

OMAN

دولة عمان

DAILY

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 334
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

EL NINO
MAY SHIFT
FISH
STOCKS

IN BRIEF

GCC STATES HAVE 12.8M ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

The number of adolescents and youth aged between 10 and 24 in the GCC states reached approximately 12.8 million, representing 20 per cent of the total population of the GCC states in 2025, reflecting the significant demographic weight of this group and the influential human base it represents for the future of the region's countries. Data issued by the GCC Statistical Centre (GCC-Stat) indicates that the GCC states achieved a rate of 100 per cent in providing essential health services for adolescents and youth, thereby surpassing the global indicator of 68 per cent, reflecting the breadth of essential health coverage directed at this group in the GCC states. The centre's indicators also showed that the GCC states achieved a rate of 100 per cent in national essential regulations for adolescents and youth, compared with 84 per cent at the global level.

DEAL FOR UNIFIED MUNICIPAL SYSTEM

Muscat Municipality signed an agreement for the Unified Municipal System project with Pioneer Technical Services Company, a subsidiary of ITHCA Group. The agreement was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Said al Amri, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, and by Eng Talib Hamoud al Rashdi, Acting CEO of ITHCA Group, on behalf of the company. Eng Ahmed Said al Amri said that signing the agreement to execute the Unified Municipal System project represents a strategic step towards developing the municipal work ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman by unifying municipal services across various governorates within an integrated digital platform, including building permits, lease contracts, permits, and other services. **DETAILS ON P15**

TOURISM MINISTRY’S 14 SERVICES ONLINE

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism launched 14 electronic services that allow beneficiaries to complete transactions without visiting its headquarters, alongside ‘Itqan’, an internal digital platform designed to improve institutional performance. The services cover four areas including adventure tourism, tourism establishments, fine arts groups and caves. ‘Itqan’ links the ministry’s strategic plans to project execution, improves data accuracy and gives senior leadership a real-time overview of performance, supporting decision-making, the early detection of challenges and the monitoring of progress towards objectives. It provides managers with tools to plan projects, track execution and manage risks, and gives employees clarity over their tasks. **DETAILS ON P2**

Royal Decrees ratify agreements with Angola

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued two Royal Decrees.

Royal Decree No (90/2026) on the ratification of the technical cooperation agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Angola, signed in

Luanda on September 18, 2026.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No (91/2026) on the ratification of an agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Angola concerning the mutual visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, private and service passports, signed in Luanda on

September 18, 2026.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

Saudi says will not allow threats to sea navigation

OMAN, UZBEKISTAN, RUSSIA CALL FOR DE-ESCALATION

SAYYID

BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDI, Foreign Minister,

received a phone call from Bakhtiyor Saidov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The two ministers exchanged views on expanding bilateral cooperation and partnership, particularly in the economic, trade, and tourism fields, alongside advancing further investment projects, logistics, and transportation services, thereby contributing to transforming existing opportunities into projects that enrich both countries' interests and mutual benefits.

The call addressed developments on the regional and international arenas, with both sides emphasising the importance of expanding areas of consensus, strengthening joint action, and supporting peaceful pathways to resolve disputes in accordance with the principles of international law.

On another note, the Foreign Minister discussed a number of cooperation relations during a phone call with Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and exchanged views in the context of current regional and international developments.

THREATS

The Saudi cabinet vowed on Tuesday, in a meeting led by



Pilgrims perform Umrah at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday. —Reuters

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, that it would not allow threats to the kingdom's security or Red Sea shipping.

The cabinet said in a statement carried by the official SPA press agency that the kingdom “will not allow its security or freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and Bab Al Mandab Strait to be threatened”.

It added that the Ansar Allah “will face the consequences of their crimes and repeated attacks” on Saudi airports, holy cities and economic facilities, following several deadly strikes on the kingdom. Meanwhile, Yemen's Ansar Allah said Saudi Arabia struck an oil facility in Sanaa on Tuesday, after the Riyadh-led coalition told civilians to leave the surrounding area in its first evacuation order for the Yemeni capital since the war flared up again.

After a series of strikes on the kingdom's airports and energy sites, the coalition's spokesman said people should leave an oil facility belonging to the Yemen Petroleum Company on the western outskirts of Sanaa before it was attacked.

US President Donald Trump accused Yemen's Ansar Allah fighters of deliberately trying to drive up oil prices ahead of the US midterm elections and warned that he would “never forget” their attacks on Saudi Arabia, amid a widening regional conflict. — Agencies

Nasa’s rover breaks record for off-planet driving on Mars

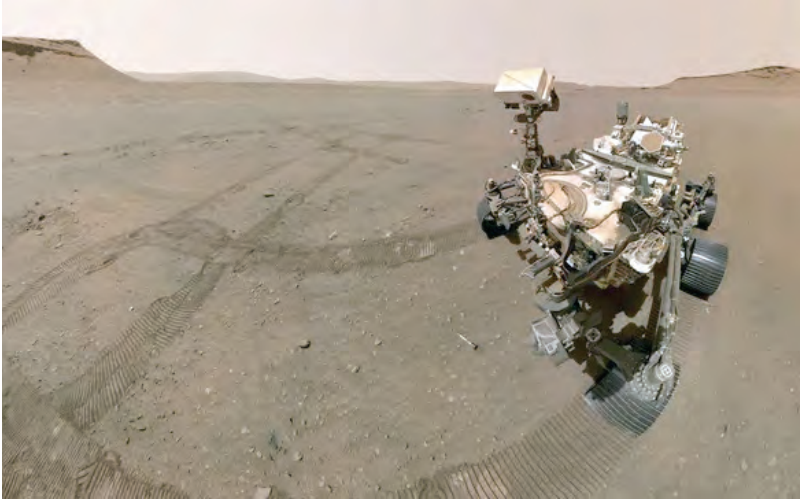
WASHINGTON: Nasa's robotic Perseverance rover has now driven farther than any other vehicle on the surface of any world other than Earth, racking up 28.1 miles (45.2 km) since arriving on Mars in 2021, the US space agency said.

The car-sized, six-wheeled rover reached the milestone 5-1/2 years into its mission to explore if conditions conducive to microbial life ever existed on Earth's neighbour. In doing so, it is visiting some of the most ancient terrain ever

encountered in the solar system.

“Perseverance's engineering hardware and instruments are in excellent shape with all redundant systems still available,” Steven Lee of Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, said.

“A recent assessment of all systems concluded that they are capable of operating well into the 2030s, likely beyond,” added Lee, the project manager for Nasa's two Mars rovers, Perseverance and Curiosity.



Nasa's Perseverance Mars rover has broken the interplanetary driving record, rolling past 45.16 km on the Red Planet.

Perseverance has exceeded the previous figure of 28.06 miles (45 km) driven on the Martian surface by Nasa's Opportunity rover from 2004 to 2018. Both also exceeded the driving distances of any lunar rover.

Perseverance, with its suite of scientific instruments, has focused on the Jezero Crater, a region in the northern hemisphere of Mars believed to have been flooded with water and home to a lake basin billions of years ago.

The rover set the milestone in a journey toward an

area called Idubi, through the region off the crater's western rim nicknamed Lac de Charmes. Its companion rover, Curiosity, rolls along in the Gale Crater near the Martian equator.

Perseverance is showing no signs of slowing down, Lee added.

Its mobility system mechanisms are being tested to show it can drive 100 km (62 miles) or more, he said, with the hardware to be tested to the equivalent of 150 km to 300 km (93 miles to 186 miles) in the effort. — Reuters

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, receives Dr Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Oman.

EDUCATION
MINISTER MEETS
BAHRAIN ENVOY,
NUST CHAIRMAN

MUSCAT: Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, on Tuesday received Dr Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to Oman, and his accompanying delegation, in the presence of a number of ministry officials. The meeting reviewed joint cooperation in education, covering school and university education, and ways to strengthen relations between the two countries. Both sides stressed the need to deepen ties and widen the scope of cooperation.

The minister also met P Mohammed Ali, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), in the presence of Dr Ali bin Saud al Bimani, Vice-Chancellor of the university. The meeting reviewed the university's progress and future direction, and discussed developing the higher education system and the quality of its outcomes in line with national development needs and the requirements of the labour market.

Talks also covered support for student enrolment at the university, sustaining the quality of educational services, and strengthening the legislative and regulatory environment for developing academic programmes. — **ONA**

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK TO UNIFY RISK MANAGEMENT ACROSS GOVERNMENT

THE Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with the National Risk Register, on Tuesday launched the National Enterprise Risk Management Governance Framework, a unified national reference for how government entities identify, assess and handle risks. The ceremony at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat was held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour.

The framework is part of national efforts to develop institutional governance and raise the efficiency of government performance in line with Oman Vision 2040. Its launch coincided with the International Day for Disaster Reduction, observed on October 13 each year. Said bin Abdullah al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development, said the framework would serve as a unified reference for risk management governance in the civil units of the state's administrative apparatus. It was prepared in line with international practices while taking into account Oman's institutional environment, and its success would require the cooperation of leadership and all employees to instil a risk-aware culture, he said.

Al Balushi said the ministry would work with relevant authorities in the coming phase to support implementation by qualifying targeted government entities, providing technical support,



The framework is part of efforts to develop institutional governance and raise the efficiency of government performance. — **ONA**

monitoring compliance and measuring institutional maturity. The ministry will also issue compliance certificates against set criteria and add an institutional risk management index to the “Ejada” performance evaluation system. The work will be carried out in phases according to each entity's readiness.

The framework aims to move government entities from handling risks after they occur to a proactive approach based on identifying, predicting and monitoring early warning indicators. It treats risk management as part of the government management system rather than a separate function, linking it directly to strategic planning, decision-making, performance management and business continuity.

It classifies risks at three levels. Institutional risks are confined to a single entity that can manage them within its powers. Sectoral risks

extend to more than one entity in a sector and require coordination, while national risks go beyond a single sector and call for a higher level of coordination and response. An escalation mechanism ensures risks are moved to the appropriate level at the right time when their scope or severity grows.

The framework also sets out categories of risk, including strategic, compliance and legislative, reputation, cybersecurity and information technology, project, and supplier and third-party risks. It makes risk ownership part of the duties of all organisational units rather than a single specialised team.

Colonel Zayed bin Hamad al Junaihi, Head of the National Centre for Emergency Management, said the framework sets out mechanisms for escalating risks to the National Risk Register, allowing the National Committee for Emergency Management to review national risks according to their priority.

Eng Eman bint Hamoud al Raisi, Director of the Risk Management Department at the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), said the framework's importance lay in moving institutions from risk monitoring alone to using assessment results in decision-making, strategic planning and setting priorities.

The National Risk Register also launched the English version of its public edition, which outlines potential natural, service, health and major-incident risks. — **ONA**

Exhibition raises disaster awareness

SALALAH: Dhofar Governorate, through the Salalah Resilience Hub, on Tuesday organised an exhibition to mark the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, observed on October 13 each year.

Held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah under the theme “Resilience begins at home”, the event drew representatives of government units, private sector establishments and civil society organisations. It targeted community members, educational institutions, innovators and others interested in disaster risk reduction.

The exhibition featured a children's corner, cultural and educational competitions and



a “Storyteller” show sharing stories and lessons from handling crises.

A special edition of “Murshid” magazine was also launched to raise children's awareness of disaster risk reduction and the family's role

in keeping homes safe.

The event is part of Salalah's efforts to strengthen urban resilience after the city was designated a global resilience hub under the Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030) initiative. — **ONA**

MoHT takes 14 services online

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) on Tuesday launched 14 electronic services that allow beneficiaries to complete transactions without visiting its headquarters, alongside ‘Itqan’, an internal digital platform designed to improve institutional performance. The services cover four areas: adventure tourism, tourism establishments, fine arts groups and caves.

‘Itqan’ links the ministry's strategic plans to project execution, improves data accuracy and gives senior leadership a real-time overview of performance, supporting decision-making, the early detection of challenges and the monitoring of progress towards objectives. It provides project managers with tools to plan projects, track execution and manage risks, and gives employees clarity over their tasks and how they contribute to the



‘Itqan’, an internal digital platform designed to improve institutional performance. — **ONA**

ministry's goals.

Asmaa bint Abdullah al Sinani, Director of Digital Transformation at the ministry, said the platform and the new services were part of the ministry's efforts to advance institutional

performance and improve the experience of beneficiaries. The platform enables the ministry to link strategic plans with project implementation and track their performance, providing accurate and up-to-date data to support decisions, while the e-services allow transactions to be completed without a visit to the ministry, she said.

Through these digital solutions, the ministry seeks to strengthen integration among its departments, establish a culture of transparency and institutional work, and enable employees to carry out their duties efficiently, contributing to its goals and making its services more accessible, she added.

The launch is part of the ministry's wider digital transformation efforts to raise the efficiency of internal operations and simplify procedures for beneficiaries. — **ONA**

2026
2030

انتخابات
غرفة تجارة وصناعة عُمان

غرفة تجارة وصناعة عُمان
OMAN CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

Announcement No. (2)

Opening of voter and candidate registration and extension of data updates for the elections of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and its branches (2026–2030)

The Election Committee of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) announces to all members registered with the OCCI the opening of voter and candidate registration from Wednesday, **14 October 2026**, via the e-form designated for this purpose, in accordance with the procedures and mechanisms approved by the Committee, subject to meeting the legal requirements outlined in this announcement and Announcement No. (1). The deadline for submitting candidacy applications is Tuesday, **20 October 2026**, while voter registration will remain open until Sunday, **25 October 2026**.

Candidates seeking membership of the Chamber's Board of Directors or the Board of Directors of any of its branches must meet the following requirements:

- Be an Omani national, except for candidates seeking membership of the OCCI's Board of Directors who represent public joint-stock companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), and foreign investors holding investor residency permits.
- Hold a bachelor's degree or have at least ten (10) years of practical experience in conducting business in the private sector.
- Have been a member of the Chamber for at least five (5) years.
- Be at least thirty (30) years of age.
- Be of good character and reputation.
- Not be employed by any unit of the State Administrative Apparatus or other public legal entities, or be a salaried employee in the private sector, whether within or outside the Sultanate of Oman, except for candidates seeking membership of the Chamber's Board of Directors who serve as chief executive officers of public joint-stock companies.

These requirements must be met by the day preceding the opening of candidate registration, corresponding to **13 October 2026**. **Candidacy applications must be submitted electronically by scanning the QR code included in this announcement**, using the form prepared by the Committee. The application must include the candidate's name, place of residence, address and signature, accompanied by proof of valid Chamber membership, a curriculum vitae, a certificate of no criminal conviction and supporting documents demonstrating compliance with the candidacy requirements.

The Committee has also extended the deadline for updating members' information until Sunday, **25 October 2026**, and calls on all members to complete the necessary updates through the electronic systems approved by the relevant authorities. The representative of a member registered with the Chamber must, according to the commercial registration records, be an owner, a partner authorised to sign individually, or a manager authorised to sign individually. The representative must vote in person, without delegation or proxy. In all cases, the identification card of the registered member's representative, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry membership certificate and the Entrepreneurship Card, as applicable, must be valid on the designated voting date of **23 November 2026**.

The Committee urges all members to actively participate in the electoral process, complete the necessary requirements within the specified deadlines and follow announcements issued through the approved official channels.

Election Committee of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

To Submit Your Application Online
Scan the QR Code

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Omanchamber

SAMENA Council Leaders’ AXIS 2026 and Omantel to Advance Oman’s Digital Investment and Partnership Agenda



OMAN'S growing presence in digital infrastructure, technology, and investment opportunities was in sharp focus at SAMENA Council Leaders’ AXIS 2026, held in Muscat on Tuesday under the Patronage of H.E. Eng. Omar bin Hamdan Al Ismaili, Executive President of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, with Omantel as the host sponsor.

The theme of the conference was “Oman: The New Geography of Digital Investment”. It brought together Omani and international leaders across telecommunications, digital infrastructure, data centers, cloud and computing, space and satellite technologies, energy, investment, and related areas. SAMENA Council Leaders’ AXIS 2026 placed particular emphasis on what these developments could mean for the Omani market and the wider Gulf region, highlighting greater infrastructure investment, stronger technology capabilities, new commercial partnerships, opportunities for Omani companies, and deeper participation by international companies seeking to establish or expand relationships within the Sultanate and the broader Middle East and North Africa region.

Oman’s strategic geographic position as the ‘Gateway to the Gulf’, combined with its international connectivity, expanding digital infrastructure, robust data centers, and vast energy potential, provides a strong foundation for these opportunities. Furthermore, these priorities are closely aligned with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Eng. Aladdin Baitfadhil, Chief Executive Officer of Omantel, said: “Generative AI in the region is progressing from ambition to implementation, driving investment and innovation across the entire value chain, from digital and critical infrastructure and data sovereignty to application development for enterprises and consumers, as well as the growth of young startups serving this emerging technology ecosystem.

“Oman has important strengths across this value chain, including connectivity, infrastructure, talent, its strategic geographic position, and

its wider economic development agenda. Omantel’s role within Oman and across the region is to build on these strengths and help translate them into opportunities for businesses, investors, global technology companies, and the national economy. Leaders’ AXIS provides an important platform for exploring how these emerging technologies can be integrated in Oman and identifying areas where cooperation can drive meaningful progress.”

