

OMAN

دَائِلِي

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IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS
TO KING OF SPAIN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Felipe VI of the Kingdom of Spain, on his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to Spain for further progress and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations further expansion and growth across all spheres.

HM GETS MESSAGE
FROM SAUDI KING



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a written message from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, pertaining to the strong relations and the existing bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The message was received by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, when he received Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman.

OMAN AFFIRMS ROLE
OF CULTURE IN PEACE

The Sultanate of Oman has affirmed that the concept of “investing in people through education, culture and knowledge” constitutes a solid foundation for building sustainable peace. Oman also underscored the importance of enhancing international cooperation to protect cultural heritage, develop education systems and support communities affected by crises and conflicts. A statement to this effect was delivered by Amna bint Salim al Balushi, Permanent Delegate of the Sultanate of Oman to the Unesco, during the 225th session of the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), being held in Paris, France, from October 5 to 20. **DETAILS ON P2**

NEW RULES FOR LABOUR
RECRUITMENT OFFICES

Ensures efficiency of recruitment procedures

To raise efficiency and the quality of services	Protection of rights of employers and workers	To enhance the reliability of recruitment offices	Owner/partners of company should be an Omani	Financial guarantee of ~~5,000~~ 5,000 to be deposited
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MANPOWER
RULES



Image generated by AI

Appropriate housing should be provided for workers	Recruitment service guaranteed for two years	Recruitment of workers to be completed in 45 days	No collection of money from workers for recruitment	Workers should be provided housing till recruitment
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THE Ministry of Labour on Sunday unveiled the regulatory framework governing the practice of recruiting non-Omani manpower. The move aims to organise the activity of recruitment offices within a clear legal framework, raise the sector’s efficiency and the quality of services provided, and enhance the protection of the rights of employers and workers, in a manner that contributes to building a clear and balanced contractual relationship among the various parties and supports the stability of the labour market.

Dr Saif bin Mohammed al Busaidi, Adviser to the Minister of Labour for Labour Welfare, said that the framework represents a regulatory step to develop the non-Omani manpower recruitment sector, raise the quality of services provided and enhance the reliability of recruitment offices, ensuring clarity in the contractual relationship between the office, the employer and the worker. He added that the new regulation focuses on creating a clearer framework for rights and obligations, through the adoption of unified contracts

and forms and the specification of clear periods and procedures for the recruitment process, alongside the establishment of financial guarantees and dispute-resolution mechanisms, in a manner that contributes to protecting the parties to the relationship and curbing unregulated practices. He noted that the framework also strengthens oversight of recruitment offices and sets out a set of requirements aimed at raising the level of professionalism in practising the activity. He affirmed the importance of offices’ compliance with the specified

controls, which is reflected in the quality of services and the stability of the labour market. The framework includes a range of new regulations and requirements for practising the activity of recruiting non-Omani manpower. They include restricting the activity to offices licensed by the Ministry of Labour, adopting unified contracts and forms that ensure clarity of obligations and establishing a register of licensed offices that enhances transparency and organises the relationship between recruitment offices, employers and workers. **TURN ON P3**

Increased rainfall in September-May period linked to El Nino

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre (NMHEWC) reviewed the current status of the El Nino phenomenon and its potential impact on the country’s weather for the period between September and May 2027 focusing on rainfall and temperatures. The review was conducted with a view to enhance the national

early warning system and boosting preparedness of national sectors to handle various potential impacts. The centre said that the statistical models showed a correlation between El Nino and rainfall patterns associated with winter westerly troughs in Oman between October and May each year. The phenomenon was linked to increased rainfall and moisture particularly in northern parts of the country. The outcomes indicate the



The phenomenon was linked to increased rainfall and moisture particularly in northern parts of Oman.

potential to consider the El Niño phenomenon as a primary and subordinate indicator in seasonal forecasting. Regarding the forecast for the coming months, the centre said that this weather pattern is associated with an increased possibility of significant changes in temperature and rainfall patterns, along with a higher risk of extreme weather events including heavy rains, droughts, and temperature fluctuations. The effects of this

phenomenon are expected to continue throughout 2027. Concerning rainfall, the centre said that seasonal forecasts show spatial variations in rainfall rates between October and December of this year. The country is expected to experience above-average rainfall in October and average rainfall in the remaining areas except for the coastal regions of the Arabian Sea where below-average rainfall is anticipated. **TURN TO P3**

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OMAN AFFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION, CULTURE IN CONSOLIDATING PEACE

THE Sultanate of Oman has affirmed that the concept of ‘investing in people through education, culture and knowledge’ constitutes a solid foundation for building sustainable peace. Oman also underscored the importance of enhancing international cooperation to protect cultural heritage, develop education systems and support communities affected by crises and conflicts.

A statement to this effect was delivered by Amna bint Salim al Balushi, Permanent Delegate of the Sultanate of Oman to the Unesco, during the 225th session of the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), being

held in Paris, France, from 5 to 20 October 2026.

Oman’s Permanent Delegate to the Unesco affirmed the Sultanate of Oman’s steadfast commitment to support multilateral international action. In her speech, she recalled the historic visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Unesco headquarters in June 2026. She pointed out that the Royal visit embodied Oman’s deep conviction in the importance of investing in people as a fundamental pillar for achieving development and realising sustainable peace that is based on education, culture and knowledge.

Speaking about the conservation of cultural heritage, Oman’s Permanent Delegate to the Unesco



OMAN NORVEGE

highlighted the launch of Unesco-Sultan Haitham Prize for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. She described the award as a significant Omani contribution to international efforts aimed to protect living heritage and enable communities to preserve their cultural legacy and pass it

onwards to future generations.

In this context, she expressed the Sultanate of Oman’s pride in supporting the “World Heritage Capacity-Building Programme” that was launched in several East African nations in cooperation with the Unesco. She observed that the strategic programme contributed to enhancing

national capacities and supporting efforts to showcase rich African heritage sites and secure their registration in the World Heritage List.

Amna bint Salim Al Balushi also affirmed the Sultanate of Oman’s integration of technologies of artificial intelligence (AI) into the educational process. She highlighted Oman’s active participation in international meetings to shape the post-2030 education agenda— notably through the country’s membership in the SDG 4– Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee, noting that Oman’s participation in such meetings affirms its keenness to keep pace with global future developments in the education sector.

She also referred to

the establishment of the “Unesco Chair on Waste-to-Fuel Innovations at Muscat University”, bringing the total number of Unesco Chairs in the Sultanate of Oman to nine.

Oman’s Permanent Delegate to the Unesco also stressed the need to enhance Unesco’s role in supporting the sectors of education and culture in conflict-affected areas. She commended the Unesco’s efforts valuable response to challenges.

In her speech, Oman’s Permanent Delegate to the Unesco also highlighted the Sultanate of Oman’s international initiative codenamed “Muscat Plan” as a vital framework for fostering dialogue, addressing conflicts and consolidating social cohesion. — **ONA**

Forum links Duqm University College with industry

DUQM University College (DUC) held its “Degree++ Work-Based Learning Industry Connect” forum on Thursday at Crowne Plaza Muscat, introducing its Degree++ model, which combines academic study with professional experience inside partner companies from day one, and seeking industry partners.

Academic, investment and industry leaders attended, and the college announced the launch of its operations in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Dr Saleh al Shaaibi, Dean of Middle East College, said strong collaboration between higher education and industry “is essential to ensure that learning remains relevant, practical, and responsive to the workforce needs of the nation”. As Duqm develops rapidly across various sectors, he said, this “creates both opportunities and responsibilities for higher education institutions to support the development of a capable and future-ready workforce”, in line with Omanisation, human capital development and Oman Vision 2040. He urged industry to help take the initiative forward.

Speaking to the Observer, Prof Glenn Christo, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Middle East College, described work-based learning as “a new adventure of Middle East College” being conducted at Duqm University College, and “a cutting-edge concept in higher education”. University education, he said, mostly takes place in classrooms and laboratories, while internships remain “a limited form of education”.

“No amount of theoretical consultations or discussion really can solve real-life problems as much as doing them actually in the workplace,” he said.

Addressing readers, he said: “In your families there may be youth who are looking at these opportunities. There may be entrepreneurs in your family who could also maybe think of this idea of teaming up, partnering with the university or the college, so that together we can bring the best kind of education for our youth



Adopting work-based learning as Oman’s first curriculum of its kind



and maybe contribute to better development of the country.”

The college offers a BA (Hons) in Business Management and Leadership and a BSc (Hons) in Digital and Technology Solutions, awarded by the UK’s Coventry University, through blended learning.

The “++”, the college says, represents more than extra training hours, adding future-ready skills, an entrepreneurial mindset and leadership

character so graduates are job-ready on completion. According to the college’s statement, participating employers said the model reduces retraining costs while providing talent with both technical knowledge and practical experience. The college also aims to develop Omani professionals for specialist and leadership roles, strengthen in-country value, support SMEs and diversify the economy.

Its motto is “Learn. Work. Grow.”



كلية الدقم الجامعة
Duqm University College

Degree++
Work-Based Learning
Industry Connect

8 October 2026
الخميس 8 أكتوبر 2026

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
9:00 صباحاً - 12:00 ظهراً

درجـة ++
التعلـم القائم على العمل
ملتقى الشراكة مع قطاعات العمل

Advertisorial

Oman joins Arab quality assurance of education forum in Doha

DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education, participated in the Forum of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education 2026, held in Doha under the theme “Exploring Opportunities in the Era of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation”.

The delegation was headed by Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukaili,

CEO of the authority and President of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

In her speech at the opening ceremony, Dr Al Shukaili emphasised the importance of transitioning from meeting accreditation standards and requirements to measuring the actual impact of educational quality, pointing out that its true value becomes evident

when it achieves a tangible impact on student life, graduate competence, institutional performance and community development.

On the sidelines, the authority met the Tunisian Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation, represented by its Director-General, Prof Dr Salma Damak, to discuss enhancing cooperation in higher education quality assurance. — **ONA**

Royal Hospital performs first complex cardiac catheterisation procedure

MUSCAT: The Royal Hospital’s National Heart Centre has successfully performed its first complex cardiac catheterisation procedure using the Impella CP with Smart-Assist device. The procedure was carried out by a highly skilled Omani medical team, supported by a comprehensive staff of specialised nursing and technical personnel.

Dr Adil al Jabri, Head of the Cardiac Catheterization Department at the National Heart Centre, said that the Impella CP with Smart-Assist device represents one of the latest advanced global medical innovations. He noted that the device functions as a micro-pump inserted via catheter to temporarily support the heart muscle and assist it in efficiently pumping blood to the rest of the body.

Dr Adil pointed out that recent studies have affirmed the technology’s efficiency in supporting blood circulation and improving survival rates

The procedure was carried out by a highly skilled Omani team. — **ONA**

for this segment of patients, as it boosts the postential for advanced therapeutic intervention in cases of cardiogenic shock.

Dr Najib bin Zahran al Rawahi, Director of the National Heart Centre, told the Oman News Agency (ONA) that the introduction of this technology into the treatment system marks

a significant milestone in the development of cardiac services and reflects the keenness of the medical and technical teams to keep pace with the latest global medical practices and technologies.

This accomplishment underscores the constant development of the health sector in the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

SPOTLIGHT

TRAVEL INSURANCE CHECKLIST

Medical cover:
Minimum
\$50,000

Trip cancellation:
Check refund limits
and conditions

Airspace closures:
Check GCC-South
Asia disruption
coverage

Baggage delays:
Coverage from four
hours

24/7 assistance:
Arabic and
English
support

KABEER YOUSUF

TRAVEL

industry experts are urging travellers to make insurance an essential part of every trip, including short regional journeys, as airspace closures, medical emergencies, flight disruptions and baggage delays leave passengers facing unexpected expenses.

They say travel insurance should be considered a basic travel necessity for both business and leisure travellers, offering financial protection when unforeseen circumstances disrupt carefully planned journeys.

An unexpected illness or accidental injury overseas can result in substantial medical and hospitalisation expenses. Depending on the policy, travel insurance can cover emergency medical treatment, personal accidents, emergency evacuation and repatriation, as well as certain travel-related disruptions.

“People spend RO 200 or even more on tickets and hotels but skip the insurance cost, and that is the biggest mistake,” said a senior IATA consultant based in the MENA region.

The consultant said cancellations and disruptions affecting flights through Dubai and Doha had highlighted the importance of insurance, citing a reported 35 per cent increase in flight cancellation claims in 2026. The figure should be verified with the source before publication.

With many travellers connecting through Gulf aviation hubs en route to South Asia and other destinations, geopolitical tensions and airspace restrictions can lead to rerouting, missed connections and unexpected overnight stays. However, reimbursement for additional accommodation, rebooking and missed connections depends on the policy’s terms, exclusions and the circumstances of the disruption.

According to Dr J Retnakumar, CEO of ISC – Insurance Services Centre, Risk Consultants & Brokers, travel insurance is an essential safeguard against unexpected expenses arising from medical emergencies, trip cancellations, lost luggage, travel delays and personal liability.

“Even a carefully planned holiday can be disrupted by illness, accidents, natural disasters or unforeseen changes, and these situations can become financially overwhelming – especially abroad,” he said.

“By choosing suitable travel insurance and reviewing its coverage, exclusions, medical

conditions, destination restrictions and claim requirements, travellers can enjoy greater peace of mind and focus on their journey rather than worrying about the unexpected.”

Jeejo Thomas, CEO of Alliance Insurance Brokers, said emergency hospitalisation was among the most important benefits of travel insurance, particularly in destinations where medical treatment can be prohibitively expensive.

“In some far-off countries, medical expenses can go beyond one’s financial capacity. Travel

insurance can provide direct billing through third-party administrator (TPA) services or insurance companies,” he said.

Jeejo noted that several travel insurance products were available in Oman and advised travellers to check whether their insurer or assistance provider offered round-the-clock support overseas.

In addition to emergency medical treatment, travellers should examine whether their policies cover emergency dental treatment, passport loss, flight and baggage delays, personal liability and

other travel-related contingencies.

Travel medical insurance is also a visa requirement for certain destinations. Applicants for Schengen visas, for example, must meet the applicable travel medical insurance requirements, while travellers to the US should consider the potentially high cost of healthcare. Requirements and recommended coverage differ by destination.

Travel insurance products in Oman are available at premiums starting from around RO 4, depending on the destination, duration and coverage selected. Some policies offer coverage exceeding \$1 million, although travellers should check the applicable limits and exclusions rather than relying on the headline figure alone.

K S Parameswaran, general manager, Khimji Ramdas Insurance Services LLC, said travel insurance could protect travellers against a range of unexpected costs, including lost or delayed checked baggage, trip cancellation or curtailment, and flight or other travel delays.

“Depending on the policy, it can also cover common travel-related contingencies such as loss of passport, loss or delay of checked baggage, trip cancellation or curtailment, and flight or travel delays,” he said.

“For a relatively modest premium, travel insurance provides valuable financial protection and peace of mind, allowing travellers to enjoy their journey without having to bear the full financial impact of unforeseen events.”

Experts advise travellers to compare policies carefully rather than choosing solely on price. Annual multi-trip plans may be cost-effective for frequent travellers, but the number of permitted trips, maximum duration of each trip and coverage limits should be checked before purchase.

