World Cup 2026. With only two decisive matches standing between Oman and their long-awaited dream, the team will enter this phase with determination and high morale. The delegation will be led by Sayyid Sulaiman bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Chairman of Oman Football Association (OFA), alongside the technical and administrative staff of the national team. Head coach Carlos Queiroz selected a 27-player squad for this crucial campaign, which will see Oman facing Qatar on Wednesday and the United Arab Emirates on Saturday in Doha.

Red Warriors completed the second phase of their training camp in Muscat, which was attended by Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, as well as the OFA Chairman and several board members. The top official of the Ministry met with the players and confirmed the Ministry full support to the team. The training sessions reflected a strong spirit within the team, combining physical readiness with tactical awareness. In the final two training sessions which was held behind closed doors at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, the Portuguese tactician intensified his team's preparation. The closed-door sessions aimed to preserve the confidentiality of Oman's tactical strategies ahead of the crucial fixtures. The drills focused on improving team cohesion across all lines, sharpening attacking efficiency, and enhancing the players' ability to capitalise on goal-scoring opportunities.

FINAL PREPARATIONS IN DOHA
Upon arrival in Doha, Oman will conduct their official training session at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium, the venue for their opening clash against Qatar on Wednesday. Subsequently, the team will shift training to the Qatar University green fields, where they will prepare for the UAE encounter scheduled for Saturday. This marks Oman's



The delegation will be led by Sayyid Sulaiman al Busaidy, Chairman of OFA, alongside the technical and administrative staff of the national team.



The drills focused on improving team cohesion across all lines, sharpening attacking efficiency, and enhancing the players' ability to capitalise on goal-scoring opportunities.

10th Asian Qualifiers campaign, and the team will look to draw inspiration from their historic 2-1 win over Qatar during the Gulf Cup in December 2024 as their first victory over the Gulf champions in 11 matches

dating back to 2009. Oman will compete in Group A of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 2026, where each group winner will directly advance to the next round, while second-placed teams will fight for playoff berths. The matches will follow a single round-robin format at centralised venues, with the Qatar Football Association hosting Group A and the Saudi Arabian Football Federation organising Group B fixtures. Among the group's contenders, Oman remains the only team chasing a maiden Fifa World Cup appearance, while Indonesia, Iraq, and the UAE seek to return for a second time each. Qatar and Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, aim to achieve back-to-back World Cup participations. SQUAD: Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Bilal al Balushi, Fayeze al Rushaidi, Khalid al Buraiki, Musab al Shaqsi, Mahmood al Mushaifri, Ahmed al Khamisi, Nayef Bait Subaih, Thani al Rushaidi, Amjad al Harthy, Ghanim al Habshi, Ali al Busaidy, Sultan al Marzooq, Harib al Saadi, Arshad al Alawi, Abdullah Fawaz, Zaher al Aghbari, Jameel al Yahmadi, Abdulrahman al Mushaifri, Mohsin al Ghassani, Nasser al Rawahi, Salah al Yahyaei, Mohammed al Ghafri and Essam al Subhi.

Russell wins Singapore Grand Prix

SINGAPORE: Mercedes' George Russell won the Singapore Grand Prix on Sunday ahead of Max Verstappen and Lando Norris, as McLaren clinched the Formula One constructors' championship. Oscar Piastri was fourth, meaning his lead over McLaren teammate Norris at the top of the drivers' standings was cut to 22 points.

The 27 points scored by Piastri and Norris were more than enough for McLaren to equal the record set by Red Bull in 2023 by winning the team title with six races to spare.

It was McLaren's second title in a row and 10th in the team's history, and was won despite their two drivers clashing in the opening turns with sparks flying as Norris got the better of Piastri. "They have driven brilliantly all season. You can't win the constructors' without two awesome racing drivers," said McLaren CEO Zak Brown.

"As you can see, we are letting them race. That was a bit more of a nail-biter there, but they race hard, they race clean, they race to win.

"A lot of racing to go and hopefully a lot more victories for both of them."

Russell was overjoyed to win the sweltering night race for the first time, saying it was payback for his final-lap crash two years ago while pushing for victory on



Mercedes' George Russell celebrates on the podium with the trophy after winning the Singapore Grand Prix. — Reuters

the Marina Bay street circuit. "It feels amazing, especially after what happened a couple of years ago. That was a bit of a missed opportunity, but we more than made up for it today," said the Englishman, who started on pole. "We don't really know where this performance came from, but really, really happy." Dutchman Verstappen was relieved to finish second for Red Bull. "I think the whole race was quite difficult, more difficult than I hoped for, for a lot of different reasons," said the four-time world champion, who remains third in the title race, 63 points behind Australia's Piastri. "There's a few things that we

need to understand why they went wrong today. "But around here even if you have more pace, you can't pass without anything crazy happening. So I think second was the maximum result." NOT FAIR Kimi Antonelli crossed the line fifth in a Mercedes, followed by the Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton. Fernando Alonso, Oliver Bearman and Carlos Sainz rounded out the top 10. Russell got away cleanly from Verstappen at the start, but the drama all happened behind. Norris, from fifth on the grid, darted past Antonelli and dived up the inside of Piastri, who started third, at turn one.

Norris was flying and clipped the back of Verstappen on the way to barging his way into third place in a wheel-to-wheel clash with teammate Piastri. The championship leader was not impressed. "So are we cool with Lando just barging me out of the way there? What's the go there?" Piastri complained on team radio. His anger was not appeased by the team saying they would discuss the incident after the race and not order Norris to swap places. "That's not fair. I'm sorry, that's not fair," Piastri said. Norris disagreed. "It was good racing," he said. After pitting for hard tyres, the leading four emerged in the same order, though Verstappen was reporting downshift problems with his gearbox that felt "like a handbrake". By lap 41 of the 62 Norris had the ailing Verstappen in his sights but found it impossible to get close enough to pass on a circuit where overtaking is notoriously tricky. "Max didn't make any mistakes. I gave it my all today and got close," said Norris. The night race in tropical Singapore was declared the first official Formula One "Heat Hazard". That means all drivers had to have liquid-cooled vests available, though wearing them was not mandatory. — AFP



AMANDA ANISIMOVA beat Linda Noskova 6-0, 2-6, 6-2 on Sunday to win the China Open for her second title of a breakthrough year and fourth overall.

The third-seeded American survived a second-set wobble to overpower the Czech 26th seed in one hour and 46 minutes in Beijing.

She lifted the trophy in the Chinese capital almost exactly one month after reaching the US Open final, where she lost to world number one Aryna Sabalenka.

“It’s been an incredible few weeks,” Anisimova said.

“I was riding on a lot of confidence because I’ve had a great year so far.”

The 24-year-old is the third American to win the China Open after last year’s champion Coco Gauff and 23-time Grand Slam winner Serena Williams.

Anisimova collapsed to the hard court in victory, lying on her back and putting her hands over her face.

She said she endured ongoing foot and calf pain and considered pulling out before the final.

“I’m just really happy that I was able to stick it through and trust myself and my team,” she said.

Anisimova began ruthlessly, winning the first set in 23 minutes without dropping a game.

“I was riding on a lot of confidence because I’ve had a great year so far, despite dealing with some pain and challenges along the way. We’ve had so much fun through it all, and to get the win today feels very special.”