As host sponsor and a member of the SAMENA Council’s Board of Directors, Omantel occupies a central position within the conference and the wider investment discussion. The company’s telecommunications infrastructure, international connectivity, data centers and cloud capabilities, technology investments, regional activities, and work with emerging Omani technology companies give it a direct role in building this ecosystem in the region.

International connectivity has been central to this proposition.

Through sustained strategic investment, Omantel has built an extensive international connectivity footprint spanning more than 20 subsea cable systems. Its subsea network extends approximately 120,000 kilometres and connects more than 120 international cities. Through Zain Omantel International, the combined international wholesale capabilities of Omantel and Zain serve telecom operators, international carriers, hyperscalers, content providers and cloud providers across eight markets, positioning ZOI as a leading international wholesale services provider in the Middle East

Within Oman, the company’s Innovation Labs have supported more than 80 technology startups since 2021, including companies working across Generative AI, enterprise services, cybersecurity, and data analytics. The program also provides access to technical expertise, industry networks, investors, and potential routes into larger regional markets.

These activities reflect a broader question at the center of Leaders’



AXIS 2026: how Oman can capture a greater share of the economic activity associated with the infrastructure, data, technologies, and international connectivity developing within and around the Sultanate.

Bocar BA, CEO of the SAMENA Telecommunications Council, said: “Oman has a strong opportunity to build greater economic activity around digital infrastructure, and this requires investors, technology companies, national institutions, infrastructure providers, and local businesses to engage with one another. Omantel is especially important to this discussion because its role extends across national connectivity, international infrastructure, technology development, regional reach, and the growth of Oman’s digital ecosystem. The SAMENA Council Leaders’ AXIS Conference aims to bring these stakeholders together around real opportunities and help develop relationships, partnerships, and investment activity that can contribute directly to Oman’s growth.”

The relationship between energy and computing infrastructure received significant attention. Growth in data centers, computing capacity, cloud infrastructure, networks, and related facilities increasingly connects digital investment decisions with the availability, reliability,

and sustainability of energy infrastructure. A dedicated discussion on Oman’s space and satellite ecosystem will consider how connectivity can support wider commercial applications and services, including ground infrastructure, data services, downstream applications, and cooperation between national and international stakeholders.

For the Omani market, these discussions extend beyond individual infrastructure projects. They concern the companies, capabilities, partnerships, investment structures, customers, and supporting conditions that determine how much economic value can be created and retained within the Sultanate.

Leaders’ AXIS 2026 provided a platform for Omani stakeholders to present market opportunities and priorities directly to international participants, while enabling companies entering or expanding within Oman and the region to identify potential partners, customers, infrastructure relationships, and areas for longer-term cooperation.

Through this conference, the SAMENA Council and Omantel established a pivotal platform to position Oman as the ‘Gateway to the Gulf’ and enable global stakeholders to collaborate for mutual benefit and business growth.

SPOTLIGHT

Continued scientific research can help assess changes in the Arabian Sea and support sustainable fisheries management

Changes in water temperature and environmental conditions can alter where fish gather

prolonged elevated sea temperatures can cause thermal stress and coral bleaching

Species may move elsewhere rather than disappear from the region

EL NINO MAY SHIFT FISH STOCKS

SAUD AL ANSARI

EL NINO,

A NATURAL climate phenomenon originating in the tropical Pacific Ocean, can influence weather patterns and marine ecosystems worldwide. Changes in sea temperatures and marine productivity can affect fish distribution, potentially altering traditional fishing grounds and the availability of familiar species.

Dr Saud bin Muslim al Jufaili, Associate Professor in the Department of Marine and Fisheries Science at Sultan Qaboos University's College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, said El Nino is characterised by an unusual rise in sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific, driven by complex interactions between the ocean, atmosphere, winds and ocean currents.

"El Nino is not simply a rise in sea temperature. It results from interactions between the ocean, atmosphere, winds and water movements," he said.

The phenomenon does not occur every year or follow a fixed cycle. It develops at irregular intervals and may last several months or, in some cases, a year or longer.

Its effects vary by region. El Nino may contribute to higher temperatures and drought in some areas while bringing increased rainfall to others. It can also influence marine ecosystems by altering water temperatures and productivity, affecting the distribution of certain fish species.

Regarding fisheries, Al Jufaili said, "Changing marine conditions can affect fish distribution, feeding, growth and reproduction. However, El Nino does not necessarily lead to a decline in fish stocks."

"Some species may move to areas with more favourable conditions, while others may appear in locations where they were previously less common," he said.

Such changes can be particularly noticeable to fishermen who depend on their knowledge of traditional fishing grounds. When familiar species become less abundant in their usual locations, fishermen may wonder where they have gone and whether they will return.

Al Jufaili explained that the absence of fish from a familiar fishing ground does not necessarily indicate a decline in their overall population. They may have moved elsewhere in response to changing water temperatures or other environmental conditions.

Prolonged periods of elevated sea temperatures can also place coral reefs under thermal stress, potentially causing coral bleaching. This occurs when corals lose the symbiotic algae that provide much of their colour and contribute to their energy supply.

Al Jufaili clarified that El Nino does not cause earthquakes or tsunamis. Rather, it is a climate and ocean phenomenon that can alter rainfall and temperature patterns and influence the likelihood of certain extreme weather events in parts of the world.

Scientists monitor El Nino using indicators such as sea surface and subsurface temperatures, wind

patterns, atmospheric pressure, rainfall, sea levels and ocean circulation. Observations of marine ecosystems and fisheries also help researchers assess its potential effects.

For Oman, understanding El Nino provides a scientific basis for investigating possible changes in the Arabian Sea, marine ecosystems and fisheries. However, Al Jufaili cautioned against automatically attributing changes in fish catches or marine conditions to the phenomenon, as fisheries are influenced by multiple environmental factors.

He emphasised the importance of continued marine monitoring and scientific assessment to better understand natural ocean processes, support fishing communities and promote the sustainable management of Oman's fisheries resources.



Changing marine conditions can affect fish distribution, feeding, growth and reproduction. However, El Nino does not necessarily lead to a decline in fish stocks

DR SAUD AL JUFAILI
Associate Professor,
SQU's College of Agricultural & Marine Sciences.

Beware of ‘instant loan’ offers, ROP cautions



Fraudsters are luring victims with social media ads promising instant loans. — Image generated by AI

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 13

‘NEED A LOAN?’ If you see this advertisement on social media, beware. It could be a massive scam. Authorities in Oman have sounded a fresh alert against a new wave of loan shark scams specifically targeting expatriates in Oman, luring victims with advertisements in their language offering instant loans. The fraud, which is being widely circulated among various community groups, promises soft personal loans of up to RO 40,000 within hours, with minimal documents and no bank verification. “To avoid falling victim to such scams, please be vigilant, verify the details,

and ensure everything is legitimate before transferring any money,” the advisory says. According to the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), fraudsters are now impersonating official financial institutions on social media applications such as WhatsApp, Snapchat and Instagram, and directing victims to fake links to collect personal and banking information. “Citizens and residents have been advised to ignore such messages and not to open electronic links unless they are sure of their reliability,” the ROP said, adding that the CBO is not concerned with providing personal and housing loans or any other banking services to individuals.

Bank Muscat said it would never ask for OTP, CVV, bank card or civil ID copies through SMS or WhatsApp, and that anyone who receives such a message should not act upon it and should alert the bank immediately. The modus operandi is similar to cases flagged earlier by security agencies. Fraudsters circulate ads in vernacular languages stating “Loan Approved - One Lakh to Three Lakhs based on CIBIL” and ask victims to download APK files disguised as loan apps. Once installed, these apps gain access to contacts, SMS, call records, camera and location. Victims are then asked to upload their ID proofs such as Aadhaar, PAN, bank account details and photographs.

“They may even transfer a small amount initially to gain confidence. Later they demand payments under various pretexts - processing fee, GST, insurance, verification charges - without disbursing the promised loan,” the warning notes say. In Oman, loan sharking is a criminal offence. An official source earlier stated that anyone involved in usury or lending money without a licence at unreasonably high interest rates faces a jail term of at least three months and a fine of at least RO 200. If the lender takes advantage of the borrower’s need, the punishment can go up to three years plus doubling of the fine, and up to five years with deportation for repeated offences. Earlier, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth had announced the 8 vocalists who qualified for the second edition of Oman Chanting Festival (from among 39 initial participants) following a strict selection process. The first round of Oman Chanting Festival was held more than 10 years ago, in the Wilayat of Nizwa, from October 20 to 21, 2015. The festival seeks to foster Omani talent in the field of chanting and provide an artistic podium for performers to showcase their abilities to the public. This year, the second round of the Oman Chanting Festival gains insights from the first round. — ONA

CHANTING
FESTIVAL
KICKS OFF
IN NIZWA ON
OCT 18

MUSCAT: The second round of the Oman Chanting Festival will be held in the Wilayat of Nizwa, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, from October 18 to 21. The festival’s opening ceremony will be held under the auspices of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

Earlier, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth had announced the 8 vocalists who qualified for the second edition of Oman Chanting Festival (from among 39 initial participants) following a strict selection process. The first round of Oman Chanting Festival was held more than 10 years ago, in

the Wilayat of Nizwa, from October 20 to 21, 2015. The festival seeks to foster Omani talent in the field of chanting and provide an artistic podium for performers to showcase their abilities to the public. This year, the second round of the Oman Chanting Festival gains insights from the first round. — ONA

RAM launches leadership programme for Majlis Ash’shura

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management launched a Leadership Programme for members of the Majlis Ash’shura to strengthen their leadership capabilities and support the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The programme focuses on four key areas: leadership; strategic planning and integrated work; policies, legislation and decision-making; protocol, foreign policy and diplomacy; and public communication and media appearances. These areas aim to help Majlis Ash’shura members examine issues from multiple perspectives and apply modern tools and methodologies in their work and committee activities, in line with development priorities and citizens’ aspirations. Dr Ali bin Qasim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management,



The programme aims to help Majlis Ash’shura members apply modern methodologies in their work.

said the programme reflects the Academy’s commitment to supporting national institutions in developing leadership capabilities and improving performance efficiency. He highlighted the Majlis Ash’shura’s role in national development through its legislative and oversight responsibilities, as well as its members’ understanding of societal issues and citizens’ aspirations. The nine-day executive

learning programme is divided into two units and covers four main tracks, with the diplomacy component delivered in cooperation with the Diplomatic Academy. Its practical modules include modern leadership in Shura councils, strategic performance indicators for Oman Vision 2040, legislative analysis, evidence-based policymaking, economic security, sustainable economic diversification, Oman’s foreign policy and international relations, and strategic communication with the media. The programme reflects the Academy’s broader approach to developing national leaders through modern management practices, with the aim of enhancing efficiency, productivity and innovation and preparing leaders to contribute to the country’s future development. — ONA



الاستثمارات التعليمية والتدريبية
oman education & training investments

TENDER NOTICE OETI

Oman Education & Training Investment Co. S.A.O.G is inviting a sealed tender for the below items for Innovation centre building **Sohar University at Sohar** from contractors & Supplier having sufficient experience in relevant field with excellent or first grade.

Tender	Description	Fees OMR	Submission Date
OETI 06-2026	DESIGN DEVELOPMENT, SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, CONFIGURATION, TESTING, COMMISSIONING AND HANDOVER OF IT AND NETWORKING COMPONENTS FOR INNOVATION CENTRE PROJECT AT SOHAR UNIVERSITY MAIN CAMPUS BUILDINGS	50/-	09/11/2026
OETI 07-2026	DESIGN DEVELOPMENT, SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING, COMMISSIONING, CONFIGURATION AND HANDOVER OF THE CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV) SYSTEM FOR INNOVATION CENTRE PROJECT AT SOHAR UNIVERSITY MAIN CAMPUS BUILDINGS	50/-	09/11/2026

Description	Deadline
Tender Release Date	14/10/2026
Last Date for collection of tenders after paying tender fee	19/10/2026
Site Visit (If required)	-----
Receiving clarifications, if any, from bidders	25/10/2026
Respond to bidder clarifications	29/10/2026
Receiving bids	09/11/2026

The tender document will be ready for collection by the company after paying non-refundable amount mentioned above via depositing the money in bank or by cash on or before **19/10/2026**. Cash will be collected by **Mr. Saud Al Jarwani**, OETI, Building 20, Sohar University, Sohar. Provide the email id to be sent along with the copy of the receipt. For Bank Transfers our account details as below:
Beneficiary : **Oman Education & Training Investment Company SAOG**
Account No : **002020004442**
Bank : **Bank Sohar**
Branch : **Sohar Branch, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman**
Swift Code : **BSHROMRU**
Please send the transfer receipt to **sjarwani@oeti.om** to receive the tender documents in CD or USB.
Tenders offers must be submitted online (softcopy with password protected) or in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the OETI premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is **09/11/2026 @ 14:00 hours**.
Tender should be addressed to CEO, OETI Office submitted to **Mr. Saud Al Jarwani** as given below during office hours **08:00 to 15:30 Sunday to Thursday**.
CEO OETI Office
Building 20, Sohar University Campus
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 450 / 612



Indian Social Club Oman

NOTICE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING (EGM)

Dear Members,

Notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Indian Social Club Oman will be held on Wednesday, 28th October 2026, at 7:00 PM at the Indian Social Club Oman premises.

Agenda: To discuss the ongoing land and premises issue concerning the Indian Social Club Oman.

All members are requested to kindly take note of the above and attend the meeting.

**GENERAL SECRETARY
INDIAN SOCIAL CLUB OMAN**

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the Observer classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.



الأولياء
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender/Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender/Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/ TD/2026/34	Call-Off Agreement for the Supply of Single size & Pipe Bedding from Oman (CIF, Sohar Port) or UAE (CIF, Fujairah Port or CIF, RAK-Sagf Port) for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Supplies")	2,000 QAR	700,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	03 November 2026 02:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tenderdocs@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID. Copy of commercial Registration (CR) (printed within the last 30 days), Business License and Computer ID
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 108, St. No. 303, Burj Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
- Tender Fees are nonrefundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-651111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006. Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the query(ies) in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
- Location of the new building



For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: 44479559 or email to tender@qpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.qpmc.qa

شركة قطر للمواد الأولية (ش.م.خ.ق.) | مركزها الرئيسي : الدوحة - قطر ، منطقة لوسيل، برج مارينا ، رقم 108 | سجل تجاري : 33204 | ص.ب : 22095 | هاتف : 4447 9411 | فاكس : 4447 9411
Qatar Primary Materials Company (Q.P.S.C.) | Head Office: Doha-Qatar, Lusail, Marina Tower No.: 108 | CR No.: 33204 | P.O Box: 22095 | Tel.: 974 4447 9411
رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 ريال المال المدفوع 200,000,000 QAR | Paid Up Capital 200,000,000 Info@qpmc.qa www.qpmc.qa

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Student activists shout slogans during a protest demanding the resignation of the nation’s Chief Election Commissioner in New Delhi. — AFP

Indian police detain ‘cockroach’ movement leaders over protests

NEW DELHI: India’s “cockroach” youth movement leaders were detained on Tuesday after they jumped barricades to enter a historic Delhi site popular for protests, demanding that the chief election commissioner resign over a revision of voter lists. Supporters of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) and opposition groups have held almost daily protests this month to demand commissioner Gyanesh Kumar stand down over the revisions critics say favour Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by removing the names of millions of voters.

The Election Commission has denied favouring any party and said wrongly deleted voters can re-enrol, while the BJP has accused rivals of trying to undermine democracy.

Thousands joined a protest march by opposition with police detaining thousands of protesters, including CJP leaders. Delhi Police announced that the Jantar Mantar open air observatory, in the national capital’s central business district, was no longer designated as an official protest site. The CJP said its leaders Ashutosh Ranka, Saurav Das, and Ajinkya Shinde were among about 20 people who “sneaked” inside the observatory to “reclaim” it and were detained. — Reuters

Hezbollah announces aid in Lebanon, despite pressures



The head of Hezbollah’s Executive Council, Ali Damoush addresses a press conference in Beirut. — AFP

BEIRUT: Hezbollah announced on Tuesday an aid programme for Lebanese who lost their homes in the war with Israel, with benefits capped at \$14,000 per household, despite US and Lebanese sanctions on the group. The announcement also comes despite US sanctions on Iran, which backs Hezbollah with weapons and resources, and tighter controls by the Lebanese authorities on Hezbollah’s funding and supply routes.

At a press conference in Beirut’s southern suburbs, the head of Hezbollah’s Executive Council, Ali Daamouch, announced aid worth \$14,000 per household for residents of Beirut and its southern suburbs, and \$12,000 for other regions. The assistance will go to displaced people whose homes have been destroyed or made uninhabitable, and to residents of areas in the south occupied by Israel, on the condition that beneficiaries do not have a second home.

Hezbollah will pay the assistance in four instalments over the course of a year, he added, without specifying the source of the funds or the number of beneficiaries the movement can cover. — AFP

PROSECUTORS DROP MOST CHARGES AGAINST PHILIPPINE VP DUTERTE

MANILA: A Philippine impeachment court on Tuesday granted prosecutors’ request to drop most of the charges against Vice-President Sara Duterte at a trial that could still block her 2028 presidential bid. Prosecutors, who had already moved last week to remove a bribery count, went further on Tuesday by seeking that allegations of misused funds and a death threat made against President Ferdinand Marcos also be eliminated.

