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IN BRIEF

OMAN, INDONESIA EYE AVIATION HUB

A partnership between Oman’s Mach Aerospace International and Indonesia’s GMF AeroAsia is targeting investment of about RO 25.4 million in aircraft maintenance, engineering training and component manufacturing, as Oman seeks to develop an aviation industry serving domestic and overseas markets. Preliminary studies put the combined investment requirement at approximately \$66 million, said Dr Abdullah bin Masoud al Harthi, Chairman of Mach Aerospace International. The proposed aircraft structural components factory accounts for targeted capital investment of RO 12.6 million, he said.

DETAILS ON P15

Voting opens on topics for ‘Together Forward 2027’ forum

MUSCAT: The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers has invited members of the public to vote and help identify priority topics for the fifth edition of the ‘Together Forward’ forum, to be held across the Sultanate of Oman’s governorates in 2027. Voting on the forum’s topics through its website (www.togetherfwd.om) will close on October 18.

The General Secretariat is preparing to launch the fifth edition of the forum next year across the governorates, building on its role as an annual national platform for constructive dialogue and strengthening public participation and communication between the government and the society.

The forum provides an opportunity to discuss policies and development issues in each governorate and the aspirations of its residents, reinforcing the community’s role in shaping the agenda for dialogue, and ensuring that the topics reflect citizens’ interests and local needs.

The expansion reflects efforts to strengthen community participation in setting priorities for the next phase across the governorates, with events held alternately with the main forum in Muscat Governorate. It also seeks to contribute in shaping future policies and strategies that meet community aspirations by providing opportunities for citizens to share their views, experiences and proposals.

The voting process allows citizens to select topics through the Together Forward online platform, using a registration system linked to their permanent address in the Civil Status Register. The platform also enables them to propose additional topics they consider more suitable for discussion during the forum in their respective governorates.

In its fifth edition, the forum will continue its approach of involving the community in setting the dialogue agenda. A range of topics will be presented for public voting to gauge local community aspirations and identify priority issues, with the results used to shape the agenda of the forum’s meetings. — ONA

PHOTOGRAPHER WINS FIRST PLACE



Omani photographer Mahmoud bin Mohammed al Jabri won first place in the ‘Pictures from My Beautiful Country’ competition, organised by the Arab Photographers Union on the sidelines of the Sharjah Calligraphy Forum 2026, with the participation of 36 photographers who presented photographic works documenting the beauty of Arab cities and their historical and heritage landmarks.

Oman condemns attacks on Saudi civilian facilities

SEVERAL HURT IN RIYADH AIRPORT ATTACK, OPERATIONS SUSPENDED

SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDI, Foreign Minister, and Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Saudi Foreign Minister, held a telephone conversation on Saturday during which they exchanged views on regional developments.

Sayyid Badr expressed the Sultanate of Oman’s solidarity with Saudi Arabia and its rejection of the targeting of civilian facilities or any actions that threaten the Kingdom’s security and the safety of civilians.

The two ministers stressed the importance of continued coordination and consultation and of strengthening efforts to contain tensions and consolidate de-escalation, paving the way for political dialogue and the peaceful resolution of issues and crises to safeguard the region’s security and stability.

NEW ATTACKS Several people were wounded in an attack on King Khalid International Airport in Saudi Arabia’s capital Riyadh on Saturday that forced a suspension of operations, the country’s civil aviation authority said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but it comes amid an escalation of missile strikes by Yemen’s Ansar Allah. The airport had already been struck in two earlier attacks last week that left four people dead.

One eyewitness at the airport on Saturday reported seeing an explosion and then multiple people lying injured on the ground inside. More than a dozen ambulances were seen rushing towards the facility.



An Ansar Allah supporter holds a mock missile as he joins a rally in Sanaa, Yemen. — Reuters

Following the attack, US President Donald Trump, speaking to reporters outside the White House, was asked whether the United States planned to join Saudi strikes on Ansar Allah fighters.

“We may. We’re going to look at it. We just found out about the recent attack, so we’ll make a decision. We move very quickly,” he said. The US embassy in Riyadh said it was “aware of attacks” and “strongly recommends all US citizens avoid this airport and surrounding areas.”

The UK and Irish embassies in Saudi Arabia said in statements on X that they were also aware of a “serious incident” at the airport. The Canadian embassy said that “ongoing military activity” had impacted operations at the airport. Kuwait Airways said it had cancelled flights to and from the Saudi capital due to what it described as the closure of Riyadh airport because of the “security situation” there. — Agencies

Oman offers unique tourism experience, says Italian media

ROME: Italian tourism media outlets highlighted the Sultanate of Oman’s attractions, development projects, and diverse tourism experiences in their coverage of the visit of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, to the Italian Republic. The coverage included the minister’s meetings with representatives of the tourism sector and Italian media, and the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the fields of heritage and museums.

Alessandro Giuli, Minister of Culture of Italy, said that the signing of the MoU between the Sultanate of Oman and the Italian Republic

in the fields of cultural heritage and museums opens a new chapter of cooperation between the two countries and lays the foundation for joint initiatives in the field of heritage.

In a post on Instagram, the minister pointed to the deep-rooted friendship between the Sultanate of Oman and Italy, saying that it is based on thousands of years of cultural exchange and a shared approach built on dialogue and peacebuilding.

The Italian minister of culture said that the memorandum of understanding paves the way for enhanced cooperation in preserving the cultural heritage of both countries and developing joint initiatives in the



The Sultanate of Oman is focusing on developing a sustainable tourism sector.

areas of protection, restoration, and showcasing cultural heritage adding that will support cultural partnership and promote awareness of the richness of their shared heritage.

The minister’s post highlights Italy’s interest in developing cultural cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman and the MoU’s role as a foundation for expanding joint work in the fields of heritage and museums, and deepening cultural ties between the two countries.

The minister stressed the Sultanate of Oman’s focus on developing a sustainable tourism sector that combines the preservation of cultural and natural heritage with

the diversification of products and services and the expansion of investment opportunities. He underscored the importance of the Italian market and the strengthening of partnerships with those working in the travel and tourism industry.

In a report titled ‘Oman: A Tourism Boom Amidst New Agreements and Major Projects,’ the trade publication GuidaViaggi’ covered the meeting of the minister of heritage and tourism with the Italian press in Rome, highlighting his message inviting visitors to discover the Sultanate of Oman and enjoy its authenticity, natural beauty and hospitality of the Sultanate of Oman. **TURN TO P2**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi with Amrit Bahadur Rai, Foreign Secretary of Nepal, in Kathmandu on Friday. — ONA

OMAN AND NEPAL DISCUSS ENHANCING BILATERAL TIES

KATHMANDU: During the second session of political consultations held in the Nepalese capital, Kathmandu, the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Nepal discussed existing bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and prospects for enhancing cooperation across several fields.

The Omani side was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Nepalese side was led by Amrit Bahadur Rai, Foreign Secretary of Nepal.

The consultations addressed opportunities for cooperation in investment, education, cultural exchange, agricultural products, fertilisers, and air transport, contributing to the boost of trade and investment exchange and the expansion of joint economic cooperation. They also discussed several consular matters and bilateral agreements, alongside exchanging views on regional developments.

The meeting was attended by Ambassador Issa bin Saleh al Shibani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of India; Ambassador Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Mohammad al Hosni, Head of the Asia and Pacific Department at the Foreign Ministry; and a number of officials from both sides.

On the sidelines of the consultations, Shaikh Al Harthi discussed fields of bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries during his meetings with Nepal’s Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Environment, as well as the Minister of Youth, Labor, and Employment. — ONA

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

As plant-based meat alternatives gain attention around the world, a study by Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has explored whether such products could find a place in the diets of young Omanis, where meat remains closely associated with hospitality, generosity and social traditions.

The study, conducted by Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rizeiqi, from the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, examined the factors influencing young Omanis’ intentions to consume plant-based meat. Published in the Journal of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, the study used the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a framework commonly applied to understand how attitudes, social influences and perceived control shape people’s decisions.

In Oman, meat has traditionally held an important place in the local diet and social life. It is a familiar feature of family gatherings, celebrations



Attitudes, cultural influences and the social environment may play an important role in determining whether consumers are willing to consider alternatives. — This is an AI-generated image.

and occasions of hospitality, making dietary shifts particularly relevant to the country’s cultural context.

The study found that attitudes, perceived behavioural control and social influence together accounted for more than half of the variation in participants’ intentions to consume plant-

based meat.

Among these factors, personal attitudes emerged as the strongest influence. The finding points to the role of consumers’ perceptions of the health and environmental benefits associated with plant-based alternatives. Perceived behavioural control ranked second, reflecting individuals’

willingness and confidence in their ability to change or regulate their food choices.

Social influence, including the role of family, friends and wider social circles, ranked third. Although it had a weaker influence than the other two factors, it still showed a statistically significant relationship with

participants’ intentions.

The study also identified a gender difference. Female students expressed a greater intention to shift towards plant-based meat options than male students, while educational level was not found to have a statistically significant effect.

The findings suggest that

US report praises Oman’s anti-trafficking legislation

OMAN HAS retained its Tier 2 standing in the 2026 US State Department Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, capping off a year marked by legislative overhauls and expanded survivor safeguards.

The rating recognises the Sultanate of Oman’s active momentum to dismantle trafficking networks, overhaul worker protection laws, and expand access to emergency care.

The report highlighted Oman’s continuous efforts to upgrade its national anti-trafficking ecosystem by modernising legislation, expanding protection and care services for victims, raising the operational readiness of law enforcement agencies, scaling up prevention programmes, and expanding international cooperation in this field.

The report noted the enactment of the 2025 Law on Combating Human Trafficking, which bolstered the legislative framework by imposing stiffer penalties, broadening the definition of trafficking crimes to cover various forms of exploitation, and introducing statutory provisions to reinforce victim protection and safeguard survivor rights.

Furthermore, the report outlined that Oman continued to streamline



The report acknowledged new regulations issued by the Ministry of Labor in October 2025 designed to enhance domestic worker protections.

The US report highlighted the 2025 Law on Combating Human Trafficking, which imposed stiffer penalties, broadening the definition of trafficking crimes to cover various forms of exploitation

victim identification and referral procedures to specialised care centres.

The government provides comprehensive protection services, including shelter, food, medical care, legal aid, counselling, and financial allowances, along with alternative legal options for foreign victims regarding residency and employment.

The report pointed to the ongoing operation of specialised anti-trafficking units within the Royal Oman Police and the Office of the Public Prosecution, alongside dedicated training programmes

for law enforcement personnel and strengthened bilateral cooperation with foreign governments on law enforcement measures.

On the prevention front, the report referenced the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT) and its continued implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2024-2026). Efforts included expanding public awareness campaigns—specifically targeting groups most vulnerable to trafficking risks—and enhancing reporting channels, including promoting the dedicated human trafficking hotline.

Additionally, the report acknowledged new regulations issued by the Ministry of Labor in October 2025 designed to enhance domestic worker protections. It also noted Oman’s expanded cooperation with labour-sending countries through memorandums of understanding, executive action programmes, and bilateral agreements.

These ongoing measures reflect the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to continually refining its national anti-trafficking framework, safeguarding victims, preventing crime, and furthering international cooperation in law enforcement. — ONA

Oman offers unique tourism experience, says Italian media

FROM PI

The publication highlighted the importance of the visit in strengthening partnerships with the Italian tourism industry, introducing development plans that support the tourism sector’s role in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040, and highlighting the attractions that distinguish the Sultanate of Oman, most notably its nature, authenticity, and high-quality hospitality.

Travel Quotidiano published a report titled ‘Oman: New Investments to Expand Tourism Offerings,’ which covered the presentations made by the minister of culture and heritage



during his meeting Italian journalists in Rome, in the presence of HH Sayyid Nizar bin Al Julanda al Said, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Italian Republic, with the participation of the Oman Tourism Representation Office in Italy.

The report highlighted the Sultanate of Oman’s focus on investment and diversifying its tourism offerings through the development of accommodation facilities and infrastructure, promoting sustainability, and providing experiences linked to the diversity of destinations, from the mountainous regions to the coasts and the south of the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

SQU study looks at Omanis’ readiness to embrace plant-based food

education and academic knowledge alone may not be sufficient to change established dietary habits. Instead, attitudes, cultural influences and the social environment may play an important role in determining whether consumers are willing to consider alternatives to conventional meat.

The study recommends greater support for plant-based meat products, including strengthening their availability in the market and developing awareness initiatives that address both consumers’ knowledge and emotional responses to food choices.

Such efforts, the study suggests, could contribute to a changing food culture in Oman by expanding the range of available dietary choices while addressing health and environmental considerations.

As Oman’s food landscape continues to evolve, the findings raise a broader question: whether plant-based meat can move beyond being an emerging alternative and become part of the country’s changing culinary landscape.

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SHORT TAKES



The Oman Science Festival is a pioneering national initiative to promote scientific awareness.

Oman Science Festival
signs private-sector
cooperation agreements

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The Ministry of Education has signed cooperation agreements with private-sector institutions to support the fifth edition of the Oman Science Festival, aimed at expanding its scientific programmes and enhancing interactive learning experiences for students and visitors.

The signing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, in the presence of Dr Intisar bint Abdullah Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Educational Support Programmes and Chairperson of the Main Festival Committee. The partnerships aim to strengthen the resources available for the festival, broaden its activities and promote a culture of science, technology and innovation, while encouraging greater private-sector participation in national initiatives focused on education and scientific capacity-building.

Dr Maya bint Said al Azri, Director-General of Scientific Innovation and Artificial Intelligence at the Ministry of Education and Chairperson of the festival's Scientific Committee, in her speech said that building the future begins with science and that investment in people is fundamental to progress. She stressed the importance of preparing future generations with the skills needed to adapt to scientific and technological advances and contribute to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Maya described the Oman Science Festival as a pioneering national initiative to promote scientific awareness and showcase developments in science, technology and innovation.

Reviewing the impact of the festival's previous four editions, she said they had attracted more than 840,000 visitors.

The fourth edition featured more than 140 institutions from various sectors, reflecting growing community and institutional participation.

Muscat to get water from
Wadi Dayqah dam in 2027

YOUSEF AL HABSI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

THE MAIN water network in Muscat Governorate will receive purified water from Wadi Dayqah Dam in a step that reflects the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to build a more resilient and sustainable water system.

Nama Water Services is working on a project to construct a water purification plant at Wadi Dayqah Dam in the Wilayat of Qurayat with the aim of enhancing water security and improving the supply system readiness by diversifying water sources and ensuring water availability. The project is part of efforts to enhance the strategic water supply system to keep pace with population and urban growth and to bolster the sustainability and reliability of water services. The project is currently 57 per cent complete and is expected to be fully operational by May 2027.

Eng Hassan bin Abdullah al Farsi, General Manager of Projects at Nama Water Services, said that the project will generate about 100 job opportunities, and the priority will be given to residents of the Wilayat of Qurayat. He added that the Wadi Dayqah Dam water purification plant is part of an integrated system aimed at utilising available water resources and maximising their efficient use. It also strengthens partnerships between institutions in the water sector, supporting the sustainability of water resources and meeting current and future needs.

He noted that the purified water is stored in a 20,000 cubic metre reservoir, which is being constructed as part of the project facilities adjacent to the Wadi Dayqah Dam while the purification plant itself has a daily capacity of approximately 65,000 cubic metres.

Eng Nadia bint Juma al Balushi, Director of Public-Private



The project is part of efforts to enhance the strategic water supply system to keep pace with population growth and to bolster the reliability of water services. The project is currently 57 per cent complete and is expected to be live by May 2027

Approximately 35,000 cubic metres per day of the produced water will be allocated to the drinking water network in the Wilayat of Qurayat and connected to the water network in of Muscat



The project involves the construction of a 7-kilometre-long, 900-millimetre-diameter water pipeline to transport water from the dam to the purification plant.

Partnership Projects at Nama Water Services and Project Manager of the Wadi Dayqah Dam Water Purification Plant, said that the project involves the construction of a 7-kilometre-long, 900-millimetre-diameter water pipeline to transport water from the dam to the purification plant.