AMANDA ANISIMOVA



USA’s Amanda Anisimova (R) holds his winner’s trophy while posing with runner-up Czech Republic’s Linda Noskova following their women’s singles final at the China Open tennis tournament in Beijing. — AFP

A defiant Noskova — contesting her first WTA 1000 final — found her feet in the second set, breaking early and powering to a 5-2 lead before closing out.

The two went toe-to-toe in the decider until Anisimova broke for a

4-2 lead, digging deep to reach the finish line with a winner on the first match point.

STELLAR YEAR

“Amanda is an amazing player. She has been playing just too strong this

whole season,” Noskova said.

“She comes after every point that she possibly can.

“She just continues to play as much down the line as possible. Sometimes it’s just hard to come up with any plan.”

It’s been a stellar season for Anisimova, the world number four, who was also runner-up at Wimbledon.

This time last year she was at world no. 43.

Anisimova, who will play at the season-ending WTA Finals for the first time, extended her gratitude to her coaches.

“We’ve had a lot of challenges and despite that we also still have so much fun,” she said.

“It’s crazy that we made it this far and to get the win today has been very special.

“I’m excited for a lot more, and hopefully we can keep going.”

Anisimova dumped out second seed Gauff in the Beijing semi-finals, thrashing the two-time Grand Slam winner 6-1, 6-2 in 58 minutes.

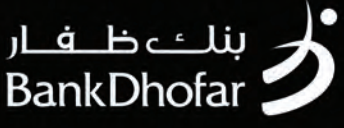
Noskova, who started her Beijing run as world no. 27, said: “I definitely wasn’t coming here feeling like I was gonna play finals, so nice surprise.”

The match was only the second WTA 1000 final in which both players were born during the 2000s. — AFP



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Indonesia marks the third destination in Invest Oman's current global outreach series.

INVEST OMAN
EXPLORES AVENUES
FOR COOPERATION
WITH INDONESIA

BUSINESS REPORTER
JAKARTA, OCT 5

Invest Oman, representing the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, is organising ‘Advantage Oman Business Dialogue – Indonesia’ – a forum that brings together a select group of prominent investors and senior executives from over 30 leading Indonesian companies.

The dialogue will focus on strategic economic sectors of mutual priority, including mining, manufacturing, food security, tourism and aviation, with the aim of showcasing promising investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman and strengthening economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

Indonesia marks the third destination in the 2025 global outreach series led by the Investment Promotion Directorate, following the successful business dialogues held in India and Canada in September.

The event will serve as a dynamic platform for direct engagement between Omani and Indonesian business communities, fostering new partnerships and facilitating the exchange of insights on how to best leverage the economic strengths of both nations.

The Omani delegation will also present a comprehensive overview of the Sultanate of Oman's competitive advantages – from its strategic geographic location as a gateway to the Middle East and North Africa, to its long-term political and economic stability, major ongoing development projects and the array of government incentives and facilitations that make Oman's investment environment both attractive and efficient.

New iconic tower for
Sultan Haitham City

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 5

AL Ahly Sabbour Developments is set to reshape the skyline of Sultan Haitham City with the launch of the Wadi Zaha Iconic Tower, a RO 90 million mixed-use development poised to become the tallest tower in the city and a new benchmark for luxury urban living in Oman.

Strategically located at the heart of Wadi Zaha, overlooking a major park and valley, the Iconic Tower will feature a combination of residential units, hotel services, and leisure facilities.

It will house the first luxury hotel and branded serviced apartments in Sultan Haitham City under the Villa Coconut Hotel & Residences by TLT Hospitality, along with restaurants, cafés, a rooftop pool, spa, and other premium amenities.

In an interview with the Observer, Eng Ahmed Sabbour, Chairman and Managing Director of Al Ahly Sabbour Developments, said, “This tower is not just another real estate development – it redefines luxury and hospitality in Sultan Haitham City. It will stand as a symbol of modern urban living and architectural excellence in the heart of Oman's first smart city.”

The project is a key component of a larger RO 400 million master plan that also includes the upcoming Wadi Safa and Wadi Tala developments. Construction of the Iconic Tower is scheduled to begin in January 2026, with completion expected within three to three and a half years.

The tower aligns with Oman Vision 2040 by integrating modern urban planning with economic diversification and sustainable development. It is expected to stimulate local economic activity, attract foreign investment, and create jobs in construction,

Eng Ahmed Sabbour, Chairman and Managing Director of Al Ahly Sabbour Developments.

The tower aligns with Oman Vision 2040 by integrating modern urban planning with economic diversification and sustainable development. It is expected to stimulate local economic activity, attract foreign investment, and create jobs in construction, hospitality, and services.

hospitality and services.

“We are not here just to build and make profits,” Sabbour said. “We want to leave a good memory that we were part of employing as many Omanis as we can.”

The company is already exceeding the 25% Omanisation requirement, making local workforce development a key part of its operational strategy.

A central feature of the project is the partnership with TLT Hospitality, which operates Villa Coconut Hotel in Egypt and Dubai and is expanding to Greece. Sabbour described the collaboration as “a strategic milestone that introduces world-class branded residences to Oman, reinforcing investor confidence in the market.”

The developer is also targeting a diverse international investor base. Beyond Omani and Egyptian buyers, the top three foreign nationalities purchasing units

are Indian, British, and Iranian investors, with additional buyers from across Europe and Asia. The branded serviced apartments are expected to offer stable returns and capital appreciation as Sultan Haitham City expands.

Phase 1 of the project has already achieved 80% of sales, worth RO 21 million out of a total RO 28 million.

Encouraged by the market response, Al Ahly Sabbour is exploring three new locations in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Salalah and Al Khuwair Downtown for future developments.

“The response from both local and international investors has been strong,” Sabbour noted. “Branded residences offer unmatched value by combining living, hospitality, and high investment confidence. This project sets a new benchmark for integrated urban development aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

Trade balance surplus exceeds RO 3.5 billion

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's trade balance recorded a surplus of RO 3.555 billion by the end of July 2025, compared to a surplus of RO 5.432 billion during the same period in 2024, a decrease of 34.6 per cent.

Preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the total value of merchandise exports reached RO 13.476 billion by the end of July 2025, a decrease of 9.2 per cent compared to the same period in 2024,

Total value of commodity imports to Oman rose to RO 9.921 billion.

which amounted to RO 14.839 billion.

Statistics indicated that this decline was primarily attributed to a 17 per cent decline in Oman's oil and gas exports, reaching RO

8.582 billion by the end of July, compared to RO 10.344 billion during the same period in 2024.

Statistics also showed that Oman's non-oil commodity exports achieved a remarkable growth of 11.3 per cent, reaching RO 3.890 billion by the end of July 2025, compared to RO 3.497 billion during the same period in 2024.

Re-exports also registered a slight increase of 0.5 per cent by the end of July 2025, reaching RO 1.04 billion, compared to RO 999

million during the same period in 2024.

Statistics showed that the total value of commodity imports to the Sultanate of Oman rose to RO 9.921 billion by the end of July 2025, compared to RO 9.407 billion during the same period in 2024, registering a 5.5 per cent increase.

