

Observer

HM'S CONDOLENCES TO TANZANIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, on the death of her husband, Hafidh Ameir Hassan. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy to President Samia Suluhu Hassan, the family of the deceased and the friendly people of Tanzania.



HM, PRESIDENT OF RWANDA HOLD OFFICIAL TALKS

Focus on strengthening partnership between two countries



HM RECEIVES RWANDA PRESIDENT IN SALALAH

TWO LEADERS HOLD OFFICIAL SESSION OF TALKS

TALKS FOCUS ON COOPERATION AND INVESTMENTS

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK and President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda held an official session of talks at Al Hosn Palace in Salalah on Monday evening.

Discussions focused on cooperation and investment in mining, renewable energy, food security, land ports, logistics and healthcare, with the aim of strengthening investment partnership between the two countries in a manner that meets the aspirations of their peoples and serves their mutual interests.

The talks were attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister

for Defence Affairs; HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs; HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance; Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office; Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority; Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister

FOCUS ON MINING, RENEWABLE ENERGY, FOOD SECURITY

ALSO DISCUSSED INVESTMENTS IN LAND PORTS, LOGISTICS

AIM OF STRENGTHENING INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP

of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; and Nasra bint Salim al Hashmi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Kenya and Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Rwanda. The session was attended from the Rwandan side by Olivier Nduhungirehe, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Yusuf Murangwa, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Antoine Kajangwe, Minister of Trade and Industry, Solange Uwituze, Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Juliana Muganza, CEO of Rwanda Development Board, Dan Munyuza, Non-Resident Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman, and other officials.

Earlier, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda at Al Hosn Palace in Salalah, on the occasion of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty welcomed the distinguished guest, expressing his best wishes for a pleasant and successful visit for him and his accompanying delegation.

An official reception ceremony was held in honour of the President of the Republic of Rwanda. Upon the arrival of the presidential motorcade, a squadron of the Royal Cavalry lined up in salute. His Majesty accompanied the President to the dais, where the national anthem of Rwanda was played and a 21-gun salute was fired in his honour.

His Majesty then greeted the official delegation accompanying the President of Rwanda, while the President greeted the Omani side.

SEE PAGES 2,3,4

His Majesty hosts dinner in honour of President



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik hosted an official dinner banquet at Al Hosn Palace on Monday in honour of President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda, and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

Prior to the dinner banquet, His Majesty and the President of Rwanda exchanged commemorative gifts, expressing the depth of friendship and good relations between the two countries. The dinner banquet was attended by a number of Their Highnesses, members of the Royal Family, ministers and advisers, senior military officers, and a number of under-secretaries.



HM, President of Rwanda focus on strengthening partnership



SALALAH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda at Al Hosn Palace in Salalah on Monday, on the occasion of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty welcomed the distinguished guest, expressing his best wishes for a pleasant and successful visit for him and his accompanying delegation.

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His Majesty then greeted the official delegation accompanying the President of Rwanda, while the President greeted the Omani side, which included Their Highnesses, Excellencies and military commanders.

The President of the Republic of Rwanda is accompanied by an official delegation including Olivier Nduhungirehe, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Yusuf Murangwa, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Antoine Kajangwe, Minister of Trade and Industry, Solange Uwituze, Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Juliana Muganza, CEO of Rwanda Development Board, Dan Munyuzza, Non-Resident Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman, and other officials. — ONA



HIS MAJESTY HOSTS DINNER IN HONOUR OF PRESIDENT



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Oman-Rwanda people-to-people ties reinforce bilateral relations



President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda arrived in Salalah on Monday on an official two-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman. HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, led the welcoming party for the guest and his accompanying delegation upon their arrival at the Royal Airport in Salalah. The guest was also received by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (Head of the Mission of Honour); Nasra bint Salim al Hashmi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Kenya and Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Rwanda; and Dan Munyuza, Non-Resident Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

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KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

People-to-people relations between Oman and Rwanda are gaining renewed attention as the two countries seek to deepen bilateral ties, with Rwandans living and working in Oman playing an important role in strengthening social, professional and cultural connections.

With a community of around 2,100 residents and professionals, Rwandans in Oman have established links across various sectors of society. Direct air connectivity between Muscat and Kigali has also made it easier for community members to maintain connections with their families, businesses and communities back home.

The growing ties also draw on Oman's longstanding historical connections with East Africa, which have shaped social and cultural links between the two regions over generations.

Shaddad al Musalmi, an Omani media personality born and raised in Rwanda, said the visit of the Rwandan President to Oman was particularly meaningful to him.

"Watching the President of Rwanda visit Oman is deeply personal to me. Rwanda is the land that raised me, and Oman is the land of my roots and my future. This visit is more than diplomacy; it is a bridge between two homes," he said.

Al Musalmi said the visit presented an opportunity to strengthen people-to-people relations through community exchanges, cultural festivals and business partnerships.

"When families and communities meet face to face, that is when real understanding and friendship begin,"

he said.

He also expressed hope that the visit would encourage greater direct interaction between Omanis and Rwandans beyond official and governmental relations.

"I hope to see our youth working together. That is how we turn this historic visit into lasting human connections," he added.

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

Ahmed bin Mohamed al Harthi, retired Team Leader, Technical Support at PDO, who also previously served at the Ministry of Electricity and Water, said Oman's historical presence in Rwanda dates back well before the country became part of the Belgian Congo.

"Omanis arrived in Rwanda during the period when it was still under German East Africa. They gradually settled across the country, and by the 1950s and 1960s, they were already well established in most major cities and towns," he said.

According to Al Harthi, Omanis were primarily involved in trade, groceries, transport, timber and, notably, coffee, which was then a major seasonal cash crop.

He said intermarriage between Omanis and local communities was also common during the early part of the last century. As transport and logistics improved, some Omani families brought their wives from Oman, further strengthening community ties.

"Relations with the local population were exceptionally good, and Omanis were respected by authorities at all levels," Al Harthi said.

He added that Omanis also contributed to the development of the traditional market system, with the word isoko, meaning market in

Kinyarwanda, sharing roots with the Arabic word souq.

"Islam spread through virtue, good conduct and intermarriage. It is difficult to do justice to decades of Omani presence in Rwanda in a single paragraph, but their legacy in this beautiful country of a thousand hills remains deeply cherished," he said.

Al Harthi is currently preparing a map documenting Rwandan lineage and family connections in Oman.

A GROWING COMMUNITY BRIDGE

Today, Oman-Rwanda people-to-people relations extend across professional, economic and social spheres. Rwandan expatriates and professionals working in Oman contribute to various sectors while maintaining strong links with their home country.

The Rwanda-Oman Friendship Society also serves as a platform connecting Omani citizens with Rwandan roots and promoting cultural understanding and unity.

For many Rwandans living in Oman, maintaining their cultural identity while contributing to their host society is an important part of their daily lives. Community members also seek to uphold values of unity, integrity and self-discipline, while acting as ambassadors for Rwanda abroad.

The expanding community links, historical connections and growing ease of travel between the two countries provide a strong foundation for closer relations beyond the diplomatic level.

As Oman and Rwanda look to broaden cooperation, these personal and community connections could provide an important human dimension to the growing bilateral relationship.

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AL BURAIMI SOCIAL PROTECTION BENEFICIARIES TOP 38,000

AL BURAIMI: The total number of beneficiaries of the Social Protection Scheme in Al Buraimi Governorate stood at 38,190 by the end of July 2026, according to statistics issued by the Social Protection Fund in Al Buraimi.

Hilal bin Salim al Shamsi, Director of the Social Protection Department in Al Buraimi Governorate, said that the Social Protection Scheme seeks to ensure that legally mandated benefits reach their



deserving recipients.

Al Shamsi pointed out that the Childhood Benefit Programme garnered the highest number of beneficiaries, exceeding 29,000, followed by the Elderly Benefit Programme (4,000 beneficiaries), the Family Income Support Benefit (2,896 beneficiaries), the Disability Benefit (1,379 beneficiaries) and the Orphans and Widows Benefit (522 beneficiaries). — ONA

SAYYID BADR HOLDS TALKS WITH HONORARY CONSULS OF OMAN

SAYYID Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, met in the Wilayat of Salalah, with a group of Honorary Consuls of the Sultanate of Oman accredited to a number of countries and cities around the world.

The meeting highlighted the role of honorary consuls within the framework of friendship and cooperation relations with the Sultanate of Oman, as well as highlighting various opportunities for economic, commercial partnership and cultural and scientific exchange. The Foreign Minister affirmed the importance of the ongoing engagement with the honorary consuls and benefiting from their networks of relations and expertise in the context of human and civilisational communication between

The meeting highlighted the role of honorary consuls within the framework of friendship and cooperation relations with the Sultanate of Oman, as well as highlighting various opportunities for economic, commercial partnership and cultural and scientific exchange.



The meeting stressed the role of honorary consuls within the framework of friendship and cooperation. — ONA

peoples and cultures.

The Foreign Ministry prepared for the honorary consuls an introductory programme about Dhofar Governorate and the capabilities and opportunities it possesses in various sectors.

The meeting was attended by Honorary Consuls of the Sultanate of Oman, namely Boleta Senkiene in Lithuania,

Eng Ivo Vaněk in the Czech Republic, Francesco Palau in Milan, Italy, Talal bin Salim al Wahaibi in Istanbul, Türkiye, Pablo Caralps in Barcelona, Spain, Tommaso D'Errico in Florence, Italy, Hussein bin Saif al Harthi in Rwanda, Erdene Dorjnamjim in Mongolia, Dr Mohammed Chand in Botswana, and Prakash Nair in Kerala, India.

FEES FOR CHARGING ELECTRIC VEHICLES FROM OCTOBER 1

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in coordination with the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) and the Net-Zero Centre, has adopted fees for charging electric vehicles ranging from 50 to 120 baisas per kilowatt-hour, as per charging capacity and speed, effective from October 1. The fees for charging service will be 50 baisas per kilowatt-hour for chargers with a capacity of 90 kilowatts or less, 90 baisas per kilowatt-hour for chargers with a capacity between 91 and 180 kilowatts, and 120 baisas per kilowatt-hour for chargers with a capacity of 181 kilowatts and above.

The fees were based on a comprehensive study of the economic and operational aspects of electric vehicle charging stations, aiming to strike a balance between reasonable costs for users and economic viability and investment sustainability for charging station and point operators.

The ministry developed the unified national platform for electric vehicle charging, the 'Shahin' app, to serve as a single national interface that allows electric vehicle users to access information on charging points operated by various providers in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



Oman and UK discuss ways to strengthen ties



The 18th session of the joint Oman-UK Working Group meeting was held in Muscat.

MUSCAT: The 18th session of the joint Oman-UK Working Group meeting was held in Muscat, co-chaired by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, and Stephen Doughty, Minister of State at the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom (UK). The two sides also explored ways to enhance these relations and expand their horizons across a number of fields of mutual interest, including benefiting from British expertise and experience in the fields of education, vocational training,

and sports, alongside discussing ways to revitalise tourism and enhance cultural exchange and participation between the two countries.

The two sides exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues, particularly current developments in the region. They also highlighted the efforts exerted by Oman towards finding diplomatic solutions to the existing situation in the Strait of Hormuz, contributing to de-escalation and promoting security and stability in the region.

The meeting was attended by Dr Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman, alongside a number of officials from the Foreign Ministry and representatives of concerned government entities. — ONA

Oman joins youth cultural diplomacy seminar

JEDDAH: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth participated in the scientific seminar organised by the General Secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), within the framework of activating communication channels among Islamic countries on youth issues and cultural diplomacy, under the title 'Youth, Cultural Diplomacy, and Leadership Skill Development.'

The ministry's participation stems from its keenness to enhance the role of youth as a pivotal pillar in leadership creation and in representing cultural identity, in line with the latest international practices in the fields of cultural diplomacy and capacity building.



The scientific seminar was organised by the OIC.

The ministry affirmed that the seminar formed a scientific platform to discuss a set of main themes, foremost among which were the role of youth in cultural diplomacy and the development of leadership skills among

youth, in addition to cooperation mechanisms among Islamic countries that contribute to exchanging expertise and translating ideas into practical initiatives supporting the cultural presence of youth and developing their leadership capabilities.

In the context of the ministry's participation, focus was placed on exchanging views and reviewing models and programmes that can be built upon within the framework of cooperation among Islamic countries.

This is in addition to supporting youth empowerment pathways to enhance their participation in cultural work and the formulation of relevant policies and programmes offered. — ONA

Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Defence ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (R.O)
30/2025	MEP works – Thumrait (Water Network)	First & Above - MEP works	17 September 2026	26 October 2026	1050/- R.O
29/2026	Building works – MAM	First & Above	17 September 2026	26 October 2026	368/- R.O
30/2026	Building works – MAM	First & Above	17 September 2026	26 October 2026	107/- R.O
31/2026	Building works – MAM	First & Above	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	100/- R.O
32/2026	Civil maintenance works - Salalah	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	158/- R.O
35/2026	Civil maintenance works - Thumrait	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	315/- R.O
36/2026	Civil maintenance works – AL-Mussanah	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	315/- R.O
37/2026	Civil maintenance works - Masirah	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	420/- R.O
38/2026	Civil maintenance works - Khasab	First & Above - Civil maintenance works	17 September 2026	19 October 2026	158/- R.O
39/2026	Building works – Seeb	First and above	17 September 2026	26 October 2026	254/100 R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- Bidders shall present the omization certificate issued by the ministry of labour prior to purchasing the tender documents provide that it meets the approved that it meets the approved minimum omization percentage as stipulated by ministry of labour.
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as SOFT COPY (USB) in two separate files:
 - A. Financial (bill 1&2 separated file from bill 3)
 - B. Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



Oman is giving growing attention to air quality as one of the pillars of environmental protection. — ONA

OMAN MARKS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CLEAN AIR

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, is joining countries around the world in marking the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, observed annually on 7 September. The day aims to raise awareness of the importance of improving air quality and reducing sources of pollution, and to encourage national and international efforts toward providing a healthy and sustainable environment for current and future generations.

This year’s occasion is held under the theme “Clean Air for Climate Action,” a message that directly links improving air quality with mitigating the effects of climate change, and affirms that measures to reduce emissions can simultaneously achieve health, environmental, and economic benefits for communities.

