

IN BRIEF

DEADLINE FOR VOTER REGISTRATION



The Ministry of Interior announced that October 31 has been set as the final date to submit (Municipal Councils Elections) voters’ registration applications or to transfer voters’ registration status within the Electoral Register for the forthcoming Municipal Councils Elections’ 4th term. The ministry pointed out that voters who wish to register for the forthcoming Municipal Councils elections, or want to have their registration status transferred from one wilayat to another, should submit their applications via ‘Intikhab’ mobile application or via the official Elections website (elections.om) before the aforementioned deadline.

LOW PRESSURE MAY AFFECT OMAN FROM WEDNESDAY

Satellite imagery and weather analyses of the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre have shown the presence of a tropical depression located southwest of the Arabian Sea at 59.0°E longitude and 7.7°N latitude. Wind speed around the centre of the weather system is estimated at 17-27 knots (31-50 km/h). The centre’s forecast indicates that the tropical depression will move westward and northwestward towards the Horn of Africa with no direct impacts on the Sultanate of Oman over the next five days. However, there is a chance of high- and medium-level cloud formation, which may lead to scattered rainfall over parts of the Dhofar and Al Wusta governorates starting from Wednesday. — ONA

SALALAH WELCOMES WINTER TOURISTS



Salalah Airport received the first charter flight arriving directly from the Hungarian market, carrying 182 tourists on board, coinciding with the resumption of the winter tourism flights to Dhofar Governorate. According to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, this comes as part of efforts to enhance direct air connectivity with global markets and to leverage the unique natural and historical attributes of Dhofar Governorate to attract more visitors during the winter tourism season. **DETAILS ON P6**

OPINION



HM’s visit to deepen strategic relations... by Dr Khalfan al Harrasi — P8

Visit a tribute to strong ties... by Ray Petersen — P9

HM BEGINS STATE VISIT TO UK TODAY

VISIT TO BOOST COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK will pay a State Visit to the United Kingdom (UK), starting from Monday. This came in a statement issued by the Diwan of Royal Court. “In reinforcement of the enduring historical bonds between the Sultanate of Oman and the friendly United Kingdom, and in response to the gracious invitation extended to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik from His Majesty King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth, His Majesty the Sultan will pay state visit to the United Kingdom from Monday. “His Majesty the Sultan’s visit to the United Kingdom comes within the framework of reinforcing all that would elevate the facets of cooperation existing between the two countries across various domains, and the means of developing them in service of their mutual interests and aspirations in the present and the future. During the visit, the two leaderships will hold consultation and coordination on various developments on the regional and international arenas.”

HISTORICAL ROOTS Omani-British relations draw their historical roots from the convergence of two maritime powers in the Indian Ocean, a beginning embodied in the Treaty of 1800 that enshrined a framework of “permanent friendship” between the two countries. On January 18 of that year, Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed and Captain John Malcolm, envoy of the British Governor-General in India, signed a supplementary agreement affirming the Treaty of 1798 and stipulating that “the friendship of the two States may remain unshook till the end of time, and till the sun and moon have finished their revolving career.” Dr Nasser bin Abdullah al Saqri, Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), said that the state visit by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom acquires exceptional historical and civilisational significance. It comes as an extension of relations whose roots reach back to the late eighteenth century, evoking a long legacy of political communication and civilisational interaction between the two countries. — ONA **SEE ALSO P2 & 3**



WINDSOR DECKED UP TO WELCOME HIS MAJESTY

Preparations continue in the United Kingdom (UK) to receive His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik who will be paying a state visit in response to the gracious invitation received by His Majesty from King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth. The streets of Windsor are adorned with the flags of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom — a scene that reflects the bonds of friendship and the historic relations uniting the two friendly countries.

Muscat Art Exhibition to be held from Oct 28

MUSCAT: Bilarab bin Haitham Initiatives, in partnership with Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, announced the organisation of the fifth edition of the Muscat Art Exhibition 2026, from October 28-30 at the exhibition hall. This partnership comes as an extension of the initiatives’ mission to empower individuals, enhance creativity, inspire innovation, and expand its journey that began with architecture to encompass visual arts, reaffirming their close connection to the identity of both place and human. Through the organisation of the exhibition, Bilarab bin Haitham Initiatives aims to support artists, highlight their works, make the artistic experience accessible to

various segments of society, and open a space for dialogue among artists, architects, and designers, thereby enhancing the presence of arts in the Sultanate of Oman’s cultural landscape. Eng Iyad al Rawas, representative of the initiatives, pointed out that holding this exhibition underscores the Initiatives’ keenness to celebrate humans as the core of creativity, by offering an artistic space through which the horizons of inspiration expand, contributing to highlighting the participants’ outputs and creations. Said al Shanfari, CEO of Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, expressed his delight over partnering with Bilarab bin Haitham Initiatives to organise this year’s edition of the Muscat



Art Exhibition, given its role in enriching the exhibition experience, highlighting the diversity of the artistic scene, and providing the public with an opportunity to explore diverse artistic and cultural experiences. The exhibition this year witnesses wide participation of more than 300 artists and will open its doors to the public over

three days, daily from 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm. The Initiatives are participating in the exhibition with a dedicated pavilion showcasing a collection of selected paintings, each telling a different story that confirms that creativity is unified even if its languages and pathways vary. It is worth noting that Bilarab bin Haitham Initiatives is a leading cultural and societal umbrella centred around Omani individuals. It began in 2022 with the launch of the Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design under the Royal blessing of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and under the supervision of HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat. — ONA

WINDSOR
ADORNED
WITH
OMAN’S
FLAGS TO
WELCOME
HM



Streets of Windsor are adorned with the flags of Oman and the UK.

WINDSOR: Preparations continue in the United Kingdom (UK) to receive His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq who will be paying a state visit in response to the gracious invitation received by His Majesty from King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth. The streets of Windsor are adorned with the flags of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom — a scene that reflects the bonds of friendship and the historic

relations uniting the two friendly countries, and that embodies the manifestations of welcome for the Royal visit of His Majesty the Sultan — a visit that stands as a landmark station in the journey of Omani-British relations. The visit will advance bilateral cooperation in various fields in a manner that serves mutual interests and boosts the achievement of the two countries' aspirations of further partnership and cooperation. — ONA



— ONA

— ONA

OMANI-BRITISH CULTURAL RELATIONS: A JOURNEY SPANNING MORE THAN TWO CENTURIES

MUSCAT: Culture bridges distances between nations, brings peoples closer together, and plays a role in building relationships and partnerships, in addition to its influence in fostering understanding among different nations.

From this standpoint, cultural relations between Oman and the friendly United Kingdom have been a principal component of bilateral ties extending over more than two centuries, having evolved from early diplomatic and commercial exchanges into a multifaceted partnership encompassing education, the arts, heritage preservation and people-to-people bonds.

These deep-rooted ties have been reflected in the context of key institutions and have continued, thanks to active cooperation in contemporary cultural fields.

Cultural cooperation between the two friendly countries represents an extension of long-standing historical relations, emerging within a context of particular official interest and being pursued to be more present and of a qualitative nature along clear tracks, including official meetings and the Oman-UK Joint Working Group.

One of the clauses of the Comprehensive Agreement on Enduring Friendship and Bilateral Cooperation, signed by the two friendly countries in 2019, includes support for cooperation in education and the strengthening of ties between universities, alumni networks, and youth exchanges.

Within the context of cultural relations between the two friendly countries, Oman produced a documentary film in 2017 entitled 'Crossing the Empty Quarter', reenacting the story of two Omani travellers and a third British explorer who together covered 1,300 kilometres on foot and on camel back across the Empty Quarter.

This journey retraced the first documented crossing of



MICHELLE POTTS

Director of the British Omani Society

the Empty Quarter desert in 1930, recorded by an Omani named Shaikh Saleh bin Kalut and a Briton named Bertram Thomas — an unprecedented achievement that made headlines around the world.

This documentation reflects one facet of the civilisational interconnectedness between the two friendly countries and peoples, affirming the depth of historical communication across past decades, concretely embodied in reality across various fields and at different levels. There are also joint projects between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom, most notably the exploratory journey project 'Oman: Jewel of Arabia,' launched in London in November 2024 under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, and His Royal Highness Prince William of Wales.

Cultural cooperation extends prominently into the museum sector, as Omani institutions and the British Museum have

established a sustainable relationship, exemplified by the British Museum's International Training Programme, through which Omani museum specialists acquired specialised skills in collections care, valuation work, museum practices, and institutional governance.

Exhibitions such as 'Jewellery and Identity,' which featured Omani jewellery and costumes gifted to the British Museum, have allowed British audiences to explore Omani heritage and highlighted the close cultural ties between the two countries. This cooperation continues to flourish, with dialogue ongoing between Omani and British museums to explore new horizons for knowledge exchange and cultural understanding, in addition to the cultural and heritage exhibitions organised by the Embassy of Oman in London and cultural tourism promotion campaigns in various British cities.

The British Council has been a pivotal pillar of this relationship since opening its

office in Oman in 1972. Over the past decades, the Council has facilitated educational and cultural exchange on a wide scale, providing English language training to more than 6,000 people annually and enabling more than 16,000 people to obtain British qualifications. Its programmes extend to encompass the arts, education, and society.

The Council also runs the UK alumni network in Oman, which comprises more than 1,500 graduates and offers events for networking and professional development. In parallel with these efforts, the British Omani Society, founded in 1976, works to strengthen the historical and cultural ties between the two countries through lectures, publications, and outreach in both Muscat and London. In 2011, the Society established the 'Next Generation Group' to ensure the continuation of this deep friendship across younger generations.

Among the Society's most prominent activities is the 'Arts Group' project, which began in 2024 and focuses on intellectual and artistic exchange between Omani and British artists. Omani artists travelled to Britain in 2024, and in January 2026 British artists visited Oman to participate in workshops in Muscat and the desert, with an art exhibition held at the British Embassy in Muscat in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

By bringing together Omani and British artists, the project fosters the exchange of ideas, techniques, and perspectives, contributing to the building of a vibrant artistic community that reflects the shared commitment of both countries to cultural development.

The British Omani Society also hosted last September a series of introductory sessions for the 'Live Oman' initiative, held on Oxford

Street in London, to introduce the Sultanate of Oman as an integrated destination for living, working, and investing, with the participation of a number of local and international institutions and companies investing in the Sultanate of Oman.

Michelle Potts, Director of the British Omani Society, said that the Royal visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to the United Kingdom embodies the strength of Omani-British relations and the shared commitment to building a bright future, as the Society celebrates its golden jubilee, marking fifty years of supporting friendship, understanding, and cooperation between the two countries.

She noted that the visit reflects the growing cooperation in the fields of education, culture, innovation, and trade, and that through the Society's programmes, events, and networks—which help transform these aspirations into firmly rooted people-to-people bonds—it has reached thousands of individuals over fifty years through educational exchanges, cultural initiatives, and commercial engagement.

On another front, relations between the friendly peoples of Oman and the UK enjoy a venerable history, having transcended official ties to reach an authentic human friendship, as Omani and British students exchange academic and cultural visits, fostering mutual understanding between the new generation.

Omanis and Britons are also bound by numerous commercial and social relationships, in addition to tourism exchanges that are witnessing continuous growth.

Additionally, the resident communities in both countries contribute to strengthening these bonds through cultural activities. — ONA

From Liverpool to Sultana: Testimonies to centuries-old Omani-British friendship

MUSCAT: Omani-British relations draw their historical roots from the convergence of two maritime powers in the Indian Ocean, a beginning embodied in the Treaty of 1800 that enshrined a framework of “permanent friendship” between the two countries. On January 18 of that year, Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed and Captain John Malcolm, envoy of the British Governor-General in India, signed a supplementary agreement affirming the Treaty of 1798 and stipulating that “the friendship of the two States may remain unshook till the end of time, and till the sun and moon have finished their revolving career.” The first half of the nineteenth century is regarded as the golden age of this relationship. During the reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (1806-1856), the Omani fleet possessed major vessels, among them the ship “Liverpool,” built in Bombay in 1826 and armed with seventy-four cannons—specifications rivaling those of the great European powers of the time. Sayyid Said later presented it to King William IV, and it was incorporated into the Royal Navy. This parity reflects the depth of Oman's maritime tradition, for the Omanis, after expelling the Portuguese from Muscat in 1650, had come to dominate the trade routes of the western Indian Ocean.

In this context, Oman News Agency (ONA) presents the views of a number of researchers and specialists in historical affairs, offering a historical narrative of the most prominent features of the friendship between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom, with a focus on how this relationship began in the nineteenth century and continues to the present day under the Renewed Renaissance of the Sultanate of Oman, led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

Dr Nasser bin Abdullah al Saqri, Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), said that the anticipated state visit by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to the United Kingdom acquires exceptional historical and civilisational significance. It comes as an extension of relations whose roots reach back to the late eighteenth century, evoking a long legacy of political communication and civilisational interaction between the two countries, and carries profound symbolic meaning as the first state visit to the United Kingdom since 1982, embodying the continuity and renewal of relations across generations and eras.

He explained that Omani-British relations are read as a unique or exceptional model within the context of Britain's relations with the countries of the region — a distinction owed not merely to their antiquity, but



DR NASSER BIN ABDULLAH AL SAQRI

Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at SQU



DR BADRIYA BINT MOHAMMED AL NABHANI

A researcher in history



DR BAHIYA BINT SAID AL ATHOBI

A researcher in Omani military history



DR YOUNIS BIN JAMIL AL NUMANI

A researcher in historical affairs



Omani-British relations draw their historical roots from the convergence of two maritime powers in the Indian Ocean. — ONA

to the historical and diplomatic characteristics that set them apart in both quantity and quality.

He added: “At a time when Britain's relations with a number of countries in the region crystallised during the twentieth century, the official roots of relations between Oman and Britain extend back to 1798, reflecting more than two centuries of continuous communication and interaction. This historical extension was not merely a chronological succession of events and interests; across multiple phases it contributed to the formation of what can be described as a historical-diplomatic balance in which mutual expertise, interests, and a level of trust and political understanding accumulated, granting this relationship a degree of particularity, flexibility, and continuity not equally available in many other regional relationships.” He indicated that the continuity of Omani-British relations across disparate historical periods is explained as the product of conscious diplomatic engineering, having succeeded in transcending historical phases marked by tensions and major events that swept the region — from the Cold War and the post-colonial era, to the emergence of oil and the transformations it wrought, to globalisation and the rise of new powers, and on to the crises the region currently witnesses. At every stage, the relationship between the two countries was redefined in keeping with the context.

In a related context, Dr Badriya bint Mohammed al Nabhani, a researcher in history, affirmed that the nineteenth century constitutes a pivotal phase in the history of Omani-British relations, noting that she tends to read this century in three stages. She explained that the first stage began in an international context, as on 12 October 1798, the first cooperation agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and Britain was signed by Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed and the envoy of the East India Company, Mehdi Ali Khan. On 18 January 1800, Captain John Malcolm affirmed this agreement, under which the presence of an agent of the Company in Muscat was approved.

She noted that the second stage is the era of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (1806-1856), which in her view was the most mature phase of Omani diplomacy in that century. She explained that the third stage began with the death of Sayyid Said, and noted that during the reign of Sultan Faisal bin Turki, the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation was signed on March 19, 1891. She explained that the milestones of cooperation between Oman and Britain can be summarised in four: first, the security of navigation in the Gulf, where Omani forces participated in the campaigns of 1809 and 1819-1820 that culminated in the General Treaty of 1820; second, cartography, where the Indian Navy conducted precise surveys of the Omani coasts in the 1830s, accompanied by travellers such as Lieutenant James Wellsted, who published his book on his travels in Oman in 1838, and these maps served commercial navigation for long decades.

