

OMAN
Observer
دَائِلِي

VOL. 44, NO. 24
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SUNRISE 06:37 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
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INTER POWER
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INBRIEF

SEASONAL SHIFT
SPARKS FLU SURGE

As the weather transitions to winter in Oman, an increase in viral infections has been observed. What often starts as a sore throat can linger, affecting daily routines, including students missing classes. This raises the question: should we revive the habit of wearing masks, especially in crowded spaces or when experiencing symptoms? Dr Mujeeb A M, Specialist in Cardiology, advises, “While attending public gatherings, it’s a good idea to wear a mask. If you’re feeling symptoms, include Vitamin C-rich foods in your diet.” SEE P3

HIMAM TRAIL
RUN DRAWS 4,000
RUNNERS



The fifth edition of the Himam Trail Run concluded on Saturday, marking a milestone in the event’s history with over 4,000 participants from 65 countries. The event showcased exceptional athleticism and the breathtaking landscapes of Oman, further cementing its reputation as the premier trail running event in the Middle East and North Africa. DETAILS ON P10

HER

HIGHNESS The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, and Intisar El Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian President, held a meeting at Al Alam Palace on Saturday.

The meeting reviewed some topics of women’s interest and means of enhancing areas of cooperation, in light of the fraternal bonds and the distinguished relations between the two countries and their peoples.

The meeting was attended by some female Royal Family members and senior female figures from both sides.

Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, and Intisar El Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian President, visited the National Museum.

The Honourable Lady and the guest were greeted upon their arrival by Jamal bin Hassan al Mousawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum.

They toured the museum and were briefed about the National Museum’s galleries and unique glimpses of the history and civilisation of the Sultanate of Oman.

During the visit, the educational activities implemented by the museum’s learning centre were highlighted through presenting an artistic session for school students. It shed light on the historical Omani-Egyptian relations extending back to thousands of years through the export of frankincense to Egypt during the Pharaonic Era.

At the end of the tour, the Spouse of the Egyptian President recorded a word in the museum’s senior visitors’ register, in which she expressed her admiration over the displayed antiquities in the museum.

Meanwhile, Her Highness The



Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, and Intisar El Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian President, visited the National Museum.

Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, hosted a luncheon at Al Alam Palace guesthouse on Saturday in honour of Intisar El Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian President, on

the occasion of her visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The luncheon was attended by some female Royal Family members and senior female figures from both sides. — ONA
SEE ALSO P2

OMAN WIN SOCCA WORLD CUP 2024

The Omani national team was crowned champions of the Socca World Cup on Saturday after a thrilling victory in the final against Kazakhstan in a penalty shootout, winning 1-0 in Muscat. The match ended in a 1-1 draw during regular and extra time, leading to penalties where the Omani team clinched the title. Oman had topped Group A of the tournament with 12 points from four wins, the last of which was a 1-0 victory over Qatar. In the knockout stages, Oman faced Hungary, the runners-up of Group H, and won 2-1, followed by a 3-1 victory over Romania in the semifinals.

UN Syrian envoy urges ‘avoidance of bloodshed’

DOHA: The United Nations special envoy to Syria, Geir Pedersen on Saturday called for calm in the country following rapid advances by rebels.

“I reiterate my call for de-escalation, for calm, for the avoidance of bloodshed and the protection of civilians in line with international humanitarian law,” Pedersen said at the Doha Forum for political dialogue, urging “the start of a process that leads to the realisation of the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people”.

Meanwhile, rebels on a lightning advance through Syria said they were nearing Damascus on Saturday, although Bashar al Assad’s government denied that the army had withdrawn from areas around the capital.

“Our forces have begun the final phase of encircling the capital,” said rebel commander Hassan Abdel Ghani, with the alliance that

A man rides a scooter with his children and wife in the Syrian city of Salamiyah in Hama on Saturday. — AFP

launched the offensive.

The leader of the group which has headed the assault, told fighters to prepare to take the seat of the government, just over a week into a renewed offensive in the long dormant conflict.

Syria’s defence ministry said army forces were “present in all areas of the Damascus countryside”.

“There is no truth to news

claiming our armed forces... have withdrawn” from positions near Damascus, it said.

AFP has been unable to independently verify some of the information provided by the government and the rebels, as its journalists in Syria cannot reach the areas around Damascus where the rebels say they are present.

In a Damascus suburb on Saturday, witnesses said protesters toppled a statue of the late president Hafez al Assad, who handed Syria’s rule to his son.

Similar scenes were witnessed in images shared by local media in the southern city of Daraa and in online footage verified by AFP from Hama, north of the capital.

“The rebels entered Hama, it was a great joy for us — something we had been waiting for since 2011,” said resident Maymouna Jawad.

— AFP



Oman and Egypt review topics of women’s interest



MUSCAT: Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, and Intisar El Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian President, held a meeting at Al Alam Palace on Saturday. Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, and Intisar El Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian President, also visited the National Museum. During the visit, the educational activities implemented by the museum's learning centre were highlighted through presenting an artistic session for school students. It shed light on the historical Omani-Egyptian relations extending back to thousands of years through the export of frankincense to Egypt during the Pharaonic Era. — ONA



البنك الوطني العماني

NBO

صندوق الحماية الاجتماعية

SOCIAL PROTECTION FUND

Congratulations

to the Social Protection Fund

NBO extends its congratulations to the Social Protection Fund (SPF) for receiving the Good Practice Award for Asia and the Pacific from the International Social Security Association (ISSA). This prestigious regional award underscores SPF's efforts in developing an integrated and sustainable social protection system while reflecting the fund's pivotal role in advancing national visions, and fulfilling societal aspirations, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

Regional Social Security Forum

ASIA&PACIFIC 2024

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 3-5 December 2024

ISSA Good Practice Award for Asia and the Pacific Award

ISSA

Good Practice Award

OMAN

WATERSTORAGE



Dams serve to reduce flood risks, protect infrastructure, and support water storage and groundwater recharge.

OMAN HAS 191 DAMS

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Oman has 191 water dams with a total storage capacity of 357.7 million cubic metres, according to a statement from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. These dams have stored over 3 billion cubic metres of floodwater, highlighting their importance in supporting agriculture and the environment.

New dams are currently being constructed in Muscat Governorate, including protection dams in Wadi Adai (G2) and Wadi Al Khoud, Majlas Dam in Qurayat, and Al Ansab 2 and 3 dams in Wadi Al Ansab in Bausher. Additionally, maintenance projects are ongoing for dams in Qurayat, Al Seeb, Al Amerat and Al Ansab. These projects are part of a comprehensive strategy to preserve water resources and maintain ecological balance.

The dams in Oman are categorised into three types: groundwater recharge dams, surface storage dams and flood protection dams. Groundwater recharge dams help store water in underground aquifers, surface storage dams provide sustainable water resources for mountainous regions, and flood protection dams safeguard areas from flood risks and seawater intrusion. Dams serve to reduce flood risks, protect infrastructure, and support water storage and groundwater recharge. These projects are essential for preserving natural resources and maintaining environmental balance.

Seasonal shift sparks flu surge, rise in infections

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, DEC. 7

AS THE WEATHER transitions to winter in Muscat, an increase in viral infections has been observed, leaving many residents feeling under the weather. What often starts as a sore throat can linger, affecting daily routines, including students missing classes.

This raises the question: should we revive the habit of wearing masks, especially in crowded spaces or when experiencing symptoms? Dr Mujeeb A M, Specialist in Cardiology, advises, “While attending public gatherings, it’s a good idea to wear a mask. If you’re feeling symptoms, include Vitamin C-rich foods in your diet.”

However, the willingness to wear masks has diminished. One respondent remarked, “I’ll wear a mask if the authorities mandate it,” signalling a departure from the earlier etiquette of mask usage to protect others when symptomatic.

Healthcare providers are noting a significant surge in viral fever cases. Dr Dilip Singhvi, Specialist in Internal Medicine and Head of Infectious Diseases at Burjeel Hospital, highlighted a rise in respiratory illnesses ranging from mild to severe. Patients report symptoms such as fever, body aches, fatigue, sore throat, dry cough, and, in some cases, gastrointestinal distress like nausea.

Dr Singhvi recommends staying hydrated, practicing good hand hygiene and avoiding crowded spaces to minimise exposure. He advises those with severe symptoms, such as



persistent high fever or difficulty breathing, to seek immediate medical attention.

During winter, respiratory diseases like the common cold (influenza) often affect the upper respiratory tract (pharynx, larynx and vocal cords) and may progress to lower respiratory tract infections, such as bronchitis and pneumonia. Factors like exposure to cold air, molds, pollution, and smog exacerbate asthma and chronic lung diseases (COPD).

TIPS TO STAY HEALTHY THIS WINTER:
DRESS WARMLY: Wear layers to protect against cold air.

COVER UP: Use scarves or masks to shield your mouth and nose from direct cold air.

VACCINATE: Take the influenza vaccine annually before winter.

ADHERE TO MEDICATIONS: Do not skip regular medication for asthma or chronic lung conditions.

ACT EARLY: Seek medical advice promptly for concerning symptoms.

With awareness and timely precautions, it’s possible to navigate the flu season while staying healthy and safe.

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

BankDhofar congratulates Oman represented by the Social Protection Fund (SPF) for receiving the prestigious award for Good practices in the Asia Pacific by the International Social Security Association (ISSA) 2024.

We congratulate SPF for enhancing the social protection coverage in Oman.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy led Oman’s delegation at Manama Dialogue Forum 2024

OMAN AT 20TH MANAMA DIALOGUE FORUM

MANAMA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry, took part in the 20th edition of the Manama Dialogue Forum 2024, inaugurated under the auspices of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Omani delegation was led by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs. Forum sessions delved into critical topics, including regional and international security, highlighting both opportunities and challenges facing the Middle East and the global community. — ONA

OMAN UNVEILS UPGRADED STANDARDS STORE, GREEN CARD



IBRA: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion launched the upgraded Omani Standards Store, the Green Card for Water Conservation, and a Laboratory Database on the Hazm Platform as part of the ‘Specifications and Standards System for a Sustainable Economy’ event in Ibra, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. The event, under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, showcased strategic initiatives aligned with Oman Vision 2040, including improved standardisation strategies, enhanced product quality, and agreements with industry leaders to develop national standards. The Green Card promotes water management and cost efficiency, while the Hazm Platform ensures product conformity and market quality. An exhibition highlighted innovations such as electric vehicles, fuel calibration labs, and energy-efficient solutions, with contributions from students and industry leaders. The initiative reaffirms the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to sustainability and innovation in economic development. Key speakers, including Dr Jihad bint Jabr al Busaidiyah and Khalid bin Mohammed al Shahri, addressed achievements, aspirations and community-driven initiatives in standardisation under Oman Vision 2040 and the 11th Five-Year Plan. The event concluded with insights into the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to sustainable economic development, emphasising innovation, quality and environmental responsibility. — ONA

AL BURAIMI MARKS INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY



AL BURAIMI: The Environment Authority in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi, Al Buraimi Governorate, marked International Volunteer Day by hosting a series of environmental activities aimed at fostering community engagement and environmental awareness. The celebration featured the distribution of wild seedlings at Al Muqdad bin Amr Primary School in Al Fayyadh, alongside environmental books such as *The Arabian Leopard in the Sultanate of Oman* and *Ras Al Shajar Nature Reserve*, as well as publications on the Arabian Oryx Reserve. Ahlam bint Rashid al Muqbaliyah, Communication and Media Specialist at the Environment Authority, delivered an insightful lecture titled *Environmental Volunteering at Hafsa bint Sirin Girls School*. The lecture explored the concept and various forms of environmental volunteering, emphasising its positive impact on both individuals and society. Environmental volunteering plays a crucial role in safeguarding nature, from afforestation and cleaning drives to environmental education and supporting clean energy initiatives, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and aware community. — ONA

Carnival celebrates people with disabilities

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, DEC 7

THE TWO-DAY event called the ‘Village of Happiness Carnival’, marking the International Day for People with Disabilities, was held at the Civil Aviation Club, where numerous children with disabilities enjoyed the festivities. The event was inaugurated under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU. The opening ceremony began with a beautiful Dhofari dance performed by children with disabilities affiliated with the Hams Al Atheer Rehab Centre. This was followed by a stage programme led by the brilliant presenter Mohammed bin Mousa al Balushi, a person with physical disabilities, who delivered the welcoming speech. A poetry session was performed by visually impaired children from the Omar bin Al Khattab Institute for the Blind. HH Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said stated, “This event enhances inclusion and empowerment for people with disabilities. The carnival provides children with disabilities and their families with a variety of educational, interactive and recreational activities. It also allows individuals with disabilities to showcase their creativity and talents. The carnival serves as a platform for parents to interact with one another, sharing their experiences, ideas, and stories about common disability issues.” Sumaira Chowdhury, Unicef Oman Representative, who participated in the event in



HH Sayyidah Hujaija al Said organised the event in collaboration with the Civil Aviation Club.

The Village of Happiness is an entertainment, educational and awareness carnival aimed at providing a safe recreational space for people with disabilities

celebration of World Children’s Day, said, “Unicef Oman is honoured to participate in the Village of Happiness Carnival, a remarkable initiative by HH Sayyidah Hujaija al Said to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This event exemplifies the power of inclusivity, engagement and community mobilisation in creating opportunities for children of all abilities to thrive. Together, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring every child in Oman can reach their full potential in a nurturing and caring environment.” Approximately 2,000 children from various associations, governmental and private rehabilitation centres serving children with disabilities were invited, as well as children with disabilities from expatriate

communities in the Sultanate of Oman, including those from the Indian and Pakistani schools. The event was organised by HH Sayyidah Hujaija al Said in collaboration with the Civil Aviation Club. The Village of Happiness is an entertainment, educational and awareness carnival aimed at providing a safe recreational space for people with disabilities. The event also celebrated the International Day for People with Disabilities, creating a joyful day while considering their needs and abilities. It aimed to provide a fun-filled experience, allowing individuals with disabilities to enjoy various interactive educational and recreational activities, showcasing their abilities and talents. The carnival featured several activities, including the presence of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) with a fire truck and an ambulance, conducting interactive educational activities for people with disabilities and their families. Educational activities included a science lab, board games, arts and crafts, and virtual reality games. Activities for children included luxury car rides, motorbike rides, magic shows hosted by global magician Moein al Bastaki from the UAE, horseback riding, a petting zoo, dog shows, face painting, henna art, cartoon character appearances, circus performances and a section for leading Omani SMEs in the children’s entertainment business, providing recreational activities and services free of charge. Food and beverage stalls were also provided free of charge to all attendees.

767 STUDENTS TO GRADUATE FROM UTAS MUSANNAH, RUSTAQ ON DECEMBER 9

AL RUSTAQ: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Al Musannah and Rustaq College of Education are set to host a grand graduation ceremony for the Class of 2024. The event will take place on December 9 at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex in Al Batinah South Governorate, honouring 767 graduates — 526 from UTAS Al Musannah and 241 from Rustaq College of Education. The ceremony will be held under the esteemed auspices of Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority

for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ). It will be attended by Dr Said al Rubaie, UTAS Vice-Chancellor, along with members of the State Council, distinguished officials from the Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South Governorates, and the proud families of the graduates. Dr Hamoud al Wardi, Dean of Rustaq College of Education, emphasised that the event will celebrate graduates from diverse disciplines, including the Colleges of Engineering and Technology, Economics and Business

Administration, Computing and Information Sciences, and Education in Science, Mathematics and English. The graduates, who have earned Bachelor’s, Advanced Diploma and Diploma degrees, are well-equipped with the skills and knowledge to excel in the job market and contribute to Oman’s growth. The organising committees have finalised all preparations for this momentous occasion. After extensive meetings, the schedule and media coverage plans are in place to ensure the ceremony is seamless and befitting of its significance.