Travellers should also establish whether their policies cover disruptions caused by airspace closures, government travel advisories or other geopolitical events. Such circumstances may be excluded or subject to specific conditions, particularly if the event was known when the policy was purchased.

Other considerations include pre-existing medical conditions, deductibles, claim documentation, exclusions for high-risk activities and the process for obtaining emergency assistance overseas.

“If you can afford to travel, you can afford to insure it. It is not a luxury; it is your ticket home,” a travel agent said.

TRAVEL
INSURANCE
KEY TO SAFER
TRIPS

SHORT TAKES



The meeting seeks to activate coordination among institutions by holding periodic meetings.

SPF ORGANISES A DIALOGUE WITH DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

MUSCAT: The Social Protection Fund, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), organised the first session of a series of social dialogues regarding social insurance programmes within the social protection system for non-Omani workers. The session saw the participation of representatives from diplomatic missions, the Ministry of Labour, and the Foreign Ministry.

The initiative aims to enhance knowledge regarding the development and improvement of the social protection system in Oman. It also seeks to activate coordination among institutions and relevant authorities concerned with supporting non-Omani workers by holding periodic meetings to exchange information and expertise and to enrich social dialogue.

This contributes to bridging the information related to social insurance programs stipulated in the law and procedures on the one hand, and the actual experiences of non-Omani workers on the other, in order to identify practical measures to enhance their actual utilisation of the social protection system.

Non-Omani workers constitute a large percentage of the workforce in the Sultanate of Oman. As the gradual implementation to improve and develop the social protection system in the Sultanate of Oman progresses, the importance of providing clear guidelines and enhancing effective coordination emerges to ensure their ability to benefit from the available protections.

The first session included an introductory presentation on the social protection system for non-Omani workers, followed by an interactive discussion addressing the experiences of diplomatic missions in this field. The dialogue provided a safe space to exchange views and experiences openly and constructively regarding frequent inquiries and common cases, alongside the administrative challenges and policy-related obstacles faced by diplomatic missions when providing assistance to non-Omani workers.

Diplomatic missions undertake an important role in connecting workers with the relevant institutions. Their direct experience in dealing with them allows for monitoring the difficulties they face, whether regarding understanding eligibility conditions, obtaining required documents, completing procedures, or following up on claims for entitlements. — ONA

OPS organises event to raise mental health awareness

MUSCAT: Oman Psychiatric Society (OPS) on Saturday organised an awareness event with the participation of resident physicians of the psychiatry programme at the Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB), coinciding with the World Mental Health Day, celebrated on October 10 annually. The event, held at Al Araiimi Boulevard 14,



aimed to increase awareness of the importance of mental health and correct misconceptions related to mental disorders.

It included an interactive awareness corner that addressed various topics such as child mental health, mental health in daily life, depression and anxiety, and addiction and recovery. — ONA

ADOPT MORE MINDFUL SOCIAL MEDIA HABITS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 11

A RESEARCH study stressed the importance of promoting healthier and more balanced use of digital platforms. The study recommends developing digital well-being guidelines and awareness initiatives addressing the mental and physical health risks associated with excessive social media use, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. It also recommends strengthening digital literacy and digital citizenship programmes in schools and universities, providing support for issues such as anxiety, cyberstress, sleep deprivation, and fear of missing out (FOMO), and encouraging young people to balance screen time with physical activity and face-to-face social interaction.

The study titled “Effects of Social Media on Gen Z Health in the Sultanate of Oman,” was led by Dr Subrahmanian Muthuraman, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Business Studies, Arab Open University. Funded by the Block Funding Program of the Research and Innovation Authority, it examined how social media use affects the social life, mental well-being, and physical health of Generation Z.

According to Dr Subrahmanian, the study focused on young adults aged 18 to 25 and explored their social media habits, levels of engagement and enjoyment, and the positive, negative, and behavioural effects associated with social networking platforms. Using a survey-based research design, the research team administered a structured questionnaire to 138 active social media users and examined six factors: usage



The findings indicated that social media has become an integral part of the daily routines of many young people, with most respondents reporting daily use and many spending several hours across different platforms.



DR SUBRAHMANIAN MUTHURAMAN

Physical health concerns included eye strain, headaches, irregular sleep patterns, and reduced physical activity, while some participants also reported signs of problematic technology use, such as compulsive checking of social media and difficulty staying offline

habits, engagement, enjoyment, positive effects, negative effects, and behavioural impact. The regression analysis showed that all six factors significantly predicted the overall influence of social media on participants, with a statistical significance level of p .05, indicating the substantial role social media plays in the daily lives and well-being of young adults in Oman.

The findings indicated that social media has become an integral part of the daily routines of many young people, with most respondents reporting daily use and many spending several hours across different platforms. The research found that social media can enhance connectivity and communication, but frequent use was also associated with social comparison, peer pressure, and changes in the quality of face-to-face interaction. Levels of engagement and enjoyment were also significantly associated with changes in social interaction patterns.

Dr Subrahmanian said the study identified several mental health

concerns associated with intensive social media use, including increased stress and anxiety, feelings of loneliness, mood fluctuations, reduced concentration, and poorer sleep quality. Participants reporting higher levels of use also showed more signs of digital fatigue and behavioural dependence. Physical health concerns included eye strain, headaches, irregular sleep patterns, and reduced physical activity, while some participants also reported signs of problematic technology use, such as compulsive checking of social media and difficulty staying offline.

Families and community institutions can also play a role by encouraging open discussions about responsible social media use and supporting young people who show signs of technology dependence or social withdrawal. The study further encourages young people to monitor their screen time, reduce excessive late-night use, take regular breaks from social media, seek support when online activity begins to affect their well-being, and verify information before sharing it.

The research team also recommends further studies on the long-term psychological and behavioural effects of social media, differences in digital habits between rural and urban youth, and the effectiveness of digital well-being interventions.

The findings of the research were published in the Journal of Ecohumanism in 2024. The research team consists of Dr Subrahmanian Muthuraman, Dr Mohammed al Hazaizi, and Amani al Balushi. They hope the study will contribute to greater awareness of digital well-being and support healthier and more balanced social media habits among the youth in the Sultanate of Oman.

Omani folk poetry needs stronger critical voices to flourish

MUSCAT: Omani folk poetry remains an important expression of the country's cultural identity, but writers and poets say it needs more rigorous literary criticism, greater institutional support and renewed engagement with younger audiences to sustain its creative growth.

As literary platforms and audience preferences evolve, critics have a crucial role in identifying emerging talent, analysing poetic works and encouraging innovation while preserving the distinctive character of Omani poetry.

Omani writer and poet Mohammed al Salehi said Omani literature had undergone significant transformations since the 1970s, with changes in society and the expansion of print, audio and visual media helping writers reach wider audiences. However, he noted that criticism had not

developed at the same pace.

He argued that literary criticism requires specialised knowledge and should go beyond personal impressions to examine a work's historical, structural and human dimensions. Such analysis can help readers discover meanings and artistic qualities that might otherwise remain unnoticed.

Al Salehi also called for greater openness towards contemporary literary forms, including the prose poem, stressing that critics should assess works on their artistic merits rather than dismissing them for departing from traditional conventions.

Researcher and poet Ahmed al Jahfali highlighted the role of criticism in shaping literary taste and sustaining a vibrant poetry scene. He observed that contemporary folk poetry faces challenges, including reduced audience



There should be greater openness towards contemporary literary forms.

engagement, fewer opportunities for literary discussion and limited support for poetry-related events.

He also expressed concern that the popularity of short videos, reels and social media trends was drawing attention away from sustained reading, research and creative development.

Al Jahfali said critics could

help promising poems reach wider audiences by examining their language, themes, imagery and artistic strengths. Without such engagement, he warned, creative works risk disappearing from public attention soon after publication.

Writer Ibrahim bin Said al Hajri called for a broader understanding of Omani folk poetry and its place

in the country's literary history. He said younger poets were producing innovative work, but some remained overlooked because of divisions and limited interaction within the cultural community.

Al Hajri also stressed the importance of documenting folk poetry, noting that its historical record remains incomplete. He argued that popular poetry should not be excluded from literary scholarship simply because it is written in local dialects rather than classical Arabic.

He acknowledged that Gulf influences had shaped Omani folk poetry in language, vocabulary and style, reflecting wider social and cultural changes. Such developments, he said, should be understood in their historical context rather than automatically treated as a departure from tradition.

Poet Abdulhamid al Duhani similarly described criticism as essential to a poet's development. While rhyme, metre and subject remain important elements, he said a poem's deeper appeal also lies in its imagery, composition and aesthetic qualities.

Constructive criticism, he added, can help emerging poets refine their work, recognise weaknesses and develop their individual voices.

Together, the writers' perspectives point to the need for a stronger culture of literary analysis that supports experimentation while safeguarding the heritage of Omani folk poetry. By bringing poets, critics and readers closer together, criticism can help ensure that this distinctive art form continues to evolve and remain relevant to future generations. — ONA

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Members of the police stand guard near shipping containers blocking a road leading to the Red Zone in Peshawar. — Reuters

PAKISTAN IMPOSES EMERGENCY RULE IN IMRAN KHAN’S STRONGHOLD

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan placed a northern province under emergency rule on Sunday, the president’s office said, following anti-government demonstrations by supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and militant violence in the northwest. Thousands of Khan’s supporters have been marching in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to demand his release and air anti-government criticism fuelled by harsh economic conditions. Shortly after the measures were announced, a lawmaker from Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, Junaid Akbar, said on X that the province’s chief minister Sohail Afridi had been arrested along with the provincial president. A government spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the PTI provincial leader detentions. The country’s law minister confirmed the provincial government had been disbanded, saying at a news conference that incidents of militancy had increased during its tenure. PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan called the emergency declaration “an extremely alarming and grave political mistake and an undemocratic measure”. — AFP

TOLL IN DJIBOUTI BOAT SINKING RISES TO 139 DEAD



UN’s IOM teams cooperate with Djiboutian authorities in the rescue operations. — Reuters file photo

NAIROBI: The death toll from a boat sinking off Djibouti has risen to 139, with 30 more bodies found, a UN agency said on Sunday. Some 84 people remain missing from the sinking, which occurred on the night of October 8-9 as the overcrowded vessel was headed from Djibouti to Yemen, the UN’s International Organization for Migration (IOM) said. Survivors said the vessel — which was carrying 305 people from Djibouti to Yemen — capsized north of the Djibouti town of Obock, according to a statement from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). “Survivors told me that the boat started to sink backwards as soon as they got in it,” Alexandre Coissac, IOM chief of mission in Djibouti, said. “This is a devastating loss of life,” he said earlier in the statement. “Our thoughts are with the survivors and the families who have lost loved ones or remain without news of their relatives.” Coissac said IOM teams were on the ground alongside Djiboutian authorities to provide emergency aid. “This tragedy is a stark reminder of the dangers faced by migrants along this migration corridor as they seek economic opportunities” by trying to cross the Bab Al Mandeb Strait. — AFP

SAFE HAVEN

Indonesia moves 8 endangered orangutans



Indonesian authorities and conservation workers successfully moved eight orangutans to a safe location after the endangered primates’ homes were destroyed by wildfires in the forests of Borneo, they said. Three mother-child pairs and two adolescent male orangutans were among those rescued between August and September from several locations, the Indonesian govt and wildlife foundation, Yayasan Inisiasi Alam Rehabilitasi Indonesia (YIARI), said. — Reuters

SEVERE WEATHER

Nepal urges villagers to evacuate after flood



Nepali authorities urged villagers to move to safer places after a flood in a river in the central part of the country swept away several houses and infrastructure, but there were no reports of any casualties. A landslide in Chumnubri village in Gorkha district, about 100 km west of Kathmandu, blocked the Budhi Gandaki River, leading to downstream flooding, authorities said. The flood swept away about a dozen houses and two suspension bridges. — Reuters

FIGHTING EPIDEMIC

No Ebola cases in Kenya after 293 tests



Kenya has not recorded any new cases of Ebola after conducting 293 tests since a positive patient died on October 5, the Ministry of Health said. Tests were conducted on 293 samples from 289 alerts and only the confirmed case was positive, the Ministry of Health said. It was appealing to the public to stay calm but vigilant, and requested anyone who had concerns about possible exposure or was presenting symptoms to seek medical care. — Reuters

SOUTH KOREA COMPLETES TRIAL OF ARCTIC SHIPPING ROUTE

SEOUL: A South Korean container ship returned on Sunday from a trial voyage through the Arctic, testing an alternative route opened by melting sea ice as conflict in the Middle East disrupts global shipping. The “PanStar Acro” made the round trip to Europe in less time than the conventional route through the Suez Canal, but the initiative has drawn concerns that increased traffic could accelerate Arctic ice loss. The Arctic route could also expose operators to sanctions-related risks

because it runs along Russia’s northern coast. “The ‘PanStar Acro’, which embarked on a trial voyage along the Arctic shipping route on August 22, docked at Jaseongdae Pier in Busan Port,” the South Korean oceans and fisheries ministry said. The vessel sailed through the Arctic’s Northern Sea Route before making port calls at Felixstowe in Britain, Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Gdansk in Poland, and returning via the same route.