Third, communications, where a telegraph station was established in 1864 on the island of Maqlab in Khasab, Musandam, as part of the line linking India to Europe. Fourth, steamships, where vessels of the British India Steam

Navigation Company began calling regularly at Muscat from the 1860s, connecting it to Bombay and Basra. For her part, Dr Bahiya bint Said al Athobi, a researcher in Omani military history, explained that when speaking of Omani-British military relations, it is necessary to distinguish between the early beginnings of political and maritime relations between the two countries and the phase in which military cooperation took on a direct character in organising forces and establishing military units.

She added that the most prominent shift in the nature of military relations began in the second decade of the twentieth century, specifically from 1913, when Oman witnessed internal political developments that necessitated a reconsideration of the organisation of forces in Muscat.

She noted that British documents revealed the role played by the British Political Resident in the Gulf, Percy Cox, who in 1913 presented a conception for forming a military force in Muscat. This was followed by the Omani military statement issued by Sultan Taimur bin Faisal in 1914, and then the Political Agent and British Consul in Muscat, Robert Benn, advanced a plan for the formation of the Muscat Levy Corps, encompassing the organisational and financial aspects necessary for its establishment. She explained that these plans reveal the beginning of the transition from reliance on traditional military formations and auxiliary forces to thinking about establishing a more regular force subject to a defined military organisation.

For his part, Dr Younis bin Jamil al Numani, a researcher

in historical affairs, said that trade played a pivotal role in Omani-British rapprochement, particularly given Oman's strategic location on global trade routes, and that the economic aspect, especially commercial exchange, was the gateway to the convergence of the two countries. He added that the agreement signed by Britain with Oman in 1798 is among the most prominent and earliest agreements that paved the way for Omani-British rapprochement, as dangers were closing in on Oman both internally and externally. Sayyid Sultan bin Ahmed therefore renewed the treaty with Britain in 1800, with new clauses added, and commercial agreements between the two countries followed thereafter in what later became known as the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce.

He said: “The relationship between Britain and Oman can be described as one of mutual respect, for neither imposed its culture on the other; rather, each respected and came to know the other, unlike some countries that imposed their policies and culture at the same time.” He noted that there are indicators pointing to the depth of cultural relations, among them the Omani-British Friendship Association, the British Council, and partnerships between educational institutions, such as the adoption of curricula like the Cambridge curriculum, as well as the cooperation of Sultan Qaboos University with several British universities, and the scholarships offered by both countries. He noted that museums play a prominent cultural and educational role, and that there is cooperation between the National Museum of Oman and British museums. — ONA



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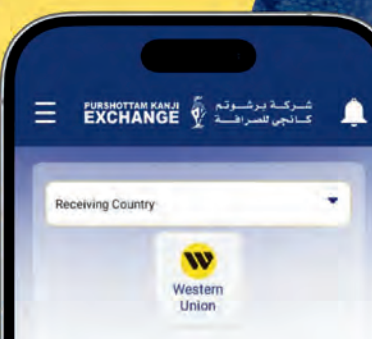
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OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Officials tour the transmission equipment at the new radio station in the Wilayat of Maqshin.

NEW RADIO STATION EXTENDS COVERAGE IN MAQSHIN

MAQSHIN: The Ministry of Information opened a radio transmission station in the Wilayat of Maqshin in Dhofar Governorate on Sunday, extending Oman Radio coverage to areas along the vital road linking the Governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar. The station broadcasts the Holy Quran Channel on 96.7 MHz, the General Programme on 103.9 MHz, the Youth Programme on 101.3 MHz and the English Programme on 92.8 MHz. Dr Mohammed bin Said al Sha'ashai, Director-General of Information in Dhofar Governorate, said the station was part of the ministry's efforts to expand radio coverage and improve the technical efficiency of the broadcasting system, allowing listeners to benefit from the content of the General, Youth, Holy Quran and Oman FM English channels. — ONA

OMAN, LEBANON SIGN MoU IN AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY SECTORS



The MoU was signed by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi and Dr Nizar Youssef Hani.

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Lebanese Republic in the field of sustainable development for the agriculture, fisheries and food security sectors. The memorandum was signed on behalf of the ministry by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and on the Lebanese side by Dr Nizar Youssef Hani, Minister of Agriculture. The MoU aims to enhance joint cooperation between the two countries in the agricultural and fisheries fields, and to exchange expertise, experiences, and technical knowledge. This contributes to developing the productive sectors and achieving sustainable development, in addition to supporting efforts aimed at enhancing food security and utilising the capabilities and resources available to both sides. — ONA

Information Minister visits Oman Observer

MUSCAT: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, visited the Oman Daily Observer on Sunday and met the editorial team to review the newspaper's work across its print and digital platforms. The minister commended the role of Omani media in raising public awareness, highlighting national development and addressing issues of concern to society. He also praised the Observer's contribution through its print



edition and digital platforms. Dr Al Harrasi emphasised the importance of original journalism, urging journalists to maintain their individual writing styles and reflect local perspectives in their reporting. He also highlighted the growing importance of artificial intelligence literacy in journalism, stressing that AI should support journalists' work while originality and editorial judgement remain central to producing credible and authentic news coverage.

Students have until Oct 24 to apply for 2,894 seats

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

STUDENTS WHO missed out on a place in the first round of higher education admissions have until Saturday, October 24, to apply for 2,894 seats in the second round for the 2026-2027 academic year, including newly introduced engineering scholarships for students on the vocational and technical pathway.

Registration with the Unified Admission Centre (UAC) at the Ministry of Education opened on Sunday. Admission tests and personal interviews for programmes that require them will take place from October 28 to November 1, and results will be announced on the evening of November 3. The seats are new and vacant places at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), vocational colleges and other higher education programmes, as well as internal and external scholarships. They are listed in the supplementary Student Guide for 2026/2027, published on the centre's official website and social media platforms. Bassam bin Sulaiman al Hasani, Head of Guidance and Counselling at the UAC, said the vacancies covered most higher education institutions and urged eligible students to make sure their applications were submitted correctly before the deadline. The second round is open to students who completed their General Education Diploma in the 2025/2026 academic year and did not previously register with the centre, those who were not offered a place in the first round and those

Applicants must re-enter every programme they wish to compete for, as preferences submitted in earlier stages will not carry over to the new application page



Eligible students have until October 24 to register for the second round of higher education admissions. — File photo

who received offers but did not complete their registration, Al Hasani said. Students who enrolled in a higher education institution and later withdrew, and those studying at their own expense, may also apply if they meet the admission requirements. Students who have secured places and completed their registration are not eligible. Admission to some programmes remains competitive. Applicants for SQU, external scholarships and specified health and education programmes must have a competitive score equal to or higher than that of the last student admitted to the programme in the first round, and must meet all other programme requirements, Al Hasani noted. The new engineering scholarships are intended to widen opportunities for students on the vocational and technical pathway at vocational colleges to continue their studies in

engineering. Applicants must re-enter every programme they wish to compete for, as preferences submitted in earlier stages will not carry over to the new application page. The centre advised students to check their eligibility through the 'Enter and View Programmes' screen on its online registration system. Students with qualifications equivalent to the General Education Diploma, including international qualifications obtained inside or outside Oman, must upload copies of their academic transcripts, identity cards and equivalency certificates issued by the Ministry of Education through their registration accounts. The centre called on eligible students to review the admission requirements, observe the registration deadlines and follow updates on its official website and social media channels.

SQU opens 1.5 million Sustainable Energy Research Centre Laboratory

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) opened its Sustainable Energy Research Centre Laboratory on Sunday, a facility of about 774 square metres built with an investment of nearly RO 1.5 million under a strategic partnership between the university and Oxy Oman. The opening was held under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. The laboratory comprises specialised research units for alternative fuels, energy materials, energy efficiency, thermal energy, and carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) and hydrogen, along with a modelling and simulation laboratory for smart grids and renewable energy systems and a dedicated studio for training and capacity building. It is intended to

provide a platform for developing technologies and solutions in sustainable energy and to support cooperation between academic and industrial institutions. The Ministry of Energy and Minerals, represented by the Oman Sustainability Centre, and SQU also signed an agreement to run the second edition of the "Kafa'a" (Efficiency) training programme over three years. The agreement was signed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU. It aims to train 275 participants in energy auditing and 20 in measurement and verification, and to incubate at least three national teams of four members each, supporting them



The Sustainable Energy Research Centre Laboratory was opened at Sultan Qaboos University on Sunday. — ONA

to develop solutions and services and set up startups specialising in energy efficiency. The first edition of the programme ran for six training weeks with 50 male and female trainees. It covered the fundamentals of energy auditing, field application and preparation for the Certified Energy Auditor (CEA) examination awarded by the Association of Energy Engineers (AEE), and 38 participants obtained the certification, a success rate of 76 per cent. Al Aufi said investing in scientific research, innovation and national capacity building was a strategic pillar for developing the energy sector and enhancing its competitiveness and sustainability, stressing the importance

of integrating the efforts of government, academic and private sector institutions. The laboratory and the renewal of the Kafa'a agreement connected scientific research with practical application and qualified Omani talent to use research outputs in creating new investment and economic opportunities, he said, enhancing entrepreneurship and in-country value while raising energy efficiency and reducing emissions in support of Oman Vision 2040 and the target of Net-Zero emissions by 2050. Prof Amer bin Saif al Hinai, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Research at SQU, said the laboratory has extended the work of the Sustainable Energy Research Centre since its establishment in 2017. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The meeting addressed a range of organisational and technical topics. — ONA

OMAN HOSTS 6TH SESSION OF INTERNATIONAL DATE COUNCIL

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, OCT 18

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, hosted on Sunday in Muscat the proceedings of the sixth session of the Members’ Council of the International Dates Council. The session aimed to discuss a number of topics related to the development of the palm and dates sector and the enhancement of international cooperation in this field.

The meeting, featuring the participation of a number of member states, addressed a range of organisational and technical topics. It reviewed the Council’s annual report, the most prominent achievements during the recent period, and matters related to the Council’s plans, programmes, and initiatives aimed at supporting and developing the palm and dates sector at the regional and international levels.

Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, stated in his speech that hosting the proceedings of the sixth session of the Members’ Council of the International Dates Council stems from the Sultanate of Oman’s keenness to enhance its role in supporting the Council’s decisions to reach the desired level. It also affirms its continuous support for the Council’s efforts and cooperation with member states in implementing the Council’s strategic initiatives and projects, and coordinating joint efforts.

“The Sultanate of Oman’s hosting of this meeting underscores its role in supporting international cooperation within the agricultural sector and strengthening joint efforts to develop the date palm and date industry — aligning with broader objectives to achieve sustainable development and enhance the economic value of this sector,” Al Habsi added.

The Council also reviewed the matter of state membership, examined the opportunities it provides for member states to participate in shaping directions, strategies and initiatives concerning the future of the date palm and date sector. The conference also addressed the enhancement of cooperation in areas such as standards, quality, food safety and access to international markets.

SECOND WAR COURSE BEGINS AT NDC



The ceremony was held under the auspices of Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College. — ONA

MUSCAT: The second War Course began on Sunday at the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies in Bait Al Falaj Camp for a number of senior officers from various military and security units.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College. In his speech, the Commandant of the National Defence College pointed out that the course includes a number of information, concepts, theories, experiences and mechanisms for handling and weighing them within a complex strategic environment.

He added that it also covers analysing situations, diagnosing their causes, and forecasting their future repercussions to support the decision-making process at the strategic level and enhance the ability to make appropriate decisions in accordance with varying circumstances within an integrated system aligned with national interests. — ONA

Energy security must be for all, Oman tells G20 forum

DR Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, called on G20 leaders to adopt energy and development policies that safeguard supply security, expand opportunities and preserve the rights of future generations, as Oman took part in the G20 Interfaith Forum in Salt Lake City, United States.

Speaking at a plenary session titled “Energy Policies, Religion, Peace, and Human Prosperity”, Al Maamari urged leaders to recognise religious and community institutions as essential partners in shaping and implementing transformation pathways. The forum was held under the theme “Resilient Hope, Shared Future”.

He said energy security in an interconnected world could not be achieved for anyone unless it was achieved for all, and that sharing resources meant sharing responsibility for them, turning them into a force for cooperation and a path towards shared prosperity and peace.

Al Maamari discussed the relationship between energy resources and the values of equity, sustainability and peace, stressing the importance of turning resources into shared prosperity that preserves human dignity and the rights of future generations. Balancing supply security, affordability and environmental protection was not only a technical and economic question, he said, but was also linked to moral values established by religions: using resources without



The G20 Interfaith Forum in Salt Lake City was held under the theme “Resilient Hope, Shared Future”. — ONA

Energy security in an interconnected world cannot be achieved for anyone unless it is achieved for all

harming others or the environment, or depriving future generations of their rights.

Achieving energy security and sustainable development required fairness in the distribution of resources, lasting benefits and trust in the fulfilment of commitments, he said. Priority should be given to communities not yet reached by energy services, and abundance and sustainability could complement each other through moderation and the reduction of waste and environmental harm.

He said the concept of stewardship placed humanity in a position of responsibility for the Earth and its resources, requiring decisions to take into account affected communities and the generations that would inherit their outcomes. From a religious perspective, prosperity was measured by human dignity and peace was a paramount goal, with religious and traditional leaders playing a role in building trust and

understanding among communities.

The minister reviewed Oman’s centuries-long interaction with the peoples of the world through maritime navigation, referring to Omani-American relations established by the Treaty of 1833 and the arrival of the Omani ship Sultana in New York in 1840, carrying the first Arab envoy to the United States.

He also spoke about the aflaj system, five of which are inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List, and what it embodies in responsible resource management and respect for the rights of others, as well as the waqf (endowment) system, whose impact extends across generations.

Al Maamari said the Omani model of coexistence was based on dialogue, good neighbourliness and mutual respect, citing the contribution of the “Message of Peace” and “Human Coexistence” projects in raising awareness of shared human values.

He highlighted the Muscat Plan, launched in June at United Nations headquarters in New York in partnership with the United Nations, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. The plan was the outcome of a consultative process involving religious and traditional leaders and representatives of indigenous peoples, aimed at enhancing the role of these leaders in conflict prevention and combating hate speech, based on the principle that peace among nations begins with trust within communities. — ONA



الهيئة العامة
لضمان جودة التعليم
Oman Authority for Quality
Assurance of Education



TENDER NOTICE

The Internal Tender Committee of the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA) hereby announces the issuance of the following tender: -

Tender Number	Tender Title	Company Grade:	Tender Fee	Dates		
				Distribution Till	Last Day to receive Clarifications	Bid Submission Date
40 /2026 General Tender	Providing Technical Support and Renewing Licenses for Huawei Network, Wireless, and Data Center Equipment	Companies and institutions specialized in Information Technology, registered with the Projects, Tenders, and Local Content Authority, classified under Grade (Excellent and First)	OMR 25	02 Nov 2026	10 Nov 2026	29 Nov 2026

The Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA) is hereby inviting all local, specialized bidders to participate in this TENDER as per the following instructions, in addition to all terms of TENDER enclosed in the TENDER documents.