On the other hand, the United Arab Emirates topped trade in non-oil exports by the end of July 2025, with exports to it amounting to RO 698 million. — ONA



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Public Auction Announcement

Majis Industrial Services S.A.O.C is pleased to announce two public auctions for sale Used Air Conditioners Units, as per the details below:

Type of Auction	Date & Time of Site Visit	Site Visit Location	Last Day for Submission
Used Air Conditioners Units	Monday 13 October - 2025 10:00 AM	Administrative Building - Sohar Port	Wednesday 15 October 2025

For inquiries, please contact:
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14 PR of BankDhofar sign agreement with Social Protection Fund

BANKDHOFAR, SOCIAL PROTECTION FUND TO DELIVER CUTTING-EDGE DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has signed a cooperation agreement with the Social Protection Fund to advance financial technology solutions, underscoring the bank’s commitment to driving innovation in Oman’s banking sector and supporting the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040.

Under the agreement, BankDhofar will provide a suite of advanced digital tools, including virtual accounts for efficient cash flow management, secure digital banking transactions and innovative B2B services designed to empower businesses with the latest financial technologies.

As a pioneer of digital innovation in Oman, BankDhofar has consistently introduced transformative solutions. In 2024, it launched Dhofar Pay, enabling customers to settle bills with a simple phone swipe at retail POS devices, followed by the rollout of Samsung Pay and Apple Pay.

This year, the bank extended its digital offering to SMEs with a specialised platform supporting self-registration, secure payroll solutions, and comprehensive digital services. Strategic partnerships with international firms have further strengthened its infrastructure, while artificial intelligence tools continue to enhance security and innovation.

BankDhofar also holds the distinction of being the first bank in Oman to enable RippleNet-powered remittances to India, offering customers instant, low-cost cross-border transfers. Its expanding portfolio includes online payment gateways — such as those integrated with Oman Air — and the relaunched “Intilaqah” digital onboarding app, which provides seamless account opening through video-based KYC, direct integration with the Mala’a Credit Information Centre, and a fully digital experience.

Security remains a cornerstone of BankDhofar’s digital journey. The bank employs AI-driven transaction monitoring, advanced anti-fraud systems, and regular awareness campaigns to safeguard customers in an increasingly digital economy.

With more than 140 branches across the Sultanate of Oman, equipped with the latest technology and highly trained professionals, BankDhofar is shaping the future of digital banking in Oman.

By combining global best practices with local expertise, the bank continues to play a pivotal role in accelerating the nation’s digital economy and enabling institutions like the Social Protection Fund to deliver greater value to the communities they serve.

URBAN OCTOBER AND HOME & BUILDING EXPO SET ON OCTOBER 6- 8

MUSCAT: The Urban October Conference 2025 is the largest event in Urban Planning in Sultanate of Oman. It coincides with key global events like World Habitat Day, World Cities Day and World Architecture Day, focusing on urban planning, real estate and best properties available in the market at the best price.

The Expo will bring together more than 200+ exhibitors from over 10 countries showcasing the most comprehensive range of latest

innovative products, services and solutions to Buy, Build, Design, Decorate and Renovate your Home and Building.

The Expo is a One Stop Destination offering a complete a 360° platform for buyers and visitors to source everything for their project requirements from Concept to Completion, within budget. Benefit

from the special and exclusive offers that participating Companies will showcase at the Expo.

No matter what stage the projects are at, the Expo will provide one-to-one advice, attendees can browse multiple new and innovative products, tailored solutions and discover the ins and outs of project requirements.

Visitors can find the latest design trends for their Apartment, Villa, Farm House or Residential Project at the Event.

Kia PV5 WKNDR concept wins at IDEA 2025

WHAT is the Kia PV5 WKNDR Concept? The Kia PV5 WKNDR Concept draws inspiration from Kia’s new line-up of Purpose Built Vehicles (PBVs). Designed for versatility, it features a highly flexible, modular interior that can be easily customised to maximise space and functionality.

A standout innovation, the ‘Gear Head’, is a first-of-its-kind off-board storage solution that offers sheltered space for gear when the vehicle is stationary.

This enables optimal use of interior space while maintaining easy access to equipment outside.

The ‘Gear Head’ can also be transformed into a mobile pantry, ideal for cooking enthusiasts who enjoy preparing meals with a scenic view. Fully self-sufficient, the PV5 WKNDR Concept is equipped with solar panels and unique hydro turbine wheels that can recharge its batteries even in remote, off-road environments.

Its interior design further prioritises sustainability, with materials such as Nike Grind flooring, made from recycled sneakers, offering both functional and aesthetic benefits.

What was Kia’s response

A standout innovation, the ‘Gear Head’, is a first-of-its-kind off-board storage solution that offers sheltered space for gear when the vehicle is stationary. This enables optimal use of interior space while maintaining easy access to equipment outside.



Designed for versatility, it features a highly flexible, modular interior that can be easily customised to maximise space and functionality.

to winning an IDEA Award? “Recognition from IDEA is a great honour, demonstrating the impact and value of Kia’s ‘Opposites United’ philosophy in guiding our future design vision”, said Karim Habib, Head of Kia Global Design.

“Awards such as this recognise the dedication of our global team but also motivate us to continue to

innovate and further strengthen Kia’s commitment to bringing products that are relevant and meaningful to our customers”.

What is an IDEA Award? One of the world’s three major design awards, the International Design Excellence Awards (IDEA), has been honouring thoughtfully developed products for nearly half a century.

OMAN OFFICIAL COUNTRY PARTNER AT EUROPEAN HYDROGEN WEEK

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the European Hydrogen Week 2025 in Brussels as the Official Country Partner.

Led by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, the national delegation brought together key entities from across Oman’s hydrogen ecosystem, including Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), OQ Alternative Energy, Nama Water Services, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO) and OQ Gas Networks. With over \$50



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

billion in committed investment secured across two public auction rounds and a third underway, the country’s participation in the

European Hydrogen Week looked to secure durable market partnerships, agree on pragmatic certification pathways, and accelerate the enabling conditions that allow gigawatt-scale investments to reach final investment decision.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Hydrom commented: “Our participation in the European Hydrogen Week is about connecting Oman’s progress with European leadership and the wider international effort to advance the hydrogen economy.

We have built a framework that enables scale; our focus now is aligning infrastructure, certification and regulation, to ensure what we develop in Oman can be utilised locally and at the same time move seamlessly across borders with the credibility, traceability and standards that Europe and global markets demand.”

Throughout the week, Oman took part in a series of discussions on policy, infrastructure and project implementation, contributing to conversations that are shaping Europe’s hydrogen economy.

Sohar International to introduce credit card offering of 3% cashback

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to customer-centric innovation, Sohar International has launched a pioneering product, becoming the first bank in Oman to introduce a credit card offering 3% cashback. The card allows customers to earn 3% cashback on their transactions, automatically credited to the card balance each month.

By delivering immediate and tangible returns, this latest addition reflects the bank’s philosophy of consistently introducing solutions that add value, make everyday spending more rewarding and enrich the overall customer experience.



The card allows customers to earn 3% cashback on their transactions, automatically credited to the card balance each month.

Commenting on the launch, Abdul Qader al Sumali, Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International stated, “At Sohar International, our customers remain at the core of every initiative we undertake.