OHRC to celebrate Human Rights Day on Dec 10

MUSCAT: As part of ongoing efforts to protect and promote human rights in Oman, the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) is organising a celebration on the occasion of International Human Rights Day under the theme ‘The Nation’s Pillar: Sustainable Steps to Protect and Promote the Rights of the Elderly’. The celebration on December 10, Tuesday, will be held under the auspices of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the

State Council, with the attendance of representatives from government institutions, the private sector, civil society organisations and media outlets. This year’s celebration focuses on the elderly, in recognition of their pivotal role in nation-building and their active contribution to various aspects of life. Oman places great emphasis on providing comprehensive care for this group and ensuring their fundamental



rights through legislation and laws that enhance their status and protect them from abuse or neglect. The event reaffirms OHRC’s commitment to raising awareness of the rights of the elderly and highlighting efforts to safeguard their rights. The programme includes activities such as a documentary film produced by OHRC which sheds light on the elderly and illustrates their role as a cornerstone of national development. The event also features a theatrical

performance portraying the challenges faced by the elderly, aimed at raising community awareness about embracing the elderly and addressing the difficulties they encounter. This will be followed by a presentation on key reports and complaints related to the rights of the elderly, showcasing how OHRC has dealt with them, along with national statistics that highlight the status of this group in Oman.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Ambassador Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari presents credentials in Turkmenistan

HM GREETINGS
CONVEYED

ASHGABAT: Ambassador Saif bin Rashid al Jahwari presented his credentials as the non-resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Sultanate of Oman to Turkmenistan on Friday. The ceremony was held in Ashgabat, where the ambassador was received by the Speaker of the Turkmen Parliament, Durnya Guzelgulmanova. During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed the greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Sardar Berdimuhamedow and the friendly Turkmen people.

HOLY QURAN
CONTEST WINNERS
TO BE ANNOUNCED

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science will host a press conference today, Sunday, to reveal the winners of the 32nd Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition for the year 1445 AH / 2024 AD.

This prestigious competition witnessed a spirited display of talent, with 1,790 male and female participants competing across seven levels. The final qualifiers saw intense rivalry, as contestants vied for top honours across 25 centres spread throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

Supervised by the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science under the Diwan of Royal Court, the competition seeks to foster a generation dedicated to the Holy Quran. It aims to inspire Omanis to memorise and adhere to its teachings, master its recitation and elevate Oman’s presence in international Quranic events.

The annual event continues to uphold Oman’s deep-rooted traditions of Quranic excellence and devotion. — ONA

Anemone fish as a symbol of rich diversity

SALALAH: The Omani anemone fish (*Amphiprion amanuensis*), a rare and striking marine species, is a testament to the biodiversity flourishing in the seas of the Sultanate of Oman. Endemic to Oman’s shores along the Arabian Sea, this vibrant fish boasts a maroon body adorned with wide white stripes, captivating marine photographers and diving enthusiasts alike. Its natural habitat is confined to the area between Masirah Island in the north and the Wilayat of Mirbat in the south, making it a symbol of Oman’s exclusive marine wealth.

Eng Salem bin Ahmed al Ghassani, Director of the Fisheries Research Centre in Dhofar Governorate, highlighted the ecological significance of the Omani anemone fish. “This species thrives in coral reef environments, forming a remarkable symbiotic relationship with sea anemones. These unique interactions underscore Oman’s pivotal role as a hub for marine biodiversity in the Arabian Peninsula,” he said.

The symbiotic bond between the anemone fish and sea anemones is one of nature’s marvels. The anemone offers protection through its venomous



Protecting anemone fish is vital for ensuring the health and sustainability of Oman’s marine ecosystems

tentacles, to which the fish has developed immunity, while the fish ensures the anemone’s health by cleaning it and warding off predators. This mutualistic relationship illustrates the intricate balance of marine ecosystems.

Recognising the rarity and ecological importance of the Omani anemone fish, the Fisheries Research Centre in Dhofar has

undertaken a survey programme to assess its natural stock and habitat conditions. This initiative aims to map the fish’s geographical distribution, determine its numbers and evaluate the surrounding coral reef environments. Using methods like marine field surveys and statistical analyses, the programme also seeks to register this species with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to protect its intellectual property rights.

Eng Al Ghassani emphasised, “The Omani anemone fish is more than just an endemic species - it is a symbol of Oman’s rich marine diversity. Protecting this species is vital for ensuring the health and sustainability of Oman’s marine ecosystems.”

The programme reinforces Oman’s commitment to marine conservation and underscores the country’s leadership in preserving biodiversity on regional and international stages. The efforts to protect the Omani anemone fish reaffirm Oman’s dedication to sustainable environmental stewardship, ensuring its seas flourish for generations to come. — ONA

Banks urge customers
to exchange currencies

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

BANKS IN Oman have urged their customers to get their currencies which are about to be banned by December 31, 2024 in exchange of the valid currencies as the earlier ones would stop to be legal tender.

The banks have also urged the customers in accordance with regulatory instructions to withdraw certain banknotes to exchange them before or by December 31 by visiting their nearest branch or deposit them at any CDM location to ensure a smooth process.

Customers have been left with a warning that after this date, these banknotes would no longer be accepted.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) had announced that certain denominations

ide the banknotes shown below:

1 Rial commemorative banknote 2005

The upgraded banknotes 2011-2012

50 Rials upgraded banknote 2019

under One Rial, please visit the branch only.

of currencies would be withdrawn from circulation and will not be useable as a legal tender after December 31, after which these denominations will have no legal

tender value. The denominations that the bank announced the end of their use include the banknotes of the fifth issue 1995, the banknotes of the upgraded issue 2000, the banknote of the denomination of one riyal commemorative banknote 2005, the banknote of the denomination of RO 20 commemorative banknote 2010, the banknotes of the upgraded issue 2011 and 2012, the banknote of the denomination of one riyal commemorative banknote and the upgraded RO 50 banknote 2019.

The CBO has directed all banks operating in Oman to accept the aforementioned banknotes and replace them with banknotes of the sixth issue during the aforementioned period. The CBO also directed all institutions and retailers to accept these banknotes from the public and then deposit them in the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman.



DHOFAR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES 764 STUDENTS

SALALAH: Dhofar University celebrated the graduation of 764 students from the Colleges of Arts, Applied Sciences and Law. The ceremony, held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, marked the 20th graduating batch. Dr Amer bin Ali al Rawas, University President, highlighted Dhofar University’s commitment to academic excellence and its alignment with Oman Vision 2040. He announced the launch of a Doctor of Medicine (MD) programme in the 2025–2026 academic year. The event included speeches, honours for top-performing students and certificate distribution, reflecting the university’s dedication to nurturing leaders for Oman’s sustainable future. — ONA

SAF, MOD CELEBRATE
RETIREEES’ DAY

MUSCAT: The Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) marked ‘Retirees’ Day’, celebrated annually on December 7, in a tribute to the invaluable contributions of military personnel who dedicated their lives to serving Oman. The occasion reflects the nation’s deep appreciation for their pioneering roles in safeguarding the country’s achievements and fostering its progress.

Retirees continue to play a vital role in Oman’s development by engaging in cultural, social, economic and administrative fields, drawing on the wealth of knowledge and practical experience accumulated during their service. Their contributions act as a cornerstone for the nation’s advancement, reflecting their enduring commitment to the Sultanate of Oman.

The Ministry of Defence and SAF remain steadfast in supporting retirees through a range of initiatives, including financial assistance, housing programmes, healthcare services via the Medical City hospitals and recreational opportunities such as Haj and Umrah trips.

Brigadier General (Engineer) Ali bin Sulaiman al Thuhli, Head of Military Social Services at the SAF Chief of Staff, emphasised the significance of Retirees’ Day, saying, “Celebrating December 7 each year honours the Sultan’s Armed Forces retirees and recognises their remarkable contributions during military service. Their sacrifices and unwavering dedication to safeguarding the nation’s achievements will forever inspire future generations.” — ONA

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

HASIS Swimming Pools Repair and Maintenance

Hay Al-Shrooq International School (HASIS) invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the “**Refurbishment, Maintenance and Completion of Swimming Pools and Deck Area**” at the school located in the Wilayat of Sur, South Al-Sharqiyah Governorate.

A complete set of tender documents may be purchased by the eligible bidder by paying non-refundable fee of 10 Omani Riyals to the bank account details shown below and sending the deposit receipt to the below mentioned email address and then the tender documents will be provided to your email.

Email: aalfarsi@hasis.om | santosh.ps@hasis.om

Depositing Tender fee for participation and registration will close on **Thursday, December 12, 2024**.

Site visit can be arranged between **15th and 19th December 2024**.

Account Name	HAI AL SHROOQ INTERNATIONAL LLC
Account No.	0050-2004-2811
Bank Name	Sohar International
Branch	Al Qurum
Swift Code	BSHROMRXXX

Hay Al-Shrooq International School is not obligated to provide a reason for excluding any bidder and the amount for entering the tender cannot be refunded.

MUSCAT GOVERNORATE MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (41/2024)

Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with General Secretariat of **Tender Board**, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
(PRE-24-330)	Supply of Computers for Muscat Municipality	22/12/2024	13/01/2025
(PRE-24-109) (Re-Call)	Design and Construction of Balance Internal Roads in Boshier & Muttrah	22/12/2024	13/01/2025
(PRE-24-264) (Re-Call)	Renewing IBM FILENET & CMS Licenses for Record and Document Management System	12/12/2024	19/12/2024

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
- Clarification and Support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
 - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Palestinians look out from a window at the site of an Israel strike on a house, in Nuseirat refugee camp. — Reuters

OVER 20 KILLED IN GAZA AS QATAR VOICES HOPE



SHAIKH MOHAMMED BIN ABDULRAHMAN AL THANI

Qatar's Foreign Minister

CAIRO: Israeli strikes in Gaza killed at least 20 Palestinians on Saturday, local health officials said, as Qatar voiced hope of fresh momentum in efforts to reach a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas. At least eight of the fatalities were civilians, according to residents and medics. It was unclear whether the rest of those killed were fighters.

Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani said Qatar was engaging with the incoming Trump administration on Gaza after sensing fresh momentum for ceasefire talks following the US election. Donald Trump's Middle East envoy has travelled to Qatar and Israel to kick-start the US president elect's diplomatic push for a ceasefire and captives release deal before his inauguration on Jan. 20, a source briefed on the talks said.

The war in Gaza has been raging for over 14 months, with much of the enclave laid to waste and more than 44,000 Palestinians killed, Gaza health authorities said. — Reuters

ROMANIA CARRIES OUT SEARCHES IN ELECTION PROBE

BUCHAREST: Romanian prosecutors searched several properties on Saturday as they probe illegal financing in a presidential candidate's election campaign, a day after the top court annulled the ballot following accusations of Russian meddling. The shock court ruling plunged the European Union and Nato members into institutional chaos, raising fears that public trust in the state could be eroded and that the pro-Western course of a staunch Ukraine ally could be jeopardised.

Prosecutors said on Saturday three searches had taken place in the central city of Brasov. They have not named the candidate whose campaign is being investigated, but the declassified documents focused on the campaign of Calin Georgescu - a far-right, pro-Russian critic of Nato - who surged to victory in the Nov. 24 first-round vote after polling in single digits in the run-up. "The searches target the possible involvement of an individual in the illegal financing of the electoral campaign of a candidate for the Presidency of Romania, through the use of sums of money... (that) could come from the commission of crimes, being subsequently introduced into a money laundering process," prosecutors said in a statement. — Reuters

POLLING FOR NATION

Ghana votes in tight presidential election



Ghanaians voted in elections with frontrunners Vice-President Mahamudu Bawumia of the NPP ruling party and opposition NDC party ex-president John Mahama facing off in a tight race for the country's top post. Voters are choosing a successor to President Nana Akufo-Addo, who steps down after his allowed two, four-year terms. Early morning turnout appeared fairly slow in parts of the capital Accra, but steady in other neighbourhoods. — AFP

SYRIA FIGHTERS SAY ENCIRCLING DAMASCUS AS GOVT DENIES FALLING BACK

BEIRUT: Gunmen on a lightning advance through Syria said on Saturday they have begun to encircle Damascus as government forces denied they had withdrawn from areas near the capital. "Our forces have begun the final phase of encircling the capital, Damascus," said fighters commander Hassan Abdel Ghani. The defence ministry flatly denied the army had fled positions near the city. "There is no truth to news claiming our armed forces, present in all areas

of the Damascus countryside, have withdrawn," it said.

Earlier, a war monitor said rebels were within 20 kilometres of Damascus as government forces fall back in the face of the offensive gathering even more momentum. The Syria Observatory for Human Rights said government forces had ceded more key ground, losing control of all of southern Daraa province and evacuating posts in Quneitra. The monitor said government forces were also

pulling out of towns as little as 10 kilometres from Damascus.

Meanwhile, the top diplomats from Iran, Türkiye and Russia met in Qatar on Saturday for talks on Syria. After the discussions in Doha with his Russian and Turkish counterparts, Sergei Lavrov and Hakan Fidan, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the parties agreed on the initiation of "political dialogue between the Syrian government and the opposition groups". — AFP

S Korea's Yoon survives martial law impeachment

SOUTH

Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol survived an impeachment vote in the opposition-led parliament on Saturday that was prompted by his short-lived attempt to impose martial law this week after members of his party boycotted the session. Only 195 votes were cast, below the 200 needed for the vote to count, and the motion was scrapped. "The entire nation is watching the decision being made here at the National Assembly today. The world is watching," said Speaker Woo Won-shik, adding that it was unfortunate that not enough lawmakers participated for the votes to be tallied. The main opposition Democratic Party vowed to try again, while Yoon's party said it would find a "more orderly, responsible" way to resolve the crisis.

The opposition needed at least eight votes from Yoon's conservative People Power Party to reach the two-thirds majority needed to impeach. As PPP lawmakers departed after casting votes on a separate motion, some people shouted and cursed them. South Korea's opposition Democratic Party will propose a new impeachment bill against President Yoon Suk Yeol on December 11, which will be put on vote on December 14, local Yonhap News reported on Saturday. Only three from Yoon's party voted.

The president apologised to the nation on Saturday morning but resisted calls to resign ahead of the vote. His party said it could not allow a repeat of the 2016 impeachment of then-President



Lawmakers appear in the plenary session for the impeachment vote at the National Assembly in Seoul. — Reuters



South Korea's opposition Democratic Party will propose a new impeachment bill against President Yoon Suk Yeol on December 11, which will be put on vote on December 14, local Yonhap News reported on Saturday

Park Geun-hye, who left office after months of candle-lit protests over an influence-peddling scandal. Her downfall triggered the implosion of the party and a victory by liberals in presidential and general elections. "We cannot repeat the tragedy of paralysis of state affairs and suspension of constitutional government through the impeachment of the president," PPP spokesperson Shin Dong-uk said after the failed vote, noting that Yoon had apologised and vowed to leave his future up to the party.

Saturday's televised speech was the embattled Yoon's first public appearance since he rescinded the martial law order. "I leave it up to my party to take steps to stabilise the political situation in the future, including the issue of my term in office," he said in the address to the nation, promising there would

be no second attempt to impose martial law. Standing in front of the South Korean flag, Yoon bowed after finishing his brief remarks, staring solemnly into the camera for a moment.

Han Dong-hoon, leader of Yoon's party, said after the address that the president was no longer in a position to carry out his public duties and his resignation was now unavoidable. On Friday Han said Yoon was a danger to the country and needed to be removed from power, increasing the pressure on Yoon to quit.