For project brief, please visit the below link:

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

A. Purchase of Tender Documents

Companies specialized in this field and registered with the Projects, Tenders, and Local Content Authority under the grade specified above, and wishing to participate in the aforementioned tender, shall obtain the relevant Tender Documents through the Authority’s e-Tendering portal (Esnad) via the website below:

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

no later than the date specified in the above table, subject to the payment of the prescribed document fee through the electronic payment gateway available on the website.

B. Submission

- All Proposals should be SUBMITTED ONLINE AT e-TENDERING System (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- Tenders submitted shall remain valid for a period of ninety (180) days from the date of submission via the electronic portal.
- The Internal Tender Committee reserves the right to cancel or reject any tender without stating the reasons.
- Tenders must be submitted through the above-mentioned website no later than 10:00 a.m. on the specified closing date. Any tender received after this deadline shall not be accepted.
- The Internal Tender Committee shall not be bound to accept the lowest-priced tender or any other tender.

C. Correspondence Tender Inquiry:

All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online through the eTendering System ONLY.

e. Tendering System Inquiry:

All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and +968 24402200

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The 168th session of the GCC Ministerial Council was held in Bahrain. — ONA

Oman takes part in 168th GCC Ministerial Council session

MANAMA: Oman took part on Sunday in the 168th session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), held in Bahrain. The Omani delegation was headed by Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinaï, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry. The meeting discussed the latest developments in joint Gulf action and reviewed developments on the regional and international arenas. The meeting was attended by Sayyid Faisal bin Harib al Busaidi, Oman’s Ambassador to Bahrain, Ambassador Shaikh Ahmed bin Hashil al Maskari, Head of the Department of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and Regional Neighbourhood at the Foreign Ministry, and several officials. — ONA

Civil Defence unit highlights new identity



The ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Hilal al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah. — ONA

MANAH: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Unit in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate organised on Sunday at Oman Across Ages Museum in the Wilayat of Manah a ceremony to introduce its new identity, reviewing its tasks, competencies, and roles in protecting lives and property, and enhancing its readiness to deal with various incidents, emergencies, exceptional climatic conditions, and disasters. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah. The ceremony included a visual presentation addressing the journey of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, its stages of development, and its key competencies and tasks in the fields of firefighting, rescue, and ambulance services, alongside the efforts it exerts to enhance the public safety and security system, in addition to introducing its new identity and what it reflects in terms of institutional development and continuous modernisation in the work system and services provided to the community. — ONA

SAYYIDAH ZAYANA APPOINTED REGIONAL HEAD OF AASI

MUSCAT: Her Highness Sayyidah Zayana bint Ali al Said has been appointed Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Middle East and North Africa Association of Air Safety Investigators (AASI), reflecting Oman’s growing presence in international aviation safety organisations. The appointment is expected to strengthen regional cooperation, facilitate the exchange of technical expertise and support capacity-building in aircraft accident and incident investigation.



HH Sayyidah Zayana bint Ali al Said

The achievement builds on Oman’s efforts to expand its participation in international aviation safety organisations.

The Council of Ministers’ General-Secretariat approved Oman’s accession to the International Society of Air Safety Investigators (ISASI) on November 17, 2020. Founded in the United States in 1964, ISASI promotes professional cooperation and the exchange of knowledge among aviation safety investigators. Its Middle East and North Africa regional association, established in 2013, supports professional networking, technical knowledge-sharing and specialised training. — ONA

Winter charter flights bring European tourists

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, OCT 18

SALALAH Airport on Saturday received the first charter flight directly from Hungary, carrying 182 tourists, coinciding with the resumption of the winter tourism flight programme to Dhofar Governorate. According to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the development is part of efforts to strengthen direct air connectivity with international markets and leverage Dhofar’s distinctive natural and historical attractions to attract more visitors during the winter tourism season. Last week, Salalah Airport received its first charter flight from Slovakia, carrying 150 tourists. Salalah offers a striking contrast between its winter season, which runs from November to February or March, and the famous Khareef season. While the monsoon brings mist and lush greenery from June to September, winter offers warm, dry weather and clear skies, making the destination an attractive winter escape for visitors from colder European countries. Ali al Balushi, operations manager at Al Fawaz Tours, said winter was an ideal time to visit Salalah, particularly for European tourists. “We have sun and sea. Our winter guests enjoy it,” he said. Al Balushi has been conducting camping tours in the Rub Al Khali (Empty Quarter) since early October. Winter is considered the best time for desert safaris, as cooler



Visitors can enjoy the region’s natural beauty alongside its heritage and cultural experiences.

temperatures make camping and dune-bashing more comfortable. “The Rub Al Khali becomes extremely hot during summer, but it gets better by October, and during winter it becomes pleasant. Now it is around 35 degrees Celsius, and by night it is cooler. Most people like to watch the sunset over the sand dunes. Some people like to stay over and watch the sunrise,” he said. With the summer monsoon over, clearer skies and lower humidity open up opportunities to explore Dhofar’s beaches, mountains and natural landscapes. The sea is generally calmer, while high-altitude destinations such as Jabal Samhan offer cooler temperatures at night. Compared with the busy

khareef season, winter is generally quieter, with less traffic and a more relaxed atmosphere. Visitors can enjoy the region’s natural beauty alongside its heritage and cultural experiences. Among the popular coastal attractions are Al Mughsail Beach and Marneef Cave. Although the blowholes at Marneef Cave are less active during winter, the calmer sea makes the season suitable for swimming and beach picnics, subject to local sea conditions. Fazayah Beach, accessible by four-wheel-drive vehicles, is another attraction, while Wadi Darbat, Ayn Razat and Ayn Athum offer opportunities to explore Dhofar’s natural scenery. Jabal Samhan is particularly

appealing during winter, when clear skies provide panoramic views and spectacular sunrise and sunset vistas. “We take tourists on day trips to Jabal Samhan. There are tourists who specifically come to watch the sunrise from Jabal Samhan and others who like to perform yoga and meditation. We make our tea there, and the visitors enjoy it while they watch the sun rise,” Al Balushi said. Dhofar’s archaeological and cultural heritage is another major draw. Al Baleed Archaeological Park and the Museum of the Land of Frankincense, located in Salalah, offer insights into the region’s historic role in the frankincense trade and Oman’s maritime heritage. Further east, the ruins of Sumhuram, also known as Khor Rori, overlook a lagoon that attracts migratory birds, including flamingos. Inland, visitors can explore Wubar, another significant site associated with the historic frankincense trade routes. Dhofar is internationally renowned for its frankincense, and visitors can explore traditional souks to purchase the aromatic resin and locally produced perfumes. Boat excursions from Mirbat for dolphin watching have also gained popularity. Seasonal sightings of humpback whales along the eastern coastline add to the region’s marine attractions. Dhofar’s coastal lagoons provide habitats for migratory birds throughout the winter months, making the region an appealing destination for birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts.

OMANI FOLK POETRY NEEDS STRONGER VOICES TO FLOURISH

MUSCAT: Omani handicrafts can preserve Oman’s cultural identity while reaching global markets by blending traditional techniques with contemporary design, quality and innovative marketing, says Zuwaina bint Sultan al Rashdi, CEO of Dar Al Harfiya (House of Crafts). She said traditional crafts represent a visual record of Oman’s history, with patterns, colours and techniques in textiles, silverwork, pottery, woodwork and palm-frond weaving reflecting the country’s diverse regions, communities and natural environment. “The goal is to move craftsmanship from the concept of a traditional piece to a contemporary product that carries the spirit of Oman and can be part of our daily lifestyle,” she said in an interview with Oman News Agency. Al Rashdi stressed that modernising traditional crafts should not compromise their cultural significance. Instead, artisans can adapt designs, colours, packaging and uses to contemporary needs while preserving the techniques, symbols and stories behind each piece.

Modernising traditional crafts should not compromise their cultural significance but instead artisans can adapt and use contemporary needs while preserving the techniques



She highlighted opportunities to incorporate traditional elements into corporate gifts, home décor, accessories, hospitality products and office supplies, making Omani craftsmanship relevant to younger generations and new markets. She said competing internationally requires more than attractive products, emphasising the importance of quality, innovation, pricing, packaging, effective marketing and consistent production. Social media also offers opportunities to showcase artisans, explain the meanings behind traditional designs and tell the stories of the people and communities that sustain these crafts. Al Rashdi noted that preserving Omani handicrafts is a shared responsibility, requiring public support through purchasing local products and passing traditional knowledge to younger generations. She expressed hope that Omani crafts would gain a stronger presence in international markets, museums, hotels, shops and exhibitions as contemporary design products that reflect Oman’s cultural identity. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



Demonstrators clash with police amid an anti-government protest held by students, in Tirana, Albania. — Reuters

Albanian PM says protests pose threat to EU membership

TIRANA: Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama rejected calls to step down and said street protests, which continued for a sixth day, were a threat not to his government but to Albania's hopes of joining the European Union. The unrest pose the biggest challenge yet to Rama, who has governed since 2013 and last year won a fourth term in office.

"I am not being challenged, the government is not being challenged, a government majority or a winning party in the elections is not being challenged but a path is being challenged, a mission is being challenged," Rama said in a live address on Facebook. "Albanians need to think very clearly: Do they want this, do they want that, or do they want the EU?"

Rama invited students to dialogue as excavators dug up and removed the paving outside his office in central Tirana before protests started on Sunday. The US embassy in Tirana urged protesters to refrain from violence. "Violence, rioting, physically injuring others, and the destruction of property are not civic engagement," it said. Rama blamed unspecified foreign interests for the protests and for what he said was an attempted drone attack at his office this week. — Reuters

Iran urges US to accept proposal to reopen Hormuz



Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz near the beach of Bandar Abbas, Iran. — Reuters file photo

DUBAI: Iran's offer to the United States to reopen the Strait of Hormuz within seven days is still on the table, Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi told Iranian media outlets on Sunday. Iran presented its proposal in mid-September after an interim ceasefire collapsed. Tehran later acknowledged receiving a US response but Iran's security chief said last week negotiations have stalled because Washington failed to address all seven conditions for reopening the strait.

"Our situation is clear and based on the seven-days proposal presented to the US. They shared comments which we are reviewing, but our proposal is still on the table and if there is any honesty on the US part, which there isn't, the way to reopening the Strait of Hormuz is obvious," Araqchi said while in Baghdad for a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

Iran's conditions include, among other demands, the lifting of the US blockade on its ports, the lifting of US sanctions on its oil exports as well as ending hostilities on all regional fronts. If Washington accepts Tehran's conditions, the strait could reopen within six days, with talks resuming the following day, Araqchi said. — Reuters

JAPAN TO LAUNCH HISTORIC ROUND-TRIP MISSION TO MARS MOON

TOKYO: Japanese scientists are readying a mission to Mars's moons to retrieve samples that could help unlock the origins of the Solar System and life on Earth, in what aims to be the first round trip to the Martian region.

The unmanned Martian Moons eXploration (MMX) probe, a collaboration with US and European space agencies as well as numerous universities and tech companies, could also help lay the groundwork for eventual human exploration.

The flagship H3 rocket carrying the MMX is set to blast off from the Tanegashima Space Center on Tuesday at 4:41 am, according to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). "Being able to be involved in such a grand mission is incredibly exciting," Makoto Arita, project manager of JAXA's H3 rocket team, told reporters two days before the launch.

The spacecraft will arrive near Mars around August next year, where it will orbit one of its

moons, Phobos, before landing and collecting at least 10 grams of material from the surface during three years of operating within the Martian sphere.

A rover dubbed IDEFIX will first conduct surface observations aimed at ensuring a safe landing. "The sampling (from) Phobos is of course the world's first, but it means... this is the first round trip to the Martian system," MMX's project manager Yasuhiro Kawakatsu said. — AFP

Kremlin stresses war aims post Ukrainian large attacks

THE KREMLIN on Sunday said that Ukrainian large-scale attacks on Russian cities will not change its war aims as Kyiv hit Saint Petersburg with the biggest drone attack on Vladimir Putin's hometown since 2022, setting an oil refinery ablaze. Rising smoke was visible from Saint Petersburg's historic city centre on the banks of the Neva River, with Russia saying Ukraine struck an oil refinery and depot in night-time strikes that killed one person.



Fire and smoke rise near the St. Petersburg oil terminal, St. Petersburg, Russia. — Reuters

The attack came as Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky accused Moscow of violating an "energy ceasefire" announced by US leader Donald Trump 76 times as he warned Russia planned a "blackout" in Ukraine before winter. Kyiv struck Saint Petersburg as its ties with Washington strained massively in recent days, with Trump waiving sanctions on Russia and striking a deal with Moscow on diesel. Ukraine and its European allies have worried the White House is siding with Moscow, which launched Europe's worst war since WWII in 2022. Saint Petersburg Governor Alexander Beglov said one person was killed and five hospitalised in the city.

Authorities were fighting fires at the Saint Petersburg oil terminal, the Ruchyi oil depot and industrial warehouses, he said. Flights were restricted at the city's Pulkovo airport,

Beglov said, adding that 12 housing blocks were also damaged. Russia's VKontakte social network said its data centre was hit in the city and Ozon — Russia's second largest retailer — also reported a hit on its logistics centre.

The head of the wider Leningrad region, Alexander Drozdenko, said air defence shot down 144 Ukrainian drones, with state media saying this was the largest attack on the city since the start of the 2022 war. Ukraine has attacked Moscow and Saint Petersburg throughout the Kremlin's dragging offensive but large-scale hits on Russia's main cities are rare. "The Kyiv regime is putting up a fight, but that cannot change the course of events," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian media.

Russia's offensive against Ukraine

has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions. Moscow has rained drones and missiles on Ukrainian cities daily and Kyiv says its strikes are fair retribution. US-led peace talks have not led to a breakthrough. In a fifth year of war, few see a way out. Putin appeared in military uniform this week and repeated Moscow intends to seize the rest of east Ukraine.

Ukrainian strikes caused nationwide fuel shortages in Russia earlier this year. Leningrad governor Drozdenko said 20,000 people were without power in the town of Yanino, where a substation was hit. He said a woman and three children were hospitalised "with symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning" in the region after drone debris fell on a house, causing a fire. "I woke up at night, heard bangs, looked out of the window and there was a fire," 40-year-old Saint Petersburg resident Igor said. "They're getting on my nerves already," he added, referring to Ukraine.

In Ukraine, Zelensky said Russian strikes hit substations in four Ukrainian regions, leaving "tens of thousands of families without power." Ukrainian authorities said Russian attacks killed at least three people on Sunday, including a 27-year-old woman in Zaporizhzhia and two people in the western Volyn region bordering Poland. — AFP



FRANCE COUNTS COST OF WORST UNREST

PARIS: France woke on Sunday to the wreckage of one of its most violent days of unrest in years after protests over high prices and public services left one demonstrator dead, hundreds of police injured and nearly 1,800 people arrested. Nationwide demonstrations erupted into riots on Saturday, with a town hall torched, shops ransacked, and buildings covered in graffiti as violent groups clashed with police in cities across the country.

One protester died after suffering a cardiac arrest during demonstrations in Paris, where police made a record 855 arrests. Across France, more than 500 officers were injured, the interior minister said.

More than half a million people joined marches in scores of cities, marking the convergence of a month-long student movement with broader social discontent against rising living costs and declining public services.