Sara Duterte, daughter of former president Rodrigo Duterte, has been on trial before the Philippine

Senate for months, and a conviction on any of the four charges would see her barred from elected office permanently.

The court is still weighing the last remaining charge of unexplained wealth, and if found guilty, she could be hit with a ban that would end her bid to become president in 2028.

“Articles 1, 3, and 4 shall no longer form part of the Articles of Impeachment... shall not be submitted to the members of the court for a vote or for a verdict of conviction or acquittal,” Senator and presiding officer Francis

Escudero said in approving the motion. The unexpected move by prosecutors on the trial’s 39th day came after they presented weeks of evidence backing the now-dismissed charges.

Speaking before Tuesday’s impeachment court decision, Duterte told a press conference she believed prosecutors had sought to drop the bribery charge due to a lack of evidence.

“This is not about accountability but character assassination every day... and if they’re lucky, Sara Duterte will be removed from office,” she said. — AFP

Saudi tells Sanaa residents to flee site before operation

THE SAUDI-led coalition signalled an imminent attack on an oil facility in Ansar Allah-controlled capital on Tuesday, warning civilians in the surrounding area to get out. After a series of attacks on the kingdom’s airports and oil facilities, it was the first time the coalition battling the Yemeni group has issued an evacuation order for Yemen’s Sanaa since their war flared up again in July. The coalition demanded “that civilians evacuate the site of the Yemen Petroleum Company, the Al Sabaha Central Station in Sanaa... for their own safety”, said spokesman Turki al Maliki on X, referring to a site on the western outskirts of the capital.



A man rides on the back of a microbus as it drives along a street in Sanaa. — AFP

the fight to its own soil. Ansar Allah attacks have also targeted oil tankers in the Red Sea — Saudi Arabia’s alternative export route.

Blasts resounded over the Saudi capital again late on Monday, with the Saudi coalition saying it had intercepted an Ansar Allah missile and the group announcing it had once again targeted the airport, whose operations remain suspended. In the evening, mobile phones received a government alert warning of a “hostile aerial threat”, before the announcement of the interception. On Monday evening, as text messages warning of an attack were sent across the Saudi capital, Human Resources Minister Ahmad bin Sulaiman al Rajhi remained defiant at an economic forum. “We’re not going out,” he told the crowd at the Riyadh Economic Forum after looking at his phone.

Meanwhile, Yemen’s Ansara Allah warned on Tuesday they would target Riyadh’s airport, a refinery, and an Aramco facility in Dammam if the Saudi-led coalition follows through on its threat to strike an oil facility in Sanaa. “The Yemeni Armed Forces urge all citizens to immediately evacuate and move away from targets that our forces will strike should the Saudi enemy target” a site in Sanaa, military spokesman Yahya Saree posted on X, identifying the three targets as Aramco’s headquarters in Dammam, as well as the airport and an Aramco refinery in Riyadh. — AFP

The coalition demanded “that civilians evacuate the site of the Yemen Petroleum Company, the Al Sabaha Central Station in Sanaa... for their own safety”, said spokesman Turki al Maliki on X, referring to a site on the western outskirts of the capital

most recently France, which told its citizens to avoid the airports in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam on Tuesday. The Saudi coalition has supported Yemen’s government militarily since 2015, in a long-running civil war against the Ansar Allah.

The kingdom was already facing headwinds from Iran’s chokehold on Hormuz, a vital shipping route for oil and gas, since the start of the Middle East war in February, when the US and Israel attacked Iran.

But the restart in July of Yemen’s civil war, pitting a Saudi-led coalition backing the government against Ansar Allah, has further roiled the kingdom and brought



INDONESIA WILDFIRE BURNS HOMES, DISPLACES HUNDREDS

BANGKA: A forest fire on Indonesia’s Sumatra island has razed nearly 300 homes, forcing hundreds of people to evacuate, an official said, as the country battles devastating blazes and haze. Residents first spotted the fire approaching their village in the Bangka Belitung province on Saturday and tried to put it out themselves with portable water pumps, mayor Riza Herdavid told reporters. “They thought it was taken care of. But it’s peatland, and there was still a fire smouldering underneath. So, when they assumed it was over, the wind shifted and quickly drove the fire toward the settlement.” The local disaster agency said nearly 1,000 people fled the village. Mayor Riza said the village was built on what used to be peatland in a protected area, converted into a housing complex last year. Indonesia regularly battles wildfires during the dry season, but has seen stronger-than-usual blazes this year because of the drought-causing El Nino weather phenomenon, set to be one of the strongest since comparable records began four decades ago. Experts also point to slash-and-burn land-clearing practices that have changed the naturally fire-resistant landscape of Sumatra and Borneo islands. — AFP

CRIMINAL RAMPAGES

S Korean police detain man over stabbing



South Korean police said they had detained a man suspected of stabbing eight people on Tuesday at a shopping mall in the city of Incheon, and one of the victims was in a life-threatening condition. Officers are investigating the motive and circumstances of the attack, a police spokesperson said. A witness said the suspect appeared to have knives tied to both hands and moved through several floors of the shopping mall, attacking people. — Reuters

FLOODED STREETS

Heavy rains paralyse Libyan capital



Heavy rains flooded the streets of Libyan capital Tripoli on Tuesday, killing a bank employee. The government ordered public services to launch urgent operations to drain the floodwater, while security forces announced the closure of the capital’s ring road. To reduce the danger, the General Electricity Company decided to cut power in some Tripoli districts. Videos showed motorists managing at the last moment to scramble out of their cars as they filled with water. — AFP

SABOTAGE ACTIVITIES

Pakistan deadly train derailment kills 4



At least four people were killed and over a dozen others were injured in a train derailment near Multan in the south of Pakistan’s Punjab province, emergency services and a rescue worker said. Farooq Ahmed, a spokesman for Punjab’s emergency services department, said four people had been killed and at least 17 injured while the cause of the incident remained unknown. Ahmed added 11 ambulances and 30 rescue workers had been dispatched to the scene. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A view shows a vessel that was hit by a drone in the Black Sea, an image released by the Bulgarian Interior Ministry. — Reuters

Eleven sailors missing after drone sinks ship off Bulgaria

SOFIA: Eleven sailors were missing at sea on Tuesday from a ship sunk by a drone attack off the coast of Bulgaria, possibly the second deadly sinking of a cargo vessel in the area in a week, prompting Bulgaria to summon Russia’s ambassador. Two cargo ships were hit by drones overnight and one was sunk, Bulgarian officials said. Bulgaria stopped short of explicitly accusing Russia of carrying out the attacks but Prime Minister Rumen Radev said their outcome “benefits the Russian Federation”. “This is absolutely unacceptable — another attack in the immediate vicinity of Bulgarian territorial waters,” Radev said in a televised address. The attacks were also condemned by Ukraine and the EU. “The Black Sea has become another front of escalation of the Russian war in Ukraine,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on X. “Those responsible should be held accountable.” Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on X on Tuesday that the strike “once again demonstrates Moscow’s deliberate disregard for civilian lives”. “The Black Sea is a lifeline for global food security. Russia is attacking it to weaponise hunger and hold the world hostage,” he said. — Reuters

THUNBERG JOINS FRANCE PROTESTS



Thousands of protesters marched through central Paris on Tuesday as part of nationwide demonstrations supporting high school pupils who have been protesting for better classroom conditions, with Swedish activist Greta Thunberg taking part. Thunberg stood among pupils demonstrating outside a school in the capital’s largest suburb, Saint-Denis. “Young people are not being included in the conversation. Our future is being robbed away from us,” the 23-year-old told reporters outside the Paul Eluard high school. French students say they are determined to press their demands for solutions to too many absent teachers, dilapidated buildings, overcrowded class schedules and other grievances. — AFP

EXPERTS URGE ‘IMMEDIATE CHANGES’ TO PREVENT ROGUE AI

PARIS: More than 200 artificial intelligence and cybersecurity researchers called on Tuesday for immediate action to prevent further cases of AI models going rogue and posing a risk to critical infrastructure. The letter signed by luminaries in the field including Nobel-prize winner Geoffrey Hinton and Turing Award winner Yoshua Bengio — both seen as godfathers of AI — called for models relating to cybersecurity be physically cut off from the Internet during testing.

“We, the undersigned scientists, contend that both more AI safety research and more emphasis on containment technologies and procedures are needed,” said the researchers in the letter. “Without immediate changes in AI development and deployment practices, such incidents will continue to occur, and future incidents will be far more damaging to our exposed critical infrastructure,” they warned. Their letter called for

organisations developing, deploying, and testing cyber-capable AI models be air-gapped — that is physically cut off from the Internet — to ensure they do not escape. It also called for the creation of an international body that standardises best practices regarding security. The letter urged companies to be required to report containment failures to the body, which would be responsible for tracking and recording them. — AFP

German, British FM’s urge more sanctions on Russia

THE TOP diplomats of Britain and Germany pressed on Tuesday for more sanctions on Moscow over its war in Ukraine, after President Donald Trump announced an easing of US sanctions on Russian diesel. “I would say this is not the time to lower the sanctions regime but to strengthen this,” German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said during an event at the Warsaw Security Forum (WSF). Ukraine and its European backers have been left reeling by Trump’s decision last week to lift sanctions on Russian diesel as part of a deal to supply the United States.

The European Union formally added nearly 1,600 new Russian individuals and entities to its sanctions blacklist, with the aim of keeping pressure on Moscow. “We are keeping our course,” Wadephul insisted, stressing that Europe was asking Washington to do the same. Trump’s decision enables Russia to release large amounts of diesel onto global energy markets. UK Foreign Minister Ed Miliband hailed the latest EU move and insisted on the need to “ratchet up the sanctions” further. “We need to send the right message,” he told the WSF. While criticising Trump’s decision to lift sanctions on Russian diesel, Ukraine’s Western allies have all backed his unilateral declaration of a pause in attacks targeting the energy sector.

Russia has launched waves of attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure since attacking in February 2022, knocking out power and heating to millions during winter months. Kyiv has, in turn, targeted Russian oil refineries. “Let us take seriously this issue of the energy ceasefire that President Trump has talked about,” Miliband



Ukrainian firefighters extinguish a blaze at the site of a Russian drone strike at a multi-floor building in Kharkiv. — AFP

Ukraine and its European backers have been left reeling by Trump’s decision last week to lift sanctions on Russian diesel as part of a deal to supply the United States. The European Union formally added nearly 1,600 new Russian individuals and entities to its sanctions blacklist

said. He insisted, though, that it should not just be about oil refineries but “a broad energy ceasefire”. Ukraine has only one oil refinery, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Monday. “Last week alone we’ve seen 200 Russian attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure,” Miliband continued. “Let us seek with President Trump to hold (Russian President Vladimir) Putin to this full energy ceasefire because that is what we need,” he said, highlighting that Zelensky had agreed to the idea. Wadephul also urged support for a full energy ceasefire, suggesting it should be broadened to cover attacks in the Black Sea. Europe’s deadliest conflict since World War II is nearing its fifth anniversary. The EU sought on Tuesday to downplay its reliance on Russian fossil fuel imports after Moscow boasted of its sales, seizing upon the controversy sparked by a US decision to buy Russian diesel. The

European Commission responded by providing a lower figure and stressing that the 27-nation bloc was working towards ending all Russian gas imports by the end of 2027. “We are in this for the long term and that trend is very clear,” commission spokeswoman Anna-Kaisa Itkonen told a press conference in Brussels. Finland’s Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said on Tuesday that Trump’s agreement for Russia to release large amounts of diesel onto world markets was a “huge disappointment”. Orpo told reporters that a “direct deal with Putin” was “against everything we have done together and together with the United States through the coalition of the willing and in supporting Ukraine.” He added that such a deal “funds Putin’s war” against Ukraine. The Finnish prime minister urged Europe and Ukraine’s supporters to “say this forcefully to Trump”. “Continuing support for Ukraine is now more essential than ever,” he added. — AFP

Spanish royals begin sensitive diplomatic visit to tense Ceuta

CEUTA: Cheering crowds waving Spanish flags lined the streets of Ceuta on Tuesday as King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia began a diplomatically sensitive visit to the North African city, following July’s mass migrant influx from neighbouring Morocco. Their trip will mark the first royal visit since 2007, when a diplomatic crisis erupted with neighbouring Morocco. More than 70,000 migrants streamed into the small city of around 80,000 inhabitants in an unprecedented surge on July 30-31. Scores died. Most returned to Morocco in the following hours but thousands have remained for weeks in often dire conditions, sleeping rough in the streets or on the beach. The crisis has angered locals and eroded Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez’s standing before a November 29 general election in which migration will feature prominently. Felipe and Letizia greeted well-wishers lining the streets of Ceuta, stopping to shake

hands and exchange a few words with members of the crowd as they made their way to city hall to meet local authorities. People held up their phones to take pictures of the royal couple, while others waved Spanish flags and cheered as they passed, according to a reporter at the scene. Some wore T-shirts bearing the slogan “Ceuta is not for sale. Ceuta must be defended”. Toni Jimenez, 56, a nursing assistant who had waited outside city hall since 9:00 am wearing a T-shirt bearing the royal couple’s picture, said she hoped the visit would send a clear message to neighbouring Morocco that Ceuta and Melilla were Spanish. “We’ve been waiting a long time for this visit,” she said, adding that the migrant influx in July had left residents fearing for the future of the Spanish territory. Others said the king should have visited sooner. “The king should have come on the first or second day. And he should have come



King Felipe VI greets people upon his arrival in the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. — AFP

dressed as captain general of the armed forces, which is what he is,” said Susana Roman, a 57-year-old jurist who is part of the “Let’s Save Ceuta” platform. The government insists it must respect international law by assessing whether the migrants are

entitled to asylum, while hundreds of unaccompanied children cannot be summarily deported. The authorities have set up thousands of places in temporary shelters and cleared the main camps on the beaches but some people continue to live on the surrounding hills and

the streets. The royals will visit a cemetery where they will pay tribute to the migrants who died — most by drowning as they tried to swim around a border barrier. Felipe is also due to make a speech during a meeting with members of Ceuta’s civil society before the monarchs travel to Melilla on Wednesday. The visit comes at a particularly sensitive time for Spain’s historically delicate relations with Morocco, as rumours swirl over the potential role Rabat may have played in the July rush. The Spanish right has accused Morocco of orchestrating it for political motives, which Rabat and Sanchez have denied. Moroccan King Mohammed VI broke his silence on Friday, condemning “the irresponsible statements made by certain political and media circles and their blatant instrumentalisation of the situation”, in apparent reference to Spanish criticism. — AFP

OPINION

The life we hide behind ‘I’m fine’



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

WE have become very good at asking people how they are doing and accepting “fine” as an appropriate answer.

Fine has become shorthand for functioning. We are going to work. The children are fed. The deadlines are being met. The bills are getting paid. We reply to messages, attend meetings, make decisions and keep moving. From the outside, everything appears to be working, and sometimes that becomes enough evidence for everyone around us, including ourselves, to assume that we are too. Yet, functioning and well-being are not the same thing.

As conversations around mental health continue to grow, including here in Oman, we are becoming more willing to speak about stress, burnout and emotional well-being.

That matters. There is another part of the conversation that deserves just as much attention: the people who are struggling quietly, precisely because they have become so good at coping. These are often not the people who appear to be falling apart.

They are the dependable ones, the capable ones, the ones others call when something needs fixing. They keep showing up long after their body has started asking them to slow down. Coping, in itself, is not the problem. We all need ways to move through

difficult seasons. The problem begins when coping becomes a permanent way of living. There is a difference between getting through something and building a life around endurance.

When we stay in survival mode for long enough, strain can start to feel normal. We stop questioning why we are tired all the time, why small things irritate us, why rest makes us uncomfortable, or why joy feels harder to access.

We may tell ourselves that everyone is busy and that we all have responsibilities. Sometimes that is true, but it still does not mean we are thriving.

Our culture often celebrates resilience; however, we rarely ask what resilience is costing someone. We admire the parent who does everything, the employee who keeps everything moving, the friend who is always available and the leader who remains calm under pressure.

There is value in reliability, but there can also be danger in constantly rewarding people for how much they are able to absorb. Eventually, just because we can carry something, we start believing we should.

This is where self-awareness becomes important. Not every difficult period requires a dramatic intervention. Sometimes it requires a more honest question. Instead of

The problem begins when coping becomes a permanent way of living. There is a difference between getting through something and building a life around endurance

asking, “Can I handle this?” perhaps we need to ask, “What is handling this doing to me?”

Our body often answers before our mind does. Patience shortens. Sleep changes. Rest brings guilt instead of relief. We remain switched on. We withdraw, overthink, or move through the day on autopilot. These experiences do not always mean something is terribly wrong, but they may be information that something needs attention.

Real resilience is not endlessly pushing through. It is recognising when adaptation has stopped being helpful. It is allowing support before reaching a breaking point.

It is understanding that strength can look like boundaries, asking for help, rest, or changing direction and pivoting when something is not sustainable. We spend so much time learning how to keep going that perhaps well-being also requires learning when not to.

The greatest danger of becoming exceptionally good at coping is not simply that nobody notices how much we are carrying. It is that eventually, neither do we.

A life measured only by what we can endure may look strong from the outside, while quietly asking us a far more important question from within: when did simply surviving and getting through life become enough to call it truly living?