In the end, however, most PPP members closed ranks and boycotted the vote. If Yoon leaves office before his single five-year term ends in May 2027, the constitution requires a presidential election within 60 days upon his departure. — Reuters



BLOCK COLLAPSES AFTER EXPLOSION

THE HAGUE: Rescue workers with sniffer dogs were scrabbling through the wreckage of a three-storey apartment block in The Hague that collapsed after an explosion and inferno in the early hours of Saturday. At least one person has died, the city's mayor said on Saturday. "It has just been announced that one dead person has been recovered" from the debris, Mayor Jan van Zanen told reporters.

The cause of the blast was not immediately clear but police appealed for information about a car seen speeding away from the scene shortly after the explosion. At least five homes were destroyed in the incident, authorities said. — AFP

CONSECUTIVE RALLY

Georgia police say arrested 48 protesters



Georgian police said they arrested dozens of people during a crackdown on pro-EU protesters who rallied for a ninth consecutive day against the government's decision to shelve talks on joining the bloc. Security forces fired tear gas to disperse the thousands of people who had gathered outside parliament. "Law enforcement detained 48 individuals for disobedience to police orders and petty hooliganism," the interior ministry said. — AFP

ELECTORAL FIGURE

AfD nominates chancellor candidate



The Alternative for Germany (AfD) nominated on Saturday co-leader Alice Weidel as its first chancellor candidate in the party's 11-year history, setting out its bid for power ahead of a snap election due in February. "We are the second-strongest force in the nationwide polls and from this we derive our claim to govern because we want to do better, we want to bring Germany forward again, we want to be at the top," Weidel said. — Reuters

The New York Times

UK’s Starmer tries to fight populism over the intended goals



STEPHEN CASTLE

The writer is the London correspondent of The New York Times



MARK LANDLER

The writer is the London bureau chief of The New York Times

BRITISH Prime Minister Keir Starmer, five months after his Labour Party won a thumping election victory, finds himself a lonely figure: Like-minded centrist leaders in France and Germany are in retreat, while in the United States, Donald Trump and his populist message have vanquished the Democratic Party. On Thursday, Starmer served notice that he would stick to the plan for rebuilding Britain that won him the election, though he did put more emphasis on kitchen-table concerns, promising to boost voters’ disposable income, construct 1.5 million new houses, and put more police on the streets.

Starmer’s six goals — delivered in a speech that was yet another effort to reset his troubled government — amounted to a stubborn bet: That he can resist the populist wave rolling across Western democracies by delivering on the issues voters care about. “Everyone can see there’s a growing impatience with traditional politics,” Starmer said. But he added, “Populism isn’t the answer to Britain’s challenges. Easy answers won’t make our country strong.” For Starmer, a methodical lawyer-turned-politician, the speech was a clear admission that his government has continued to struggle — a string of missteps and minor scandals sapping its poll ratings and giving an opening to populist critics such as Nigel Farage, a close ally of Trump.

Starmer’s six “milestones” are an attempt to recapture the initiative by improving

the daily lives of Britons: in addition to the pledges on disposable income, housing and police, he vowed to cut patient waiting times at the National Health Service, improve childhood education and put Britain on a course to a clean-energy economy, albeit with slightly softened ambitions. Whether that will be enough to arrest the government’s plummeting popularity is an open question, especially with the public in such a querulous mood. Even Starmer seemed sceptical, noting, “the path of change is long, it is hard, and there are few thanks in the short term.”

He steered away from an earlier promise to make Britain the fastest-growing economy among the Group of 7 major industrialised nations — the kind of abstract goal, critics said, that does not speak to voters. More controversially, he omitted a pledge to cut down immigration — a rallying cry of the populist right — arguing that controlling borders was, implicitly, a core duty of any government. Analysts said Starmer was drawing a lesson from the defeat of Vice President Kamala Harris last month in the United States: delivering economic growth does not by itself satisfy disgruntled voters.

“Unless voters experience the benefit of that themselves when they’re sitting around the kitchen table and adding up what they’ve got left at the end of the month, then you’re not going to get the political benefit,” said Claire Ainsley, a former policy director for Starmer who now

Starmer served notice that he would stick to the plan for rebuilding Britain that won him the election, though he did put more emphasis on kitchen-table concerns, promising to boost voters’ disposable income, construct 1.5 million new houses, and put more police on the streets

works in Britain for the Progressive Policy Institute, a Washington-based research institute.

Although the Labour government secured a comfortable parliamentary majority and does not have to face voters until 2029, aides to Starmer are already keenly focused on how Labour can avoid the fate that befell the Democrats: becoming a one-term administration. Critics cite the government’s change in inheritance taxes for agricultural property as an example of poor communication. The rule change brought angry farmers into the streets of London. But some said the government should have stressed that the reform was aimed at wealthy people who, research shows, have bought farmland in recent years to shelter their assets from inheritance tax. Starmer’s predicament is a stark turn from just four months ago, when McSweeney, Ashworth and other Labour aides travelled to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago to speak to the Harris campaign about the blueprint they had used in their landslide victory the previous month.

Now, Starmer is isolated on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to Trump’s victory, there is French President Emmanuel Macron, who is struggling with the ouster of his centre-right prime minister, Michel Barnier. In Germany, the Social Democratic-led government appears destined to lose to the centre-right Christian Democrats next February.

IN MEXICO, HEAT WAVES ARE KILLING YOUNGER ADULTS



TEDDY ROSENBLUTH

The author is a health reporter at The New York Times

As climate change pushes global temperatures higher, attention has focused predominantly on the threat that heat poses to older adults, whose physiology makes them more susceptible to health complications. But a study published on Friday in the journal Science Advances found that certain types of young people — including seemingly

hardy working-age adults — may also be particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures. The researchers analysed deaths in Mexico from 1998 to 2019 and discovered that people younger than 35 accounted for three-fourths of heat-related fatalities. “These age groups are also quite vulnerable to heat in ways that we don’t expect even at temperatures that we don’t think of as particularly warm,” said Andrew Wilson, a first author of the paper and an environmental social scientist at Stanford University.

Measuring heat-related deaths is complicated, since death certificates rarely name heat as a cause. A proximate cause of death, such as cardiovascular failure, is often listed instead. To get around this, Wilson and his colleagues used a common statistical approach to estimate how daily mortality rates across Mexico change in response to fluctuations in the “wet bulb” temperature, a measurement that uses humidity and air temperature to capture how well humans can cool their bodies through sweating.

Unexpectedly, the team also found that a large number of children younger than 4 and adults ages 18 to 34 were dying from the heat — but at more moderate conditions than those affecting older adults. Most of the deaths occurred at wet-bulb temperatures around 75 degrees Fahrenheit, roughly equivalent to 88 degrees Fahrenheit with 50% humidity.

That’s concerning, Wilson said, because although climate change is likely to increase the number of extreme heat waves, the moderately hot temperatures that seem to be causing young people to die will be far more common. People ages 50 to 70 experienced the least amount of heat-related mortality, the research found.

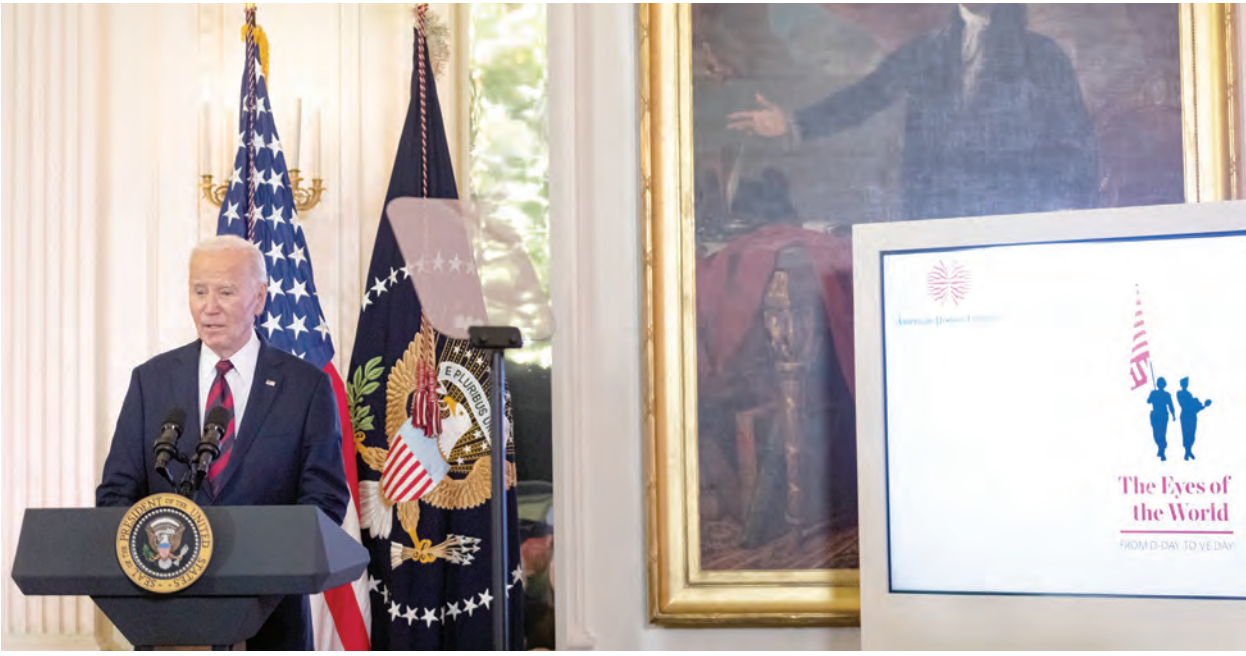
The paper pointed to several theories that might explain why younger age groups are at risk. Children younger than 4 are worse at thermoregulation and don’t have the agency to remove clothing or change environments when they’re under heat stress. Adults between ages 18 and 34 are more likely to engage in vigorous activity in the heat.

Biden considers blanket pardons before Trump

PRESIDENT Joe Biden’s staff is debating whether he should issue blanket pardons for a swath of President-elect Donald Trump’s perceived enemies to protect them from the “retribution” he has threatened after he takes office, according to people familiar with the discussion. The idea would be to pre-emptively extend executive clemency to a list of current and former government officials for any possible crimes over a period of years, effectively short-circuiting the next president’s promised campaign of reprisals.

White House officials do not believe the potential recipients have actually committed crimes, but they have grown increasingly worried that Trump’s selections for top Justice Department positions indicate that he will follow through on his repeated vows to seek revenge. Even an investigation that results in no charges could drag on for months or years, costing those people hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and crippling their career prospects. The discussion of blanket pardons, reported earlier by Politico, remains primarily at a staff level, although Biden has talked about it with senior members of the team, according to the people familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe internal deliberations. It comes after Biden pardoned his son Hunter to spare him from prison on gun and tax charges.

Biden in effect previewed the approach with his son’s pardon, wiping away not just the counts he was actually convicted of but any crimes he “may have committed or taken part in” since 2014. That presumably will forestall Trump’s Justice Department from going after Hunter Biden on any allegations that did not merit charges by the prosecutor who has investigated him since Trump’s first term. Such a sweeping act of clemency covering even theoretical crimes



President Joe Biden delivers remarks in honor of American veterans, at the White House in Washington.



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over the course of a decade went beyond the scope of any since at least the Watergate era, when President Gerald Ford pardoned his disgraced predecessor, Richard Nixon, for any crimes even though he had not been charged. Never before has a president issued mass pardons of government officials for fear that a successor would seek to prosecute them out of partisan vindictiveness.

But the choices of Pam Bondi, a former Florida attorney general and Trump surrogate, to run the Justice Department and Kash Patel, a former Trump aide and far-right provocateur, to be director of the FBI have put the issue front and centre. Patel has vowed to “come after” Trump’s critics and even published a list of about 60 people he considered “members of the executive branch deep state” as the appendix to a 2023 book. Democrats on Capitol Hill have been pressing Biden to do what he can to protect targets of Trump. Rep. James E. Clyburn of South Carolina, one of the president’s closest allies, urged the White House to consider pre-emptive pardons

shortly after Trump’s election last month and likewise recommended that the president pardon his son.

But as White House officials weigh the matter, they are concerned that such a move would fuel the impression spread in conservative media that the recipients had actually done something wrong.

At least some of those who would be obvious candidates for such pardons have said privately that they would not want one because of such an implication. Others who are concerned about retribution have lobbied for their own pardons.

Trump, who has argued that the many criminal and civil cases against him are part of a sweeping “witch hunt” that has “weaponised” the justice system, has done little to disguise his desire to use the law enforcement system to get back at his foes.

He has threatened to prosecute Democrats, election workers, law enforcement officials, intelligence officials, reporters, former members of his own staff and Republicans who do not support him.

OPINION

Can helping others heal your soul?



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THE MOVIE ‘The Intimate Storm’ tells the real-life story of Pam, a 53-year-old rescue volunteer in the mountains. While on a mission, she accidentally falls into a small ditch but manages to climb out and continues walking in the snow. Shortly after, she sees a young man nearly freezing to death and rescues him after spending the night in freezing weather conditions. I watched this movie while covered in a blanket, with a mug of hot chocolate in my hand. It was a cold night in Muscat, although nowhere near as cold as depicted in the movie.

As I watched, I had one question in mind: What motivates her to leave the comfort of her house to walk in freezing mountains, risking her life? The movie explains that Pam lost her young children in a gas leak accident. Volunteering as a mountain rescuer becomes her way of honouring her children's memory while finding a sense of purpose amidst

unbearable sorrow.

At the end of the movie, Pam meets the man she rescued, who explains that his girlfriend had died in the same mountains. He had returned there in a desperate attempt to hold onto her memory, fearing he was forgetting what she looked like.

As I watched this movie, I was reminded of the statement, “Loss connects us all, but how we respond to it defines us.”

Human beings experience various types of traumas and respond to them differently. While some endure chronic depression and misery, others exhibit resilience and process their trauma better. People who survive a particular trauma can use their experience to help others, often doing something extraordinary and contributing to the well-being of others.

Survivors can understand emotions that others may not fully appreciate. They are more likely to relate to others and show

Some individuals endure chronic depression and prolonged misery, while others exhibit greater resilience, allowing them to process and cope with trauma more effectively

compassion, particularly when dealing with fellow survivors. Trauma survivors often hope that the person or situation causing the trauma will not prevail. Turning pain into something positive helps them feel that the trauma and its causes have not won.

This is why recovered alcoholics sometimes train to become addiction counsellors, helping others deal with their struggles. Trauma survivors can explore career paths such as nursing, social work, law, non-profit entrepreneurship, writing, first response, and counselling, all of which help people in traumatic situations.

Even if one does not pursue helping others as a profession, they can still participate by donating time, fundraising, raising awareness, or simply reaching out to others.

Let us remember that the human spirit can endure hardship and emerge stronger, finding purpose even in the face of unbearable sorrow.

PANDEMIC TREATY TALKS WRAP UP WITHOUT A BREAKTHROUGH

ROBIN MILLARD

A bonus round of talks aimed at finalising a landmark global agreement on handling future pandemics was set to close on Friday without a breakthrough.

The week of talks at the World Health Organization’s headquarters in Geneva began on Monday — almost exactly three years since countries decided, in the midst of the Covid crisis, to draft a new accord on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

The closed-door session was added to the 12th round of negotiations held last month in the hope of concluding a deal by the end of the year.

However, amid slow incremental progress, the discussions were expected to extend into 2025, leaving several of the toughest sections unresolved.

Co-chair Anne-Claire Amprou urged countries to approve “as much as we can” by the end of Friday. She told an open session with non-governmental organisations that the objective was “to finalise a negotiation and get this pandemic agreement, even if it’s not perfect”.

The WHO’s 194 member states negotiating the treaty have agreed on most of its contents but remain divided on the practicalities.

A significant fault-line lies between Western nations with major pharmaceutical industries and poorer countries wary of being sidelined during future pandemics.