Violent fringe groups targeted public buildings, looted luxury boutiques and supermarkets and attacked police vehicles and officers. A massive clean-up operation began in cities from Lille in the north to Marseille in the south and Strasbourg. — Reuters

ACTS OF VIOLENCE

EU 'strongly condemns' WB settler attack



The European Union said that it "strongly condemns" an attack the previous day by a group of Israeli settlers on visiting European diplomats. "The EU strongly condemns the latest attacks by violent settlers in the West Bank, including on European diplomats," the foreign service said in a communique. The communique also urged "full accountability as well as effective measures to prevent continued acts of violence and violent harassment against Palestinians. — AFP

SUDDEN INCURSION

Lithuanians take shelter after drone explosion



A suspected drone exploded over Lithuania after triggering an alert that forced residents in northern and central areas to seek shelter for an hour on Sunday morning, the president and other defence officials said. Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said later it regretted the incident in Lithuania's airspace, adding that it may have resulted from Russian electronic warfare diverting drones off course. The object flew into Lithuania's airspace from Poland, Defence Ministry said. — Reuters

CONTINUOUS CHALLENGES

Ebola has spread to 8th province in DRC



The Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo has spread to an eighth province, North Ubangi, Congo's public health institute said. The emergence of cases in the province, which borders Central African Republic, poses a new challenge for health authorities struggling to contain the outbreak. The National Institute for Biomedical Research confirmed two cases — including one death — in North Ubangi. — Reuters

OPINION

Women’s leadership should be the norm, not the exception



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is an Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

A COMMON saying shared by much of the world holds that there might not be so many wars if women made those choices. Of course, this is a generalisation and history offers many examples that counter this.

But the sentiment is real. As Oman observes Omani Women’s Day this week, there is much to celebrate and much to look forward to.

We often hear introductions which begin with ‘the first woman CEO’ or ‘the first woman adventurer’. This sounds like a compliment, but it hides a larger truth. Women leaders are still the anomaly, not the norm. It bears attention when the fact that a woman is leading an organisation is viewed as a unique event.

Research on women in leadership roles suggests that the expectations on them are still not normative. Respondents in studies across the world have suggested that women feel that they may have been appointed to fill the gender gap in top administration. Also, once they are heading an organisation, expectations change.

A University of Georgia study found that women were often stifled by their own internalised expectations of their role as

leaders: “Some of these societal expectations included presenting a nurturing attitude, prioritising employee well-being over productivity and not giving boss-like directives.”

The rise in opportunities across the board is undeniable.

The way to the top is more accessible today than ever before. Women now make up the majority of university graduates in many countries, including in the Gulf and South Asia. They run companies, manage budgets and teach the next generation of leaders.

But what is still lacking is an ease of getting to the top for the majority of women. The ones who do are few, in comparison to general trends. This is unfortunate because data shows women outperforming in every school leaving exam and in tertiary education. Potential is no longer the issue.

The reasons for this are not hard to find. Somewhere along the line, women’s lives take a detour. The gap is usually to be a parent and raise a family. This happens in the crucial years when others are making long-term plans for their careers. Upon returning to the workforce, women find that they have missed out on years of experience and others have jumped the queue to seniority.

Research on women in leadership roles suggests that the expectations on them are still not normative. Respondents in studies have suggested that women feel that they may have been appointed to fill the gender gap in top administration

There are further examples of women putting their careers on hold. Most demands on the family come at a time when women are climbing the ladder and they are having to halt. These demands often put an abrupt stop to any potential leadership role. The common notion that ‘women can have it all’ is swiftly put to the test.

The issue is not just that women are underrepresented in leadership roles, but that such a reality has consequences for our future. A child watching women chair meetings and make policy will regard this as a norm, not a reality to challenge. Others will also accept that competence is not judged by gender but by outcomes.

The solutions are well known: organisations must offer seamless opportunities to grow, offer better support services to employees, and make mentoring and recruiting transparent.

Creating an even playing field will mean that everybody can grow without treading on others’ shoes.

The aim is not to make women’s leadership less celebrated but less surprising. It should become the norm and be celebrated just as every other achievement of an institution or an organisation, and even of a family.

AFTER A YEAR IN TURMOIL, THE LOUVRE FACES UNCERTAIN FUTURE

JEREMY TORDJMAN

The Louvre is gradually plugging the security gaps exposed by the spectacular burglary of October 19 last year, but its reputation has taken a battering and its creaking infrastructure is a growing source of concern.

The beloved Parisian museum, the most visited in the world, has spent a year as the subject of police investigations, government reports and parliamentary inquiries following the theft of eight crown jewels in broad daylight a year ago.

The heist exposed a string of failures, from old or non-existent CCTV cameras and a chronic shortage of equipment to the lack of a modern security control room and a security director.

“We still feel the trauma of the burglary,” Valerie Baud, a workers’ representative from the CFDT trade union, said.

Parliament has heard how, in the run-up to the burglary, the institution had spent just \$3.4 million out of €83 million earmarked for a security masterplan because of administrative delays, management decisions and red tape.

The museum had “prioritised projects that were visible and attractive”, the French Court of Auditors found in one of many damning judgements.

That report and others, compounded by a staff strike and a spate of other incidents - including a water leak and a major ticket-fraud scandal - hastened the downfall of Louvre president Laurence des Cars, who resigned in February.

“The Louvre needs a change in security culture, which has yet to happen and will take several years,” said Laurent Lafon, who is monitoring the museum as chairman of the Senate’s culture committee. “The Louvre’s leaders must embrace the idea that security is a priority, which wasn’t the case,” he said.

New museum chief Christophe Leribault, who replaced des Cars in February, argues that change is taking place.

“The security masterplan is making rapid progress,” he said, while stressing the “complexity” of carrying out the work while keeping the museum open to the public.

The museum has pledged to invest around 20 million euros a year until 2032 and, since July, has a new dedicated security director.

Short-term worries about security are also giving way to longer-term questions about how to finance a palace-wide modernisation programme. — AFP

His Majesty’s UK state visit to deepen bilateral relations

THE State Visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the United Kingdom is an important occasion for Oman, especially when we remember that the last formal state visit by an Omani Sultan to Britain was 44 years ago, in 1982, when the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said was welcomed by Queen Elizabeth II.

This does not mean there have been no royal visits since then. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met Queen Elizabeth II in 2021 and King Charles III in 2025. But this visit is different. It is a formal state visit, and such occasions do not come around every day.



DR KHALFAN BIN HAMED AL HARRASI

The writer is an academic and researcher

Oman and Britain go back a long way together, almost 400 years, which is quite a history. Over those years, the two countries have worked together in trade, defence, education, business and many other areas. Their relationship has stood the test of time, even as leaders have come and gone and the world has changed. To me, what matters now is how this long experience can help both countries achieve even more together.

There is plenty on the table for this visit. The official announcement says it will focus on strengthening cooperation and discussing regional and international matters. Looking at the senior officials accompanying His Majesty, including those responsible for the economy, defence, education, foreign affairs, trade and investment, it is clear that there is much for both countries to discuss and develop together.

There will be a royal welcome at Windsor Castle, military honours, official photographs and a state dinner. These are important traditions that reflect the respect between the two countries. The visit also brings valuable opportunities to deepen cooperation across many areas, building on the work already taking place between Oman and Britain.

The state visit brings valuable opportunities to deepen cooperation across many areas, building on the work already taking place between Oman and Britain. One of the most important aspects of the visit is the opportunity to expand economic cooperation

One of the most important aspects of the visit is the opportunity to expand economic cooperation. Britain is already a major investor in Oman, and both countries have much to gain from closer ties in trade, investment and business. This could mean more opportunities for Omani companies, stronger links between businesses in both countries and new projects that support the national economy.

His Majesty’s visit comes at a time when Oman and Britain are looking to strengthen cooperation in several important areas, including renewable energy, manufacturing, technology and investment. These sectors have already been highlighted as promising opportunities for both countries and are closely linked to the goals of Oman Vision 2040. What makes this more important is the opportunity to build on these shared interests and take the relationship even further.

Economic cooperation is only one part of the picture, as Oman and Britain have also worked together in defence, security, education, research and cultural exchanges. His Majesty’s visit offers an important opportunity to strengthen these areas and explore further partnerships.

When we hear about cooperation between countries, we often think of governments, ministers and large companies. But international relations can also touch everyday life in ways we may not immediately notice. A new investment may help a small Omani business grow. Cooperation in technology may improve a service we use. A partnership in tourism may create opportunities for families and communities. What makes His Majesty’s visit especially meaningful to all of us is the possibility that cooperation at the highest level can bring benefits to people in different parts of Oman.

The political discussions are equally important. We live in a region where developments can quickly affect peace, security and economic activity. Oman has long believed in dialogue and peaceful solutions, while maintaining good relations with countries that do not always see eye to eye. Britain also has important interests in regional stability. The discussions during His Majesty’s visit will give both countries an opportunity to exchange views on matters that concern them both.

Oman’s position near the Strait of Hormuz gives it an important place in international trade and security. But geography is not the only reason. Oman’s approach to dialogue and its ability to maintain communication with different countries are also valuable. These strengths make cooperation and discussions between Oman and Britain very meaningful at a time when international developments affect countries far beyond our region.

We know that sometimes the most lasting connections begin with something as simple as a conversation.

This is where political conversations positively affect the relationship between the people of Oman and Britain. Over the years, people from both countries have travelled, studied, worked and done business together. Such connections have helped build understanding and trust, and His Majesty’s visit offers another opportunity to encourage these exchanges.

What I admire most about this visit is that it brings so many areas of cooperation together. From investment and trade to security, research, culture and international relations, the possibilities are broad. Different sectors may benefit in different ways, but together they can contribute to Oman’s development and prosperity.

Visit a tribute to strong ties between Oman and UK



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik visits the United Kingdom this week at the specific invitation of King Charles, extending again the mutually cherished relationship between the two countries.

On the occasion of this State Visit, the first accorded to a ruling Sultan since 1982, when the late Queen Elizabeth II hosted the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said in March 1982, although His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik did enjoy Prince Charles’ and Queen Camilla’s hospitality in the form of a high tea and an informal meeting at Windsor Castle, as recently as July 4 last year, during His Majesty’s brief private visit to the United Kingdom.

Their Majesties, King Charles and Queen Camilla, will host this State Visit at Windsor Castle, from October 19. According to a spokesman, matters of mutual interest will be discussed, with the objective of affirming the warm relationship between the two nations, which was a feature of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth II, who was a frequent visitor to the Sultanate of Oman, with Prince Phillip, the late Duke of Edinburgh. This strong relationship has been perpetuated by King Charles, who himself has visited Oman on four occasions, appreciative of the genuine affection held for Oman and Islam, saying in 2010 that the Islamic faith was ‘custodian to

the greatest heritage treasuries of knowledge, wisdom and spirituality,’ and that these were “a priceless gift to the rest of the world.” Wise words of true friendship.

The King’s son, Prince William, and Princess Catherine, then as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, have also visited Oman in 2019, where the wonderful impression the Omani people had made upon them was clear, the Duchess commenting on “the joy of the colourfully attired, joyous schoolchildren, the diverse and beautiful landscapes of Musandam and Wadi Al Arbreen, and the nation’s authentic Arabic heritage.”

Five years later, in 2024, he was to launch, alongside HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, the ‘Jewel of Arabia Expedition,’ referring to his 2019 trip as his inspiration for an expedition that followed in the footsteps of British explorer Bertram Thomas’s trek, in 1929, from Ras Al Hadd, now a protected turtle sanctuary, down the Eastern coast to Salalah, in the south, putting the spotlight on Oman’s youth.

Both monarchies have, in the past, paid strong tribute to their historic ties and shared mutual interest in not only the oil and gas sector but also in the environment, a passionate personal interest of Prince Charles, whose farms are managed with an emphasis on ecosystems, sustainable

The strong relationship has been perpetuated by King Charles, who himself has visited Oman on four occasions, appreciative of the genuine affection held for Oman and Islam

and environmentally friendly agricultural practices, and new technologies. The Royal Family has also supported Oman’s continued efforts at regional mediation, its commitment to quality education, and how this is working to not only educate, but empower young Omanis, and to help them develop leadership skills and resilience.

The monarchies’ support for decades of transformative education, the key driver in the Sultanate of Oman’s renaissance, for commercial opportunities, for scientific and cultural opportunities, will surely be discussed, while defence, not strictly within the realm of the UK monarchy, must be a concern in light of the continued efforts at destabilisation within the Middle East, specifically the Strait of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman, the disruption to trade, the fragile ecosystems, and unacceptable loss of life.

Only in a mutually appreciative relationship between two Royal families could visible awareness of each other’s communities, societies, and national interests be shared with the genuine knowledge and understanding of the challenges of a changing and evolving world result from, and in, genuine trust and respect. Shakespeare wrote, “Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.” However, these two crowns, and thrones, may be oceans apart, yet clearly share immense respect.

WHAT IS HOLDING UP THE US-INDIA TRADE DEAL?

ANUJ SRIVAS

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is set to visit India for the second time this year, as Washington seeks to bolster ties with a strategic partner despite months of friction over a trade deal.

Rubio will meet senior Indian officials, but will bypass the Indian capital during the trip in the coming week.

Instead, he will focus on investment and energy during visits to financial hub Mumbai and India’s oil hub of Jamnagar, which is home to billionaire Mukesh Ambani’s refining complex, the world’s largest. The elephant in the room will be the inability by both countries to seal their long-awaited trade deal, experts say.

Several factors, including US President Donald Trump’s tariff blitz, friction over energy imports and Washington’s warmer ties with Pakistan have made it harder for negotiators to clinch an agreement. Rubio will start his six-day overseas trip on Saturday with a visit first to Uzbekistan before arriving in India, according to the US State Department.

Here are some of the challenges the trade pact has faced and the road ahead.

India and the United States agreed in February on the framework for an interim deal under which Washington would lower reciprocal tariffs from 25 per cent to 18 per cent and India would reduce duties on a range of industrial and agricultural goods. Despite months of negotiations, the agreement has not yet been finalised and signed.

One reason is the legal uncertainty surrounding Trump’s tariff plans after court challenges undermined the reciprocal tariffs that formed their basis. “The February framework had offered to reduce India’s reciprocal tariff.. in return for substantial Indian concessions. Once that tariff regime was struck down, the value of the US offer became unclear,” trade expert Ajay Srivastava said in a note. India is also wary of new trade measures by Washington that could impact it, including an investigation into alleged unfair practices in several countries and a new law that allows for up to 100 per cent tariffs on nations that purchase Russian oil.

Trump on Friday signed an executive order that waived those threatened sanctions.

Progress appears to have hit several hurdles. For the better part of this year, both governments spoke optimistically about the possibility of finalising the interim deal. US Ambassador to India Sergio Gora in June said negotiators were working on the “last one percent” of the pact. More recently, the tone has turned markedly cautious.

India’s Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said last week that talks had hit a “plateau”, with little room for further concessions.

Her remarks came days after US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said an announcement was not “imminent”.

Agriculture remains a sensitive area for India, which is reluctant to expose farmers to greater foreign competition. — AFP

Omani women’s story...woven through their hands

THE STORY of Omani women did not begin with a title, a degree, or a seat at a decision-making table. Its roots go deeper, into the lives of generations of women who carried responsibilities with resilience, protected the values of their communities and passed knowledge from one generation to another.

In villages and towns, across mountains and deserts, women helped sustain families, preserve traditions and maintain the ties that hold communities together. Their contributions were not always recorded in official documents, but their influence was written into the lives they shaped.

Today, the scenario may be different, but the spirit of determination remains. The Omani woman is now seen in a laboratory, a boardroom, a university, a newsroom, a technology centre, or a factory. She may be developing solutions, influencing policy or exploring fields that previous generations could barely have imagined.