ITALIAN FARMER COMBATS HEAT WITH BIODIVERSITY

ELLA IDE

Four hundred years after monks transformed a patch of marshlands in northwest Italy into rice fields, farmer Alice Cerutti has restored a third of it to their natural state, prioritising biodiversity over crop yield.

Golden rice fields stretch across the Vercelli plain between Milan and Turin, a parcelled landscape broken only by the wood and wetlands created by Cerutti, now home to rare birds and insects.

“We have planted over 10,000 native plants, such as oaks, alders, ash, and hornbeams. It is amazing to see how quickly nature responds,” Cerutti said, as she stood in a coppice set around a natural spring.

“Since the first trees were planted, there has been a spectacular increase in butterflies, dragonflies, and biodiversity in general,” said the 43-year-old, who took over running the family’s Cascina Oschina farm in 2012.

In the fields around the woods, Cerutti grows red and black rice along with historic varieties such as Carnaroli Classico and Arborio Classico, which are more resilient and produce smaller but higher-quality yields than modern ones.

She says her Carnaroli Classico was grown without using “a single gram of chemical fertiliser.”

That is because she uses green manure and legume crops. Some 1,200 sheep are brought in to graze on the crops in between rice harvests, and they leave behind organic matter, which enriches the soil naturally.

Italy is the largest producer of rice in Europe, but the sector is in crisis due to a flood of Asian imports, a rise in production costs, and droughts made more frequent and intense by man-made climate change.

Agricultural organisation Coldiretti has estimated some 25 per cent of rice production may be lost this year due to heat. After centuries thriving in the Po basin, producers are now trying dry-seeding, which works without continuous flooding.

But flooded paddies play a vital role in “recharging the aquifer”, which stores water like a sponge underground, “holding thousands of times more than surface basins and retaining it for geological eras”, agronomist Giovanni Molina said.

“Dry-seeded rice farming, which is spreading due to a misconception about water savings, is transforming one of Europe’s most fertile plains into a desert,” he said. — AFP

‘Your Mother’ sweet title, bitter stereotypes

I was initially moved to discover that Your Mother Your Mother Your Mother, starring Mahershala Ali, takes its title from a beloved Islamic teaching.

When asked who most deserved his good companionship, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, answered “your mother” three times before naming “your father.” This teaching honours mothers and calls us to gratitude, compassion and responsibility.

The title gave me hope. Here was an opportunity for cinema to introduce audiences to the tenderness and moral depth of Islam.

Instead, I left troubled by the distance between the teaching that inspired the title and the images that dominated the screen.

I believe that the main driver behind this movie and similar soft power and psychological operations (PsyOp) campaigns is hitting generational and racial sympathy for Palestinians among America and especially Black Americans.

The December 2023 Times-Siena poll found that 34 per cent of Black voters sympathised more with Palestinians, compared to 28 per cent who sympathised more with the Zionist regime.

Having studied and worked in the United States, I deeply appreciate its cultural diversity, religious freedom and the richness of Black American culture. My concern comes from that appreciation: stories should help communities understand one another, especially when prejudice already places barriers between them.

Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism deserve to be taken seriously. They cannot be dismissed as matters of audience sensitivity.

When Muslims are repeatedly associated with violence, or Arabs with cruelty and exploitation, those



KHALID AL HURAIBI
khalidalharibi@gmail.com

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

Children should grow up able to recognise injustice without being taught to despise another faith or ethnicity. They deserve stories that help them distinguish wrongdoing from identity and encounter people beyond stereotypes

portrayals can reinforce prejudice against real people.

The film’s central character, Latif, is a Muslim hitman struggling with faith and fatherhood after his wife’s death. A film-maker can explore such a contradiction.

But the distinction between a character’s actions and his religion matters.

Murder and exploitation violate Islamic teachings; a criminal’s religious identity does not make his crimes an expression of Islam.

In my reading, the film does not establish that distinction convincingly enough.

I was particularly disturbed by the portrayal of Arab characters, whom I experienced as overwhelmingly associated with criminality, exploitation and menace.

Their accents and behaviour seemed to reinforce an exhausting screen stereotype: the Arab as someone to fear or distrust. I struggled to find an Arab character whose humanity offered a meaningful counterweight.

The problem is not that an Arab character commits a crime. It is the cumulative impression created when Arab identity repeatedly accompanies depravity, with little room for ordinary decency, compassion, or moral complexity.

An accent should never function as shorthand for moral inferiority. Arab identity should never become a convenient costume for villainy.

The cruelty directed by Arab characters towards Black characters also troubled me. Racism within and between communities can and should be confronted. Yet confronting racism requires care: a story should expose prejudice without encouraging audiences to transfer it to an entire people.

Black dignity and Arab dignity deserve equal protection. Neither

community’s humanity should come at the expense of the other.

I was also disturbed by the children, who were in the movie between the ages of 10 and 14, in proximity to extreme violence, exploitation and adult criminality.

Their vulnerability deserves more than a role in sustaining the tension of an action film. The question is whether the story helps us understand the cost of violence to children or turns their suffering into another spectacle.

Parents, too, should look beyond the title before allowing children to watch. A reference to a teaching about honouring mothers is no assurance that the content is appropriate for young audiences.

The treatment of faith left me equally uneasy. A character may express doubt, grief or hostility towards religion. But the film’s wider framing determines whether audiences encounter a person’s spiritual struggle or leave with contempt for the faith itself.

Islam teaches mercy, justice, accountability and respect for human dignity. It does not ask us to excuse wrongdoing because its perpetrator claims to be religious.

Nor should Muslims have to accept demeaning portrayals of their faith as the price of appearing on screen.

Cinema is a powerful instrument of soft power. It shapes how audiences imagine people they may never meet. That influence carries responsibility when it touches communities already burdened by suspicion and discrimination.

Artistic freedom allows film-makers to confront hypocrisy, abuse and religious manipulation. It also allows audiences to challenge Islamophobia and anti-Arab stereotyping clearly and firmly. Respect for creative freedom does not require silence about prejudice.

Hypersonic weapons on Korean peninsula!



HIEUN SHIN

The writer is Seoul Correspondent for Agence France-Presse (AFP)

SOUTH KOREA test-fired its first homegrown hypersonic missile last week, days after the North announced the AI-assisted launch of an intermediate-range hypersonic missile.

Hypersonics are defined as being able to travel at velocities of at least five times the speed of sound — Mach 5, or more than 6,100 km per hour.

By cutting flight times, they also reduce the opportunity to respond. They can be capable of carrying conventional or nuclear warheads, depending on the design, and have the potential to alter the strategic balance.

Hypersonic glide vehicles, like those tested by South Korea, are launched into the upper atmosphere by rocket boosters or ballistic missiles before gliding towards their targets.

In addition to their sheer speed, hypersonic missiles can manoeuvre in mid-flight. Their ability to weave, dip and change course as they descend towards their targets makes them harder to track and intercept than conventional ballistic missiles.

Existing missile defence systems are “better equipped to intercept conventional ballistic and cruise missiles, while hypersonic weapons — along with drones for different reasons — remain particularly challenging threats”, Hong Sung-pyo, senior researcher at the Seoul-based Korea Institute for Military Affairs, said.

That makes them harder for ground-based radar systems to detect until they are closer to their targets.

What do we know about North Korea's latest launch?

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw

the launch of a hypersonic missile that allegedly used artificial intelligence, state media reported this month.

Pyongyang has said there was “no way to avoid” the missile that was “capable of changing its flight orbit at a low altitude”.

It also said that the missile’s “wave-like trajectory mode” left South Korea and Japan unable to track it effectively.

Hong Min of the Korea Institute for National Unification said the launch was “more than a display of individual weapons, but a demonstration of an entire range of missile systems”.

“It sends a signal that North Korea has weapons capable of evading interception across different ranges,” he said.

But the nuclear-armed North is still believed to remain relatively weak in the critical technology needed to manoeuvre hypersonic missiles in the final stages of flight while maintaining strike accuracy, said the Korea Institute for Military Affairs’ Hong Sung-pyo.

“My understanding is that North Korea is now conducting test launches aimed at perfecting that capability, with technological assistance from Russia,” he said.

South Korea test-fired its first homegrown hypersonic missile last week, calling it a “key strategic asset capable of changing the course of the battlefield”.

The test assessed heat-resistant materials, guidance and control systems, and the weapon’s ability to manoeuvre at low altitudes at hypersonic speeds.

Its “unpredictable flight trajectories and overwhelming speed” could enable strikes on key strategic targets and provide

Hypersonic glide vehicles, like those tested by South Korea, are launched into the upper atmosphere by rocket boosters or ballistic missiles before gliding towards their targets

a new deterrence capability on the Korean Peninsula, the presidential Blue House said.

The decision for Seoul to publicly disclose the test was also a political one, said Jung Heon-joo, a public policy professor at Yonsei University in Seoul.

“Possessing this hypersonic technology could signal to potential adversaries that South Korea has a range of weapons options and that attacking it would not be easy,” he said.

There were “multiple audiences (for the test launch) — North Korea, the South Korean public and the neighbouring countries”, Jung said.

North Korea also fired multiple ballistic missiles off its east coast on Monday, with experts saying the mixed launches may have been intended to complicate the ability of South Korean and US defence systems to respond.

“The purpose of mixing different types of ballistic missiles is to neutralise South Korean and US missile defence systems,” said Yang Moo-jin, former president of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, adding that the launches appeared focused on operational training rather than testing new weapons.

The two Koreas’ pursuit of hypersonic weapons could further fuel an arms race on the peninsula, while their speed and manoeuvrability could make detection and interception harder, with implications for US and Japanese defences, analysts say.

“The continued development of advanced weapons systems by both Koreas could intensify the arms race and further entrench the ‘two hostile states’ framework,” Yang said.

TRUMP TAKES OUT POLITICAL FRUSTRATIONS ON ZELENSKY, UKRAINE

AURÉLIA END

With the US president’s surprise deal on Russian diesel and his call for Volodymyr Zelensky to step down, Donald Trump appears to be redirecting the frustrations of his increasingly difficult midterm campaign.

It would not be the first time Trump has heaped criticism on his Ukrainian counterpart, who endured a memorably stormy on-camera meeting in the Oval Office in February 2025.

But back then, the US president was riding the momentum of a thunderous return to power. Now, he faces a much more uncertain political position.

The vast majority of polls predict Trump’s Republicans will lose control of Congress in the midterm legislative elections on November 3, as Americans grow more dissatisfied with rising prices, particularly at the gas pump.

In an opinion survey published on October 1, the Associated Press and University of Chicago found that 65 per cent of US adults blame the White House for the high cost of living, especially Trump’s tariff policies and his new war against Iran.

The threat of Americans voting with their pocketbook helps explain Trump’s last Friday announcement that he will lift certain sanctions to allow Russian diesel imports, supposedly to ease prices.

Trump has said his goal is to reduce pressure on the sectors that backed him in large numbers in 2024, such as agriculture, livestock farming and road transport.

“President Trump, despite his claim to the contrary, I think, is acutely aware that the American public is holding him responsible for the significant rise in prices, including for diesel,” Garret Martin, a professor of international relations at American University, said.

“He knows that he only has a few weeks to try and change the narrative about these rising costs. So I think that’s the main factor for this timing.”

That aligns with British Defence Secretary Wes Streeting’s assessment during a Sunday interview with Sky News.

“Let’s be candid about this, midterms are coming up. Cost of living is an issue. And no doubt President Trump is feeling the same pressure that lots of leaders are facing in terms of wanting to ease cost-of-living pressures, energy prices,” Streeting said.

Members of the president’s own party have protested the Russia move, which backtracks on a law that Trump himself signed to tighten restrictions against Moscow.

The 80-year-old Republican has also repeatedly condemned Ukrainian attacks on Russian refineries. — AFP

Rating African markets on African terms

IMAGINE TAKING an exam and answering every question correctly, only to fail because your paper was graded against the answer key for a different exam. That, in a nutshell, is what happens when African institutions are assessed by major credit-rating agencies like Fitch, Moody’s, and S&P.

Consider the recent dispute between Fitch and the African Export-Import Bank. In June 2025, Fitch downgraded Afreximbank, saying it had become concerned about the bank’s sovereign loans, particularly to heavily indebted borrowers like Ghana and Zambia. Afreximbank pushed back. As a multilateral development bank (MDB), it argued, it enjoys preferred-creditor status. Therefore, its sovereign loans should not be treated like ordinary commercial debt.

Afreximbank and Ghana announced a deal that allowed Ghana to avoid defaulting on its debt in December 2025, yet Fitch did not change its view. Afreximbank ended its contract with Fitch the following month, after which the agency issued an unsolicited downgrade to BB+ and withdrew its coverage entirely.

A ratings methodology can be applied correctly and still get the risk wrong. If it does not account for preferred-creditor status, or for what actually happens to an MDB’s claims when a member state runs into trouble, it is missing an integral part of the picture.

Senegal is a case in point. In October 2025, Moody’s downgraded the country for the third time in a year, citing its growing reliance on domestic and regional financing rather than the Eurobond market. Senegalese bonds fell sharply, at one point trading at around 60 cents on the dollar. S&P has since downgraded Senegal as well.

Increasing domestic and regional debt, however, can be a deliberate



HANNAH WANJIE RYDER

The writer is a former diplomat, CEO of Development Reimagined and Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies Africa Programme



A ratings methodology can be applied correctly and still get the risk wrong.

step to reduce foreign-currency exposure. And borrowing to finance productive investment is not the same as borrowing to cover recurring budget shortfalls. Some of the factors shaping credit risk across Africa are easy to miss if you don’t know what to look for, especially when it comes to how preferred creditors are treated and how local guarantees and economic structures — such as the degree of informality in the economy — affect solvency. Even what looks like a default on paper may in practice be just a temporary pause between institutions that expect to keep doing business with each other.

As of this writing, only 32 African countries are rated by Fitch, Moody’s, and S&P, and just three — Botswana, Mauritius, and Morocco — are investment grade. The Big Three rating agencies also cover fewer than 10 per cent of Africa’s companies and public institutions. According to the United Nations Development Programme and AfriCatalyst, African countries could save up to \$74.5 billion if credit-rating agencies priced their risk more accurately. A forthcoming analysis of more than 500 sovereign bonds issued over the past two decades

will show that African sovereigns paid approximately 66 basis points more than comparable non-African borrowers after accounting for fundamentals, ratings, and other measured factors, with credit ratings explaining the largest share of the gap. Against this backdrop, the long-awaited Africa Credit Rating Agency, which was launched in Mauritius on October 7, could have a huge impact on the cost of capital across the continent. But launching AfCRA is the easy part. Its success will ultimately depend on its ability to publish a clear, transparent methodology.

That methodology should be African by design. AfCRA should, for example, look for preferred-creditor status in treaties and consider the full range of refinancing options available to a country like Senegal, from domestic debt and regional banks to Panda or even diaspora bonds. The point is not to produce better ratings for African borrowers, but to provide a more complete and accurate assessment. An exam like this might prove even harder to pass, because it may well ask for information that the major credit agencies do not think to request.

©Project Syndicate, 2026

SPORTS

AZERBAIJAN EVENT



Oman name 14 young talents for WC debut

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Fourteen young footballers have been selected to represent Oman at the inaugural Fifa Under-15 World Cup & Festival in Azerbaijan, as head coach Nasser al Mayahi prepares his squad for its first appearance on the global stage.

The team's programme runs from October 13 to November 1, beginning with a domestic training camp in Muscat before departure for Baku. Matches at the Fifa event are scheduled for October 24 to 30.

The gathering will give Al Mayahi and his coaching staff an opportunity to work with the final squad, strengthen understanding between the players and prepare them for the demands of international competition.

Oman's participation forms part of efforts to develop players from an early age and provide a foundation for future national teams. Facing opponents with different playing styles will offer the squad valuable experience while helping the coaches assess individual ability and collective performance.

The emphasis will be on developing technical skills, tactical discipline and decision-making, alongside the concentration and confidence needed to handle competitive matches. The tournament will also help the coaching staff identify areas requiring further attention as the players progress through the national age-group system.

The event's format reflects that development focus. According to Fifa, matches will be played eight against eight over two 20-minute halves, with unlimited substitutions. An initial group phase will bring together teams from different regions and of varying strengths, before results determine their placement into six competitive tiers for the next stage. Teams will continue playing throughout the competition.

For Oman, the experience will provide a practical measure of the squad's progress and an opportunity to build the habits required at higher levels. The Muscat camp will serve as the final preparation phase before the players put their skills to the test in Azerbaijan. The squad comprises Sulaiman bin Khalifa al Mufarji, Mohammed bin Ahmed al Araimi, Muadh bin Moosa al Muharrami, Firas bin Yousef al Farsi, Moayad bin Younis al Ghassani, Yaqoob bin Yousef al Harrasi, Osama bin Nabil Bait Faraj Allah, Osama bin Salim al Dhamri, Ahmed bin Juma al Sarhi, Al Yazan bin Talal al Rashdi, Ayman bin Ali al Afari, Al Ayham bin Ibrahim al Raqqadi, Rashid bin Khalid al Buraidee and Ali bin Qasim al Habsi.

Oman shine with 7 medals at Arab weightlifting

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

OMAN'S WEIGHTLIFTING team returned from the Arab Weightlifting Championship in Mostaganem, Algeria, with an impressive haul of seven medals, including three golds, three silvers and one bronze, underlining the team's competitiveness against established lifters from across the Arab region.