While only a few issues remain unresolved, they include the core of the agreement: the obligation to rapidly share emerging pathogens and the benefits derived from them, such as vaccines.

Other unresolved topics include ensuring effective pandemic threat surveillance; the interconnection between human, animal and environmental health; and the transfer of technology and knowledge for the widespread production of pandemic-fighting products.

The Medicines, Law and Policy NGO noted that some “very difficult issues... remain largely absent or are at best weak” in the agreed sections of the text.

Oxfam, representing 26 NGOs, stressed that countries “still have the opportunity to be on the right side of history”, advocating for an instrument providing “real protection for everyone”.

The Panel for a Global Public Health Convention NGO encouraged countries to maintain momentum into the New Year, highlighting the need for “give and take”.

The negotiation process aims to conclude in time for the next World Health Assembly — the WHO’s decision-making body — in May.

One potential approach is to establish a skeletal agreement that could be developed further in the future.

“Not all challenges will be resolved before May, so we ask you to focus on establishing a solid framework with equity as its cornerstone,” said the Four Paws animal welfare NGO.

Action for Animal Health reminded countries of the constant threat of pandemic outbreaks.

“Outbreaks of avian influenza, H5N1 in cattle and its spillover to humans, and the new strain of mpox in central Africa send us a very clear message — and one that we ignore at our peril,” it said. — AFP

Notre Dame reopens five years after shocking blaze

NOTRE DAME formally reopened five years after the Paris cathedral was devastated by fire, with former US president Donald Trump among world leaders there to celebrate its remarkably rapid restoration.

Held up as an example of French creativity and resilience by President Emmanuel Macron, Notre Dame’s renaissance so soon after a 2019 blaze that destroyed its roof and spire comes at a difficult time for the country.

The sense of national accomplishment in restoring a beloved symbol of Paris has been undercut by political turmoil that has left France without a proper government and in a budget crisis.

Macron is hoping that the first full service inside Notre Dame and the sight of around 40 world leaders in Paris might provide a fleeting sense of pride and unity — as the Paris Olympics did in July and August.

The re-opening “is the proof that we know how to do grand things, we know how to do the impossible and the whole world has admired us for it on two occasions this year,” Macron said during a televised address on Thursday, referring to the widely praised Olympics.

During a visit with TV cameras last week, however, he somewhat undermined the suspense behind the reopening, revealing the cathedral’s freshly scrubbed limestone walls, new furniture and vaulted wooden roof cut from ancient oak trees selected from the finest forests of France.

The reconstruction effort has cost around \$750 million, financed from donations, with the re-opening achieved within five years despite predictions it could take decades.

Workers had to overcome problems with lead pollution, the Covid epidemic and the general overseeing the project falling to his death while hiking in the Pyrenees last year.

While the reborn 12th-century architectural masterpiece will be the main focus of public attention on Saturday, TV cameras are also likely to linger on Trump, who will be making his first overseas trip since winning re-election to the White House last month.

He accepted an invitation from Macron to attend earlier this week, saying the French leader had done “a wonderful job ensuring that Notre Dame has been restored to its full



Firefighters stand at the Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral ahead of its official reopening ceremony after more than five years of reconstruction work following the April 2019 fire in Paris. — Reuters



ADAM
PLOWRIGHT

The writer is an AFP journalist and author based in Paris

level of glory, and even more so.”

US President Joe Biden will be represented by his wife Jill, while Britain’s Prince William and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky will also be present.

Zelensky is expected to seek his first face-to-face meeting with Trump, who has vowed to force a peace agreement to end the war in Ukraine, possibly by withholding US weapon supplies.

One surprising absentee will be Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church, who has decided against breaking off from a weekend trip to the French island of Corsica.

A message from Francis addressed to the French people will be read out to the congregation of VIPs, church figures and selected members of the public when the service begins.

Parisians watched in horror in 2019 as flames ravaged Notre Dame, a landmark famed as the setting for Victor Hugo’s novel The Hunchback of Notre Dame and one of the world’s most visited monuments.

The apocalyptic images were even seen by some as a sign of the demise of Western civilisation, with the 850-year-old wonder saved from complete collapse only by the heroic intervention of firefighters.

The exact cause of the blaze

has never been identified despite a forensic investigation by prosecutors, who believe an accident such as an electrical fault was the most likely reason.

“We felt a sense of universal sadness when Notre Dame burned,” said fashion designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, who has dreamed up colourful new priestly vestments that will be worn by senior clergy on Saturday.

“It was a moment of terrible emotions, like a premonition of our world in difficulty,” he said.

The service will feature prayer, organ music and hymns from the cathedral’s choir, followed by a televised concert with performances by Chinese piano virtuoso Lang Lang, South African opera singer Pretty Yende and possibly US singer and fashion designer Pharrell Williams.

Harsh weather forced officials to move Macron’s planned speech indoors and pre-record the concert on Friday night, with forecasts for winds of up to 80 kilometres per hour as Storm Darragh put parts of France on red alert. On Sunday, the first mass with 170 bishops and more than 100 Paris priests will take place at 10:30am, followed by a second service in the evening at 6:30 pm, which will be open to the public.

Covid’s backlash... The real hurt starts now



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THE UNTOWARD consequences of the global pandemic continue to haunt us. As adults, we have generally responded with the resilience that age and maturity offer us, and have managed to negotiate our way through life and work having weathered the initial storm, but there is more hurt, on the way.

But what about the younger generations? Socially, they have had the ‘sobering’ experience of isolation, just when they are in the midst of their academically formative years. Whether 5 or 15 at the time, studies by the London School of Economics, the University of Glasgow and many others in the academic sector, have recently opened debate as to the social and academic trauma facing these young people, in schools, high schools, secondary and even higher education.

Their experience, our failure to recognise and respond to the new school and pupil dynamic that has resulted from the pandemic, and to help these young people through this destabilising experience. A BBC Panorama investigation found, in fact, that young people now aged between 16 and 25, were likely to lose their jobs, or give up on their studies than earlier generations, leaving no doubt that the uncertainty and upheaval of the pandemic have severely affected their mental health.

And why wouldn’t it? After all, Covid

wasn’t just a flu... it was a killer, a malignant, invisible reaper, and few families or friendship circles remained unaffected by loss. Yet what did we do? All we could of course. We didn’t want to lose our kids, so we locked them up, and force-fed them a diet of ‘fast-food education,’ on TEAMS or ZOOM. I mean... what else could we do?

What else could schools, or teachers do? And while they did their best in an ‘alien’ environment, and breathed a massive sigh of relief when it was all over, they, and we, neglected the learner’s wellbeing. We didn’t focus, at all, on their potential anxieties or insecurities, or the sensory overload, the ‘car crash,’ of being ‘back to normal.’ It was just like someone being released from a jail, and with no support just being kicked back into society, a society that had silently and with incredible subtlety, ‘moved on.’

So, once again... surrounded by people, they had to adjust, find old friends, make new friends, establish new relationships. Actually, for many, find, make, and mend relationships, deal with loss, deal with change, deal with disappointment as few coped with, or managed their studies effectively. It was a disaster, and why? Because we were doing the same for ourselves, and we didn’t think, did we? After all, kids are resilient, they’ll bounce back, as kids do... we treated their total experience

After all, Covid wasn’t just a flu... it was a killer, a malignant, invisible reaper, and few families or friendship circles remained unaffected by loss

of the pandemic like a skinned elbow or a grazed knee... and put a sticking-plaster or a bandage on it. Our care was so facile. It was either ‘kiss-it-better,’ or, “It’ll be alright.”

The upshot, declare Sarah Mervosh and Claire Millar in the New York Times, are kids that “Can barely speak, sit still, or hold a pencil,” and certainly teachers are being confronted only now with Year 10 students who cannot read the alphabet, use punctuation, read, write, add, subtract, multiply or divide... and as parents, we should have seen it coming, but we were nearly all busy fighting our own fires, weren’t we?

So, we would deal with our ‘stuff’ first, and then ‘look after’ the kids. The problem is that we rarely saw their educational experience, their learning, as something we needed to be involved in... did we? And while I am certainly being critical, I still can’t find it in me to be terribly judgemental of the parents and teachers who didn’t see this storm coming. None of us were prepared for the pandemic, because we all thought we were ahead of the curve, and by the time we found out we were out of our depth... we were drowning!

Survival was for the fittest, that’s for sure, and being defeated for a time was forgivable, but giving up never is... so let’s not give up just as the real hurt starts.

MUSCAT... AN ANCIENT CITY TO VISIT



DR MUSALLAM AL MA'ANI

The writer is Dean of Al Zahra College for Women, Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT is one of the few ancient cities in the Sultanate of Oman. Visitors coming to the Sultanate of Oman soon realise that Muscat Governorate with all its peculiarities convey an impression of aged goodness and benevolence.

As it is the capital of Oman, Muscat Governorate combines very beautiful cities and

towns that combine careful modern planning and ancient items of value. The moment visitors leave Muscat International Airport, they will see Muscat Governorate’s modern roads and bustling streets, which are well designed for smooth flow of traffic. Although some roads are surrounded by commercial buildings, it is uncommon to see anything that interferes with the utter calm and unruffled repose of the place or causes loud noise and chaos.

The art of designing and building residential and commercial structures in Muscat Governorate reflects a modern architectural touch. Oman has long adhered to a fixed building practice which does not permit the construction of very tall buildings such as skyscrapers. Households in Muscat Governorate as well as the rest of Oman do not exceed two stories, combining the privacy of a home enjoying freedom from unauthorised intrusion with freedom from disturbance or turmoil of the surroundings and with residents affording and enjoying contentment and security.

As you drive through Sultan Qaboos Road, visitors come across Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Al Ghubra. The mosque is an Islamic architectural masterpiece, a supreme artistic achievement that reflects Oman’s long Islamic tradition. The mosque can be distinguished by its unique minarets and golden dome and serves as a hub for Islamic tolerance and Oman’s beacon for indulgence for beliefs and practices that calls for coexistence and tolerance with other Islamic schools of thought and religions differing from or conflicting with their own inclinations.

There are also beaches in Al Seeb, Qurum and Muttrah, representing seashore areas. Oman restricts any acts that would result in the pollution of beaches, ensuring that all beaches remain clean and tidy as well as free from dirt, filthy or soiling substances at all times. The beaches are characterised by tranquillity and cleanliness. Visitors would definitely take pleasure and satisfaction in walking without any interruption of their peace, quiet, or calm. Beaches also provide a safe place for families to get together and barbecue. A visit to Muscat Governorate would not be complete without visiting the ancient city of Muttrah. The city has one of the oldest souqs (markets) in Oman.

Located on the cornice beach, which is a perfect place and ideal spot for relaxation, equilibrium and walking.

Why Bidenomics did not deliver at the polls

AS US president, Joe Biden charted a new economic path for the Democrats by siding unabashedly with the working class and introducing a wide range of industrial policies to reinvigorate manufacturing, reshore supply chains, and promote the green transition. Most of these new policies made economic sense, and like many other progressives, I thought they made political sense as well. What, then, accounts for Vice President Kamala Harris’s disappointing electoral performance, especially with working-class voters?

Donald Trump’s appeal, like that of right-wing ethnonationalists elsewhere, owes much to rising levels of economic insecurity, which many regard as the result of deregulation, increased corporate power, globalisation, deindustrialisation, and automation. As the traditional champions of the underdog, centre-left parties could have benefited from these developments. But they had come to speak more for educated, professional elites, and they were slow to change course. Faced with the growing perception that they had abandoned their working-class roots, Biden’s move towards economic populism seemed like the right strategy.

One interpretation of Trump’s re-election is that economic populism was a mistake, implying that the Democratic Party should have moved more forcefully to the centre instead. But Harris’s apparently fruitless efforts to woo middle-of-the-road Republican voters was not much of a success, either.

There are at least three other possibilities. The first is that Biden’s strategy did work, but not enough to win the election. Inflation and the increased cost of living have produced a generalised backlash against governments everywhere. A widely circulated chart in the Financial Times shows that incumbents have fallen short of their previous share of the vote in every election in 2024. To Bidenomics’ credit, Democrats did much better by comparison.

The second possibility is that



Biden’s move towards economic populism seemed like the right strategy.



DANI RODRIK

The writer is Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School

By focusing so much on manufacturing, old-style union power and worker organisations, and geopolitical competition with China, the Biden administration paid too little attention to the changing structure of the economy

it takes time for new policies to show effects and result in new political coalitions. Bidenomics is still new, and it faced the daunting challenge of dislodging more than three decades of voter experience with Democratic centrism. Perhaps it was too much to expect Biden’s pro-worker rhetoric and strong manufacturing construction numbers to overcome the cleavages that have emerged (and deepened) since President Bill Clinton’s administration. It takes more than a few years of well-designed policy to engineer a political realignment.

The third, and least discussed, possibility is that Bidenomics was economic populism of the wrong kind. By focusing on manufacturing, old-style union power and worker organisations, and geopolitical competition with China, it paid too little attention to the changing structure of the economy and the nature of the new working class. In an economy where only 8 per cent of workers are employed in manufacturing, a policy that promises to restore the middle class by bringing manufacturing back home is not only unrealistic; it also rings hollows, because it does not align with workers’ aspirations and everyday experiences.

The typical US worker today is no longer rolling steel or assembling

cars. Rather, he or she is a long-term care provider, a food preparer, or someone running an independent small business (perhaps through gig work). Addressing the problems of low pay and precarious working conditions in such services requires a different strategy than manufacturing incentives or import tariffs. Likewise, class solidarity needs to be built differently than through appeals to unions or bargaining power. Biden had the right idea, according to this view, but failed to hit the right targets.

Our new economic structure requires a twenty-first-century version of “industrial policy” that focuses on creating good jobs in services. Such a strategy entails organisational and technological innovations to upgrade work in low-pay activities and improve the provision of inputs such as digital tools, customised training, and credit. One can find local and national examples of such initiatives, but they remain small-scale and largely incidental to federal programs. New technologies that help workers, rather than displace them, are critical to this effort. Green industrial policies show that innovation can indeed be redirected from carbon-intensive activities to more sustainable ones.

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



AHMED TRIUMPHS AT RED BULL CAR PARK DRIFT 2024

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 7

Oman's drifter Ahmed al Amri emerged as champions of the Red Bull Car Park Drift 2024 World Final after delivering an impressive show on Friday night at the Muscat Drift Arena in Oman Automobile Association (OAA).

Oman's drifters dominated the podium as the young drifter Haitham al Hadidi ended as runner-up while Egypt's Hisham al Khatib claimed the third spot. Fourth place went to Lebanon's Mohammed Chihab following an electrifying showdown among the world's top drifters.

The prestigious one night event, featuring 28 drifters from 17 countries, unfolded on a track designed for intensity and skill, culminating in a proud moment for Omani motorsport. After an electrifying showdown, the chief guest His Highness Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said delivered the awards to the top performers in presence of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth officials, dignitaries and World Record holder Abdo Feghali. This year's competition marked a return to glory for Oman rekindling memories of the country's dominant performance in 2016 as the Omani drifters swept the podium including the drifter Haitham al Hadidi. "It is great to rekindle the memories after my triumph in 2016. Thanks to all for their support and special appreciation goes to the huge audience who attended and cheered all Omani's drifters in the final," Haitham al Hadidi said.

The Muscat Drift Arena roared with excitement as competitors showcased their skills on one of the fastest and most challenging circuits in Red Bull Car Park Drift history. The track, designed by drifting legend and Guinness World Record holder Abdo Feghali, tested drivers' precision, speed and ability to control their vehicles under extreme conditions.

Four Omani drifters, Ahmed al Amri, Haitham al Hadidi, Ali al Balushi and Tariq al Shaihani, took part in the final. Their performance reaffirmed the Sultanate of Oman's position as a hub for drifting excellence, thrilling fans and solidifying Oman's legacy in the sport. The event saw participants who hailed from across the Middle East and beyond, including Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Palestine, alongside top drifters from Europe and Africa.