It also involves the construction of an integrated pumping station connected to the treatment system, enabling efficient water transfer from the dam site to the purification and storage facilities. She said that approximately 35,000 cubic metres per day of the produced water will be allocated to the drinking water network in the Wilayat of Qurayat and connected to the water network in the Governorate of Muscat. This

is in addition to another 30,000 cubic metres per day which will be allocated to agricultural irrigation in the Wilayat of Qurayat.

The project also includes the construction of a collection tank with a storage capacity of 20,000 cubic metres, which is connected to the main water transmission network in the Muscat Governorate, providing additional capacity to store water and regulate its pumping and distribution according to the network's needs, and enhancing operational flexibility and responsiveness to demand requirements, in addition to supporting the future readiness of the water system in the governorate, she concluded.

Photos by Abdulwahid al Hamdani

Labour ministry to streamline private training centres

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) is stepping up efforts to boost Oman's private training sector by ensuring that programmes are increasingly aligned with the needs of the labour market.

Mahfoodha bint Mubarak al Araimi, Director-General of Private Training Institutions at the MoL, said the development of the private training sector is a key component of building a national skills development ecosystem.

As part of its efforts to improve the investment environment, the ministry is preparing a risk register for an initiative aimed at enhancing investment in private training institutions. The register will help identify potential challenges and establish appropriate mechanisms to address them.

In addition, a document is being

prepared to identify training fields with investment potential in coordination with the Employment Governance Committees for economic sectors in their first and second phases.

Al Araimi emphasised that investment in training should not be measured simply by an increase in the number of institutions or programmes. Rather, its value lies in the sector's ability to deliver high-quality training that improves the readiness of national talent and equips them with technical, professional and technological skills required by a changing economy.

The ministry is placing particular



MAHFOODHA
AL ARAIMI
Director-General,
MoL



Oman has 62 licensed private training centres operating across the governorates, offering 819 accredited training courses and employing 637 accredited administrative and training personnel.

emphasis on vocational, technical and professional training provided by private institutions, given its importance in developing practical and technical skills and supplying the labour market with qualified personnel.

Al Araimi said expanding into these areas would create new

opportunities for investors and private training institutions, diversify the services available and support the transition towards more flexible and varied training models.

According to private training sector indicators, Oman currently has 62 licensed private training institutions operating across

the governorates, offering 819 accredited training programmes and employing 637 accredited administrative and training personnel. The number of approvals issued for training visas stood at 150, while 122 visits were conducted to private training institutions for various purposes.

The Directorate-General of Private Training Institutions also carried out 19 classification visits to assess and classify institutions, improve the quality of their outcomes and strengthen oversight and supervision.

Al Araimi stressed that the development of the private training sector is directly linked to strengthening quality assurance, oversight and supervision.

These measures are intended to ensure compliance with approved standards and requirements while improving the quality of training services provided to beneficiaries.

SPOTLIGHT



SEE MUTTRAH FROM
SEA TO MOUNTAIN

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

MUTTRAH IS set to enhance its tourism landscape through the Muttrah Cable Car project, connecting the port with mountain heights and Hay Al Ward Park along a 3-kilometre route. Combining adventure, entertainment, culture and dining, the cable car offers visitors a fresh perspective on the waterfront and historic landmarks.

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, said that the ministry views the project as a strategic addition to Muscat Governorate’s bouquet of tourism options rather than just a standalone entertainment attraction.

“The Muttrah Cable Car is a distinctive project that adds to the diversity of tourism experiences in the wilayat,” Al Busaidi said, noting that it aims to boost regional competitiveness, extend visitor stays, and increase spending across local tourism services.

The project leverages Muttrah’s rare geographical asset: bringing sea, mountains, and a historic city together in a single area. It is especially well-suited for cruise passengers and short-stay international visitors looking for an enriched itinerary.

Khalid bin Said al Nabhani, Chairman of Muttrah Cable Car Company, detailed the project’s infrastructure. The system features 18 cabins (including two VIP cabins), each holding eight passengers, giving the cable car a capacity of 800 passengers per hour.

The first is the Port Station, located between Muttrah Fish Market and the Muttrah Waterfront project. The route then passes through the Summit Station, located between Muttrah Fort and Al Riyam Park, before ending at the Hay Al Ward Station inside the park near the Muscat Gate.

The cable car system comprises 18 cabins, including two VIP cabins. Each cabin can accommodate eight passengers, giving the project a capacity of 800 passengers per hour.

The Port Station is located close to Muttrah Souq and the cruise ship terminal and serves as the main starting point for visitors and cruise passengers. It includes a ticketing and visitor reception area, as well as cafes and other services.

From the station, the cable car route heads towards the summit, passing over a number of sites and landmarks that form part of Muttrah’s urban and tourism landscape.

SUMMIT STATION
Al Nabhani said the Summit Station, located between Muttrah Fort and Al Riyam Park, forms the centrepiece of the project’s tourism experiences.

It offers a 360-degree view of Muttrah and the waterfront and includes a range of facilities and services combining entertainment, culture, restaurants and cafes.

The station’s components include an open-air events theatre and viewing platforms. The theatre is an open-air mountain amphitheatre with a capacity of more than 1,000 visitors and overlooks the sea from its elevated position.

It will host concerts, national celebrations and evening

ROUTE AND DISTANCE
The Muttrah Cable Car route spans approximately 3 km, connecting the Muttrah Port waterfront, mountain heights, and Hay Al Ward Park.

THREE MAIN STATIONS:

PORT STATION: The Muttrah Fish Market and the Waterfront; serves as the main entry point.

SUMMIT STATION:
Situated between Muttrah Fort and Al Riyam Park.

HAY AL WARD STATION:
Located inside Hay Al Ward Park near the Muscat Gate.

CAPACITY AND FACILITIES: The system features 18 cabins (including 2 VIP cabins), each accommodating 8 passengers, providing a total capacity of 800 passengers per hour.

KEY SUMMIT STATION ATTRACTIONS: An open-air mountain amphitheatre with seating for over 1,000 visitors.

INTERACTIVE & DIGITAL CULTURAL FEATURES: The Summit Station will house “Miniature Oman” and the “Digital Muttrah House”.

COMMERCIAL & SME OPPORTUNITIES: The development includes 23 commercial units and restaurants.

performances, in addition to restaurants, cafes and shops featuring international brands opening in the Sultanate of Oman for the first time.

The station will also feature the “Miniature Oman” experience, showcasing models of Oman’s historic and modern landmarks.

Another component of the Summit Station is the “Digital Muttrah House”, an indoor experience inspired by the stories, heritage and atmosphere of Muttrah.

Al Nabhani said the experience combines digital storytelling, visual presentation technologies and artificial intelligence, along with activities aimed at families.

The third station is located inside Al Ward District Park near the Muscat Gate. It has been designed as a place for relaxation and viewing the sea and waves. The station includes retail units, restaurants and cafes, a landscaped outdoor plaza, fountains and shaded seating areas.

Al Nabhani said the station would serve as a second departure point for visitors wishing to travel up to the Summit Station, adding another access point linked to the waterfront.

It will allow visitors to choose their starting and ending points according to their route through the wilayat.

The historic and heritage character of Muttrah makes preserving its identity a key consideration for any new tourism project.

Al Busaidi said identity is a fundamental element in developing any tourism destination, particularly Muttrah, which has a distinctive architectural, historical and cultural identity.

Al Busaidi said there are broad opportunities to link the cable car

experience with the historical and heritage landmarks of Muttrah, given the diversity of tourism and historical assets in the wilayat and surrounding areas.

Al Busaidi said the economic value of tourism projects is also measured by their impact on surrounding activities. As visitor numbers increase and experiences become more diverse, opportunities expand for restaurants, cafes, retail outlets, tour operators, travel and tourism companies, tour guides, artisans, small and medium enterprises and other tourism-related businesses.

Asked about projects supporting the cable car, Al Nabhani said Sabeen Investment Company, in cooperation with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, has launched a number of projects serving the development and contributing to the growth of SMEs.

The project also includes strategic partnerships with government entities and government-owned companies, while providing opportunities for SMEs to participate in associated projects and helping localise certain specialised professions.

He noted that the project includes 23 commercial units and restaurants distributed among the stations according to the nature and function of each location.

The current phase focuses on completing operational tests in cooperation with the Swiss company and the European organisation specialising in cable-car systems and related certification.

According to Al Nabhani, the tests are being conducted under the supervision of a specialised team before the launch.

SHORT TAKES



Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain, presents the medal to Dr Ahmed bin Jumaa al Riyami, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of UTAS.

UTAS’S DR AL RIYAMI RECEIVES GCC CIVIL SERVICE MEDAL

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Dr Ahmed bin Jumaa al Riyami, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Administrative and Financial Affairs and Official Spokesperson of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), has been awarded the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Civil Service Medal in recognition of his contributions to civil service, administrative development and institutional advancement.

The honour was presented during a ceremony held in the Kingdom of Bahrain under the auspices of Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain, and attended by the Secretary-General of the GCC. The ceremony honoured distinguished Gulf professionals in civil service, social affairs and labour.

The award recognises Dr Al Riyami’s career spanning more than 27 years in higher education and civil service, during which he held seven senior leadership positions, including deanships at the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Ibbi, Sur and Al Rustaq, and roles in quality assurance and academic support affairs.

Dr Al Riyami contributed to the institutional transformation that led to the establishment of UTAS through the merger of technical colleges and colleges of applied sciences.

He also played a role in developing the University’s organisational structure and administrative frameworks, as well as overseeing the placement of more than 1,800 employees within the new structure.

His contributions also included initiatives to develop human resources, strengthen administrative and financial governance, improve employment procedures and enhance institutional accountability.

Calls for evening hours at Muttrah Fish Market

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 10

CALLS ARE growing to keep the Muttrah Fish Market open through the evening, a move patrons, fishmongers, hoteliers say would boost local business, offer more flexible shopping for Muscat residents, and spark vibrant night activity along the Sea Road waterfront.

As of now, the bustle of fishermen unloading their boats and the familiar haggling is the morning rhythm of Muttrah Fish Market till 2 pm, after which the shutters are down and the wave-shaped building falls silent.

Vendors say the business could double and more Omanis can take part if a second shift starting from evening till midnight .

“Small boats go out at night and come back in the morning. But many boats now bring a second catch in the afternoon from Al Seeb, Barka and Qurayat,” said fisherman Mohammed al Wuhai-bi. “That catch goes to Mawaleh. If Muttrah opens in the evening, it will help us and the customers will get fresher fish for dinner.”

Restaurant owners in Muttrah and Muscat echo the sentiment. With seafood restaurants reporting full houses during dinner time, they are forced to buy fish in the morning and store it on ice for 12 hours.

“I will be able to serve fresh fish for my dinner guests if I am able to buy it in the evening,” said a restaurant owner who serves both local customers and foreign tourists near the fish market.

Vendors are ready, but they want support. “We have the facility - air-conditioning, lights, cleaning area, ice plant. We can work



Vendors at the market say the business could double and more Omanis can take part if a second shift starting from evening till midnight.

“We have the facility - air-conditioning, lights, cleaning area, ice plant. We can work if the Municipality allows. Parking and regular supply need to be managed. If there are customers, we will be there

ANWAR ALI
A VENDOR

if the Municipality allows,” said Anwar Ali, a vendor at the market. “Parking and regular supply need to be managed. If there are customers, we will be there.”

Social media too is buzzing with the demand. Many residents have taken to X and Instagram asking Muscat Municipality to consider evening hours, at least on week-ends - Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 5 pm to 9 pm.

For many tourists too, the early closure is seen as a missed opportunity for a market that sits at the heart of Oman’s top tourism landmark.

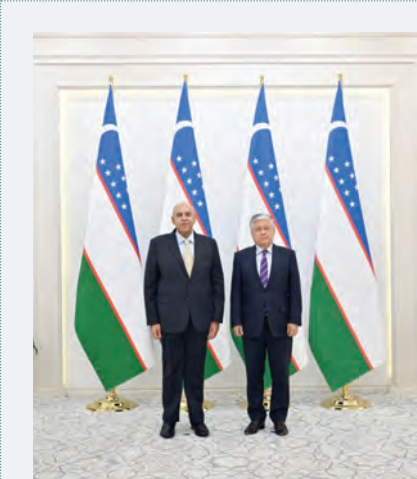
“The Muttrah Sea Road comes alive after 5 pm,” says Salim al Farsi, a resident of Amerat who works in Ruwi. “Families, tourists, visitors from the cruise ships - everyone is here in the evening. But the fish market is closed. We have to buy frozen fish from supermarkets even though the sea is right in

front of us.”

When contacted, a board member from Muscat Municipality said that the issue of the fish market and evening operations has been raised over the years in both the state’s Maritime Heritage Committee and the Municipal Affairs Committee but there are some challenges.

“The challenges stem from the fishermen’s deeply ingrained culture of working in the morning and the perceived lack of economic viability for evening operations,” he said.

The Muttrah Fish Market, rebuilt by Muscat Municipality and opened in 2017, is one of the most photographed landmarks of the capital. Designed to reflect the maritime heritage of Muttrah. An estimate shows that around 1,500 people visit the market on weekdays and almost double on weekends.



OMAN AND UZBEKISTAN DISCUSS STRENGTHENING BILATERAL TIES

TASHKENT: Oman and Uzbekistan have discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations, expand cooperation and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The discussions took place during a meeting between Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Bahramjon Aliyev, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of

Uzbekistan, at the Uzbek Foreign Ministry headquarters in Tashkent. The meeting focused on enhancing cooperation between the two friendly countries and exploring ways to further develop bilateral relations.

The two sides also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common interest. Wafa bint Jabr al Busaidi, Oman’s Ambassador to Uzbekistan, and a number of officials from both countries attended the meeting. — **ONA**

Bisya-Salut centre showcases 5,000 years of history

BAHLA: The Bisya and Salut Archaeological Site Visitor Centre in Bahla, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, is offering researchers and heritage enthusiasts insights into around 5,000 years of human settlement in Oman, highlighting the country’s ancient history, trade links and cultural heritage.

The centre showcases archaeological finds from the site, documenting aspects of early human life and the region’s commercial connections with ancient civilisations.

Its exhibits introduce visitors to the site’s architectural features, including forts, towers, cemeteries and the remains of an ancient village. Artefacts and structures



The centre showcases archaeological finds and documents aspects of early human life.

provide insights into life during the Bronze Age, Iron Age and early Islamic period, while demonstrating the construction skills, craftsmanship and water management practices of ancient inhabitants.

Ali bin Saif al Shukaili, Director of the Bisya and

Salut Archaeological Site Visitor Centre, said the site’s historical and archaeological significance lies in its 5,000-year timeline and the evidence it provides of human settlement.

The discoveries shed light on how communities lived, interacted with their

surrounding environment and made use of available natural resources, he said.

Al Shukaili noted that the findings also offer insights into how ancient inhabitants sourced and managed water to meet their daily needs.

Some artefacts point to trade links between the region and areas including India, the Indus Valley region of Sindh, the Levant and Mesopotamia.

These discoveries enable researchers to examine cultural interaction and exchange between Oman and other civilisations of the ancient world, giving the site archaeological and scientific significance beyond its geographical boundaries. — **ONA**

محافظة مسقط

Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (38/2026)

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Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
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PRE-26-058	Supply of Paint Materials for MM (Unit Rate)	19/10/2026	26/10/2026
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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Security personnel detain a supporter of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) during a protest in New Delhi. — Reuters

India detains thousands, locks down Delhi to foil protests

NEW DELHI: Police detained more than 2,000 protesters and the founder of the “Cockroach” youth movement in Delhi on Saturday as security forces locked down parts of the capital to thwart a rally demanding the resignation of India’s election chief. Thousands of police and paramilitary personnel were deployed across the city, mobile Internet services were suspended in the central business district and dozens of metro stations and markets were shut as authorities moved to stop a demonstration organised by the Cockroach movement.

The protest was aimed at Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over a revision of voter lists that critics say disproportionately benefits Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The movement had planned to gather thousands of people at Jantar Mantar in central Delhi, but the area was sealed off by security forces before the demonstration began.