President Lee Jae Myung hailed the successful voyage, saying it “shortened the one-way sailing time by 10 days compared with the route via the Suez Canal”. “It also allowed us to gain valuable experience operating a South Korean container ship in polar waters and to collect navigational data,” Lee said. Environmental advocates, however, warn that expanded shipping along the Northern Sea Route could threaten the fragile Arctic ecosystem. — AFP

India’s ‘cockroach’ leaders vow to keep up protests

LEADERS OF India’s online “cockroach” movement pledged on Sunday to continue their campaign against the election commissioner, hours after they were released from detention as authorities sought to thwart a major demonstration. The rally planned in the capital New Delhi came after weeks of opposition mobilisation following allegations of misconduct during a nationwide voter roll revision that critics say could benefit Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ruling party. The Election Commission of India, which oversees the voting process in the world’s most populous nation, has denied wrongdoing. Abhijeet Dipke, founder of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest movement, and two other leaders were detained on Saturday before they could disembark from their flight in Delhi ahead of the planned demonstration. “We will not back down,” CJP co-convenor Saurav Das said at a news conference in Delhi after his release from detention. “We urge people to come out and carry out peaceful protests,” he added, vowing to continue until Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar resigns. In July, protests organised by the CJP over exam irregularities forced the resignation of the education minister, marking a rare climbdown



People look on during a protest seeking the resignation of India’s Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. — Reuters

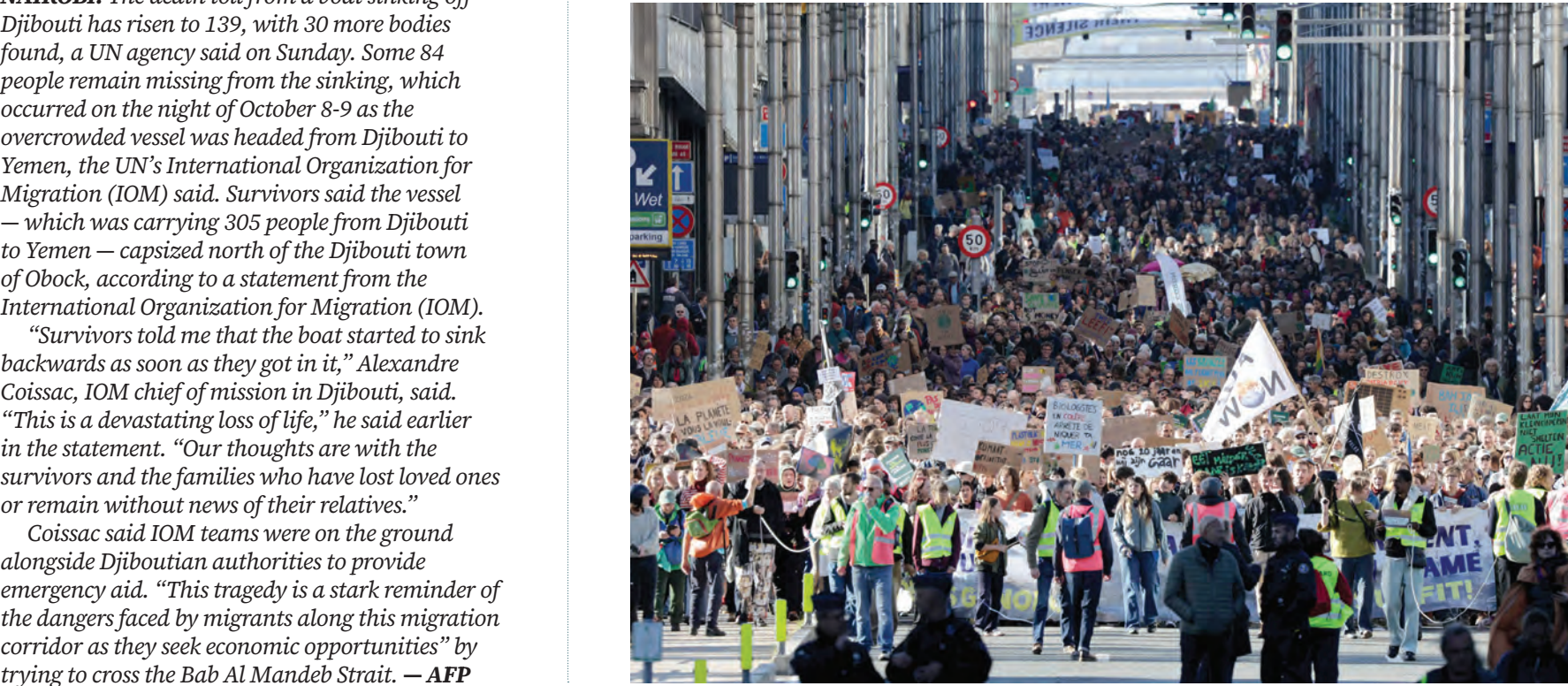
The rally planned in the capital New Delhi came after weeks of opposition mobilisation following allegations of misconduct during a nationwide voter roll revision that critics say could benefit Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ruling party

by Modi’s administration. Ahead of Saturday’s rally, authorities mounted a sweeping security operation across the capital, shutting down metro stations and more than 200 trains while imposing a ban on public gatherings in several areas. The protest leaders were released on the condition that they would maintain “peace for one year”, Ratna Singh, the CJP’s head lawyer, said in a social media post. The Supreme Court, hearing petitions challenging the detentions and other security measures, directed the authorities on Sunday to ensure protesters gathering peacefully are not detained illegally. “Detention shall only be after following a legal procedure,” Justice Joymalya Bagchi said in oral remarks.

The court also ordered authorities to ensure there was no disruption to Internet connectivity after mobile access was temporarily shut down around the Jantar Mantar protest site on Saturday. In a social media post soon after his release, Dipke took aim at Modi, who “as PM, is an embarrassment to India”, he said. “Never has this country seen a bigger coward and bully.” The youth movement has emerged as one of the most significant political challenges to Modi during his third term in power, winning millions of followers on social media since it was launched in May as a satirical party. On Sunday, a reporter saw dozens of people, including journalists, detained at three locations near Jantar Mantar, which remained fortified. “I was detained for 10 hours yesterday,” said Aarti, 37, who gave only one name. “I have come again today because it is important to show up.” The revision of voter rolls at the centre of the protest campaign resulted in more than 133 million names being removed from electoral lists. Critics say the revision has disproportionately affected minorities, particularly Muslims, potentially benefiting Modi’s Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. Election authorities say the revision was aimed at eliminating duplicate, deceased and fraudulent entries. — AFP

THOUSANDS URGE CLIMATE ACTION IN BRUSSELS

BRUSSELS: Thousands of people marched through the Belgian capital Brussels to the EU’s headquarters to demand greater action to combat climate change ahead of a major UN summit. Record heatwaves across Europe this month have raised concerns about the impact that man-made climate change is having on the continent. Delegates from around the globe will gather in the Turkish resort town of Antalya next month for the annual COP gathering. But expectations are low that the meeting will yield any major breakthroughs as the United States under Donald Trump has disengaged from the process and momentum is waning in Europe. “There is a great deal of concern among the population, not just among the protesters today,” economist Etienne de Callatay said, as he attended the march. “The extreme heat we experienced this summer is something everyone was aware of. Politicians shouldn’t be afraid of electoral repercussions if they take courageous measures on environmental issues.” After having its hopes dashed for a more ambitious deal last year in Brazil, the European Union is setting its sights low for next month’s COP31. — AFP



SHORT TAKES



(L-R) Poland's PM Donald Tusk and Poland's Deputy PM and Minister of Defence Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz attend a session of parliament in Warsaw. — AFP file photo

POLAND SUSPECTS ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS ON PM, DEFENCE MINISTER

WARSAW: Poland's interior ministry said that the country's Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz may have been targeted by assassination attempts. A "report about a potential assassination attempt on Prime Minister Donald Tusk, as well as on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz, was transmitted to the police via the State Protection Service (SOP)", interior spokeswoman Karolina Galecka said.

Earlier on Sunday, the ministry ordered authorities to take action "in connection with the information received by (the police) concerning a possible assassination attempt on the prime minister... as well as the deputy prime minister", who is also defence minister, Galecka wrote on X. Members of the police, state protection service (SOP) and internal security agency were present at the meeting on Sunday.

"We are treating this matter as deadly serious," a spokesperson for the minister-coordinator of special services, Jacek Dobrzynski, told journalists afterwards. "Month by month, year by year, more and more various threats and menacing messages reach the police, SOP, and the services concerning Poland and Poles," he said, adding "in this case we are talking about a strong likelihood that these threats could actually be carried out". — AFP

POPE LEO TO UNDERGO SURGERY



Pope Leo said that doctors had detected a small growth on his lung during a recent health check and he would be undergoing surgery this week to remove it, in the first health scare of the 71-year-old pontiff's tenure. Leo told pilgrims in St. Peter's Square for his weekly on Sunday prayer that the growth, a small nodule, was "well-contained" and had been spotted early. "Recently, during some medical examinations, doctors found a localised nodule in my lung," said the pontiff. "It was detected at a very early stage and is well contained." — Reuters

BRAZIL'S LULA ACCUSES META OF ELECTION INTERFERENCE

BRASILIA: The campaign of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva accused tech giant Meta of election interference after his social media content was allegedly blocked on the company's platforms. The leftist leader is seeking a fourth term in the October 25 runoff.

The campaign claimed that in recent days, Meta "prevented President Lula's profile from promoting Instagram feed posts," while a post from his official account "experienced an interruption in view counts, which affected its reach." It also said that prior to

last Sunday's first round of voting the profiles of Lula and other leftist leaders "suddenly disappeared from Instagram's search function." "The series of technical issues... raises strong suspicions that Meta's actions constitute an attempt to interfere in the Brazilian electoral process to the benefit of Flavio Bolsonaro's candidacy," the statement added.

Brazil's Superior Electoral Court (TSE) gave the social media giant 48 hours to clarify whether it reduced the reach of posts by Lula's campaign and to explain the irregularities reported.

Meta was ordered to "report, profile by profile, all the measures applied" to "Lula's official accounts" and to "explain the anomalies in the metrics" of the videos, the TSE said.

Meta's Brazil office denied the charges, calling them "simply false" and "not supported by the facts." "Many of the technical issues mentioned did not affect only Brazil or specific accounts," Meta said. "We comply with electoral regulations and are committed to a level playing field regarding the use of our platforms." — AFP

Germany backs Zelensky as Trump calls for his ouster

GERMAN FOREIGN Minister Johann Wadephul restated Berlin's support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday following US President Donald Trump's call for his removal and urged more pressure to be put on Russia to resume peace talks. Wadephul said Germany remained by the side of Ukraine and its government "and fully support the President as he carries out his difficult duties."

The comments, at a leadership meeting of Chancellor Friedrich Merz's conservative Christian Democrats (CDU), followed Trump's call on Saturday for Zelensky to be replaced and underlined Berlin's growing rift with Washington. Trump, who last week announced a diesel supply deal with Russia, called for Ukraine to replace Zelensky and rallied against Ukraine's attacks on Russian oil infrastructure.

Germany, the biggest European donor to Ukraine, said on Saturday it would maintain sanctions against Russia despite Trump's announcement that his administration had temporarily lifted US sanctions on Russian fuel. Wadephul, who met his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York last month, said "consistency and clarity" were needed to support Ukraine and bring Moscow to negotiate. "We don't need less pressure, we need more pressure on Putin to make him be ready to negotiate," Wadephul said.

"That is what this moment requires and that's what the government stands for." British Prime Minister Andy Burnham spoke with Zelensky on Saturday and told him the UK would continue to strengthen its sanctions on Russia, a Downing Street spokesperson said.



Rescuers evacuate a wounded woman found under debris damaged during a Russian air strike in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. — Reuters

The comments followed Trump's call on Saturday for Zelensky to be replaced and underlined Berlin's growing rift with Washington. Trump called for Ukraine to replace Zelensky and rallied against Ukraine's attacks on Russian oil infrastructure

Meanwhile, Ukraine is ready to halt attacks on Russian oil refineries if Moscow ceases its own strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Sunday, after US President Donald Trump demanded that Kyiv unilaterally stop its strikes. The steep rise in global diesel prices, which followed the outbreak of the Iran war in February, has become a political liability for Trump's Republican Party ahead of next month's midterm elections, when opposition Democrats could gain control of one or both houses of Congress.

Zelensky on Sunday repeated Ukraine's long-standing position that it was willing to halt attacks on Russian refineries only as part of a mutual de-escalation of the conflict, which would require Moscow to cease its own strikes on Ukrainian power infrastructure. Any such deal would need to come with "real

guarantees", Zelensky said. "The real cause of the war in Europe is Russia and Russia alone," Zelensky said, without alluding specifically to Trump's remarks. "It's possible to stop strikes on energy infrastructure as early as today, but Putin does not want to do so."

Analysts said Trump's agreement with Moscow was unlikely to lead to sustained lower fuel prices, with the volumes still much lower than what Russia usually exports when its refineries are not under attack. The diesel deal was also criticized by US lawmakers, including one of Trump's fellow Republicans, Representative Don Bacon, who said it was time to apply more sanctions, not lift them.

On the streets of Kyiv, several residents expressed anger at Trump's suggestion that Ukraine should find a new leader willing to make a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin. "No one has the right to tell us what to do, especially since elections cannot be held during wartime," said Sabina, a 40-year-old primary school teacher, referring to Ukraine's prohibition on elections under martial law for security reasons. "In my view, it is a betrayal by our partners," she said, describing Trump's remarks.

Zelensky said he would continue discussions with European leaders on Sunday, and there were daily conversations around additional air defence packages, including ammunition for combat aircraft that are used to down Russia's jet-powered drones. On Monday, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha is due to participate in a European Union Foreign Affairs Council meeting that is expected to discuss increasing sanctions pressure on Russia and advancing negotiations on Ukraine's EU accession. — Reuters

Hurricane Simon strengthens as it nears western Mexico

PUERTO VALLARTA: Hurricane Simon strengthened into a powerful Category 4 storm and was expected to make landfall or skirt the coast of west-central Mexico, according to the US National Hurricane Center. Fluctuations in strength are expected until the core of Simon reaches the coast, with a maximum wind speed of 155 miles (249 kilometres) per hour, the NHC said in an update.

"Significant or catastrophic wind, surge, and rainfall appears likely over portions of west-central Mexico" on Saturday night and Sunday, the centre added. "Preparations to protect life and property should be rushed to completion shortly in the hurricane warning area." It comes as Florida assesses the damage from Isaias, the first hurricane of the Atlantic season, which killed at least four people in the southeastern United States.

Simon is the latest in a busy hurricane season in the Pacific, where the powerful El Nino ocean warming phenomenon is weakening wind shear, allowing the storms to gain in strength. Mexico's Navy

Simon is the latest in a busy hurricane season in the Pacific, where the powerful El Nino ocean warming phenomenon is weakening wind shear, allowing the storms to gain in strength. Mexico's Navy had evacuated around 100 people along the country's west coast



Residents watch the damage caused by heavy rains following the arrival of Hurricane Simon in Acapulco, Mexico. — AFP

had evacuated around 100 people from settlements along the country's west coast due to the storm. "Three years ago, we lost everything," said Elena Gulmas, 63, in reference to 2023's Hurricane Lidia.

"Now I say, life comes first." In the Pacific tourist resort of Puerto Vallarta, the skies were cloudy on Saturday but the sea was still relatively calm. The government of Jalisco state,

where Puerto Vallarta is located, declared a red alert for several municipalities. The airport has also suspended operations.

Torrential rains caused by Simon have already caused flooding in Acapulco, another major tourist destination further south. But residents of Puerto Vallarta, which sits on a huge horseshoe-shaped bay that helps defuse the power of a hurricane, appeared largely unfazed by the threat. While shop owners sandbagged the entrances to their stores and boarded up the doors and windows, there was little sense of impending disaster.

"What people are most scared of is that the water will reach a tall height... like it did with Hurricane Kenna," said Paulina Perez, who owns a furniture boutique on the boardwalk, in reference to the 2002 storm that killed at least four people. She put up a sign in her shop that read: "Simon, be brief, be peaceful." "Simon says: 'Everything is going to be alright'", someone had spray-painted on a board, in a play on the name of a popular children's game. — AFP

Classics make a comeback in the digital age



SANDHYA
RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

IT IS A season of classics – as Homer’s ‘The Odyssey’ made international headlines through the latest film adaptation by Christopher Nolan, another fan of European classics, Anne Carson has just won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The Canadian, in addition to being a formidable poet, is also known for her translation of Greek plays into English, themselves ‘an oeuvre of their own’. Asked in an earlier interview to name her favourite author, she named Homer.

In an aside, famous author Jeffrey Archer passed away last week. One of his most famous novels, ‘Kane and Abel’, is also based on a well-known story found in classical and religious texts.

In a world of video games and virtual reality, the revival of the classics is an interesting phenomenon. Some of the reasons are heartening, although not all.

In a famous essay written in 1981, Italian writer Italo Calvino says that “a classic is a book which has never exhausted all that it has to say”. At the same time, he also maintains that when we first read a classic, it feels we have already read it before.

This is because a classic is based on universal actions, feelings and emotions which we come across time and again in our

own lives.

Classics are seen to be timeless because concepts like power, mortality, jealousy and love remain forces that move our world. It gives us a sense of perspective when we realise that people felt and acted the same way thousands of years ago.