Oman is giving growing attention to air quality as one of the key pillars of environmental protection and human health, with the Environment Authority working to strengthen the air quality monitoring and observation system, track various sources of emissions and pollutants, and develop the tools and technologies used in collecting and analysing environmental data, thereby supporting decision-making and the formulation of appropriate measures to curb air pollution.

Oman has an integrated national network for monitoring ambient air quality, operated through dozens of stations strategically distributed across the various governorates and industrial and vital areas, alongside continuous emission monitoring devices at industrial sources. — ONA

SIGNAL CORPS WINS CHAMPIONSHIP



MUSCAT: The Signal Corps Team of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) on Monday won the RAO’s 2026 Volleyball Championship, after defeating the 11th Infantry Brigade’s team 3-1 in the final match, held at Muaskar Al Murtafaa. The championship’s closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman, who presented the championship’s trophies to the top teams. The team of the 11th Infantry Brigade secured second place, while third place was won by the Sultan of Oman’s Artillery team. — ONA

Vocational college capacity grows 19% as intake reaches 2,272

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

The General Directorate of Vocational Colleges at the Ministry of Labour has announced that 89 per cent of its seats for the 2026/2027 academic year have been filled following the first admissions round, congratulating newly accepted students and wishing them success in their academic and professional journeys.

Dr Khalid Ambusaidi, Director-General of Vocational Colleges at the Ministry of Labour, said the colleges achieved a 19-per cent growth in intake capacity for new students this year compared with the previous academic year, across eight

vocational colleges spanning engineering, commercial, maritime, water technology, agriculture and other applied fields. He explained that results from the first round of the Unified Admission Centre showed 2,272 seats filled out of total capacity, representing 89 per cent, with remaining seats to be opened for competition among general education diploma graduates in the second round.

“This level of demand confirms the growing awareness of the importance of vocational education and training as one of the key pathways that allows students to acquire specialised and practical skills, and gives them wider opportunities to enter the labour market in line with the needs of various



More than 2,270 students have been accepted into Oman’s vocational colleges this year, across specialisations ranging from engineering and marine sciences to water technology and logistics.

economic sectors and the requirements of the coming period,” Ambusaidi said. He pointed to continued expansion this year in specialisations directly linked to labour market needs, including engineering

and technical fields, commercial and logistics studies and warehouse management, marine sciences, seafood safety and quality, aquaculture, water and wastewater treatment technologies, and plant

production technologies, among other specialisations gaining increasing importance amid rapid economic and technological shifts.

“We want to assure our accepted students that securing a place is the beginning of the opportunity, not the end of it,” he said. “The coming stage requires diligence and hard work, commitment to attendance and practical training, and making the most of the facilities, laboratories, workshops and expertise the colleges provide, alongside developing their personal, digital, language, communication and teamwork skills.” Ambusaidi urged students to view vocational education as a genuine pathway to building

a promising career, stressing the importance of every student investing in the opportunity before them to develop themselves and refine their skills, and to remain passionate about learning and able to keep pace with developments in their field, strengthening their readiness to move from the educational environment into the workplace with confidence and competence.

On cooperation with the private sector, he said: “We place great importance on strengthening partnership and cooperation with the private sector, as an essential partner in developing the vocational education and training system and improving its alignment with labour market needs.”

OCO, International Committee of Red Cross discuss ties

MUSCAT: Oman Charitable Organization (OCO) and the International Committee of the Red Cross discussed the requirements and steps necessary to complete the procedures for its official recognition within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

This came during a meeting between Badr bin Mohammed al Zaabi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Oman Charitable Organization, and Pierre Krähenbühl, Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and his accompanying delegation, during an official visit

to the Authority’s headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Oman Charitable Organization expressed his appreciation for this visit, aimed at strengthening dialogue and cooperation with the International Committee and benefiting from its long-standing expertise in humanitarian work, in a manner that serves national directions to develop the humanitarian work system and enhance its presence at the national and international levels.

For his part, the Director-General of the International Committee

of the Red Cross explained that the visit aims to gain a closer understanding of the Authority and its management officials, to learn about the directions for the coming phase, and to facilitate coordination and support efforts aimed at completing the requirements for the recognition of the Omani Red Crescent.

The delegation of the International Committee praised the humanitarian role undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman, and the wise approach of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in supporting humanitarian efforts and enhancing international

cooperation, commending the role of Oman Charitable Organization in facilitating the work of the International Movement and supporting its humanitarian activities.

During the meeting, both sides affirmed the importance of building the Red Crescent on solid institutional and humanitarian foundations, and benefiting from international expertise in the fields of governance, institutional development, training, capacity building, and the exchange of expertise, in a way that enhances its readiness and capacity to fulfil its humanitarian mission. — ONA

Labour Ministry sees rise in unions, awareness reach

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

THE Ministry of Labour has announced that awareness programmes run by its Labour Relations Department reached 8,943 beneficiaries by August 31, 2026, of whom 6,471 came through individual outreach and 2,472 through group sessions, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen awareness of rights and obligations and reinforce stability in the labour market.

Ali bin Salem al Sawa’i, Director of the Labour Relations Department at the Ministry of Labour, said the labour relations system operates across three main tracks: union organisation, awareness and education, and social dialogue committee affairs. He explained that the awareness track focuses on delivering legislative knowledge to workers and employers, while the union organisation track oversees the registration of unions and reviews their governing regulations, and the social dialogue track manages the joint committee’s work and follows up on the implementation of its recommendations.

Al Sawa’i noted that group awareness sessions rose to 57 in 2026, up from 49 in 2025, a growth of 16.3 per cent, with some programmes directed specifically at human resources managers and occupational health and safety officers, given their role as a key link in transferring legal knowledge into workplaces.

The programmes also extended to working women, final-year



ALI BIN SALEM
AL SAWA’I

Nearly 9,000 workers were reached through awareness programmes this year, while union registrations climbed to 351. Group awareness sessions rose to 57 in 2026, up from 49 in 2025, a growth of 16.3 per cent.



The Labour Relations Department at the Ministry of Labour is shifting from responding to disputes to preventing them through awareness and dialogue.

university students and workers with hearing disabilities.

He confirmed the continuation of the “Sustainable Awareness” initiative for a second consecutive year, alongside the activation of an automated response service via WhatsApp, the introduction of an electronic system for workshop registration and certificate issuance, and the preparation of bilingual Arabic and English booklets outlining workers’ rights and obligations.

On union activity, he revealed that the total number of registered unions rose from 339 in 2025 to 351 in 2026, while the number of administrative bodies increased from 126 to 145. He pointed to field visits conducted in cooperation with the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions across a number of private sector establishments to

strengthen legal awareness.

On social dialogue, Al Sawa’i described it as “an institutional mechanism that brings together government, employers and workers to discuss labour market issues and reach data-driven solutions and recommendations,” noting that five resolutions had been issued and their implementation followed up, alongside the formation of a dedicated team addressing banking facilities for workers whose employment in the private sector has ended.

He said the department is increasingly shifting towards preventing disputes through raising awareness and strengthening dialogue, rather than responding to issues after they arise, reinforcing a work environment built on rights, obligations and shared responsibility.

SHORT TAKES



Danish PM Mette Frederiksen (C), President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen (R) and Greenland's head of government Jens-Frederik Nielsen (L) visit the company Eutelsat Oneweb in Nuuk. — AFP

EU pledges €200m
Greenland deals
amid Trump’s threats

NUUK: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen unveiled plans on Monday for €200 million (\$232 million) of EU investments in Greenland and closer ties with the Danish Arctic territory, which President Donald Trump has insisted should belong to the United States. Von der Leyen arrived in Greenland for a two-day visit serving as a show of support for the governments of Greenland and Denmark, which have strongly rebuffed Trump’s campaign to acquire the world’s largest island.

The head of the 27-nation European Union’s executive body said the EU money would focus on sectors including critical minerals, satellite communications and renewable energy in Greenland, a semi-autonomous part of the Danish realm. “The EU stands in full solidarity with the Kingdom of Denmark and the people of Greenland,” von der Leyen told a news conference. “We will continue to do so.” Von der Leyen’s visit reflects the increasing geopolitical importance of the Arctic to major powers, such as the United States, Russia, China and Europe, as melting ice opens new shipping routes. — **Reuters**

Lebanon says
12 killed in Israeli
new wave of strikes



A Lebanese army soldier inspects destroyed vehicles at the site of an overnight Israeli airstrike on the village of Kfar Roummâne. — AFP

BEIRUT: Israel conducted a wave of air strikes in south Lebanon, killing 12 people, including women and children, according to the Lebanese health ministry on Monday, in an intensification of violence after a weeks-long lull. Eleven people, including two children and four women, died in one attack on a building in Kfar Rumman that killed 11 people, the ministry said.

A separate attack in the same town killed a rescuer and wounded another, the ministry said. Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency had previously reported two wounded rescuers. The strikes, which came despite a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, follow separate raids a day earlier that left 11 dead.

Fighting in Lebanon had decreased since a June memorandum of understanding between Washington and Tehran on the wider Middle East war and an Israel-Lebanon framework agreement later that month. Rescue teams were searching the debris on Monday morning for other victims. Villagers had returned home following the June truce after being displaced by the war. — **AFP**

FAR-RIGHT
WIN LEAVES
GERMANY’S
MERZ SHAKEN

BERLIN: Chancellor Friedrich Merz ruled out working with the Alternative for Germany on Monday after the far-right party surged into first place in state elections in Saxony-Anhalt, but he conceded the result had shaken his party “to its very foundations”. The AfD is appealing to lawmakers from Merz’s conservatives to support its bid to rule the eastern state, in what would be the first time a far-right party takes power at state level in postwar Germany.

The anti-immigrant, pro-Russia AfD won nearly 44% of the vote, an outcome that underlined the deep unpopularity of Merz’s ruling coalition and also triggered alarm among Germany’s neighbours, France and Poland, and elsewhere. However, the party — which wants to deport immigrants, halt support for Ukraine and restore ties with Moscow — fell short of an absolute majority in the state legislature, winning 39 of the 83 seats, and hopes to poach

individual conservative lawmakers. The election result could test the longstanding refusal of Germany’s mainstream parties, including Merz’s Christian Democrats (CDU), to work with the AfD, a policy known as the “firewall”.

The AfD says this is undemocratic. “This shakes our party to its very foundations,” Merz said. “We are all deeply shocked,” he added later at a press conference, describing the result as his party’s worst election result in decades. — **Reuters**

Seven Indonesian airports
remain shut due to volcano

SEVEN INDONESIAN airports, including two serving Jakarta, remained closed on Monday because of volcanic ash from eruptions at Mount Anak Krakatau as around 341,000 travellers were affected by flight cancellations and delays, officials said. Ash from Anak Krakatau, which sits halfway between Java and Sumatra islands, has blanketed Jakarta and several surrounding areas since it erupted late on Friday, leading to the closure of the airports for safety reasons.

Around 341,000 people have been affected by the delay, diversion, or cancellation of 2,961 flights, said Indonesia’s chief infrastructure minister, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono. Jakarta’s main airport Soekarno-Hatta will remain closed with six other airports, Transport Minister Dudy Purwagandhi said. Dudy said the closure was extended to give the airport time to clean the runway, taxiway and apron, and give airline operators time to prepare their fleets. “We want to ensure that the volcanic ash is moving away from the airports located around Mount Anak Krakatau,” he said.

On Monday, passengers at Soekarno-Hatta, which is located in the city of Tangerang, adjacent to Jakarta, were frantically looking for the status of their flights on the information boards. Some were sleeping on benches.



A stranded passenger looks on at the terminal as Soekarno-Hatta International Airport closed its operations in Tangerang, near Jakarta. — Reuters

Around 341,000 people have been affected by the delay, diversion, or cancellation of 2,961 flights, said Indonesia’s chief infrastructure minister, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono. Jakarta’s main airport Soekarno-Hatta will remain closed with six other airports

President Prabowo Subianto chaired a virtual meeting on Monday with authorities on the eruption, as well as an August 15 earthquake that killed more than 130 people in eastern Indonesia and the ongoing forest fires, saying that the disaster mitigation budget needed to rise significantly. “This is our destiny, a country located in the ring of fire,” he said, adding that more helicopters and water pumps are needed to mitigate disasters. “For the future, we will take anticipatory steps.”

At night, the lava from Anak Krakatau lit the sky red as it erupted. Residents were sweeping the dusty floors of their homes and the blackened walls of a nearby mosque, photographs showed. Anak Krakatau is one of about 130

active volcanoes in Indonesia, which straddles the “Pacific Ring of Fire”, a highly seismically active zone where different plates on the earth’s crust meet to create a large number of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Anak Krakatau, which means child of Krakatau, began emerging a century ago from the area previously occupied by Krakatau, then known as Krakatoa. The older volcano destroyed itself in mass eruptions in 1883, which killed more than 36,000 people after triggering a series of tsunamis.

A tsunami after an eruption at Anak Krakatau in 2018 killed over 400 people. Renowned volcano expert Surono said that it was dangerous to fly as sulphur and silica-laden ash could damage plane engines and visibility was low due to the ash spread, especially with a lack of rain. “For Anak Krakatau, the recent eruption was unusual,” he said.

The volcano monitoring agency’s website showed the most recent Anak Krakatau eruption occurred on Sunday at 8:23 pm. The agency warned on Monday that “the probability of further eruptions in the coming periods remains high.”

The eruptions have seen ash towers reach as high as 6,000 metres on the Java side of the volcano and 15,000 metres on the Sumatra side and in some parts of Banten province in Java. — **Reuters**



NEPAL HOLDS DAY OF MOURNING

KATHMANDU: Nepal held a national day of mourning with candlelight vigils on Monday for victims of devastating glacial floods, as families of missing hydropower workers feared trapped in tunnels prayed rescuers might yet find them alive. The August 26 glacial and mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border killed at least 1,399 people, with more than 5,500 missing, including around 800 foreigners.