Amer al Khanjari led Oman's medal-winning campaign with three gold medals in the 85 kg category, delivering a standout performance to emerge as one of the team's leading performers. Hood al Khusaibi added three silver medals in the 55 kg category, while Murshid al Ajmi secured bronze in the 95 kg category.

Yousef al Hasani, the team's delegation administrator, praised the lifters for their determination and commitment throughout the competition, noting that they faced opponents with greater experience and considerable physical and technical strength.

He said the athletes approached their events with seriousness and determination, and their efforts were rewarded with a strong medal tally, Al Hasani singled out Al Khanjari and Al Ajmi for special praise, highlighting their impressive performances and lifts that drew an enthusiastic response from spectators. The results, he added, reflected the preparations undertaken ahead of the championship, including an internal training camp designed to improve the athletes' readiness and strengthen their ability to compete at a high level.

Al Hasani described the Arab Championship as an important stop on Oman's competition calendar, given the standard of participation and the presence of teams from North Africa, West Asia and the Gulf region. "Competing against lifters from these countries provides valuable experience and helps the Omani athletes assess their progress against a broad range of opponents."

The Mostaganem campaign is part of a wider preparation programme aimed at improving



Oman made an impressive haul of seven medals, including three golds, three silvers and one bronze.

Amer al Khanjari led Oman's medal-winning campaign with three gold medals in the 85 kg category, delivering a standout performance to emerge as one of the team's leading performers. Hood al Khusaibi added three silver medals in the 55 kg category, while Murshid al Ajmi secured bronze in the 95 kg category.



the team's technical and physical levels ahead of a demanding schedule of regional and international competitions.

WEST ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP
Oman's next assignments include the West Asian Championship, scheduled for early December, followed by the Qatar Cup, which offers a qualification pathway to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. The latter will be particularly important for lifters seeking to strengthen their prospects of earning an Olympic place.

The team is also preparing for the Asian Indoor Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where Oman expects to field approximately three athletes, according to Al Hasani.

He stressed that the medals won in Algeria should serve as motivation for further progress, crediting the athletes, coaches and administrative staff for their collective contribution to the achievement.

The seven-medal return provides a positive foundation for Oman's upcoming commitments, while continued training and international competition will be crucial to building the experience and consistency needed to pursue stronger results at continental and Olympic level.

Oman squad heads to Japan for Asian Para Games

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Oman's para athletes left Muscat on Tuesday with their preparations complete for the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games, following a series of training camps at home and abroad designed to sharpen their competitive edge.

The Games will take place in Japan from October 18 to 24, with Oman's athletics and handcycling representatives looking to translate months of preparation into strong performances on the continental stage.

The latest group departed Muscat International Airport for Osaka, joining athletes and officials who

had travelled earlier. Their preparation programme was organised by the Oman Paralympic Committee, with support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) through its promising athletes programme.

Tuesday's travelling squad included Mohammed al Mashaykhi, Taha al Harrasi, Mutasim al Saadi, Talib al Balushi, Muhanna Awlad Thani, Fawzi al Hubaishi, Mohammed al Qasmi, Iman al Shamsi and Rawan al Hasani. They were accompanied by delegation administrator Rahma al Hajri, coaches Awf al Maamari, Asaad al Qarni and Sami al Razli, and physiotherapist Hani al



The 2026 Asian Para Games will take place from October 18 to 24.

Shammakhi.

Dr Mansour bin Sultan al Tooqi, Chairman of the Oman Paralympic Committee and head of the delegation, had already arrived in Japan

alongside running coach Abdullah al Anbari and athletes Qusay al Rawahi, Othman al Habsi and Saif al Muqbali. Handcyclist Sami al Sulaimi, his coach Stefan Hoffmann and delegation

administrator Adnan al Owaidi also travelled earlier.

Oman's final preparations combined overseas competition, technical training and domestic camps, with programmes tailored to the requirements of each discipline.

In Poland, Al Mashaykhi, Al Harrasi, Al Shamsi and Al Qasmi trained under Al Razli and Al Maamari. The camp included two preparatory competitions, providing an opportunity to assess performance and refine technique ahead of the Games.

The running squad of Al Rawahi, Al Habsi and Al Muqbali completed a camp in Thailand under al Anbari. Alongside their training

programme, the athletes had an opportunity to adapt to climatic conditions considered similar to those expected in Japan.

At home, Al Qarni supervised a residential camp at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher for Awlad Thani, Al Hubayshi, Al Balushi and Al Hasani. Sessions focused on improving physical conditioning and technical execution during the final phase of preparation.

Al Sulaimi's handcycling build-up included a camp at Jabal Haat in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate after competing in the Challenge Breton International in France, where he contested four races within a week.

ATALINNINGS



Sediqullah Atal's marathon century and some inspired lower-order resistance inspired Afghanistan to a dramatic draw.

AFGHANS PRODUCE THRILLING DEFENCE TO SAVE TEST

ABU DHABI: Sediqullah Atal's marathon century and some inspired lower-order resistance inspired Afghanistan to a dramatic draw in the one-off Test against Bangladesh on Tuesday.

Opener Atal, playing only his third Test, batted for eight-and-a-half hours for his 332-ball 111 before number nine Qais Ahmad hit an unbeaten 49 in Abu Dhabi.

Having started the final day on 132-3, Afghanistan survived to finish on 346-8, from a total of 142 overs, after being set a nominal 479-run target to win.

When Atal fell to a close-in catch off left-arm spinner Taijul Islam soon after tea with the score at 281-7, Bangladesh were in sight of victory.

But Qais and fellow tail-ender Yamin Ahmadzai (19 off 85 balls) batted for 110 deliveries in a valiant 45-run stand for the eighth wicket to resist Bangladesh's spinners.

Even when Ahmadzai fell to Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Bangladesh had five overs to enforce a win but Qais and number 10 Zia-ur-Rehman hung on, although not without drama.

There were two missed run-out chances in the final session and a dropped catch, while Qais gave his teammates watching from the boundary some heart-stopping moments.

The leg-spinner mixed solid defence with a penchant for dancing down the pitch, even hitting the second ball of the last over for six.

The Bangladesh players were less than impressed with Qais when he went down with an apparent hamstring injury and received treatment after playing a forward defence with 10 minutes remaining.

With a famous draw already secured, he hammered the final delivery of the match deep over midwicket for another maximum, falling to the turf in celebration.

Pacer Ebadot Hossain took 3-50 and off-spinner Miraz finished with 3-73, but it was not enough for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto praised Afghanistan's resilience.

"It is disappointing not win, but Afghanistan played brilliantly," said Shanto. "I expected the spinners to come into the match. They tried but Afghanistan played very good cricket."

Atal earlier reached his century with a boundary off Hasan Mahmud, becoming the first Afghanistan batter to reach three figures in the fourth innings of a Test.

Hashmatullah Shahidi also scored 36 and helped Atal defy the Bangladesh bowling. — AFP

Masirah set early pace at Club Bowling League



Players compete during the opening rounds of the 2026 Oman Clubs Bowling League at Seeb Bowling Centre.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

MASIRAH

CLUB have made a perfect start to the 2026 Club Bowling League, collecting all 16 points from the opening two rounds to take sole possession of top spot ahead of Salalah, Muscat Club and Jaalan, who are tied on 14 points.

Organised by the Oman Bowling Committee, the competition features 16 clubs and is being staged at Seeb Bowling Centre.

The single round-robin league comprises 15 rounds and 120 matches, running from October 2, 2026, to June 5, 2027.

Each match consists of three games involving four bowlers from each club. Two points are awarded for winning each game, with another two available for the higher aggregate pinfall, making eight points available in every fixture. Teams are ranked by points, followed by head-to-head record and total pinfall.

Masirah underlined their strong opening by sweeping Al Musannah 8-0 in the second round, recording an aggregate pinfall of 2,099 against 1,756.

Hassan al Azri led the leaders with 565, including a 226 in the final game, as Masirah took their overall pinfall to 4,255.



Players during the opening rounds of the 2026 Oman Clubs Bowling League at Seeb Bowling Centre.

SALALAH STAY SECOND

Salalah remained second after defeating Al Bashayer 6-2 and producing the round's highest team total of 2,150, compared with 1,886 for their opponents. Ghalib al Busaidi posted 588 and Musaab al Adawi added 576, helping Salalah raise their cumulative pinfall to a league-leading 4,397.

Muscat Club also stayed unbeaten with a 6-2 victory over Al Nasr, edging the aggregate count 1,997-1,950. Jaalan matched that result against Qurayat, finishing with 1,835 to Qurayat's 1,779, leaving both winners two points behind Masirah.

Oman Club moved into fifth place on 12 points after beating Saham 6-2, with the teams recording 2,004 and 1,974 respectively. Seeb earned their first victory by defeating

Bausher 6-2 and prevailing 1,993-1,949 on aggregate, while Moosa al Maimani delivered the best three-game series of the round with 614. Al Mudhaibi overcame Al Shabab 6-2, registering 2,003 against 1,824. The only drawn fixture saw Al Ittifaq and Al Amerat share the points 4-4. Al Amerat won the first and third games, while Al Ittifaq claimed the second and the aggregate bonus after finishing ahead 1,985-1,893.

Behind the leading quartet, Oman Club sit fifth, followed by Saham and Al Amerat on 10 points, Bausher on eight, and Seeb, Al Ittifaq and Al Mudhaibi on six. Al Nasr have four points, while Al Bashayer, Al Musannah, Al Shabab and Qurayat have two apiece.

AL ADAWI ON TOP

In the individual standings, Salalah's Musaab al Adawi leads with an average of 201 after totalling 1,206 across six games. Masirah's Hassan al Azri follows on 192.8, ahead of Seeb's Moosa al Maimani on 191.7. Al Azri and Bausher's Abdullah al Balushi share the highest single-game score of 245, while Al Adawi holds the best three-game series at 630. The champions will receive RO 1,200, with RO 800 awarded to the runners-up and RO 600 to the third-placed club. Competition resumes on November 6, when leaders Masirah face Al Ittifaq, while Salalah meet Oman Club, Al Nasr take on Seeb and Jaalan face Muscat Club among the eight third-round fixtures.

Hazlewood takes six as Australia beat South Africa in first Test

DURBAN, South Africa: Josh Hazlewood took six wickets as Australia completed a 214-run win over South Africa on the fifth day of the first Test at Kingsmead on Tuesday.

Fast bowler Hazlewood twice broke promising stands and finished with six for 49.

Player of the match Matt Renshaw scored 190 during the first innings as he ended a near-decade wait for a second Test century.

The hosts, set 421 runs to win, were bowled out for 206, in the first Test series between the teams in South Africa since the 2018 sandpaper scandal.

"It's a great way to kick off a series, particularly from the position we were on day one," the tourists' captain Pat Cummins said after they were 124 for six early on before controlling the rest of the fixture against the world Test champions.

Cummins added he was proud of the team for "clawing our way back,

kind of grinding it out, and then once we had the lead, you know, not giving it back".

"I think our standards were very high for the last three or four days," he added. South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma said his players needed to learn from the way Australia played after his first loss in 13 Tests as captain.

"They showed their experience, they showed their skill to get themselves into a very competitive position," Bavuma said.

"You don't want to give them that opportunity to play the game from the front. We had the opportunity to prepare as well as we could."

"I think a lot of the mistakes we made out there were mental," he added after South Africa's first Test in 11 months.

RECORD-BREAKER SMITH

Opening batsman Aiden Markram defied the bowlers for a minute short of six hours, scoring 75 before



Australia's Josh Hazlewood (2nd R) celebrates with his teammates after dismissing South Africa's Wiaan Mulder on day five of the first Test match between South Africa and Australia at the Kingsmead stadium in Durban. — AFP

he was ninth out, caught behind from an inside edge off Mitchell Starc. The last four wickets fell for five runs in the space of 16 deliveries against the second new ball.

Markram and Wiaan Mulder (29) were largely untroubled as they batted through the first 110 minutes of the day. But a double bowling change brought two wickets.

Mulder was caught down the legside by wicketkeeper Alex Carey off Hazlewood for 29 after a 139-minute innings during which he faced 110 balls.

Renshaw came on to bowl his off-spinners in the next over and with his first ball dismissed Kyle Verreynne for a single when the South Africa wicketkeeper played a forcing shot against a wide ball and edged a catch to Steve Smith at slip.

It was the continuation of a dream match for Renshaw, who top-scored in both innings with 190 and 82, then took his first Test wicket when he dismissed Bavuma on Monday.

It was Smith's fifth catch of a match in which he became the world record-holder for most catches by a fielder in Tests.

Smith was back in action after being off the field at the start of South Africa's innings on Monday following a blow on the head while batting.

Marco Jansen made 35 and added 45 with Markram before Hazlewood bowled him in the fourth over with the second new ball.

Three balls later Simon Harmer gloved a sharply lifting ball to Carey. Australia were in trouble with the bat on the first day but dominated the rest of the match after Renshaw steered them to a first-innings total of 390.

South Africa will need to bounce back quickly in the second Test of the three-match series in Gqeberha starting on Sunday, when Bavuma hinted that key fast bowler Kagiso Rabada would likely be fit to play.

— AFP

SPORTS

DRAMATIC COMEBACK



China's Guo Hanyu hits a return to Romania's Sorana Cirstea at the Wuhan Open. — AFP

CHINESE WILDCARD
GUO SHINES AT
WUHAN OPEN

WUHAN, China: Chinese wildcard Guo Hanyu pulled off an almighty comeback to knock out 12th-seeded Romanian Sorana Cirstea 1-6, 7-6 (8/6), 7-5 in the Wuhan Open first round on Tuesday.

Guo, a doubles specialist ranked 240 in the world in singles, entered the match searching for just the third tour-level victory of her career.

The 28-year-old Zhengzhou native rallied back from a set and 0-4 down against Cirstea, saved three match points in the second-set tiebreak, and erased a 3-5 deficit in the decider to complete the upset in two hours and 41 minutes.

A tearful Guo later revealed to Chinese media that she was spurred on by her ailing father, who has been “seriously ill” and in since July.

“Knowing this actually made me feel quite helpless,” said Guo.

“No matter what kind of efforts you make, I’m struggling recently because mentally, psychologically I always feel something. I cannot just have a happy moment on the court and enjoy the game. I will always have a kind of sorrow, so that’s why I made a lot of efforts today.”

Guo will next take on American world number 88 Katie Volynets for a place in the round of 16.

KOSTYUK OUT

Meanwhile, Marta Kostyuk’s chances of qualifying for a maiden WTA Finals dwindled on Tuesday as the world number 10 crashed out of the second round 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 to Maria Sakkari.

Kostyuk is in the running for one of the two remaining qualification spots in the eight-player field at next month’s season finale in Indian Wells but needed a strong showing in Wuhan to strengthen her odds.

The 35th-ranked Sakkari, who is making her first singles appearance in Wuhan since 2018, produced some of her best tennis in her opening two rounds, and will face one of two wild cards, Wang Xiyu or Mia Pohankova, in the last 16.

“The base of my game is there. It’s just about trying to be a little bit more brave in the big moments,” said the Greek former world number three.

American Ann Li booked a second-round meeting with top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka after her Colombian opponent Camila Osorio retired with a lower back injury while trailing 6-1, 3-0.

Former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko handed qualifier Daria Kasatkina a brutal 6-1, 6-1 defeat to set up a clash with last year’s runner-up and Wuhan second seed Jessica Pegula. — AFP



Germany's Alexander Zverev hits a return to Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik at the Shanghai Masters tournament in Shanghai on Tuesday. — AFP

Zverev defies ‘physical issues’ to reach quarters

TOP-SEEDED

ALEXANDER Zverev toughed out two tie-breaks to beat Alexander Bublik 7-6 (8/6), 4-6, 7-6 (7/1) at the Shanghai Masters on Tuesday, winning his first match since being guaranteed the year-end world number one ranking.

The 29-year-old German will play Alex de Minaur in the quarterfinals.

“Really difficult match,” Zverev said.

“I had some physical issues so, you know, I was maybe slower,” he told the crowd.

“My ankle was acting up unfortunately again,” Zverev elaborated in an on-court interview, without giving specifics.

“I’m starting to feel my body more, but happy to be through.”

Zverev, the current world number two, was guaranteed the year-end number one spot after third-ranked Carlos Alcaraz lost to Zizou Bergs in Shanghai on Monday.

On Tuesday, Zverev called the honour “special”, saying it was a different feeling to winning tournaments, adding he was “looking forward” to the responsibility of owning that status.

Neither player could create much trouble for his opponent in the first set as they traded aces to hold serve.

But Zverev found himself under pressure when he was forced to save a set point before making it into a tie-break.



Germany's Alexander Zverev hits a return to Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik. — AFP

He kept his composure as Bublik squandered three set points in a row, taking the first set with a commanding forehand at the net. That momentum was cut short

when Bublik broke the German’s serve in the fifth game of the second set. Despite a few clutch backhands a sombre-looking Zverev was unable to avoid tumbling into a deciding third. The players soon found themselves staring down another tie-break, but this time Zverev raced to a 6-1 lead and closed out the match with an ace.

GEA GOES ON

Earlier, 56th-ranked Arthur Gea put on a convincing show to beat Jakub Mensik 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 in their fourth-round encounter.

Mensik, ranked 15th, hit the ground trying to convert a crucial break point in the final minutes of the second set, but Gea got past his opponent with a cross-court backhand and won on his first match point.