From epics like the Sumerian ‘Gilgamesh’, ‘Mahabharata’ from India, or the Greek ‘Odyssey’, classics across the world address issues that we can see in every generation and civilisational cycle.

In a world that is disenchanting, these classics remind us that this time too shall pass. Power is fleeting and the good do finally win, however tenuous that victory may be.

These are messages that are being shared on social media across multiple platforms. The fascination with Roman history keeps getting rejuvenated with every excavation in Pompeii that offers glimpses of life in 79 CE. Add to that the increasing number of books, podcasts, guest interviews and documentaries outlining these past worlds.

Shared platforms like BookTok, BookTube, and other smaller forums on Instagram offer readers a sense of community and reading classics together. This makes the task of reading less overwhelming. Reading groups also share bite-sized readings of daunting texts in manageable timelines.

Classics have raised interest in times and places that are distant from us. This has also led to a new readership that is discovering classics for the first time away from classrooms

Adaptations have, of course, greatly expanded readership as well.

Films, fan fiction and video games based on classics have raised interest in times and places that are distant from us. This has also led to a new readership that is discovering classics for the first time away from classrooms.

A commonly held belief is also that, because we are already aware of the plot, classics allow us time to dwell on the smaller intricacies of writing – images, word choices, the rhythm of writing. It takes us to another time when reading was pleasurable for its own sake and not a box that needed ticking off.

Of course, the counterargument to classics is equally valid and needs discussion. Epics seem dated when placed against the mirror of the present. Women characters are often unidimensional; there is glorification of violence, and the morality is often questionable and not sufficiently complex.

But that is precisely the value of the classics.

They must lead to disrupted reading, to examine their world and compare it to ours, to point to what is missing, misplaced or just wrong. These discussions help to evaluate classical literature with contemporary eyes and hold a mirror to the present.

GOOGLE FACES INDIA DATA CENTRE BACKLASH

AISHWARYA KUMAR

Handcuffs encircle Google’s logo on one campaign poster, while another warns that people ‘cannot drink data’, as opposition mounts to the tech giant’s planned AI mega-facility in India.

Excavators have swung into action, clearing forest and farmland on the southeast coast for the \$15 billion construction of Google’s largest data centre outside the United States.

The project at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh state, a port often called Vizag, is championed by India as a cornerstone of its technological ambitions. But many residents fear the data centre - one of several huge new tech sites in Vizag - will strain water and power resources, damage the environment and bring too few jobs in return. Farmer Chandala Sadamma said that when she sees the red-earth scars where her plot of mango and cashew trees once stood, “I feel like crying”.

She was paid more than \$82,000 for the two-acre stretch of land, but the transaction left a bitter taste. “Some company came and, without showing any respect, they took the land and we accepted it,” the 50-year-old said.

The “AI Hub investment is a multi-decade commitment” carrying “an obligation to be a good neighbour”, said Alexander Smith, Google’s head of infrastructure and energy for Asia-Pacific. “The watershed, the grid and the communities around our facilities must be better off for our being here.”

The Andhra Pradesh government said that in addition to financial compensation, new housing is being built and handed over to people who had lived on the site.

Governments and tech firms worldwide are spending trillions of dollars on data centres - boxy buildings stuffed with racks of computer servers that power apps and AI tools.

But the developments have sparked backlash in many countries, with a Finnish authority recently ordering work to halt on two Google data centre sites pending mandatory environmental assessments.

Activists in Andhra Pradesh are also demanding a moratorium on new data centres across the state until independent environmental and social impact evaluations are published.

“The United States has a huge coast... They can simply set it up there,” Gutta Rohith of the local campaign group Human Rights Forum said at a meeting of around 150 people. “Why are they coming here?”. — AFP

Don’t count your rain before El Nino comes

EL NINO has been appearing in the news a lot recently. Reports suggest that Oman may experience a wetter and more fertile winter between October 2026 and May 2027. So, are we happy or worried?

In a country where a few drops of rain can quickly become the main topic of every WhatsApp group, I decided to find out what all the excitement was about.

The first thing I discovered was reassuring. El Nino is not a cyclone heading towards Oman. There is no enormous weather system crossing the Pacific with Muscat programmed into its navigation system. It is a natural climate pattern that begins thousands of kilometres away in the tropical Pacific Ocean.

Normally, the winds push warm surface water westwards. During El Nino, those winds weaken and unusually warm water spreads across the central and eastern Pacific, changing air pressure, winds and rainfall patterns around the world.

Scientists call this natural climate cycle ENSO, short for El Nino-Southern Oscillation. El Nino is its warm phase, La Nina its cool phase, and between the two are periods known as ENSO-neutral conditions. El Nino generally appears every two to seven years and usually lasts around nine to twelve months. The name means ‘the boy’ in Spanish and comes from South American fishermen who noticed unusually warm coastal waters around Christmas.

The current event is attracting attention because it is expected to become very strong. The World Meteorological Organization said in September that it was firmly established and had a near-100 per cent chance of continuing through



DR KHALFAN
AL HARRASI

The author is an academic and researcher

Follow Oman Meteorology and official warnings, take flood alerts seriously and never drive into a flowing wadi. And be careful with dramatic headlines and AI summaries, where probability can easily turn into prophecy

February 2027. You may also have seen the expression ‘super El Nino’. It sounds as though it should arrive wearing a cape, but it is not an official WMO classification.

Scientists monitor Pacific temperatures, winds, air pressure and heat below the ocean using satellites, buoys and computer models. A warming that seems tiny when adjusting an air conditioner can matter enormously when spread across a vast ocean. The resulting atmospheric changes can influence weather thousands of kilometres away. El Nino does not travel to Oman, but its influence can.

Current indicators suggest Oman may experience a relatively wet and fertile winter from October 2026 to May 2027. Historical analyses have examined El Nino periods including 1982-83, 1997-98 and 2015-16 and found an indirect relationship with winter weather systems affecting Oman. One analysis of Omani rainfall from 1977 to 2003 also found 1997 to be the wettest year in that dataset.

This sounds promising, especially if you enjoy seeing our brown mountains suddenly turn green. But ‘may’ is doing quite a lot of work here. A seasonal outlook tells us what has become more likely; it is not a promise. El Nino can tilt the weather odds, but it cannot guarantee us a wet winter.

Oman’s weather has several influences. The Pacific matters, but so do the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, regional pressure systems, ocean temperatures, geography and season.

Another influence is the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), a natural pattern involving differences in sea temperatures between the western and eastern Indian Ocean.

These temperature differences can change winds and rainfall

across the region, including areas around the Arabian Sea.

Different parts of Oman may also experience different conditions. The Hajar Mountains influence thunderstorms and rapid runoff, while Dhofar’s Khareef is strongly connected to the Indian monsoon. We cannot assume El Nino will make the next Khareef stronger or weaker. The same caution applies to cyclones. ENSO can influence Arabian Sea cyclone activity, but ocean heat, winds and other climate systems also matter. El Nino has not booked a cyclone for us.

A wetter winter could recharge groundwater, dams and aflaj and help farms, grazing areas and vegetation. Anyone who has travelled through Oman after good rainfall knows how quickly brown can become green. The same rain, however, can turn wadis dangerous within minutes, flood roads and damage infrastructure.

In Oman, rain has the unusual ability to be welcomed enthusiastically and feared seriously at exactly the same time.

Weather elsewhere does not always stay elsewhere. El Nino could even affect us without additional rain. Droughts and floods elsewhere can damage crops and influence international food prices, while warmer seas can affect fisheries and marine ecosystems.

There is also climate change. El Nino is natural and existed long before modern global warming. Research using corals to reconstruct around a thousand years of Pacific climate history suggests ENSO variability has increased in recent decades. Scientists are still studying exactly how long-term warming affects El Nino, but it now operates in a warmer world, where some consequences can become more serious.

Is a mirror more important than a window?



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

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THERE IS a mirror in every room, but not everyone is willing to look into it. Perhaps those who avoid the mirror spend their lives carrying a deep sense of injustice. They believe life has not given them what they deserve. They complain that people do not appreciate them, that managers do not recognise their efforts, and that circumstances always seem to work against them.

They feel that life is being unfair. But there is a more difficult question they need to ask themselves: “Am I being fair to myself?” Life cannot be blamed for every door that remains closed when we have not been knocking hard enough.

It is easy to look at someone else’s achievement and call it luck. It is much harder to acknowledge that perhaps that person spent years learning, working late, taking risks, accepting criticism and continuing after failure. It is easy to say, “Nobody gives me a chance.” It is harder to ask, “What have I done to become ready for that chance?”

There is a difference between being treated unfairly and being disappointed because you have not done enough. Not every unsuccessful person has been treated unfairly.

Sometimes, the missing ingredient is effort. Sometimes, it is discipline, courage, or consistency. And sometimes, it is simply the willingness to leave the comfort zone

and do something different.

A person who consistently does the minimum at work cannot reasonably expect maximum recognition. Someone who makes little effort to develop their skills cannot continuously complain about missed opportunities.

And a person who spends years waiting for life to change without changing anything about themselves may eventually discover that the problem was not always the world around them.

But this does not mean that life is always fair; It is not. People face circumstances they did not choose. Opportunities are not always equal.

Some people receive chances they may not have earned, while others work tirelessly without immediate recognition. Some struggle despite doing everything they can. Disappointment is real, and sometimes injustice is real too.

But acknowledging that life can be unfair should never become an excuse for personal inaction.

There is a strange contradiction in human nature. We can be extremely ambitious about the life we want while being remarkably comfortable with the effort we are willing to give. We dream about the destination yet complain about the journey. We see the open door, but not how long someone may have been pushing against a closed one.

The greatest danger is not failure. It is becoming so comfortable with blaming life

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that we stop taking responsibility for living it. So, before declaring that life has been unfair, take an honest look in the mirror.

Perhaps life owes us some things. But perhaps we also owe ourselves something: more effort, more learning, more courage, more discipline and the willingness to change.

We owe ourselves the responsibility to stop waiting for life to become different and start becoming different ourselves.

Some people spend years waiting for an apology from life for being stagnant. But life has never promised equal circumstances, and growth rarely begins with comfort.

Sometimes, the problem is not that nobody has opened a door for us.

Perhaps we have been standing outside the wrong door, complaining that nobody invited us in.

And sometimes, the door we are waiting for does not exist at all.

That is why there comes a moment in everyone’s life when the mirror becomes more important than the window.

The window allows us to look outside to see what others have, where they are going and how far they have travelled.

But the mirror asks a different question: What are you doing with your own life? And perhaps that is the question we should ask ourselves before blaming the world for everything we believe we deserve.

Because sometimes, the greatest injustice is not what life has done to us. It is what we have failed to do for ourselves.

MIDTERM STRATEGY DRIVING DEMOCRATS DEEP INTO TRUMP COUNTRY

LEAH DOUGLAS AND JOSEPH AX

On paper, Democrat Justin Pearson, a 31-year-old Tennessee state legislator, has little chance of winning the state’s 9th Congressional District, which Republican lawmakers redrew months ago from a Democratic stronghold to a deeply Republican seat.

Yet last week the national Democratic Party added the rural district to its list of midterm targets in November, part of a broader strategy to compete in President Donald Trump’s conservative heartland despite long odds of flipping it.

On its face, the strategy may look like Democratic overreach. Voters living in the 9th District’s newly reconfigured boundaries, for instance, picked Trump by more than 21 points in 2024. More than a dozen Democratic operatives, strategists and candidates said the goal in part is to force Republicans to spend money defending safe seats, draining resources from the swing districts that will decide control of the US House.

By expanding the map, the party is also signalling to donors that races are becoming more competitive amid high prices and the Iran war driving Trump’s unpopularity, helping unlock money that might otherwise stay on the sidelines, they said. “These expansions force Republicans to go on defence in more districts,” said one House campaign official, speaking on the condition of anonymity. “It’s also a signal to donors and outside groups that House Democrats are taking these races seriously.”

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the party’s US House campaign arm, last week added Pearson’s race and 13 others to its target list, expanding its battlefield to 66 Republican-held seats.

Getting on the target list gives candidates access to national party staff and campaign tools, while also raising their profiles with donors, potentially opening new streams of fundraising for their campaigns.

There are early signs the strategy is having some effect. Republican-aligned groups have begun spending in some newly added districts, while two Democratic campaigns in Republican districts said their fundraising accelerated after being placed on the target list.

Republicans have dismissed the idea that Democrats have a serious chance of defeating their party in districts that overwhelmingly voted for Trump in 2024.

Mike Marinella, a spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee - the party’s House campaign group - accused the Democratic Party of “stretching its map a mile wide and an inch deep, pretending every district in America is suddenly a battleground.” — Reuters

Learning alive through campus as curriculum

CLASSROOMS TODAY are seeing a major shift. Schools are moving from memory-based examinations to assessments that emphasise true understanding, analysis, and real-world application. Teachers everywhere recognise that meaningful learning depends on more than recalling information - it requires helping students think, question, and connect ideas to the world around them.

Yet many educators still wonder how to make this shift practical, sustainable, and relevant for every learner. One effective approach is the idea of viewing the entire campus and its environs as a curriculum, a purpose-driven strategy that turns the school environment into a living learning laboratory.

Why this shift matters: When students merely read or listen, their understanding stays abstract. However, when they touch, observe, investigate, and experience learning first-hand, concepts become concrete and memorable. Using the campus as a curriculum bridges the gap between theory and practice, thereby giving students ample opportunities to learn from events, spaces, people, and resources within and around their immediate surroundings.

This approach does more than support academic goals. It makes rote learning redundant and, instead, builds curiosity, anticipation, and imagination — the emotional drivers that ignite genuine learning. It also allows teachers to serve as facilitators who guide exploration, help learners interpret new experiences, and encourage reflective thinking.

What the campus as a curriculum looks like: A purpose-driven curriculum that uses the entire campus as a learning space and is grounded in the belief that learning must be directly connected to real life. Students go beyond reading,



HIMMAT SINGH
DHILLON

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School Bousher

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hearing and writing about concepts; they encounter them in action and, by experientially engaging with them organically, learn lessons that will last a lifetime. A powerful shift occurs that seamlessly moves from theory to practice, from rote learning to learning from real life itself. It involves a transition from the abstract to the concrete through hands-on, experiential learning. It moves from the intangible to the tangible, thereby leading to learning outcomes that will be retained for life, as opposed to rote learning, a concept that is forgotten right after an examination. And, yes, it does enable a shift from teacher-centred to student-centred education, thereby empowering students to be intrinsically motivated as well as making them lifelong learners.

Through this shift, students begin finding solutions to real-world problems shaped by geography, culture, lifestyle, economics, climate, and social dynamics — factors that deeply influence life beyond the classroom. The ultimate goal is not only to enable learning but to promote the well-being and awareness of the entire community of learners.

Key principles for teachers: The campus as a curriculum model emphasises several teacher-friendly strategies, including local relevance. Choose topics rooted in the students’ life experience as well as the school’s environment, so that students feel an immediate connection and genuine ownership.

Hands-on learning: Encourage field investigations, surveys, mapping exercises, project work, field research, interviews, and creative demonstrations to deepen understanding.

Collaborative work: Promote teamwork, brainstorming, innovative approaches, peer learning, and shared responsibility during projects.

Reflection and presentation: Allow students to express what they have learned through writing, discussion, art, sculpture,

storytelling, performance, or visual documentation.