These are not separate stories. They are chapters of the same journey. The hands that once preserved a community’s heritage can now help shape its digital future. The wisdom passed down through generations can collaborate with scientific discovery, business ambitions and global leadership.

We often celebrate exceptional women by telling their stories of determination: how they overcame obstacles, worked harder, persevered and eventually succeeded. These stories deserve to be told. But talent is everywhere and opportunity is not always equally within reach. This is where the responsibility of institutions, employers and society becomes meaningful. Empowerment is not merely telling women that they can succeed. It is creating environments in which their abilities can be developed, their contributions fairly evaluated and their ambitions pursued.

There is another story that deserves greater attention: the story of the women who are expected to be many things at once. She may be



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and communications professional



We often celebrate exceptional women by telling their stories of determination.

a professional with ambitious goals, a mother with deep responsibilities, a daughter who supports her family, a citizen who cares about her community and an individual with dreams that belong entirely to herself.

These identities do not cancel one another out. Together, they form the complexity and richness of her life. Yet, too often, society celebrates a woman’s ability to carry every responsibility without asking whether the weight is fairly shared.

We praise her resilience, but do we provide the support that makes resilience less exhausting? We admire her achievements, but do we create the conditions that allow her to achieve without sacrificing her well-being? We celebrate her ability to manage competing demands, but do we recognise that families and institutions must share that responsibility?

A more mature understanding of empowerment recognises that women should not have to prove their worth through exhaustion. Their strength should be celebrated, but so should their right to support, balance, choice and opportunity.

A society that values women must do more than admire how much they can carry. It must help ensure that they have the freedom to decide what they wish to carry, what they

wish to change and what they wish to become.

Imagine Oman in the years ahead: a nation where a young woman’s ambition is met with encouragement, where her expertise is valued for its quality, where her leadership is judged by its impact, and where her opportunities are not narrowed by assumptions about what she can or should become.

Imagine a society in which the achievements of women are no longer introduced as surprising exceptions, but recognised as an integral part of the country’s collective success. Omani women’s stories are still being written, in classrooms and workplaces, in homes and communities, in research centres, businesses and public institutions.

Some stories will be written by women whose names become widely known. Others will be written by women whose influence is measured in opportunities created, lives improved and generations inspired. Thus, both matter and both deserve recognition.

On Omani Women’s Day, we honour the women who brought us this far, the women who are shaping the present and the girls who take the story forward.

SPORTS

KARATE CHAMPIONS CLUB CLINCH CHAMPIONSHIP WITH NINE GOLDS



Karate Champions Club celebrate winning the overall title at the 16th Oman Karate Championship.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

KARATE CHAMPIONS Club won the 16th Oman Karate Championship with nine gold medals, edging Al Qudra Club by one gold as competition concluded at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Saturday.

Al Qudra finished second with eight golds, followed by Ali al Raisi Karate Club with seven. Shotokan Karate Centre placed fourth.

The October 16-17 championship attracted 350 male and female competitors from 20 clubs and centres. Organised by the Oman Karate Committee with Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) support, it featured kata and kumite across different age groups. The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North. Ali bin Talib Miran al Raisi won two kata golds for Ali Al Raisi Karate Club. He defeated Idris bin Ali bin Hamood al Batrani in the men's 18-and-over final, with Muhammad Umar Qureshi and Jamil bin Khadoom al Hikmani taking bronze.

Al Raisi also won the 40-and-over title ahead of team-mate Jubran Jabar



Competitors in action on the final day at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

Nasser. Saif bin Hamed bin Saif al Othmani earned bronze.

Shito Ryu's Muhammad Qureshi claimed men's under-84 kg kumite gold ahead of Al Qudra's Majed bin Abdullah al Raqqadi. Al Waleed bin Nabil al Yaqoobi and Yazan Nasser Khalfan collected bronze.

Al Qudra's Ahmed Badir won the over-84 kg title, with Monther Mohammed Salim taking silver. Shotokan's Mohammed Amir Bahrouz secured under-75 kg gold ahead of Khamis Thani Khalfan Rashid.

In boys' 10-11 years over-41 kg kumite, Al Qudra's Suhaib bin Wahab al Wahibi beat Talal al Busaidi for gold. Khalifa bin Jabir al Maskari and Asad bin Hassan al Numani received bronze.

Addressing the closing ceremony, Dr Sadiq bin Mohammed al Issa, organising committee chairman and Oman Karate Committee secretary, highlighted the sport's contribution to personal development.

"Kata teaches discipline, concentration and confidence, while kumite develops respect for opponents, quick decisions and controlled courage," he said.

He said the committee's 2026 programmes included an advanced course for 37 referees and classification training involving 41 officials. Seven referees participated

in the Asian championship in Amman, with five earning Asian refereeing upgrades. The Khareef Dhofar Season tournament attracted 160 athletes from 14 clubs, while the calendar also included the Lift Open.

Al Issa called for greater public and private sector support for training camps and international competition, and expressed hopes of staging a Al Batinah North championship in Suhar.

Champions coach Said bin Nasser bin Said al Batrani credited three months of preparation, daily training and cooperation between coaches, administrators and parents for the title. Families had helped athletes balance training with schoolwork and examinations, he said.

He highlighted the club's role in supplying national-team players, including athletes with achievements at West Asian events. Further overseas participation would require financial support and careful planning.

Al Qudra's Ahmed bin Badir al Baldi said the title race remained open until the closing moments. His club fielded 30 competitors after three months of preparation and was satisfied with second place despite narrowly missing the championship.

Fanja claim first win as hat-trick ends Saham's unbeaten run

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

Fanja secured their first victory of the 2026/27 Jindal League season with an impressive 3-1 win over Saham, ending their opponents' unbeaten run, while Samayil and Al Musannah played out a 1-1 draw as the fifth round of the competition continued on Saturday.

The results brought contrasting fortunes for the four clubs, with Fanja collecting three valuable points to move away from the lower positions, while Saham suffered their second defeat of the campaign after previously recording three consecutive victories.

Fanja produced one of the notable results

of the round as Mulhim al Hadhrami scored a hat-trick to lead his side to victory over Saham. The forward was the decisive figure in the contest, converting three opportunities, including a penalty, to secure Fanja's first win of the season.

Saham, who entered the encounter hoping to build on their strong start to the campaign, struggled to contain Fanja's attacking threat. Ali al Hashmi scored their only goal, but it was not enough to prevent the defeat.

The result represented a significant turnaround for Fanja, who had collected only two points from their opening four matches. Their victory lifted them to five points from five games,



Action from Fanja's 3-1 victory over Saham in the fifth round of the Jindal League.

providing a welcome boost after a difficult start to the season.

For Saham, the defeat

themselves among the early contenders through three successive victories, they will now be looking to regain momentum in the coming rounds. Meanwhile, Samayil and Al Musannah shared the points following a 1-1 draw at the Nizwa Sports Complex.

Osama al Zuaabi found the net for Samayil, while Hazza Al Mashaykhi scored Al Musannah's goal as neither side managed to secure the decisive advantage.

The draw allowed Samayil to increase their tally to six points after five matches, while Al Musannah moved to four points.

For Samayil, the result represented another opportunity to add to their points total as they seek to establish greater consistency

in the competition. Although they were unable to secure all three points, the draw ensured they continued to accumulate points during the opening stages of the campaign. Al Musannah, meanwhile, earned a valuable point as they look to improve their position in the standings. Their ability to find the net through Al Mashaykhi ensured they avoided defeat, although they remain in search of further victories to strengthen their league position.

With the fifth round continuing to shape the early standings, the coming fixtures will provide further opportunities for clubs to consolidate their positions and build momentum as the 2026/27 season progresses.

SHORT TAKES



Oman B against Germany

OMAN TEAMS
FALTER AT BEACH
VOLLEYBALL MEET

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 18

The fifth World Military Beach Volleyball Championship, ‘Muscat 2026’, began with a competitive opening day at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, where seven matches were contested across the men’s and women’s events.

The championship, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman from October 15 to 22, has brought together military teams from several countries. However, Oman’s three participating sides were unable to secure victories in their opening fixtures.

In the men’s competition, Oman A produced a determined performance before losing 2-1 to Brazil. The hosts matched their experienced opponents for long periods and claimed one of the opening two sets to force the contest into a decider.

Brazil eventually held their nerve in the third set to seal the victory, but Oman A’s display underlined their ability to compete against one of the strongest teams in the tournament.

Oman B also faced a challenging start, going down 2-0 to Germany. The European side maintained control of the contest and secured victory in straight sets.

Elsewhere in the men’s event, France opened their campaign with a 2-0 win over the Netherlands, while Qatar recorded a straight-sets victory over Germany. Algeria also made a successful start, defeating Sri Lanka 2-0 to collect their first win of the championship.

In the women’s competition, Oman’s military team suffered a 2-0 defeat against Algeria in their opening appearance. Despite their efforts to stay in contention, the hosts were unable to halt the Algerian pair, who closed out the match in straight sets.

France’s women also began strongly, overcoming the Netherlands 2-0 to complete the opening day’s programme.

The tournament is being played on the sand courts at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex and is organised by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), represented by the Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces.

Competition will continue until October 22, with Oman’s teams aiming to respond positively in their upcoming matches as the battle for the championship titles intensifies.



Al Hubaishi to lead Oman’s
campaign at Asian Para Games

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 18

FAWZI AL HUBAISHI will become the first member of Oman’s delegation to compete at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games when he contests the men’s F54/55 shot put qualification on Monday.

Al Hubaishi faces a strong field featuring some of Asia’s leading throwers as he seeks to secure a place in Thursday’s final. The remaining Omani para athletes continued training in Nagoya, while H4 handcyclist Sami al Sulaimi prepared for the road cycling events.

The Games, featuring more than 2,700 athletes from 45 National Paralympic Committees across 18 sports, were officially declared open by Emperor Naruhito of Japan during a simple ceremony at Nagoya City Mizuho Park Athletic Stadium on Sunday.

Oman’s delegation joined the parade of nations before Asian Paralympic Committee President Majid Rashed welcomed the participating teams and wished the athletes success.

Dr Mansour bin Sultan al Tooqi, Chairman of the Oman Paralympic Committee and head of the delegation, said Oman’s participation represented an important opportunity to strengthen the country’s presence in continental para sport.

He added that the athletes carried a national and humanitarian message founded on determination and ambition, while their participation reflected Oman’s commitment to empowering persons with disabilities in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Al Tooqi said competing against Asia’s leading athletes would also allow the Omani squad to gain experience and assess the progress made through its training camps and competitive preparation.

Oman’s programme gathers pace on Tuesday. Mutasim al Saadi will compete in the F53 javelin, Muhanna Awlad Thani in the F33 shot put, Taha al Harrasi in the T36 100 metres and Talib al Balushi in the F56 shot put.

Qusai al Rawahi will contest the T13 100 metres, Othman al Habsi the T12 100 metres and Saif al Muqbali the T46 100 metres.

Wednesday’s programme includes Al Saadi in the F53 shot put, Mohammed al



Campaign hats for Republican presidential candidate and former US President Donald Trump.



Oman’s para athletes during their final training session ahead of the start of the athletics competitions in Nagoya.

Qasmi and Mohammed al Mashaykhi in the F32 shot put, Al Rawahi in the T13 long jump, Rawan al Hasani in the wheelchair 100 metres and Iman al Shamsi in the F34 shot put. Al Sulaimi will begin his handcycling campaign on the same day in the individual time trial at the Cycle Sports Center in Izu.

On Thursday, Al Hubaishi will contest the F54/55 shot put final if he progresses from qualification. Al Shamsi will compete in the F34 javelin, Al Balushi in the javelin and discus, Al Harrasi in the T36 long jump and Awlad Thani in the F33 javelin.

Al Habsi will take part in the T12 long jump and 400 metres, while Al Muqbali contests the T46 400 metres. Al Sulaimi will return for the men’s H4-5 50 km road race.

Oman’s athletics campaign continues on Friday, when Al Qasmi and Al Mashaykhi compete in the F32 club throw.

Musannah Race Week champions sailing, sustainability

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

The 15th Musannah Race Week and the 3rd Arab Women’s Sailing Championship are highlighting how international sport can contribute to athlete development, greater opportunities for women and environmental responsibility, with more than 100 sailors representing seven countries.

Competitors from Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Tunisia and India have gathered in Al Musannah for an event that offers more than a contest for results. It provides sailors with opportunities to test their abilities against different competitors, exchange technical knowledge and gain experience that can support their progress at regional and international level.

The Arab Women’s Sailing Championship is a central part of this effort, featuring the Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 classes. By providing a dedicated competitive platform for female sailors, the championship supports the development of women’s sailing and encourages greater participation across the region. Musannah Race Week also features several classes, including Optimist, ILCA and inclusive sailing.

The value of international competition is reflected in the preparations made by participating teams. Bahrain has brought seven sailors to Al Musannah, including three women competing in the Arab Women’s Sailing Championship and four sailors taking part in Musannah Race Week.

Qasim Abdulrazzaq, technical director



The value of international competition is reflected in the preparations made by participating teams.

of the Bahrain Sailing Team, said the event offered an important opportunity to strengthen technical abilities and gain experience against competitors from different countries. He also highlighted its role in preparing sailors for future competitions.

Kuwait has taken a similarly focused approach, completing a month-long training programme before the event. Dr Mohammed al Awadhi, technical director of the Kuwait National Sailing Team, said the squad was aiming for positive results. He emphasised that international championships help sailors improve their performance, exchange knowledge and develop practical experience beyond what can be gained through training alone.

The event’s wider impact extends into local communities through environmental education and youth engagement. On October 17, coinciding with Omani Women’s Day, the inaugural Community Sustainability Lab was launched for school and college students,

particularly girls and young women aged 14 and above in Al Batinah South Governorate, as well as teachers.

The initiative aims to help participants develop practical ideas to address environmental challenges and encourage sustainable practices in their schools and communities.

These ambitions are supported by direct action. A clean-up campaign at Musannah beach brought together 51 sailors, volunteers and local residents, while other environmental measures promote recycling and reducing single-use plastics. The initiatives build on the event’s sustainability efforts, which earned Gold certification under the Clean Regattas programme in 2025.

With sporting competitions running alongside community activities, safety remains a fundamental priority. Rescue boats and dedicated safety teams are in place, with weather and sea conditions monitored in coordination with race committees and medical teams. Races can be postponed or rescheduled when necessary to protect participants.

By combining international competition, athlete development and environmental engagement, Musannah Race Week and the Arab Women’s Sailing Championship demonstrate how sporting events can contribute to broader development goals. The initiatives support opportunities for women and young people, promote sustainability and strengthen Oman’s position as a host of international sporting events, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Poland's Maja Chwalinska celebrates with the trophy after winning her singles final match against Britain's Sonay Kartal. — Reuters

CHWALINSKA
OUTWITS KARTAL
TO WIN WUHAN OPEN

WUHAN, China: Maja Chwalinska pulled off an impressive comeback to defeat Britain's Sonay Kartal 2-6, 6-4, 6-2 and claim the first tour-level title of her career at the Wuhan Open on Sunday.

The Polish 16th seed trailed by a set and a break before she turned things around to become just the fourth player to win her maiden tour-level title at a WTA 1000 event.

She joins Naomi Osaka (2018 Indian Wells), Bianca Andreescu (2019 Indian Wells) and Victoria Mboko (2025 Montreal) in that exclusive club.

The 25-year-old Chwalinska started the year ranked 146 in the world and provided one of the biggest surprises of the season when she reached the French Open final as a qualifier in June.