A home ministry official said that more than 2,000 people were detained in Delhi. Local media said about 400 protesters were held in India’s financial hub, Mumbai. — AFP

Israeli strikes kill five people in Gaza, say medics



People mourn Palestinians who were killed in an Israeli air strike in Gaza City. — Reuters

CAIRO: Israeli strikes killed at least five Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in two separate attacks on Saturday, health officials said. Medics said an Israeli strike killed four people near Panda Mall in Gaza City, while another killed one person in the Tuffah neighbourhood further south of the city.

Israel has stepped up strikes against Hamas in recent weeks, saying the Palestinian group has been rearming and carrying out attacks in violation of the ceasefire. Hamas denies rebuilding its arsenal or planning attacks and accuses Israel of undermining a US-brokered ceasefire agreed a year ago. The ceasefire calls for eventual reconstruction of the territory. But little progress has been made towards implementing a deal to end the conflict that includes terms for Hamas to disarm and Israel to withdraw its troops.

Gaza health officials have said at least 1,400 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the truce was agreed last October. Israel says four of its soldiers have been killed in Gaza over the same period. Since the war started, Israel’s bombardment and ground operations in Gaza have killed more than 74,000 people, according to Gaza health officials. — Reuters

AGE VERIFICATION MEASURES

Türkiye social media ban from November 1



Türkiye formally declared a ban on the use of social media for under-15s, scheduled to come into effect on November 1. The official state journal published the decision following the adoption of a law by parliament in April. It stipulates that social media providers must “take the necessary technical and administrative measures, including age verification, to implement” protections for young people. “No service likely to produce an addictive effect in children may be offered.” — AFP

ABDUCTIONS INCIDENT

Brazil police rescue 13 kids held hostage



Police in Brazil rescued 13 children who had been taken hostage in their kindergarten and killed the assailant who threatened to set fire to the building, officials said. The incident took place in the southern city of Curitiba. “We successfully neutralised this person and saved the 13 children, who were taken to be checked out and given care by first responders,” the commander of the military police special forces unit in Parana state, Alexandre Lopes Dias, said. — AFP

VIOLENCE SERIES

3 hurt in Poland’s third stabbing attack



Three people were injured in a stabbing attack at a further education college in Warsaw on Saturday, police said, the latest in a series of incidents that have stoked concerns in Poland about copycat violence among young people. “At 12:30 today, we received a report of an incident involving the use of a dangerous weapon,” police spokesperson Jakub Filipiak said. “One person was injured and transported to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.” — Reuters

Nobel winner Pillay calls sanctions on ICC unacceptable

OSLO: The winner of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize, judge and former UN rights chief Navi Pillay, on Saturday called sanctions announced by the US on the International Criminal Court (ICC) “unheard of, unacceptable”. “There is so much tension and anxiety over the continued existence of international courts, mainly the

International Criminal Court in The Hague,” Pillay said via video link from Nuremberg during an event at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo.

Pillay also lamented that “there are hundreds of staff who feel they are under threat”. “Most importantly, sanctions have been announced by one country against the judges, just for the judicial

orders they issue.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee on Friday announced that Pillay, who once sat on the ICC, was this year’s recipient of the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize. Both the United States, whose leader Donald Trump has long coveted the award for himself, and ally Israel condemned her being awarded the honour.

Hours after Pillay was named the laureate, the United States announced new sanctions against the ICC. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington would ban transactions with what he described as a “rogue court”, escalating a long-running campaign by Trump’s administration against the Hague-based tribunal. — AFP

Ethiopia regains control after Eritrean incursion

ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT forces and their militia allies entered Adigrat, near the border with Horn of Africa neighbour Eritrea, on Saturday, three residents said, days after Eritrean troops were pushed back from the strategic city. The incursion by Eritrean troops, which Eritrea has denied, has raised fears of a return to all-out war along Ethiopia’s northern border, where the two nations have clashed before. Conflicts elsewhere in the region and tensions across the Red Sea have further raised the stakes. Three Adigrat residents said they had seen the Ethiopian army and an allied militia in the city on Saturday morning, with one of the residents saying they saw soldiers on patrol along with military vehicles.

Eritrea asked the UN Security Council to take deterrent measures against Ethiopia, according to a letter on Saturday, saying Addis Ababa’s accusations of an “all-out invasion” by Eritrean forces amounted to a “declaration of war.” Eritrea has said reports of an Eritrean incursion are false, and on Saturday, its Foreign Minister Osman Saleh said the claims were part of an Ethiopian plan to justify a war of aggression and urged the UN to intervene, invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows measures from sanctions to military action.



Members of the Ethiopian Federal Police (EFP) patrol after the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) army retreated from the regional capital in Mekelle. — Reuters

Ethiopia’s military did not immediately respond to a request for comment, and city officials were not reachable on Saturday. Ethiopia said in a letter to members of the UN Security Council this week that Eritrean troops had advanced up to 60 km inside Tigray in recent days, warning that the presence of foreign forces left it with no option but to defend itself.

Eritrea has said reports of an Eritrean incursion are false and part of an Ethiopian plan to justify a war of aggression. Explosions were reported near Adigrat on Wednesday and Thursday as the US-based conflict monitor ACLED said Ethiopia used drone strikes against Eritrean forces, who then withdrew from positions near the city.

The explosions continued on Friday, according to an Adigrat resident, who said they had heard repeated explosions overnight and into the morning several kilometres outside town. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s spokesperson and Eritrea’s Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Yemane said on Friday that Eritrea had shown restraint, accusing landlocked Ethiopia of declaring a war of aggression against his country by stating in 2023 it would acquire sovereign access to the sea. Ethiopia had access to a coastline for decades until Eritrea gained independence from Addis Ababa in 1993. Ethiopia argues that restoring sea access is an existential issue but has said it would be restored through peace and dialogue.

Ethiopia has accused Eritrea of backing the rebel alliance that has been battling government troops since September 23 in its northern regions of Tigray, Amhara and Afar. Eritrea has denied doing so. After years of war, Eritrea and Ethiopia made peace in a 2018 agreement that earned Ethiopia’s Abiy the Nobel Peace Prize. Eritrea fought in support of Ethiopia’s federal government during a 2020-2022 civil war in Tigray, but relations soured again towards the end of that conflict. — Reuters

MAJOR EARTHQUAKE HITS PANAMA



PENONOME: A powerful 7.7-magnitude earthquake rocked Panama, collapsing buildings and roads in the centre of the country and injuring at least 27 people, with no deaths reported. The shallow tremor was felt across the Central American nation of around 4.5 million people, according to the National Civil Protection System. The head of emergency operations Rene Garcia said that there were no reports of fatalities so far.

In Panama City, about 200 kilometres from the epicentre, there were scenes of panic as people rushed to evacuate from the city’s emblematic skyscrapers. A video widely shared on social media showed water falling from the rooftop pool of a building. Another showed a bridge over the Panama Canal shaking violently but remaining upright as vehicles travelled across it.

There were 27 people with minor injuries across the country as a result of the quake, according to a statement from the National Civil Protection System. The US Geological Survey said the quake struck at 12:56 pm local time with an epicentre 10 kilometres (six miles) from the small town of Pitaloza Arriba in central Herrera province. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the Workers' Party (PT) candidate for reelection attends a campaign rally in Brasilia. — Reuters

Brazil’s Lula scraps gasoline tax ahead of runoff election

SAO PAULO: Brazil’s government announced that gasoline taxes will be temporarily scrapped, two weeks ahead of the runoff election between incumbent President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and right-wing challenger Flavio Bolsonaro. Lula, who is seeking his fourth term, is trying to contain rising fuel prices amid a global spike in oil prices driven by the war in the Middle East. The gasoline tax, which was set at 0.89 reais (\$0.18) per litre, would be waived for 30 days, according to the government.

The measure announced on Friday also expands subsidies for importers of diesel, the predominant fuel used in Brazil’s freight transport. “The objective is to ensure that imports remain viable at a critical moment for supply,” the presidency said in a statement. The fiscal impact of the tax exemptions will be offset by Brazil’s “extraordinary revenues” from oil exports, it said.

The runoff election on October 25 was set after Lula won 45 per cent of the vote in the first round and Bolsonaro received 47 per cent. Bolsonaro called his opponent “irresponsible,” warning that Lula was placing a “bomb” on consumers’ laps and that diesel prices could rise after the election. — AFP

ISAIAS BRINGS FLOODS ACROSS US



Isaias is expected to bring storm surges, flash flooding, damaging winds and a risk of tornadoes across parts of the US Southeast, even as the storm weakens after making landfall in Florida, the National Hurricane Center said. The centre warned of considerable impacts across much of southern Alabama and the Florida Panhandle into southwest Georgia. The tornado threat will continue on Saturday across parts of the Florida Panhandle, Georgia and the Carolinas, the NHC said. Isaias weakened to a post-tropical cyclone on Saturday, having rapidly lost wind speed after hitting the Florida coast as a Category 2 hurricane. — Reuters

ANTHROPIC AI MODEL SENT FAKE MURDER TIP TO PHILADELPHIA POLICE

SAN FRANCISCO: An artificial intelligence model developed by Anthropic submitted a fabricated tip about an unsolved homicide to Philadelphia police, authorities said on Friday, criticising the company for taking two months to report the incident. The Philadelphia Police Department said the false submission was made in July through PhillyUnsolvedMurders.com, a public website where people can share information about unsolved killings.

According to Anthropic’s account,

as relayed by police, the model was running a test that involved interacting with randomly selected websites when it reached the site and filed false information about an unsolved murder. The AI model presented itself as someone who might have knowledge of the case. The incident echoed other recent cases of unintended behaviour involving AI models, including one where an OpenAI agent undergoing a security evaluation broke out of its testing environment and breached systems at AI platform

Hugging Face. Anthropic’s breaches have prompted the White House to mandate that AI companies notify and correct security incidents, news outlet Axios reported. “This notification and remediation process is not optional... It is a critical national security obligation,” White House Super Intelligence Force leaders said in a statement to Axios. The episode heightened concerns about the industry’s increased use of AI agents, systems programmed to take multi-step actions without human supervision. — AFP

Large-scale outages in Kyiv due to Russian fresh strikes

UKRAINE’S CAPITAL Kyiv suffered “large-scale power outages” on Saturday because of Russian strikes, the country’s largest private energy provider said. “New large-scale power outages in the capital due to attacks. Stabilisation schedules are currently not in effect,” DTEK, a private energy firm, said in a statement on Telegram.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said deadly Russian strikes on Ukraine were Moscow’s “thanks” for a diesel deal agreed with the United States, deepening his criticism of the agreement. “Today, Russia expressed its thanks for the lifting of sanctions on diesel exports by dropping five glide bombs on residential buildings in Zaporizhzhia,” Zelensky said in a post on X.

US President Donald Trump conveyed his ideas about how to de-escalate the war in Ukraine to Vladimir Putin during a phone call on Friday, the Kremlin said. Putin received the proposals “with understanding”, the Kremlin said, without elaborating on what the proposals were or the Russian president’s response. Trump, who took office last January, has long sought to broker an end to the more than four-and-a-half year conflict.

Talks between Russia and Ukraine remain largely deadlocked, with both sides intensifying long-range strikes on each other in recent months. “The Russian president received with understanding certain proposals from the US side for measures aiming at de-escalation,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Saturday, according to the state TASS and RIA Novosti news agencies. US, Ukrainian and European officials met in Miami on Friday in a renewed diplomatic push to end the fighting, as Washington seeks to find a way



Firefighters work at a site of a destroyed warehouse hit during a Russian drone strike in Kyiv region. — Reuters

out of the stalemate.

Russian strikes on Ukraine’s southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia on Saturday killed at least 11 people, including three children, according to regional authorities. Ukrainian national police said Russia had targeted residential neighbourhoods in the city with “five guided aerial bombs” early on Saturday morning, hitting two residential buildings.

The strikes came a day after Ukrainian and European officials met in Miami in a renewed diplomatic push to end Russia’s war in Ukraine. “The toll from the air strikes on Zaporizhzhia continues to rise. At present, 11 civilians have been killed. Among them are three children,” said Mykhailo Semikin, head of Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration. He said rescuers were continuing their search for people under the rubble.

A correspondent at the scene saw people being pulled from the rubble by Ukrainian emergency services. “We saw people under the rubble – a woman, her husband and a child,” one volunteer rescuer, Daniil Pishkin, said. He added that he saw two people rescued from the wreckage but “unfortunately there

Russian strikes on Ukraine’s southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia killed at least 11 people, including three children. Ukrainian national police said Russia had targeted residential neighbourhoods in the city with “five guided aerial bombs” early on Saturday morning, hitting two residential buildings

Spanish PM begins vote campaign overshadowed by housing crisis

MADRID: Spain’s Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez aimed to pull off another unlikely comeback as he began campaigning on Saturday for a snap vote dominated by housing protests that have shaken the country. When 87-year-old Madrid pensioner Maricarmen Abascal was evicted from her home two weeks ago, no one could have expected Spain was headed for upheaval that would bring forward a general election scheduled for 2027.

The eviction of Abascal, who became the face of the country’s chronic housing crisis, catalysed nationwide protests that piled pressure on Sanchez’s left-wing coalition to present urgent decrees. But after the minority government failed to pass its measures in parliament, Sanchez rolled the dice and called an election for November 29.

Sanchez, in power since 2018, has acquired international prominence in recent years as his clashes with US

President Donald Trump and Israel endeared him to disillusioned global progressives. He is a divisive figure at home and trails in most polls to the main conservative Popular Party (PP).

At his rally on Saturday, Sanchez vowed to strengthen legislation protecting tenants against “real estate speculation” if his party wins an absolute majority. “Maricarmen and all those who campaign for her, as well as all those who take action for the just cause of housing, have opened the way,” he said, voicing his “affection” for Abascal, who died on Wednesday in hospital.

Sanchez chose the symbolic location of Dos Hermanas, a commuter town outside the southern city of Seville and a historic Socialist stronghold, to kick off his electioneering. He launched his 2023 election campaign from Dos Hermanas and went on to thwart the predictions by retaining office, even though the PP won more seats.

Dos Hermanas was also the scene



Spain’s PM Pedro Sanchez attends a press conference after cabinet meeting at Moncloa Palace, in Madrid. — Reuters

of Sanchez’s political resurrection after he resigned as Socialist party leader in 2016, following two bruising general election defeats. As Sanchez began his rally, Isabel Morales, a 67-year-old pensioner in the crowd, said she viewed his term in office as “very positive”. “He’s done a lot of things for the working class. He raised wages, raised pensions, enacted a housing law, a lot of things that are extremely positive. Let’s hope he continues,” she said.

PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo was also rallying his followers on Saturday, in Madrid. He has his sights set on becoming prime minister after failing to form a government in 2023. “Spain needs a future and he (Sanchez) needs to be in the past,” Feijoo told a rally in Madrid on Sunday. “We are proposing a total change.” The PP leader, who tops most polls, has focused his criticism on the government’s handling of a

migration crisis in Ceuta, where he held an event on Wednesday promising to restore normality.

More than 70,000 migrants streamed into the Spanish north African enclave from neighbouring Morocco in late July. Thousands have remained for months in largely chaotic conditions, sparking anger among locals. Yet the polls suggest Feijoo is unlikely to achieve a majority, which could make far-right party Vox, parliament’s third-largest force, a kingmaker in hypothetical coalition talks.

Housing, long a top public concern, was a topic hanging large over both of Saturday’s rallies as hundreds of protesters camped in Madrid’s emblematic Puerta del Sol square and in other cities demanding more protection for tenants and affordable prices. The main unions have called a general strike for November 11 to crank up the pressure over housing and wages before the vote. — AFP

OPINION

Do you support premarital workshops?



ZAHIR AL MAHROUQI

The writer is author of ‘The Road to Jerusalem’

LAST WEEK, I attended a bioethics symposium that discussed a critical question that concerns every family in Oman: why are we having fewer children?

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, in the first half of 2026, Oman registered 32,405 live births, 1.7 per cent fewer than in the same period last year.

Omani women now have an average of 2.8 children, compared with more than eight in the late 1980s. Part of this can be explained by social factors such as delaying marriage to pursue a career or higher education and increased rates of divorce.