Oman Golf Trophy 2024 kicks off on Monday

THE OMAN Golf Trophy, to be held at three of Oman's most prestigious golf courses, will see national priorities converge when international players, guests and local golfers compete, network, experience Oman's hospitality, and further understand the opportunities available across the nation.

More than 80 players will compete at the Oman Golf Trophy Grand Final, including the 48 winners from qualification events Italy, Austria, Germany, India, South Africa, Japan and France which saw a total of 5,500 players take part.

These winners will play alongside invited distinguished guests including diplomats, business leaders and media professionals from across Oman and abroad, and members of the Oman national golf team as the event aims to strengthen ties, build new bonds and facilitate long-term trade and business relations.

Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, said, "The Grand Final, held on three of Oman's most stunning and technically challenging golf courses, brings together the best of international and local talent with the aim of uniting players and guests in a celebration of excellence, sportsmanship and camaraderie as we look to leverage Oman's global appeal to support long-term national goals.

"Oman's central location within a seven-hour flight of half the world's population and its visa-free access for citizens of over 100 countries make it an ideal destination for global events, business, and tourism and sport has proven to be a powerful platform to bring all sectors together. We look forward to hosting this diverse group of players, guests and stakeholders, and are confident that this event and the many other activities organised within Oman will lead to impressive returns for the nation," added Al Muselhi.

Hosted at Ghala Golf Club, La Vie Club and Al Mouj Golf, the players and the guests will have the chance to take on the challenges of each course in groups, starting with a 'shotgun' start where the players begin at the same time on different holes, providing new opportunities each day to interact with each other.

The second staging of the event



reflects Oman's vision of leveraging sport as a powerful platform for building meaningful, lasting connections. Through this initiative, the Oman Golf Trophy aims to strengthen collaboration between competing nations in trade, diplomacy and cultural exchange.

During the Grand Final, the participants will also be able to take part in an extended range of engagement opportunities with stakeholders and VIP guests and have the chance to witness first-hand Oman's potential in several economic sectors.

The competition begins on December 9 with at 8 am at Ghala Golf Club. Action resumes for the finalists on December 11 at La Vie Golf Club while international guests take to the fairways and greens at Al Mouj Golf. The final day of play begins at 9 am at Al Mouj Golf for the championship where the prizes will be awarded.

Included as part of the event, the guests have been invited to attend a welcome dinner at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat

on December 8, a traditional Omani evening dinner at Rozna Restaurant on Tuesday, December 10, and a networking business gala dinner at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat on Wednesday, December 11. Each occasion provides additional opportunities to experience Omani hospitality and further promote investment and economic ties between nations, stakeholders and participants.

The Oman Golf Trophy is a unique initiative led by the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, alongside the Oman Golf Association, Strategic Partners for the event.

The Grand Final is also supported by Silver Partners Experience Oman, Ominvest, and the Saud Bahwan Group, Bronze Partners the Kempinski Hotel Muscat, Lovera, and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and official supporters the Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, Qatar Airways, SeaOman, Tanuf and Visit Oman.

5th Himam Trail Run ends, draws over 4,000 runners from 65 countries

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 7

The 5th edition of the Himam Trail Run concluded on Saturday, marking a milestone in the event's history with over 4,000 participants from 65 countries. The event showcased exceptional athleticism and the breathtaking landscapes of Oman, further cementing its reputation as the premier trail running event in the Middle East and North Africa.

The closing ceremony of the race was held in Birkat Al Mouz, in the Wilayat of Nizwa, under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy (MoE). The race, organised by the 'Himam' Mountain Running Team, was marked by an enthusiastic atmosphere and fierce competition among participants who showcased their skills in overcoming mountainous terrains. The winners were announced as follows:

In the 110 km category, Moroccan Rachid El Morabity secured first place in the men's division with a time of 15:54 hours. Second place



was taken by Saleh al Saidi, and Russian Naval Shaimukhametov finished in third. In the women's division, Spain's Maite Maiora claimed first place with a time of 17:40 hours, followed by Morocco's Aziza El Raji in second, and Russia's Tatyana Fedosyeva in third.

In the 55 km category, Ghaith al Saidi clinched first place in the men's division with a time of 5:11:28. Amjad al Jamoudi came in second, while Musa bin Salem bin Said al Subaithi finished third. In the

women's division, Australia's Iris Brown secured first place with a time of 7:22:37, Kenya's Prudence Maskei took second, and Portugal's Demi Lopes finished third.

In the 20 km category, Moroccan Aziz Ahneida won first place in the men's division with a time of 1:32:17. Second place went to Mohammed bin Shaikhan bin Said al Rajhi, while Kenya's Bernard Mongai took third. In the women's division, Ireland's Ciara Blackstock secured first place with a time of 1:32:17, followed by

Iran's Zahra Hashem Day in second and South Africa's Sandra Pretorius in third.

In the 10 km category, Omani Mohammed al Jashmi claimed first place in the men's division with a time of 45:15. Salem al Rashdi took second, and Morocco's Fadel Akram finished third. In the women's division, Britain's Arlene Cugill took first place with a time of 1:00:06, followed by Lebanon's Ghina Mohammed in second, and Italy's Alessandra Mostafa in third.

Ali al Thuhli, a member of the media team for the 'Himam' Mountain Running Race, confirmed that the fifth edition of the race concluded successfully, showcasing the immense efforts of the work teams and volunteers, as well as the fruitful collaboration between supporting entities.

al Thuhli added, "Our goal from the outset was to deliver an exceptional sporting experience that aligns with the aspirations of participants and meets the expectations of mountain running enthusiasts, while highlighting the beauty of Oman's natural

landscapes and promoting the concept of sports as a means of challenge and inspiration." He pointed out that this year's race was distinguished by its professional course design, comprehensive logistical support and ensuring the safety of runners throughout the event, all of which contributed to creating a unique and memorable experience. He further noted, "We witnessed great enthusiasm from the participants, who enriched the event with their competitive spirit and determination to complete the challenge."

al Thuhli concluded his remarks by extending his thanks and appreciation to everyone who contributed to the success of the event, whether through the work teams, partners, or runners, emphasising that the success of this edition marks the beginning of greater ambitions. He added, "We always aim to make the Himam Mountain Running Race a prominent milestone in the world of mountain sports and a continuous source of inspiration for athletes and enthusiasts of this sport."

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



SHOTOKAN KARATE CENTRE WINS MUSCAT KARATE-DO CHAMPIONSHIP



MUSCAT: Under the umbrella of the Oman Karate Committee, the Muscat Karate-Do Academy Interior Championship concluded on Friday. The event was under the auspices of Said bin Zahir al Abri, in the presence of Shaikh Salem bin Hamad al Mahrrouqi, Chairman of the Oman Karate Committee, and Shaikh Abdullah al Mahdhali. The event witnessed the participation of 130 male and female athletes from six clubs, academies, and karate centres. The general rankings were as follows: First place won by Shotokan Karate Centre, second place was claimed by Shito-Ryu Oman Club, third place was snatched by Al Buraimi Karate Academy, and fourth place by Muscat Karate-Do Academy, and fifth place was Samayil Eagles Karate Club.

BDO LIFT AUDITOR’S CUP 2024 TROPHY



MUSCAT: The BDO team made a sensational fourth consecutive appearance in the 22nd edition of the Auditor’s Cup 2024 to snatch the title for the second time. The event was held at the Al Bahri Al Hail Ground in Muscat, brought together seven talented teams, each vying for glory. Key highlights from the tournament showed Crowe impressed by reaching the Eliminator round and finished as 2nd Runners Up, which set up a thrilling finale between BDO and KPMG. BDO’s victory was a testament to their consistency and skill. Their performance, led by Vishnu and Abu Hashim, ensured they outclassed KPMG, despite a spirited effort from their opponents. The tournament lived up to its reputation with outstanding performances across the board and an atmosphere of sportsmanship.



Al Nahda, Sohar secure quarters spot in HM Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 7

AL NAHDA CLINCHED their place in the quarterfinals of the Sultan Football Cup after defeating Bahla in a dramatic penalty shootout. The intense Round of 16 match, held at Nizwa Sports Complex, ended 2- 2 after extra time, with Al Nahda prevailing 4-3 in the penalty shootout. The match started with fireworks as Al Nahda took an early lead through Mohammed bin Mubarak al Ghafri in the 2nd minute, giving his team a strong boost. Bahla responded swiftly, with Abdul Salam al Shukaili equalising in the 9th minute, setting the stage for an end-to-end encounter. Al Nahda regained the lead in the 38th minute when al Ghafri netted his second goal following a well coordinated attack, giving his side a 2-1 advantage at halftime. In the second half, Bahla displayed great determination to fight back, with al Shukaili scoring again in the 51st minute to bring the match level. Both teams continued to exchange attacks throughout the remainder of regular time, but neither could find the decisive goal. With the score still tied, the match headed into extra time, which remained goalless, pushing the teams to a penalty shootout. Al Nahda excelled in the crucial moments, converting four penalties compared to Bahla’s three, securing their spot in the next round.



SOHAR ADVANCES TO SULTAN CUP QUARTERFINALS
Sohar booked their place in the quarterfinals of the Sultan Football Cup with a convincing 3-1 win over Al Ittihad in a match held on Friday at Sohar Sports Complex.

The first half saw an evenly matched contest, with both teams attempting early strikes. Al Ittihad nearly opened the scoring in the 2nd minute, but Sohar’s goalkeeper, Fayez al Rushaidi, made a brilliant save to deny them. Al Ittihad had the upper hand in the first 10 minutes. However, Sohar suffered a setback in the 11th minute when their professional defender junior was sent off for a foul on Al Ittihad’s forward, Shabeeb Saleh. Al Ittihad capitalised on the numerical advantage, breaking the deadlock in the 34th minute through their foreign player John Kofi, who scored from a precise cross by Saleh. Sohar gradually regained composure and equalised just before halftime. In the 47th minute, the referee awarded a penalty to Sohar after their striker was fouled by Al Ittihad defender Mazin al Balushi, who was subsequently sent off, leaving both teams with 10 players. Mohsin Jawhar successfully converted the penalty, levelling the match at 1 1. The second half saw Sohar dominate offensively. Saud al Maqbali headed in a stunning goal in the 52nd minute following a pinpoint cross from Abdullah al Shibli, putting Sohar in the lead. Al Shibli continued his impressive performance by delivering another cross in the 65th minute, which deflected off an Al Ittihad defender into the net, sealing a 3 -1 victory for Sohar. With this win, Sohar confidently advances to the next stage, leaving Al Ittihad to reflect on their missed opportunities.

Oman all set for Gulf Cup T20 in Dubai

MUSCAT: The Oman national cricket team is gearing up to defend their Gulf Cup T20 title as the tournament returns from December 13 to 21 in Dubai, UAE. Six teams - Oman, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia - will battle it out at the ICC Academy Ground, with the final scheduled at the iconic Dubai International Stadium. Oman’s coach, Duleep Mendis, exuded confidence ahead of the team’s departure for the UAE on December 11. Reflecting on Oman’s recent achievements, he said, “The boys are full of confidence and have shown they can do well. We had a successful run in the Cricket World Cup League 2, which, although a 50-over tournament, has added to our

momentum. The recent win over the Netherlands in the T20 has further boosted the team’s morale.” With a new-look squad, Mendis expressed satisfaction with the team’s readiness. “I’m hopeful that the boys will perform well and bring the trophy back. They’ve performed admirably recently, and I believe they’re ready for the challenge,” he added. **LEADERSHIP** Under the leadership of experienced skipper Jatinder Singh, Oman will begin their campaign against hosts UAE on December 14. This will be followed by matches against Qatar (December 15), Kuwait (December 17), Bahrain (December 18), and Saudi Arabia (December



File photo of Oman with the 2023 Gulf Cup T20 trophy

19). The single round-robin format promises intense competition, culminating in the final on December 21. Oman’s victory in the inaugural Gulf Cup T20 last year remains a significant milestone, where they defeated the UAE in a thrilling final. The team is eager to replicate that success and defend their title.

The Gulf Cup T20 provides a platform for cricketing nations in the region to showcase their talent and grow the sport. For Oman, it is an opportunity to solidify their reputation as a formidable cricketing side, especially after their international successes in recent years. As Oman embarks to defend the title, fans eagerly await to see if the team can once again rise to the occasion and bring home the trophy. Oman’s squad: Jatinder Singh (captain), Aamir Kaleem, Ashish Odedera, Hammad Mirza, Mohammad Nadeem, Sufyan Mehmood, Mehran Khan, Shakeel Ahmed, Jay Odedera, Muzahir Raza, Karan Sonavale, Samay Shrivastava, Wasim Ali, and Vinayak Shukla.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



LIONEL MESSI
NAMED MLS MOST
VALUABLE PLAYER

NEW YORK: Lionel Messi was named Major League Soccer’s Most Valuable Player on Friday after leading Inter Miami to a record-breaking regular season campaign.

The Argentine superstar was handed the accolade after his performances helped Miami to a record regular season points tally, earning the club its first ever Supporters Shield.

The 37-year-old maestro finished the regular season with a league-leading 36 goal contributions after netting 20 goals and 16 assists.

Messi’s MVP award comes despite an injury-hit campaign in which he made only 19 appearances.

Miami and Messi’s season ultimately fizzled out, when the team suffered a shock first-round defeat in the MLS Cup playoffs.

Messi is the 10th South American to win the MVP, and the fifth from Argentina after Luciano Acosta, Diego Valeri, Guillermo Barros Schelotto, and Christian Gomez.

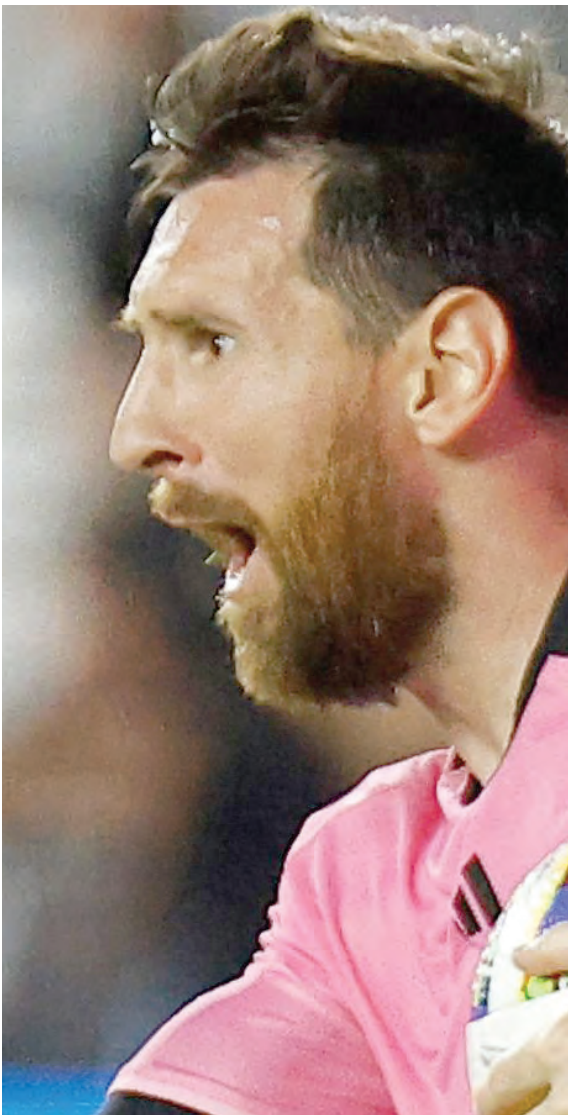
Messi was presented with the award in a ceremony at Inter’s Chase Stadium in Fort Lauderdale alongside Miami Academy players.