The talented lefty will now rise to a career-high No.11 in the world, making her top-20 debut when the new rankings are released on Monday.

Kartal, who was contesting her second tour event back from a six-month hiatus due to a spinal stress fracture, entered Wuhan ranked 170 in the world but will return to the top 50 after reaching the first WTA 1000 final of her career.

The first set was one-way traffic, with Kartal dictating play with heavy hitting from the baseline and Chwalinska scrambling to defend from all corners of the court.

It took three breaks of serve and 45 minutes to give Kartal a one-set lead and send her closer to the biggest title of her career.

Chwalinska found her legs in the second set and began to put pressure on the Kartal serve by employing the methods that helped her knock out her compatriot Iga Swiatek in the semifinals: extending the rallies, running down every ball, and mixing things up with her smooth touch.

Despite saving 10 out of 13 break points and holding a 2-0 advantage early in the frame, Kartal surrendered the second set after 71 minutes.

Kartal ran out of steam in the decider as Chwalinska broke twice to secure the trophy on her third championship point after a gruelling two hours and 43 minutes. — AFP



Al Harthi maintained his composure and duly took fifth from the Aston.

EXCELLENT P3 BRONZE CUP FINISH
IN PORTUGAL FOR OMAN RACING BY
CENTURY

CELEBRATORY CONCLUSION TO
GTWCE SEASON FOR AHMAD AL
HARTHI

SECOND PODIUM OF CAMPAIGN
DELIVERS

NINTH IN Bronze Cup championship Ahmad al Harthi wrapped-up the GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Endurance Cup season with a richly deserved return to the Bronze Cup podium on Saturday, 17th October, after a fantastic performance at the Autódromo Internacional do Algarve.

Competing at the Portuguese track for the first time since 2023, the Omani was quick throughout practice, qualifying and the race itself and along with team-mates Javier Sagrera and Calan Williams he was delighted to celebrate Oman Racing by Century Motorsport's second podium of the season.

Starting at 17:00 local time, the three-hour race concluded under night skies at the Portimão track and with one of the largest crowds of the GTWCE Endurance Cup season. The very strong third place result for the No.42 BMW M4 GT3 EVO trio also ensured ninth in the Bronze Cup championship, just a single point shy of the top eight.

HIGHLY COMPETITIVE END TO GTWCE CAMPAIGN FOR AL HARTHI

The Oman Racing by Century Motorsport team-mates produced a fantastic collective performance across the three qualifying sessions on Friday evening, 16th October, to match their best showing of the season with the fourth fastest time on average.

Sagrera took the opening session and delivered a best time of 1m43.358 seconds to end the run fourth fastest in the Bronze Cup. Al Harthi took over the BMW M4 for session two and posted a very impressive best of 1m43.545s, and in session three Williams lapped with a time of 1m42.483s. On average times across the three outings, the

squad ended with an aggregate time of 1m43.128s.

Al Harthi took the start of Saturday's race and with a combined grid of 61 cars, surviving the opening lap would be the first priority for the OQ, Omantel, Oman LNG, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), and BMW Oman supported driver.

Ending a very busy first lap sixth in Bronze, the Omani was shuffled back another couple of places on the second tour but was very determined to hit back. Running tight behind the No.91 Porsche, just a tenth of a second shy over the line into lap six, Al Harthi swiftly made his move to take seventh and immediately closed on the No.74 Ferrari before smartly passing for sixth the next time around. Once again, the Omani instantly latched on to his next target, the No.11 Aston Martin, while pulling well clear of the pack behind.

Almost 20 minutes into the contest the first Full Course Yellow period of the race was required due to a car off circuit, but the cautionary period didn't last more than a few minutes and racing quickly resumed.

Then came news of an unfortunate 10 second penalty for the Oman Racing car linked to an on-track incident, but Al Harthi maintained his composure and duly took fifth from the Aston.

At the 35-minute mark the second in class Porsche spun off track after contact with another car, and so Al Harthi moved back inside the Bronze top four as a result. During the latter part of hour one the Omani was edged back to fifth, but he was fourth again when pitting 65 minutes into the race.

Sagrera took over the car for hour two as the sun began to set over Portimão and the temperature dropped, with the No.42 BMW M4 still fourth in Bronze. Soon after, another FCY period was

called and racing resumed with an hour and three quarters to run, but 20 minutes left and as the race entered its final hour Sagrera was within half a second of the Bronze podium, and swarming all over the No.87 Mercedes. Taking third place a few laps later, a penalty for the class leading No.991 BMW M4 then meant Sagrera moved up into second in Bronze before pitting with 48 minutes to run.

Williams climbed into the No.42 BMW for the final three quarters of an hour and when the order settled he was third in Bronze and 25 seconds clear of his closest class rival.

Another FCY period occurred with just over half an hour to go, and following the subsequent Safety Car there were just 23 minutes left.

Williams held third comfortably to the finish, ensuring much deserved silverware.

"It's an amazing feeling to be back on the podium, at one of the hardest tracks we have ever raced on and I think the busiest ever for Portimão. In qualifying I think I had driven one of my best laps of the season and it was great to have the car in P4.

The race was very complicated, very tough, but we managed to really produce a great result for the team.

"It's always a proud moment to see the Omani flag on the podium, I want to say huge thanks to my team-mates and everybody at Oman Racing by Century Motorsport.

Most importantly I want to thank all of the incredible partners who have supported us, this result is for them and is a nice way to start building for next year – we keep pushing!" Al Harthi said.



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
7,656.142

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



Oman's gross domestic product at current prices rose 25.6 per cent to RO 12,868.9 million in Q2 2026.

OMAN FIRMS' VALUE ADDED JUMPS 31.2%

MUSCAT: Value added by active private-sector enterprises in Oman rose 31.2 per cent year on year to RO 10,655.4 million in the second quarter of 2026, despite a decline in the number of operating businesses.

The figure increased from RO 8,124.0 million in the corresponding quarter of 2025, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The number of active private-sector enterprises fell 4.6 per cent to 269,714, down from 282,764 a year earlier.

Employment nevertheless increased, with the number of workers at active private-sector establishments rising 1.4 per cent to 1,827,518 from 1,802,972 in the second quarter of 2025.

The figures represent an increase of 24,546 workers and a decline of 13,050 enterprises over the year. Oman's gross domestic product at current prices rose 25.6 per cent to RO 12,868.9 million in the second quarter, compared with RO 10,249.7 million a year earlier.

Active private-sector enterprises accounted for approximately 82.8 per cent of GDP at current prices, up from 79.3 per cent in the corresponding quarter of 2025. — ONA

OMAN LAUNCHES RO 100 MILLION SUKUK

MUSCAT: Oman has launched a RO 100 million domestic sovereign sukuk issue, with an option to raise a further RO 50 million, offering investors an annual profit rate of 4.85 per cent over seven years.

Oman Sovereign Sukuk Company, acting on behalf of the government, said subscriptions for the 12th domestic sovereign sukuk issue will open on Monday, October 19, and close on Sunday, October 25.

Settlement is scheduled for October 29, with the sukuk maturing on October 29, 2033. Profit payments will be made quarterly on January 29, April 29, July 29 and October 29.

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

Oman's decision not to extend Salalah Port Services Company's operating concessions beyond November 1, 2028 has put the treatment of about \$200 million in leased equipment and longer-term commercial agreements in focus ahead of a change in operator.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said on Sunday that a successor would take over after the existing concessions expire. The new operator will be announced in due course.

Salalah Port Services said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange that it had received formal notification of the decision, which it described as final and unconditional.

Its board will assess the implications and potential impact on the business. The company has not disclosed an estimate of the financial consequences.

The ministry said operations and development activities would continue throughout the remaining concession period.

The Port of Salalah, on the Arabian Sea, is one of Oman's principal maritime gateways and a container transshipment hub serving

Tax exemptions for industries in Oman zones

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 18

OMAN has identified a broad range of industrial, technological, energy and other activities of special economic significance as eligible for income tax exemptions under new executive regulations governing its special economic zones and free zones, reinforcing efforts to attract high-value investment and accelerate economic diversification.

The provisions, outlined in Chapter Seven of the Executive Regulation of the Law of Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, issued under Decision 81/2026, seek to strengthen the Sultanate of Oman's attractiveness to high-value investors while advancing industrial diversification, technological development and economic security.

Under Article 37, enterprises involving investments of at least RO 10 million may qualify for strategic status and a single approval covering their establishment, operation and management.

Eligible projects must contribute to technology and knowledge transfer, strengthen local content, enhance self-sufficiency or economic security, or increase Oman's annual exports.

They must also fall within investment fields identified by the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), in line with national development strategies.

Importantly, the Board may waive the RO 10 million minimum investment requirement where a project's nature or strategic importance warrants special consideration.

Article 39 provides for additional incentives, subject



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to approval by the Council of Ministers on the Board's recommendation.

These include exemptions from land and property rentals or usufruct payments for up to 10 years from commencement of operations, exceptions from prescribed Omanisation percentages for up to four years, and full or partial exemptions from applicable fees. Other project-specific incentives may also be approved.

A significant component of Chapter Seven concerns income tax exemptions for activities classified as being of a special nature under Article 41.

These encompass heavy manufacturing, including petrochemicals, minerals and basic metals; renewable energy and green industries; green hydrogen and its derivatives; port logistics and cargo handling; advanced technologies, data centres, artificial intelligence and innovation; strategic infrastructure; food security; pharmaceuticals, medical industries, biotechnology and recycling.

The eligible categories additionally cover administrative offices, commercial

representation, import-export businesses and related activities generating national economic value.

Service providers may also qualify, provided their contracts have at least 15 months remaining when exemption applications are submitted.

The Board retains discretion to include other projects demonstrating economic or strategic value to the zones or the national economy.

Beyond tax incentives, the regulations permit enterprises to export products directly or through third parties without requiring separate export permission or licensing, subject to reporting requirements.

Foreign investors and eligible real estate owners are also provided a framework for obtaining residency, extending to spouses and first-degree relatives, subject to stipulated conditions.

The wider regulations introduce measures designed to improve the investment environment, including integrated electronic one-stop-shop services, streamlined licensing, clearer compliance obligations and dedicated provisions governing real estate development.

Port of Salalah transition puts \$200 million equipment in focus

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

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routes linking Asia, Europe, the Middle East and East Africa.

Among the outstanding commercial issues is the future of equipment leased during the port's expansion programme.

During a discussion of the company's 2025 financial results, reported by *Observer* in March 2026, executives said equipment worth approximately \$200 million had been leased rather than purchased because of uncertainty over the concession's extension.

Management said clarity on an extension would help determine whether to acquire the equipment outright or extend the leases, while supporting decisions on further

investment.

The company has not disclosed how those assets will be treated when its concessions expire, including whether any equipment could be purchased or transferred under arrangements involving the incoming operator.

The equipment forms part of the investment context surrounding a \$300 million container terminal upgrade completed in the first quarter of 2025.

The project included improvements to six existing berths, additional container-handling cranes, expanded storage yards and upgrades to electricity and access infrastructure.

It increased annual handling capacity to approximately 6.5 million twenty-foot equivalent units, or TEUs, from 4.5 million. Other commitments extend beyond the current concession period.

OQ Base Industries' audited financial statements for 2025 identify agreements signed with Salalah Port Services in May 2017 covering LPG storage and associated port facilities.

One agreement provides for the lease of 76,844 square metres of land within the port for an initial 30-year term, extending to approximately 2047, with provision for a further 10 years.

Related agreements cover access to port

facilities and pipeline rights of way over similarly long periods.

The disclosures do not explain how those arrangements would be treated after the concessions expire. Their duration does not, in itself, establish that they will be terminated or adversely affected by a change in operator.

Salalah Port Services operates the container and general cargo terminals under separate concession agreements.

Its financial statements provide for fixed annual concession payments that increase by 3 per cent a year, alongside variable royalties.

Separate management agreements with APM Terminals cover day-to-day operations, with fees linked to container terminal revenue and general cargo handling volumes. APM Terminals, part of the A P Moller-Maersk group, holds approximately 30 per cent of Salalah Port Services, while government-owned Asyad Group holds about 20 per cent.

The port handled 4.3 million TEUs in 2025, up 31 per cent from the previous year. General cargo volumes rose 17 per cent to 26.4 million tonnes.

The ministry has yet to announce the successor operator, details of the selection process or arrangements for the operational handover.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



212 offers customers the freedom to explore beyond the familiar while meeting the demands of daily life.

TOWELL AUTO GROUP UNVEILS 212 OMANI WOMEN’S DAY OFFERS

MUSCAT: 212 range of 4x4 SUVs, brought to Oman by Towell Auto Group, is marking Omani Women’s Day by celebrating the strength, ambition and individuality of women across Oman. The occasion honours their achievements, their contributions to their communities and the confidence with which they continue to shape their own journeys.

Speaking on the occasion, a spokesperson for Towell Auto Group, said “Omani Women’s Day is an opportunity to recognise the women whose achievements and aspirations inspire progress across generations. On behalf of 212 Oman, we extend our warmest wishes to Omani women across the nation. We are proud to celebrate their individuality, their determination and the paths they choose for themselves”.

To mark the occasion, 212 is offering customers a special package of benefits from October 17 to 19, 2026, with prices starting from RO 12,999, including VAT. The package includes 3 years or 30,000 km service, 5 years or 200,000 km warranty, free insurance, free registration, exclusive gifts and 6 years roadside assistance.

Combining durability and off-road capability with everyday versatility, 212 offers customers the freedom to explore beyond the familiar while meeting the demands of daily life.

HOTEL INDIGO CELEBRATES GLOBAL MILESTONE

MUSCAT: Every neighbourhood has a story to tell. Now, Hotel Indigo is telling those stories in 200 hotels around the world. IHG Hotels & Resorts’ distinctive Luxury & Lifestyle brand has reached a defining moment in its global journey, bringing curious travellers closer to the places, people and ideas that make each destination one of a kind.

Since 2004, Hotel Indigo has looked beyond the guidebook, drawing on the character of each neighbourhood to shape its design, dining, stories and experiences. The brand has doubled its global footprint since 2019, with another 134 hotels in the development pipeline—each ready to share a fresh local story.

In Oman, that story unfolds 2,000 meters above sea level at Hotel Indigo Jabal Akhdar Resort & Spa. Set high on the Sultanate of Oman’s iconic Green Mountain, the resort takes its cues from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar’s dramatic landscapes, rich heritage, local people and ever-changing natural rhythms.

Omantel and Sohar International host Aamali Talks for women

MUSCAT: Omantel, in partnership with Sohar International, hosted the fourth edition of Aamali Talks at Al Bait Al Sharqi in Muttrah, bringing together Omani women entrepreneurs and business leaders to share experiences, discuss common challenges and explore opportunities to support one another in business.

Held in celebration of Omani Women’s Day under the theme “Women Supporting Women in Business”, the session explored how mentorship, strategic networks and knowledge exchange can accelerate the growth of women-led enterprises and multiply opportunities across Oman’s business community.

This edition marks the first collaboration between Omantel and



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Sohar International on Aamali Talks, a forum dedicated to strengthening Oman’s local SME network by

connecting entrepreneurs, sharing practical insights and guiding them as they build and scale their

Lulu launches British Food Week 2026

FANCY a taste of Britain without leaving Oman? LuLu Hypermarket is bringing the flavours of Great Britain and Northern Ireland closer to home with LuLu British Food Week 2026, inviting shoppers to discover much-loved British food, tempting treats and exciting culinary experiences.