Their trust and evolving aspirations drive us to go beyond conventional banking, constantly designing offerings that align with their lifestyles and add meaningful impact to their financial journeys.

This new credit card is another step in our broader commitment to redefining the relationship between Sohar International and its customers — one that emphasises thoughtful innovation, practical

benefits and a seamless experience that transforms routine interactions into meaningful rewards and enduring benefits”.

Available to all customers earning a monthly salary of RO 400 and above, the new 3% cashback credit card will complement existing card portfolios, giving cardholders an additional tool to manage their finances more effectively while enjoying exclusive perks.

The card is accepted globally at over 40 million merchant locations and more than 2.5 million ATMs that recognise Visa Cards, ensuring seamless access to funds and payments anywhere in the world.

Further amplifying its appeal, the

card comes with a host of premium benefits that make it more than just a cashback credit card.

Enhancing travel comfort, cardholders receive six complimentary lounge visits annually at 25 participating airports, have access to 24/7 global emergency assistance, and are covered by extended warranty protection on purchases.

For those seeking flexibility, a wide range of installment plans are also available, offering terms of up to 24 months. Additionally, the card features contactless payWave technology, enabling fast, secure and convenient transactions for small purchases.

DISCLOSUREGUIDELINES



Annual ESG reporting is now a requirement for public joint-stock firms

MSX PUTS ESG INTO ACTION

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, OCT 5

When most people think of a stock exchange, they picture screens, prices and fast trades. The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) wants to be known for something else as well: using market rules and its own programmes to deliver social value in Oman.

Over the past year, MSX has set clearer expectations for listed companies on sustainability. It rolled out ESG disclosure guidelines built around 30 indicators and, from 2025, made annual ESG reporting a requirement for public joint-stock firms. In simple terms: cleaner data, more comparability and fewer gaps for investors and regulators.

MSX also published a sustainability report covering 2024, signalling that the exchange is holding itself to similar standards. The message is straightforward — ESG is not a side project; it is part of how the market works.

This shift sits within a wider national framework. The Oman Investment Authority (OIA) encourages its portfolio to adopt robust ESG practices and directs social investment towards projects with clear, measured benefits. For MSX and its post-trade subsidiary, Muscat Clearing & Depository (MCD), that means supporting initiatives that make a difference in communities while strengthening market integrity.

Governance is the backbone. MSX has built internal capacity for ESG and diversity and inclusion, aligning operations with global practice and helping issuers raise the quality of their disclosures. The aim is to move away from ad-hoc donations and towards accountable, long-term programmes that can be tracked and improved.

For investors, these steps mean more reliable information to judge risk and opportunity.

Pact signed to improve esports sector in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, OCT 5

A landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Oman Esports and Gaming Committee and Nova Technology & Investment LLC to accelerate the growth of the Sultanate of Oman's gaming and esports sector. In an exclusive interview with Oman Observer, senior executives from Nova Technology, an associate of Sur International Investment Group, outlined how the partnership will create a structured, globally competitive esports ecosystem in the country.

The MoU was signed by Eng Saba al Busaidy, Chairwoman of the Oman Esports and Gaming Committee; and Saba al Sinani, Co-Founder and Deputy CEO of Nova Technology & Investment LLC. The agreement aims to build strategic partnerships, support local talents and create new opportunities for players and the broader gaming community — in line with Oman Vision 2040 emphasis on innovation, youth empowerment and economic diversification.

Hilal al Sinani, CEO of Nova Technology, emphasised the broader strategic impact of the partnership. “This MoU reflects our belief that esports is more than just competition — it is a future-ready industry that can inspire young Omanis and create real economic value”, he said. “Through Nova Tech, we aim to position the Sultanate of Oman as a regional hub for esports excellence, innovation and entrepreneurship”.



The agreement aims to build strategic partnerships, support local talents and create new opportunities for players and the broader gaming community.

He added, “Our commitment goes beyond launching platforms and tournaments. We are building the foundations for a sustainable ecosystem — one that nurtures talent, attracts investment and connects the Sultanate of Oman to the global gaming community”.

Saba al Sinani, Co-Founder and Deputy CEO of Nova Technology & Investmen LLC, highlighted the operational vision driving these initiatives, Under the partnership, Nova Technology will focus on three key initiatives over the next 12–18 months. The first is the WAJH platform, which will serve as the digital backbone of the esports ecosystem by identifying, ranking and certifying Omani players.

The second is the establishment of a structured Esports Academy, starting online and eventually expanding into physical bootcamps, to develop players, coaches, referees and casters. The third

is hosting major tournaments in the Sultanate of Oman, from local championships to regional and international events, aimed at putting the country on the global esports map.

“Our priority is to support and uplift Omani talents by gathering and showcasing them through the WAJH platform”, she explained. “This will connect Omani players to opportunities at regional and global levels, while also documenting and certifying their achievements”.

Adeel Irshad, Chief Operating Officer at Sur International Investment Group, further noted that in addition to working towards sustainable development and e-mobility, this partnership aims to create a complete talent pathway aligned with international standards. “By partnering with leading global esports organisations, we will ensure Omani players and staff are prepared to compete and succeed at the highest level”, Irshad said. “We’re

investing significant resources to build an ecosystem that will endure — from grassroots to elite competition”.

Beyond esports, both executives see the partnership as a catalyst for wider economic development. Esports is increasingly recognised as a driver of innovation, job creation and digital entrepreneurship. By investing in platforms, training and events, the initiative is expected to create hundreds of direct and indirect jobs and stimulate new start-ups in gaming technology, media production, content creation and event management.

Through this collaboration, the Sultanate of Oman is positioning itself to become a leading player in the esports destination in the region — empowering youth, fostering digital skills and supporting the goals of economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040.

25% equity stake for OQAE in Oman’s Ibri III solar project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 5

UNDERSCORING its leading role in Oman's clean energy sector, OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) — a subsidiary of the integrated Omani energy group OQ — has secured a 25 per cent equity stake in the Ibri III Solar PV Independent Power Project, awarded recently to an international consortium led by Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company PJSC (Masdar).

Last month, Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP) — the national procurer of new power and water capacity — signed agreements with the winning consortium for the development of a 500 MW solar PV plant at the Wilayat of Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate. A 100 MW battery energy storage system (BESS) — a first-of-its-kind in Oman

— will also be built alongside the solar project.

OQAE, designated as Oman's National Champion for Renewable Energy, will co-develop the Ibri III Solar IPP (since rebranded as Nour Ibri PV) together with Masdar (UAE), Al Khadra Partners (Oman) and Korea Midland Power Co Ltd (KOMIPO) of Korea.

In addition, OQAE will play an active role in the operations and maintenance (O&M) of the project.

Significantly, OQAE's securing of a 25 per cent stake in the Ibri III Solar PV project marks the start of a back-in arrangement committing Nama PWP to offer an equity stake of up to 25 per cent in all renewable energy projects floated by the national procurer.

The move affirms OQAE's pre-eminent role in decarbonising the economy and catalysing the achievement of Net Zero by 2050.



OQAE's securing of a 25 per cent stake in Ibri III Solar PV marks the start of a back-in arrangement committing Nama PWP to offer an equity stake in all renewable energy projects floated by the national procurer.