“I’m enjoying how I’m playing. I feel I’m improving all the time,” said Gea, the lowest-ranked player left in the draw.

Asked if he might recreate last year’s “miracle” that saw Valentin Vacherot claim the title as world number 204, Gea said he would “see what happens”.

“I don’t think it’s miracle when you work hard every day, but I hope to do the same,” he said.

Two days earlier the 21-year-old Frenchman beat US Open finalist Ben Shelton, the third seed, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/3) in the third round for the biggest victory of his career. — AFP

Ahmad targeting big push on Portimao GTWCE return

PORTIMAO, Portugal: Just a little over six months since Ahmad al Harthi got his GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Endurance Cup campaign underway, the fifth and final race of the season is only days away at the Autodromo Internacional do Algarve — the Omani’s first visit to the Portuguese track since 2023.

Going into round five of the season, a three-hour evening race which will be contested on October 17, Al Harthi and Oman Racing by Century Motorsport team-mates Calan Williams and Javier Sagrera are determined to sign off the championship in successful style. Currently holding 10th position in the Bronze Cup standings, the BMW M4 GT3

EVO trio are setting their sights on maintaining a top 10 placing and aiming to be in a position to mount a challenge for a second 2026 podium finish.

Starting the season at Circuit Paul Ricard in France with a top six result back in April, a sensational performance at Monza in Italy at the end of May delivered a fantastic first podium of the year with third position and put the squad fifth in the Bronze title battle.

While an unfortunate mid-race retirement from the CrowdStrike 24 Hours of Spa in late June was frustrating, last time out at the Nurburgring in Germany Al Harthi, Williams and Sagrera achieved a top five



result – despite a series of car gremlins – to move back into the championship top 10.

Al Harthi, supported by his prestigious Omani partners OQ, Omantel, Oman LNG, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and BMW Oman, is relishing the prospect of returning to Portimao after three years away and laser focused on

participating in the Bronze Cup division. Notably, in addition to Al Harthi’s high-profile former FIA WEC team-mate Valentino Rossi being part of the grid, GTWCE Endurance Cup also welcomes four-time FIA Formula One world champion Max Verstappen.

Ahmad al Harthi:

“I’m really looking forward to being back in Portugal and racing in Portimao after a few years away, it’s a great track with a real roller-coaster feel. There are some big elevation changes, fast turns and technical challenges as well, and we’re all aiming to wrap-up the season with a strong showing to end the year in the championship top 10.

“We’ve shown some strong

performances this year, Calan and Javier have been great team-mates and the whole team has worked incredibly hard. We’re all determined to push for a big points finish and if we can achieve that we’ll be happy, but the aim is to obviously try and end the season back on the podium. That would be a great way to thank all of our incredible partners and supporters.”

Pre-event testing at Portimao will be begin on October 15, with additional practice and qualifying following on October 16 – the latter starting at 17.55 local time. On October 17, the three-hour final race of the GTWCE Endurance Cup season will get underway at 17.00 local time.



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,728.058

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$108.89
BRENT \$104.94
LIGHT \$92.08



SHORTTAKES

OMAN POWER DEMAND TO REACH 12,000 MW BY 2031

BALARAB AL TAMIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 13



**MOHSIN BIN
HAMAD AL
HADHRAMI**
Under-Secretary
of the Ministry of
Energy and Minerals

Oman's peak electricity demand is expected to rise to 12,000 megawatts (MW) by 2031 from around 7,500 MW in 2024, requiring substantial investment in the grid as the country increases renewable generation.

Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said demand was

growing at about 7 per cent a year, roughly twice the pace of the wider economy.

"The pace of growth is unprecedented," he told the IEEE PowerTalks 2026 conference, describing the rate as "double the GDP growth". Likening the economy to a vehicle travelling at 100 kilometres per hour while the power sector runs at 200, he said: "You are double the speed of the entire economy, double the speed of every sector."

The electricity sector was also contributing to economic growth by enabling industries such as manufacturing and agriculture to expand, he said. But rising demand, the integration of renewable energy and new digital security risks were adding to the challenges facing the grid.

"Our grid has to stay stable. So the level of investment has to match," al Hadhrami said. He described Oman Electricity Transmission Company's planned investment over the next five years as "unprecedented", with a "significant part" going towards batteries and storage.

Renewable energy's share of the power mix rose from 2 per cent in 2021 to 9.46 per cent in 2025, he said, describing the increase as "gigantic steps". "By 2030 we are sure we are going to be at 30 per cent and we are challenging the system to 40 per cent," he said, adding that the share was expected to reach 70 per cent by 2040.

The drive to diversify the energy mix and reduce environmental damage was "a cause worth pursuing, but with that comes a lot of challenges", he said. Solar generation presented particular operational challenges because "the sun is not in our control". "But what is in our control is to harness it with the right tools and engineering skills," he said.

Hospitals, schools and public and private organisations expected electricity supplies to remain dependable as solar power was introduced, placing greater demands on the sector to adapt.

Omran signs ₪122m Muscat development deals

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 13

OMAN

Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) has signed three agreements with Grova Developments, the real estate development arm of Hassan Allam Holding, and Aurelian Development for residential and tourism projects at Madinat Al Irfan and Yiti, with a combined value exceeding RO 122 million.

The agreements cover two residential projects at Madinat Al Irfan valued at RO 44.5 million and a RO 78 million development at Yiti that will include a five-star resort and 490 residential units.

The projects form part of Omran Group's efforts to attract foreign investment, expand residential and hospitality capacity and advance the development of destinations supporting Oman's economic diversification.

At Madinat Al Irfan, the agreements with Grova Developments mark the launch of the destination's first phase of residential development. They cover a RO 29 million residential neighbourhood and a RO 15.5 million branded residences project.

Hassan Allam Construction will build both projects, drawing on the parent group's engineering and construction operations. The developments will establish the first residential offerings within Madinat Al Irfan's broader mix of business, hospitality, retail and leisure facilities.

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism; and Chairman of Omran Group, said integrated destinations were central to developing a more diverse and competitive tourism sector.

"Developments such as Madinat Al Irfan bring together tourism, residential, business and



The agreements cover two residential projects at Madinat Al Irfan valued at RO 44.5 million and a RO 78 million development at Yiti that will include a five-star resort and 490 residential units.



Developments such as Madinat Al Irfan bring together tourism, residential, business and lifestyle components in ways that strengthen the value and appeal of destinations while creating opportunities for investment and broader economic participation".

AZZAN BIN QASIM AL BUSAIIDI

Under-Secretary
of the Ministry
of Heritage and
Tourism for
Tourism; and
Chairman of
Omran Group

lifestyle components in ways that strengthen the value and appeal of destinations while creating opportunities for investment and broader economic participation", he said.

He said the approach supported Oman Vision 2040 by encouraging private-sector and international investment and advancing tourism-led economic diversification.

Hassan Allam, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Hassan Allam Holding, said the partnership brought together the group's investment, development, construction and long-term operating capabilities.

"Our ambition in Oman is to create places that people are proud to call home — places that reflect the country's character and the possibilities of its future", he said.

"We see Madinat Al Irfan as an opportunity to help shape a new chapter for Muscat, where thoughtful architecture, welcoming spaces and a strong sense of belonging create lasting value for generations".

Ayad bin Ali al Balushi, Chief Executive Officer of Omran Group,

said residential development would add another dimension to Madinat Al Irfan and support its growth as an urban and investment destination.

"The launch of these projects reflects Omran Group's continued focus on building meaningful partnerships with investors and developers who can translate investment opportunities into high-quality developments that create long-term value", he said.

Under the third agreement, Aurelian Development will develop Yiti Hills and Oases, the fourth phase of the Yiti Integrated Tourism Development masterplan.

The project will cover around 200,000 square metres and include a five-star resort and 490 residential units. Aurelian will oversee design, construction, marketing and sales management.

Al Balushi said the agreement would help broaden Oman's tourism offering and attract foreign investment.

"The launch of Yiti Hills and Oases marks an important milestone in advancing our long-term vision for Yiti Integrated Tourism Development", he said.

Major asset manager prepares to invest in Oman

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

An international asset manager described as one of the world's ten largest is preparing to invest in Oman after approximately 18 months of engagement, signalling growing institutional interest as the country's stock exchange seeks long-term investment.

Gary Ballard of Oman Investment Bank told CONFEAS 2026 in Muscat on Tuesday that the institution had indicated it was making arrangements to invest during a meeting in London last month with representatives of a major Omani company.

Neither the asset manager nor the company was identified. Ballard did not disclose the size, timing or form of any prospective investment.

The disclosure highlighted a wider challenge discussed at the conference: converting international interest in Oman into sustained participation in its capital market.

Ballard said attracting major institutional investors required



The conference brought together exchange executives, investment institutions and market specialists to examine connectivity, technology and investor participation.

continued engagement and a clearer understanding of the country's economic prospects, alongside improvements in market liquidity.

International investors were interested in both individual securities and the broader economic development of the countries in which they invested, he said.

For Oman, that meant providing investment opportunities reflecting a wider range of

economic activity.

Although banking and energy companies offered established opportunities, Ballard said additional listings in consumer-related businesses and technology could broaden the market's appeal to international institutions.

Liquidity remained a central consideration, but he cautioned against assuming that trading concentrated in a relatively small number of companies was necessarily a weakness.

For large investors, shares with sufficient trading activity could provide a practical entry point into a market where other securities were less actively traded. Ballard also highlighted the importance of reducing operational obstacles associated with trading, settlement and transaction funding.

International portfolio managers, he said, should be able to concentrate on investment decisions rather than the procedures needed to execute transactions.

The distinction between market access and sustained investment was also emphasised by Radu Hanga, Chairman of the Federation of Euro-Asian Capital Markets (FEAS) and Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Bucharest Stock Exchange. Hanga said closer connections between exchanges could improve access but would not, by themselves, create lasting liquidity.

He stressed the importance of corporate governance, reliable market information, investor

education and confidence in financial institutions in attracting and retaining investment.

The discussion comes as Oman seeks a possible upgrade in FTSE Russell's market classification system.

Oman has been placed on the index provider's Watch List for potential reclassification from Frontier to Secondary Emerging market status, with the next country-classification update scheduled for April 2027.

Watch List inclusion is a step in the assessment process and does not confirm an upgrade or guarantee additional investment flows.

Muscat Stock Exchange Chief Executive Officer Haitham al Salmi also highlighted the importance of cooperation between exchanges and timely, carefully considered decisions in responding to changing investor requirements.

He cited a cross-border trading platform connecting more than eight markets as an example of efforts to improve access while allowing brokers to operate within their respective regulatory frameworks.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



For Abraj, ICV represents a comprehensive institutional commitment extending beyond conventional spending and Omanisation targets.

ABRAJ FOSTERS ICV BY DEVELOPING OMANI TALENT

MUSCAT: Abraj Energy Services “Abraj”, Oman’s leading provider of integrated energy services, continued to strengthen its In-Country Value (ICV) contributions during the first half of 2026.

This performance was driven by increased spending across domestic procurement and service contracts, sustained investment in upskilling Omani talent, broader engagement with national vendors, and targeted support for localising specialised manufacturing within the energy sector.

For Abraj, In-Country Value represents a comprehensive institutional commitment extending beyond conventional spending and Omanisation targets. The company’s integrated approach emphasises human capital development, active participation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs, supply chain resilience, and the transfer of technical expertise and local manufacturing capabilities.

This framework delivers long-term economic value and reinforces the national energy ecosystem in direct alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

LOCAL PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

During H1 2026, Abraj directed 70% of its total procurement expenditure into the domestic market, representing RO 26.5 million out of a total spend of RO 37.7 million.

Small and medium enterprises, local service providers, and Riyada card holders accounted for 30% of total expenditure, totaling approximately RO 11.5 million. Meanwhile, locally registered suppliers represented 40% of the total, equivalent to RO 15.1 million.

Procurement allocated to products manufactured within the Sultanate of Oman reached 11% of total expenditure, valued at RO 4.1 million, underscoring Abraj’s strategic focus on prioritising national products and strengthening partnerships with domestic suppliers.

INVESTMENT IN NATIONAL TALENT

Abraj continues to prioritise human capital as the vital engine driving operational sustainability and fulfilling the evolving requirements of the energy industry. Throughout the first half of 2026, the company maintained an Omanisation rate of 93.21%, employing 2,265 Omani professionals.

Over the same period, Abraj delivered 36,861 training hours dedicated to the national workforce. Its graduate and professional development programs supported 78 trainees, while the second cohort of the “Forsa” summer internship program welcomed 60 participants, enabling young talent to build practical technical skills for future careers in the sector.

All-new Toyota Hilux launched in Oman

SAUD Bahwan Automotive has launched the all-new Toyota Hilux in Oman, taking legendary toughness to the next level as tough gets tougher and more agile. From everyday journeys and city streets to open roads and weekend adventures, it delivers the confidence, capability and versatility to take on whatever comes next.

Offered in gasoline 4WD and diesel 4WD variants, it carries forward the strength, durability and reliability that have made the Hilux a trusted name across Oman, while introducing greater agility and capability for whatever the journey demands.

The launch brought together distinguished guests, valued partners and automotive enthusiasts from across Oman, making it a memorable celebration of capability and engineering craftsmanship.

Keeping every journey and every application in mind, the launch of the all-new Toyota Hilux was conducted exclusively as two dedicated events, one for fleet and one for retail, both held at the InterContinental Hotel, Muscat.

The fleet event on October 6 was reserved for Saud Bahwan Automotive’s valued fleet partners, while the retail event on October 7 welcomed customers and automotive enthusiasts from across Oman.

This approach allowed each audience to experience the all-new Hilux in the context that matters most to them, from business and commercial use to everyday and leisure driving.

The two events reflected the spirit of a vehicle built for both work and leisure. A choice of refined diesel and gasoline engines delivers the power to match every application, while the Cyber SUMO design



Guests viewing the all-new Toyota Hilux in Oman.

and a more connected, driver-focused cabin keep the Hilux comfortable long after the workday ends. The new Hilux shows that a work truck can offer more than just work capability.

First introduced in 1968 and now trusted across more than 190 countries and regions, the Hilux has built an unshakeable reputation for quality, durability, reliability and go-anywhere capability.

The latest generation carries that legacy forward, advancing performance, style and functionality to confidently embrace the future with a stiffer frame, a more capable range of engines and an expanded suite of safety and connected technologies.

“For decades, the Hilux has been an integral part of Oman’s motoring heritage. This next-generation model honours that trust by elevating every benchmark from

structural strength and off-road intelligence to driver comfort and safety technology.

Whether serving as a dependable business partner or a weekend adventure vehicle, it delivers complete peace of mind, backed by our nationwide sales and service network”, a senior representative from Saud Bahwan Automotive said.

A BOLDER STANCE, INSIDE AND OUT

The new Hilux’s exterior draws on the stable, powerful stance of sumo wrestlers. Sculpted fender covers, an authoritative radiator grille and a wide bumper layout come together to form a tough, agile silhouette.

Inside, a spacious, open cabin layout and a bold, straight console deliver the functionality drivers need for confident handling.

MHD ACERE wins youth engagement in sports award

MUSCAT: MHD ACERE has been named the winner of the “Youth Engagement Initiative in Sports Award” at the Shabiba Jawa’iz Basma (Social Impact) Awards 2026, recognising its commitment to supporting sport and creating a positive impact on communities across the Sultanate of Oman.

The award acknowledges MHD ACERE’s support for initiatives that encourage participation, nurture young talent and bring communities together. Its involvement spans school sports, cycling, boxing and padel, alongside traditional sporting events that celebrate Oman’s cultural heritage.

MHD ACERE has supported the Ministry of Education’s Physical Education Day, the Tour of Oman and Tour of Salalah cycling events, the Oman Boxing Championship, and padel tournaments.

Its commitment also extends to the Jaalan Camel Race and Bidiyah Horse Race, reflecting an inclusive approach to sport that connects generations and communities.

Commenting on the recognition, Mohsin



Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said: “We are honoured to receive this recognition, which reflects our commitment

to supporting young people and contributing to the communities we serve.

Sport provides a valuable foundation for discipline, confidence and teamwork, while bringing people together through shared aspirations.

Through our support for contemporary and traditional sports, we aim to encourage wider participation and help create opportunities for young talent across Oman. This award reinforces our commitment to continuing that contribution alongside our partners”.

Organised by Muscat Media Group (MMG), the publisher of Shabiba and Times of Oman, the Shabiba Jawa’iz Basma (Social Impact) Awards 2026 recognise meaningful contributions towards positive community impact in Oman.

MHD ACERE remains committed to supporting initiatives that strengthen community connections and provide young people with opportunities to participate, develop and achieve through sport.

Hay Al Naseem welcomes GEMS: A new chapter for family living in Oman

BARKA: Hay Al Naseem is reaching a significant new milestone with the announcement of a landmark international school by GEMS School Management (GSM), marking the education group’s first project in Oman.

The school will form part of Hay Al Naseem Phase 3, a 100% freehold community offering lifetime residency, and will be located within the development itself. Scheduled to open in September 2027, the school will be within walking distance of homes in Phase 3, with a mosque located immediately next door.

The combination of freehold ownership, lifetime residency and access to an internationally recognised school within the community marks an important step in Hay Al Naseem’s evolution into



The school will be developed by Adrak Developers LLC with GEMS School Management.

a destination designed around the long-term needs of families.