Flags flew at half-mast and hundreds of people gathered for the vigils in the Nepali capital Kathmandu, as the nation marked the 13th day after death in line with Hindu mourning rituals. Hundreds of hydropower workers are among the missing, but the rescue of three of them from deep inside tunnels — two Nepalis on Friday and a Chinese man on Saturday — has buoyed hopes that more could still be alive. Nepal Army spokesman Raja Ram Basnet said rescue efforts were continuing at “the same tempo” to make sure “that no one is still stranded”. Entire communities have been swept away, with roads destroyed and homes demolished.

Nepal President Ram Chandra Paudel visited relief camps in Nuwakot, speaking to those left homeless by the disaster. “Today the entire nation is mourning this horrific disaster,” he said in a statement. “To everyone waiting for news of family members and friends, I want to assure you that search and rescue operations will continue.” — **AFP**

DEEPENING RELATIONS

Russia, N Korea open first road bridge



Russia and North Korea held a ceremony on Monday marking the opening of the first road bridge across their narrow shared border, as the two Western-sanctioned countries deepen ties amid the Ukraine war. Russia and North Korea already shared rail and air links. The new bridge, which crosses the Tumen River, is designed to accommodate “a projected growth in freight and passenger traffic, allowing up to 300 vehicles to pass through it daily,” the Russian government said. — **AFP**

INVOLVEMENT CONCERNS

Iran warns South Korea over Hormuz



Iran’s foreign ministry warned South Korea against military deployment or involvement in US operations in Hormuz, saying such a move would have “serious consequences”. Seoul said it was considering “contributions” to US security efforts in the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Iran’s foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei warned against succumbing to what he called “US pressure and intimidation”. Iran and the US have continued to trade fire in and around Hormuz. — **AFP**

SOARING TEMPERATURE

Italy logs hottest summer in 75 years



Italy has recorded this year its hottest summer since 1950, with an average temperature of 24.3 degrees Celsius, the National Research Council’s Institute for BioEconomy (CNR-IBE) said. August was the hottest month of the year, with an average temperature of 25.6C, up 5.2C from the 1951-1980 average and 3.5C above the 1991-2020 norm. The areas of Italy most affected were concentrated in northwestern lowlands and along the Apennines. — **Reuters**

Oman, Rwanda seek new horizons for cooperation



AS Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame visits Oman, the moment carries more weight than a standard diplomatic exchange. It is a signal that two nations, separated by geography but united by ambition, are choosing to write the next chapter of cooperation.

For Oman, this visit is a natural extension of its foreign policy: balanced, pragmatic, and anchored in peace.

Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman has consistently positioned itself as a bridge — between East and West, between tradition and innovation, between stability and growth. The country does not seek dominance. It seeks partnerships that deliver prosperity, dignity, and resilience.

For Rwanda, the visit reflects the same clarity of purpose. In just three decades, Rwanda has transformed itself from a nation recovering from tragedy into one of Africa’s most dynamic economies. It has prioritised good governance, digital transformation, clean energy, and a knowledge-based economy. It is a country that proves that vision, discipline, and investment in people can change a nation’s trajectory.

Oman and Rwanda do not have a long colonial history binding them. They have something better: shared values. Both countries believe in stability as the foundation for development. Both have prioritised youth, education, and technology as engines of the future. Both understand that in a volatile world, diversification is not a luxury — it is survival.

Oman brings to the table its expertise in

logistics, maritime trade, renewable energy, tourism, and financial services. With ports like Suhar and Al Duqm, Oman sits at the crossroads of global shipping lanes. With Oman Vision 2040, it is investing heavily in green hydrogen, manufacturing, and a knowledge economy.

Rwanda brings a different but equally powerful set of assets: a reputation for efficiency, a young tech-savvy population, leadership in conservation and sustainable development, and a strategic position as a gateway to the East African Community and the African Continental Free Trade Area. Kigali has become a hub for innovation, drone delivery, and digital government — proof that scale is not a prerequisite for impact.

Put together, the complementarity is clear. Oman can help Rwanda access Gulf and Asian markets, invest in infrastructure, and develop tourism that respects culture and environment. Rwanda can offer Oman a foothold in Africa’s fastest-growing region, opportunities in agri-tech, fintech, and smart cities, and lessons in how to deliver public services with speed and integrity.

There are immediate areas for collaboration. In renewable energy, Oman’s green hydrogen ambitions and Rwanda’s investments in methane gas and solar can create knowledge exchange.

In agriculture and food security, Rwanda’s expertise in high-value crops and Oman’s logistics capabilities can build resilient supply chains. In tourism, both nations offer authentic, sustainable experiences — from Oman’s mountains and coasts to

Both Oman and Rwanda believe in stability as the foundation for development. Both have prioritised youth, education, and technology as engines of the future

Rwanda’s gorillas and lakes — and can market themselves to each other’s travellers.

Education and human capital must also be central. Exchange programmes, vocational training, and partnerships between Omani and Rwandan universities can ensure this relationship is carried forward by the next generation.

At a time when the world is fragmenting into blocs, Oman-Rwanda relations offer a different model. It is not about charity. It is not about dependence. It is about two sovereign nations choosing each other because it makes strategic sense.

This partnership also reflects a broader shift. Africa and the Gulf are no longer talking across each other. They are talking with each other.

Oman, with its history of maritime trade with East Africa dating back centuries, is uniquely placed to lead this reconnection.

For Rwanda, Oman represents a gateway to the Gulf, to Asia, and to stable capital. For Oman, Rwanda represents proof that reform works, that Africa’s future will be built by Africans, and that opportunity exists beyond traditional partners.

The presidential visit should therefore be more than ceremonial. It should lock in mechanisms: a joint commission, regular business forums, direct air connectivity discussions, and investment promotion desks in Muscat and Kigali.

In a world searching for stable partnerships, Oman and Rwanda can show what is possible when two countries choose to grow together.

PRINCE HARRY’S UK RETURN REVIVES SECURITY ROW

JOE JACKSON

Prince Harry’s return to Britain has reignited debate about whether taxpayers should foot the bill to protect him and his family, with experts warning genuine threats likely exist.

The Duke of Sussex, who arrived in Britain last week with his wife Meghan and their two young children, had previously ruled out returning to his home country, citing security concerns.

The couple left Britain and quit royal duties in 2020 amid a royal family feud, and Harry subsequently waged a years-long, ultimately unsuccessful, legal battle to retain UK taxpayer-funded security while living in California.

Now back with their seven-year-old son, Prince Archie, and five-year-old daughter, Princess Lilibet, he has reportedly been pushing for reinstated police protection.

However, when the family landed on August 26 at Birmingham Airport, they had private security in place rather than police officers, according to British media.

“It’s very surprising,” Scott Hamer, an ex-protection officer for Harry’s father King Charles III when he was Prince of Wales, said.

Harry and Meghan, who are reportedly living in central England’s Cotswolds region, are said to have enrolled their children at private schools there for the coming academic year.

They are thought to have heightened concerns about security around the kids’ daily drop-off and collection, given that these follow predictable patterns.

“The vulnerability aspect needs to be assessed,” said Hamer. “The fact that he’ll have to take his kids to school at the same time each day, and pick them up at the same time each day, now makes him quite vulnerable.”

Britain’s Royal and VIP Executive Committee (Ravec) - an independent body overseen by the interior ministry - decides which politicians, royals and others get police protection.

Harry battled the ministry in the courts after Ravec downgraded his security following his 2020 North America move.

— AFP

Starting the academic year with the right information

THERE is something exhilarating about the beginning of a new academic year. Campuses become busy again. Classrooms fill with familiar and unfamiliar faces, corridors echo with conversations, and students arrive carrying new notebooks, new bags and, perhaps most importantly, new expectations.

For some, it is the beginning of an entirely new chapter. For others, it is simply another year on a journey that will eventually lead to a degree, a profession and a different kind of independence.

But while students prepare for the new academic year by buying clothes, stationery, iPads, and laptops, there is another kind of preparation that is often overlooked: information.

Most schools, colleges and universities understand this. That is why they organise orientation programmes. Students are introduced to their institutions, shown around campuses, informed about regulations and given advice about academic life.

Yet orientation can be one of the most underestimated parts of education. Some students do not attend at all. Others attend physically but mentally check out. They sit through presentations, look at their phones and wait for the instructions to finish.

This is unfortunate because orientation is not merely a ceremonial welcome. It is an information session about how to



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

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Students learn how to navigate an institution, manage their time, find resources and gradually become independent adults. There is another skill that deserves far more attention: learning how to learn

survive — and perhaps thrive — in an unfamiliar environment.

Students need to know their rights, but they also need to understand their responsibilities. They need to know where the library is, how to access academic databases, whom to contact when they encounter a problem and what procedures they must follow if they need academic or personal support.

They should know the rules concerning attendance, examinations, assignments, academic integrity and communication with instructors. These may sound like small details, but not knowing them can create unnecessarily large problems.

And then there are the things nobody necessarily thinks to explain.

Where is the best place on campus to sit between classes? Where can you get a decent cup of coffee? Which building has the quietest study space? Where can you print something five minutes before class? Who is the person you should speak to when you cannot solve a problem yourself?

These details matter because education is not experienced only inside a classroom. Students are learning how to navigate an institution, manage their time, find resources and gradually become independent adults.

There is another skill that deserves far more attention: learning how to learn.

Students sometimes arrive at

college believing that taking notes means writing down everything a lecturer says. It does not. Different instructors teach differently. One may expect students to listen carefully and write only key concepts; another may rely heavily on slides; another may conduct discussions in which the most important ideas are never written on the board.

Students therefore need to learn to listen for arguments, examples, explanations and connections rather than simply attempting to produce a transcript of the lecture.

The same applies to asking questions. Knowing when and how to ask for clarification is an academic skill. So is reading a syllabus carefully, checking university email regularly, keeping track of deadlines and seeking help before a small difficulty becomes a crisis.

Perhaps, then, the most useful item students can bring with them on the first day is not a new notebook or an expensive laptop. It is curiosity.

Ask questions. Listen during orientation. Read the information you are given. Explore the campus. Find the library. Learn the rules. Talk to people. Discover where to seek help. Pay attention to how each instructor teaches.

A new academic year offers more than a fresh timetable. It offers students an opportunity to learn how their educational world works. And that is information worth paying attention to.

Is there a stream of disasters rolling out?



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

HAVE you noticed the news these days is filled with disasters? What is striking is the relentless combination of natural calamities and man-made mishaps. Many are left wondering whether we are witnessing a tragic streak of misfortune or simply the harsh hand of fate. From aviation accidents and geopolitical escalations to climate-driven weather events, news headlines in early September 2026 have felt overwhelming.

Whether it truly feels like there are “too many” disasters right now often comes down to two factors: an actual rise in climate-driven extreme events and the amplified reach of modern real-time media. On September 6 alone, the world watched reports of a deadly building collapse in Delhi and a major cargo plane overrun at Miami International Airport that resulted in tragic fatalities.

What is driving this surge? The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) points to a rapidly intensifying El Niño event altering global atmospheric patterns — exacerbating flooding in some regions while driving severe heatwaves and drought in others. Climate watchers note that record-high sea surface temperatures are intensifying seasonal monsoons, wildland fires, and tropical storms, causing them to strike with shorter intervals between events.

The world gasps as hazards hit simultaneously: the Nepal disaster due to glacier collapse, monsoon flooding across South Asia, volcanic eruptions like

Indonesia’s Mount Anak Krakatau sending ash plumes up to 50,000 feet, and prolonged wildfires scorching hundreds of thousands of hectares across Greece, Spain, Southern Europe, and North America.

So what has been going on? North America and Europe have been experiencing compound heatwaves, prolonged wildfires, and localised urban flash flooding, and the cause could be the extreme summer temperatures combined with dry atmospheric conditions. South and Southeast Asia has also been going through severe monsoon flooding, riverbank erosion, and intense heat spells, and the reasons, expert says could be heavy rainfall anomalies linked to tropical ocean warming and El Niño shifts. Latin America and the Horn of Africa have been going through severe regional droughts alongside major seismic events, and there have been prolonged dry seasons combined with tectonic activity in vulnerable regions. Indonesia’s Mount Anak Krakatau, located in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra, the active island volcano, initiated a continuous 25-hour eruptive phase, halting all activities. Meanwhile, the wildfire disrupted normalcy as well.

Active blazes in Greece — such as the major Konitsa wildfire in Epirus near Vikos-Aoos National Park — have burned into early September. In the Iberian Peninsula, Spain faced historic blazes (including major fires in Ávila), scorching hundreds of thousands of hectares. Moving onto Southern and Eastern Europe, significant fire activity hit Southern

Whether it truly feels like there are “too many” disasters right now often comes down to two factors: an actual rise in climate-driven extreme events and the amplified reach of modern real-time media

France, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, and the Balkans.

In the United States, dozens of large wildfires remained active across the Pacific Northwest. Canada, too, had its problem. Glued to real-time updates and social media reels, local catastrophes instantly become global. We carry the collective weight and helplessness of communities in distress thousands of miles away. Maybe this is what is called disaster fatigue.

Back home here in Oman, that anxiety takes on a very personal form. Many of us now feel uneasy the moment we see a flatbed trailer truck transporting heavy industrial steel coils, haunted by the tragedy that recently occurred in Samayil. Just a few days ago, I watched a truck driver at a red light step down from his seat simply to recheck that his cargo was well secured. We worry about these massive vehicles on our roads or parked nearby, even while acknowledging that these very drivers ensure goods reach our communities every day.

The reality is that our collective mind is tired, and beneath that fatigue lies fear. When a problem arises, our instinct is to look for solutions — or someone to blame. But what do we do when the force behind it is nature itself? Realising the scale of these disasters forces us to confront how vulnerable we truly are. Logically, we tell ourselves, “We can plan better safety measures.” But as human beings, our memories carry deep layers of emotion — and in the face of so much loss, we can only hope that we heal progressively.

MALAWI’S LOOMING MINING BOOM OFFERS PROMISE AND CHALLENGE

JACK MCBRAMS

A new generation of mining projects targeting rare earth and critical minerals could transform Malawi’s economy - but experts warn of the Africa-wide challenges in turning resource wealth into broad-based prosperity.