One effective project is exploring the history of the city through its society, trade, heritage, monuments, structures, and archival spaces. Students become researchers, storytellers, and interpreters as they trace the origins and heritage of various buildings and customs. They may film short documentaries, sketch iconic landmarks, or act as guides for visitors. This first-hand journey into their city’s past makes history come alive and strengthens pride in their community.

Using the campus as a curriculum transforms the learning experience in myriad ways, including the research and project-based activities strengthen scholastic competencies including critical thinking and creativity. Students learn 21st-century skills including working in teams, communication, and problem-solving.

The emphasis on finding solutions to real-world issues serves as an entry point to future careers, particularly by yoking together disparate fields and strands of knowledge, e.g., combining STEM with the arts.

Lessons cease being dry and theoretical; instead, they become joyful, relevant, memorable, and meaningful.

Teachers engage deeply with their craft and discover fresh ways to connect syllabus goals with real-life learning moments.

The Campus as a Curriculum model offers a practical blueprint for making education more dynamic, experiential, and skill-based. As schools embrace assessments that evaluate understanding rather than memorisation, this approach equips teachers with tools to guide students towards deeper learning. When classrooms expand beyond four walls and learning becomes lived experience, students develop the confidence, competence, and curiosity needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

SPORTS

SAHAM GO TOP AS AL MUSANNAH CLAIM FIRST WIN

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

SAHAM moved level on points with leaders Al Nasr after beating Sur 1-0, while Al Musannah secured their first victory of the season with a commanding 4-1 win over Sohar in the fourth round of the 2026/27 Jindal League.

The matches played on October 9 and 10 also saw Dhofar snatch a late 2-2 draw against Samayil, while Ibri and Fanja shared the points in a goalless encounter. Three fixtures remain awaiting confirmed dates.

At Sohar Sports Complex, Ali al Hashmi's ninth-minute strike proved enough to earn Saham their third win in four matches. Juma al Zaabi delivered a cross from the left, finding Al Hashmi inside the penalty area to finish past Sur goalkeeper Ahmed al Orajmi.

Sur responded with greater attacking urgency. Emmanuel tested Hassan al Buraiki with a powerful effort that the goalkeeper turned behind, before Abdullah al Musharafi shot narrowly wide in the 21st minute.

Saham continued to threaten as Sur pushed forward, although neither side converted further chances before the interval. Sur increased the pressure



Dhofar and Samayil shared the points in a 2-2 draw at Al Saada Sports Complex, with Hussam al Naabi scoring a late equaliser for Dhofar.

after the restart, winning several corners, while Saham sought opportunities on the counterattack. A free kick in the 65th minute sailed over the bar as Sur's search for an equaliser continued without reward.

Saham held firm to reach nine points, leaving Sur rooted to the bottom without a point after four consecutive defeats.

At Al Saada Sports Complex in Salalah, substitute Hussam al Naabi rescued a point for Dhofar with a 90th-minute equaliser against Samayil.

Mohammed al Muhaijri put

Samayil ahead in the 19th minute, finishing a well-worked move past Mazin al Kasbi. Dhofar struggled to turn their response into clear opportunities, and Samayil goalkeeper Alaa al Hamadani protected the lead as his side went into the break 1-0 up.

Dhofar's persistence eventually paid off in the 68th minute when Abu Kamara converted a chance inside the penalty area.

Samayil appeared to have secured victory when Mutasin al Hakmani restored their advantage in the 86th minute,



Saham edged Sur 1-0 at Sohar Sports Complex to move level on points with Jindal League leaders Al Nasr.

finishing a counterattack after a pass from substitute Osama al Zughabi.

However, Al Naabi struck four minutes later to secure the draw. Dhofar remain without a win on two points, while Samayil have five.

Friday's biggest victory belonged to Al Musannah, whose 4-1 success against Sohar at Al Rustaq Sports Complex ended a run of three defeats.

The result gave Al Musannah their first three points of the campaign, while Sohar remained on five.

At Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Ibri's goalless draw with Fanja took their tally to five points. Fanja moved onto two points but are still seeking both their first victory and their first league goal after four matches.

Al Nasr retain top spot on goal difference, with nine points from three matches, ahead of Saham, who have played four. Seeb and Al Nahda follow on seven points each. The remaining fourth-round fixtures are Al Shabab against Al Nasr, Bahla against Al Nahda, and Seeb against Oman Club, with dates to be announced.

Muscat edge closer to last 8 as Oman Club dominate Youth Handball League

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS
Muscat continued to underline their title credentials in the 2026/2027 Youth Indoor Handball League, recording a commanding 40-10 victory over Al Amerat to strengthen their

position at the top of Group One after the third week of competition.

The round also produced important wins for Oman Club, Seeb, Al Rustaq, Al Ittihad and Nizwa, keeping the qualification race alive as clubs look to secure places in the second round.

Muscat have made an impressive start to their title defence, moving to eight points after another dominant display. They took control against Al Amerat early in the contest, establishing a 21-4 lead at half-time before maintaining their attacking intensity in the second period to complete a 30-goal victory.

The result highlighted Muscat's scoring power and their ability to dictate the pace of a match. With their position at the top of Group One strengthened, the defending champions will be keen to maintain their consistency and secure qualification for the next stage.

Elsewhere in Group One, Al Ittihad overcame Masirah 35-30 in a more closely contested encounter. The



Al Ittihad and Masirah players compete for possession. — Faiza al Balushi



Action from the Muscat vs Al Amerat match in the Youth Indoor Handball League. — **Faiza al Balushi**

victory earned Al Ittihad two valuable points in a competition where every result could influence the final standings.

Nizwa also capitalised on home advantage to beat Ibri 24-18 at the Nizwa Club sports hall.

The result provided a timely boost to their campaign as they seek to improve their position and remain in contention for a place in the second round.

In Group Two, Oman Club produced one of the most convincing performances of the week, defeating Al Khabourah 44-18. Their tally was the highest among the winning teams in the round, reflecting an effective attacking display that enabled them to establish a substantial advantage.

Oman Club's emphatic victory will provide encouragement as the competition progresses, with the team looking to build on the result and strengthen its qualification prospects.

Seeb also enjoyed a successful outing, beating Majees 32-17 at the Sohar Sports Complex to collect two important points. Al Rustaq completed the round's results with a 26-14 victory over Saham at the Al Rustaq Club sports hall, using home advantage to secure a comfortable win.

The third week demonstrated the importance of consistency across both groups, with several clubs taking significant steps towards improving their standings. While Muscat have established themselves as strong contenders in Group One, the results elsewhere underline the continuing competition for qualification places.

Attention now turns to the upcoming rounds, when clubs will have further opportunities to strengthen their positions.

Muscat will aim to maintain their winning momentum, while Oman Club, Seeb, Al Rustaq and the other contenders will seek to turn their latest results into sustained progress towards the second round.

وزارة الثقافة والرياضة والشباب
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat,
hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:-

No.	Tender	Project Category	Last Day to Purchase Tender Documents	Last Date of Tender Submission
1	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF ELECTRONIC SCOREBOARD TO FOOTBALL STADIUM AT SUR, SUHAR, IBRI AND NIZWA SPORTS COMPLEX	SUPPLY	25/10/2026	23/11/2026
2	DESIGN, SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING THE LIGHTING SYSTEM TO SPORTS STADIUMS SULTAN QABOOS SPORTS COMPLEX AT BOUSHER, SEEB, SOHAR, SUR	SUPPLY		
3	THE 13 TH OMANI SONG FESTIVAL	SERVICE	14/10/2026	26/10/2026

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

SHORT TAKES



The participating teams discover their routes to the Super Cup final.

OMAN HANDBALL
SUPER CUP SET FOR
NOVEMBER 8

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

The Oman Handball Super Cup will provide an early test of the four participating clubs as they compete for the first title of the 2026/2027 season. Holders Oman Club will face Seeb, while Al Amerat take on Nizwa in the semifinals following Sunday's draw at the Oman Handball Federation headquarters.

The draw was attended by Nasr bin Hamad al Hassani, chairman of the federation's Athletes Committee and guest of honour, members of the Competitions Committee and representatives of the participating clubs. Zuhair Khalid Samha, refereeing expert and acting technical expert at the federation, explained the draw procedure before the match-ups were confirmed.

The semifinal matches will be played on November 8 at the indoor hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Oman Club will meet Seeb in the opening match, followed by Al Amerat against Nizwa. The winners will advance to the final on November 11.

Oman Club will be aiming to defend their title and extend their record as the competition's most successful team, having won the Super Cup three times, in the 2017/2018, 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 seasons.

Seeb will seek to upset the holders and make a strong start to the new campaign, while Al Amerat will look to build on their previous success in winning the Second Division League and the Ministry Shield. Nizwa, meanwhile, will be determined to secure a place in the final.

Al Hassani described the draw as producing promising encounters and praised the transparent process conducted in the presence of club representatives. He also stressed that the teams' technical and physical preparations would be crucial to delivering competitive performances and reflecting the continued development of Omani handball.

Following the draw, the Competitions Committee met club representatives to discuss organisational arrangements, including team kits and player registration. The first registration window closes on November 5, with each club permitted to sign two foreign players.

The First and Second Division leagues are scheduled to begin on November 20, with eight clubs competing in the First Division. Meanwhile, the preliminary rounds of the Oman Handball Federation Cup, formerly known as the Ministry Shield, will start on January 15, 2027.

The Super Cup will therefore offer the four clubs an important opportunity to assess their readiness and build momentum ahead of a busy domestic season.



Oman fields five teams at the 2026 Union Classic ice hockey tournament in Al Ain, UAE.

Oman's ice hockey teams
chase top honours in Al Ain

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

FIVE TEAMS comprising more than 50 players are representing Oman at the 2026 Union Classic ice hockey tournament in Al Ain, UAE, with the competition offering a test for emerging talent alongside the country's men's and women's squads.

Running from October 10 to 17, the tournament forms part of the Oman Skating Sports Committee's programme to develop players across different age groups and provide regular opportunities to compete beyond domestic ice.

Oman's delegation includes children's, junior and youth teams, as well as the men's and women's sides. Their participation reflects the committee's efforts to broaden the sport's player base and help young players progress towards higher levels of competition.

Matches for the younger age groups are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, while the youth, men's and women's competitions extend across the week.

Beyond the results, the tournament provides an opportunity to assess the teams' technical and physical development, strengthen teamwork and identify areas requiring further attention. Facing opponents with different playing styles will also test the players' ability to adapt during matches.

Ali al Sulaimani, a member of Oman's



Oman's young ice hockey players gain valuable competitive experience at the Union Classic.

children's team, said the competition offered younger players a valuable chance to sharpen their skills and gain experience against other teams.

He explained that the standard of opposition encouraged players to work harder and produce their best performances, while regular tournament appearances helped them improve both individually and collectively. Al Sulaimani said the challenges increased as players moved through the age groups, making continued training and competitive experience essential to their development. He added that the team's ambitions extended beyond participation, with players determined to compete for the leading positions and carry what they learnt into future tournaments.

Junior player Aya al Mahrouqi highlighted the value of facing teams whose players brought different sporting backgrounds and

levels of experience to the ice.

She said those differences added to the challenge and encouraged Oman's players to raise their standards. Their enthusiasm for the sport and determination to represent the country well, she added, were central to their approach.

Al Mahrouqi said the team wanted to demonstrate its ability to compete and deliver performances that reflected the players' potential. Exposure to different opponents would also help them respond more confidently to changing situations during matches.

The women's team's participation provides another opportunity to strengthen the presence of Omani women in ice hockey through regional competition. Al Firdaus al Kindi captains the side, with Khulood Ambusaidi serving as assistant captain.

Enad al Balushi leads the men's team, assisted by Talal Ambusaidi, while Ibrahim al Ghabshi captains the youth side alongside assistant captain Muhannad Rakho.

The delegation is accompanied by the committee's technical director, Greg Cameron, and chairman Eng Saud al Aufi, who are following the teams' performances and supporting their participation.

The committee hopes the experience gained in Al Ain will help build squads better prepared for upcoming competitions. With players represented across several stages of development, the tournament offers an opportunity to assess progress and guide the next phase of preparation.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

Forty one male and female referees took part in a two-day karate training and classification course at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, strengthening their understanding of international rules ahead of upcoming domestic and regional competitions.

Organised by the Referees Committee under the Oman Karate Committee on October 9 and 10, the programme formed part of the activities accompanying the 16th Oman Karate Championship. It combined sessions on the latest kata and kumite rules with theoretical and practical examinations for local referee classification.

Dr Faisal bin Hamad al Maawali, Chairman of the Oman Karate Committee, said the programme followed four earlier courses covering beginner, intermediate and advanced levels, continuing the committee's efforts to develop qualified officials.

He explained that the courses aimed to develop referees and prepare them for upcoming championships and competitions.

Al Maawali identified Oman championships and the West Asian karate championship, scheduled to take place in Jordan in November, among the key events for which referees were being prepared.

The opening day featured morning sessions explaining kata and kumite rules, followed by



Referees attend the karate training and classification course at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

theoretical examinations in both disciplines during the afternoon. Practical assessments took place on the second day, with kumite examinations in the morning and kata assessments later in the day.

For participating officials, the programme provided an

opportunity to review rule changes and strengthen their ability to apply them during competitions.

Shaimaa bint Tariq bin Ali Baomar, a referee with the Oman Karate Committee, said the course had improved her knowledge of international regulations and their latest updates. She praised the committee's work in organising training and classification opportunities. Baomar said she had benefited greatly from the programme, learning more about the rules and their amendments. She explained that understanding these changes helped referees ensure fair competition for everyone involved.

She said accurate application of the rules was important to the quality of officiating and the

satisfaction of players, coaches and parents. She hoped to use the knowledge gained to improve her performance and progress in her refereeing classification.

Her ambition, she added, was to gain as much as possible from the course, develop a thorough understanding of the latest updates and make a positive contribution to competitions through her work as a referee.

Fellow referee Hilal bin Said al Hudaifi also welcomed the programme, describing the committee's continued support as important to the development of officials. He said participants had benefited greatly from the course and expressed appreciation for the committee's ongoing support.

SPORTS

BEZZECCHI PIPS
FERNANDEZ TO WIN
INDONESIAN GP



BEZZECCHI OUTDOES INJURED FERNANDEZ

MARTIN RETAKES CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD

MARQUEZ FINISHES SIXTH

APRILIA'S Marco Bezzecchi ruthlessly hunted down injured Raul Fernandez to win the Indonesian Grand Prix on Sunday, while Jorge Martin came in third to retake the championship lead from rival Marc Marquez.

Polesitter Fernandez, racing with fractured fingers sustained in a crash on Saturday, looked untroubled in the opening half of the race as he and Bezzecchi surged away from the chasing pack.

But the Trackhouse rider began to fade as the afternoon wore on, and a determined Bezzecchi finally pounced with nine laps remaining to seize the lead and secure victory, with Martin completing a podium lockout for Italian manufacturer Aprilia.

Bezzecchi's win, the 300th victory for an Italian in MotoGP, also kept his faint championship hopes alive.

"I'm very, very happy to be back on the top step of the podium," said the 27-year-old, who led the standings in the early stages of the season but has struggled in recent weeks.