“Truly, it is an honour for me to receive this award from all of you,” Messi told the Academy players in a video posted on the team’s website.

“It’s a source of pride to watch you all train. I’m very happy to be here every day.

I’m happy to be in this city, in this club that is growing ... I invite you to keep fighting and striving for your dreams.”

MLS commissioner Don Garber said Messi brought an unprecedented touch of football stardom to the league, which will conclude its season on Saturday with the MLS Cup final between LA Galaxy and New York Red Bulls in Los Angeles. “To have the best player in the world be the best player in Major League Soccer is something that dreams are made of for all of us,” Garber said. — AFP



Inter Milan’s Nicolò celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters

Inter power past Parma
in comfortable 3-1 win

INTER MILAN eased to a 3-1 win at home against Parma in Friday’s Serie A clash, with Federico Dimarco, Nicolò Barella, and Marcus Thuram all finding the back of the net.

The win kept third-placed Inter on the heels of leaders Napoli, who are just one point ahead with 32 points. Parma are in 12th place with 15 points.

Inter were in action for the first time since their Serie A match against Fiorentina was abandoned last Sunday after midfielder Edoardo Bove collapsed on the pitch and had to be taken to hospital.

On Friday, Dimarco impressed with a deft heel touch to flick the ball past a defender and into the box and then fired in from a tight angle to break the deadlock five minutes before the interval.

The hosts doubled their lead in the 53th minute when Barella latched onto a perfectly timed pass from midfield that slipped behind the Parma defence, giving him ample time to slot the ball into the net.

Parma keeper Zion Suzuki saved his side going further behind when his quick reflex save denied Martinez from scoring with a header.

An unmarked Thuram sealed Inter’s win in the 66th minute, volleying a flicked-on corner into the net for their third goal



Inter Milan’s Nicolò celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters

against the team from his city of birth.

“Things are going well but I still have a lot to learn. I’m working with my teammates and I’m following the teachings of Lautaro (Martinez) and (Marko) Arnautovic who are helping me improve,” Thuram told DAZN.

“This team (Parma) has a place in my father’s heart and for me playing against the yellow and blues is a bit strange but I’m happy to have scored and won this match.”

INTER OWN GOAL

Parma pulled one back in the 81st minute when Inter defender Matteo Darmian attempted to intercept a through ball but accidentally sent it into his own net.

Inter and Martinez were awarded another penalty in the dying moments but the decision was overturned following a VAR review.

Despite the defeat, Parma coach Fabio Pecchia remained optimistic about his team’s performance.

“The boys’ performance was positive, we knew who we were facing. The attitude was positive, with the desire to do what we usually do,” he said.

“In the situations of the first half we could have been a little luckier, but this match is a new step for my boys.” Inter will next travel to Bayer Leverkusen for a Champions League clash on Tuesday. — Reuters

BUSINESS

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E-COMMERCEHUB



The completed initiatives enhance Oman's position as a regional e-commerce hub.

OMAN ADVANCES E-COMMERCE PLAN WITH 21 COMPLETED INITIATIVES

MUSCAT: Oman's National E-Commerce Plan has achieved significant progress, with 21 out of 30 initiatives completed, representing a 70 per cent completion rate as of November 2024, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP). This marks a notable increase from the 14 initiatives completed by the end of 2023.

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsiyah, Director-General of Commerce at MoCIIP, highlighted that these initiatives have strengthened the e-commerce sector. The number of e-commerce licences rose to 5,890, while 100 online stores have been registered through the "Maroof Oman" platform.

"The completed initiatives enhance Oman's position as a regional e-commerce hub, boosting competitiveness and fostering economic growth," she said.

Al Habsi also underscored the importance of Ministerial Resolution 499/2023, which established a regulatory framework for digital businesses, ensuring the rights of consumers and traders while reducing challenges for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Azza bint Ibrahim al Kindiyah, Director of Commercial Affairs and E-Commerce at MoCIIP, said the Ministry is committed to implementing the remaining initiatives in collaboration with various government entities. "The plan addresses key challenges such as market regulation, business facilitation and consumer awareness," she noted.

Key initiatives include developing a trust mark for e-commerce companies, simplifying company registration and regulating digital marketplaces.

Oman's trade surplus hits RO 6 billion by September

OMAN'S TRADE BALANCE recorded a surplus of RO 6.063 billion by September 2024, marking a rise from RO 5.611 billion during the same period in 2023, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The value of commodity exports surged by 10% to RO 18.241 billion, driven mainly by oil and gas exports, which rose 21.5% to RO 12.406 billion.

Crude oil exports increased 7.6% to RO 7.610 billion, while refined oil exports soared 151.6% to RO 2.975 billion. However, liquefied natural gas exports dropped 7% to RO 1.822 billion.

Non-oil exports declined by 14.1% to RO 4.534 billion. Mineral products led non-oil exports at RO 1.307 billion, despite a 27.3% decline. Metal products followed at RO 991 million, while plastics and rubber products saw a 6.9% increase to RO 720 million.

Re-exports rose 18.1% to RO 1.3 billion, led by transportation equipment (RO 316 million) and machinery (RO 273 million). Food and beverage re-exports

Crude oil exports increased 7.6% to RO 7.610 billion, while refined oil exports soared 151.6% to RO 2.975 billion. However, liquefied natural gas exports dropped 7% to RO 1.822 billion.



The value of commodity exports surged by 10% to RO 18.241 billion.

grew 32% to RO 133 million, while mineral product re-exports increased 51% to RO 108 million.

Imports also rose by 10.9% to RO 12.178 billion. Mineral products topped the list at RO 3.470 billion, up 16.4%.

Machinery and electrical equipment imports climbed 24.7% to RO 2.089 billion, while transportation equipment imports rose 9.3% to RO 1.072 billion. The UAE emerged as Oman's top trading

partner, with non-oil exports to the UAE valued at RO 737 million, up 14.1%. Re-exports to the UAE totalled RO 445 million, while imports from the UAE reached RO 2.922 billion. Saudi Arabia ranked second in non-oil exports at RO 602 million, followed by South Korea at RO 515 million. China and Kuwait were also key trading partners, with imports from China totalling RO 1.294 billion and from Kuwait RO 1.230 billion. — ONA

OMAN'S REAL ESTATE TRADING HITS RO 2.94 BILLION

MUSCAT: Oman's real estate trading surged 30.1% to RO 2.94 billion by October 2024, up from RO 2.26 billion in 2023, according to the National Center for Statistics and Information.

Fees collected from real estate transactions rose by 2.1% to RO 56.7 million, while sale contracts totalled RO



913.4 million across 56,259 transactions, marking a 2.9% increase in value. Mortgage contracts skyrocketed by 47.9% to RO 2.02 billion.

Despite these gains, issued property titles fell by 3.3% to 191,871, while property registrations for GCC nationals rose by 8.3% to 1,209. — ONA

New report identifies optimal sites for wind power projects in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 7

NAMA Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP), the single procurer of power and water capacity in the Sultanate of Oman, has begun publishing data from its multi-year Wind Resource Assessment (WRA) initiative, which offers a bankable set of wind data to support the development of wind-based renewable power in the country.

To date, six Project Areas - Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Duqm 1 (SEZAD), Ras Madrasah, Ras Madrasah (new), Sadah and Mahoot - have been covered during the four-year-long assessment exercise.

Many of these sites are set to host a new wave of wind-based Independent Power Projects (IPPs) currently under competitive procurement by PWP.



Met masts help with the generation of bankable data on the wind potential of locations targeted for Wind IPPs. Picture for illustration.

"PWP recognises that a robust and detailed WRA aims to quantify wind resource potential which does not only determine the financial viability of a specific wind project but to also assist in mapping wind resources for the country," the state-owned procurer - part of Nama Group - said.

"By undertaking this activity on behalf of project companies/developers and well in advance of the initiation of the procurement activities for wind IPPs, PWP aims to provide a clear and accurate representation of wind resources at key wind-sites in Oman," it further noted.

As part of the initiative, PWP installed a number of 100-metre tall meteorological masts (met masts) in the Project Areas. Fitted on these towers were a number of sensors each designed for a specific function.

The list includes Dataloggers to monitor and record environmental parameters over time, ensuring conditions are measured, documented, analysed and validated; Anemometers to measure wind speeds; Wind vanes to measure the wind directions; and Pyranometers (sensors measuring solar irradiance from a hemispherical field of view incident on a flat surface).

The met masts have yielded at least 12 months' worth of data pertaining to each of the six Project Areas, according to PWP.

This validated data is being published in phases for the benefit of potential wind power developers interested in further analysing the interpretation of this resource.

Going forward, PWP says it plans to evaluate the wind

potential of further sites across Oman for possible IPP projects.

Additionally, it aims to use the data to run a feasibility study to advise on and guide the future development of wind power projects in the Sultanate of Oman, it stated.

Significantly, as many as 16 international companies are currently participating in a competitive process leading to the award of five wind farm projects with an aggregate generation capacity of over 1 gigawatts (GW).

These five projects, part of PWP's strategy to secure 30 per cent of Oman's electricity requirements from renewables, are planned at Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Al Duqm, Mahoot, Dhofar and Sadah. Total investment in these IPPs is estimated at around RO 450 million (equivalent to about \$1.2 billion).

ADVERTORIALS

BANKER’S CHOICE



It reflects Sohar International’s dedication to transforming Oman’s financial landscape through innovation, strategic growth, and active participation in pivotal national projects.

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL WINS BANK OF THE YEAR 2024-OMAN

MUSCAT: Sohar International, Oman’s best bank, has been honored with the esteemed title of ‘Bank of the Year 2024 – Oman’ by The Banker magazine, a prestigious UK based publication by the Financial Times. This recognition highlights the bank’s forward-thinking strategy, exceptional growth, and significant contributions to advancing both national and regional economic goals.

It reflects Sohar International’s dedication to transforming Oman’s financial landscape through innovation, strategic growth, and active participation in pivotal national projects. By driving economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040, the bank continues to strengthen its position as a key enabler of sustainable development.

At the award ceremony held in London on December 4, 2024, global financial leaders gathered to celebrate excellence in the banking industry. Sohar International was proudly represented by Aziz al Jahdhami, Chief Priority Banking Officer, and Omar Baccouche, Executive Vice President of Global Banking, who accepted the award on behalf of the bank’s leadership and dedicated team. This accolade not only highlights the bank’s achievements but also underscores its unwavering commitment to fostering sustainable growth, empowering communities, and strengthening Oman’s position on the global economic stage.

Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “Being named ‘Bank of the Year 2024 – Oman’ by The Banker is a testament to Sohar International’s unwavering commitment to redefining excellence in banking. This accolade highlights the success of our forward-looking strategy, exceptional growth, significant contributions to advancing national and regional economic goals, and dedication to transforming Oman’s financial landscape.

At Sohar International, we remain steadfast in our mission to elevate industry standards while aligning with Oman’s economic aspirations. Our investments in digital transformation have enhanced accessibility and operational efficiency, empowering clients with intelligent financial solutions that meet their evolving needs.

Moreover, our deep commitment to sustainability ensures that our growth contributes to long-term national and environmental resilience. This recognition inspires us to continue driving purpose-driven progress and shaping the future of banking in Oman and beyond.”

OQEP holds emergency management exercise

EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION (OQEP) has conducted an emergency management exercise in its Block 60 concession area – Bisat Field, implemented by the Emergency and Crisis Management Team in collaboration with strategic partners from relevant governmental authorities and both local and international service providers.

The exercise was conducted to evaluate the company’s emergency rand crisis systems, as well as the efficiency of communication and coordination among all relevant stakeholders and responders during large-scale emergencies.

The exercise is a key part of the company’s commitment to maintaining a high level of readiness and ensuring the safety and security of all employees and contractors, and company assets.

The exercise featured a complex scenario with multiple elements to test response procedures, escalation processes and communication protocols. This simulation was of an oil well blowout (loss of well control) with potential escalations including gas leaks, oil spills, etc.

Several entities participated in the exercise, including the Ministry of Energy and Minerals the Royal Oman Police, the Oil and Gas Installations Security, the Directorate General of Police Aviation, the Public Authority for Civil Defense and Ambulance, the Ministry of Health, the Directorate General of Health Services in Al Dakhiliyah, the Environment Authority, and



The exercise is a key part of the company’s commitment to maintaining a high level of readiness and ensuring the safety and security of all employees and contractors, and company assets.

external entities such as Wild Well Control (USA) (WWC), among others, including contractors and service providers.

These entities contributed expertise in well control and medical emergency response and coordinated with third parties and internal teams as needed.

OQEP conducted similar scale exercises in its Block 60 concession in 2022 and in its Block 8 offshore concession area in Musandam in 2023 in close collaboration

with relevant Government authorities, showcasing the company’s commitment to maintaining best practices in health, safety, security, environment and emergency preparedness.

These large-scale initiatives are held annually and provide a valuable opportunity for OQEP to evaluate and improve its emergency response procedures and communication protocols across all its operationally diverse assets.

MHD sponsors 2024 Bidiyah carnival challenge

MUSCAT: The vibrant Wilayat of Bidiyah in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate came alive with the thrilling “Bidiyah Carnival Automotive Challenge,” proudly sponsored by MHD.

Held as part of the Sultanate of Oman’s celebrations of the 54th National Day, the event took place over three days at Tel Bidiyah Field and Bidiyah Public Park, coinciding with the winter desert sports season.

This year’s edition was marked by exceptional enthusiasm, drawing large crowds of motoring enthusiasts, tourists, and families from across Oman and the GCC.

With participation from both professional drivers and amateurs, the carnival showcased exhilarating endurance car sports and competitive events, further boosting tourism and economic activity in the region.

Highlighting the scale of the event, seven MG3 cars were awarded to the first-place



The event took place over 3 days at Tel Bidiyah Field and Bidiyah Public Park.

winners in each category, alongside cash prizes totaling RO 15,000 for the second- and third-place winners.

Competitions spanned seven categories, including 6-cylinder and 8-cylinder modified and unmodified vehicles, “Backfire” and “Burnfire” events, and an open category with strict safety protocols.

Mohsin Hani Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, stated: “The Bidiyah Carnival Automotive Challenge is a testament to the passion Oman holds for motorsports and the shared spirit of adventure and innovation.

MHD ACERE is proud to support this event as it not only celebrates our country’s vibrant National Day but also promotes tourism, community

engagement, and the love for automotive excellence. We remain committed to fostering such dynamic platforms that bring communities together while driving economic and social progress in Oman.”

Adding to the excitement, the event featured an exhibition of vehicles by MHD, including renowned brands like MG, Jetour, INEOS, Jeep, Dodge, Hongqi, and Defender. The showcase provided attendees with a close-up view of these remarkable automobiles, blending innovation, performance, and style.

The Bidiyah Carnival Automotive Challenge continues to be a major highlight of Oman’s winter tourism calendar, with events planned to extend until March 2025.

This year’s record-breaking participation and audience turnout underscore its significance as one of the largest automotive competitions in the Sultanate of Oman.

Make your journeys memorable with Ford Expedition

MUSCAT: The Ford Expedition is an ideal SUV for adventurers combining spacious design with innovative features to make every journey enjoyable. With seating for up to 8 passengers, this SUV offers generous room for both people and cargo, making it perfect for weekend trips and long drives.

he unique sliding second-row seat provides easy access to the third row without having to remove a child safety seat. Meanwhile, passengers in the third row enjoy ample legroom and reclining seats, adding comfort to longer journeys.

The Ford Expedition is a powerhouse when it comes to towing, leading its class with impressive capabilities. The Trailer Tow Class IV system makes hauling



This SUV offers generous room for both people and cargo.

effortless, whether it’s for a boat, trailer, or additional cargo. Plus, with an available power lift-gate, loading and unloading gear is easier

than ever.