One of the world’s poorest countries, Malawi has long depended on agriculture, aid and a handful of exports such as tobacco, tea and sugar. Now discoveries of rare earths and critical minerals potentially worth tens of billions of dollars are drawing the small southern African nation into the global scramble for materials essential for the energy transition and advanced manufacturing.

Critics warn that without stronger institutions, local participation and domestic processing, Malawi could repeat a pattern familiar in Africa of exporting valuable resources while reaping few benefits at home.

“This means a lot to us, and expectations are very high,” said parliamentarian Lawrence Chakakala Chaziya whose constituency includes central Kasiya where an Australian company is advancing a major critical minerals project.

Sovereign Metals says the operation sits atop the world’s largest natural deposit of rutile - used in titanium production - and one of the largest of graphite, an important component of lithium-ion batteries. “Given the large quantities of deposits here, we expect the mining project to bring tangible benefits to our people, particularly in terms of improved social services,” Chaziya said.

“I have already urged our people not to sell their land,” he said.

In the south, another Australian company is developing a project to extract rare earths used in powerful magnets for electric vehicles, wind turbines and other advanced technologies.

Canadian and Australian groups are also developing other rare earths projects and reviving a long-dormant uranium mine.

Mining currently contributes about one per cent of Malawi’s gross domestic product, according to figures cited by the Chamber of Mines and Energy. The World Bank estimates the sector could account for about 12 per cent of GDP by 2027.

Cumulative mineral exports could reach \$30 billion between 2026 and 2040, with annual revenues approaching \$3 billion by 2034.

“Mining offers Malawi a realistic chance to diversify the economy, earn foreign exchange, create skilled jobs and build industries beyond agriculture,” said University of Malawi economist Gowokani Chijere-Chirwa. The government has already moved to strengthen its hand by passing a law in 2023 removing a 10-per cent ceiling on state participation in the sector. — AFP

25 years on, America seeks to keep 9/11 memories alive



The twin towers billow smoke after hijacked airliners crashed into them on September 11, 2001. — AFP file photo



RAPHAËL HERMANO

The writer is an AFP journalist and Bureau Chief New York

through video clips.

Young people are “more inquisitive” and ask more questions than their elders, who Miller said sometimes hesitate to challenge him for fear of causing offence.

“I wasn’t born at the time and yet it was important for me to be here, to do this trip,” said 22-year-old Ignacio Gaete, a Chilean visiting the museum and memorial featuring two large recessed pools within the footprints of the Twin Towers.

Gaete said that while young people don’t have visceral memories of 9/11 like his father does, “I think it can transcend generations.”

But that transcendence requires preservation and education, according to Holly Kafka, visiting Manhattan from Chicago with her husband.

“Our younger generation... they’re always in this little rat race, keeping up with social media,” the 61-year-old said. “We have to stop them and say, ‘Come here and experience it.’”

As they do every year at Ground Zero starting at 8:40 am (1240 GMT), the time shortly before hijacked American Airlines Flight 11 struck the North Tower, relatives will read the long list of their loved ones’

The New York Times reported it was because Trump would not be allowed to deliver remarks at the site, which has strictly banned speeches so commemorations there could remain non-partisan

names.

In the evening, two beams of light will project skyward from lower Manhattan, symbolic of the towers.

Nineteen Al Qaeda operatives hijacked four planes on that nearly cloudless day in 2001. Two jets slammed into the World Trade Center, causing the iconic 110-storey buildings to collapse.

A third plane struck the Pentagon, while a fourth - which apparently had targeted the US Capitol or the White House - crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers fought back.

Beyond those killed on September 11, more than 9,400 other people have died from 9/11-related illnesses, according to the federal programme established to provide medical care to those affected.

The trial of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, alleged mastermind of the attacks and a top lieutenant of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, was recently scheduled for June 2028 at the US Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He has been detained there for 20 years. Trump, 80, has confirmed he will skip the Ground Zero event and instead speak at the Pentagon on 9/11.

SPORTS

OMAN EYE CRUCIAL WIN AGAINST BAHRAIN



Oman's national team will look to bounce back against Bahrain after their defeat to Australia in the Asian Championship.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

Oman will have one final opportunity to keep their Asian Championship campaign alive when they face Bahrain on Wednesday, following a straight-sets defeat to Australia in Fukuoka, Japan, on Monday. The national team suffered their second loss in Pool A of the 2026 AVC Men's Volleyball Continental Championship, with Australia winning 25-18, 25-14, 25-22. Oman, however, produced a stronger performance in the third set, leading for much of it before the Australians recovered to complete the victory.

The result leaves Oman seeking their first win when they meet Bahrain at 5 am Oman time on September 9. Both sides have lost their opening two matches, making the encounter decisive in the contest for third place and a possible quarterfinal berth.

Australia, meanwhile, registered their second successive victory after opening their campaign with a 3-0 win over Bahrain.

Oman had entered Monday's match hoping to build on their encouraging performance against hosts Japan, when they took a set from the defending Asian champions and world No 6 despite losing 3-1.

The opening set began with both teams exchanging points, but Australia gradually established an advantage through their powerful attack and effective blocking.

Majid al Shibli and Falah al Jaradi provided much of Oman's attacking threat, helping the side reduce the deficit to 10-7. Head coach Nizar al Shukaili introduced Adam al Jaradi to strengthen the attack, and the substitute made an immediate impact with two successive points.

Australia nevertheless maintained their advantage and closed the set 25-18.

Oman briefly led 5-4 in the second set, with Al Shibli again finding success in attack and Saud al Maamari contributing at the net. Australia responded quickly, opening a 13-9 lead before taking control of the latter stages through stronger serving, blocking and attacking efficiency. The Australians won the set 25-14 to move two sets ahead.

OMAN PUSH BACK

Oman showed greater resilience in the third set, with Mohammed al Maqbali and Mahmoud al Saadi contributing to an improved start before Falah al Jaradi finished a long rally with a powerful spike.

The national side built a four-point lead during their best spell of the match, but Australia gradually reduced the deficit and levelled at 17-17.

The closing stages were closely contested as Oman continued to challenge the Australian attack and remained within reach of extending the match. Australia eventually moved 22-20 ahead and held their nerve to secure the set 25-22. The result means Oman have one set won and six lost from their opening two fixtures, while Bahrain have lost both matches without winning a set.

Under the competition format, the top two teams from each of the three pools and the two best third-placed sides advance to the quarterfinals. A victory over Bahrain would therefore give Oman an opportunity to enter the third-place qualification calculations, although progression would also depend on results elsewhere.

Al Shukaili will be looking for greater consistency from his players, particularly in reception, serving and blocking, as Oman seek to turn the promising periods shown against Japan and Australia into a first victory of the tournament.



Seeb continued their title defence, defeating Sur 2-0 in the second round of the Jindal League for the 2026/2027 season.

FOUR TEAMS ON SIX POINTS AFTER JL ROUND TWO

AL NASR, SEEB, OMAN CLUB MAINTAIN WINNING STARTS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

AL NASR claimed the southern derby with a 2-1 win over Dhofar at Al Saada Sports Complex on Sunday, while defending champions Seeb and Oman Club maintained their perfect starts in the second round of the Jindal League. Sohar also registered their first victory of the season after edging Fanja 1-0 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

After two rounds, Seeb lead the standings on goal difference with six points, five goals scored and one conceded. Al Nasr sit second with six points, followed by Oman Club and Al Nahda, who also have maximum points from their opening two matches. Ibri and Sohar follow on four points, while Al Shabab, Saham and Samayil are on three.

In Salalah, Dhofar made an ideal start to the derby when Liberian forward Abu Kamara headed in Mutaz Saleh's corner in the third minute past Al Nasr goalkeeper Ibrahim al Rajhi. Al Nasr gradually worked their way back into the contest, although they had a nervous moment in the 29th minute when Mohammed al Mashari was shown a red card before the decision was reviewed through VAR and



Oman Club secured their second consecutive victory by defeating Al Musannah 1-0 — with a goal scored by Abdullah al Balushi in the second round of the Jindal League for the 2026/2027 season.

changed to a yellow.

Al Nasr made the most of that reprieve and levelled in the 39th minute through Gabonese forward Romis Aissogo, who finished from inside the area after a quick counter-attack. The turnaround was completed in first-half stoppage time as Malian midfielder Noumory Keita scored the second goal, sending Al Nasr into the interval 2-1 ahead.

The second half remained open, with Dhofar pushing for an equaliser and Al Nasr looking dangerous on transitions. Abu Kamara forced another important save from Ibrahim al Rajhi, while Mazen al Kasbi kept Dhofar alive at the other end with key stops. Al Nasr, however, stayed compact until the final whistle to secure a second straight win.

At Seeb Stadium, Seeb

continued their title defence with a composed 2-0 victory over Sur. Axel Meye gave the champions an early lead in the sixth minute with a headed finish, continuing his strong start to the campaign after scoring twice in the opening round against Bahla. Seeb controlled large spells of the match before Nasser al Rawahi sealed the result in the 63rd minute.

Oman Club also made it two wins from two after defeating Al Musannah 1-0 at Al Rustaq Sports Complex. Abdullah al Balushi scored the only goal in the 45th minute, giving Oman Club another important result after their opening 2-0 win over Dhofar. The Muscat side have now completed 180 minutes without conceding.

Sohar completed Sunday's winners list by beating Fanja 1-0 through Ibrahim al Raqadi's 82nd-minute goal. The result lifted Sohar to four points and kept their clean-sheet record intact, while Fanja remained bottom without a point or a goal after two matches.

The early picture has already created a compact race at the top, with four clubs on six points and two more unbeaten sides close behind. For Dhofar, Sur, Al Musannah, Bahla and Fanja, the third round now carries added pressure after back-to-back defeats.

SHORT TAKES



Stage 2 of the Salalah Cycling Tour.

PELLAUD CLAIMS LEADER’S GOLDEN JERSEY AFTER STAGE 3

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

Swiss rider Simon Pellaud of Li Ning Star took over as the leader of Tour of Salalah 2026 after winning Stage 2 in Salalah on Monday.

Pellaud romped home in two hours 19 minutes and four seconds in a sprint finish in the 102 km second stage from Dahariz Beach to Wadi Darbat. The top nine cyclists clocked the same time.

Colombian rider Edison Alejandro Callejas of Roojai Insurance Winspace came second while Frenchman Huby Antoine of 7Eleven Cliqq Roadbike Philippines finished third.

The Li Ning Star team was awarded the title of best team in the stage. Pellaud received the golden jersey, sponsored by the Dhofar Municipality, for leading the overall standings. He also received the green jersey, sponsored by Mohsin Haider Darwish Company, for leading in points.

Stage 1 winner Eduardo Sepulveda of Li Ning Star received the grey jersey (the aggressive rider), sponsored by Badr Al Samaa Hospital.

Indonesia’s Fadhil Nur Dimas Rizki from the Jakarta Pro Cycling team retained the white jersey, sponsored by Oman Oasis, for the young rider (under-23 category).

The winners of the top positions were crowned at the conclusion of the second stage by Saif bin Seba’a Al Rashidi, Chairman of the Oman Cycling Association.

CLOSE CONTEST

The second stage began at Al Dahariz Beach, passing through Al Dahariz Roundabout towards Al Maamoura Roundabout, then to Mirbat Roundabout, then to Aqabat Hashir, then towards Tawi Atir, passing through the Ghadbah turnoff, and finally reaching the finish line in Wadi Darbat. The third stage, the longest of the Tour covering 156 km, will be held from Taqah Castle to Jabal Samhan on Tuesday.

This will be the most challenging stage of the tour, starting in front of Taqah Castle, proceeding along Taqah Street, passing through Madinat Al Haq Roundabout, then towards Mirbat Roundabout, then to Aqabat Sahl Ashour, then towards Tawi Atir, then back to Madinat Al Haq Road, then to the Jabjab turnoff, then back to Madinat Al Haq, then to Jabjab, then towards Ain Hamtoug, and finally returning to Tawi Atir, passing through Jabal Samhan Road to the finish line overlooking Jabal Samhan.

OMANI REFEREES HOG LIMELIGHT

Omani referees Saud al Rawahi and Sultan al Rawahi are prominently featured on the officiating team for the sixth edition of the Tour of Salalah, organised by the Dhofar Municipality in partnership with the Oman Cycling Association. The presence of the two Omani referees at this international event reflects ongoing efforts to enhance the participation of national talent in managing and organising major championships.

Saud al Rawahi and Sultan al Rawahi play a crucial role within the Tour’s refereeing system, monitoring the competitions and ensuring adherence to regulations and technical instructions. They also contribute to maintaining order during the race, guaranteeing fairness and safety for all participants, especially given the diverse stages and varied terrain, which demand highly competent and prepared on-site referees.

The presence of Saud and Sultan in the Tour reflects the growing confidence in Omani refereeing expertise and underscores the importance of continuing to invest in referee training and giving them the opportunity to participate in international championships.

MEDICAL SUPPORT

The medical aspect is considered one of the most important organisational pillars in cycling races, given the high level of preparedness this sport requires to deal with various emergencies and potential injuries during competitions. In the sixth edition of the Tour, Nasser al Sulaimi, a physiotherapist at the Royal Hospital, plays a prominent role in managing the medical aspect and contributing to providing a comprehensive system aimed at maintaining the safety of cyclists and participants throughout the event.



Oman U20 players celebrate their qualification for the Asian finals following the 1-1 draw in Doha.

Oman U20 secure Asian Cup berth with late equaliser

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

A SUPERB

late free-kick from Ali al Alawi secured Oman’s place at the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Finals as the young Red Warriors came from behind to draw 1-1 with Hong Kong, China, in their final Group E qualifier at Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium in Doha on Sunday.

The result took head coach Hamad al Azzani’s side to four points, enough to qualify as one of the seven best runners-up and secure Oman’s fourth appearance at the continental finals.

Saudi Arabia completed a perfect qualifying campaign with a 1-0 victory over hosts Qatar in the other Group E fixture, finishing top with nine points. Oman ended second on four points, Qatar third with three and Hong Kong, China fourth with one.

Oman began the decisive encounter on the front foot, with Al Alawi firing wide in the fifth minute before Al Hassan al Qasimi headed off target from an Abdulaziz al Manwari set-piece. Al Manwari also went close with a shot that narrowly missed the goal.