OQAE is actively advancing renewable energy projects, with over 10 GW of initiatives in its pipeline for implementation

by 2035. These include projects designed to support the decarbonisation of OQ Group subsidiaries and affiliates, as well as industries operating in Suhar, Al Duqm and elsewhere.

Additionally, as part of its mandate as National Champion, OQAE is supporting Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in the decarbonisation of its oilfield operations.

It holds a 51 per cent stake in a joint venture with French multi-energy firm TotalEnergies for the development of three renewable energy projects within PDO's Block 6 concession.

The projects include the 100 MW North Oman Solar Project and the Riyah-1 and Riyah-2 wind schemes, each of 100 MW capacity.

Furthermore, OQAE is supporting the development of another 300 MW solar farm to supply clean energy to

the Marsa LNG bunkering project, currently under construction at SOHAR Port and Freezone.

More recently, OQAE signed a joint development agreement with state-backed Naqaa Sustainable Energy Company to invest in a series of wind IPPs with a combined capacity of 1,100 MW in Al Duqm and the wilayats of Mahout and Sadah in Dhofar Governorate.

Wind turbines for these projects will be supplied by Mawarid Turbines, a subsidiary of OQ Group, which is currently developing Oman's first wind turbine manufacturing plant at the Duqm SEZ.

Beyond PDO and Marsa LNG, OQAE's customer base for its decarbonisation programme also includes Oxy, Shell, BP and OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP), as well as industrial players such as Vale, Jindal and Sohar Aluminium.

RECORD PRICE

Bitcoin hits all-time high above \$125,000



Bitcoin, the world's largest cryptocurrency by market value, hit a record high on Sunday and was up nearly 2.7% at \$125,245.57 at 05:12 GMT.

Bitcoin's previous record was \$124,480 in mid-August, buoyed by friendlier regulations from US President Donald Trump's administration and strong demand from institutional investors. — Reuters

SUPPLY GLUT

Opec+ to raise oil output from November



Opec+ will raise oil output from November by 137,000 barrels per day (bpd), it said on Sunday, opting for the same fairly modest monthly increase as in October amidst persistent worries over a looming supply glut.

The group comprising the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries plus Russia and some smaller producers has increased its oil output targets by more than 2.7 million bpd this year, equating to about 2.5% of global demand. — Reuters

PROTECTIONIST STANCE

Coalition seeks protections for European steel



Germany's Social Democrats, junior partners in Chancellor Friedrich Merz's coalition, will push for a more protectionist stance on Europe's steel industry, urging the EU to adopt a “buy European” strategy.

The SPD is due to adopt the proposals next week. They call for the European Commission to adopt a “robust trade protection” strategy to defend against subsidised foreign competitors. — Reuters

The AI job disruption: Women at a greater risk than men



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

THE world is at a technological crossroads, with AI disruption expected to reach more than 22% across various industries. By 2030, we are expected to witness a net increase of 78 million jobs in employment. In addition to AI, automation, and big data, significant contributors to this change include geopolitical fragmentation, economic uncertainty, demographic shifts, and the green transition. A recent United Nations report reveals that in the race for automation and AI, women could be left behind. According to the International Labour Organisation, one in four people globally will work in occupations with some exposure to AI. The report also stated that 2,500 professions and over 29,000 work tasks would be automated. Jobs such as data entry, accounting, and bookkeeping, as well as clerical roles, are the most vulnerable to AI risk. Others, such as web designers, media developers, database specialists and those in financial and software-related jobs, are also under threat. For decades, women have navigated a male-dominated world to secure their position in organisations. Now they must compete with men in upskilling and reskilling to stay ahead in the race for AI automation. The alarming and startling revelation of the report is that not only is AI creating unprecedented disruptions, but it is also exacerbating the digital gender divide.

Research states that women are more likely to be impacted by Generative AI. Women will be primarily affected, as they are overrepresented in roles that AI can already perform. The UN report states that 28% of roles held by women are at risk as compared to 21% of men's jobs. Gender disparities are long-standing, with women comprising 29% of the global tech workforce and 14% of tech leadership roles. Women are disproportionately concentrated in positions most vulnerable to replacement by AI, including administrative and financial roles. Interestingly, the challenge is more prominent among the high-income economies of the Global North. In the Global North, occupational segregation is in play, with more women in part-time routine jobs. The G-7 economies are driving digital innovation, infrastructure, and AI adoption, which accelerates the exposure and risk associated with roles that can be partly or wholly automated. Most of the professions held by women are administrative, banking, public sector, finance, insurance, public administration, clerical, healthcare, and office work. For instance, in Switzerland, 59% of women work part-time due to various personal commitments and family structures. These individuals amplify the risks associated with Generative AI. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women are employed in banking, insurance, and public sector roles, facing the sharpest impact. In

Gender disparities are long-standing, with women comprising 29% of the global tech workforce and 14% of tech leadership roles. Women are disproportionately concentrated in positions most vulnerable to replacement by AI, including administrative and financial roles.

Asia, most women are engaged in sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, retail and the informal sector, rather than in white-collar jobs. The Unique labour distribution and economic structures of the continent put women in Asia at a lesser risk of job disruption from generative AI as compared to women in G-7 countries. Yet, urban women in Asia employed in similar fields, such as banking, insurance, and administration, face the same risk as those in the G-7, compared to women engaged in rural and informal sectors. Although women in G-7 countries have made advances in career growth in engineering, medicine and management, their employment remains intensely concentrated in administrative, clerical and service roles. The UN report states that job and statistical data reflect a potential exposure, indicating that complete replacement by AI is limited and that human involvement will be required. To ensure that women are not disadvantaged in the race to automation and artificial intelligence, governments, employers, and leaders must prioritise reskilling, equal access to AI roles, upskilling and rethinking work structures, as well as implementing gender-responsive policies. This approach will enable the world to close the gender gap in the digital age and foster a sustainable global work environment.

WARREN BUFFETT'S LAST DEAL BARELY MOVES THE NEEDLE

WARREN BUFFETT will step down as chief executive of Berkshire Hathaway at year end, but the cash pile he's created at the \$1 trillion valued conglomerate may stick around far longer. Thursday's \$10 billion deal, to buy Occidental Petroleum's chemicals business, OxyChem, is the company's biggest in three years. It may be the Oracle of Omaha's last move, yet it barely makes a dent in the coffers. That presents a dilemma for successor Greg Abel. The transaction shows how sprawling Berkshire has become. The acquisition adds another sizeable chemicals business to the company's collection of insurance, candy, paint, mobile homes, railroads, underwear, utilities and more. OxyChem should throw off \$800 million of pre-tax income this year. Taxed at the statutory rate, that's a 6.5% return on the purchase price. Eventual returns might be higher, as the business is cyclical and earned three times as much in 2022. Occidental boss Vicki Hollub, meanwhile, plans to use part of the proceeds to pay down some debt still hanging around from her acquisitions of Anadarko Petroleum and CrownRock. That will allow the company to rev up its stock repurchasing plan, to the benefit of shareholders. And the largest stakeholder is Berkshire, which has over a quarter of the common shares in the \$18 billion oil company, as well as significant amounts of warrants and preferred stock. While this transaction may be Buffett's swan song, investors will wonder what else Berkshire has planned. The company's cash pile was almost \$350 billion at the end of last quarter, more than double the amount of five years ago. Even Buffett has admitted the challenge: Finding deals to move the needle of a \$1 trillion conglomerate is tough. Sizeable opportunities are few and well picked over. Indeed, Berkshire's stock price barely moved this week despite reports suggesting the purchase. It will be hard for Abel to find attractive outlets for this much cash, yet shareholders will also wonder why the company is sitting on so much. Buffett's final gift to his successor may be Abel's most difficult burden. — Reuters