At the heart of the Expedition is a robust 3.5-liter EcoBoost engine, offering up to 380 horsepower and

637Nm of torque.

Coupled with a 10-speed automatic transmission, the Expedition delivers smooth, powerful performance on highways or rugged trails—all while maintaining best-in-class fuel efficiency.

Ford has built the Expedition with a focus on safety and ease of use. Features like Collision Avoidance Detection and the Blind Spot Information System add an extra layer of security, while the Control Trac with Electronic Limited Slip Differential provides superior handling on rough terrain.

Inside, the Expedition is equipped with cutting-edge technology. SYNC 4 with a 12-inch LCD touchscreen keeps you connected, while multiple

USB ports, a 220-volt power outlet, and wireless charging ensure devices stay powered throughout the trip.

With Tri-zone Electronic Temperature Control and the Panoramic Vista Roof, every passenger can enjoy customized comfort and spectacular views. Those interested in experiencing the Ford Expedition can visit their nearest Ford showroom.

In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to [www.fordoman.com](#), or [www.facebook.com/FordOman](#) or [www.youtube.com/FordOmanChannel](#) or [www.instagram.com/ford_oman](#) for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

BUSINESS

GLOBALAVIATION



The Week will focus on the role of global civil aviation security amidst the increasing growth of air transport worldwide.

OMAN SET TO HOST ICAO SECURITY WEEK

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, DEC 7

THE Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) will host the Security Week, and ministerial meeting, which will be held for the first time after the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) headquarters in Montreal, Canada.

To be held between December 9 and 12 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), the Week will focus on the role of global civil aviation security amidst the increasing growth of air transport worldwide, especially following the gradual recovery of the sector post-COVID-19 pandemic, and ensuring commitment to ongoing cooperation with other ICAO member states to overcome future challenges in the sector.

It will address critical issues affecting global aviation security and recommend initiatives to tackle challenges facing international aviation security, emphasizing the importance of a collective approach among member states to address joint efforts related to comprehensive counter-terrorism issues, including the protection of critical civil aviation infrastructure.

The main objective of the ICAO members is to ensure the safety of passengers and crew members and strengthen international cooperation, coordination, and communication to ensure the security of civil aviation, coordinate responses to emerging threats and solutions, explore ways to cooperate in facing these challenges, and discuss and share best practices in aviation security and facilitation.

The high-level ministerial segment will take place on December 11 to identify global priorities ahead of the 42nd ICAO Assembly in September 2025.

The ministerial segment will serve as a platform for strategic discussions and the endorsement of a ministerial declaration on aviation security.

This includes aviation security, cybersecurity, and protection of vital aviation infrastructure, as well as launching the second edition of the Global Aviation Security Plan.

Oman is making significant strides to boost its aviation sector, focusing on competitiveness, investment opportunities, and sustainability. Key initiatives include digital transformation, infrastructure upgrades, and strategic planning to position Oman as a regional aviation hub. Recent developments include the inauguration of the southern runway at Muscat International Airport, increasing capacity to handle larger aircraft like the Airbus A380.

AI AND DRONES: UNLOCKING POTENTIAL FOR OMAN’S ECONOMY

MUSCAT: The Oman Business Forum under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion is set to host its sixth Business Dialogues session titled “Artificial Intelligence and Drones” next Tuesday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center. The session will spotlight the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and drone technologies in key sectors while addressing regulatory frameworks that ensure the responsible deployment of these technologies. Jamal bin Khalfan al Asmi, Executive Director of Reality CG, emphasized that AI and drones



The session will spotlight the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and drone technologies in key sectors.

play a crucial role in advancing Oman’s Vision 2040 by driving sustainable economic growth and diversification. “These technologies simplify logistics operations and

boost sectors like agriculture, reducing water consumption and enhancing productivity through precision farming,” he said. He also noted drones’ significance in disaster management, offering real-time mapping and search-and-rescue capabilities during emergencies like floods and earthquakes. Industry experts will participate in the session, exploring AI’s industrial impact and drones’ potential to transform agriculture and logistics. They will also discuss developing regulatory frameworks to govern these innovations in Oman. — ONA

Energy security, transition are not mutually exclusive

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, DEC 7

In a compelling keynote address at the 18th Annual GPCA Forum, Prof Christof Rühl, a renowned Senior Research Scholar at Columbia University’s Center on Global Energy Policy, laid out a thought-provoking exploration of the intricate interplay between energy transition, energy security, and economic warfare in the context of rising global uncertainty.

His address, enriched by decades of expertise at institutions like BP, the World Bank, and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, served as both a reality check and a roadmap for the petrochemical industry as it navigates unprecedented challenges. Prof Rühl began his address with a sobering observation: the global energy landscape is undergoing another seismic shift.

While the broader narrative of the energy transition has remained consistent over the past two decades, recent geopolitical events, particularly the conflict in Ukraine, have thrust energy security to the forefront of international discourse.

This dual challenge—balancing the urgency of transitioning to sustainable energy sources with the immediate need for reliable energy supplies—has created an era of profound complexity for policymakers and industry stakeholders alike.

Rühl set the stage by emphasizing that his analysis was not a denial of climate change or the need for



Prof Christof Rühl addressing the GPCA Forum in Muscat.

sustainable energy but a critique of the oversimplified narratives often surrounding these topics. He stressed the importance of pragmatic approaches that account for the realities of energy systems and global interdependencies.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has underscored the fragility of global energy systems. Europe, heavily reliant on Russian gas, found itself in a precarious position as supply disruptions loomed large. Rühl recounted the dramatic images of the Nord Stream pipeline explosion and the subsequent scramble to secure alternative energy sources.

In response, Europe witnessed an unprecedented level of adaptability, from rapidly expanding liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports to reviving dormant coal plants.

This crisis, Rühl argued, revealed the limitations of renewables in addressing acute energy shortages. While renewables play a critical role in decarbonization, their intermittency and the challenges of cross-border electricity transmission make them less suitable for immediate crisis

response. Fossil fuels, despite their environmental drawbacks, proved indispensable due to their transportability, storability, and reliability. The heart of Prof. Rühl’s address centered on the global energy transition and its apparent stagnation. Despite decades of investment and policy focus, the share of fossil fuels in the global energy mix has remained stubbornly high. In 2022, fossil fuels still accounted for nearly 80% of primary energy consumption, with renewables contributing only about 8%. Prof. Rühl called for a shift from the “substitution narrative”—the idea that renewables can simply replace fossil fuels—to one of “complementarity.” This approach recognizes that diverse energy sources, including fossil fuels, nuclear, and renewables, must work in tandem to ensure energy security while advancing decarbonization goals. He also emphasized the need to focus on practical strategies for reducing greenhouse gas concentrations, such as carbon capture, afforestation, and

innovative market mechanisms like carbon credits. Rühl pointed to the potential of global carbon markets, though he cautioned against the pitfalls of poorly regulated systems. Turning to the petrochemical industry, Rühl underscored its dual role as both a contributor to and a potential mitigator of global emissions. The industry’s innovations, particularly in plastics recycling and alternative feedstocks, could significantly reduce its environmental impact. However, he cautioned that achieving these outcomes would require sustained investment, technological breakthroughs, and supportive policy frameworks. Rühl highlighted the unique opportunity for petrochemical producers to lead the way in decarbonization by embracing circular economy principles and leveraging their expertise in materials science. He also warned of the risks posed by geopolitical shifts and market disruptions, urging the industry to adopt strategies that enhance resilience and adaptability. Prof Rühl concluded his address with a powerful call to action. The global energy transition, he argued, is not a linear or straightforward process. It requires a nuanced understanding of energy systems, a willingness to adapt to evolving circumstances, and a commitment to innovation. “Energy security and energy transition are not mutually exclusive,” Rühl asserted. “They are two sides of the same coin, and our success in addressing both will define the future of the petrochemical industry—and indeed, the world.”

Growing Oman-Azerbaijan ties boost bilateral trade prospects

SUDEEP SONAWANE
YARDIMLI (AZERBAIJAN), DEC 7

The Sultanate of Oman has given top priority to develop bilateral relations with Azerbaijan. This intent speeded up during United Nations’ climate change conference (COP29) that ended in the Azeri capital Baku recently.

Oman and Azerbaijan discussed prospects of cooperating in transport and green energy, on the sidelines of the conference. Reaffirming the growing bilateral ties, Oman’s Ambassador to Azerbaijan Saif Rashid al Jahwari recently said, “We shall give particular attention to developing political, economic, trade

and technical relations.” These initiatives augur well for propelling Azerbaijan’s economy in GCC markets in the future. Under the initiative-taking leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan’s economy gathers momentum on the highway of prosperity. The salubrious and green Central Asian country, flanked by the Caspian Sea on the east and Talysh Mountains on the west, now aims to export its agricultural crops to the GCC and South Asia. A European Union-supported agricultural project in Lankaran and Astara district added further speed to this goal. The project increased five times the yield of Yardimli



New investments in Azerbaijan’s farming-rich regions have an eye on exports markets in the GCC.

district potato farmers in southern Azerbaijan. The ten-month phase two of the three-year project closed last month in Lankaran. The project, in partnership with Azerbaijan Government, boosted the

productivity of farmers in Lankaran-Astara Economic Region. The Head of Astara District Executive Authority Gazanfar Arif oglu Agayev, thanking the EU project team, said: “We appreciate your project work in Astara and other districts. We shall strive to increase the productivity of citrus crop, particularly mandarin. Last year the output was 52,000 tonnes. We now aim to reach 80,000 tonnes. We hope to repeat this success for avocado and peaches.” The Azerbaijan Ministry of Economy and EU started the project titled ‘EU Support to Lankaran-Astara Economic Region of Azerbaijan’ in Lankaran in December 2021. Over

three years, the EU team, led by Project Manager Tara Sharafudeen focused on helping and training Lankaran-Astara Economic Region farmers with international best practices. “Our team helped Lankaran, Astara and six other districts farmers to modernise, boost crops quality and quantity by planting high-yield seeds delivered by the project and produce climate-change resistant fruits and vegetables. Our initiative helped to increase potato yield by five times,” said Tara. This project supported Azerbaijan’s efforts to diversify and revive its economy affected during the Covid-19 pandemic, she said.

Traditional finance adapts to new BTC all-time highs



STEFANO VIRGILLI
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The author is a member of the International Press Association

BITCOIN achieved a historic milestone this week, surpassing \$100,000 for the first time before experiencing significant volatility that saw prices briefly touch \$93,000. This landmark event, which comes amid growing institutional adoption and regulatory clarity, marks a fundamental shift in how traditional finance views digital assets. The impact of this achievement extends beyond mere price action.

More than \$1.1 billion in cryptocurrency positions were liquidated in 24 hours as the market adjusted to these new heights, marking the largest daily liquidation volume since December 2021.

This volatility, while dramatic, demonstrates the market's increased maturity, with various assets showing resilience despite Bitcoin's fluctuations.

Traditional financial media, which had long criticized cryptocurrency, found themselves acknowledging the market's evolution. The Financial Times, which first covered Bitcoin in June 2011 when it traded at \$15.90, issued a notable response to the \$100,000 milestone, reflecting how mainstream perception of digital assets has transformed over the past decade.

Institutional involvement continues deepening, particularly in the stablecoin sector, where total market supply has reached \$135.78 billion. Tether recently minted an additional 1 billion USDT tokens, responding to growing market demand. The stablecoin

market's 10% growth in November, with monthly trading volumes exceeding \$1.8 trillion, indicates strong institutional confidence.

The financial centers in the GCC are increasingly positioning themselves as bridges between traditional and digital finance. The UAE in particular has emerged as a global model through its comprehensive virtual asset framework, which balances innovation with robust consumer protection.

The establishment of dedicated crypto regulations in Dubai's VARA (Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority) and Abu Dhabi's FSRA (Financial Services Regulatory Authority) has created clear operational guidelines that other jurisdictions now study and emulate.

This approach has successfully attracted major crypto firms while maintaining market stability, demonstrating how regulatory clarity can foster sustainable industry growth. Regulatory developments continue shaping the landscape.

Circle's USDC stablecoin achieved compliance with Canada's new listing rules while various jurisdictions advance their regulatory frameworks.

This growing clarity has encouraged institutional participation, with Vancouver's mayor even announcing plans to add Bitcoin to the city's balance sheet.

Looking ahead, several factors suggest sustained market strength despite short-term volatility. Institutional infrastructure continues developing, while regulatory frameworks mature globally.

More than \$1.1 billion in cryptocurrency positions were liquidated in 24 hours as the market adjusted to these new heights, marking the largest daily liquidation volume since December 2021

The combination of mainstream adoption and improving market structure indicates a more resilient ecosystem capable of supporting sophisticated financial products.

The broader digital asset market shows compelling dynamics beyond Bitcoin's milestone. XRP, now the third-largest cryptocurrency by market capitalization at \$141.8 billion, has seen extraordinary growth with a 430% rally since early November.

European investment products focusing on XRP have attracted \$95 million in inflows over the past week alone, representing 67% of total inflows this year and pushing year-to-date allocations past \$141 million.

However, market analysts note potential challenges ahead. With Bitcoin's market dominance at 55.3%, any significant shift of capital back to Bitcoin could impact alternative digital assets.

Open interest in XRP derivatives has reached \$3.44 billion, nearly \$1.44 billion higher than the previous peak in April 2021, suggesting increased leverage in the market. This heightened exposure could lead to significant price movements if Bitcoin's dominance continues to rise.

The XRP/BTC ratio, measuring XRP's relative strength compared to Bitcoin, currently stands at 0.00002375, up 47.6% over the past month. While this indicates strong recent performance, historical patterns suggest that periods of rising Bitcoin dominance often lead to capital rotation away from alternative digital assets, making current market positioning particularly crucial for investors.

MONTHS OF CHAOS WILL CRIPPLE FRANCE FOR YEARS

FRANCE has been thrown into political chaos after the fall of Prime Minister Michel Barnier's government this week. Even in an optimistic scenario where the mayhem only drags on for a few months, it will exact a toll on the economy that will last for years.

The French parliament rejected a budget that was only the first step in a multi-year process to control the rise of the country's debt load. Ironically, those measures were greenlighted by the European Commission days before this week's no-confidence vote. Under the plan, public debt would have risen from 113% of GDP this year to more than 116% in 2028, and begun to shrink, albeit slowly, thereafter.

Under the plan, public debt would have risen from 113% of GDP this year to more than 116% in 2028, and begun to shrink, albeit slowly, thereafter.

That was conditioned on the fiscal deficit declining to 5% of GDP in 2025, from more than 6% this year. Barnier's concessions in the last few weeks to convince MPs to back his budget amounted to some 10 billion euros, or about 0.4% of France's GDP.

Debt was already on track to top 120% of GDP in 2028. If no measures were taken to control public finances, the deficit would reach 7% of GDP next year, according to the French government. In that case, the debt load would rise to some 125% of GDP by the end of the decade.

Those predictions are based on the government's generous assumptions about growth, seen at 1.1% next year, whereas the European Commission's estimate is 0.8%. Without a serious plan, the inexorable rise of the debt load over the next decade will trigger a major conflict with Brussels and France's European Union partners. And it will require a much harsher bout of austerity than the mild version Barnier proposed.

The political crisis has already exacted an economic price. Uncertainty means that business will be reluctant to invest. The level of confidence of French companies was already lower than the euro zone's average. And consumers do not seem to be rushing to take advantage of lower inflation either: they are stashing money away at a pace not seen since the late 1970s, with their savings rate now at 19%, AXA economist Gilles Moëc said.