Officially inaugurated by Thomas Phipps, UK Chargé d’Affaires/Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Muscat, at LuLu Hypermarket, Bausher, the event runs until October 20, 2026 across selected LuLu stores in Oman.

The launch featured a special performance by the British School Muscat student band, setting a lively tone for a celebration of food, culture and discovery.

From the distinctive taste of Scottish salmon to classic British biscuits, specialty teas, delicious confectionery and premium cheeses, there’s plenty to excite food lovers.

Shoppers can explore a wide selection of British products, including breakfast cereals, preserves, baking ingredients, frozen foods and fresh produce, alongside organic, gluten-free and diabetic-friendly options.

And the experience goes beyond the supermarket shelves! Shoppers can savour traditional British-inspired favourites at the hot food counters, with dishes such as roast beef with potatoes, chicken tikka masala, and the much-loved British classic fish and chips.

For those with a sweet tooth, the simple pleasure of strawberries and cream adds a delicious finishing touch to this culinary journey. Whether you’re planning a family meal, looking for inspiration for your next baking adventure or simply craving a



The event runs until October 20, 2026 across selected LuLu stores in Oman.

familiar British favourite, British Food Week offers plenty of reasons to try something different.

The products are sourced through LuLu’s Sourcing and Logistics Centre in Birmingham, UK, connecting shoppers in Oman with a diverse selection of British food products. Specially themed displays across participating stores add to the experience, inviting customers to explore the tastes and traditions of Britain as they shop.

Thomas Phipps, UK Chargé d’Affaires/ Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Muscat, said: “The UK and Oman share a longstanding relationship that dates back nearly 400 years, built not only through official engagements but also through business, communities and shared experiences. LuLu British Food Week is a wonderful example of how food brings

people together, giving customers in Oman the opportunity to discover and enjoy a little taste of Britain.

I would like to thank the LuLu team for bringing such a fantastic range of British products to Oman and for helping celebrate the enduring friendship between our two countries”. Shabeer K A, Director — Oman, LuLu Hypermarket, said: “At LuLu, we are committed to bringing the best of the world closer to our customers. British Food Week celebrates the rich flavours of the United Kingdom while introducing our shoppers to exciting new products.

From special product discoveries to much-loved dishes, we are delighted to offer customers in Oman an opportunity to experience the taste of Britain through a distinctive shopping experience”.

Al Mouj Muscat, OCA unite against breast cancer

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat, Oman’s premier lifestyle and waterfront destination, joined forces with the Oman Cancer Association (OCA) this month to mobilise support for breast cancer awareness and fundraising.

Through the Pinktober Market at Al Mouj Walk and the Al Mouj Golf Pink Walk, the partnership brought the community together to support the Association’s work across Oman.

Held from October 15-17, the Pinktober Market brought three evenings of local vendors and community activities to Al Mouj Walk.

On October 17, Al Mouj Golf hosted a 5 km Pink Walk around the course, giving participants an active way to support the cause. Organised in collaboration with OCA, the



The Pinktober Market brought three evenings of local vendors and community activities to Al Mouj Walk.

initiatives directed all vendor registration fees and voluntary donations collected onsite to the Association, helping fund prevention and early detection outreach programmes, patient

support and palliative care.

Ahmed al Massan, Acting CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: “The power of community is measured by what we can achieve together. When people

unite behind a cause that affects so many lives, awareness can become action and individual contributions can make a lasting difference. At Al Mouj Muscat, we believe destinations have a role to play in making that possible, using the connections they create every day to mobilise support where it matters most”.

Kawthar al Jabri, Board Member of Oman Cancer Association, said: “Progress in the fight against breast cancer depends on reaching people early and ensuring those affected have access to the support they need.

Al Mouj Muscat provided an important platform for this work, bringing vital health messages into everyday community life while helping generate resources for patients and families”.

SHORTTAKES



PDO recorded 555 electrical incidents and protection events during the period, with approximately half resolved remotely.

PDO REMOTE SYSTEM CUTS ELECTRICAL FIELD VISITS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) estimates its remote electrical fault-analysis system avoided about 275 field dispatches between 2024 and mid-2026, reducing the need for engineers to travel across its extensive power network.

The company recorded 555 electrical incidents and protection events during the period, with approximately half resolved remotely, Ahmed bin Humaid al Shuaili, Power Protection Lead-South in PDO’s Electrical Function, told IEEE PowerTalks 2026 in Muscat on Monday.

The estimate of avoided dispatches was derived from those results, rather than a separate count of cancelled journeys.

The system, known as the Protection Relay Engineering Workstation (PREW), enables engineers to retrieve protection-relay records at a central engineering desktop within minutes, allowing fault analysis to begin without an initial site visit.

Previously, engineers might have had to travel to a substation, download the records and return to the office before conducting detailed analysis. Road closures during adverse weather could further delay access.

PDO’s electrical infrastructure includes more than 28 generating units, over 40 substations operating at 132 kilovolts and approximately 4,000 kilometres of transmission lines.

Oman widens local content investment drive

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 18

THE Sultanate of Oman is preparing to extend its Local Content Certificate to government entities subject to the Tenders Law in 2027, as it seeks to increase domestic procurement, develop manufacturing capacity and expand employment opportunities for Omanis.

The phased rollout was reviewed at the second meeting of the Executive Committee for Local Content for 2026, chaired by Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Minister of Economy.

The certificate’s initial rollout began in the energy sector. Its extension to government entities will pave the way for wider adoption in subsequent phases.

The committee reviewed local content performance in the first half of 2026, progress on decisions taken at its previous meeting, and initiatives to increase the use of locally supplied goods and services. Six manufacturing investment opportunities were announced during the first half of the year, including four introduced by Nama, part of the Oman Investment Authority’s portfolio.

These cover reverse osmosis membranes for desalination plants, ring main units, steel utility poles and cooling components for electrical transformers.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning announced two



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further opportunities through its Tatweer platform. One involves establishing, financing, equipping and operating a factory producing locks, hinges and metal door accessories.

The other covers establishing, financing and operating a sanitary ware plant.

Employment initiatives included a programme targeting the Omanisation of 130 job titles at service providers and contracting companies operating in the oil and gas sector.

The committee reviewed efforts by oil and gas operators to identify employment opportunities for Omanis within their contracts, alongside work by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to identify additional goods and services that could be supplied locally.

It also examined Oman Investment Authority initiatives

to develop domestic industrial capacity, localise artificial intelligence activities and build advanced technical capabilities.

The committee called for closer coordination among government entities, military and security bodies, oil and gas operators, and companies affiliated with the authority.

Sharing expertise and replicating successful initiatives across sectors would help strengthen local content implementation, it said.

Discussions also covered work by military and security bodies and the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones to develop regulatory frameworks and improve local content practices.

The Authority for Projects, Tenders and Local Content presented progress on implementation methods and regulations, including

the framework governing the mandatory list of goods and services.

Its National Content Office is coordinating efforts across sectors to identify investment opportunities, monitor their implementation and expand initiatives that have proved effective.

These include introducing the Imdad programme into government contracts, building on its implementation in the energy sector. The programme aims to develop national talent, increase the employment of Omanis within contracts and broaden access to training and sustainable jobs.

The committee oversees the strategic direction of local content efforts, monitors performance and sets priorities to strengthen their contribution to economic growth and competitiveness.

Muscat Stock Exchange targets more women investors

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCT 18

The Muscat Stock Exchange has launched the Omani Women Investors Club to attract more women to financial markets, channel savings into investments and broaden Oman’s investor base.

The club will combine financial education, professional networking and partnerships to help women assess investment opportunities and participate more actively in capital markets.

Launched at an MSX ceremony marking Omani Women’s Day, the initiative began with a bell-ringing ceremony signalling the start of its activities.

Haitham bin Salim al Salmi, Chief Executive Officer of MSX, said the club formed part of efforts to build a more



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inclusive and diversified capital market.

Increasing women’s participation would broaden the investor base and deepen the market, supporting its contribution to sustainable economic growth, he said.

Al Salmi said the initiative would connect financial knowledge with investment opportunities, strengthen confidence and give Omani women a larger role in investment decisions and wealth creation.

MSX aims to establish the club as a lasting platform for institutional partnerships and collaboration, supporting the economic diversification objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Areej bint Mohsin Haider Darwish, Chairperson of the club and Chairperson of the Automotive, Construction Equipment and Renewable Energy cluster at Mohsin Haider Darwish Group, said women’s economic empowerment required stronger financial literacy and wider access to investment opportunities.

Professional networks would also be important in encouraging collaboration, sharing expertise and turning investment potential into tangible results, she said.

Darwish said the club would develop strategic partnerships, promote financial and investment

awareness and support the growth of investments led by women. Its objectives also include strengthening women’s representation in leadership and investment decision-making roles, while encouraging long-term wealth creation.

The club aims to connect women investors and business leaders in Oman and abroad through collaboration and the exchange of knowledge and experience.

Majda al Maamari, Director of the Sustainable Investment Centre at MSX and a member of the club, said increasing the number of Omani women investing in the stock market was a central objective.

“The club will host three to four sessions annually, aimed at the economic empowerment of Omani women”, she said.

The sessions will support the club’s wider goals of

improving financial literacy, building confidence in investment decisions and expanding participation in financial markets.

Darwish chairs the club’s committee, whose members include Samra al Harthi, an MSX board member; Al Maamari; Lamis al Lawati, Chief Financial Officer at Shell Oman Marketing; and Zahra al Lawati, Head of Al Sadara Premium Banking at the National Bank of Oman.

Other members are Hamda al Shamsi, Chief Executive Officer of Isar Financial and Management Consultancy, and Rania al Khasibi, Chief Executive Officer of Al Amal Consultancy.

The committee will oversee the club’s strategic direction and develop measurable initiatives, with governance, transparency and sustainability guiding its work.

FISCAL SHORTFALL

US annual budget deficit reaches \$2 trillion



The US budget deficit widened by \$217 billion to nearly \$2 trillion in fiscal year 2026, marking the largest gap in five years.

Driven by record debt-service payments of \$1.36 trillion, tariff refunds, and social benefit spending, total outlays reached \$7.4 trillion. The shortfall represents the third-largest annual deficit in the United States’ history. — Reuters

TRADE CONTROLS

China proposes solar technology export curbs



China proposed export controls on 12 solar-manufacturing technologies, citing security concerns and dual-use applications in defence and aerospace.

Part of a broader overhaul covering artificial intelligence and biotechnology, these restrictions aim to protect domestic production. The move could hinder efforts by foreign competitors in the US and India to build independent solar industries. — Reuters

MARITIME FREIGHT

Supertanker shipping rates ease from peaks



Global supertanker shipping rates eased from record highs as oil transport demand along Middle East routes softened following recent vessel attacks.

Baltic Exchange data showed Sea of Oman to China VLCC rates falling to 776 Worldscales. Furthermore, potential US plans to remove sanctions on select shadow-fleet tankers helped lower freight costs by increasing available vessel supply. — Reuters

OPINION

Why are school protests growing across France?



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

THE unprecedented growth and adoption of AI, job displacement, and workplace transformations call for a rethink of education's foundations. Today, educational institutions from primary schools to universities are considering how to prepare students for the future and reduce overreliance on AI.

These questions come amid geopolitical fragmentation, international conflict, and climate change. Country-specific issues and challenges further burden the educational system. In France, hundreds of thousands of students have taken to the streets to protest and have been blocking access to many high schools since late September.

According to trade unions, nearly half a million people marched in the streets. Most were young, but not only students; teachers, parents, and unionists also joined the protest.

Students interviewed by the media said they took to the streets to protest poor learning conditions. One 16-year-old boy interviewed by the BBC said classrooms lack enough chairs, and that though they have a 50-minute lunchtime recess, 2000 students still need to get through the canteen.

Students face unbearable summer heat and freezing classroom temperatures in winter. Other issues included a chronic

staff shortage, very long school hours, overcrowded classrooms, a high incidence of classroom cancellations, dissatisfaction with Parcoursup, the higher education admission platform in France, and deteriorating school infrastructure.

Many teachers have highlighted concerns about the poorly structured timetables, long hours, overcrowded classrooms, staff shortages, and poor planning. Many teachers described difficulties in providing individual attention to all students in the classroom.

The unrest and protests have resulted in widespread unrest and injuries. So far, approximately 7000 people have been arrested, of whom 85% are under the age of 18. 700 police officials have been injured over the last three weeks.

Over 200 people were injured, including parents and teachers. Some teachers believe that the political tactics could damage the relationship between the French government and the youth.

Beneath the anger and confrontation that spilled over onto the streets lies a deeper issue of trust. The protests raise a fundamental question: can educational institutions keep the promise to deliver opportunity to the students? What can the French government do before disappointment over public institutions

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hardens into lasting distrust?

Critical analysis requires looking beyond visible symptoms to find sustainable solutions to underlying problems. A deeper look at France's current education system shows that it invests substantially in education-6.7% of its GDP.

However, responsibility for public schools is divided: the national government pays teachers and sets curricula, while different tiers of local authorities maintain school infrastructure. Unequal resource allocation and slow renovation fail to create acceptable conditions across all classrooms. Differences in local financial capacity and renovation delays contribute to uneven learning conditions.

In France, the educational system aims to provide equal educational opportunities regardless of socio-economic background. But students from poorer backgrounds have said they have been disproportionately affected by classroom cancellations. This shows a gap between policy planning and execution. The French government is also facing huge debt and rising borrowing costs that could limit its ability to fund rapid improvements.

French Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu has acknowledged student grievances and has promised school improvements.

STRONG DOLLAR, WEAK HAND FOR TRUMP BEFORE MIDTERMS

JAMIE MCGEEVER

With the US midterm elections weeks away, a surging dollar is exposing a central contradiction in President Donald Trump's economic agenda: currency markets are delivering the opposite of what his administration wants.

Trump's economic record in the first two years of his second term is being heavily scrutinised. Polls show voters' approval of his handling of the economy has rarely been lower. That goes a long way toward explaining why betting markets point to his Republican Party losing control of the House of Representatives, and perhaps even the Senate, on November 3.

Yet if there's any truth to the market adage that a country's currency is a reflection of the world's confidence in its economy, Trump should be going into the upcoming vote brimming with confidence. The dollar has been rising steadily, recently hitting its strongest level in 18 months against major peers.

But a strong and appreciating exchange rate is the last thing Trump wants. His administration's economic and trade policies are aiming to revive US manufacturing, make American exports great again and shrink the trade deficit. A strengthening currency won't help with any of that.

One might expect the dollar to be under pressure, especially given that the US trade balance has not narrowed according to the administration's plan.

Imports have exploded to record levels, largely driven by US companies hoovering up the chips, equipment and goods needed for the AI build-out, and the country's trade deficit is widening.

It was 2.7% of gross domestic product earlier this year — one of the smallest readings of the century — but it could be headed for 4% of GDP next year, according to Dean Maki at hedge fund Point72.

But the dollar is not weakening. It did during Trump's first year back in the Oval Office, amidst concerns about "dollar debasement" and a "sell America" mentality among foreign investors fostered by Trump's tariffs, but that has since gone into reverse.

Why? Because exchange rates are relative, and the greenback currently appears to be the proverbial "cleanest dirty shirt". While the US is suffering from acute debt and deficit concerns, so are other developed countries, most notably France. Investors fear that Paris is unwilling to take the politically unpalatable steps to get its budget under control and are thus slamming the euro.

Similarly, worries that higher interest rates will make it nearly impossible for Japan to service its enormous debt load have anchored the yen near its recent historical lows.