Hong Kong, China threatened midway through the first half, but Oman continued

to create opportunities. Al Alawi fired over from inside the penalty area shortly before the break, while Abdullah al Saadi saw an effort saved in stoppage time as the teams went into half-time level.

Al Manwari remained a threat after the restart, going close twice in the opening ten minutes of the second half. However, Hong Kong, China struck against the run of play in the 58th minute when a swift counter-attack ended with Cheung Hin converting the rebound after Oman’s goalkeeper had saved the initial effort.

The setback increased the pressure on Oman, who needed a result to protect their qualification hopes. Al Azzani’s players responded by pushing forward, with Ahmed al Fahdi denied by a goal-line clearance as the search for an equaliser intensified.

The breakthrough arrived in the 81st minute when Al Alawi curled a fine direct free-kick into the net to restore parity. Oman continued to press in the closing stages, but the Hong Kong, China goalkeeper produced further saves to preserve the draw.

Speaking after the match, Al Alawi said Oman had entered the encounter determined to win but found Hong Kong, China difficult to break down. He acknowledged the pressure on his side and said the most important outcome was securing qualification.

Oman’s campaign included a 2-1 comeback victory over Qatar, a narrow 3-2 defeat to Saudi Arabia and the final-round draw against Hong Kong, China. The four points were sufficient to extend their continental journey.

The 2027 finals will be held in Hangzhou, China, from March 24 to April 10, bringing together 16 teams. Oman previously appeared at the tournament in Iran in 2000, Myanmar in 2014 and Uzbekistan in 2023. The next challenge for Al Azzani’s side will be to build on this qualification and pursue their first victory at the Asian finals.

Photo Caption: Oman U20 players celebrate after securing qualification for the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Finals.

Ali al Alawi celebrates after scoring Oman’s equaliser against Hong Kong, China in Doha.

The young Red Warriors in action during their 1-1 draw with Hong Kong, China at Hamad bin Khalifa Stadium.

Oman U20 players battle for possession during their final Group E qualifier against Hong Kong, China.

Oman U20 players celebrate their qualification for the Asian finals following the 1-1 draw in Doha.

Ali al Alawi’s late free-kick helped Oman secure a place at the AFC U20 Asian Cup China 2027 Finals.

Oman hockey team enters final Asian Games phase

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

Oman’s national hockey team will travel to Japan as it enters the final phase of preparations for the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026, scheduled to take place from September 18 to October 3.

The Omani side has been following an intensive preparation programme aimed at building the team’s technical and physical readiness ahead of the continental tournament. The current phase includes a training camp in Kakamigahara City from September 5 to 14, where the players will work on fitness, technical execution, team cohesion and tactical plans ahead of the competition.

The team’s preparations in Japan will also feature a series



of friendly matches against Japan, providing the coaching staff with an opportunity to assess the squad’s readiness, test its tactical organisation and identify areas requiring improvement before the start of the official matches.

Oman will open its Asian Games campaign against China on September 18 at 9 am, before facing Malaysia on September 22, Uzbekistan on September 24, Thailand on September 26 and Pakistan on September 28. The men’s hockey competition

will be staged at Kawasaki Juko Stadium in Gifu.

The tournament schedule places significant demands on the squad, making preparation and recovery key factors as Oman seeks to compete strongly throughout the group stage.

The delegation is headed by Majid bin Said al Hooti, Team Leader, while Khalil al Balushi serves as Team Manager. The coaching and support staff also includes Head Coach Mohammed Hoobais al Shar, Assistant Coach Salah bin

Nasser al Saadi, Physiotherapist and Stand-in Manager Ghassan al Hasani, Physical Trainer Salim al Mazrouei, Psychologist Abdullah al Noufali, and Video Technician Wagdi Hassan Bait Mabrook. The 18-player squad features Aliyas al Noufali, Asama Ramadhan Barazahan, Akram bin Ashoor Bait Shamaiaa, Khalid bin Juma al Shaaibi, Aiman Faraj Khadim Madit, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Noufali, Al Khoder bin Sulaiman al Noufali, Sanad Sbeit, Faisal bin Ambork, Maitham bin Saif al Wahaibi, Aseel bin Ammar al Maaini, Khalid bin Waleed al Hasni, Fahad bin Hassan al Lawati, Ahmed bin Khalfan Muqadam, Rashad bin Salim al Alawi, Rashid bin Salim al Alawi, Ibrahim bin Nasser al Farsi, and Al Baraa bin Ghabish al Noufali.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES

FERMIN SHINES FOR BARCELONA IN THUMPING WIN AT VALENCIA

VALENCIA: Fermin Lopez scored a goal and created two others as champions Barcelona eased to a 5-0 victory over hosts Valencia in their LaLiga clash on Sunday to maintain their 100 per cent start to the new season.

Lamine Yamal scored twice, while Raphinha and Pedri were also on target for the visitors as they controlled the contest from the start and lead the LaLiga table with 12 points from four games, two more than second-placed Alaves, who won 5-2 at home to Osasuna.

Valencia are rooted to the bottom of the table with a single point from their four games and never looked like getting anything from this encounter.

“We played a great game, almost perfect,” Barca coach Hansi Flick said.

Barca took the lead inside six minutes when Fermin’s pass into the box was latched onto by Yamal, who lifted his shot over home goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski from a tight angle.

Fermin then drilled in a second from 18 yards on 22 minutes after being teed up by Anthony Gordon, before he turned provider again.

He got in behind the Valencia defence from a Yamal pass, and his ball across the six-yard box was tapped in by Raphinha at the back post on 50 minutes.

“He (Fermin) has a lot of energy and intensity,” Flick said. “He gets into the box; he is very dangerous, and he can score goals. Without the ball, he always presses and tries to win it back.”

Rodri struck the crossbar with a header as Barca created chances at will, and it was no surprise when Pedri slotted in a fourth on 79 minutes.

There was time for one more as Yamal swept home his second from close range as the visitors took their tally of goals in LaLiga this season to 17 in four games.

Marcos Fernandez scored a 98th-minute equaliser for Espanyol as they drew 1-1 at home with 10-man Sevilla.

Lucas Stassin looked to have scored the winner for the visitors with a close-range strike with five minutes remaining, until Fernandez netted with a header to grab a share of the points.

Sevilla had Arouna Sangante sent off in the 56th minute for bringing down Espanyol forward Roberto Fernandez when he was the last defender.

Argentine forward Lucas Boye scored a hat-trick as Alaves completed a 5-2 home win over Osasuna.

Mariano Diaz and Pablo Ibanez, against his former side, got the others, while there was a double for Osasuna forward Ante Budimir.

Malaga drew 0-0 with visitors Levante as Chupe missed an early penalty for the home side, who remain winless this season. — Reuters



Barcelona’s Spanish midfielder #07 Fermin Lopez celebrates scoring his team’s second goal during the Spanish league football match between Valencia CF and FC Barcelona at Mestalla Stadium in Valencia. — AFP



Real Madrid’s French forward Kylian Mbappe gives a press conference at the Ciudad Real Madrid training ground in Madrid. — AFP

Mbappe embraces Ballon d’Or talk after WC exploits

REAL Madrid striker Kylian Mbappe said Monday it was natural for people to consider him as a potential Ballon d’Or winner this year after his World Cup exploits.

The France captain scored 10 goals at the tournament this summer to win the Golden Boot, with his country finishing fourth, and has netted 22 in the competition during his career, making him the World Cup’s all-time top scorer.

Mbappe, 27, has not yet won the prestigious trophy given to the world’s best player.

“I think that when you play for Real Madrid, which is the best club in the world, naturally people associate you with that kind of award, they associate you with collective awards, individual awards,” Mbappe told reporters.

“A lot of people, when they see me in the street, talk to me about the Ballon d’Or, a lot of people talk about me as a possible Ballon d’Or winner...

“Of course I made a lot of history this summer in the most important competition in sport, but we’ll see.

“I have the feeling that it’s a good year for that, but there’s still a long time to go and people are free to vote for whoever they think is the best player in the world.”

Since joining Real Madrid in 2024 Mbappe has scored huge quantities of goals but the club has failed to win a major trophy.

On Tuesday, the record 15-time European champions host Inter Milan in the Champions League in the first match of the league phase.

During Mbappe’s first two years at Madrid the team has appeared unbalanced, with too many star names, including the Frenchman and Brazilian winger Vinicius Junior, widely considered not to be contributing enough to the team effort in contrast to Ousmane Dembele at Paris Saint-Germain and Raphinha at Barcelona.

“We have to improve,” admitted Mbappe. “But I could play dumb and tell you that I score more goals than (Dembele and Raphinha), and that they need to score more goals to be like me.

“Everyone is different, but I want to do things intelligently and say that of course I have to improve and



Real Madrid’s Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho gives a press conference at the Ciudad Real Madrid training ground in Madrid. — AFP

There aren’t many (people) left from my time, but it’ll always be a pleasure to see people, even if I don’t know them, but people who defend Inter, before and after.

JOSE MOURINHO
Real Madrid’s Portuguese coach

all that, but I don’t like comparisons because I think I do a lot of things that others don’t do.”

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho recently said he would prefer if Mbappe scored fewer goals but also worked hard to help the team win titles.

Mbappe said he would accept lower numbers if it led to trophies, but noted they were not mutually exclusive.

“I’d take 30 goals with titles, yes, but... for me it’s an absurd debate,” said Mbappe.

“I always want to score goals and win titles... you don’t have to choose, you can do both things.”

- Mourinho faces old friends -

Veteran Portuguese coach Mourinho led Inter to Champions League glory in 2010 at the Santiago Bernabeu before he departed to take over at Real Madrid.

Despite his history with the Italian side, whom he steered to the treble that year, the coach said that only mattered before and after, but not during the match.

“There aren’t many (people) left from my time, but it’ll always be a pleasure to see people, even if I don’t know them, but people who defend Inter, before and after,” said Mourinho.

“During the game, I want to win, they want to win, and there won’t be time to think about things from a wonderful past.”

Mourinho wants his Madrid players to bounce back from their first defeat of the season, 1-0 at Real Betis on Friday in La Liga.

“I want to win. I could tell you I want to play well, but I don’t want to play well like we did against Betis and lose,” said Mourinho.

“Obviously we’re in a phase where we play eight games and the objective in these eight games is to qualify, and I think we’re going to do that. But I want to think about this match in isolation from that context.

“I want to think about this match as a one-off game. I don’t want to think that we still have seven more matches to play, and I want to win.” — AFP



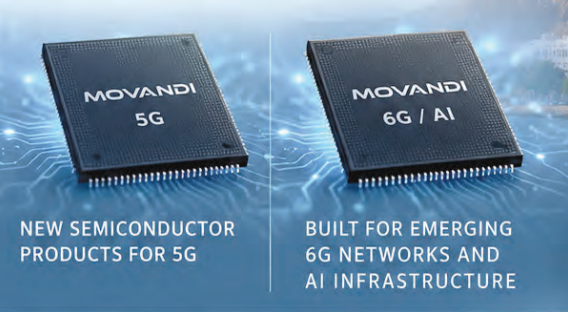
MUSCAT
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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$104.54
BRENT \$97.18
LIGHT \$92.11



SHORT TAKES



Movandi's Muscat base will operate as a R&D centre focused on smart communications and artificial intelligence.

OMAN ADVANCES SEMICONDUCTOR AMBITIONS

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

Oman is seeking to turn its growing semiconductor investments into deeper local engineering, research and technical capability as international technology companies establish operations linked to the Sultanate of Oman and expand across the Gulf.

The latest development involves US-headquartered semiconductor and connectivity company Movandi, which is establishing a research and development operation in Muscat while expanding its activities elsewhere in the region. The company has unveiled two new semiconductor products designed for 5G, emerging 6G networks and artificial-intelligence infrastructure, alongside new partnerships in Saudi Arabia.

For Oman, however, the broader significance lies less in the individual chip launch than in whether such investments can help establish lasting technical capability inside the country. Movandi's Muscat operation is intended to focus on smart communications and artificial intelligence, working with local universities and research institutions to co-develop technology and develop Omani talent.

The approach reflects a wider effort to position Oman in higher-value parts of the semiconductor and advanced-technology ecosystem rather than solely as a consumer of imported technology.

Through technology investment group ITHCA, Oman has already attracted investments linked to a number of semiconductor and advanced-technology companies. The supplied project material lists an investment of RO 5 million, equivalent to about \$13 million, in chip-design company GSME and RO 1.93 million, or about \$5 million, in programmable-optics company Lumotive.

ITHCA also led a \$20 million investment in Movandi as part of a wider \$40 million funding round. While these investments do not yet amount to large-scale semiconductor manufacturing in Oman, they point towards an emerging focus on chip design, research, advanced communications and engineering skills.

Asyad Group inks pacts to advance smarter logistics

BUSINESS REPORTER
SALALAH, SEPT 7



Group, the global integrated logistics provider, has signed three agreements on the sidelines of the Gulf Green Mobility Forum, held in Salalah. The agreements span autonomous freight transport, green hydrogen mobility solutions and onshore power supply (OPS) for vessels at ports. They mark an important step towards deploying new technologies and solutions across the Group's logistics and maritime operations, contributing to the development of a smarter, more sustainable and lower-emission logistics ecosystem, in line with the Sultanate of Oman's direction to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The three partnerships reflect Asyad's approach to emerging technologies: testing them in real-world operating environments and building the operational expertise and data required to assess their viability and identify opportunities to scale solutions that prove effective.

Ahmed al Bulushi, Chief Executive Officer of Asyad Drydock and Infrastructure Services at Asyad Group, commented: "These partnerships enable us to turn emerging technologies into tangible operational trials, giving us the practical insight needed to assess their impact on improving operational efficiency and reducing emissions.

At Asyad, we focus on adopting sustainable, scalable solutions that create long-term value for the transport and maritime sectors, supporting the sector's competitiveness and reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's position as a global logistics hub".

Autonomous Vehicles at Ports and Free Zones

In smart transport, Asyad Group plans to implement a pilot project for autonomous vehicle



The three partnerships reflect Asyad's approach to emerging technologies.