"It was a nice, nice battle with Raul. I think we deserve a result like this, me and all my team, especially them, because they never stop working. They've been through tough times with me."

A dejected Fernandez revealed the full extent of his injury after the race.

"Yesterday, when I crashed and I saw my hand, I knew before going to the clinic that I had my finger broken, the one that normally I used to brake," the Spaniard said.

"This morning, when I woke up, I realised I don't have one, but two fingers broken. No one knew. I tried to say nothing, just keep the pain for me and keep my focus on



Aprilia Racing's Marco Bezzecchi and Trackhouse MotoGP Team's Raul Fernandez in action during the MotoGP race. — Reuters

the race.
"This morning, I tried find a solution on the brakes, because I was not able to use the finger that I use normally. I started everything from zero. It was a very difficult job for me."

MARTIN BACK AT THE TOP
The most exciting duel in the race took place behind the top three, with Marquez engaging in a thrilling back-and-forth with KTM's Pedro Acosta.

Marquez had a strong start and swooped into third place in the opening lap, but his Ducati struggled to keep pace with the Aprilia machines around him, and a hard-charging Martin picked him off with ease in the third lap

The defending champion was then quickly overtaken by Acosta, but for the second time in as many days, Marquez profited from tyre pressure issues for his opponent and was allowed back into fourth.

When Acosta was sure he would not receive a penalty, he once again locked horns with Marquez, but as they traded blows, Trackhouse's Ai Ogura capitalised and moved past both riders to seal a first-ever 1-2-3-4 finish for Aprilia.

Martin, the 2024 champion, moved up to 355 points at the top of the championship standings, with Saturday's sprint-winner Marquez on 353 points after finishing in sixth place — the first time he has completed a full race at the Mandalika circuit.

"The last few laps, I was struggling a lot with the tyres, physical condition, but I was able to finish on the podium, so really, really happy," Martin said.

"We are still in the fight. We are still in the lead. It will be a tough championship, but I will give my all."

— Reuters

Shelton dumped out in Shanghai but Zverev ploughs on

SHANGHAI: France's world number 56 Arthur Gea stunned Ben Shelton in the third round of the Shanghai Masters on Sunday as the US Open finalist became the biggest casualty of the event so far.

Top seed Alexander Zverev needed three sets against another Frenchman, Quentin Halys, to reach the last 16 and close in on the number one ranking.

The 21-year-old Gea beat the big-serving American Shelton 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/3) for the biggest win of his career.

"I got outplayed today," world number four Shelton told reporters.

"My body wasn't ready," said Shelton, who played at the Davis Cup last month following defeat in the US Open final to Zverev.

Shelton skipped the Japan

Open that ended last week due to fitness concerns.

"That's just the way this tour is sometimes," said the 24-year-old, adding that jet lag had also taken a toll.

Gea will play 13th seed Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic next.

"Amazing, to be honest," Gea said after his first win over a top-10 player.

He added that he has been "more confident on court" following a breakout year that saw him clinch his first ATP title in July in Los Cabos.

He stormed into a 5-3 lead in the first set before Shelton came back fighting, levelling to 5-5 with a clutch backhand volley at the net.

The two players were neck and neck in the tie-break until Gea sneaked ahead to win the first set point.



Germany's Alexander Zverev in action during his round of 32 match against France's Quentin Halys. — Reuters

Third seed Shelton forced his way into another tie-break in the second set as the match went past two hours, but faltered as a charging Gea clinched victory at the first chance.

ZVEREV COMES THROUGH
Germany's Zverev belatedly saw off Halys 6-4, 6-7 (8/10), 6-3, despite moving a little uncomfortably at the end.
"He plays unbelievably aggressive and serves

incredibly," Zverev, himself one of the biggest servers on tour, said of his beaten opponent. Zverev faces Kazakhstan's 19th seed Alexander Bublik next.

"This year I have been picking my tournaments and places where I want to peak, I did not do that early in my career," said Zverev.

"It paid off, I won two Grand Slams and reached the Wimbledon final."

Zverev cut a frustrated figure at times, barking at his corner even as he clinched the first set against the 48th-ranked Halys in 38 minutes.

The second set was much closer, going with serve and taking them into the tie-break.

Zverev unleashed a delicious backhand down the line to avoid going down 6-4 in the tie-break, but then squandered a match point

when he shanked a forehand return. A second match point came and went, and Halys took full advantage to force a deciding set courtesy of an overhead smash.

The third was poised for another battle, but Zverev broke for 2-0 and behind his reliable serve powered home for victory. Zverev, the world number two, is an imminent threat to Jannik Sinner's number one ranking.

The US Open and French Open winner has never topped the rankings. The Italian Sinner is not playing in Shanghai because of injury, opening the door for the 29-year-old Zverev to usurp him. World number three Carlos Alcaraz is in action in Shanghai on Monday.

The Spaniard faces Belgium's Zizou Bergs in the third round. — AFP



BUSINESS

MSX targets sustained investment

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

MUSCAT Stock Exchange (MSX) is broadening its focus from building liquidity to attracting sustained investment, developing investment funds and new products as Oman prepares for a possible upgrade to emerging-market status.

Chief Executive Officer Haitham bin Salim al Salmi outlined the next phase at a media gathering on Sunday, saying initiatives to support trading were being followed by efforts to widen investment participation.

Exchange-traded funds and other investment funds form part of that effort, alongside continued engagement with international institutions and prospective issuers, he said.

Al Salmi described a progression from liquidity providers to liquidity funds and market-making arrangements. These initiatives had sought to improve trading and reduce concentrated holdings, helping broaden the shares available to investors.

The emphasis was now extending towards sustained investment activity, he said. He pointed to market makers participating through regional links and deploying their own capital as evidence of commercial interest in the Omani market.

That development also demands stronger capabilities from local intermediaries.

FTSE Russell announced on October 6 that Oman had joined its Watch List for possible reclassification from Frontier to Secondary Emerging status after meeting the required market-quality, size and securities-count criteria. Oman remains a Frontier market, with the next classification update due in April 2027.



Initiatives to support trading were being followed by efforts to widen investment participation.

Ahmed bin Ali al Maamari, Vice Executive President of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), said brokerage firms had an opportunity to invest more in their businesses, expand their activities and recruit staff.

Some companies were responding to the market's development, while others remained largely unchanged, he said, warning that firms which failed to adapt faced significant risks.

Al Salmi distinguished between the exchange's role in opening access to other markets and the commercial role of brokers. MSX could establish links and promote opportunities, but intermediaries would decide which services to offer.

For international investors, immediate preparations include opening accounts, establishing relationships with brokers and custodians, and becoming familiar with the market.

Al Salmi said Oman's inclusion on FTSE Russell's watch list provided

time for that work, while the exchange continued its international outreach and sought to maintain the conditions required for a potential upgrade.

FTSE Russell announced on October 6 that Oman had joined its Watch List for possible reclassification from Frontier to Secondary Emerging status after meeting the required market-quality, size and securities-count criteria. Oman remains a Frontier market, with the next classification update due in April 2027.

Al Salmi said services for institutional investors were also being developed. Omnibus accounts, which enable investment managers to place orders covering multiple clients or funds, were available and were being refined with the FSA to meet investor requirements.

The exchange wants a more balanced mix of institutional funds, foreign and Gulf investors, domestic institutions and individuals. Individual investors remained important to daily trading,

while continued activity and listings would help sustain confidence, he said.

Alongside efforts to broaden participation, MSX is seeking a wider range of issuers.

Al Salmi said discussions with family businesses about listing were taking place, although he did not identify prospective companies or announce dates. Improved market valuations could make selling shares more attractive to business owners, he said.

Government offerings would continue alongside efforts to attract companies from a broader range of sectors, with the relevant investment entities determining which businesses would come to market.

Al Maamari said the wider objective was to build a sustainable capital market capable of financing public and private development projects. Attracting external capital would require effective risk management and lessons from neighbouring markets, he added.

He linked the market's development to the privatisation programme and the arrival of larger listed companies, while stressing its role as a source of financing alongside banks.

Further product development remains dependent on supporting infrastructure. Al Salmi reiterated a target to introduce derivatives in 2028 at the earliest, with work towards establishing an independent clearing company in 2027 in coordination with the FSA.

The proposed company would act as a central counterparty to manage the risks associated with derivatives. Al Maamari said the exchange's competitiveness ultimately depended on the strength of the wider economy, its sectors and the investment opportunities they offered.

Oman power generation rises 4.3%



Electricity generation increased from 35,935.3 GWh in the corresponding period of 2025.

MUSCAT: Oman's total electricity generation rose 4.3 per cent year on year to 37,481.8 gigawatt-hours (GWh) in the first eight months of 2026, while water production fell 3.5 per cent, preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed.

Electricity generation increased from 35,935.3 GWh in the corresponding period of 2025, with growth across most governorates.

Muscat recorded the largest increase, at 204.8 per cent, followed by Al Dakhiliyah at 44.1 per cent and Al Wusta at 8.4 per cent.

Generation in the combined grouping of Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South and Al Dhahirah rose 5.5 per cent, while Dhofar recorded growth of 4.6 per cent.

Generation in Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South fell 16.4 per cent. Musandam's output was unchanged at 376 GWh.

Net electricity production rose 4.6 per cent to 36,463.9 GWh from 34,871.8 GWh a year earlier.

The measure includes purchases by the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company and the Rural Areas Electricity

Company, with figures broken down by region.

Muscat also recorded the strongest growth in net production, at 204.4 per cent, followed by Al Dakhiliyah at 44.2 per cent, Al Wusta at 9.1 per cent and Dhofar at 7.6 per cent.

Net production in the combined grouping of Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South and Al Dhahirah increased 5.4 per cent. Output in Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South declined 16.6 per cent, while Musandam's net production remained unchanged at 368 GWh.

Water production fell to 330.65 million cubic metres in the January-August period, compared with 342.71 million cubic metres a year earlier.

Muscat's water output declined 6.2 per cent to 128.07 million cubic metres from 136.57 million cubic metres. Production in other governorates, excluding Dhofar, fell 3.4 per cent to 149.90 million cubic metres from 155.19 million cubic metres.

Dhofar bucked the decline, with water production rising 3.4 per cent to 52.68 million cubic metres from 50.94 million cubic metres. — ONA



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (ر.ع.)	Site Visit
NESC/ 2026/039	Consultancy Services for the Design and Construction Supervision for Vehicle Parking Facility	18/10/2026	27/10/2026	Specialist	Free cost	19/10/2026 at 9:00 am NESC head Office

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -						
Participation	• Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. • To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit https://supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender					
Enquiries	• Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om , using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. • Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.					
Tender Submission	• Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website https://supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.					
Terms and Conditions	• The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. • NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. • Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization • NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. • Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.					



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ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The plan brings together the benefits of disciplined savings and insurance protection in a single solution.

BANKDHOFARENDOWMENT PLAN COMBINES SAVINGS WITH PROTECTION

MUSCAT: BankDhofar continues to strengthen its commitment to helping customers achieve their long-term financial goals with the promotion of its Endowment Plan, a solution that combines savings with life protection to provide greater financial security for individuals and families.

Underwritten by Dhofar Insurance Company SAOG, the Endowment Plan is designed to help customers build savings for important life goals such as children’s education, retirement planning, family milestones, and other future financial needs.

The plan brings together the benefits of disciplined savings and insurance protection in a single solution. Customers can choose a policy term ranging from 1 to 25 years, with 100% of the selected sum assured guaranteed at maturity, subject to policy terms and conditions. In addition, any bonuses declared under the policy may further enhance the maturity benefit.

With contributions starting from just RO 50 per month, the Endowment Plan is accessible to a broad range of customers. Premium payment options include monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual modes, while a single-premium option is also available.

One of the plan’s key features is its protection benefit. In the event of the policyholder’s death during the policy term, future premiums are waived while the full maturity benefit remains payable at the end of the selected term. This helps ensure that the customer’s intended financial objective can still be achieved, even in unforeseen circumstances.

Customers can further enhance their protection through optional benefits such as Family Income Benefit, Immediate Family Support Benefit, and Total and Permanent Disability coverage. Under the Family Income Benefit, an annual payment equivalent to 10% of the applicable rider sum assured will be paid for up to 10 years, helping provide financial stability to beneficiaries.

The plan also offers flexibility to accommodate changing financial circumstances. A 60-day grace period is available for missed premiums, and policies may be reinstated within 24 months, subject to applicable conditions.

Once a surrender value has been established, policyholders may also access loans of up to 80% of the surrender value.

Available to both Omani nationals and expatriates holding valid residency permits, the Endowment Plan is open to customers aged between 18 and 54 years, with worldwide coverage throughout the policy term and a maximum maturity age of 70 years.

Sohar Islamic, Sooq Cars to advance vehicle financing

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to delivering convenient, digitally enabled financial solutions and expanding access to Sharia-compliant financing, Sohar Islamic, the Islamic banking window of Sohar International, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sooq Cars, Oman’s digital automotive platform, to explore opportunities to enhance vehicle financing solutions and customer access through the platform.

The agreement was signed by Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International; and Abdulrahman al Kharusi, Chief Executive Officer of Sooq Cars, establishing a framework for both parties to explore new areas of collaboration and value creation.

Under the partnership, Sohar Islamic will seek to become a preferred financing partner on the Sooq Cars platform, providing customers with greater access to relevant vehicle financing solutions as they navigate their vehicle purchase journey.

The collaboration will also create opportunities to generate qualified financing referrals and enhance awareness of Sohar



Sohar Islamic will seek to become a preferred financing partner on the Sooq Cars platform.

Islamic’s products and services among customers engaging with the platform.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “This partnership reflects our ambition to make Islamic banking more accessible, relevant and seamlessly integrated into the everyday financial decisions of our customers.

As customer journeys increasingly move into digital environments, we see significant

potential in collaborating with platforms that are already part of those journeys.

Our partnership with Sooq Cars brings together Sohar Islamic’s financing expertise and Sharia-compliant solutions with a digitally enabled automotive ecosystem, creating an opportunity to simplify access to vehicle financing while opening new avenues for customer acquisition and engagement. More broadly, this collaboration forms part of our strategy to build partnerships that extend our reach, strengthen our proposition and contribute to the continued growth and development of Sohar Islamic”.

Abdulrahman al Kharusi, Chief Executive Officer of Sooq Cars, said: “At Sooq Cars, we are focused on building a more connected and convenient automotive marketplace that responds to the evolving expectations of customers in Oman.

Financing is an integral part of the vehicle purchasing journey, and partnering with Sohar Islamic enables us to bring a trusted Islamic financing proposition closer to customers at a relevant point of decision-making”.

Al Mouj Walk wins silver MENA region retail award

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat has secured regional recognition for Al Mouj Walk, its waterfront retail and leisure destination, winning silver at the MECSR MENA Shopping Centre & Retailer Awards 2026 for The Market, its seasonal outdoor retail and entrepreneurship initiative.

Recognised in the Marketing Excellence Award for Community Engagement & Impact category, The Market has strengthened Al Mouj Walk’s position as a platform for local businesses and community experiences, contributing to a 33% year-on-year increase in Saturday visitation and 10% growth in tenant sales during its first season.

Announced at the awards ceremony in Dubai, the accolade recognises The Market’s success in turning a weekly marketplace into a platform for local enterprise and a driver of activity across Al Mouj



The Market has strengthened Al Mouj Walk’s position as a platform for local businesses and community experiences.