With the two major engines of economic growth stalling, the government will see tax receipts shrink since the third engine – exports – is not taxed. The task of devising a sensible and growth-friendly budget, given the state of France's finances, would be uncommonly arduous even for a strong government supported by a stable majority. For the next French PM, it will be more like mission impossible. — Reuters

OIA: Driving Oman's economic diversification

IN AN ERA increasingly driven by innovation and sustainability, the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has emerged as a strategic vehicle that envisions the future while driving economic development in the Sultanate of Oman.

The year 2024 was not just another chapter in the OIA's journey; it marked a transformative phase that redefined the role of sovereign investment in national economic growth.

What sets the OIA apart in this phase is not merely the scale of its achievements but its forward-thinking approach. The focus is no longer solely on financial returns but on building an integrated economic ecosystem that fosters domestic growth and opens new horizons for international partnerships.

The launch of the "Oman Future Fund" with a capital of RO 2 billion exemplifies this vision. It is not just a financial project but a strategic enabler designed to bolster leadership in non-oil sectors.

One of the most significant transformations within the OIA is its increased focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups. Investing in these sectors translates into investing in the ambitions and innovative ideas of Omani youth.

The substantial financial support for SMEs and initiatives like the "Qimam" platform reflect the OIA's belief that a sustainable economy relies more on human potential than mere financial assets.

The notable increase in the OIA's assets and investment returns is not merely a fleeting financial achievement but a testament to a balanced sovereign strategy. By managing Oman's wealth prudently, the OIA pursues a dual objective: securing reliable returns from global investments while strengthening productive sectors domestically.

This synergy between local and global dimensions ensures the sustainability of resources for future



OIA's newly launched Future Fund Oman recently unveiled \$2 billion worth of investment projects.



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of Oman Observer's Business section

generations.

By hosting recently the largest gathering in the history of the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds, the OIA has placed Oman firmly on the global investment map. This event was not just symbolic but a clear affirmation of Oman's position as a regional leader in the investment landscape.

Such steps send a strong message that Oman is not just a partner in development but a pivotal player in reshaping the global investment narrative.

Despite these accomplishments, the greatest challenge for the OIA remains striking a balance between immediate returns and long-term projects.

In a world facing unprecedented economic volatility, the OIA's strength lies in its adaptability and innovation. Its prudent financial hedging and flexible policies demonstrate its readiness to face potential crises.

Today, the OIA is no longer just a financial institution managing wealth; it is a fundamental driver of Oman's economic transformation. Investments in infrastructure, support for entrepreneurship, and enhancement of key sectors reflect a holistic vision aimed at building a diversified economy that does not rely on a single resource but is rooted in a broad foundation ensuring sustainability.

If 2024 has proven anything, it is that the Oman Investment Authority is not merely a sovereign wealth fund but a national institution reshaping the dynamics of economy and development in Oman. What is being achieved today is not just immediate gains but an economic legacy positioning Oman as a regional and global model in resource management and investment.

ART/LIFE

A R T

EXPLORING SHARED HUMANITY THROUGH A METAPHORICAL GARDEN AT BAIT MUZNA > 20



COMMUNITY EVENT

A memorable community event and celebration in the Wilayat of Muttrah



BY KABEER YOUSUF

EXPATRIATES AND CITIZENSOf the Sultanate of Oman united recently for a vibrant family gathering celebrating Oman’s spirit of inclusivity, warmth, and its journey towards progress in the Wilayat of Muttrah.

The lively event, organised by the Dawoodi Bohra community in honour of their Omani friends and neighbours in Darsait, took place at the Sahil Oman Football ground. It attracted a diverse crowd, including distinguished members of the Omani community, such as Shaikhs and other prominent figures.

Approximately 1,000 attendees, including children accompanied by their mothers, grandparents, and elders, enjoyed the pleasant evening on the open football pitch. Esteemed Omani nationals, including Hussain al Lawati, a member of the Majlis Ash’shura, and Shaikh Hashil bin Khalfan al Hasani, Shaikh of the Darsait area, expressed their appreciation for the community’s efforts in bringing local residents together on such an occasion. This was the first time a gathering of this nature had been organised in the neighbourhood.

Hussain al Lawati commended the meticulous planning and thoughtful execution of the event, stating, “Oman is a peaceful country, and Omanis are renowned for their hospitality and welcoming nature towards all who come to this glorious nation.”

He engaged with community members, offering encouraging words and wishing them success in organising similar events in the future.

“We believe in cultivating an inclusive society and fostering brotherly relations with everyone,” remarked Shaikha Khuzaima Yamani from the Dawoodi Bohra community.

The carnival featured a delightful selection of Dawoodi Bohra delicacies, generously served to all guests, accompanied by an assortment of sweet and savoury treats. The various games created an atmosphere of excitement, with winners receiving gifts as rewards. The raffle draw, with over 20 prizes on offer, generated a buzz of anticipation among the attendees.

Additionally, the event included henna and face painting stalls that drew many visitors, alongside booths where local Omani women showcased their handicrafts and culinary skills. Participants left the carnival with high spirits, expressing a desire for the Dawoodi Bohra community to host similar events in the future.

The lively atmosphere and sense of camaraderie between the Dawoodi Bohra community and local Omanis were evident, further strengthening their existing bonds. This heart-warming celebration will be fondly remembered for its excitement, joy, and community spirit, as shared by the attendees.

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



LIFESTYLE

Costume designer Macha Makeieff explains her choices for the exhibition “En piste!” (In the Ring), focused on circus culture, at the Mucem, at the Mucem museum in Marseille, southeastern France. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

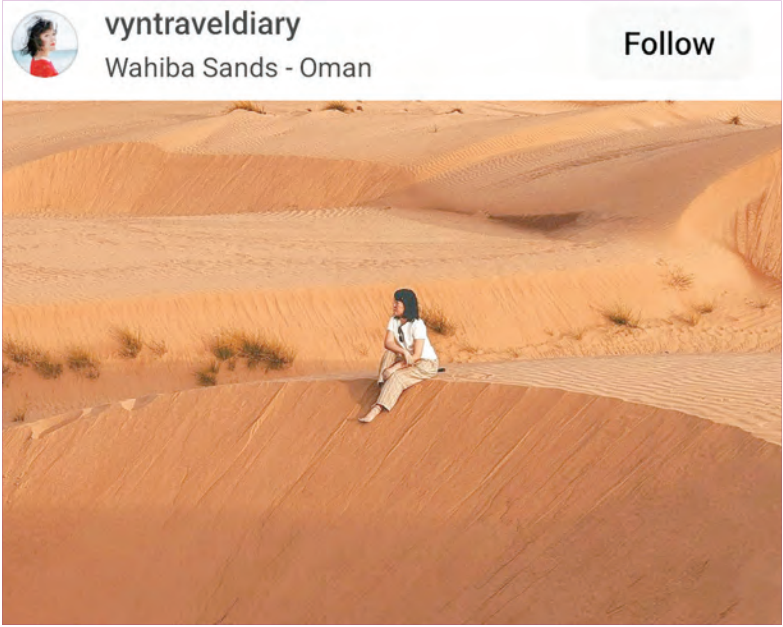
British actor Ian McKellen poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the World premiere of the animated film “The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim” at the Odeon Luxe, in central London. — AFP



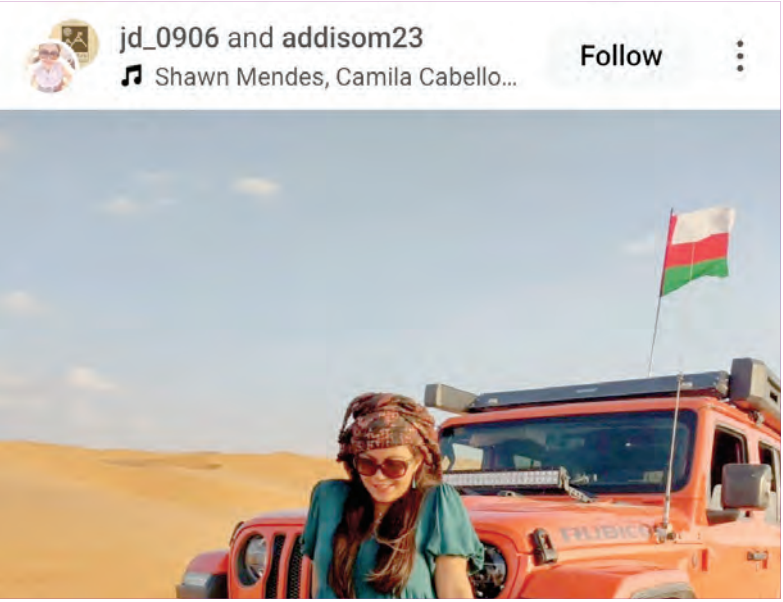
CULTURE

A woman sells turkeys at a market stall in Lima. Thousands of shoppers crowd the formal and street markets in downtown Lima in search of seasonal decorations, gifts and food in anticipation of the upcoming festive holidays. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Desert Season



Bring a Four Wheel Drive

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We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Bronze statues, coins and ancient eggs found in Tuscan thermal baths



ANCIENT statues, coins, jewels and still-intact eggs from Roman and Etruscan times have been recovered from thermal baths in southern Tuscany, Italy’s culture ministry said on Tuesday, presenting the latest discoveries at the site.

Archaeologists have been digging in San Casciano dei Bagni, a hilltop town about 160 km north of Rome since 2019, and announced other remarkable finds over the past two years.

San Casciano had a shrine linked to hot water springs used for healing purposes as far back into the 3rd century BC, the ministry said. Etruscans and Romans used to throw offerings in there, which are now being excavated.

The latest findings, located

almost 5 metres below the ground, include male and female bronze sculptures, including of man cut in half lengthwise, thousands of coins, a gold crown and ring, precious stones, and a series of snake sculptures.

One of these is almost one metre (one yard) long and is likely a representation of Agathos Daimon, a bearded snake-like god with horns from Greek mythology, who may have been the protector of the springs, the ministry said.

It would be the largest bronze sculpture of this god recovered so far, the statement said, noting that smaller examples are held at the British Museum in London and at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. — Reuters



Dali, Warhol and other seized mafia art on display in Milan

MORE THAN 80 contemporary works of art confiscated from the Italian mafia, including by Salvador Dali and Andy Warhol, went on display on Tuesday in Milan.

“Works destined to remain buried in the networks of organised crime are finally returned to the community, taking on a symbolic role as resistance to crime,” said Maria Rosaria Lagana, head of the national agency for administering the assets.

The agency organises auctions of some goods seized by the Italian courts, which include Ferrari cars and Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Houses, apartments and agricultural land meanwhile are allocated free of charge to public bodies and non-profit organisations.

But some of the art that graced the mobsters’ walls has been made public as part of the “SalvArti” exhibition.

“These are goods that obviously could have been sold, but it was decided to keep them in museums, because they are of significant value,” Lagana said.

More than 20 of the works at Milan’s Palazzo Reale were confiscated in 2016 from a boss of the powerful ‘Ndrangheta mafia, based in the southern region of Calabria.

They include a lithograph of “Romeo and Juliet” by surrealist Spanish painter Dali, located in a room dedicated to works seized by a court in the Calabrian capital Reggio Calabria.

Nearby is “Piazza d’Italia”, a gorgeous oil on canvas by Italian master Giorgio de Chirico.

Around 60 other works come from a seizure ordered by a Rome court in 2013 over a giant fraud linked to an international money laundering network.

These include a screen print by pop artist Warhol entitled “Summer Arts in the Parks” and a “Wrapped Venus” lithograph by Christo.

The exhibition also features press cuttings and videos of police seizing the works, which are used as currency in drugs and arms trafficking.



Lagana said the aim was to highlight the “insidiousness of the mafia scourge” while promoting culture.

“It’s a rebirth for these works. It is a bit like digging them out of the earth, like archaeologists, and putting them on display where everyone can see them,” she said.

The exhibition, which is free to visit, runs until January 26 in Milan before being transferred to Reggio Calabria from February 8 to April 27.

— AFP



FEATURES

BY LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

BAIT MUZNA GALLERY, in collaboration with Metamorphosis Art Projects, London, debuted the Middle Eastern launch of “We Are All Flowers from the Same Garden”, a solo retrospective exhibition by the acclaimed South Korean artist Oh Myung Hee, on Tuesday evening. The exhibition was inaugurated by Her Highness Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU, accompanied by Kie-Joo Kim, Ambassador of South Korea to the Sultanate of Oman. This significant event also celebrates 50 years of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Oman, adding an important cultural dimension to the occasion.

From December 3, Bait Muzna transformed into “The Garden: A Metaphor for Shared Humanity”, showcasing the breathtaking artwork of Prof Oh Myung Hee. During an interview with the Observer, Prof Oh expressed her desire for visitors to reflect on the deep metaphor of a garden as a space where harmony, diversity and interconnectedness thrive. The theme resonates not only through her art, but also mirrors the gallery’s mission to foster a cultural dialogue within the community.

Sayyidah Susan al Said, founder of Bait Muzna Gallery, spoke highly of Prof Oh’s artwork, stating, “I haven’t seen such quality of work before. She is profoundly connected to spirit and energy. Anyone who experiences this exhibition will grasp the significance of her work. I have attended two of her exhibitions in the UK, and each was an enlightening experience.”

Prof Oh shared insights into her artistic journey, stating, “My pursuit revolves around searching for the essence of life. As an artist, I navigate this exploration through my artwork. While my thoughts evolve over time, there exists a continuity in my essence. Long ago, I portrayed a scarf dancing in the wind across a prairie full of flowers. Although the shape and form of my work have transformed, the core essence remains unchanged. The imagery of the scarf persists in all my pieces, representing an ongoing quest for beauty.”

The walls of Bait Muzna will showcase Prof Oh’s vibrant art from December 4 until January 2, 2025. She noted, “Oman is calm and quiet. I draw great energy from the mountains surrounding us. The people of Oman are immensely friendly,” as she reflected on her experience while enjoying the stunning sunset from the terrace of Bait Muzna.

For Prof Oh, “Art is an endless series of questions — a continuous journey into the unknowable,” emphasising her belief that art serves as both a personal exploration and a universal commentary on the human experience. This exhibition represents the culmination of emotions, reflections and artistic growth she has nurtured over the past decade, and she eagerly anticipates her future creations to bloom.

Through her artwork, viewers can engage with nostalgia stemming from the stories she has uncovered while walking the paths of Korean women. Her paintings, such as “The Days that Were Snowy but Warm’ and “The Spring Day Goes By”, offer profound insights into the lives of these women. Drawing inspiration from Ganggangsulae, a traditional Korean dance performed during



EXPLORING SHARED HUMANITY THROUGH A METAPHORICAL GARDEN AT BAIT MUZNA



full moon festivals, she introduces themes of moonlight and the joy and equality experienced amongst women.

Prof Oh employs lacquer, a centuries-old Oriental technique, along with extensive use of mother of pearl and eggshells in her creations. Her work transports the viewer from the tangible world to realms of imagination, exploring the interplay of shadows, the vastness of the universe, and the mysteries of starlight and moonlight, culminating in a sense of transcendence.

When asked about her use of mother of pearl, she expressed that it is deeply rooted in her memories: “Mother of pearl signifies nostalgic memories for me. As a child, my mother owned a wardrobe adorned with inlaid mother-of-pearl work, and I was captivated by its beauty in the morning light.”

Tatiana Palinkasev and Eva McGaw, curators from Metamorphosis Art Projects in London, have represented Prof Oh for the past decade. They emphasised the significance of Oman in curating the exhibition: “Oman is a land rich in history and trade, celebrating both art and culture. We are all like flowers, with unique functions; no one purpose is superior to another. We must embrace and celebrate our differences. This is the core message of the exhibition.”

Through this retrospective, Bait Muzna Gallery not only showcases a profound artistic journey, but also invites the community to engage with themes of unity, diversity and the shared human experience that transcends borders and cultures.