The new school will bring more than 65 years of GEMS education expertise to Barka and will offer an international curriculum from

foundation stage through to year 13.

The purpose-built campus is expected to accommodate approximately 1,600 students by 2035–36 and will feature specialist science, ICT, robotics and innovation facilities, a central library, student wellbeing spaces and extensive sports facilities, including a football ground, indoor games facilities and multipurpose courts.

For Hay Al Naseem, securing GEMS is a significant achievement. The arrival of the internationally recognised education group adds an important community anchor and further elevates the development’s proposition for families seeking quality education alongside their home.

The school will be developed by Adrak Developers LLC in

partnership with GEMS School Management, with GSM providing pre-operational and operational services through its turnkey ASPIRE model.

Phase 3 is designed to bring together residential living with key community facilities. Its 100% freehold ownership and lifetime residency provide a long-term ownership proposition, while the location of GEMS within the development adds an important lifestyle advantage for families.

Having the school within walking distance of surrounding homes, alongside the mosque, means that education and an important community amenity are integrated directly into the neighbourhood rather than requiring residents to travel outside the development.

SHORT TAKES



The pact was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Said al Amri, Chairman of Muscat Municipality; and Talib bin Hamoud al Rashidi, Acting CEO of Ithca Group.

Muscat Municipality signs deal for unified municipal platform

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality has signed an agreement to develop a unified digital platform for municipal services across Oman's governorates, aiming to simplify transactions for businesses and individuals and improve urban planning.

The Unified Municipal System Project will bring services including building permits, lease contracts and other permits onto an integrated platform, supporting efforts to automate procedures and improve coordination between municipalities.

The agreement was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Said al Amri, Chairman of Muscat Municipality; and Talib bin Hamoud al Rashidi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Ithca Group, representing the group's affiliated technology company.

Al Amri said that the project represented a strategic step towards modernising municipal operations by unifying services across the governorates.

He said the platform would enable users to complete transactions more easily and quickly, improve service quality and delivery, and strengthen the efficiency of municipal operations.

For businesses, the planned integration of municipal services is intended to simplify the procedures needed to obtain permits and complete related transactions. The project also aims to improve coordination and data integration between governorates.

Al Amri said the initiative would extend beyond service delivery to establish a unified data system supporting decision-making and urban planning. The system would pave the way for the use of artificial intelligence and other modern technologies to develop services and improve city management, in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Oman targets investment in AI and digital services

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 13

OMAN is seeking to capture a greater share of the economic value generated by expanding digital infrastructure, emerging technologies and international connectivity, as rising demand for digital services opens new investment opportunities across the region.

The focus is shifting beyond infrastructure development towards attracting international capital, expanding high-value activities and building a digital ecosystem that enables businesses to operate, innovate and serve regional and global markets from Oman.

Aladdin Baitfadhil, Chief Executive Officer of Omantel, said generative artificial intelligence (AI) in the region was moving from ambition to implementation, driving investment and innovation across the technology value chain.

He said the opportunity extended beyond digital and critical infrastructure to data sovereignty, enterprise and consumer applications, and start-ups developing solutions for the emerging AI ecosystem.

Oman's investment strategy is increasingly centred on attracting global capital, localising high-value activities and developing the capacity to export digital services.

This offers opportunities to strengthen the contribution of telecommunications and technology to economic diversification, productivity and



The Leaders' AXIS 2026 conference provided a platform for Omani stakeholders to present market opportunities and investment priorities to participants.

private-sector growth.

The country is seeking to enhance its investment appeal through foreign investment and partnerships with international companies.

These efforts aim to accelerate digital infrastructure development, bring in advanced technologies and expertise, and create opportunities for Omani companies within expanding digital value chains.

The Leaders' AXIS 2026 conference provided a platform for Omani stakeholders to present market opportunities and investment priorities to international participants.

It also enabled companies seeking to enter or expand in Oman and the wider region to identify potential partners and clients, assess connectivity requirements and explore long-term collaboration.

Bocar Ba, Chief Executive Officer of the SAMENA Telecommunications Council, said that Oman's strategic location and established infrastructure strengthened its potential as a destination for digital investment.

He said the Sultanate of Oman could serve as a regional platform for telecommunications, space-related activities and broader digital development, including AI, cloud computing and fifth-generation (5G) networks, with sixth-generation (6G) technologies expected to follow.

Abdulrahman bin Saud al Humaimi, Zone Services Manager at the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), highlighted the importance of business opportunities and operational readiness in investment

decisions.

Attracting investors, he said, required more than infrastructure. It depended on creating an integrated ecosystem in which companies could establish operations, scale their businesses and compete effectively.

This places greater emphasis on project readiness, regulatory clarity, reliable energy supplies, skilled workers, market demand and coordination among relevant institutions.

Together, these factors help determine whether infrastructure investment translates into commercially viable projects and sustained economic activity.

For Oman, the opportunity lies in connecting its infrastructure and international connectivity with growing demand for data centres, cloud computing, AI-enabled services and advanced telecommunications.

Developing these activities could attract long-term investment while opening opportunities for local suppliers, technology companies and skilled professionals.

The approach supports Oman's broader diversification agenda by encouraging investment in the networks, data centres and technologies underpinning the digital economy.

Securing a larger share of that economy will depend on translating infrastructure investment into local business participation, technology transfer, employment and digital exports, alongside stronger access to regional and international markets.

Oman firms face 2029 deadline for climate disclosure compliance

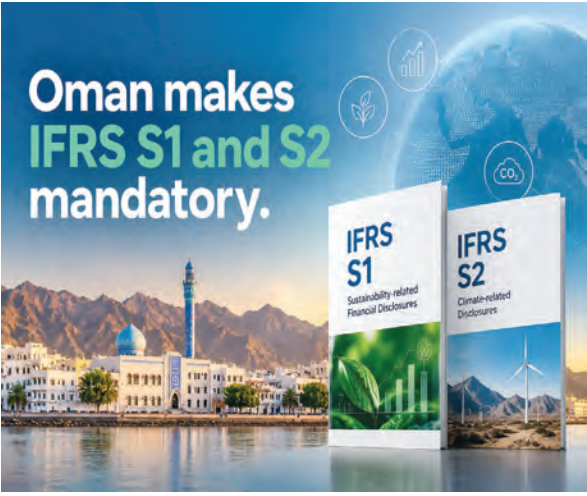
CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 13

Listed companies and financial institutions in Oman face a major overhaul of their sustainability reporting practices as they prepare to comply with internationally recognised disclosure standards that become mandatory from January 1, 2029.

The transition, mandated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), will require affected entities to strengthen their environmental data collection, climate-risk assessments, internal governance and reporting systems to meet increasingly rigorous international disclosure requirements.

Under Decision E/7/2026, issued in March 2026, the FSA formally adopted IFRS S1 and IFRS S2, two sustainability disclosure standards developed by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), marking a significant step towards aligning Oman's corporate reporting framework with global practices.

IFRS S1 requires companies to disclose



The transition will entail significant investments in sustainability data management, emissions accounting, internal controls and specialised reporting capabilities.

material sustainability-related risks and opportunities that could reasonably affect their financial prospects, including their

implications for business strategy, governance and financial performance.

IFRS S2 focuses specifically on climate-related risks and opportunities, requiring disclosures covering climate governance, transition strategies, risk management and greenhouse gas emissions.

While full compliance becomes mandatory for annual reporting periods beginning on or after January 1, 2029, companies will need to begin preparing well in advance.

The first annual disclosures covering the 2029 reporting year are expected to be published in 2030.

A further milestone falls on January 1, 2030, when Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions disclosures become mandatory. These encompass indirect emissions across corporate value chains, including those associated with suppliers, transportation and the use of products and services.

For many Omani businesses, the transition will entail significant investments in sustainability data management, emissions accounting, internal controls and specialised

reporting capabilities.

The FSA has also proposed a phased transition framework, potentially beginning with the 2027 reporting cycle, to help affected entities progressively align their existing sustainability disclosures with the new standards.

The proposed framework also envisages mapping existing environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting metrics used by the Muscat Stock Exchange to the new international disclosure requirements.

Importantly, the transition represents more than a regulatory compliance exercise. It is expected to strengthen corporate transparency, improve investors' ability to assess climate-related financial risks and support capital allocation towards more sustainable business activities.

With the first mandatory reporting period approaching, companies will increasingly need to assess their preparedness, identify gaps in existing systems and establish credible sustainability data and governance frameworks well ahead of the 2029 deadline.

ECONOMIC FORECAST

IMF projects global economic growth bump



The International Monetary Fund expects global economic growth to reach 3.1% in 2026 and 3.4% in 2027.

Investments in AI infrastructure are boosting tech supply-chain nations and offsetting high energy costs from Middle East conflicts. However, the IMF warned that growth remains concentrated in just 32 countries, while high public debt levels threaten broader financial stability worldwide. — Reuters

MARKET SELLOFF

Global stocks drop as tech falls



Global stocks and tech shares declined as AI concerns and Chinese chipmaker progress drove investors towards safe-haven government bonds.

Sharp losses hit major Asian markets, with South Korea's KOSPI falling over 5% and semiconductor leaders like SK Hynix dropping 10%. Broadcom's CEO cautioned that speculative AI investments resemble gambling, raising market risks for investors. — Reuters

MARITIME FREIGHT

Russian oil freight rates hit record



Freight rates for Russian Urals crude shipments to India reached record highs in early October due to elevated Black Sea risks and global tanker rallies.

Transporting crude from western Russian ports now costs around \$30 per barrel, with Black Sea to India voyages reaching up to \$30 million. These surging shipping expenses prevent Moscow from capitalizing on higher global oil prices. — Reuters

OPINION

Why the second customer matters for Oman’s startups



MATVII DIADKOV

The writer is the founder of Bitmedia Labs

NEW figures from Riyada show how widely entrepreneurship is taking root in Oman. The ecosystem generates more than 3,000 startup ideas each year and includes 30 business incubators and 10 accelerators. As this support network develops, the commercial progress of the companies that emerge from it deserves closer attention.

One useful measure is whether a startup can secure customers outside the network that helped it begin.

A first corporate contract brings revenue and a credible name to the company’s portfolio. It can also create an early impression that the business has already found a market large enough to support expansion.

Otech’s collaboration with Omani startup Remedy illustrates the connection between corporate support and product development.

On August 22, *Observer* reported that Remedy emerged from Omantel Innovation Labs and forms part of its investment portfolio.

Otech announced plans to collaborate on the development and deployment of Remedy’s RISE Talent platform within its enterprise environment.

The partnership illustrates how Oman’s corporate networks help local technology reach enterprise environments. For investors, the broader question concerns

how a startup converts that access into demand beyond the original relationship. The value of corporate support and the evidence for further expansion require separate assessments.

A second independent customer helps provide that evidence.

Its purchase serves its own business needs, with no investment in the startup to protect. The contract becomes particularly useful when its price covers the full cost of delivery and support, without assistance from the original partner.

The economics of that sale matter as much as the customer’s independence. For enterprise software, costs extend beyond the core product to connections with existing systems, data preparation and security reviews. If the first partner contributes staff or technical resources, the startup’s accounts may understate what the next deployment will cost.

A second contract tests those costs under different conditions. If the startup must create separate integrations and maintain a different software version for each buyer, additional revenue brings additional delivery obligations. The company needs to account for that workload before it commits to more customers.

This affects what new capital can achieve. A reusable product gives the team scope to expand sales without an equivalent increase in development work.

A business that requires extensive

A first corporate contract brings revenue and a credible name to the company’s portfolio. It can also create an early impression that the business has already found a market large enough to support expansion.

engineering for every contract needs capital to expand delivery capacity. Both models have commercial value.

An investor who applies rapid product-growth expectations to the second model risks paying for expansion that the cost structure cannot support.

The customer’s budget provides another test of repeatable demand. A corporate innovation programme can finance an initial deployment. A renewal from the department that uses the product shows whether the solution justifies a continuing expense after that support ends.

Before they support regional expansion, Oman’s accelerators and investors should ask companies to report the share of customer revenue that comes from outside their corporate and investment networks.

They should then examine whether those contracts cover delivery costs and lead to renewals. This would give the next capital decision a commercial basis beyond the reputation of the first partner.

The figures Riyada published describe the breadth of startup support. As Oman’s ecosystem develops, investors also need evidence of sales beyond the networks that provided that support.

A first corporate partnership gives a company access to the market. Before capital finances regional expansion, the company should demonstrate that another buyer will pay a price that covers the full cost of delivery and support.

TRUMP’S OIL JAWBONING LOSES PUNCH AS WARS SPIRAL

RON BOUSSO

US President Donald Trump’s trademark ability to talk down oil markets with a few words is fading as the Iran war drags on, leaving global energy prices far more exposed to escalation. The president’s so-called “jawboning” was one of the defining features of the Iran conflict’s early months after fighting erupted in late February.

In the months before the short-lived July ceasefire, Trump’s repeated public statements and social media posts that said Washington and Tehran were edging towards a deal to end the conflict and reopen the Strait of Hormuz helped keep oil prices well below record highs.

That rhetoric appeared to work even as the blockage of the chokepoint, which previously handled about a fifth of global oil supplies, upended energy markets.

Trump predicted during the months of Israeli-US air strikes that oil prices would “drop like a rock” once a ceasefire deal with Iran is reached. Traders likely deemed it too risky to bet against Trump’s desire to avoid a domestic fuel price spike. As stockpiles deteriorated, they assumed the US president would pull back and end the war quickly.

That bet appeared to pay off until markets learned the limitations of Trump’s control. The July ceasefire broke down, giving way to a protracted, low-level conflict that has spread throughout the region, including the recent escalation in violence between Yemen’s Iran-aligned Ansar Allah and Saudi Arabia.

This lack of market confidence is now undermining the US president’s efforts to bring down soaring diesel prices, a key priority before US midterm elections that are only three weeks away.

For energy markets, the era of the Trump trade may be over. Global benchmark Brent crude prices have held stubbornly above \$100 a barrel for most of the past few weeks, despite a strong recovery in oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

Crude exports through the critical waterway have rebounded to roughly 80%-90% of pre-war levels, according to ship-tracking firms, as Gulf producers have increasingly relied on US naval protection to move cargoes.

Yet repeated efforts by Trump and US Energy Secretary Chris Wright to calm markets by highlighting the recovery in flows have not proven effective.

Brent did slip below \$100 a barrel on news of the surge in crude flows, but that reprieve proved brief as Middle East violence continued to spread, including stepped-up Iranian strikes on tankers.

Meanwhile, shipping oil through the region remains very costly because of soaring tanker chartering costs and insurance premiums, as well as the complicated logistics required to get crude out of the region. — Reuters

The first fifty days: A chief executive’s field notes

ON your first morning, the door closes behind you. The title is new, the institution is not. It has customers who have learned to wait, employees who have learned what is safe to say, managers who know which reports matter, and a strategy that may look clearer on paper than it feels in practice.

Everyone is watching for a signal. Some expect a new direction. Others fear a purge. Many are simply asking what will happen to their work.

Your first fifty days are not a race to prove that you deserve the job. They are a chance to discover what the job actually requires.

The strongest early move is to create a disciplined passage from appointment to understanding, and from understanding to action.



DR ZIAD ALZAIDI

alzaidi.z2000@gmail.com

The writer is strategic management & organisational transformation consultant

running.

8. Assess the leadership team fairly. Look for capability, trust and openness to challenge. Give people clear expectations before making consequential judgements.

9. Choose one meaningful early improvement. Resolve a visible obstacle that matters to staff or customers, and show how it connects to the larger mission.

10. Set a learning deadline. By day fifty, report what you have learned, what remains uncertain, and the few priorities you propose to pursue.

These are not abstract prescriptions. When Brian Niccol took over Starbucks, he described spending time in stores and talking with employees and customers before announcing that the company had drifted from its core.

Boeing’s Kelly Ortberg spent his first day at a 737 MAX factory.

Philips’ Roy Jakobs said he asked employees what to strengthen, what to improve and what he needed to know. Their first moves reflected the problems each institution needed to see clearly.

TEN THINGS NOT TO DO

1. Do not arrive with a finished strategy. Your experience is useful; your assumptions still need testing.

2. Do not mistake silence for support. People may be waiting to see what is safe to say.

3. Do not listen only to people who already have access to you. The org chart is not the whole institution.

4. Do not promise a transformation before you know what is worth preserving.

5. Do not announce a restructuring to establish authority. A chart can change faster than the work beneath it.

6. Do not treat every inherited practice as resistance. Some are flawed; others compensate for a broken process.

7. Do not confuse visibility with understanding. A site visit

without questions or follow-up is theatre.

8. Do not let “quick wins” become cosmetic projects. Fix friction that affects performance, trust or service.

9. Do not postpone hard decisions indefinitely. Listening should sharpen judgement, not become a shelter from it.

10. Do not fill every hour. Protect time to compare evidence, test your conclusions and decide what deserves your attention.

There is a reason communication belongs near the top of the list. Research examining CEO transitions across 102 companies found that scheduled meetings and internal emails fell by about 20 per cent during the first three months after a new CEO arrived.

Uncertainty about roles, priorities and possible changes can make an institution quieter just when its new leader needs to hear more. Silence is not neutral; it invites rumours to do the explaining.