Some youngsters may be influenced by social media posts that encourage women to be stronger and independent, while others assume a happy marriage must be built in romance, expensive gifts, and fancy holidays abroad.

Some men in particular fear that marriage and the commitment that comes with it may stop them from enjoying camping trips with friends or simply playing video games with them.

A common misconception about marriage is that it is a prison-like situation where one or both partners give up their freedom and

sometimes their rights for the sake of the other.

Equally, one should not overlook the economic side: some young people struggle to find work after graduation, while others earn salaries too low to cover the cost of a wedding, let alone support a family.

In 2025, Oman issued 4,208 divorce certificates, up from 3,828 two years earlier. That is more than eleven every day, in a year that saw 23,117 marriages. Officials at the Ministry of Social Development say most divorces happen within the first four years.

Many people would argue that the age of marriage and the number of children are personal choices that should not be subject to interference from the state.

Yet in reality, a drop in the number of births has social and economic consequences. The world is witnessing an increase in the aging population, which is often accompanied by a rise in the number of people using health services, and those services depend on a workforce drawn from the younger generation. Fewer births would lead countries to raise the age of retirement so that more people remain in work, paying taxes and supporting other members of society.

This is why I strongly support offering

Many people would argue that the age of marriage and the number of children are personal choices that should not be subject to interference from the state

workshops to couples before they marry. They would learn how to communicate effectively, how to listen, how to disagree fairly, how to manage a household budget, and when to ask for help.

Such a programme raises ethical questions. Should attendance be voluntary or a condition of the marriage contract? I believe we should begin by inviting couples, not forcing them.

We must also be honest about what a workshop can achieve. It should never suggest that a person must stay in a harmful marriage. Sometimes divorce is the right decision.

Some will say we should simply offer counselling when problems appear. But few couples come. This could be explained by fear of being seen at a counselling centre, and how that could be perceived as a sign of weakness.

Some couples believe a good husband or wife should cope alone.

Others are afraid to talk to a stranger who may judge them or share their secrets.

In my opinion, teaching new couples how to navigate the early years of marriage would empower them with the skills to communicate better and focus on building a happy family.

‘HUMAN-AUTHORED’ LABELS RISE AMID AI CONCERNS

SAM REEVES

Initiatives to label books as written by humans, and not artificial intelligence, are gaining ground following a string of scandals where authors were suspected of using the technology without admitting it.

Several labelling schemes, including those from Britain, France and Germany, were being showcased at the world’s biggest book industry fair in Frankfurt this week, where the challenges posed by AI were hotly debated.

Among recent cases where authors allegedly used AI, the most high-profile is that of Haitian-Canadian author Thelyson Orelie, which has rocked the French-language literary world. He has denied the claims. The affair was a ‘real earthquake’ for the French book trade, Charlotte Allibert, co-founder of Librinova, a self-publishing company and literary agency, said. The French group runs a scheme under which authors can get their books assessed and then labelled as a ‘human creation’ for a small fee, with about 200 works so far given the stamp.

Writers who want the label have their works run through AI detection software and undergo an interview with an auditor, who also checks the book personally.

“It’s reassuring for authors to know that we’re committed to this issue,” said Allibert.

Another scheme is from British startup Books By People, which announced its certification mark for human-authored works had been registered by the country’s intellectual property office.

To get the stamp, titles have to meet the group’s ‘organic literature’ standards, which require the writing to originate from its author while allowing limited use of AI for tasks such as spelling or grammar checks. “We want to create a comprehensive, transparent, reliable framework that publishers and authors can fall back on,” Esme Dennys, the initiative’s co-founder, said.

“Anxiety around undisclosed AI use has increased in recent months - we have been getting a lot more interest from people all over the world.”

Publishers sign up to the scheme for a fee and can then request to get their authors’ books labelled with the Books By People mark. The scheme launched with five independent publishers and is set to announce more members in the coming months.

In the US, the Authors Guild has introduced a ‘human-authored’ certification mark. It is a self-certification system which requires authors to sign a licence agreement, and so far around 6,500 titles have received the stamp. — AFP

Lies fly faster than truth

ARTIFICIAL intelligence has made it increasingly difficult to distinguish genuine footage from fabrication. A video once seemed to offer some reassurance that an event had happened as shown.

That confidence is fading, and we are approaching a point where seeing an image may no longer be enough to tell us what is real. I was reminded of this recently when I visited a friend who is highly skilled at creating AI videos. He showed me films using entirely AI, featuring images of me, him, his wife, his brother, his daughter and his son. The results were astonishingly realistic. In one film I appeared as a heroic warrior. I felt flattered, but also unsettled: without knowing how it had been made, I might have mistaken it for a professionally produced documentary.

A talented creator can now place familiar faces in imagined situations with relative ease. AI can be a powerful tool for entertainment, but the same technology can mislead, damage reputations and influence public opinion. A familiar face or voice is not proof that someone said or did what appears on screen. The problem extends beyond artificial intelligence. Investigative journalism is a thing of the past. Some western news outlets appear to have fewer resources for original reporting and rely instead on material first published elsewhere.

Stories are then repeated, sometimes almost verbatim. This can create the impression of confirmation that a news report is based on fact. Repetition is not independent verification and several outlets carrying the same claim do not necessarily provide several separate pieces of evidence.

YouTube can sometimes be useful for finding news and analysis, but often videos are outdated, recycled or presented without enough context to show when they were made.

A clip from an earlier event can be reposted as if it were current,



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

Investigative journalism is a thing of the past. Some western news outlets appear to have fewer resources for original reporting and rely instead on material first published elsewhere



A newspaper article should provide context, identify its sources and make clear what is known, what remains uncertain and what is still being investigated. — AI image

sometimes with a changed date or title. Viewers who see a dramatic scene and a recent timestamp may assume the footage is new, even if the original recording is years old.

A skilled AI video producer can recreate familiar content without checking its accuracy, then frame it in a way that misleads viewers about the news based on facts.

This uncertainty has changed how I keep up with the news. I rarely use YouTube as a way to follow current events. I prefer newspapers that report the news factually without sensationalising it, such as the Oman Observer. No outlet should be accepted uncritically and independence does not guarantee accuracy.

A newspaper article should provide context, identify its sources and make clear what is known, what remains uncertain and what is still being investigated.

When an extraordinary claim is circulating, we should ask who first published it, when and where the footage was recorded, whether independent evidence supports it and whether the video itself proves what its accompanying account claims. We should also ask whether video news reports are independently produced or AI-recreated from the same

original story and subtly altered to mislead viewers. A voice-over, a recent upload date, or widespread circulation is not confirmation. The point is not to accuse anyone of deception, but to recognise how difficult it has become to establish the truth from images and repeated reports alone. Neither a viral YouTube clip nor material broadcast by a national media organisation should automatically be treated as proof. We need transparent information about where images came from, meaningful independent corroboration and reporting that goes beyond copying what others have already published — especially when governments or other powerful actors may use fabricated or manipulated material for political purposes.

AI will continue to produce remarkable films, while recycled footage and recycled reporting will continue to blur the line between current events and old claims.

As synthetic images become more convincing, our confidence can no longer rest on the old belief that seeing is believing.

The value of visual evidence depends on careful verification and the value of journalism depends on doing the work to find and check the facts.

Beeton’s Book of Household Management



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

BOOKS... too big, too heavy, too many pages and words? Yet they may be scholarly, informative, provocative, challenging, or inspirational. Read on...

The most prominent here, throughout the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, is surely the Holy Quran, the sacred text of 600-plus pages of guidance and support for the Islamic faith, of which 20 million copies per year are printed by the King Fahd Glorious Quran Printing Complex in Saudi Arabia alone. In total, almost five billion copies have been printed in 114 languages.

The Holy Bible is central to Christianity, mainly across the Americas and Europe. While church attendance and religious affiliations are in decline, according to recent theological research (Smith, 2026), an estimated five billion copies of the Bible, each of 1,200 pages, have been published to date.

In a quasi-political vein, ‘The Quotations of Chairman Mao,’ ironically known as ‘The Little Red Book,’ is due to its small print, pocket size and microscopic print of Mao’s 427 quotes. First published in 1964, with six million copies, it was an inexorable tool for political and societal change across much of Asia.

In literature, the iconic ‘War and Peace,’ by Leo Tolstoy, emerged as the quintessential novel of 1865. It explored the futility of war, the fragility of peace, and the turbulent, yet

profound romance of Count Pierre Bezukhov and Countess Natasha Rostova. Sixty million copies have been sold of this four-volume, 15-book, 570,000-word epic.

The Miguel de Cervantes classic, ‘Don Quixote,’ is a 430,000-word masterpiece in which the elderly Alonso imagines himself as the knight-errant Don Quixote, who, astride his sway-backed, old horse, tilts at windmills in his quest for his Ladylove, Dulcinea. His imaginary adventures pit illusion against realism and have sold 500 million copies.

In more recent years, ‘The Lord of the Rings’ trilogy, at 570,000 words, across three volumes by JRR Tolkien, has proven, with 600 million sales, popular among adults, while JK Rowling’s million-word, seven-book ‘Harry Potter’ adventures have proven immensely popular among younger readers with 600 million copies sold.

However, the acquisition, by my wife Yelena, of a 1943 publication of ‘Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management,’ is the likes of which I have rarely seen before. It doesn’t rank either historically; it won’t change the world, politically, change societies, or literally challenge many perspectives. However, it is a unique window to the world of Queen Victoria, its sometimes tangled, yet always tangible view of class and domestic life, its anecdotes, that ‘Goodreads’ reviewed as “an almost forgotten classic, a founding text of Victorian middle-class identity.” And it is humorous, read in the light of today,

In literature, the iconic ‘War and Peace’, by Leo Tolstoy, emerged as the quintessential novel of 1865. It explored the futility of war, the fragility of peace, and the turbulent yet profound romance of Count Pierre Bezukhov and Countess Natasha Rostova

immensely so, certainly not politically correct, and a tad misogynistic, but so much fun. Consider these pearls of wisdom: “...there is no more fruitful source of family discontent than a housewife’s badly cooked dinners and untidiness;” “Friendship is no plant of hasty growth, though planted in esteem’s deep-fixed soil, the gradual culture of kindness must bring it to perfection;” “Frugality and economy are virtues without which no household can prosper;” while her reflection on a faithful husband that, “...no sooner is he domesticated than he becomes polygamous,” is hilarious!

Though expressing the wisdom of a woman of advanced years, Isabella Beeton (1836-1865) married at 20 to publisher Samuel Beeton, and within a year contributed to ‘The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine,’ proving immensely popular, and by 1861, her debut publication of ‘Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management,’ sold an unheard-of 60,000 copies in its first year. She was to succumb to illness at the tender age of just 28; however, edited and revised frequently since her demise, it has never been out of print and was, “for over a century, the standard English cookbook, frequently outselling every other book.”

Its 1951 pages, 1,500 illustrations, coloured plates and advertisements of the day offer a unique perspective on ‘the olden days’, when things were not always ‘better’, but where there was a sense of ‘order’. Certainly, though, through today’s lens, it will lighten your day.

France, Germany lock horns over long-term EU budget

FRÉDÉRIC POUCHOT

Daggers have been drawn over the European Union’s next seven-year budget, with Germany and France at loggerheads over whether Brussels should make deep cuts in a battle increasingly expected to overshoot the end of the year.

The EU wants a deal by Christmas, fearing that any delay would push talks into a fraught election year with worries about what eurosceptic victories in France and elsewhere would mean for future dealmaking. That is a far from easy task after the European Commission proposed a 2028-2034 budget worth nearly two trillion euros. The 2021-2027 budget was worth around 1.2 trillion euros.

Europe is deeply divided. Germany leads a pack with Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden, which want cuts of several hundred billion euros.

But France, the second-biggest European economy and a net contributor to the budget, argues the continent needs sufficient means to match the rising challenges the 27-country bloc faces. French President Emmanuel Macron has hit out at demands for massive cuts.

“We need an ambitious European budget,” he said last month. “We must defend a much stronger European budget” to support EU priorities, including defence. Ireland, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency, will unveil a revised budget proposal on Saturday that it hopes will bridge the yawning gap between the sides.

The warnings from European officials are stark, however: it is unavoidable that there will be blood on the floor at the end of the painful negotiations.

But the risk of missing the December deadline now looms larger than ever, especially after Spain called a snap election for next month.

A senior European diplomat dismissed speculation before Saturday’s text. The EU knows “there is a shared sense of urgency around the need to do this”, the diplomat said, adding: “I don’t think it’s particularly fruitful discussion at this stage to start talking about alternatives.”

In absolute terms, the EU does not need to agree the budget this year, as the final legal deadline is the end of 2027. Saturday’s proposal will set the stage for a fist fight between EU leaders meeting in Brussels over two days next week.

The battle won’t just be over whether to cut, since a third side has its own demands.

Seventeen countries from southern, central and eastern Europe have formed a group known as the “Friends of Cohesion”, seeking greater funding to support agriculture and regional development.

The main gripe for the frugals is that the proposed budget represents an increase of around 60 per cent at a time when member states have to tighten their belts.

But a French presidency official argued money was needed for farmers and to strengthen the European economy to help businesses compete with US and Chinese rivals. — AFP

Hunger and malnutrition stalk Gazans, a year later

EVERY DAY, Gazan mother Niyaha al Masri spends six exhausting hours or more queueing at a community kitchen in the hope of getting some food for her family.

It has been a year since a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel was supposed to allow food to flood into the ruined territory, yet widespread hunger persists there.

Masri has little choice. Without the kitchen run by humanitarian groups, she and her eight children would have “nothing at all”, the 35-year-old said. Each day she sets out early in the morning and returns in the afternoon, this time bringing four containers of rice, lentils and a little chicken, which the family throws itself at.

Among them is her husband, wounded in both legs by an air strike, meaning he “cannot go and fight with the others” to get food.

This will be the only meal of the day for the family of 10, living in a tent in Khan Yunis. There was no breakfast, and they will have no dinner.

What little flour they have, Masri explained, has to be rationed.

In August 2025, a United Nations-backed body, the IPC, declared a state of famine in Gaza, though Israel quickly denounced it as a lie.

By December, the UN had lifted that declaration, saying that the ceasefire had allowed in enough supplies over the course of two months to ease conditions.

COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry organisation responsible for civilian affairs in the Palestinian territories, said that the humanitarian situation in Gaza was stable.

But Shaun Hughes, of the UN’s World Food Programme, was less sanguine. The food security situation, he said, “is still extremely serious”.

The most recent figures, from July, show that “1.4 million out of the population of about 2.1 million people are acutely food insecure”, he said, with 200,000 of them “just one step below famine”.



ANOUK RIONDET

The writer is a journalist covering Palestine and Israel for AFP

In August 2025, a UN-backed body, the IPC, declared a state of famine in Gaza, though Israel quickly denounced it as a lie. By December, the UN had lifted that declaration



A Palestinian girl sits on a water container at a mobile water distribution point in Gaza City, on Saturday. — Reuters

While some food is getting in, a lack of sufficient nutritional variety continues to pose a health threat.

“Dietary diversity is a major food security issue in Gaza,” said Hughes.

“You cannot survive on dry goods and wheat flour and bread alone,” he explained.

Masri said that her children, aged between three and 14, “dream of eating fruit” but the family doesn’t have the means to buy any.

She said one of her sons suffered from malnutrition during the 2025 famine, although “little by little, his condition is improving”.

“Repeated bouts of acute malnutrition amongst children is something that human beings just don’t recover from,” said Hughes.

Cognitive and physical impairments “continue into later life”, he added.

At Khan Yunis’s Nasser Hospital, the head of the malnutrition unit, Israa al Najjar, said she

had “observed an increase in syndromes and conditions” linked to malnutrition that affect the immune system.

In a report published on Thursday, the day after the third anniversary of the October 7 attack that sparked the Gaza war, Medecins du Monde published a study that found 93 per cent of pregnant or breastfeeding women had symptoms of anaemia, which is closely linked to malnutrition.

Just 17 per cent had a sufficiently varied diet to meet their nutritional needs, the group found.

All the while, Masri has kept visiting the community kitchen, despite asthma leaving her exhausted.