In short, the dollar is "winning" as much by default as it is benefiting from the flood of global capital chasing the US AI dream. — Reuters

Listed manufacturers record profit growth in Q3

LISTED manufacturing companies on the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded a significant improvement in their combined financial performance during the first nine months of 2026.

The results point to stronger profitability across several industrial activities, particularly chemicals, fertilisers, cements and selected food-processing businesses.

However, a closer examination reveals that the improvement was concentrated in a relatively small number of companies, while others experienced declining earnings or continued to record losses.

The figures therefore provide a positive indication of financial performance, but also highlight the importance of assessing the depth, distribution and sustainability of industrial growth.

Oman India Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO) recorded the highest net profit among the companies covered, earning approximately RO 99.4 million during the nine-month period, compared with RO 92.9 million a year earlier, an increase of around 6.9%.

OQ Base Industries followed with net profit of RO 61.4 million, up from RO 32.3 million, representing growth of approximately 90%.

The strong performance of OMIFCO and OQ Base Industries during the first nine months of 2026 reflects a combination of favourable global market conditions and domestic industrial advantages.

Higher international prices for selected chemicals and fertilisers, driven partly by supply disruptions and geopolitical tensions, alongside strong global fertiliser demand, supported profitability.

Meanwhile, efficient production operations, access to natural gas, improved sales volumes and established export channels strengthened the companies' competitiveness.

These results highlight the importance of combining local production advantages with global market opportunities to achieve sustainable industrial growth. The next important development was the improvement in the cement sector.



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A closer examination reveals that the improvement was concentrated in a relatively small number of companies, while others experienced declining earnings or continued to record losses.

Oman Cement increased its net profit from approximately RO 5.9 million to RO 9.9 million, representing growth of around 68%.

Raysut Cement recorded a particularly notable turnaround, moving from a loss of approximately RO 3.9 million in the first nine months of 2025 to a profit of around RO 3.1 million in the same period of 2026. Nevertheless, the performance is relevant to Oman's wider industrial development, given the importance of cement and construction materials to infrastructure, housing and industrial projects.

Sustained competitiveness in these activities will depend not only on demand but also on production efficiency, energy costs, logistics, product quality and the ability to compete in regional markets.

The metals and electrical manufacturing industries delivered more mixed results. Oman Cables Industry recorded net profit of approximately RO 17.1 million, compared with RO 17.6 million in the corresponding period of 2025, a decline of around 2.8%.

Al Jazeera Steel Products also reported lower net profit, falling from approximately RO 6.5 million to RO 6 million.

In contrast, Voltamp Energy increased its net profit from RO 9.6 million to RO 10.5 million, representing growth of approximately 9.5%. These differences demonstrate that industrial companies operating in related manufacturing markets can experience contrasting financial outcomes.

Their performance may depend on product mix, operating costs, customer contracts, export exposure and other company-specific factors that cannot be determined from net profit figures alone.

The food-processing sector also showed contrasting trends. Dhofar Food and Investment increased its net profit from approximately RO 405,000 to RO 3.1 million.

Gulf Mushroom Products recorded an increase from RO 1.8 million to RO 2.6 million, while Oman Refreshment raised its net profit to approximately RO 3 million from RO 2.8 million. However, A'Saffa Foods recorded a decline

in net profit from approximately RO 5.2 million to RO 4.8 million, while Salalah Mills moved from a profit of RO 1.8 million to a loss of approximately RO 842,000.

The results illustrate the importance of distinguishing between percentage growth and the absolute contribution to profitability.

Companies starting from a relatively small profit base can report high growth rates without necessarily becoming major contributors to the sector's aggregate earnings.

For example, Dhofar Food and Investment recorded a substantial percentage increase, but its net profit remained significantly below that of the largest companies in the sample.

The food industry nevertheless remains strategically important to Oman's economic diversification. Developing competitive food manufacturing capabilities can support domestic value addition, strengthen links with agricultural and livestock production, reduce selected import dependencies and create employment opportunities.

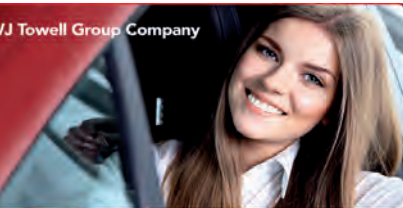
Achieving these objectives requires attention to productivity, processing technology, packaging, storage, distribution and access to export markets.

Other specialised manufacturers also reported improved results. Omani Chromite increased its net profit from approximately RO 417,000 to RO 747,000, while Al Anwar Ceramic raised its profit from around RO 473,000 to RO 943,000. Omani Packing Industries recorded net profit of approximately RO 624,000, compared with RO 145,000 in the previous year, while Muscat Thread Mills increased its profit from RO 334,000 to RO 434,000.

Although the absolute profits of these businesses were relatively small, their performance illustrates the diversity of activities within Oman's manufacturing base. However, their longer-term contribution should be assessed through additional indicators, including production capacity, sales growth, export performance, labour productivity, investment and the development of local supply chains.

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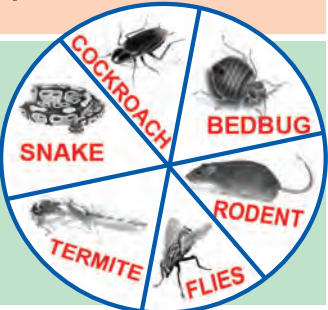
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ART/LIFE



VIDEO GAMES

NINTENDO GIVES ZELDA CLASSIC A MODERN MAKEOVER



The launch forms part of Zelda’s 40th anniversary celebrations. — AFP

For millions of gamers, a few notes from an ocarina are enough to bring back fond childhood memories. Nintendo is betting that magic still works with a remake of the beloved action-adventure classic “The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time”, due out on November 5.

AFP got hands-on with the game at Nintendo’s European headquarters in Frankfurt ahead of its release. Released in 1998 on the Nintendo 64, Ocarina of Time was the fifth entry in the franchise created by Shigeru Miyamoto, the legendary designer behind Mario.

It follows green-clad hero Link as he battles Ganondorf and tries to save Princess Zelda. Its sweeping story shifts between Link’s childhood and adulthood.

Poetic, melancholy and groundbreaking for its era, it is widely considered one of the best video games ever made. It received a lighter facelift for Nintendo’s handheld 3DS in 2011.

“Ocarina of Time’ basically wrote the rulebook for 3D Zelda games”, journalist Paul de Barbeyrac of Jeux Video Magazine said.

This remake, he added, “is a bit like opening a page of gaming history and getting to read it in the best possible conditions”.

The launch forms part of Zelda’s 40th anniversary celebrations, alongside a global concert tour and a live-action film hitting cinemas next spring.

Powered by Nintendo’s Switch 2 console, the remake features richer environments, upgraded textures and more detailed character models.

The art style divided fans when unveiled, with some saying it looked too polished or plastic-like.

But De Barbeyrac said the improvements become clearer with play, highlighting textures and lighting that “elevates the original material”.

Players can now freely control the camera, while Link can jump with the press of a button.

Characters are fully voiced in some scenes, and the soundtrack has been newly orchestrated.

Voice recognition also allows players to hum ocarina melodies to trigger certain in-game actions. Nintendo nevertheless appears keen to preserve the original experience. The demo, covering the opening hour and a later section, unfolded much as it did in 1998.

Nintendo is targeting fans who grew up with the game, which sold millions of copies worldwide. Social media videos joke about parents dropping everything when they hear familiar ocarina melodies.

De Barbeyrac sees it as “a game about passing something on”, with older players sharing it with their children.

For Serkan Toto of consultancy Kantan Games, the title looks set for solid success. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



OPERA

Musicians and opera singers perform during a rehearsal of “The Mothers of Kherson” opera on the stage of the Warsaw Grand Theatre, Poland.

— AFP



ICON

Rapper Megan Thee Stallion attends the 3rd Annual InStyle Imagemaker Awards in Los Angeles, US.

— AFP



CULTURE

A view of a shop selling papel picado decorations and Day of the Dead-themed items at a market in Mexico City.

— AFP

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UNSEEN VAN GOGH PAINTING EXHIBITED IN HONG KONG



Vincent van Gogh's 'Chataigniers en fleur' is from the last two months of his life. — AFP

Hundreds of people queued last week outside a Hong Kong gallery to see a Vincent van Gogh painting on public display for the first time in six decades.

The Dutch artist's "Chataigniers en fleurs" ("Chestnut Trees in Blossom") was exhibited ahead of its November 18 auction in New York, where Sotheby's expects it to fetch around \$180 million.

It is among 12 works owned by late Argentine collectors Nelly Arrieta de Blaquier and Carlos Pedro Blaquier. Paintings by Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro and Paul Cezanne will also go under the hammer.

Completed in 1890, during the last two months of van Gogh's life, the painting portrays a blossoming chestnut tree with a solitary man walking past three women in Japanese attire.

"It's one of the last, most

expressive and hopeful works by van Gogh in this final phase of his career," Scott Nüchel, a vice chairman at Sotheby's, told AFP.

It is among approximately 70 works van Gogh created after leaving the psychiatric asylum of Saint-Remy, where he painted "The Starry Night". During this period, he averaged around one work a day.

Nüchel highlighted the thickness of the paint layers, saying the artist was "racing to put it to canvas".

"Orchard with Cypresses" holds the auction record for a van Gogh, selling for \$117.2 million in 2022.

Asked who might buy the painting, Nüchel said "anything is possible".

"Our revealing in Hong Kong suggests that Asia is certainly a possibility," he said of the auction in November. — AFP

30 women honoured on Women's Day



THE Ministry of Social Development celebrated on Sunday in Muscat the Omani Women's Day, which falls on October 17 every year.

The celebration was held under the auspices of Eng Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

The celebration included a theatrical performance which reviewed the journey of celebrating Omani women since the Omani Women's Symposium held at Saih Al Makarim in the Wilayat of Sohar in 2009.

The symposium constituted a prominent national milestone in the journey of Omani women, under the royal blessing of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the declaration of October 17 as Omani Women's Day, signaling a new phase of focus on women's issues and aspirations and enhancing their participation in the national development process.

The performance reviewed the milestones of celebrating Omani Women's Day since 2010, including the honoring of distinguished female role models and the introduction of women's contributions across state institutions and various sectors.

It also highlighted the diversity of fields covered by the accompanying events over the years, to include social work, education, culture, economics, community initiatives, voluntary work, and entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the performance recalled the milestone honoring of Omani women in 2020 by Her Highness the Honourable Lady and the national significance it carried, reflecting appreciation for women's achievements across various fields of work and giving. It reaffirmed the importance of highlighting distinguished female role models as inspiring examples for future generations, and as testimonies to Omani women's competence and capability to bear responsibilities and contribute to development paths.

The performance addressed the key features of celebrating Omani women during subsequent years; 2023 witnessed a



Omani Women's Day was celebrated under the auspices of Eng Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals

focus on cultural and literary fields, while the 2024 celebration centred on women's contributions to culture, literature, and poetry, as well as their role in enriching cultural life, preserving national heritage, and enhancing its presence.

The 2025 celebration came under the slogan 'She is Oman,' reaffirming women's connection to their national identity and their contributions to the renaissance journey

Dr Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, honoured 30 Omani women working in the energy, minerals, and environment sectors, comprising 10 honourees in the energy sector, 12 honourees in the environment sector, and 8 honourees in the minerals sector, in appreciation of their efforts and contributions in vital sectors linked to economic development, sustainability, and natural resource management.

The selection of these sectors serves to emphasize the diversity of work fields in which Omani women contribute, as well as the scientific and professional qualifications, specialised expertise, and ability to keep pace with technical developments and elevate performance required by these fields.

It also underscores the importance of highlighting female competencies working in vital domains and presenting their professional experiences, thereby inspiring young generations and encouraging them to participate across various development sectors.

Eng Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, affirmed in a statement that celebrating and honoring Omani women comes in appreciation of the efforts and expertise they offer in sectors considered pillars of the national economy and tied to the future of development in the Sultanate of Oman.

He added that this comes as an extension of the high attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to enhancing women's status and participation in the national development process.

He noted that this recognition highlights women's presence in workplaces and leadership positions, affirming that competence and dedication are the basis for participation and excellence.

He added that it also represents a message of encouragement to young women to benefit from available opportunities to contribute to these sectors and participate in building their future.

Al Aufi explained that Omani women's contributions to the energy, minerals, and environment sectors are witnessing growth and diversification, as their presence has extended from technical, engineering, and research fields to planning, policymaking, management, and leadership, reaching senior executive positions, including heading companies in the oil and gas sector and leading operational processes and strategic projects.

— ONA

FEATURES



Omani actress and entrepreneur Arwa al Sinaidi is building a multifaceted career across television, business and entrepreneurship. Her journey highlights the value of embracing unexpected opportunities, pursuing diverse ambitions and contributing to the growth of Oman's creative industry.



ARWA AL SINAIDI MAKES HER MARK IN OMANI DRAMA

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

AS Oman celebrates Omani Women's Day throughout October, rising actress Arwa al Sinaidi represents a generation of women pursuing diverse ambitions across the arts, business and other professional fields. Her journey into acting began unexpectedly, with an opportunity to step onto the street theatre stage that would eventually open doors to Omani television drama. Her first performance came during the inaugural Sandan Festival, when she was asked to help present a street theatre production. She took on the role of a hypocritical clown, a psychologically complex character with elements reminiscent of the Joker. What began as an effort to rise to the occasion became a turning point. Three months later, she was nominated for another production and won her first award for Best Supporting Actress at the inaugural Dhofar Festival. Soon afterwards, an invitation from Oman Television led to an audition and her entry into television drama.

She credits director and mentor Yousuf al Haj for guiding and encouraging emerging actors, helping young talents find their footing in the industry. Among her most significant projects are the Omani series Al Madyunair and Al Qafir, each offering a different acting experience. The former introduced her to social comedy and realism, while also bringing her wider recognition among audiences. Viewers began addressing her by her character's name, Shaikha, a response she sees as evidence that the role resonated with them. However, it was Nasra, her character in Al Qafir, that left the deepest impression on her. Playing an orphaned, travelling shepherdess from the Shawan community required considerable time and effort to develop the character's personality and emotional depth. For Arwa, Nasra also embodied the resilience and generosity of Omani women, making the role particularly meaningful. The public's response helped establish her name among audiences of different ages. Looking ahead, she believes Omani drama has a distinctive cultural identity, landscape and heritage that could appeal to audiences beyond the Sultanate of Oman. Reaching a wider regional audience, she argues, requires stronger scripts rooted in Omani society, alongside greater opportunities for emerging talent. She welcomes initiatives offering auditions to

new performers, describing them as an important step towards developing the industry. Acting, however, is only one part of her professional life. An entrepreneur before entering the arts, Arwa is also a certified trainer who delivers entrepreneurship workshops and works on feasibility studies. She serves as a business developer at a helicopter company and owns and manages A&M Café. She attributes her ability to balance these responsibilities to prioritising tasks, managing her time and building a reliable team. Rather than viewing her different careers as competing demands, she treats each as an opportunity to renew her enthusiasm. Her ambitions include taking on psychologically complex film and television roles, exploring socially relevant stories and participating in Arab co-productions that represent Omani talent. She is also considering a new business project. In the month of Omani Women's Day, Arwa's journey offers a reminder that professional paths need not follow a single direction. Her advice to young Omani women is to welcome unexpected opportunities, invest in knowledge and resist limiting themselves to one role. Sometimes, she believes, the chance to step in and save a situation can become the beginning of an entirely new journey.