Walk. By bringing independent businesses into an established retail and dining environment, the initiative demonstrated how community-led programming can deliver impact beyond the marketplace itself.

Ahmed al Massan, Acting CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: “The true value of a destination lies in what it creates for the people and businesses within it. This requires looking beyond traditional retail and recognising community engagement as an integral part of building places that remain relevant and commercially successful.

The Market reflects this approach, demonstrating how thoughtful programming can respond to changing consumer expectations while contributing to the vitality of established retail destinations”.

Running from November 2025 to February 2026, The Market established a weekly Saturday marketplace with capacity for up to 75 stalls, with Al Mouj Walk recording 132,784 visits during its first season.

Featuring local SMEs and emerging brands across food, fashion, art, beauty and wellness, it gave independent businesses a direct route to customers while introducing a changing mix of products and discoveries to Al Mouj Walk.

Building on its award-winning debut, Al Mouj Muscat is now preparing for the return of The Market. The next season will introduce exciting new offerings, expanding opportunities for local businesses and further enriching Al Mouj Walk’s retail and lifestyle proposition.

SHORTTAKES



A BOMCO automated drilling rig in Oman.

GREAT WALL WINS \$100M-PLUS OMAN DRILLING AWARD

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 11

China's Great Wall Drilling Company has received a letter of award from Medco for a five-year drilling services programme involving two rigs in Oman, valued at more than \$100 million, according to China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC).

Great Wall Drilling's Oman branch received the award on October 8, CNPC's China Petroleum News Centre said.

The programme covers Medco's operations at Karim Small Fields (KSF), where it serves as project operator under a service arrangement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

CNPC said the tender attracted several established domestic and international oilfield services companies, with requirements covering rig performance and the efficiency of moving rigs between well locations.

Great Wall Drilling had been tracking the opportunity since September 2022, when Medco began a market assessment for drilling rigs.

The Chinese contractor subsequently held several rounds of technical discussions with Medco and proposed integrated modular rigs designed for faster relocation. Its proposal also highlighted its drilling experience and health, safety and environmental management systems.

During the tender process, Great Wall Drilling presented its operating record across Gulf Cooperation Council markets and submitted performance data from previous projects, CNPC said.

Oman seeks digital innovation partnerships

OMAN is seeking new digital innovation partnerships to support its digital economy roadmap as a three-day meeting of the International Telecommunication Union's Digital Innovation Board opened in Muscat on Sunday.

The fourth meeting of the board, part of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development under the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, will review the alliance's strategic direction and progress on its initiatives and programmes.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, said Oman had embarked on developing its own digital economy roadmap.

Addressing the meeting, he expressed hope that discussions would identify new opportunities for digital innovation and partnerships, paving the way for projects serving stakeholders across the digital economy.

Eng Omar bin Hamdan al Ismaili, Chief Executive Officer of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), said hosting the meeting reflected Oman's commitment to contributing to international discussions on innovation and digital transformation.

The event also provides



The meeting of the board will review the alliance's strategic direction and progress on its initiatives and programmes.

an opportunity to showcase national initiatives and expand cooperation with international partners in developing innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, supporting the digital economy and Oman Vision 2040, he said.

Al Ismaili described digital transformation as a key pillar of Oman Vision 2040 and said it aligned with the TRA's efforts to support economic diversification.

The authority continued to invest in telecommunications, digital infrastructure, emerging technologies and national capacity building, he added.

Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, said the board's meetings focused on bridging the digital divide, addressing gaps in digital skills and accelerating digital transformation, with innovation underpinning all three areas. Participants will assess the alliance's priorities for its next phase and review the results of ITU acceleration centres, contributions from its expert network and strategic foresight studies.

Panel discussions and specialist working groups will examine priorities for innovation, entrepreneurship and future alliance programmes. The agenda also includes field visits to explore Oman's experience in telecommunications and digital technology.

An exhibition held alongside the meeting showcases Omani telecommunications and information technology companies, including small and medium-sized enterprises specialising in digital innovation. — ONA

EDF hosts Omani delegation on landmark pumped hydro storage project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 11

French energy giant EDF recently hosted a high-level Omani delegation in France as cooperation advances on the Sultanate of Oman's proposed 2-gigawatt (GW) Jabal Abyadh pumped hydro energy storage project — potentially the largest facility of its kind in the Middle East.

The delegation was led by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and included Ahmed al Araiimi, Oman's Ambassador to France; Ahmed bin Hamed al Subhi, Chairman of Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP); representatives of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR); and other key Omani stakeholders.

According to an update by EDF Middle East, the visit featured engagements with senior EDF executives, alongside technical discussions on the role of pumped hydro storage in supporting



EDF's Grand'Maison pumped hydro storage facility in the French Alps.

decarbonisation, grid stability and renewable energy integration.

A highlight was a technical tour of EDF's Grand'Maison pumped hydro storage facility in the French Alps.

With an installed capacity of approximately 1,800 megawatts (MW), Grand'Maison ranks among Europe's largest pumped storage

power stations. Its reversible pump-turbine system transfers water between reservoirs at different elevations, storing surplus electricity for subsequent generation during periods of peak demand.

The facility provides valuable operational insights for Oman's proposed Jabal Abyadh

development, particularly in reservoir management, hydropower forecasting, maintenance, dam safety, sediment management and infrastructure monitoring.

"These exchanges supported ongoing discussions on the development of Oman's Jabal Abyadh pumped hydro energy storage project. EDF looks forward to continuing this collaboration to support Oman's energy transition and its ambitions for energy and water security", EDF Middle East stated.

The proposed Jabal Abyadh project, being advanced by a consortium comprising EDF Power Solutions, ONEIC-Takhzeen and Green Universe Enterprise, seeks to harness the exceptional elevation differential between the existing Wadi Dayqah Dam reservoir and the adjoining Jabal Abyadh plateau.

Central to the development is a new upper reservoir planned at approximately 1,130 metres above sea level, providing a gross hydraulic head of around 940

metres. The system envisages an active water storage volume of approximately eight million cubic metres.

Designed for 2 GW of generating capacity and around 17.9 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of energy storage, the facility could supply electricity for nearly nine hours at full output.

During periods of surplus solar generation, electricity would pump water uphill through underground tunnels.

When demand rises, the water would flow downhill through reversible turbines, generating dispatchable electricity.

Importantly, the project would utilise the existing Wadi Dayqah reservoir, with its approximately 100-million-cubic-metre capacity, potentially reducing construction costs and environmental impacts.

The initiative is strategically significant for Oman's ambition to increase renewable electricity generation while strengthening grid flexibility, energy security and long-duration storage capabilities.

TELECOM COMPETITION

Musk vows cheap Starlink for India



Elon Musk announced SpaceX will offer affordable Starlink satellite internet in India to compete against Mukesh Ambani's low-cost Reliance Jio. The statement comes days before Jio Platforms targets a \$106 billion valuation in India's largest-ever IPO.

While both satellite ventures await security clearances, Musk noted that increased competition will benefit Indian citizens. — Reuters

ENERGY RELIEF

US releases oil from strategic reserve



The US Department of Energy authorised an emergency release of up to four million barrels of crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve following Hurricane Isaias.

The measure aims to sustain refining operations and prevent fuel shortages. The storm disrupted Gulf of Mexico production, halting 1.3 million barrels of oil daily after platform worker evacuations. — Reuters

FINANCIAL INEQUALITY

Fed survey reveals growing financial stress



A Federal Reserve survey covering 2022 to 2025 revealed that while most US families experienced income gains, financial stress rose alongside elevated inflation. Wealth growth slowed compared to pandemic years, with gains concentrated among the top 10%.

Lower-income households saw incomes rise, yet the bottom fourth suffered a severe net worth decline of over 50%, falling to \$1,700. — Reuters

OPINION

What is the Conference of the Parties (COP)?



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at College of Banking and Financial Studies

In February 1979, the First World Climate Conference was held in Geneva; it was sponsored by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). At the conference, scientists raised concerns about climate change and its potential harm to humanity. The scientists urged governments to anticipate and prevent potentially harmful human-made changes to the climate. This conference helped shift climate change research onto the international policy agenda. Further conferences in 1985 and 1988 provided the impetus for international action. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change established COP as the governing body; it was adopted in New York on May 9, 1992 and opened for signature at the Rio Earth Summit in June 1992. Although the foundation stone for COP was laid in 1992, the convention began functioning in Berlin, Germany, from March 7, 1995. In 1992, 154 countries participated; today, it includes 198 members, 197 countries and the European Union. COP-Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In the context of COP, parties refer to the states and the EU that have joined the UN climate convention. This convention is the parent treaty of

the 2015 Paris Agreement. The 2015 Paris Agreement is a legally binding climate treaty adopted at UNFCCC at COP21 in December 2015. The main aim of COP is to prevent dangerous human-induced climate change. COP brings countries together to negotiate, enforce commitments, review progress, and support implementation and accountability under climate change agreements. The annual climate summit commonly called COP includes meetings of three governing bodies: COP for the UNFCCC, CMP for the 1997-Kyoto Protocol, and CMA for the 2015 Paris Agreement. COP aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that drive global warming, implement the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep the increase in global average temperature well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C, support countries to become resilient to climate impacts, arrange climate finance for climate action, particularly for developing economies, address loss and damage to vulnerable economies experiencing climate harm, and review emissions levels. COP also works to enhance skills and support climate-related technologies. COP works collectively to advance the realisation of commitments towards climate action. One

COP aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that drive global warming, implement the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep the increase in global average temperature well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.

major factor influencing COP progress is that decision-making generally uses a consensus model rather than a majority vote. No countries have so far agreed on a fallback mechanism for decision-making if consensus is not reached. This factor can explain slow final agreements, which sometimes dissatisfy certain countries. The COP's purpose extends beyond pollution control; it provides an opportunity for countries to sustain climate protection, food security, and sustainable ecosystems. COP efforts continue, with COP31 scheduled for November 9-20, 2026 in Antalya, Türkiye. Türkiye's environment ministry is the president-designate. COP31 is expected to emphasise translating climate commitments into measurable emission reductions, making funding more accessible, and providing stronger support for vulnerable communities. These remain some priorities and expectations, not agreed outcomes. COP31 proposes collective dialogue and a plan to strengthen action to keep global warming at 1.5°C. They will also discuss practical steps to transition from fossil fuels to cleaner energy. Moving forward, COP31 is expected to focus more on implementing existing commitments than on negotiating a new overarching treaty.

Why is it getting harder to spot the rich?



RAHMA AL KALBANI

The writer is a journalist specialising in economic and social affairs

Imagine walking into a room full of businesspeople. Could you tell who the wealthiest person is just by looking at them? Twenty years ago, you might have looked for the most expensive suit, the biggest watch or the flashiest car parked outside. Nowadays, however, the richest person in the room might be the one wearing a plain T-shirt and a watch you do not recognise.

What is even harder to believe is that some wealthy people are now spending more to hide their wealth, not out of fear of the evil eye, but to stand out from the crowd. As luxury products become available to more people, they lose some of what makes them special. This was explored in a 2025 study titled *The Hidden Signals of Luxury*, published in the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. The study surveyed 425 consumers who each spend more than \$20,000 a year on luxury goods. It found that some prefer expensive products with simple designs and no obvious logos. Instead of showing off their wealth to everyone, they choose brands that only a small group of people can recognise. What is interesting today is that people who always seem busy and have no time for anything somehow give off an aura of wealth, as if having no free time is a sign of success. This is not just my own observation. A 2017 study published in the *Journal of Consumer Research* found that busy people are often seen as having a higher social status, as their busy schedules suggest success and being in high demand at work. There are also other signs of wealth that I personally find more positive, as they reflect a shift from showing off to investing in ourselves and our quality of life — something that others may not even notice. This is what researcher Elizabeth Currid-Halkett explored in her 2017 book *The Sum of Small Things*, published by Princeton University Press. She discussed how some wealthy people are moving away from showing off their wealth and spending more on education, healthcare, good food and services that improve their lives and give their children better opportunities. Perhaps the traditional symbols of wealth have not disappeared. Luxury cars, expensive jewellery and mansions still matter to many people, but the ways people show their wealth have become more varied. Some prefer to show it through travel and exclusive experiences; others hide it behind simple but expensive clothes, while some spend their money on things that nobody can see, such as education, healthcare and time with their families. Perhaps the biggest irony is that many signs of wealth can now be bought, rented or even faked, while having the freedom to choose how we live our lives, without being limited by money or the expectations of others, may be a different kind of luxury worth thinking about.

The French far right embraces austerity

MARINE

Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Rally (RN) in France, has unveiled an economic programme centred on rapid fiscal consolidation — more commonly known as austerity. In doing so, she has broken sharply with her own party's past and aligned herself more closely with a longstanding trend on the European right.

The RN's move comes just as France is being rocked by protests, with its government struggling to pass a budget for lack of a parliamentary majority. Public debt stands at 119% of GDP, compared to 102% in Britain and 63% in Germany, and the deficit is expected to reach 5.4% of GDP in 2026 — well above the European Union's 3% ceiling. To bring it down to 5% in 2027, the government has announced €54 billion (\$60 billion) in deeply unpopular budget cuts. But Le Pen wants to take austerity further. She is proposing that France mimic Germany's "debt brake" (a legal restriction on the size of budget deficits) by enshrining a "golden rule" in the French constitution. Crucially, such an amendment would have to be approved by referendum. Suspending it for one year would require 60% support in parliament, and doing so for a second year would require another referendum. Thus, Le Pen has offered a populist vision of fiscal consolidation. Rather than rely on the usual technocratic model in which fiscal, legal, or environmental constraints are embedded in difficult-to-change rules (such as constitutional provisions or European treaty provisions), Le Pen wants to give austerity a democratic mandate. Whereas Greece had belt-tightening imposed on it by the Troika (the European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund), French austerity would be endorsed by French voters. This bold approach contains a major political contradiction that lies at the heart of many far-right parties' agendas. To deliver her promised savings, Le Pen would need to cut not only immigration-



LAURENT WARLOUZET

The writer is Professor of History at Sorbonne University

related spending (which is popular with her electorate), but also welfare policies such as pensions and health care (which is not). One way that Le Pen plans to generate savings is by reducing the number of civil servants. Yet RN voters have historically been drawn disproportionately from rural, working-class, and lower-middle-class areas where public services are already under strain. Many depend on welfare provisions, and others live in regions suffering from shortages of nurses, teachers, judges, and police. Such voters generally demand more state intervention, not less. The contradiction is not uniquely French. Across Europe, the nationalist right is combining demands for stronger state intervention with fiscal restraint. The RN, Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), and Reform UK may differ profoundly on many issues, but they are converging on the need to reduce public spending and constrain government debt. At the same time, Le Pen has been careful to distinguish herself from the AfD, which is more openly radical and racist. She has kept RN out of the same group as the AfD in the European Parliament, and instead moved closer to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who has managed to present herself as part of a new, more respectable nationalist right. This is a familiar story in France. The far right, once associated with political and economic radicalism, is supposedly becoming more moderate and more "responsible". Meloni has cooperated with the European Union on several issues and pursued a cautious economic policy, and Le Pen is now attempting a "Melonisation" of her own. Her rhetoric ahead of next year's presidential election is calibrated to reassure centre-right voters. To sell her massive austerity programme, she has invoked none other than Charles de Gaulle, France's most storied 20th-century political leader. She has even promised a more "constructive" European policy, as did de Gaulle when he returned to power in 1958. What Le Pen actually wants is to halve France's net contribution

to the EU budget. Yet she is presenting this position not as a revolutionary rejection of Europe, but as a return to the level of net contributions made during Jacques Chirac's centre-right administration between 1995 and 2007. She has even proposed harmonising excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco with European rates and transferring some of the additional revenue to the EU. Le Pen's apparent transformation is all the more striking for its repudiation of her own political past. The reference to de Gaulle would once have been unthinkable, considering that her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, founded the National Front with anti-Gaullists and others nostalgic for the collaborationist Vichy regime. Le Pen is also attempting to erase the memory of her own anti-European radicalism. It was only a decade ago that she was praising Brexit and musing about the appeal of Frexit. During the 2017 presidential campaign, she called for France to leave the euro, only to be humiliated by Emmanuel Macron in their crucial televised debate. She may have learned from these experiences. Her recent speech outlining her economic policies was packed with figures and technical details. At a time when her party is embroiled in a controversy over anti-Semitic remarks attributed to her deputy, Jordan Bardella, she is projecting an image of fiscal responsibility. After attacking the huge debts accumulated under Macron, she is presenting herself as the defender of fiscal discipline—a position typically advocated by classical liberals. But Le Pen's programme is not simply an attempt to make the RN respectable. It could also signal a broader transformation of the European far right. For decades, the political dividing line over economic policy was relatively clear: center-right and liberal parties defended fiscal discipline and market-oriented reforms, while the left and, increasingly, the radical right demanded greater social protection and state intervention. That alignment may be breaking down as a new political combination emerges. — @Project Syndicate, 2026

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> 20

MOVIE**PREMIERE**

JOHN CENA AND BIEL HIT THE GAS IN ‘MATCHBOX’



Shay Shariatzadeh and John Cena attend Apple Original Films’ “Matchbox: The Movie” New York Premiere. — **AFP**

John Cena spent much of his childhood playing with Matchbox cars, so when the chance came to hit the gas in “Matchbox: The Movie”, he jumped behind the wheel.