Gloomy data means problems for Chancellor



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THE UK economy was hit by a "litany of worrying news" in the three months to September with thousands of jobs lost ahead of Chancellor Rachel Reeves' second autumn Budget. The latest 'flash' PMI from S&P Global showed business activity expectations for the year ahead slumped to a three-month low in September as firms braced for a painful Budget. Chief business economist at S&P, Chris Williamson said: "Around 50,000 job losses were signalled by the PMI in the three months to September". He said the latest figures "brought a litany of worrying news including weakening growth, slumping overseas trade, worsening business confidence and further steep job losses. He added: "Alarm bells should be ringing that the economy is faltering." The UK's manufacturing output sank to a 6-month low at 45.4 falling from 49.3 in August — the latest decline since March. In the all-important service sector higher levels of business and consumer spending were "constrained" by "lacklustre UK economic conditions". However, the headline index held firm at 51, staying above the 50 threshold which indicates a level of — even though modest — growth. The wafer-thin distance from contraction comes as the Treasury faces pressure to avoid further burdening business in the autumn Budget. S&P Global said respondents to the PMI had "widely" commented on weak client confidence alongside "heightened political and economic uncertainty". The PMI data landed just moments before the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released its latest assessment of the UK economy in a report closely watched by the Treasury and policy makers. The OECD warned that higher taxes and the sting from US tariffs are set to restrain UK growth, now

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Workers walk through the Canary Wharf financial district in London, Britain.

— Reuters

forecast to limp along at just one per cent next year. The Paris-based group said that core inflation in the UK, which measures the changes in prices of goods and services except for food and energy, is expected to be 3.7 per cent in the UK, a full percentage point above the G20 average and significantly higher than the likes of the US and Spain. Executive director of the Institute of Economic Affairs, Tom Clougherty said: "The OECD's forecast growth for the UK will barely sustain our ageing population; never mind delivering an upgrade in living standards. Worse still, the forecast of the highest inflation in the G7 will quickly eat away at any minor benefits we do feel". Meanwhile, Chancellor Reeves has been issued with a fresh warning on the damaging effects of raising taxes at this year's Budget, with a leading forecaster claiming the prospect of a fiscal crisis is "real". Capital Economics has warned that a higher tax burden on households could drastically lower

spending levels across the country. A decision to target people's incomes would shorten GDP growth by 0.2 percentage points, according to projections made by the consultancy. The firm's top economists believe the government will have to raise some £28 billion in extra revenue later this year as they suggested that backbench Labour MPs' reluctance to "stomach spending cuts" had put the UK on a course towards a possible crisis. While Capital Economics does not forecast an economic collapse in the upcoming years, it warned a number of "triggers" could yet send the UK economy into a meltdown. The consultancy said a break from Reeves' fiscal rules, the replacement of the Chancellor or a deterioration in official economic data over the coming year could set a crisis in motion, with bond traders becoming less likely to view the UK in a positive light. The election of Reform UK party with its as-yet "unfunded commitments", could also trigger a fiscal crisis, analysts said.

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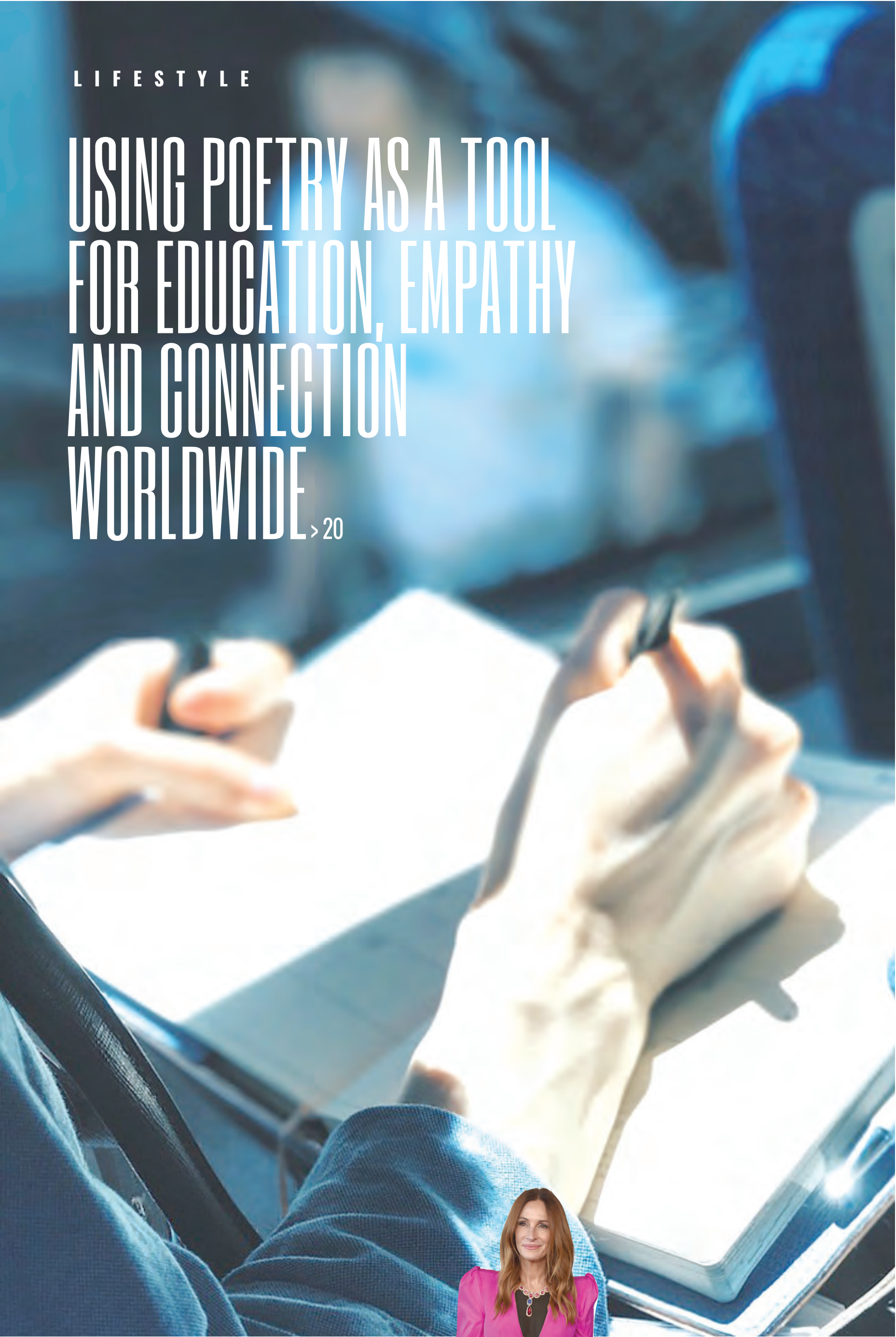
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L I F E S T Y L E

USING POETRY AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATION, EMPATHY AND CONNECTION WORLDWIDE > 20

HERITAGE

The Netherlands returns major fossil collection, including 'Java Man', to Indonesia



THE NETHERLANDS said it would give back a major fossil collection to Indonesia, granting its former colony's request to recover historical artefacts, including bones of the "Java Man", the first known fossils of the Homo erectus species from which humans are believed to have evolved.