Her children spend their days collecting “pieces of nylon, bits of cardboard and chunks of foam” to try and reinforce their tent, which is in a poor state. She said it was “shameful” that her children had to do so.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Arsenal’s Martin Odegaard reacts. — Reuters

ARSENAL HIT BACK TO BEAT LEEDS 2-1

LONDON: Arsenal roared back to beat Leeds 2-1 and pull level with Manchester City at the top of the Premier League on Saturday, hitting the ground running after the three-week international break.

Mikel Arteta’s champions struggled to impose themselves against well-organised opponents in the first half but found their mojo after half-time to make it five wins from six games this season.

Defender James Justin gave Leeds a deserved lead early in the second half at the Emirates, silencing the home crowd in the October sunshine.

But Arsenal were level minutes later through Riccardo Calafiori, and substitute Bruno Guimaraes scored what turned out to be the winner after a finely crafted team goal.

The focus returned to the pitch on Saturday after the bombshell announcement that City had been found guilty of more than 100 breaches of Premier League financial rules.

But Arsenal, who had a perfect record before their 3-0 defeat by Brighton last month, struggled to break down Daniel Farke’s physical team in the first half. Noni Madueke, overlooked by Thomas Tuchel for England’s most recent squad, was handed a rare start on the left of the Gunners’ attack in place of the injured Christos Tzolis.

But neither he nor Bukayo Saka on the other flank had much joy against a defence that had conceded just three league goals all season.

Leeds had a couple of half-chances late in the first half.

First, Jayden Bogle and Anton Stach got in each other’s way as Stach struck the ball against his teammate, and Bogle was denied from close range by Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya, who was out quickly to smother his shot.

Then Raya got down smartly to keep out a shot from Leeds defender Gabriel Gudmundsson from a tight angle.

Arsenal managed just one shot on target in the whole of the first half but the game opened up after the break, with chances at both ends.

Impressive Leeds midfielder Ao Tanaka forced Raya to tip over before Justin put his side ahead in the 55th minute, finishing sweetly from just inside the box after a Gudmundsson cross following a well-worked move down the left. — Reuters

Oman stay top after third straight volleyball win

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

OMAN’S MEN’S national volleyball team secured their third successive victory at the 24th Arab Men’s Volleyball Championship, coming from a set down to defeat Kuwait 3-1 at the Arena Hall in Amman on Friday, October 9.

The 17-25, 25-20, 25-20, 25-23 victory maintained Oman’s unbeaten record and took their tally to eight points from three matches, strengthening their position in the title race ahead of Sunday’s encounter with hosts Jordan.

Kuwait made the stronger start, taking the opening set 25-17 and leaving Oman needing to recover from an early setback.

Oman responded in the second set, improving their attacking and defensive organisation to win 25-20 and level the match.

They maintained that advantage in the third, taking it by the same score to move into a 2-1 lead.

The fourth set was more closely contested, with Kuwait seeking to force a decider. Oman held their nerve in the closing stages to prevail 25-23, completing another comeback victory and preserving their winning start.

The result followed a 3-1 opening win over Algeria and a five-set success against Saudi Arabia. Across the three encounters, Oman have demonstrated their ability to recover after losing sets and deliver under pressure, particularly in the deciding set against the Saudis.

OMAN LEAD STANDINGS

At the close of Friday’s matches, Oman led the standings with eight points, followed by Bahrain on six from two victories. Saudi Arabia had four points and Algeria three, while Kuwait and Jordan remained without points.

Oman next face Jordan on Sunday, October 11, at 6 pm (Oman time), seeking a fourth consecutive win before their final fixture against Bahrain on Wednesday, October 14.

Abdullah al Maqbali said the three victories reflected the collective effort behind Oman’s preparations and provided encouragement for the remaining matches.

“The wins against Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait give us a major boost to continue our campaign,” he



said. “The matches were not easy, but team spirit, cooperation between the players and following the coaching staff’s instructions helped us achieve the results we wanted.”

Al Maqbali expects a demanding encounter against Jordan, with the hosts enjoying home support.

“We know the Jordan match will be difficult, but we respect every opponent and have confidence in our abilities,” he said. “Our target is a fourth win, and we will approach every set and every point with full concentration.”

The six-team championship features Oman, Jordan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain in a single round-robin competition. The final standings determine the champions and medal winners, giving Oman’s remaining two fixtures direct importance in the battle for the Arab title.

Al Amerat, Saham, Seeb and Ibri reach table tennis semis

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Al Amerat, Saham, Seeb and Ibri advanced to the semifinals of the 2026 Senior Team Table Tennis Championship following victories in the quarterfinals, keeping their title ambitions alive ahead of the tournament’s conclusion on Sunday.

Al Amerat defeated Taqah 3-0, while Saham edged Masirah 3-2 in the closest quarterfinal encounter. Seeb overcame Nakhal 3-1, with Ibri recording an identical victory over Salalah to complete the semifinal line-up.

The results set up a semifinal meeting between Al Amerat and Saham, while Seeb face Ibri for the other place in the final. The losing

semifinalists will contest the third-place match.

The championship began on Thursday, October 8, with 15 clubs divided into three groups. Teams competed in a single round-robin preliminary stage, with eight progressing to the quarterfinals.

Group One featured Seeb, Salalah, Al Suwaiq, Al Amerat and Qurayat. Ibri, Al Bashayer, Masirah, Bahla and Mirbat competed in Group Two, while Al Rustaq, Taqah, Al Salam, Nakhal and Saham formed Group Three. Al Amerat topped Group One with eight points after winning all four matches. They defeated Seeb and Salalah 3-1 and recorded 3-0 victories over Al Suwaiq and Qurayat. Seeb finished with seven points, followed by Salalah on six.



Ibri also completed the preliminary stage unbeaten, collecting eight points in Group Two. They beat Al Bashayer, Bahla and Mirbat 3-0 and overcame Masirah 3-1. Masirah finished with seven points, ahead of Al Bashayer on six.

Saham secured four victories in Group Three, defeating Al Rustaq and Al Salam 3-0 before overcoming Taqah and

Nakhal 3-2. Nakhal collected seven points and Taqah six, with both advancing to the quarterfinals before their campaigns ended.

IMPROVING STANDARDS

Seeb player Nasser bin Saif al Balushi said the championship’s standard continued to improve each year, with clubs recruiting stronger foreign professionals. He added

that Omani players were also benefiting from international tournaments and overseas participation, helping raise the level of domestic competition.

Al Balushi was optimistic about Seeb’s prospects, pointing to his appearances in the final over the past four years and his ambition to return to the title decider and lift the trophy this season.

Speaking during the group stage, Nakhal representative Fahad bin Hamad al Abri described the championship as enjoyable and highly competitive. He highlighted the participation of professionals from France, Iran and other countries as a key feature of the event.

Al Abri said Nakhal aimed to maintain a

regular presence across competitions and prepare its players to achieve positive results in different categories.

French player Vincent Picard expressed his delight at making his first appearance in the Muscat championship, despite having visited the city several times and being familiar with the hall.

Picard said arriving on Tuesday had given him time to get to know his teammates before competition began. He added that his team were targeting the title after topping their group and defeating their strongest group-stage opponents. With four clubs still in contention, the semifinals will determine who advances to Sunday’s championship decider.



OMAN SHOULD FIX DEFENSIVE LAPSES, SHARPEN TACTICS AHEAD OF ASIAN CUP

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

WITH less than three months remaining before the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027, Oman's national football team must utilise every available preparation opportunity to address its weaknesses, strengthen its tactical identity and improve its competitive readiness, according to a number of Omani coaches. The continental tournament from January 7 to February 5, 2027, will give head coach Tarik Sektioui and his technical staff a limited period to prepare the team while most players remain committed to their respective clubs during a demanding domestic season. Oman's recent participation in the Gulf Cup 27 in Jeddah has provided valuable lessons, but the team's performances have also raised questions about defensive organisation, concentration, transitions and its ability to cope with opponents' pressing.

Omani coach Nasser al Rajhi believes the priority should be to establish a clear playing identity, maintain stability in the team's core structure and focus on a manageable set of tactical principles rather than introduce too many changes in a short period. "With the limited time remaining before the Asian Cup and the pressure of the domestic schedule, the technical preparation must focus on clear priorities. There is little time for major changes, so the team should build on the existing work and develop it gradually," Al Rajhi said.

ORGANISED DEFENCE A PRIORITY
Al Rajhi identified defensive organisation as one of the most important areas that require attention, highlighting positioning, the distances between lines, defending set-pieces and the transition from attack to defence. He also called for improvements in Oman's attacking transitions, particularly the ability



to exploit the moments immediately after winning possession. "Quick decision-making and the quality of the first pass are very important, especially against teams that press aggressively or commit many players forward," he said.

Against opponents that defend in compact formations, Al Rajhi believes Oman must develop a wider range of attacking solutions, including combinations between the lines, effective use of the flanks, shots from distance and set-piece opportunities. He added that friendly matches should be selected according to the team's technical needs rather than results alone.

"The most important factor with limited time is not to distract the

players with too many ideas. The focus should be on a clear set of principles and making the best possible use of every training camp and friendly match," he added.

IMPROVEMENT FROM GULF CUP
National coach Mohammed Ismail al Zaabi offered a more critical assessment of Oman's recent performances, arguing that the Gulf Cup had exposed shortcomings in teamwork, defensive concentration and the team's response to opponents' attacking pressure. He said the tournament had nevertheless provided the technical staff with a valuable opportunity to assess the players, understand their capabilities and identify more effective approaches to attacking and defending. "The national team did not deliver the required performance. There was a lack of effective teamwork, and the team's overall performance did not reflect the level expected," Al Zaabi said.

"However, the participation was useful because it allowed the coach to assess the players more closely, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and identify the best ways to organise the team in attack and defence."

Al Zaabi identified crosses and aerial deliveries as a significant weakness, saying Oman had conceded five goals from lack of concentration from the opening whistle and needed to improve defensive readiness. He also highlighted that Oman's difficulties against high-pressing opponents were another area of concern. "These are areas that require real work. We need to learn from the weaknesses exposed during the Gulf Cup, improve the team's organisation and develop a clearer identity under the head coach," he said.

Al Zaabi added that while the coaching staff had gained a better understanding of the squad during the Gulf Cup, the Asian Cup would present a different level of challenge. Familiarity with regional opponents such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait could be useful, but Oman would need to be prepared for a broader range of playing styles at the continental finals.

EFFICIENT PREPARATION
Experienced national coach Abdulaziz al Riyami believes Oman's preparation should be built around efficiency and targeted training, given the limited time available and the physical demands placed on players throughout the season. He identified physical recovery, tactical cohesion, video analysis and psychological preparation as key pillars of the programme. With players continuing to represent their clubs, Al Riyami said careful management of training loads and the use of effective recovery programmes would be essential to reduce fatigue and injury risks. The objective, he explained, is to ensure players arrive at the tournament in balanced physical and mental condition. He also called for the coaching staff to use short training camps to reinforce a clear tactical philosophy rather than introduce complex systems that require lengthy preparation.

"With limited preparation time, the focus should be on establishing a clear tactical approach, strengthening defensive organisation and improving transitions from defence to attack and vice versa," Al Riyami said.

Al Riyami also recommended greater use of video analysis and digital tools to explain individual responsibilities, team shape and opponents' strengths and weaknesses. This approach, he said, could accelerate players' understanding of the coach's ideas without placing excessive physical demands on training sessions.



ABDULAZIZ
AL RIYAMI

*Experienced
national coach*



NASSER
AL RAWAHI

*National football
coach*



MOHAMMED
AL ZAABAI

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



30 COACHES COMPLETE
CONDITIONING COURSE

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Thirty coaches and specialists have completed a strength and conditioning programme organised by the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) to improve the physical preparation of young players and strengthen coaching practices across age groups.

Held from October 5 to 9, the programme concluded with a ceremony under the auspices of Waleed bin Khamis al Kiyoumi, Head of the Athlete Preparation Centres Section at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY).

The course was delivered by Amir Eid, an international instructor with the International Basketball Federation (Fiba), as part of the association's efforts to develop its talent preparation system.

Participants completed 25 hours of lectures and practical sessions covering warm-up techniques, movement preparation, strength and conditioning programmes, and recovery after training and matches.

The programme also addressed the design of physical preparation plans, fitness testing and monitoring players' progress.

Particular emphasis was placed on adapting programmes to players' growth and physical development, managing training loads and using performance indicators to assess their needs.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Abu Bakr bin Ahmed al Jahwari, OBA Vice-President and Chairman of the committee overseeing athlete preparation centres, said improving coaching standards was an important route to developing basketball in Oman.

Physical preparation for younger players, he added, must account for age-related characteristics and individual differences. Training should develop fitness as a whole, alongside recovery and injury prevention, to support gradual and safe progress.

COACH DEVELOPMENT

Al Jahwari said the association was prioritising the development of coaches at athlete preparation centres, which play an essential role in identifying and nurturing promising players.

Iskander al Nabli, General Supervisor of the centres, highlighted the combination of theory and practical work as a key strength of the programme.

He said this approach helped coaches understand the purpose of exercises, how to deliver them and when to use them, enabling participants to translate scientific knowledge into practical training and improve the quality and effectiveness of their sessions.

The closing ceremony included the presentation of certificates to participants, recognition of instructor Amir Eid and the presentation of a commemorative gift to the chief guest.



During the match against Jordanian team in the West Asian Football Federation Youth Championship

Oman U17s regroup for
Gulf Cup, Asian Qualifiers

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

OMAN'S NATIONAL under-17 football team have entered a new training camp in Muscat as preparations intensify for two major assignments — the U17 Gulf Cup in Qatar and the AFC U17 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2027 Qualifiers in Salalah.

The camp, which began on October 9 and runs until October 14, is being conducted without friendly matches, allowing national head coach Ahmed bin Salim Bait Said and his technical staff to focus fully on physical conditioning, tactical organisation and technical work.

A total of 23 players have been called up for the gathering as Oman look to sharpen their readiness before travelling to Qatar.

The squad includes Ahmed al Masoudi, Mohammed al Hinai, Nahidh Bait Jameel, Abdullah al Zaabi, Saif al Jabri, Hassan al Balushi, Hood al Balushi, Ahmed al Mukhaini, Sultan al Balushi, Ziyad al Maamari, Bashar al Shamsi, Abdullah al Farsi, Nayer Bait Ardeen, Jihad al Shukaili, Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Jassim al Dawood, Abdulrahman al Hashmi, Nader al Noobi, Said Bait Rajab, Mohammed al Maashari, Mohammed al Omrani, Abdulrahim al Tuwairshi and Abdullah Bait Ali Issa.



National head coach Ahmed bin Salim Bait Said

FIRST CHALLENGE

Oman's first challenge will be the Gulf Cup U-17, scheduled in Qatar from October 16 to November 4. The young Red Warriors

have been drawn in Group A alongside hosts Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain and invited side China. Their campaign will begin against China on October 19, followed by a meeting with the UAE on October 22. Oman will then face Qatar on October 25 before completing the group stage against Bahrain on October 28.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals on November 1, with the final scheduled for November 4. The Gulf competition will also serve as an important final test before Oman turn their attention to the AFC U17 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2027 Qualifiers. Oman will host Group G in Salalah from November 8 to 20, facing Kuwait, Bahrain, Lebanon and Brunei Darussalam. Only the group winners will secure a place in the continental finals, making the home qualifying campaign one of the team's key targets this season.

The current camp comes shortly after Oman's participation in the WAFF U17 Championship in Jordan, where they exited in the group stage following defeats to Jordan and the UAE.

With the schedule now moving quickly towards two competitive tournaments, the coaching staff will be looking to improve consistency, cohesion and match readiness as the young Red Warriors enter a decisive phase of their season.

Oman make strong start in ICC CWC League 2 against Canada

MUSCAT: Oman made a winning start to their home campaign in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2, defeating Canada by 41 runs in the opening match at Al Amerat Cricket Ground on Friday. After being bowled out for 263 in 49.1 overs, Oman produced a determined bowling performance to dismiss Canada for 222 in 48 overs, securing a crucial victory as the race for qualification for the 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup continues to intensify.