Strategic partnerships in autonomous vehicles, green hydrogen and onshore power supply drive innovation across transport and maritime operations, marking a new step towards a low-carbon mobility future in Oman.

technologies dedicated to freight transport at SOHAR and Salalah Free Zone, in partnership with Zelos Technology.

The project aims to assess the performance and efficiency of these technologies under real-world operating conditions, evaluate safety levels and determine their suitability for logistics operational requirements, providing the Group with a practical basis for identifying opportunities to expand their use in the future.

Green Hydrogen for Transport and Logistics

In green hydrogen, Asyad Group has signed a term sheet with OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE), paving the way for a long-term hydrogen offtake agreement.

Under the proposed agreement, Asyad would receive more than 91,000 kilogrammes of low-carbon hydrogen annually, produced using renewable energy and supplied through a dedicated refuelling station in Al Duqm for use in powering the Group's vehicle fleet.

Once the station becomes operational, this volume is expected to support between 8 and 10 heavy-duty hydrogen trucks per day, displacing around 1,100 litres of conventional fuel used daily.

The agreement represents a practical step in Asyad's transition towards cleaner fuel sources and will also help establish demand for hydrogen within the Sultanate of Oman's emerging mobility sector.

Onshore Power Supply for Vessels

In maritime infrastructure, Asyad Group has signed an agreement with Moon Rock Research & Development LLC (MRD) to assess the feasibility of implementing an onshore power supply system for vessels at ports, with Asyad Drydock in Al Duqm set to be the first site evaluated under the initiative. The initial phase will focus on assessing suitable berths, grid connectivity, technical requirements and commercial viability, laying the groundwork for the potential expansion of onshore power supply across Asyad's wider port portfolio and contributing to lower emissions from vessels while at berth.

Together, the three partnerships demonstrate Asyad Group's transition from developing emissions-reduction strategies to putting them into practice, reinforcing the Group's role in leading the future of low-carbon mobility in the Sultanate of Oman and contributing to Oman Vision 2040 and the country's net-zero 2050 targets.

Omani legal-tech firm extends reach to 17 countries

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

Omani legal-technology company instaSpace says it now has paying customers in 17 countries, with Saudi Arabia becoming its fastest-growing market in the region as the Muscat-based firm expands outside Oman.

Founded in 2024 by Ahmed al Kindi and Aseel al Rawahi, the company develops an Arabic-English artificial-intelligence platform for legal research, drafting, contract review, negotiation, workflow management and electronic signatures.

instaSpace said that its customers include legal teams in Gulf markets as well as in the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Singapore and Canada.

The company said its user base more than quadrupled between June and August 2026, monthly



Representatives of instaSpace and Ejabah Legal Consultancy signing a strategic partnership agreement in Riyadh recently.

user onboarding is now about 20 times its January level and the volume of legal work completed on

the platform has risen more than sixfold quarter on quarter.

The company has also signed

a strategic partnership in Riyadh with Ejabah Legal Consultancy.

Under the agreement, Saudi lawyers will review the platform's Arabic legal output for users in the Kingdom and contribute to its development for the Saudi market.

Ejabah will also provide specialist Saudi legal support when users require advice from a practising lawyer.

instaSpace says it plans to use a similar arrangement in other jurisdictions, combining its technology with local legal expertise rather than applying the same legal output across different markets.

Saudi Arabia is already one of the company's largest user markets in the region, according to instaSpace, which says it has established its own entity and presence in the Kingdom.

The company said the product was developed after the founders worked with an in-house legal

department during a business-accelerator programme in Oman. Its first customers were Omani financial institutions.

Al Kindi said the Saudi partnership was intended to make the platform more relevant to users operating under Saudi law.

"We already work with legal teams in Saudi Arabia and this partnership is, at its core, about serving them better", he said.

"Saudi legal work has its own rules and its own context, which general-purpose tools may not capture adequately". Turki al Qahtani, chief executive officer of Ejabah Legal Consultancy, said the agreement was intended to combine technology with local legal expertise.

The next test for instaSpace will be whether the Saudi approach can be repeated in other jurisdictions as the company seeks to expand its customer base outside Oman.

BUSINESS FEATURE

Exclusive interview highlights around 108mn cubic metres produced annually and a 5.6mn-sq-m Al Amerat concept that could support agriculture, tourism and up to 1,500 jobs



QASIM AL
MAASHANI

About half of the treated wastewater produced across Oman is not currently being put to productive use, a Nama Water Services policy expert said in an exclusive interview in Salalah.

Sultan bin Saif al Salami, Policy and Planning Expert at Nama Water Services, was speaking on the sidelines of the Water Resources Sustainability: Water and Climate Change symposium in Salalah. He said treated wastewater should increasingly be viewed as an economic input rather than simply the final output of a sanitation system.

Al Salami estimated that around 108 million cubic metres of treated wastewater is produced annually across Oman, with roughly half currently utilised.

“We pay to treat wastewater and then we pay to deal with the treated water”, he said. “The treated water has economic and environmental value”.

The scale of the unused resource matters in a country where desalination remains central to potable water supply while agriculture, urban expansion and climate pressures compete for limited water resources.

One of the most significant proposals discussed by Al Salami is a concept in Al Amerat that would use surplus treated water as the basis for a wider development spanning approximately 5.6 million square metres.

Nama Water Services has been pursuing the concept with stakeholders including Muscat Municipality and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. The initial idea is to demonstrate how treated-water supplies and suitable land could be brought together to support greener neighbourhoods and productive economic activity.

The proposed site has varied terrain that could support a mix of agricultural, tourism, recreational and commercial activities, Al Salami said. Biofuel-related production is among the

possibilities being considered, although the eventual investment mix would depend on the master plan and subsequent land allocations.

Al Salami estimated that the broader concept could ultimately support between 1,000 and 1,500 direct and indirect jobs.

That figure is preliminary. No final investment mix has been approved and the employment outcome will depend on what is ultimately developed on the site.

“The master plan will determine the investment components on the land”, Al Salami said. Once the uses are clearer and the relevant authorities determine how individual areas could be offered for agricultural, tourism or other investment, Nama would be in a stronger position to determine the infrastructure required to supply the development, he added.

Nama Water Services’ published 2025 indicators point to the scale of the reuse challenge within its operating territory.

The company reported a treated-water utilisation rate of 53 per cent and recorded 37.05 million cubic metres of treated-water overflow during the year.

Nama’s operating territory excludes Dhofar, meaning the published operating figures and Al Salami’s broader national estimate of around 108 million cubic metres do not cover precisely the same geographical base.



The concept could ultimately support between 1,000 and 1,500 direct and indirect jobs.

SULTAN BIN
SAIF AL SALAMI
Policy and Planning Expert at Nama Water Services

Both nevertheless point to substantial volumes of treated water that could potentially be put to greater productive use.

THEORETICAL VALUE, NOT LOST REVENUE

Putting a monetary value on that opportunity requires caution.

Nama’s application platform for agricultural customers uses 220

baisa per cubic metre as a reference treated-water tariff. Applied to the 37.05 million cubic metres recorded as overflow in 2025, that produces a theoretical gross-volume value of about RO 8.15 million.

Turning overflow into sales requires transmission pipelines, distribution networks, viable customers, land allocations and investment capable of consuming the water consistently.

The calculation is useful for one reason: it illustrates that treated wastewater has potential economic value once the infrastructure and demand exist to use it.

Agriculture is an obvious market. Landscaping, urban greening, tourism developments and some industrial and commercial activities can also use appropriately treated recycled water where potable-quality supplies are unnecessary.

There is already evidence that Oman’s treated-water market is expanding.

Nama said the number of beneficiaries of its treated-water service increased by more than 36 per cent in 2025, from 228 to 311. The company has increasingly positioned treated water under its Manhal Nama initiative as a resource for economic and environmental use rather than simply an output of wastewater treatment.

In Barka, Nama awarded a RO 2.3 million project to supply treated water to farms in the Al Shakhakhit

area. The scheme includes more than 40 kilometres of pipelines, initially designed to connect 60 farms, with longer-term plans to extend the network to more than 200 farms.

The infrastructure push is continuing. On August 19, Nama floated a tender for construction of a treated-effluent transmission pipeline from Al Seeb to Barka.

FROM TREATMENT TARGETS TO UTILISATION TARGETS

Al Salami also sees greater reuse as a way to reduce unnecessary reliance on desalinated water for applications that do not require potable-quality supplies.

The comparison, however, should not be reduced to a simple tariff calculation. Oman’s official bulk tariff for desalinated water contains fixed capacity charges as well as variable charges that change according to month and time of day, so it cannot be compared directly with the 220-baisa reference tariff for treated water.

Building wastewater-treatment capacity remains essential, but treatment alone is no longer the end point. Increasingly, success will also depend on how much of the resulting water is productively reused.

That requires something closer to a market-development model: identifying major users, reserving suitable land, building transmission infrastructure and structuring projects around dependable supplies of recycled water.

Al Amerat could become one test of that model. Its significance is not simply the prospect of greener neighbourhoods, tourism activity or up to 1,500 jobs.

It is whether multiple government agencies, infrastructure providers and investors can convert a resource that already exists into productive economic activity.

For Oman’s water economy, the next efficiency gain may therefore come not from producing more water, but from extracting more value from the water it already produces.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



The value of re-exports rose by 20 per cent to reach RO 978 million, compared with RO 815 million during the same period last year.

OMAN’S H1 TRADE SURPLUS: 4.7 BN

MUSCAT: Oman’s trade balance recorded a surplus of about RO 4.7 billion by the end of June 2026, compared with a surplus of about RO 3.1 billion during the same period of 2025, marking an increase of about 51 per cent.

Data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the total value of Oman’s merchandise exports rose by 15.3 per cent, reaching about RO 13.2 billion by the end of June 2026, compared with about RO 11.5 billion during the same period of 2025.

This increase is attributed to a 16.5 per cent growth in the value of oil and gas exports, which reached about RO 8.6 billion, compared with about RO 7.4 billion by the end of June 2025.

The value of re-exports rose by 20 per cent to reach RO 978 million, compared with RO 815 million during the same period last year, while non-oil exports recorded growth of 11.4 per cent to reach about RO 3.6 billion, compared with about RO 3.3 billion during the same period last year.

In terms of trading partners, the United Arab Emirates topped the list of leading destinations for Omani non-oil exports with a value of RO 1.134 billion, followed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with RO 357 million and then the Republic of India with RO 333 million.

With regard to re-exports, the Islamic Republic of Iran topped the list of leading destinations for re-exports by the end of June 2026, with a value of RO 254 million, followed by the United Arab Emirates in second place with RO 221 million, while the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came in third place with RO 188 million. — ONA

Oman, China to enhance economic cooperation

QAIS BIN MOHAMMED AL YOUSEF, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), received today at the Authority’s headquarters in Muscat an economic delegation from Hainan Province of the People’s Republic of China, headed by Bater, Executive Vice Governor of Hainan Province.

During the meeting, the two sides explored ways to enhance economic and investment cooperation in special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities.

During the meeting, investment opportunities available in the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities supervised by the Authority were reviewed, alongside discussing possible areas of cooperation with the Chinese province of Hainan, as well as exploring opportunities to establish investment partnerships between companies and institutions from both sides across a number of promising economic and industrial sectors.

The two sides emphasised the importance of coordination, facilitation and creating an environment supportive of cooperation, in parallel with involving economic zones, companies and the private sector in developing and executing investment and commercial opportunities and projects of mutual interest. They also highlighted benefitting from mutual experiences in developing and managing economic and specialised zones, enhancing integration between zones and



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ports, developing industrial clusters and attracting qualitative investments, thereby contributing to transitioning from general frameworks of cooperation to practical partnerships based on specific initiatives and projects.

During the meeting, the ecosystem of special economic, free and industrial zones supervised by the Authority was presented, along with the supportive investment environment it provides, benefitting from the Sultanate of Oman’s strategic location, regulatory flexibility and openness to regional and global markets, as well as the logistical depth provided by the network of ports, airports and integrated infrastructure, which enhances investors’ ability to access markets and expand their businesses.

The two sides addressed the importance of enhancing communication between the business communities in the Sultanate of Oman and Hainan Province; and introducing the opportunities available for Chinese companies to invest and expand in the zones supervised by the Authority, contributing to attracting qualitative investments, enhancing industrial integration; and transferring knowledge and modern technologies.

Both parties also affirmed the importance of continued coordination and exchange of expertise, as well as working to explore new areas for cooperation and partnership, enhancing economic and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the People’s Republic of China, represented by Hainan Province and serving the mutual interests of both sides. — ONA

Omani mining sector enters new investment phase

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 7

The Sultanate of Oman is moving to enhance investment in the mining sector, with the focus gradually moving from the stage of exploring mineral resources to developing projects capable of achieving added economic and industrial value, especially in copper and gold ores and strategic minerals.

The copper development project in the North Al Batinah Governorate, which brings together the Minerals Development Oman (MDO) and Kazakh-based Solidcore Resources, comes in this context, based on an extensive exploration programme and preliminary results that the Omani side described as promising.

According to data shared by MDO, the selection of the site came after an exploration and exploration programme that extended for several years and included geophysical and geochemical surveys of about 17,000 km2,

while the targeted area underwent exploratory drilling work during the past two years on an area of approximately 84 km2, and the results showed indications of good mineral extensions.

Fahd al Adi, CEO of Corporate Support and Sustainability at MDO, said: “The partnership primarily aims to accelerate the cycle of mining projects from exploration and drilling to production by taking advantage of the advanced capabilities and global experience of Solidcore Resources.”

Al Adi also added that MDO seeks to benefit from the partner’s extensive experience in exploring gold and copper deposits in particular, which increases the chances of discovering good economic reserves. It will contribute to developing techniques for processing and filtering ores, especially complex ones.

From an investment perspective, the entry of a partner specialized in exploring gold and copper deposits



The partnership aims to accelerate the cycle of mining projects from exploration and drilling to production.

represents an important factor in reducing the technical risks associated with the early stages of mining projects.

Transitioning from promising geological indicators to extractable economic reserves requires significant investments in drilling, geological assessment, mineralogical testing and feasibility studies. This step gains greater investment importance given the

Omani government’s intention to increase the role of mining in economic diversification.