The action-comedy, out this Friday on Apple TV, follows a reunion of childhood friends that veers unexpectedly when they are caught in a mission to recover a nuclear warhead.

Starring Cena, Jessica Biel, Arturo Castro, Sam Richardson and Teyonah Parris, the film directed by Sam Hargrave combines high-octane action with humour.

It taps into nostalgia for the toy cars, which originated after English engineer Jack Odell designed the first model to comply with a 1952 British school rule requiring toys to fit inside a matchbox.

“If you have childhood memories like me of Matchbox, I think you’re going to appreciate all the Easter eggs in there. And if you don’t know anything about Matchbox or the Mattel franchise, you’re going to sit down and really enjoy this movie”, Cena told journalists.

The action scenes challenged both Cena and Biel. Training focused on learning to move in new ways and performing fight scenes with greater fluidity, Cena said.

And, of course, to “gain the courage to jump off a building”, he added.

Biel said driving pushed her out of her comfort zone. “I’ve never learned how to spin a car, you know, in a 180 and stop it on a mark”, she said.

For Biel, the experience brought an adrenaline rush as she tackled driving techniques she had never tried before.

Driving “was the coolest stuff I got to do”, she said. “Going 60 plus miles an hour on a freeway with a bunch of camera cars everywhere, and guys on motorcycles, and gals in giant semis... There was a really major sense of being safe for everyone else’s sake”.

Both actors said Hargrave’s direction was crucial to the demanding scenes. The filmmaker is known for stunt work and coordination on Marvel Cinematic Universe films.

“He was such a big draw to this movie because of his experience and his expertise in the stunt world, and how he likes to do things practically”, Biel said.

The film also offered an opportunity to reflect on friendship and share stories from behind the wheel. Cena, a car collector, recalled one of his most significant purchases: “a fake Lamborghini”. He bought it cheaply, intending to fix it himself. Ultimately, he blew \$825,000 and two decades of work on the venture in vain.

But he learned a valuable lesson.

“If you think it’s too good to be true,” he said, “it’s too good to be true”. — **AFP**

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



PETS

Dogs dressed as US country music singer Dolly Parton attend the “Howl-o-ween Pet Parade” in Salem, Massachusetts, USA.

— **AFP**



PERFORMANCE

Dancers perform over the tidal basin as part of the Festival International des Arts de Bordeaux (FAB) in France.

— **AFP**

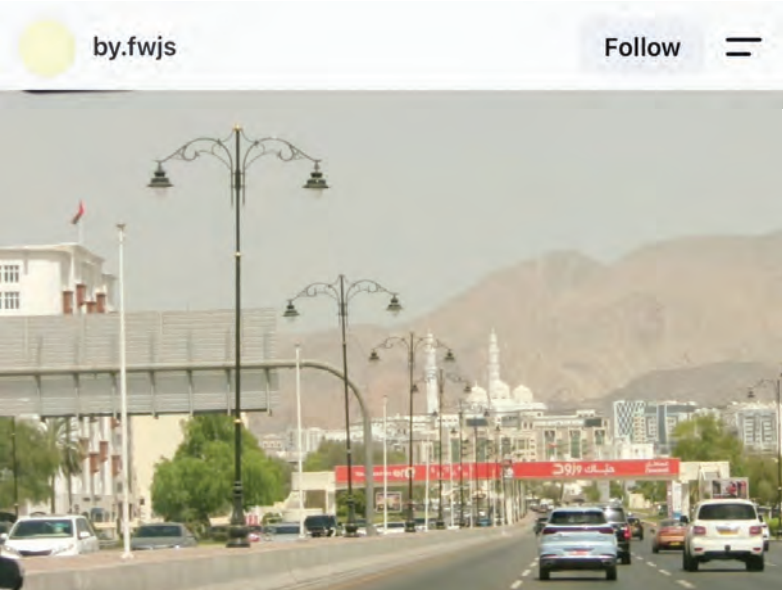


DESSERT

Ube macarons on display during a purple yam promotional event at a mall in Quezon City, Philippines.

— **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



On the highway



Eastern Imperial Eagle

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ATKINSON RETURNS TO STAGE COMEDY AFTER 40 YEARS



British actor Rowan Atkinson. — dpa

Rowan Atkinson will star in his first West End comedy sketch show in 40 years, returning to the theatre after more than a decade.

The actor, 71, will perform at London's Gillian Lynne Theatre next year in "Rowan Live", combining new material with sketches and characters.

The show will run for 30 performances from February 8 to March 13, with material created alongside longtime collaborators Richard Curtis, Ben Elton and Howard Goodall.

Atkinson rose to fame in BBC sketch show "Not The Nine O'Clock News" before starring in "Blackadder" in the 1980s. He achieved global recognition in the 1990s as the silent, chaotic character Mr Bean.

"It is 40 years since I last did a comedy sketch show in the West End, and I thought it would be fun to perform again the sketches that began it all for

myself and Richard Curtis, and in which my most well-known characters originated; alongside some surprise new material written especially for this show", Atkinson said.

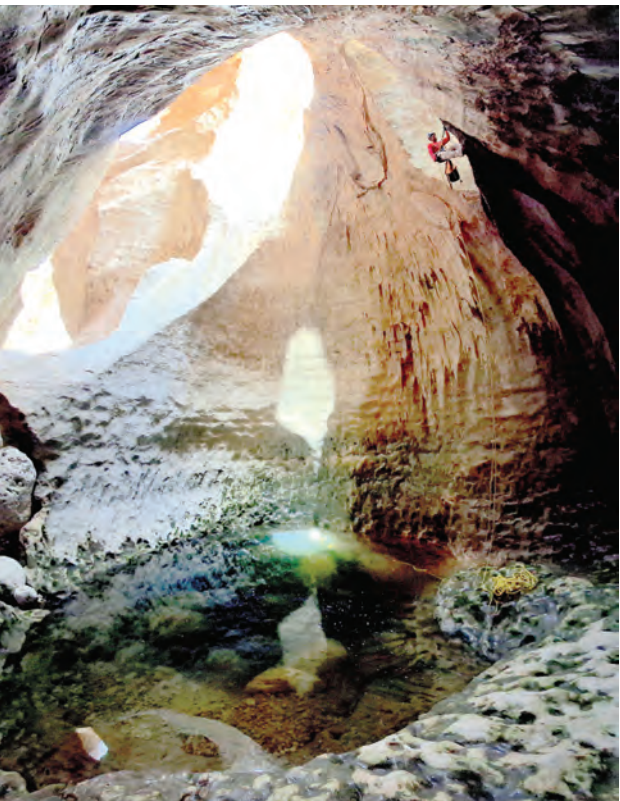
Curtis first saw Atkinson perform in 1976 and said rehearsals before a small audience this summer showed his comic talent remained intact. "I hope it will make people very happy", Curtis said.

Goodall has composed the music for the production, directed by Raz Shaw and presented by Playful Productions in association with PBJ Management.

The production marks Atkinson's first West End appearance since the 2013 revival of Simon Gray's "Quartermaine's Terms".

Tickets will be available through the Rowan Live website, with priority booking opening before general sales. — dpa

Adventure through a spectacular canyon



DR KHALED ABDUL MALAK

WHEN we came out of the cave and went back on the trail, we realised that we needed to climb about a hundred metres as progressing at a lower level was impossible. Continuing on, we followed the old trail, which soon descended to a spot where we could secure our rope to a natural anchor for a short abseil, allowing us to reach the wadi bed.

At that moment, we were confident we would find the anchors that previous adventurers had placed in the canyon's past.

After briefly inspecting the area, we stumbled upon another natural anchor, which we used to descend approximately 18 metres. We were slightly surprised not to find any metallic anchors initially and had to install our own using a drill to enable further progress.

This allowed us to make another spectacular descent of about 20 metres, ending

An adventurous canyoning expedition unfolds through dramatic descents, hidden passages and a narrow underwater squeeze, culminating in breathtaking views of rugged landscapes and the coastline

in a vast round chamber reminiscent of a cathedral, with light streaming in through two large openings.

Here, we refilled our water bottles from a crystal-clear pool fed by a spring. While doing so, I noticed a small pink snake next to my foot and instinctively jumped back, mistaking it for a juvenile carpet viper.

However, after returning home and researching the photo I took, I discovered it was actually a cat snake.

From that point, we continued through the canyon, performing numerous small descents, none exceeding 10 metres in height. Previous explorers had left fixed ropes in good condition, which we used.

Our journey proceeded smoothly as we paused at a magnificent spot where the cliff wall was lush with ferns, the perfect place for a brief snack break.

Afterwards, we continued along the increasingly narrow wadi. At one point, I panicked slightly because I could not see how to move forward. As Rami and

Hamood caught up with me, I noticed light seeping under a nearby rock. There was scarcely 5 cm of space between the rock and the water's surface.

I reached under and realised it was necessary to swim through a metre-long sump.

Once on the other side, we pressed on through the canyon, swimming through several pools and navigating boulders until we exited the narrow section.

From there, we climbed out of the wadi bed to reconnect with the trail we had followed down from the mountain. It took us roughly an hour from there to return to our car.

On our drive back to Muscat, we paused at a stunning viewpoint on the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea more than 1,000 metres below. There, we enjoyed some food and drinks before heading home.

This canyon ranks among the most beautiful I have visited in Oman, possibly even 'The' most beautiful one.

FEATURES

ARWA AL HASHIMI

A FOOTBALL injury in 2023 prompted Mubarak bin Abdullah al Shuaili to look beyond the immediate setback and investigate why injuries occur among athletes. That search eventually led to an idea: a smart wearable that could help monitor electrolyte levels during physical activity.

Al Shuaili is part of To Care, an Omani team developing smart healthcare solutions. Its wearable is designed to monitor sodium levels through sweat, helping athletes and coaches better understand the body’s response to exertion.

“The project began in 2023 after I sustained an injury to the bottom of my foot while playing football. That experience motivated me to research the causes of injuries among players”, al Shuaili said.

What started as a personal experience has grown into a broader ambition to address challenges in sports health.

“Our vision is to help reduce injuries worldwide”, he said.

At the centre of the project is sodium, an essential electrolyte that helps regulate fluid balance, transmit nerve signals and support muscle function. Athletes lose water and electrolytes through sweat, particularly during prolonged or intense exercise.

To Care hopes its device will provide additional information to guide hydration decisions. While muscle cramps can have several causes, the team believes wearable monitoring could help manage some of the challenges associated with strenuous exercise.

The device uses ion-selective sensors that come into contact with sweat on the skin. A sodium-sensitive membrane produces an electrical signal corresponding to the sodium concentration. This signal is amplified and filtered before being transmitted via Bluetooth to an application or monitoring unit, where readings appear and alerts can be generated.

The system also incorporates potassium monitoring, providing another measure of electrolytes relevant to muscle and nerve function.

The goal is to make monitoring practical during sporting activities, when conventional equipment may not be suitable for continuous use.

Al Shuaili said the device had achieved approximately 90 per cent accuracy compared with hospital-based sensors, according to the team’s assessments, and had undergone several trials. Further validation will be important to establish its performance under different conditions.

Developing a wearable that delivers reliable readings during exercise has presented challenges. One difficulty, Al Shuaili explained, is accounting for variations in sweat production. The team is also improving how the device’s controller collects data and transfers it to an online platform.

“We are still working on these challenges to bring the product to its final form”, he said.

For To Care, resolving these issues is essential to taking the device beyond controlled testing environments, where movement and changing conditions can affect readings.

Scientific events and exhibitions have helped the team refine its approach. Al Shuaili said visitors had generally responded positively, asking questions that highlighted areas for improvement.

Some initially compared the device with smartwatches from Apple and Huawei. He explained that To Care focuses specifically on electrolyte monitoring, rather than the broader functions offered by consumer smartwatches.

The project has also required members to learn skills ranging from technology and finance to product development. Al Shuaili credited their supportive working environment and shared belief in the idea with helping them move forward.

To Care intends to target professional athletes and sports clubs first. In the longer term, it hopes to reach amateur athletes, runners and people participating in team sports through a simpler, more affordable version.

The team is exploring additional measurements, including blood pressure and haemoglobin levels. These remain under study, Al Shuaili stressed, because obtaining reliable measurements during intense activity presents technical challenges.



OMANI TEAM TURNS INJURY INTO SPORTS INNOVATION



OMANI TEAM DEVELOPS SMART WEARABLE TO MONITOR ATHLETES’ SODIUM LEVELS

“The project began in 2023 after I sustained an injury to the bottom of my foot while playing football. That experience motivated me to research the causes of injuries among players.

MUBARAK AL SHUAILI

Another ambition is to use intelligent data analysis to develop personalised alerts based on each athlete’s readings and individual patterns. Such additions will require further development and validation before they can guide health-related decisions.

The next objective is to turn the project into a product that can be manufactured and marketed. To Care plans to expand field testing, obtain the necessary regulatory approvals and establish partnerships with sports clubs and manufacturers.

Its initial focus will be Oman, with ambitions to enter regional markets later.

For Al Shuaili, the motivation remains rooted in the experience that started it all. An injury on the football field has become the starting point for an Omani innovation that the team hopes will one day support athletes well beyond the Sultanate of Oman.