"At Indonesia's request, the Netherlands is transferring more than 28,000 fossils from the Dubois collection... This collection is an important resource in research into human evolution", the Dutch government said in a statement on Friday.

It added it had taken that decision following the advice of the independent Colonial Collections Committee and that the Dutch Culture Minister Gouke Moes had handed his Indonesian counterpart Fadli Zon a letter announcing the move.

Eugène Dubois was a Dutch paleoanthropologist and geologist. He earned worldwide fame for his discovery in 1891, on the Indonesian island of Java, remains of what he then called Pithecanthropus erectus — later redesignated as Homo erectus — and also known as "Java Man".

In its statement, the Dutch government said the Colonial Collections Committee had come to the conclusion that the Dubois collection — currently in the university city of Leiden — never became the property of the Netherlands.

"In addition, the Committee considers that the circumstances under which the fossils were obtained make it plausible that they were taken against the will of the population and that the population was wronged by this", it added.

It is the sixth time the Netherlands returns artefacts based on the recommendations of that Committee.

Western museums have traditionally resisted appeals to return objects to their countries of origin, which they often argue lack the necessary resources to care for the works.

But in recent years, many have started to return artefacts looted or removed during the colonial era to the countries of origin. In 2022, Germany and the Horniman Museum, based in London, handed back sculptures known as Benin Bronzes to Nigeria.

Two years ago, the Netherlands repatriated more than 200 artefacts to Indonesia. —Reuters

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



ENTERTAINMENT

South Korean singer Joshua Hong of the boy band 17 poses upon arrival for The BoF 500 Gala at the Shangri-La Hotel in Paris, on the sidelines of the Paris Fashion Week Spring-Summer 2026. —AFP



FILM

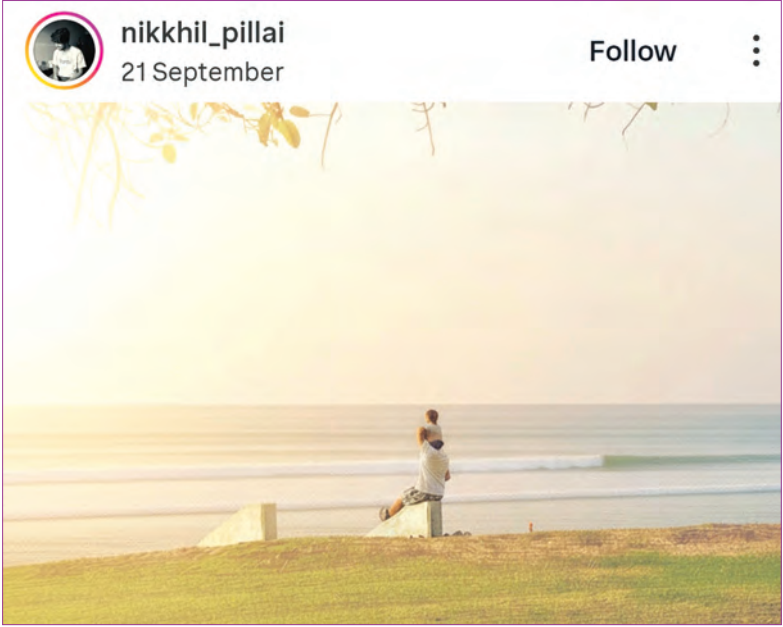
US actress Julia Roberts attends the special screening of Amazon MGM Studios' "After the Hunt" at the David Geffen Theatre at The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles. —AFP



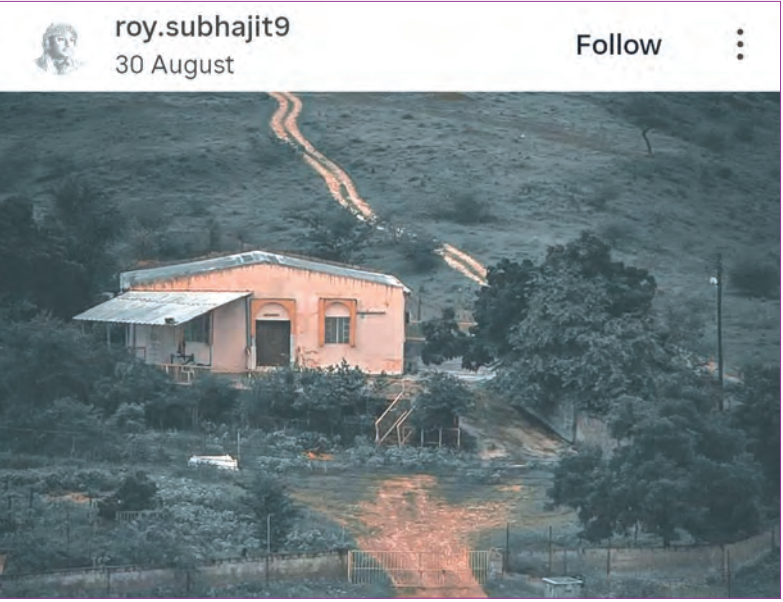
EXHIBIT

People visit an exhibition of North Korean art at a museum in Moscow, Russia. —AFP

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Fake Dalí artworks seized at exhibition in Italy



ITALIAN police have seized 21 suspected forgeries attributed to surrealist artist Salvador Dalí from an ongoing art exhibition, the Carabinieri said on Wednesday.

The artworks had only been on display for a few days at the “Dalí — Between Art and Myth” exhibition in the northern Italian city of Parma, the law enforcement agency said.

In a statement they said the seized objects include tapestries, drawings, prints and other artworks.

The same works had previously been shown in an exhibition with the same title in a museum in Rome. The Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, which manages and protects the artist’s intellectual property rights worldwide, had expressed concerns about their authenticity.

The Rome Public Prosecutor’s Office ordered the

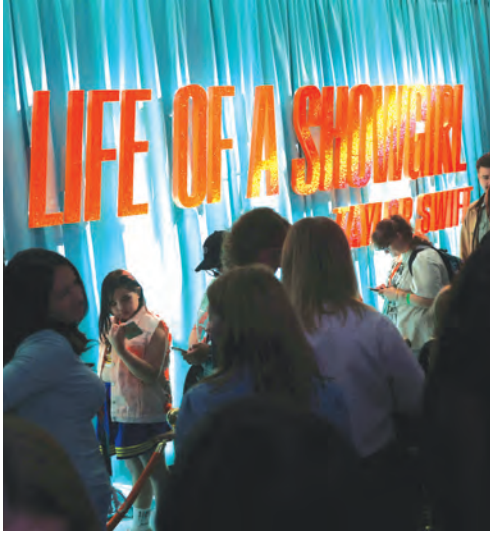
artworks seized following an investigation.