According to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Sultanate possesses important resources of copper, chromium, gypsum, limestone, manganese, silica, etc., and that the sector represents one of the tributaries of diversifying sources of income and attracting private sector investments in exploration, extraction and related industries. Total investments in the mining sector exceeded RO 105 million during 2025, in conjunction with the signing of six new concession agreements, bringing the total mining concession areas to 28 areas managed by 13 companies.

Exports of copper concentrates amounted to about 95,000 tonnes, while mining production reached about 65 million tonnes, and sales reached about 60 million tonnes, with a value of approximately RO 159 million. These numbers indicate that investment in mining is no

longer limited to geological survey operations, but rather has begun to transform into a productive and export activity, which raises the importance of new copper projects as they are capable of adding new productive resources and exports to the Omani economy.

Copper is at the heart of investment opportunities, as copper is of particular importance in the Omani mining strategy, not only because of the presence of historical deposits in the Sultanate, but also because of the increasing global demand for the metal used in electricity networks, renewable energy, electric vehicles, and infrastructure.

The Invest in Oman platform presents multiple opportunities in the mining sector, including exploration, extraction, mineral processing, refining and manufacturing, and indicates the allocation of investments of about \$260 million for copper, gypsum and chromite projects.

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold falls on rate hopes



Gold slipped on Monday as strong US jobs data reinforced expectations for higher interest rates, while investors awaited key US inflation reports due later this week for further clarity on the Federal Reserve’s policy path.

Spot gold was down 0.6% at \$4,402.86 per ounce, as of 04:20 GMT, after falling 1% on Friday. US gold futures for December delivery were down 0.6% at \$4,447.60. — Reuters

CURRENCY MARKETS

Dollar gets Fed boost



The dollar was on shaky ground on Monday, despite a ramp-up in US rate hike bets as Middle East tensions raised the prospect of broader inflationary pressures that could force global central banks to tighten policy in tandem.

A shift in sentiment towards the Japanese yen and worries about ever-growing US debt and policy uncertainties also weighed on the greenback. — Reuters

ENERGY MARKETS

Ship fuel shortage looms



A shortage of fuel oil used in ships and power plants looms in the third quarter as refiners increasingly squeezed by wars that have disrupted both crude processing and tanker traffic prioritise output of diesel and other products at its expense. While crude oil has avoided major price spikes in recent months, refined product prices have soared as strikes damage refineries and curbs on ship traffic choke flows. — Reuters

OPINION

WhatsApp is kicking people out. You may be next!



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is
strategic adviser,
businessman and
motivational
speaker

“TARIQ, I have been kicked out of WhatsApp. I am not able to communicate to family, friends and even engage with my business affairs?” my friend Hassan complained to me a few days ago, His WhatsApp account had suddenly been placed “under review”, leaving him unable to use the service normally.

At first, it sounded like an isolated problem, yet quickly became a common message I received from many other users whom were experiencing the same thing.

This problem is a big deal and you may encounter the same too.

My article today explains the issue and shares tips to revert and/or avoid being part of the problem at first place. For many of us in Oman, WhatsApp is no longer just an app for saying “good morning” or sharing family photos.

It has become part of our daily lives, ie, used for work, business, school, family communication, customer service and even sending important documents.

Losing access, even temporarily, can therefore feel surprisingly disruptive, like how Hassan felt and many others whom complained about the same.

So, what is really happening? With a bit of research, I learnt that many users from several other countries also reported that their WhatsApp accounts had suddenly been placed “under review”.

The app displayed a message saying that account activity and device information were being checked for compliance with WhatsApp's Terms of Service, with reviews typically taking up to 24 hours.

WhatsApp later acknowledged that its systems had mistakenly flagged some legitimate accounts and said it was working to restore access. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the affected users had done something wrong.

Why does this happen though ? WhatsApp uses automated systems to detect activity associated with spam, scams, bulk messaging, automation and other forms of abuse.

The platform says these measures are designed to protect users, but automated systems can sometimes get it wrong.

Certain behaviours can increase the risk of restrictions, for example, sending large numbers of unsolicited messages, repeatedly contacting people who do not know you, adding people to groups without permission, using unofficial or modified WhatsApp applications, or using automation and bulk-messaging tools. The lesson is simple.

Even if you consider yourself an innocent user, your account activity may still trigger an automated security system. This was the case Hassan and I trust many more too.

What can one do therefore? I recommend doing the basics.

WhatsApp uses automated systems to detect activity associated with spam, scams, bulk messaging, automation and other forms of abuse. The platform says these measures are designed to protect users, but automated systems can sometimes get it wrong.

1. Use only the official WhatsApp application and keep it updated. Avoid modified versions and third-party tools that promise extra WhatsApp features.
2. Don't send bulk or automated messages, particularly to people who have not agreed to receive them.
- Be careful when adding people to groups and avoid repeatedly forwarding questionable content.
3. If your account is suddenly placed under review, don't panic and don't pay anyone claiming they can unlock it. Use the review option provided inside WhatsApp.
- The company says contacting third parties will not speed up the process, and only WhatsApp can restore a banned account.
4. Add your email and create a username within WhatsApp, in order for them to contact you for retrieval too.
- I trust with above steps, you can not just avoid but also get your account restored too (yet with some hassle as it stands today).
- We often say technology makes our lives easier. It does. But the more dependent we become on a single digital platform, the more disruptive it becomes when that platform suddenly disappears.
- So perhaps the smartest WhatsApp user isn't simply the one who knows how to use WhatsApp but the one who also has a backup way to communicate. Until we catch up again next week, stay safe and have a backup chat in place.

CAN CHINA’S WEAK OIL IMPORTS CONTINUE?

CLYDE RUSSELL

China’s seaborne imports of crude oil ticked up in August from July but remained nearly 40% below levels before the start of the Iran conflict.

China, the world’s biggest oil importer, saw seaborne arrivals of 7.14 million barrels per day (bpd) in August, from July’s 6.93 million bpd, according to data compiled by commodity analysts Kpler.

The dramatic reduction in China’s seaborne crude oil imports since the start of the conflict means it is shouldering the bulk of the adjustment of lower volumes from the Middle East, with exports dropping amidst constrained flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

The narrow waterway remains contested between Iran and the United States and while there is dispute over exactly how much crude oil and refined products are getting through, it is certain that it remains well below the near 20 million bpd before the conflict began.

While most crude oil market participants expected Beijing to cut its imports in response to the higher prices caused by the Iran conflict, the extent of the drop is surprising.

China has a history of cutting imports when prices surge, but boosting them to increase stockpiling when prices slip.

The question for the crude oil market is whether China will continue to curb its imports amidst ongoing high prices, or whether its refiners will seek to secure cargoes so that they do not have to tap inventories.

There are several dynamics at work in the answer to that question.

Firstly, China’s smaller independent refiners are losing access to Iranian crude as the US naval blockade ensures that no new Iranian crude leaves the Gulf and the oil in tankers gets delivered and depleted.

This means these refiners either have to pay more for cargoes from other suppliers, or cut processing rates.

China is buying more from Russia, another exporter under Western sanctions, but that puts it in competition with India as refiners in the South Asian nation have largely replaced constrained Middle East supplies with crude from Russia.

Another factor to consider is whether China’s refiners try to export more refined fuels, given the extremely high profit margins currently on offer in Asia for products such as diesel and gasoline.

Exports of light and middle distillates were 963,000 bpd in August, up from 774,000 bpd in July and above the 713,000 bpd average for the three months prior to the start of the Iran war.

Since the start of the Iran war, China’s decision to slash crude imports has been a major factor in keeping oil prices from surging.

But its lack of product exports in the April to June period is also a factor in keeping fuel prices elevated in Asia. — Reuters

Old sea, new corridor: Oman’s Kenya moment

LONG before there were embassies, there were monsoons. For centuries the winds carried Omani dhows to Mombasa and Lamu with dates and fish; and brought them home with mangrove poles, spices and ivory. The Swahili language still carries Arabic in its bones and Omani families still carry Swahili in theirs. Formal diplomatic relations followed in 1976, Kenya’s embassy opened in Muscat in 2011 and Oman’s reopened in Nairobi in 2013.

That is the history. What is new and what deserves more attention than it has received, is how much things have changed in both countries in the last eighteen months. The first round of Oman-Kenya political consultations were held in Muscat, with the second due in Nairobi. In June 2026, Kenya’s Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Oman’s ambassador opened structured talks on tea, coffee, livestock, flowers and the commercial development of under-used farmland.

Days later, the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry mapped shipping links between Mombasa and Lamu and Salalah, Suhar and Al Duqm, with transit times of five to twelve days and asked both governments to complete the long-pending investment protection and double taxation agreements.

The trade is responding. The National Centre for Statistics and Information reports that Kenya became Oman’s largest tea supplier in 2025, at RO 20.2 million and the Tea Board of Kenya records shipments to Oman rising from 4.2 million to 17.8 million kilogrammes in a single year.

Oman’s exports to Kenya, led by refined fuels, dairy and steel, grew by roughly a quarter a year between 2018 and 2023. Kenya is the anchor of East Africa. An economy of about \$132 billion, growing around five per cent a year through every shock since 2021, with record reserves above \$14 billion, inflation inside its central bank’s band and two credit-rating upgrades and a



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Fifty years after Muscat and Nairobi exchanged ambassadors, the groundwork for a modern economic partnership has been laid faster than most people noticed. The task now is to connect across trade, culture, people, industry, energy, knowledge and finance.

third affirmation in five months. A country of fifty-six million people with a median age near twenty. Kenya is also a key gateway to a common market of over three hundred and thirty million through the East African Community (EAC) and AfCFTA. In addition, duty-free access to the European Union under its 2024 partnership agreement. A power grid that is roughly ninety per cent renewable along with strong environmental and sustainability regulations. Nairobi’s role as the region’s technology, cultural, aviation and financial capital is also a major advantage.

Kenya is also looking outward, deliberately diversifying its export markets towards the Gulf.

It is, in short, the East African end of the gateway that the India–Oman comprehensive partnership, in force since June, publicly describes Oman as being. The maritime distance from Arabia to East African mineral and agri-food belts (Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Djibouti) enables two-way import-processing-export value chains. That is where the fit with the Omani Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan becomes concrete rather than rhetorical. The plan asks manufacturing to grow by 5.9 per cent a year, the digital economy by 10.8 and tourism by 5.7. It also seeks foreign direct investment at eleven per cent of GDP and a private sector carrying 56 per cent of output by 2030. None of those numbers is reached at home alone.

They are reached by giving Omani ports, free zones, fuels and capital a hinterland to serve. Located in the Strait of Hormuz, Omani free zones such as SOHAR have one of the most strategic market accesses globally and Kenya is the largest, closest and most familiar hinterland to Oman.

The opportunities are layered and they reward different kinds of Omani capital. In agri-food, Kenya’s tea, coffee, chilled meat and horticulture can be blended, packed, halal-certified and distributed to all six Gulf markets from Salalah and Suhar, while Omani groups take stakes in processing and irrigated production

on the Kenyan side. Kenyan Special Economic Zones governed by a national SEZ authority (SEZA) provide competitive incentives (eg corporate tax discounts, duty exemptions, capital allowances), modern infrastructure and serviced land. In logistics, a scheduled ASYAD rotation between Mombasa and Salalah would turn a proximity that exists on the map into one that exists on a timetable and Lamu’s corridor to Ethiopia and South Sudan extends the reach further. In energy, OQ’s refined-products capability answers Kenya’s structural import need today, while geothermal expansion and Al Duqm’s green-fuel ambitions point to tomorrow.

In the digital economy, Kenya’s mobile-money and fintech experience is world-leading and its developer talent is deep; a two-way exchange of know-how, delivery centres and data infrastructure on green power serves the plan’s fastest-growing target. In tourism, safari-and-coast pairs naturally with Oman’s heritage and adventure offer for the same long-haul visitor.

In finance, the Nairobi International Financial Centre invites an Omani banking presence and the Muscat and Nairobi exchanges have a natural conversation to begin.

What takes this to the next level is sequence, not size. The private sector on both sides has asked for the same two instruments, an investment protection agreement and a double taxation treaty and concluding them is the single most valuable step either government can take. Alongside them, a joint business council to keep the momentum between ministerial visits and a revived bilateral air services agreement so that goods and people move on the same schedule. Then the market can do its work with one or two anchor investments in agri-processing and logistics, an offtake contract large enough to justify the shipping line, and, when the pipeline is proven, a sovereign-anchored co-investment vehicle on the model Oman has used with other partners.