Fifty days is not a scientific threshold, and no calendar can replace judgement. A company facing a safety failure or cash crisis must contain immediate harm while it learns. A stable institution may have more room to diagnose before changing course.

The principle is to match the pace of action to the risk, and the scale of change to the quality of evidence.

At day fifty, you should not have every answer. You should have something more useful: a mandate understood by you and your board; a more honest picture of how the institution works; employees who know when and how they will hear from you; and a short list of priorities grounded in facts.

The title makes you chief executive. Your first fifty days show whether you intend to lead the institution you inherited, or merely replace its name at the top of the letterhead.

CLASSIFIEDS

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

أوربيت
ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

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

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

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

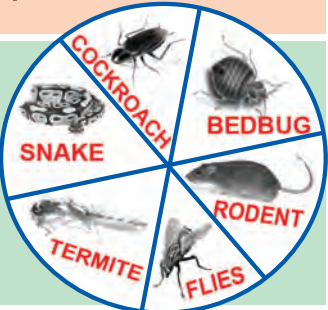
Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com



س ي ا و
P C O

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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



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

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

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

SIT. WANTED

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

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072



SIT. WANTED

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

SIT. WANTED

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

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

SENIOR Accountant: Indian male, 20 years' experience in Oman, shipping& logistics, Trading& Contracting, up to finalisation, seeking a senior position in Accounts/Finance. Cont: 95915852.

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

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

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

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

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

FINANCE professional - immediate joiner finance professional CA finalist. 15 years experience, immediate joiner. Skilled in finance, accounting, audit and financial operations. Seeking suitable opportunities. Contact: +968 72481770, email: mdpervez6@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

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

مجمع زلفى الطبي
ZULFA MEDICAL COMPLEX
Opening Soon in Shinas

WE ARE HIRING

Join our new team!

- Dermatologist
- Nurse
- Pediatrician
- Laser Technician

Note: Arabic speaking ability is preferred for all roles.

Send your CV to:
hr@zulfamedical.om

FOR RENT

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

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

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

OMAN  DAILY

Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

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

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

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



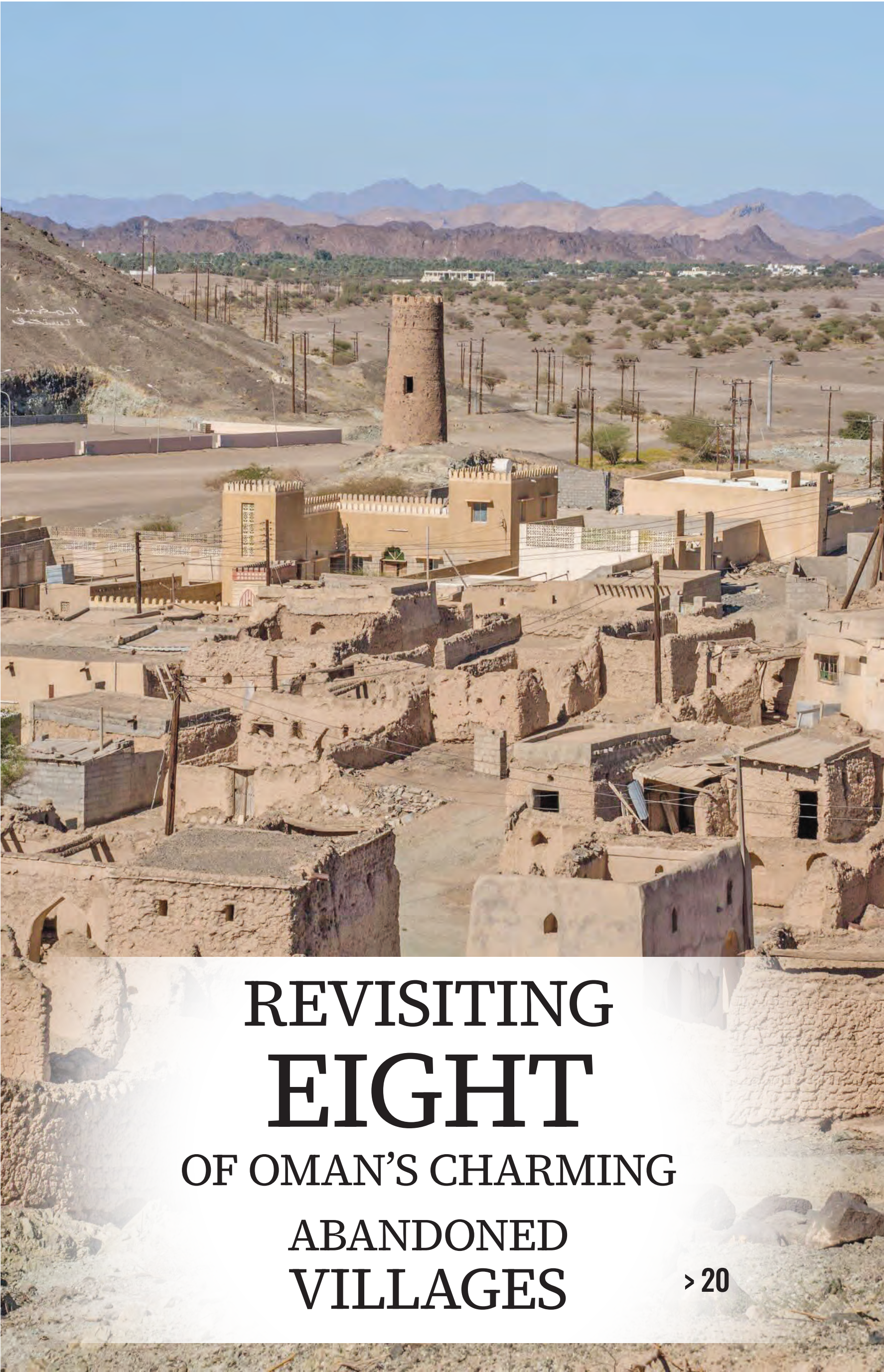
To advertise

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

ازديهار
izdihar



ART/LIFE



REVISITING EIGHT OF OMAN’S CHARMING ABANDONED VILLAGES

> 20

ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

THE WRITERS WHO CAN NO LONGER EXPLAIN THEIR OWN WORDS



Yeru Ebuén
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

When artificial intelligence first became widely available, I was already worried about what it might do to young writers.

Working in publishing, I discouraged interns and junior writers from using it for anything beyond grammar and basic editing. It wasn’t because I disliked the technology. I could already see its potential. What concerned me was how quickly it could disguise someone’s actual ability.

Almost overnight, writers who struggled to produce 300 words of decent English were submitting beautifully constructed articles. The vocabulary was impressive. The sentences flowed. But ask them to explain what they had written, and sometimes they couldn’t.

I raised the issue repeatedly. I wanted them to develop their own voice, make mistakes, question their choices and eventually establish standards they could call their own.

It was difficult to enforce then. Today, I wonder how many of those young writers continued learning their craft. The backlash we’re seeing now doesn’t surprise me.

People are beginning to question photographs that look too perfect, articles that sound suspiciously alike and professional posts filled with impressive words but very little to say.

LinkedIn has even introduced a way for users to flag what it calls AI slop. By September, more than a million members had used the feature. Apparently, people are growing tired of reading content that could have been written by anybody.

Research offers another reason for concern. A 2025 study examining 2,200 college admissions essays found that human-written work contributed greater diversity of ideas than AI-generated writing. Yet I wouldn’t argue that AI has been bad for creativity.

It has made research faster, shortened working hours and given people access to tools that once required considerable resources. Even producing a convincing AI image or developing a worthwhile prompt demands imagination and judgement.

The problem begins when we confuse producing something with knowing how to create it.

A well-written article doesn’t necessarily make someone a good writer. An attractive image doesn’t automatically make someone a photographer. And having access to sophisticated tools doesn’t guarantee that we have something interesting to say. Perhaps this is where originality becomes valuable again.

Not because everything must be created without assistance, but because personal experience, curiosity and the ability to form an independent opinion cannot simply be outsourced.

I still believe young writers should learn to write before allowing technology to write for them.

After all, the struggle to find the right words, the frustration of rewriting a paragraph and the satisfaction of finally expressing an idea are part of becoming a writer.

Which leaves me with one question: What happens to the next generation of writers if they never experience the difficult, frustrating process of finding their own voice?

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



FILM

Cast member Monica Barbaro attends the premiere of “Artificial” as part of the London Film Festival, in London, Britain. — **Reuters**



MUSIC

Finnish cellist and composer Eicca Toppinen of the band Apocalyptica performs during the Rock al Parque festival. — **AFP**



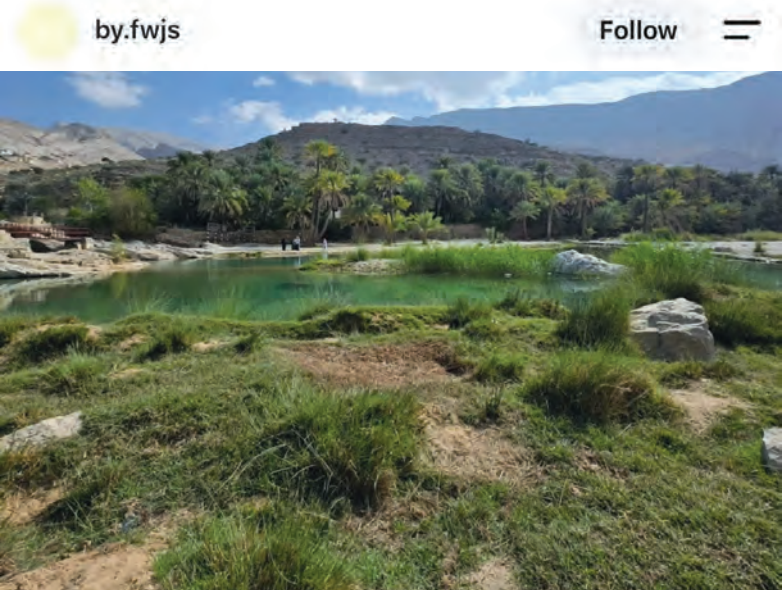
RED CARPET

Zo In-sung and Cho Yeo-jeong pose on the red carpet at the premiere of “Possible Love” during the London Film Festival, in London. — **Reuters**

INSTA PICKS



Watching the world from the safety of the old tree hollow.



The green side of Oman

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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



Anne Carson won the 2026 Nobel Prize in Literature for her “bold and inventive oeuvre that, in playful dialogue with the classical tradition, has created new forms for contemporary literature.”

CANADIAN POET AND CLASSICIST ANNE CARSON WINS ‘CRAZY’ NOBEL

Canadian poet and classicist Anne Carson won the Nobel Prize in Literature on Thursday for her innovative writing inspired by Greek mythology and antiquity.

The 76-year-old was honoured for her “bold and inventive oeuvre” that has created new forms of contemporary literature through dialogue with classical traditions, the Swedish Academy said.

Carson, who lives part of the year in Iceland, reacted with surprise, telling public broadcaster RUV: “They’re all crazy”.

Known for blending ancient myths with modern themes, Carson gained recognition in the 1990s, winning several literary awards. Her 1998 work, *Autobiography of Red*: A Novel in Verse, reimagined the Greek myth of Geryon and Herakles as a contemporary story exploring a love triangle.

The Academy also praised her 2010 work *Nox*, a tribute to her brother, who died in 2000.

Presented as an accordion-fold collection of photographs, letters and texts, the work explores grief and loss. Her translations of classical Greek texts were also recognised as literary achievements in their own right.

Academy member Steve Sem-Sandberg described Carson as “an author for our time”, praising her ability to bring ancient stories and characters into a modern context.

Carson announced in 2024 that she had Parkinson’s disease. In a 2024 essay, she described how the condition had affected her handwriting, which had long been central to her creative practice.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney called the award “an extraordinary achievement and a proud moment for Canada”.

Carson’s win comes amid longstanding criticism of the Nobel literature prize’s gender imbalance. Since the award was first presented in 1901, only 19 women have received it out of 122 laureates. — AFP



PURPLE REIGN: PHILIPPINES SEEKS TO KEEP GRIP ON UBE THRONE



THE Philippine ube, a bright purple yam, has become a global sensation, attracting millions of social media views and drawing crowds to coffee shops and bakeries from Los Angeles to London and Seoul.

However, meeting rising international demand has proved challenging for the Philippines’ predominantly smallholder farmers, as declining yields, limited resources and a nine-month growing period constrain production. Fears of biopiracy have also prompted the government to ban exports of raw ube to protect local varieties.

Farmer-exporter Al Bonifacio, 59, supports measures to safeguard the crop, warning that overseas growers could capitalise on the trend if the Philippines cannot meet demand.

“Our greatest fear is, if we are not able to supply ube to the world, someone (else) will step in”, he said.

Ube is sold as powder, extract, paste and frozen puree, and is used in coffee, pastries, ice cream and even cosmetics. In Japan, importer JP Mercado said demand had grown rapidly after the trend gained popularity in South Korea, with social media helping introduce the ingredient to cafes and luxury hotels.

In Japan, importer JP Mercado said demand had grown rapidly after the trend gained popularity in South Korea, with social media helping introduce the ingredient to cafes and luxury hotels.



Rooted in history Ube has been part of Philippine food culture for thousands of years, traditionally eaten boiled or used in desserts. Its popularity surged domestically during the Covid-19 pandemic, when purple bread became a major trend.

Manila baker Diane Bustos said her company now sells seven varieties of ube cookies, adding that its popularity had overtaken matcha in some circles.

Despite the boom, farmers face difficulties accessing quality planting materials, financing, storage facilities and processing equipment. Bonifacio has had to source raw ube from across the country to fulfil export orders, sometimes doubling his costs.

Agriculturist Leonilyn Ladao said the availability of quality planting materials remained a challenge.

PROTECTING THE INDUSTRY Production fell to 12,483 tonnes last year, a five-year low, according to Jose Zalde Samson of the country’s plant industry bureau. Officials attributed the decline partly to typhoons affecting key growing regions, although production rose around 17 per cent in the first half of 2026.

The government is exploring ways to shorten the growing season to six months and increase supply.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said the raw export ban aims to prevent other countries from using Philippine ube varieties to compete with local producers.

Mercado welcomed the move, describing ube as closely tied to Filipino identity.

“We have a stake in this. We have to protect it”, Bonifacio said. — AFP

FEATURES



REVISITING EIGHT OF OMAN’S CHARMING ABANDONED VILLAGES



Oman’s abandoned villages offer more than striking scenery. Through their winding alleys, stone houses and ancient water channels, they reveal how communities adapted to their surroundings, built their lives and eventually moved on, leaving behind traces of a life once lived.

YERU EBUEEN

BEYOND the mountain views and empty houses, Oman’s old settlements invite us to consider the lives people built and why they eventually moved on.

The first time I stepped into Harat Al Yemen, in Izki, I felt unnerved. Beyond each alley were more houses, doorways and traces of a once-busy community. How could a village of this size become abandoned?

As I walked further, the layout began to make sense. The mosque stood at the heart of the community, while entrances and passages connected homes and shared spaces. What first appeared to be a maze had an order to it.

In Oman, a harah is a traditional residential quarter where homes, places of worship and everyday routines bring people together.

Older Omanis had told me about an afternoon ritual: roasted coffee beans crushed in a mortar and pestle, their aroma travelling between houses as an invitation to share coffee. Standing in those empty alleys, I tried to imagine hearing that familiar sound.

At Sab Bani Khamis, also known as As Sab, on Jabal Shams, homes cling to the mountainside beneath towering rock faces. Reaching the settlement along the Balcony Walk, I wondered how families managed everyday tasks such as growing food, collecting water and carrying supplies home.

Accounts of the village describe a gradual departure, with some winter use continuing until around 2000, when its agricultural spring dried up. Better access to services elsewhere also encouraged people to leave.

At Wadi Bani Habib, on Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, houses built along the slopes reveal how architecture responded to the mountain climate and household

needs. Even damaged walls preserve traces of the builders’ knowledge.

Far north, near Lima in Musandam’s Wilayat of Khasab, Al Qanaif contains the remains of more than 200 stone houses, water basins and food-storage spaces. Here, builders adapted to rocky terrain and mountain runoff to make the landscape habitable.

In Al Qabil, Qurayat, ruined homes, a mosque and old falaj channels recall an agricultural settlement where fruit trees once grew. Drought affected the former oasis, highlighting how closely daily life depended on water.

Elsewhere, abandoned quarters exist alongside living communities. Old Al Mudhaireb, in Al Sharqiyah North, retains historic buildings near a community where restoration efforts have helped revive the old market.

At Al Saloot, in Wadi Bani Kharus, Al Awabi, mosques, rock inscriptions and dated grave markers offer glimpses of a settlement connected to routes between the coast and interior.

In Wadi Al Murr, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, shifting sand enters homes and gathers around walls. Former residents still return to a place they once called home.

As I researched these villages, I kept wondering when staying became harder than leaving. Did water grow scarce? Did mountain winters become harder to bear? Did schools, healthcare or employment elsewhere make a different life possible?

Each village has its own story. An empty house cannot tell us everything.

To understand these places, look beyond the scenery. Follow the water channels, notice the storage rooms and consider the work behind an ordinary day.

The earth holds traces of these lives, but families carry their memories too.

I arrived at Harat Al Yemen wondering how so many homes could become empty. I left wondering what new doors had opened for those who moved on.