Dalí, who was born in 1904 in Figueres, Spain, died there in 1989, aged 84. His artworks are among the most expensive and sought-after in the art world, driven by his unique surrealist style and historical significance. His innovative imagery and limited originals make his work highly desirable for collectors and investors worldwide. However, the high market value has also led to an increase in forgeries, as counterfeiters attempt to exploit his fame.

Experts warn buyers to exercise caution and verify provenance through reputable authentication services to avoid fraud. Despite efforts to combat forgeries, Dalí’s iconic pieces continue to attract both admiration and illicit replication, underscoring the need for vigilance in art transactions. — dpa



Taylor Swift breaks streaming records with new ‘Showgirl’ album



TAYLOR SWIFT quickly set on Friday several streaming records with “The Life of a Showgirl”, her new album of bouncy pop songs about love, relationships, success — and score-settling — that had fans analysing every word.

Critical opinion of “Showgirl” ranged from glowing to unimpressed, but fans flocked to music platforms to hear the 12 tracks, breaking streaming records on Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon Music, the services said.

Swift reunited with Swedish hitmakers Max Martin and Shellback for her 12th studio album and their influence is clear in the driving beats and catchy hooks.

“I can’t tell you how proud I am to share this with you, an album that just feels so right”, the 35-year-old artist posted on Instagram.

On Spotify and Apple Music, the album became the most-streamed in one day in 2025 and on Amazon Music it broke an all-time record — surpassing a previous Swift album, “The Tortured Poets Department”.

Lead single “The Fate of Ophelia” also broke a first-day streaming record for 2025 on Apple Music and in “Spotify history”, the platforms said in statements online.

While the album still features plenty of introspection, it reveals a lighter, joyful Swift — in love with her NFL Super Bowl champion fiancé Travis Kelce, happy to have bought back her music catalog and proud of her record-shattering Eras Tour. “I just want you, have a couple kids, got the whole block

looking like you... Got me dreaming about a driveway with a basketball hoop”, she sings on the dreamy “Wish List”.

On “Opalite”, which Kelce has said is his favorite track, she says, “You were dancing through the lightning strikes / Sleepless in the onyx night / But now the sky is opalite”. “I used to have this dark fear that if I ever were truly, like, happy and...nurtured by a relationship — what happens if the writing just dries up?” Swift said.

“And it turns out that’s not the case at all”.

Elated fans worldwide snapped up tickets to special “release party” screenings in movie theatres — including the premiere of the video for lead single “The Fate of Ophelia”.

In Melbourne, Swifties — many dressed in orange, the artist’s signature colour for the album — were among the first to dance and sing to “Showgirl”。“I love the album”, Kerry Brookes, a 54-year-old British IT manager attending a screening in the suburbs of Washington, said.

“I’m just interested to see what she has to say about it”, said Brookes, who was wearing a showgirl headpiece and a feather boa.

— ‘Only as hot as your last hit’ — “Showgirl” represents a shift from the folksy pandemic-era “Folklore” and “Evermore” in 2020, the pensive “Midnights” in 2022 and the introspective “Tortured Poets” last year.

Swift said ahead of the release that the new album “comes from the most infectiously joyful, wild,

dramatic place I was in in my life”.

Some of that drama comes through on “Elizabeth Taylor”, on which she sings: “You’re only as hot as your last hit”. Then she goes for the jugular on “Father Figure”, a reinvention of late pop crooner George Michael’s hit of the same name in which she skewers power dynamics in the music business.

She could be singling out Big Machine Records founder Scott Borchetta, who discovered Swift when she was a teen and Scooter Braun, who bought the label and took control of the master recordings of her first six albums.

“You want a fight, you found it / I’ve got the place surrounded / You’ll be sleeping with the fishes before you know you’re drowning”, she sings. Fans are also musing that “Actually Romantic” is a diss track referring to a rumored feud with pop singer Charli XCX.

“Showgirl” is available on streaming platforms. Special editions are for sale at retail giant Target, including the “Portofino orange glitter vinyl” or the “summertime spritz pink shimmer vinyl”.

Aside from the “Ophelia” video, the weekend screenings feature behind-the-scenes footage and lyric videos. The one-off cinematic event is estimated to gross \$30-50 million, according to film industry website Deadline.

“And now I know the life of a showgirl”, Swift sings in the title track featuring pop princess Sabrina Carpenter, who opened for her at some Eras Tour stops.

“Wouldn’t have it any other way”. — AFP



USING POETRY AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATION, EMPATHY AND CONNECTION WORLDWIDE

LIJU CHERIAN

IN 2012, she became the first Omani poet to publish a collection in German, titled Schönheit des Herzens (Beauty of the Heart). This milestone not only marked her international debut but also laid the groundwork for her evolving role as a cultural ambassador for Oman, using poetry and art to amplify Omani voices on the global stage.

Lubna al Balushi's work is defined by its ability to transcend borders and languages, uniting people through shared human experiences. Fluent in Arabic, English, German and Balochi, she crafts poetry that celebrates the richness of Oman's heritage while fostering understanding across diverse cultures.

Her journey has seen her emerge as a

attention, with features in media outlets such as Switzerland's Neue Zürcher Zeitung and her exhibitions have been held at prominent venues in Muscat, including Bait Al Baranda and Bait Al Zubair.

Lubna's influence extends into academia as well. She collaborates with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) to develop educational programmes that explore poetry's role in nurturing empathy, emotional intelligence and cultural awareness. To her, poetry is more than art; it is a powerful tool for social cohesion and personal transformation.

Looking to the future, Lubna envisions a global 'Poetry Tour' that goes beyond mere readings. She hopes to create vibrant platforms for intercultural exchange, where words serve as bridges — connecting not just continents, but hearts and minds. Her aim is to demonstrate poetry's relevance in today's interconnected world, fostering conversations that cross boundaries and



key figure in cultural dialogue, seamlessly weaving Omani traditions into the fabric of international conversations.

Her latest publication, Faces from the Land of Tolerance (2024), launched at the Muscat International Book Fair, exemplifies this approach. A collaborative effort with German photographer Anja Menzel, the book marries visual artistry with poetry to depict Oman's landscapes and cultural identity, emphasising themes of acceptance and community. It's a vivid reminder of her commitment to showcasing Oman's story through innovative, cross-disciplinary projects.

Beyond her books, Lubna's voice resonates through her participation in literary festivals, cultural events and community initiatives. She has appeared at Arab Cultural Week in Hamburg and the Heart to Heart readings in Oman, transforming poetry into a means of fostering empathy and dialogue. Her work has garnered international

build understanding.

Her dedication to cultural preservation is evident through her involvement with initiatives supported by Unesco to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. She remains committed to elevating Oman's traditional artistry on the international stage, ensuring that the nation's voice endures amidst global discourse.

As she prepares to release new collections — like her forthcoming Once Upon a Heart, which explores nostalgia and the voice within — it is clear that Lubna sees poetry as a universal language. Her work encourages reflection and connection, reminding us all of the enduring power of words to inspire, heal and unite.

Through her poetry and cultural initiatives, Lubna al Balushi continues to demonstrate that the art of storytelling can serve as a vital bridge — linking diverse backgrounds and fostering a deeper understanding of our shared humanity.