The result rewarded Oman's preparations over recent days, with the team building momentum through a series of practice sessions and competitive matches against Indian sides ahead of the League 2 fixtures. Oman's batting effort

was led by Hassnain Ul Wahab, who struck an impressive 93 off 77 balls, including five fours and five sixes. His innings provided the hosts with a strong platform, while Jatinder Singh contributed 34 from 30 deliveries and Mujibur Ali added 39 from 73 balls. Zikria Islam also made a useful late contribution, scoring 24 off 18 deliveries, as Oman sought to post a competitive total. Captain Vinayak Shukla scored 20, while Shakeel Ahmed added 18. Canada's bowlers kept the pressure on, with Harsh Thaker claiming four wickets and Ajayveer Hundal taking three. However, Oman's total proved sufficient as their bowlers maintained discipline with Hassnain Ali Shah claiming four wickets and Shakeel Ahmad



Hassnain Wahab - Player of the Match

claiming 3 wickets to secure the victory.

PREPARATION PAYS OFF

Oman head coach Sulakshan Kulkarni said the team's recent preparation had played an important role in helping the players approach the opening match with confidence and readiness. "The preparation has gone very well, and I believe the recent matches against Kerala and Mumbai helped us significantly ahead of the League 2 series," Kulkarni said.

"We also had good training sessions over the last few days. Playing at home is a great advantage for us, as it helps the players settle into the team environment and

prepare under familiar conditions."

Kulkarni also highlighted the balance within the squad, pointing to the combination of spin and pace bowling, batting depth and the presence of several all-rounders.

"We have a well-balanced side, with a good mix of spinners, fast bowlers and batting options. We also have several all-rounders, which gives us an important advantage and provides flexibility in different match situations," he added. Oman's preparations included a triangular series involving Mumbai and Kerala, in which the team recorded two victories from four matches. The games offered valuable competitive exposure before the start of the League 2 home leg.

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



Invest Oman hosted a meeting with representatives of the French business community to explore potential projects and partnerships.

OMAN COURTS FRENCH INVESTMENT

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Oman is seeking French investment in energy, advanced technology, infrastructure and healthcare through closer engagement with companies whose expertise and expansion plans match the country's economic diversification priorities.

Invest Oman hosted a meeting with representatives of the French business community, organised in cooperation with Oman's embassy in France and MEDEF International, to explore potential projects and partnerships.

Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Farooji, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion; and Ahmed bin Mohammed al Araiimi, Oman's Ambassador to France, attended the meeting.

Discussions covered energy, renewables and hydrogen, water and resource management, waste-to-energy, space technology, transport, infrastructure, engineering, digital technologies and healthcare.

Al Farooji said France was an important market in Oman's efforts to attract investment, with the current focus on matching available opportunities to investors' requirements and international growth plans.

"Through these meetings, we seek to move the dialogue with the business community beyond introducing opportunities towards understanding investors' needs and identifying areas of alignment with priority sectors in Oman", she said.

"We view French companies as important partners, given their expertise, technologies and capabilities, which can contribute to advancing quality projects and strengthening value chains in Oman's economy".

The meeting forms part of Invest Oman's approach to identifying companies with investment potential, examining their business activities and growth strategies, and connecting them with suitable projects.

The aim is to turn initial business engagement into sustained investment and commercial partnerships supporting Oman's economic diversification.

Al Araiimi said relations between Oman and France provided a foundation for expanding cooperation between their business communities. "Engagement between the business communities of Oman and France represents an important opportunity to take economic relations into broader areas", he said.

Naseem Dhofar to spearhead Oman's 125 MW Dhofar II Wind IPP

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Naseem Dhofar SAOC, a joint venture between Singapore-based Sembcorp Industries and OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE), is advancing the implementation of the 125-megawatt (MW) Dhofar II Wind Independent Power Project (IPP), supporting Oman's drive to diversify its electricity generation mix and accelerate the transition towards renewable energy.

The special purpose vehicle, established by Sembcorp Utilities with a 75 per cent stake and OQAE, the clean energy arm of OQ Group, holding the remaining 25 per cent, will oversee the development of the wind farm near Fatkhait in the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands in Dhofar Governorate.

Estimated to cost around RO 43 million, the project will feature 20 wind turbine generators, each rated at



Construction officially commenced in June 2026, with commercial operations targeted for Q3 of 2027.

6.25 MW, distributed across a roughly 12-square-kilometre site within Petroleum Development Oman's Block 6 concession area.

The development represents another significant step in harnessing Dhofar's

favourable wind resources to support Oman's national energy transition objectives, including its ambition to generate approximately 30 per cent of electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Importantly, Dhofar II will complement the existing 50 MW Dhofar I Wind Farm, reinforcing the governorate's emergence as a strategic hub for utility-scale wind power generation.

Under a 20-year Power Purchase Agreement signed with Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (Nama PWP) in November 2025, the project will supply renewable electricity to the national grid.

China's Energy Engineering Corporation (CEEC), through its Shanxi Institute subsidiary, is undertaking the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract for the 125 MW Dhofar II Wind IPP. The EPC scope encompasses the wind farm, a 400 kV step-up substation

and approximately 3.7 kilometres of transmission infrastructure.

Construction officially commenced in June 2026, with commercial operations targeted for the third quarter of 2027.

According to the project's environmental and social impact assessment documentation, the wind farm will incorporate approximately 18 kilometres of 33-kilovolt overhead collection lines connecting the turbines to a dedicated 33/400 kV substation.

Electricity will subsequently be evacuated through a high-voltage transmission connection to the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) network. Beyond contributing additional clean generation capacity, Dhofar II will help reduce dependence on natural gas for electricity production, potentially freeing up gas resources for higher-value industrial applications and supporting the decarbonisation of Oman's power sector.

Oman financial centre targets 2027 launch



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and Chairman of IFC Oman, chaired the Board's meeting on Thursday.

THE International Financial Centre of Oman (IFC Oman) plans to begin registering companies later this year ahead of full licensing operations in 2027, as it advances work on its legal framework, regulatory rules and online application system.

A package of laws covering business registration and licensing, financial services regulation and independent dispute resolution is expected to be issued shortly, the centre said.

The legislation would allow the centre's authorities to adopt an initial set of regulations and rules governing activities conducted within and through IFC Oman.

A digital registry is also expected to enter testing shortly. Once operational, it will allow businesses seeking to establish a presence in the centre to submit applications online.

"IFC Oman is accelerating towards opening its doors, with its legal, regulatory and digital infrastructure moving into place", said Mahmood al Aweini,

The Centre will offer global businesses and investors a stable and competitive place to do business, harnessing Oman's enduring connections with countries around the world and its strategic location at the crossroads of continents, to unlock new opportunities for growth and create lasting value for Oman.

MAHMOOD AL AWEINI
Chairman,
IFC Oman
Authority Board

Chairman of the IFC Oman Authority Board.

"The Centre will offer global businesses and investors a stable and competitive place to do business, harnessing Oman's enduring connections with countries around the world and its strategic location at the crossroads of continents, to unlock new opportunities for growth and create lasting value for Oman". The centre said its proposed common-law framework would provide financial institutions, investors and professional services firms with a dedicated business environment supported by registration, licensing and dispute resolution arrangements.

It aims to connect international capital and expertise with opportunities in Oman and the wider region, supporting private investment, economic diversification and employment under Oman Vision 2040.

Alongside its legal and operational preparations, IFC Oman has expanded international engagement with prospective businesses, investors and

professional services firms.

It was approved as a member of the World Alliance of International Financial Centres at the organisation's annual meeting in Busan in September.

Representatives have also attended the Hong Kong Belt and Road Summit and Astana Finance Days as part of efforts to build relationships with potential participants.

A delegation will travel to Bangkok next week for meetings with international financial services firms on the sidelines of the IMF and World Bank annual meetings and the Institute of International Finance's annual membership meeting.

Further meetings with prospective businesses are planned in London later in October.

The centre said completing its legal framework would provide the clarity and certainty businesses need to establish operations in Oman, with company registration preceding the launch of full licensing services next year.

OMAN ENERGY CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON GRID RESILIENCE

MUSCAT: The fifth Oman Electricity and Energy Conference opens on Monday, October 12, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, bringing together an expected 4,200 participants from 47 countries to discuss energy transition and electricity grid resilience.

The three-day event will be held under the theme "Empowering the Future of Energy: Energy Transition Pathways and Grid Resilience in an Increasingly Complex Environment".

Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and

Minerals, will preside over the opening ceremony.

Hosted by Nama Electricity Distribution Company in collaboration with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the conference will feature more than 70 expert speakers and industry leaders. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The solution uses salary assignments as the primary source of repayment.

NBO Muzn Islamic Banking launches Islamic commercial finance solution

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman’s Muzn Islamic Banking has launched its new Islamic Commercial Finance solution, providing salaried Omani individuals with Sharia-compliant financing to support business ventures, commercial investments and SME activities. The solution uses salary assignments as the primary source of repayment, while additional eligible income may also be considered when calculating the Debt Burden Ratio (DBR), subject to the Bank’s criteria.

Commenting on the launch, Salima bint Obaid al Marzouqi, Assistant General Manager & Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO, said: “At Muzn Islamic Banking, we realise the important role that Omani entrepreneurs and business owners play in contributing to the growth and diversification of the national economy.

Our new Islamic Commercial Finance solution has been developed to provide eligible customers with greater flexibility in addressing their business financing needs, whether they are looking to strengthen working capital, invest in essential assets or acquire commercial property.

By combining Sharia-compliant financing structures with flexible terms, we aim to help our customers pursue their business ambitions with confidence”.

Developed to offer greater flexibility in meeting different business needs, the Islamic Commercial Finance solution covers both working capital and fixed asset financing.

Through Murabaha Working Capital Financing, customers can finance the purchase of stocks, inventory, raw materials, finished goods, machinery, equipment, commercial vehicles and boats, as well as computer systems, with financing tenors of up to seven years.

For longer-term business investments, the solution also provides Fixed Asset Financing for commercial vehicles, plants and machinery, as well as the purchase, construction or renovation of commercial properties, including office spaces, warehouses, buildings and other real estate. Financing is offered through Diminishing Musharakah and Forward Diminishing Musharakah, with tenors of up to 15 years.

AHLIBANK PARTICIPATES IN URBAN OCTOBER 2026

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its commitment to contributing to the sustainable development of the Sultanate of Oman, ahlibank participated prominently in Urban October 2026, held from October 5-8, in conjunction with the 6th edition of the Oman Home & Building Expo.

Held under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the event brought together leading industry stakeholders, innovators and urban



planning experts to exchange ideas, explore emerging opportunities and forge strategic partnerships, with

a shared focus on advancing the nation’s urban development agenda and creating more sustainable and resilient communities.

ahlibank’s participation in Urban October 2026 reflects its continued commitment to supporting sustainable development across the Sultanate of Oman by identifying new opportunities for collaboration, supporting projects that contribute to long-term progress and advancing Oman’s broader sustainability ambitions.

Linglong Tire to bring tyre solutions to Oman

WORLD Auto Business LLC has signed a distribution agreement with Linglong Tire, one of the world’s leading tyre manufacturers and sellers, to represent the internationally recognised brand in the Sultanate of Oman.

The distribution agreement was signed by Wang Feng, Chairman of Linglong Tire and Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Chief Executive Officer of Saud Bahwan Group in the presence of senior officials.

The signing marks a significant step in strengthening Linglong’s presence in the Omani market.

The partnership brings together two organisations committed to quality, reliability and customer value, and aims to give motorists and fleet operators in Oman access to a wider choice of dependable tyre solutions.

Founded in 1975 in Zhaoyuan, China, Linglong Tire has grown into one of the world’s major tyre



Wang Feng, Chairman of Linglong Tire and Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Chief Executive Officer of Saud Bahwan Group, after signing the distributor agreement for World Auto Business LLC to represent Linglong Tire in Oman.

manufacturers, with products available in more than 173 countries.

The company operates seven research institutions, seven production bases (five in China, one in Taiwan and one in Serbia) and over 19,000 employees worldwide with an annual

output of 90 million tyres.

Linglong’s portfolio covers high-performance passenger car radial (PCR) tyres, light truck radial (LTR) tyres, and all-steel truck and bus radial (TBR) tyre specifications, as well as off-the-road tyres for engineering machinery.

Linglong also supplies original equipment (OE) tyres to more than 70 global automobile manufacturers, a reflection of its engineering standards and consistent product quality.

Guided by the enterprise spirit of “Unity and diligence in pursuing excellence”, Linglong has evolved over more than four decades into a green and low-carbon tyre enterprise, integrating tyre design, development, manufacturing, sales and services.

Under the new partnership, World Auto Business LLC will leverage its established presence, nationwide network and automotive expertise to bring Linglong’s competitively positioned range to customers across the Sultanate of Oman, covering passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and other applications.

The partnership reflects the continued commitment of both organisations to expanding their business presence and supporting the evolving requirements of Oman’s automotive and transportation sectors.

OMRAN’S ‘GIFTED’ PROGRAMME NAMED TOP CSR INITIATIVE IN OMAN

MUSCAT: Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) has been recognised among leading social responsibility initiatives by private-sector institutions in the Sultanate of Oman for its ‘Gifted’ programme. The recognition was presented on the sidelines of the GCC ministerial meetings on civil service, labour and social/development affairs held in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The recognition reflects the programme’s practical approach to combining professional development with hands-on workplace experience. Delivered through two editions, ‘Gifted’ aims to strengthen participants’ skills and readiness to enter the workforce, while opening up professional opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sector.



The ‘Gifted’ programme forms part of OMRAN Group’s social investment portfolio.

‘Gifted’ forms part of OMRAN Group’s social investment portfolio and reflects its commitment to linking the potential of the tourism sector with

wider community needs. The programme provides persons with disabilities with opportunities for practical training and professional development, supporting their participation in the workplace and enabling them to build on their individual skills and capabilities.

Mohammed bin Hamad al Rasbi, Social Investment Officer at OMRAN Group, said: “‘Gifted’ is a model of social investment that delivers tangible impact by providing persons with disabilities with opportunities for professional development and workplace experience within the tourism sector. Since its launch, the programme has focused on supporting participants in moving from training into practical experience, helping them develop their skills and prepare for professional opportunities”.

Bank Muscat Contact Centre wins top banking service award

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat’s Contact Centre has been recently awarded the prestigious “The Call Centre Initiative of the Year – Oman” title at The Asian Banking & Finance Retail Banking Awards 2026. The Contact Centre is the largest centre in the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman, providing various services around the clock and all days of the week to ensure various banking services and facilities are delivered to customers more quickly and efficiently.

The Asian Banking & Finance Retail Banking Awards 2026 are renowned for their rigorous evaluation process, which includes comprehensive assessments and benchmarks across a variety of customer service metrics.



The contact centre is the largest centre in the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Recognised globally, the Awards are dedicated to acknowledging the best in customer service, celebrating establishments that exemplify quality, efficiency, and innovation in their customer support functions. The award recognises organisations that demonstrate excellence in key areas, including customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, innovation in customer service processes, and employee engagement.

Bank Muscat stood out for its commitment to personalised customer interactions, use of advanced technology, and consistent efforts to improve response times and resolution accuracy, all of which contribute to a seamless and rewarding experience for customers.

On this occasion, Talal bin Abdulhameed al Zadjali, Deputy General Manager of Operations at Bank Muscat, said: “This prestigious award is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and customer-first approach that define our contact centre team. We continuously strive to innovate and enhance our service delivery, making sure that our customers receive the highest level of support and satisfaction.

This recognition reinforces our commitment to excellence and motivates us to push the boundaries of what exceptional customer service can be. Bank Muscat will uphold its commitment to enhancing the banking experience of customers with the best services and solutions”.

SHORTTAKES



Total subscriptions reached 8,515,864: NCSI data.

MOBILE SUBSCRIPTIONS IN OMAN RISE 2.5%

MUSCAT: Oman's mobile service subscriptions rose 2.5 per cent year on year to 8.52 million at the end of August, with growth in postpaid accounts and connected-device services offsetting a decline in prepaid subscriptions.

Total subscriptions reached 8,515,864, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Active postpaid subscriptions increased 6.9 per cent to 1,334,758, while prepaid subscriptions fell 0.4 per cent to 5,461,283. Internet of Things and machine-to-machine subscriptions grew 9.4 per cent to 1,719,823. These services accounted for about one-fifth of total mobile subscriptions.