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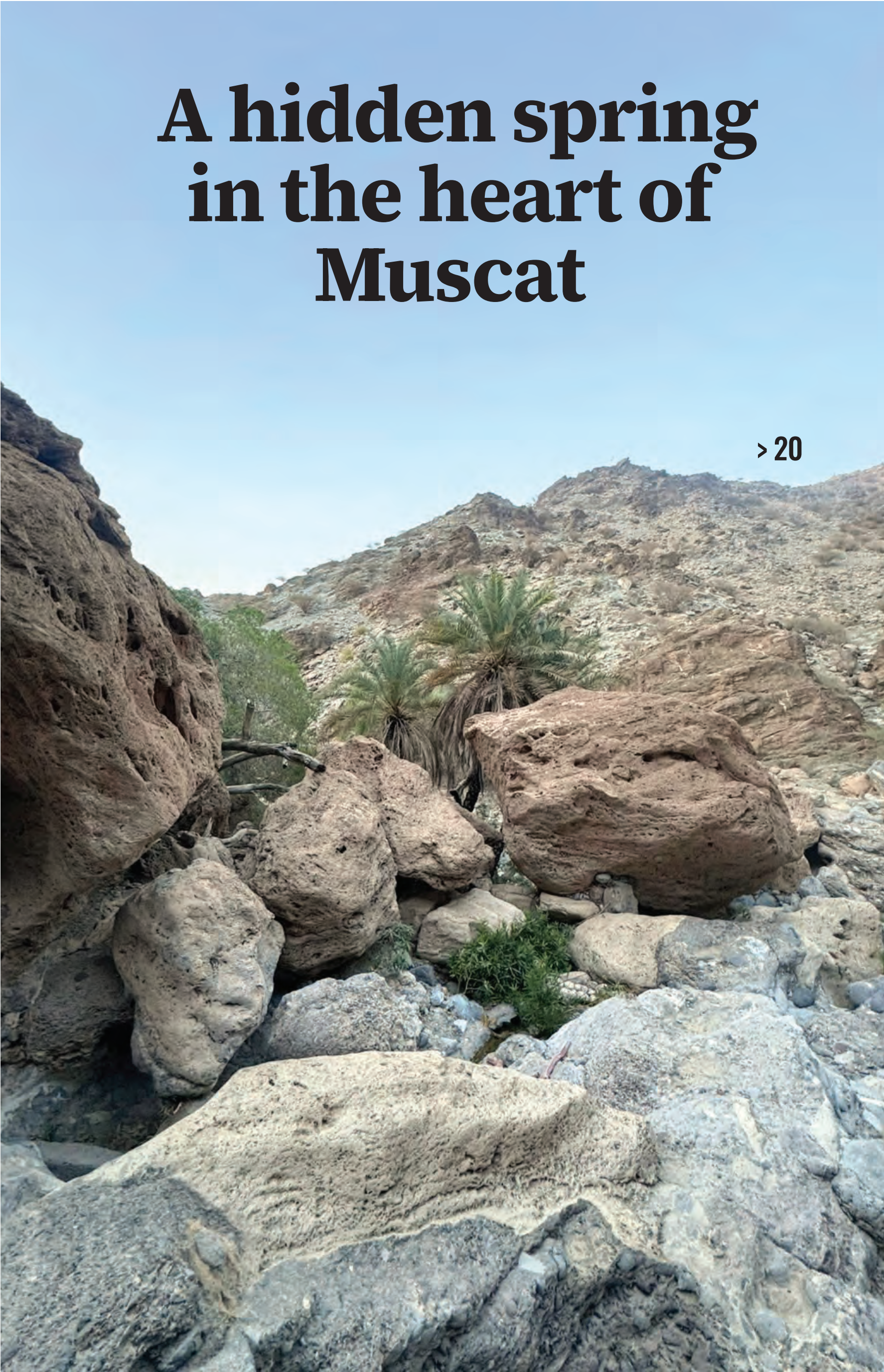


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POP **LEGEND**

FANS CELEBRATE FREDDIE MERCURY’S 80TH BIRTHDAY



A fan poses next to the iconic Freddie Mercury statue overlooking Lake Geneva. — AFP

Thousands of Queen fans sang, cheered and partied at the Freddie Mercury statue in Montreux on Saturday to celebrate what would have been the legendary British singer’s 80th birthday.

Wearing some outlandish outfits reflecting Mercury’s stage costumes, fans from across the world gathered in honour of the frontman, in the Swiss lakeside town where he sought peace in his final years and recorded his last vocals.

“It is a special birthday, so you’ve got to make the effort to come and celebrate all things Freddie”, said Sonia, who travelled from Canberra.

Her friend Khristina added that she “fell in love with him, thought he was the most beautiful man — and then my husband looks just like him!”.

The bronze statue of Mercury, erected in 1996 overlooking Lake Geneva, was decked with balloons, flowers and tributes left by well-wishers.

Appreciation of Queen’s legacy and Mercury’s unique talent has only grown since his death in 1991.

Among the world’s best-selling artists ever, most of the group’s sales have come since the singer’s passing at the age of 45.

For many of those gathered, the celebration was also a chance to revisit the music, performances and flamboyant stage presence that made Mercury one of rock’s most recognisable and enduring frontmen around the world today.

Queen owned Mountain Studios, built into the Montreux Casino and recorded six albums there.

In Montreux, the Freddie Days birthday event has been running annually since 2003 and has grown. “This is the busiest I’ve ever seen it”, said fan Gail Potter, 61, from York in northern England. “It’s this that makes Queen different from any other band”, she said, looking at the sea of fans milling round the market square.

“The music keeps on going, which is extraordinary”.

Fans were dressed in a wealth of different Mercury outfits, including his iconic 1986 Magic Tour yellow jacket, his “Invisible Man” sunglasses, 1982 “arrows” jackets and his 39th birthday “Living on My Own” black and white leggings.

The event also saw concerts and talks, including one on Mercury’s trailblazing 1988 “Barcelona” duet album, recorded with Spanish opera diva Montserrat Caballé.

“He would have been amazed that people still come from all over the world in such large numbers to celebrate — he’d have loved it. He loved being idolised! — though he’d have hated being 80!” composer Mike Moran, who co-wrote the album with Mercury, said.

The day culminated with the cutting of an 80th birthday cake, with Mercury’s sister Kashmira Bulsara as the special guest. — AFP

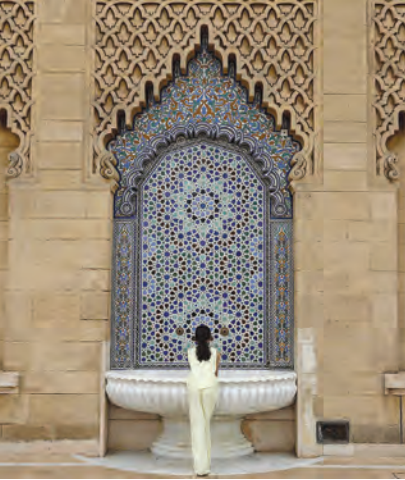
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POSE

A woman poses for a picture during the Braderie de Lille flea market in Lille, northern France.

— AFP



CRAFT

A girl stands by a wall fountain decorated with Zellige ceramic tiles on a street in Sale, Morocco.

— AFP



STARS

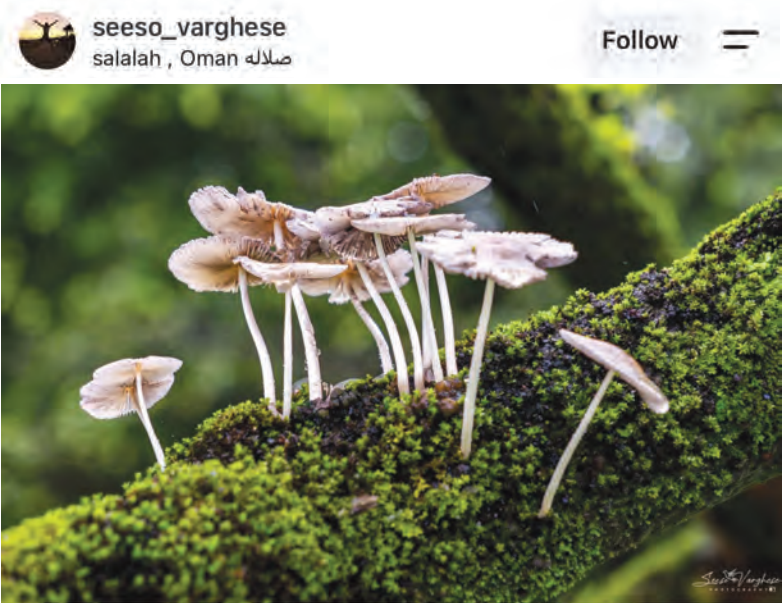
US actress Octavia Spencer attends Night One of the 78th Emmy Awards at the Peacock Theatre in Los Angeles.

— AFP

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Majesty in the monsoon



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VENICE JURY HEAD QUESTIONS LACK OF WOMEN DIRECTORS



Gyllenhaal said women found it much harder to get films financed. — AFP

The head of this year’s Venice Film Festival jury, Maggie Gyllenhaal questioned last week why only two women directors had been selected for the main competition.

“There’s a systemic problem”, the American actress-turned director told reporters at a press conference, sitting next to Venice supremo Alberto Barbera.

“I do think it’s much harder for women to get their films financed. Also, could it be possible that the things that women, having had a different experience of being alive in the world, want to make movies about are not always deemed high art. Who decides what’s good? Who decides what’s valuable?

“That’s also a question I have and it’s a legitimate one”, she added. “Woman Unknown” by Danish-Egyptian director May El Toukhy was the only woman-directed film in the

initial 20-strong field of films competing for the prestigious Golden Lion in Venice’s top competition.

The late addition of “NAZA” about Israel’s targeting of civilians in Gaza improved the gender balance slightly — it is co-directed by a woman, Oscar-winning filmmaker Rachel Szor.

Barbera said this year’s selection had been made “without prejudice”.

At a press conference to announce the selection in July, he said that the quality of submissions from women directors “was not enough to put them into the competition” — which led to a critical open letter from campaign and industry groups in Italy.

Although her remarks appeared to be an implicit criticism of Barbera’s choices, Gyllenhaal stressed that her role as head of the jury was also significant. — AFP



An aerial view of the new Lucas Museum of Narrative Art before a media preview of the 300,000 square foot structure. — AFP

George unveils art galaxy at his new LA museum

GEORGE Lucas, the legendary creator of the “Star Wars” saga, showcased his long-awaited Museum of Narrative Art last week, the culmination of nearly two decades of work and numerous obstacles.

“I’m used to doing the impossible. This one almost broke my will”, Lucas said as he offered reporters a first glimpse inside, ahead of the museum’s official opening on September 22.

Lucas, 82, has described the complex built with his wife and business partner, Mellody Hobson, as the “people’s temple of art.”

“Part of the problem is I’m a contrarian. I don’t like to do things that people think can be done”, he added. “I’m fascinated by doing things that people say can’t be done”.

The futuristic-looking museum was built on what used to be a parking lot next to the University of Southern California, the filmmaker’s alma mater.

That personal connection, combined with Los Angeles’s place at the heart of American cinema, made it the ideal home for the project, executive director Tracey Bates said.

At the entrance, visitors are greeted by the yellow Naboo N-1 starfighter from “Star Wars: Episode I — The Phantom Menace” (1999), but with more than 9,300 square metres of exhibition space, the offerings go far beyond the beloved saga.

Its more than 30 galleries feature works by artists including Banksy, Frida Kahlo, Jacob Lawrence, Charles White and Robert Colescott; comics by Winsor McCay, Jack Kirby and Frank Frazetta; and illustrations by Norman Rockwell, Jessie Willcox Smith and NC Wyeth. “Narrative art is stories that are illustrated”, Bates said. “A story that you can see a picture in one frame and it doesn’t need further explanation”.

Lucas said he wanted



Co-founders of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Mellody Hobson and George Lucas. — AFP

The Lucas Museum’s unusual design, a green roof that blends into the surrounding landscape, is meant to offer a glimpse of the future and spark visitors’ curiosity, while the over 30 galleries feature works by artists including Banksy, Frida Kahlo and Jacob Lawrence.



A visitor views exhibits from the Star Wars gallery during the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art press preview in LA. — AFP

to highlight the work of illustrators. “A picture is very powerful and the stories are very powerful; and you combine them together and those two elements create a society”, he said.

“And that’s why I wanted to build this, because, you know, narrative art creates a group of people with a common belief system and that common belief system allows them to work together, not kill each other”.

The museum’s unusual design — a green roof that

blends into the surrounding landscape — is meant to offer a glimpse of the future and spark visitors’ curiosity, said Ma Yansong, the architect behind the project.

“We want to make architecture look futuristic and making people curious. What is it?” Yansong said. “Some people say this is a spaceship. Some people say this is a cloud, but that makes people curious. What’s in there? They want to discover on their own”.

— AFP

FEATURES



Ain Al Aqbiah spring offers a glimpse of a quieter, greener side of Muscat. The journey begins where the road ends, with visitors following a natural trail for around 15 to 20 minutes. The ascent is moderate and accessible enough for beginners, but the changing scenery gives the walk a sense of adventure.

IDRIS AL BALUSHI & MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

THERE are places in Muscat that feel as though they belong much farther from the city. Hidden among the rugged landscape of Al Aqbiah village in Al Ansab, Wilayat of Bausher, Ain Al Aqbiah is one of them, a secluded natural spring where a short hike opens onto an unexpectedly serene oasis.

Located roughly a kilometre from the more familiar Ain Al Hammam, the spring offers a glimpse of a quieter, greener side of Muscat. The journey begins where the road ends, with visitors following a natural trail for around 15 to 20 minutes. The ascent is moderate and accessible enough for beginners, but the changing scenery gives the walk a sense of adventure.

For Omar al Taha, nature enthusiast and co-founder of adventure tourism agency Venture City, the route is particularly appealing to those looking for an introduction to hiking. The initial walk takes roughly 10 to 15 minutes before the landscape gradually opens up to reveal the spring and its clear, fresh water.

The moment of arrival is perhaps what makes the hike memorable.

For Waad al Farsi, a first-time visitor to Ain Al Aqbiah, reaching the spring felt like a reward for every step taken along the trail.

“Arriving at the spring feels like a remarkable achievement, worth every bit of the effort. It’s breathtaking, almost like finding a massive pearl nestled deep in the ocean”, she says.

The contrast is striking. After making their way through the dry,

rocky landscape, visitors are met by the unexpected sight of clear water surrounded by natural greenery, creating a setting that feels far removed from the urban landscape of Muscat.

Omani adventurer and hiker Mazin al Yahyaei captures the same sense of surprise, noting the unusual beauty of finding such a rural landscape and road within the capital.

For Faisal al Shibli, a seasoned hiker, the trail has become one of his favourites, offering an easy way to combine movement with moments of calm.

“It’s one of my favourite hikes because of the peaceful views. It’s also such a convenient way to get my steps in while enjoying the outdoors”, he says.

Omani content creator Samer al Badaei likewise describes the hike as moderate, with the scenery making the effort worthwhile for those willing to take the trail.

Yet the beauty of Ain Al Aqbiah also calls for caution. Swimming in the spring is prohibited, as the water is believed to be deep and unpredictable and previous incidents have resulted in fatalities involving people who attempted to swim there.

The surrounding terrain is also home to wildlife, including lizards, snakes and scorpions. Visitors are therefore advised to wear suitable hiking shoes or high boots and remain mindful of their surroundings.

Ain Al Aqbiah is ultimately less about reaching a destination quickly than about discovering what lies quietly beyond Muscat’s familiar roads. Its appeal is found in that unexpected transition, from city to trail, from rock to greenery and finally to a spring that appears almost like a secret waiting to be found.