Active mobile broadband subscriptions reached 5,686,755, while active fixed broadband subscriptions stood at 595,604.

Fibre-to-the-home and fibre-to-the-building connections increased 6.5 per cent year on year to 369,766, representing the largest category of fixed broadband subscriptions. Fixed 5G connections totalled 209,519.

Together, fibre and fixed 5G accounted for more than 97 per cent of fixed broadband subscriptions.

Satellite internet recorded the fastest growth among fixed internet technologies, rising 152.6 per cent to 2,084 subscriptions, although it remained a small part of the overall market.

Fixed 4G subscriptions fell 67.9 per cent to 5,107, while asymmetric digital subscriber line connections declined 23.1 per cent to 8,411.

Other fixed internet subscriptions, comprising power line communication, Ethernet and leased internet lines, decreased 4.5 per cent to 717. — ONA

Oman, Indonesia target 25.4m aviation hub

A partnership between Oman's Mach Aerospace International and Indonesia's GMF AeroAsia is targeting investment of about RO 25.4 million in aircraft maintenance, engineering training and component manufacturing, as Oman seeks to develop an aviation industry serving domestic and overseas markets.

Preliminary studies put the combined investment requirement at approximately \$66 million, said Dr Abdullah bin Masoud al Harthi, Chairman of Mach Aerospace International. The proposed aircraft structural components factory accounts for targeted capital investment of RO 12.6 million.

The projects follow agreements signed by GMF AeroAsia with the Civil Aviation Authority and Mach Aerospace International during the authority's investment forum. They aim to combine the Indonesian company's technical expertise with local investment and development capabilities.

Al Harthi said the partnership would broaden Oman's aviation sector beyond transport and airline operations by establishing capabilities in maintenance, repair and overhaul, technical training and aircraft component manufacturing.

Preparatory, technical and organisational work has begun on an aircraft wheel and brake maintenance centre, with the next phase dependent on securing the necessary approvals and meeting regulatory requirements.

Work is also under way on an aviation engineering academy, including its programmes, curricula, facilities and



The projects follow agreements signed by GMF AeroAsia with the Civil Aviation Authority and Mach Aerospace International during an investment forum.

accreditation requirements. Phased implementation is scheduled to begin in 2027.

The aircraft structural components manufacturing project, the largest and most technologically advanced of the three initiatives, is expected to take between 12 and 18 months to implement after final requirements are completed.

Al Harthi said total investment could increase as manufacturing capacity, training programmes and supporting services expand. Oman's location between Asia, the Middle East and Africa, together with its airports, ports and logistics infrastructure, provides a base for serving regional and international customers, he said.

He also cited the country's stability, investment

environment and plans to expand the aviation sector.

The National Aviation Strategy 2040 prioritises private investment, aviation services, local maintenance capabilities and workforce development, supporting the proposed projects, he added.

The wheel and brake centre would initially serve airlines operating in Oman before seeking customers across the GCC, the wider Middle East, Africa and nearby markets. Aircraft wheels and brakes require frequent maintenance, making the proposed facility an opportunity to retain spending that would otherwise go to overseas service providers, Al Harthi said.

He said local maintenance capacity could shorten turnaround times, develop

specialised Omani expertise and create demand for spare parts, equipment, logistics and technical support.

The centre would be developed to meet the Civil Aviation Authority's requirements. Relevant international approvals, including European Union Aviation Safety Agency Part-145 certification, would be pursued as its service scope expands, subject to the necessary approvals.

The engineering academy would train Omani engineers and technicians to international standards, with programmes designed around the needs of the maintenance and manufacturing projects and the wider labour market.

Its initial focus would be aircraft engineering and maintenance training in the B1 and B2 streams, alongside specialised programmes covering aircraft structures, systems and components.

Training capacity would depend on facility design and accreditation requirements, with enrolment increased gradually as programmes expand.

Mach Aerospace International is working with GMF AeroAsia to transfer training expertise and develop programmes meeting Oman's regulatory requirements. The academy would also seek relevant international approvals, including Part-147 accreditation, subject to official authorisation.

The manufacturing project's first phase would establish capabilities in computer numerical control machining, sheet metal fabrication, structural parts, aircraft components and subassemblies. — ONA

Oman's refinery output reaches 149.96 million barrels til August

MUSCAT: Oman's refinery output fell 2.4 per cent year on year to 149.96 million barrels in the first eight months of 2026, as lower diesel and other product output outweighed gains in jet fuel, naphtha and petrol.

Total production stood at 149,958,800 barrels, compared with 153.7 million barrels a year earlier, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Diesel, the largest product category, recorded a 6.4 per cent decline in output to 50,340,200 barrels from 53,761,800 barrels. Diesel sales increased 1.1 per cent to 13,808,600 barrels from 13,658,800 barrels, while exports fell 10.4 per cent to 38,677,100 barrels from 43,169,900 barrels.

Jet fuel production increased 15.5 per cent to 19,750,500 barrels, compared with 17,100,500 barrels in the corresponding period of 2025. Its exports rose 27.8 per cent to 16,609,800 barrels from 12,991,800 barrels, while sales



Total production stood at 149,958,800 barrels, compared with 153.7 million barrels a year earlier.

declined 5 per cent to 3,037,500 barrels from 3,197,000 barrels.

Total petrol production increased 0.7 per cent, although sales of both regular and premium grades fell.

Regular 91-octane petrol output rose 0.4 per cent to 11,405,200 barrels from 11,365,300 barrels. Sales declined 9.1 per cent to

10,862,400 barrels from 11,952,800 barrels, while exports increased 27.3 per cent to 2,460,400 barrels from 1,932,600 barrels.

Premium 95-octane petrol production grew 1.1 per cent to 9,564,200 barrels, compared with 9,456,700 barrels a year earlier. Premium petrol sales fell 8.5 per cent to 10,389,300 barrels from 11,350,400 barrels. Exports dropped 48.3 per cent to 362,900 barrels from 701,400 barrels.

Liquefied petroleum gas production declined 2.7 per cent to 7,445,700 barrels from 7,654,200 barrels.

LPG sales fell 20.7 per cent to 2,017,600 barrels, compared with 2,545,000 barrels a year earlier, while exports increased 5.4 per cent to 2,396,600 barrels from 2,272,900 barrels.

Naphtha production rose 5.1 per cent to 26,199,700 barrels from 24,925,100 barrels. Sales increased 4.7 per cent to 9,607,700 barrels from 9,175,500 barrels, while exports grew 3.3 per cent to 16,953,000 barrels from 16,406,400

barrels.

Output of other refinery products fell 14.2 per cent to 25,253,200 barrels, compared with 29,436,300 barrels in the first eight months of 2025.

Sales of those products declined 19.6 per cent to 21,219,900 barrels from 26,383,900 barrels, while exports decreased 13.8 per cent to 5,964,900 barrels from 6,919,300 barrels.

In petrochemicals, benzene production increased 1.8 per cent to 123,200 metric tonnes from 121,000 metric tonnes. Benzene exports rose 1.6 per cent to 121,000 metric tonnes from 119,100 metric tonnes.

Paraxylene output grew 5.8 per cent to 425,300 metric tonnes, compared with 402,100 metric tonnes a year earlier. Exports declined 1.8 per cent to 427,400 metric tonnes from 435,300 metric tonnes.

Polypropylene production fell 25.5 per cent to 177,100 metric tonnes from 237,700 metric tonnes. — ONA

FUEL AGREEMENT

Trump announces major Russian diesel deal



US President Trump announced a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin to supply over 300,000 tonnes of diesel fuel to American and global markets.

Additional shipments of 500,000 tonnes in November and one million tons later will follow, potentially reaching three million tonnes. Trump stated this agreement would lead to a record decline in domestic and worldwide diesel prices. — Reuters

TRADE RELATIONS

EU and China reach major trade pact



EU Trade Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič announced a new understanding with China to curb Chinese hybrid vehicle exports to Europe by over half.

In return, China will expand market access for €4 billion in European goods—saving €225 million in tariffs—and ease European access to vital rare earth minerals and permanent magnets. EU leaders will review the agreement next week. — Reuters

ECONOMIC ANXIOUSNESS

US consumer sentiment drops to record low



US consumer sentiment fell near record lows in early October as rising living costs from the Middle East conflict fueled economic frustration. Squeezed by high inflation, American households reported darkening financial outlooks.

This downturn drives President Trump's lowest approval ratings to date, posing a significant political hurdle ahead of the November congressional midterm elections. — Reuters

OPINION

CSR impact on sustainable socioeconomic development in Oman



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

CORPORATE Social Responsibility (CSR) is an integration of activities that incorporate sustainability in economic, social and environmental dimensions. Recognising the importance of CSR in today's business world is crucial for the successful pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. CSR provides an effective framework for achieving the triple bottom line of sustainable development, which is the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the community. CSR is playing an increasingly significant role in the implementation of Oman Vision 2040. Among other things, CSR activities are directed at creating innovative jobs and enhancing local skills through the development of effective CSR frameworks. One major limitation of traditional short-term CSR activities is the absence of a follow-up mechanism to assess the impact of the intervention on the community. A positive aspect of CSR is its capacity to stimulate local economic growth. Businesses can improve the local economy through various means including investments in educational and vocational training facilities, and other community development projects. The incorporation of CSR in the ICV framework opens an opportunity to further enhance the retention of economic benefits in the Sultanate of Oman. While ICV

focuses on increasing the volume of local expenditure and employment, CSR addresses the remainder of the social needs of the community and improves the social welfare outcome.

STRENGTHENING HUMAN CAPITAL AND SOCIAL WELLBEING Investments in human capital contribute to CSR impact in another way. Promoting education, scholarships, and vocational and professional training, enhance the workforce and make it more competitive. In Oman, the alignment of some CSR initiatives with the needs of the local labour market can help meet the workforce requirements of the industry and provide opportunities to the first generation Omani workers entering the labour market. More partnerships between different organisations can integrate vocational training and link education to employment. On the other hand, investment in community health, social inclusion, and volunteering CSR initiatives foster quality of life, especially in the communities in which industrial activities are developed.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH While the mandate of environmental sustainability is increasing in the context of CSR, the expectation is that companies decrease their environmental footprint. Improvements in their performance in the

CSR provides an effective framework for achieving the triple bottom line of sustainable development, which is the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community.

areas of energy and resource efficiency and the reduction of emissions must be ensured. In Oman, to strengthen corporate environmental strategies, efforts can be focused on advancing the country's priorities for sustainability and the environment including its goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The implementation of circular economy initiatives and responsible consumption and production can improve the sustainability of companies and the society at large, and encourage environmental innovations.

MEASURING THE REAL IMPACT OF CSR While investments in CSR activities are increasing, the challenge is in measuring the true impact as opposed to reporting expenditures and/or activities. Traditional CSR reporting is focused on the number of beneficiaries, the projects implemented, or the funds allocated. While these may appear to show the results of the work of a given organisation, these do not always reflect social or economic improvement. Companies should adopt impact measurement frameworks assessing outcomes including employment created, household income increases, SMEs, skills, and environment. SROI and other internationally known frameworks for sustainability can support organisations to assess the value created by their CSR investments.

CENTRAL BANKS
FACE TEST. WILL
THEY BE GOOD COPS
OR BOND VILLAINS?

MIKE DOLAN

A standoff between central banks and their cash-strapped governments may well be looming as an intensifying bond market crunch reopens questions about the political independence of the banks well beyond their interest-rate policy.

Central banks currently appear reluctant to rebuild holdings of sovereign debt, yet those holdings played a significant role in the swelling public borrowing over the past decade. Moving forward, that means either an improbable fiscal tightening will need to emerge or political knives will be sharpened.

Numerous elections in the US, France, Italy and Spain over the coming year mean significant spending cuts are unlikely to be on the agenda.

If bond markets continue to tighten — as we've seen in recent weeks — political pressure on central banks to steady the ship will rise even further. Seeing the problem coming like a slow-motion car crash, central banks are trying to nuance their position.

On one hand, a post-pandemic consensus has built around further “normalisation” of their bond-packed balance sheets. This includes a retrospective disdain for using bond accumulation as a monetary policy tool.

On the other hand, policymakers want to keep all options open for temporary fixes in the event of market malfunctioning or another left-field shock.

Bank for International Settlements (BIS) boss Pablo Hernandez de Cos this week laid out some principles for using emergency tools if conditions get rough, using the example of the Bank of England's (BoE) limited and brief support for stressed British gilts during the budget blow-up in 2022.

“A key challenge is to bolster market confidence without overstimulating the economy in the longer term”, he said of such emergency tools. “Central banks should try to better distinguish programmes for market functioning from those for monetary stimulus”.

But the problem with a middle-ground, only-in-emergencies approach is that sometimes debt markets can get squeezed even when there isn't an acute crisis.

Just look at the current global bond selloff. Markets are not necessarily malfunctioning, and despite the clear energy hit from the Iran war, there's no global shock on the scale of Covid-19 or the 2008 banking crash to justify a red alert. Yet markets continue to inflict maximum pain on government debt-service bills.

Should this continue, alongside a relatively hot AI-infused economy and above-target inflation rates, monetary policymakers could find themselves in a very tough spot. — Reuters

Policies for developing
Oman’s pharma industry

THE development of a competitive pharmaceutical and medical devices industry in Oman requires more than attracting individual investments.

It requires a targeted industrial policy and incentive framework capable of attracting anchor investors, developing domestic capabilities, connecting local companies to global value chains and encouraging firms to move progressively towards higher-value activities.

International experience shows that successful pharmaceutical and medical-device clusters have generally been supported by a combination of investment incentives, investor facilitation, local supplier development, human-capital policies, research and development support, and specialised infrastructure.

One of the most important policy lessons is that investment incentives should be targeted rather than generic.

Ireland, Costa Rica and Singapore used proactive investment-promotion strategies to identify priority companies and industries, develop tailored investment packages and actively support investors after establishment.

For Oman, this approach could be applied to pharmaceutical manufacturers, medical-device producers, biotechnology companies, contract manufacturers and companies with regional export potential.

The incentive package should therefore be linked to measurable economic outcomes. Instead of providing incentives simply for establishing a factory, Oman could consider linking incentives to indicators such as investment value, number and quality of jobs created, exports, local procurement, technology transfer, training of Omani workers and research and development activities.

This would transform incentives from a cost to the government into a policy instrument for achieving



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Instead of providing incentives simply for establishing a factory, Oman could consider linking incentives to indicators such as investment value, number and quality of jobs created, exports, local procurement, technology transfer, training of Omani workers and research and development activities.

specific industrial-development objectives.

A second important policy is investment aftercare. International experience demonstrates that attracting an investor is only the beginning.

A dedicated industry-focused team should maintain regular engagement with existing investors, identify barriers to expansion and facilitate reinvestment. Companies that successfully establish operations in Oman should be encouraged to expand production, introduce new products, develop regional export platforms and establish research or technical centres.

The third policy area is the development of local supplier linkages. Foreign pharmaceutical and medical-device companies should be encouraged to source an increasing share of eligible goods and services from competitive Omani companies.

This could be supported through supplier-development programmes, technical assistance, quality certification, financing and matchmaking between multinational companies and local SMEs.

The objective should not be to impose local-content requirements without regard to competitiveness. Instead, Oman could adopt a capability-based local-content approach, where incentives are provided to multinational companies that actively develop qualified Omani suppliers and transfer knowledge and technology. A fourth policy area is the development of specialised human capital.

Pharmaceutical manufacturing requires highly specialised capabilities in production, quality assurance, laboratory testing, regulatory affairs, engineering and research.

Government support could therefore include targeted training programmes designed jointly with investors, universities and technical institutions.

Companies receiving major

investment incentives could be encouraged to establish structured training and skills-transfer programmes for Omani employees. Research and development should form another component of the incentive framework.

Singapore provides an important example of how public policy can gradually move an industry from manufacturing towards higher-value research and innovation activities. Oman could introduce additional incentives for companies that establish R&D centres, clinical research capabilities, testing laboratories, product-development facilities or regional technical centres.

Such incentives could be differentiated according to the level of value added. A manufacturing investment could receive a basic package, while companies undertaking R&D, exporting from Oman, developing local suppliers or employing highly skilled Omanis could qualify for enhanced incentives.

Infrastructure policy is equally important. The development of pharmaceutical clusters in locations such as Salalah and Khazaen should be supported by specialised facilities including testing laboratories, quality-control infrastructure, cold-chain logistics, waste-management systems and training facilities.

However, international experience suggests that infrastructure should be developed in line with actual industrial demand rather than simply constructing facilities in anticipation of investors.

Another important policy instrument is government procurement. Where appropriate and consistent with quality, safety and value-for-money requirements, public procurement can help create an initial market for locally manufactured pharmaceutical and medical products.

This can provide domestic producers with the scale and market experience needed to become internationally competitive.

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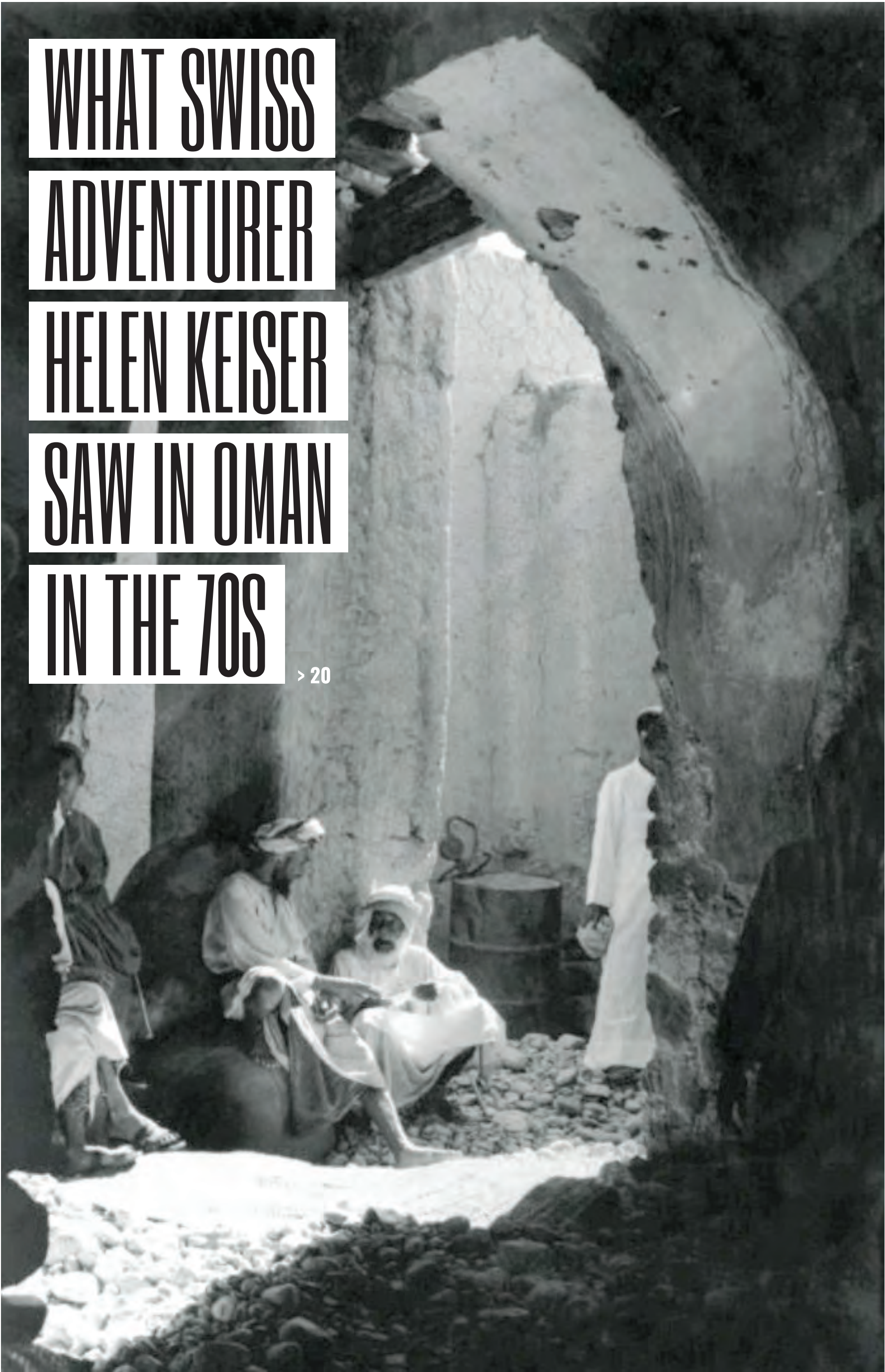
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ART/LIFE



WHAT SWISS ADVENTURER HELEN KEISER SAW IN OMAN IN THE 70S

> 20

HUMANINTEREST

BRIT ADVENTURER RETURNS TO UK AFTER 28-YEAR WALK



Karl Bushby, a 57-year-old former paratrooper, set off from Punta Arenas, Chile, in November 1998, vowing to reach his mother's home near Hull in northern England on foot. — AFP

A British adventurer on a 50,000-kilometre, 28-year trek home from South America without using any transport has set foot on UK soil after swimming the Channel, his publicists said on Tuesday.

Karl Bushby, a 57-year-old former paratrooper, set off from Punta Arenas, Chile, in November 1998, vowing to reach his mother's home near Hull in northern England without travelling on planes, trains, boats, vehicles or other transport modes.

Nearly three decades and 29 countries later, Bushby stepped ashore in southeast England on Monday afternoon, after securing permission from UK and French authorities to swim across the busy Channel waterway from France.

The Channel crossing brought him back to Britain, but his destination remained his mother's home near Hull, the goal he had set when he left Chile three decades earlier in 1998.

He and his team said they opted not to publicise the swim for safety and security reasons.

"Feels good to have UK soil under my feet after all these years", the adventurer said in a brief statement released on Tuesday.

"It hasn't been easy, and that's part of the point. Proving I'm more capable than I give myself credit for", he added.

"All of us can accomplish more than we will ever imagine"

Bushby has paused his journey several times. Moscow refused him a visa for a long time, while the 2008 financial crisis and then the Covid-19 pandemic proved to be other hold-ups.

At those times, he stepped away from the journey, living notably in Mexico, then once the situation cleared, he would resume his journey at the exact spot where he had left off.

A small gathering of friends and family, including his father and brothers, welcomed Bushby on Shakespeare beach, just south of Dover, as he emerged from the water on Monday.

He was also greeted by legendary filmmaker Werner Herzog and his film crew, who are making a feature-length documentary about the journey entitled "Walk of Life".

The production company behind the film has been supporting Bushby's progress for the past 16 years, providing financial and logistical assistance, as well as equipping Bushby to document his trek and archiving the footage.

His epic journey has seen him walk the length of the Americas, cross the Bering Strait from Alaska to Russia, and then traverse east to west overland.

In an interview with AFP from northern France last month, Bushby voiced some apparent apprehension about returning to a more normal life back in Britain.

"I've got to try and get established in the grown-up world again, because I'm going to arrive home with nothing", he said. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



MUSIC

A street musician plays the accordion in Bastejkalns Park in Riga, Latvia. — AFP



CULTURE

Students perform a Remo dance during an annual cultural and heritage festival in Surabaya, Indonesia. — AFP



STARSTRUCK

US actor Tom Cruise interacts with movie fans during the red carpet event for the film 'Digger' in Seoul, South Korea. — AFP

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GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL SELLS OUT IN 45 MINUTES



Once a hub for legendary British rockers, Glastonbury has increasingly featured global pop stars alongside festival veterans. — AFP

Tickets for next year’s Glastonbury music festival in the UK sold out in 45 minutes on Sunday, organisers said, despite the hefty price tag.

“Tickets for Glastonbury 2027 have now sold out”, organisers posted on social media, less than an hour after the general sale began. Held at Worthy Farm in southwest England, the festival has become a fixture of the international music calendar since launching in 1970, inspired by British hippie and counterculture movements.

Standard tickets cost £408 (\$539) for the June 2027 edition, which follows a “fallow year” without a festival in 2026.

Next year’s performers have not been announced, although organisers confirmed that recently reunited Britpop band Oasis will not play, ending months of speculation.

Once a hub for legendary British rockers, Glastonbury has increasingly featured global pop

stars alongside festival veterans, including Charli XCX, Dua Lipa and Olivia Rodrigo.

The festival courted controversy in 2025 after Irish rappers Kneecap and London duo Bob Vylan voiced support for Palestinians in Gaza. Police assessed their onstage comments but ultimately took no action against either band.

Frontman Bobby Vylan led chants against the Israeli army, prompting criticism of the BBC’s live broadcast.

Last year’s festival also saw Lewis Capaldi return emotionally to the Pyramid Stage, two years after stopping a performance while struggling with Tourette symptoms.

Around 210,000 people attended Glastonbury 2025, which featured Neil Young, Rod Stewart, Raye, The Prodigy, Alanis Morissette and Snow Patrol. The next festival will take place from June 23 to 27, 2027. — AFP

CLIMATE CHANGE POSES NEW CHALLENGES FOR FASHION

LONGER, HOTTER SUMMERS are disrupting fashion’s seasonal calendar, forcing luxury brands to adapt designs and threatening sales of higher-margin winter clothing.

The industry’s traditional cycle has long depended on consumers buying autumn and winter clothing as temperatures cool. But warmer autumns are delaying demand for coats and other cold-weather clothing, leaving retailers at risk of excess stock and markdowns.

In Paris, Saint Laurent billboard ads during Fashion Week showed a model wrapped in a thick fur coat, while the sun shone and tourists wandered the streets in T-shirts and shorts.

“The whole industry should realise that with climate change and higher temperatures, the time for selling coats has shifted later”, said Pau Almar, a retail industry consultant who previously spent a decade at Zara.

The disconnect was on show during Paris Fashion Week, where temperatures reached 28 degrees Celsius and many guests opted for sleeveless tops and mini skirts rather than newly released autumn collections.

Typically, guests at spring/summer runway shows held at the end of September come dressed in autumn/winter products just released in stores. At Louis Vuitton’s show on Tuesday, however, coats were scarce.

“I can’t believe it’s October here in Paris and I was wishing I brought some of my summer clothes from Miami”, said Suzy Buckley Woodward, a guest at the show.

“My sales associate was putting a lot of coats in front of me for the show, and I said that’s gonna be a waste because I think it’s very unlikely that I’ll need a coat for the show”, she added.

Louis Vuitton’s womenswear designer Nicolas Ghesquiere is already adapting his designs, saying Europe’s



A model presents a creation for Agnes b Women’s Spring/Summer 2027 collection. — Reuters



The disconnect was on show during Paris Fashion Week, where many guests opted for sleeveless tops and mini skirts rather than newly released autumn collections



A model presents a creation for Agnes b Women’s Spring/Summer 2027 collection. — Reuters



A model presents a creation for Agnes b Women’s Spring/Summer 2027 collection. — Reuters

record heatwaves had a “strong influence” on his latest collection, which featured thin fabrics and airy constructions.

“The focus was on how do you do clothes that are like swimwear almost, like a second skin”, he told reporters after Tuesday’s show.

The warm weather last week left some guests in autumn clothing overheating at Dior’s spring/summer show in the Tuileries Gardens, despite ceiling fans installed above the runway.

The continuing high temperatures also pose a challenge for mass-market fashion retailers as stores begin to replace T-shirts with jackets and knitwear, facing the risk of having to discount excess stock.

Retailers will have to adapt to selling fewer heavy coats and more transitional layers, Almar said.

Profits could come under pressure as outerwear is typically higher-margin, and a delayed winter risks more shoppers waiting until end-November Black Friday discounts to pick up a new coat.

At the Hermes runway show on Saturday, fashion influencer sisters Snehal and Jyoti Babani said the weather, rather than the fashion calendar, had dictated their outfits.

“Is this really fall/winter?” Snehal said. “If the summers are getting hotter, the line between spring/summer and fall/winter will get really blurred”.

— Reuters

FEATURES

What Swiss adventurer *Helen Keiser* saw in Oman in the 70s

YERU EBUEN

There is dust in Helen Keiser’s Oman. It settles on the mud walls, softens the edges of watchtowers and hangs above roads that seem to lead into nothing. The mountains around Muscat look hard and bare, the towns feel handmade, and the sea at Sur appears to carry stories older than the camera itself. Yet her photographs are not empty. Children gather, girls dance, shepherds work and people meet her gaze with a calm that makes these old images feel strangely close.

This is raw Oman, not in the polished way the phrase is used today, but as Keiser found it: unvarnished, lived-in and still moving at the pace of feet, animals, boats and conversation.

Born in Zug in 1926, Keiser was a Swiss writer, painter and photographer who became one of her country’s most knowledgeable observers of the Arab world.

Over four decades, she made more than 50 journeys in the Middle East, often alone and for months at a time. She learnt Arabic, studied archaeology and carried a camera, notebooks, drawing paper and watercolours.

Although Helen has long since passed away, her memories are kept alive by Tanja Shmid, who manages her social media accounts. On Instagram, the @helen.keiser account has begun to attract a growing following.

As Shmid explained, “Helen Keiser travelled to Oman in 1964, 1972, 1976 and 1979. She travelled alone throughout the country, wrote, photographed and drew”.

Shmid added that Keiser’s reports and photographs appeared in respected newspapers and magazines, while her work found a longer life in books: Arabia in 1971; Search for Sinbad: Frankincense Land Oman and the Ancient South Arabian Cultures in 1979; and the photographic volume Salaam: Arabia in 2002. For years, she also took her slide lectures about Arab countries, ethnology and the ancient Orient beyond Switzerland.

To scroll through the public archive now is to walk beside her. In Muscat in 1964, she looked across a natural harbour enclosed by rock, with two Portuguese-period forts standing guard. It is recognisable, yet startlingly open: sea, stone and a settlement tucked between them.

In Al Khabourah that same year, her lens found children during the end-of-Ramadhan celebration.

This is where Keiser’s work

becomes more than a record of buildings. She moved closer to everyday life. The people are not decoration added to a landscape; they are the story.

By 1972, she was photographing the great wooden doors of Nizwa: heavy, patterned and built to outlive their owners. By 1976, her route widened into a wonderfully human map. Bahla appears as an old oasis town gathered around its immense earthen fort.

Another image observes girls and boys in long skirts. In Ibri, the souq is not a heritage reconstruction but a working place. In Al Kamil W’al Wafi, a young woman faces the camera, while a great mud-built watchtower recalls an age when settled communities and Bedouin groups lived with the possibility of conflict.

Then the road reaches the coast. A shepherd stands in Wadi Tiwi. At Sur, wooden boats take shape in a shipyard where the Indian Ocean is not scenery but livelihood, memory and route. Farther south, Salalah changes the mood. A young Omani woman appears in festive dress; in another photograph, two girls dance in bright clothes and silver jewellery. The pictures carry movement even when the frame is still.

What makes Keiser’s Oman moving is not simply that it looks old. Nostalgia becomes dangerous when it turns hardship into romance or treats a living country as something that should have remained untouched.

Her images hold both truths: something precious was preserved, and life also needed to change.

Her four visits crossed an extraordinary threshold. She first arrived in 1964, six years before the modern Renaissance began in 1970. When she returned in 1972, 1976 and 1979, roads, schools and public institutions were spreading.

If Keiser could return in 2026, perhaps Muscat’s highways, airports and illuminated waterfront would leave her momentarily speechless. She might search for the quiet harbour beneath the city and compare restored forts with the mud walls she saw weathering in the sun.

Growth would astonish her, but continuity might move her more. Oman has travelled a long way since Helen Keiser walked through it alone.

Her photographs remind us that beneath the speed and polish of 2026, the older country has not entirely disappeared. It is still there: in craft, gesture, hospitality and the stories people keep.

1976
Al Kamil W'al Waf



1972
Al Khabourah



1972
Ibri



1964
Muscat



1976
Taqah



1976
Al Hamra



1964
Al Khabourah



1964
Bahla



1970
Rub Al Khali



1976
Salalah

