

HM greets Angola President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President João Manuel Lourenço of the Republic of Angola, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Lorenzo and the people of his country.

SUNRISE - 06:19 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 05:01 AM
DHUHR - 11:56 AM
ASR - 03:06 PM
MAGHRIB - 05:28 PM
ISHA - 06:41 PM



P12

GAUFF FIGHTS BACK TO BEAT ZHENG FOR WTA FINALS TITLE



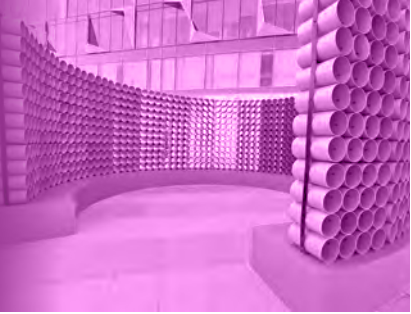
P13

INFLATION CLIMBS 0.4 PER CENT IN OMAN



P20

THIS OMANI ART INSTALLATION REMINDS OF RESILIENCE OF NATURE IN URBAN SETTING



MUSCAT

HOLIDAY FOR NATIONAL DAY

As per the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, it has been decided that Wednesday and Thursday (November 20-21) will be an official holiday for employees in units of the State's Administrative Apparatus (public sector), other legal entities and private sector establishments on the occasion of the 54th National Day. In a statement issued on Sunday, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) said that employers may agree with their respective employees to continue working during the above-mentioned two days, if deemed necessary, provided the workers be compensated for that.

DAY-CARE CENTRES FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE



The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) issued a ministerial decision to regulate the operations of day-care centres for the elderly. The regulatory procedures include licensing requirements, obligations of a day-care centre management, conditions governing the enrolment of the elderly in the day-care centres, cancellation of the licences, fees and administrative penalties. Day-care centres for the elderly provide social, rehabilitation and psychological services, among other types of assistance to the elderly (people aged 60 years or more). The centres offer a safe environment for the elderly and helps them gain the skills and experiences necessary for utilising their free time. **DETAILS ON P2**

Royal Decree promulgates Media Law

THE MEDIA LAW RAISES COMMUNITY AWARENESS

PROVISIONS OF THE LAW ATTACHED TO DECREE, SHALL BE ENFORCED

MINISTER OF INFORMATION SHALL ISSUE REGULATION OF THE LAW

ARTICLE 3 CANCELS THE LAW ON CENSORSHIP OF ARTISTIC WORKS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued Royal Decree No (58/2024) on the promulgation of the Media Law, after presenting the same before the Council of Oman.

Article (1) states that the provisions of the Media Law attached to this Decree, shall be enforced.

Article (2) states that the Minister of Information shall issue the regulation of the attached law, as well as necessary decisions to implement its provisions. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be implemented without prejudice to the provisions of the attached law.

Article (3) cancels Royal Decree No 49/84 on the Publications and Publishing Law, Royal Decree No 65/97 on the Law on the Censorship of Artistic Works and Royal Decree No 95/2004 on the Law of Private Radio and Television Establishments.

It also cancels all that contradicts with the law attached to this Decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (4) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publication. — **ONA**



MEDIA LAW REFLECTS HM'S COMMITMENT

THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION (MoI) has affirmed that Royal Decree (No 58/2024), which enacts the new Media Law, reflects His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's commitment to empowering Oman's media and journalists to fulfil their essential and constructive role in the Sultanate of Oman.

In a press statement, Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, highlighted that the law aligns with Oman Vision 2040, responding to changes and advancements in media and the impact of modern digital technologies. The law reinforces the mission of Oman's media by upholding principles of objectivity, accuracy, full neutrality, and freedom of opinion and expression, in accordance with the country's foundational laws and with a strong emphasis on the values of citizenship and national pride.

The minister also noted that the law safeguards journalists' rights, organises the media profession, sets standards for media activities, and outlines mechanisms for engaging with artistic works and publications.

Expressing confidence in the law's impact, the minister added that it will propel Omani media to new heights, marking the beginning of a new chapter that will support its national and cultural mission, aligned with Oman's aspirations and vision for a renewed renaissance. — **ONA**

SEE ALSO P5

Majlis Ash'shura approves draft laws

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 10

The Majlis Ash'shura opened its second annual session of the Tenth Term (2024-2025) on Sunday, chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, and attended by the Majlis Ash'shura members.

The session included discussions and approval of several draft laws and recommendations, as well as urgent statements addressing significant social and economic issues. Additionally, the Majlis approved the working plans of its permanent committees for the current session, and the topics for upcoming ministerial statements.

Speaking on the occasion,

Khalid al Maawali extended heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of the 54th National Day. He prayed that this occasion brings prosperity and growth to Oman.

In his speech, he emphasised the importance of fulfilling national responsibilities, stating that the Majlis would continue to work under the principles set by the Basic Law of the State and Oman Vision 2040 to enhance the Majlis's role in steering national development efforts.

The Majlis ratified the draft Special Economic Zones and Free Zones Law referred by the government after in-depth discussions among members. Ahmed bin Said al Sharqi, head of the Economic and Financial Committee, presented

a comprehensive report on the legislative developments and expected impact of the new law.

The law aims to unify the legislative framework for these zones, granting the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones greater flexibility in overseeing future expansions and standardising investment and licensing procedures, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

During the discussions, members reviewed the economic and regulatory aspects of the law, emphasising the importance of its role in achieving economic diversification, encouraging foreign investments and enhancing Oman's competitiveness regionally and internationally.

TURN TO P5

State Council opens regular session

Based on the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council on Sunday opened the sessions of its second regular sitting of the Eighth Term (2023-2027), in accordance with the provisions of Article (38) of the Council of Oman Law.

The opening session was chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

The council discussed a number of proposals and studies submitted by the permanent committees for debate during the Eighth Term. It also reviewed the Council of Ministers' reply about a study on setting standards for regulating e-commerce and arts, including their desired role.

DETAILS ON P2



DEADLY STRIKES AS ISRAEL FACES AID DEADLINE

Israeli air strikes killed dozens of people in Lebanon and Gaza on Sunday, rescuers and authorities said, ahead of a US deadline for improved aid delivery to the Palestinian territory. Rescuers in Gaza said 13 children were among 30 people killed by Israeli strikes in the territory's north. The first strike early on Sunday hit a house in Jabalia, killing "at least 25" people including 13 children and injuring more than 30, Gaza's civil defence agency said. **DETAILS ON P6**

OMAN

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EIGHTH TERM

STATE COUNCIL APPROVES FIVE PROPOSALS

The Council discussed a number of proposals and studies submitted by the permanent committees for debate during the Eighth Term. — ONA

MUSCAT: Based on the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council today opened sessions of its second regular sitting of the Eighth Term (2023-2027), in accordance with the provisions of Article (38) of the Council of Oman Law.

The opening session was chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

The Council discussed a number of proposals and studies submitted by the permanent committees for debate during the Eighth Term. It also reviewed the Council of Ministers’ reply about a study on setting standards for regulating e-commerce and arts, including their desired role in supporting the national economy and efficiency of spending in the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the State Council approved five proposals and studies submitted by the standing committees for study during the current terms. They included a proposal submitted by the Legal Committee regarding the draft amendment of the Law on Arbitration in Civil and Commercial Disputes, a proposal submitted by the Economic and Financial Committee on the study of the ‘Framework for Developing the Government Performance Management System’, a proposal submitted by the Social and Cultural Committee regarding the study on ‘Enhancing the Financial Sustainability of Civil Society Institutions’, a proposal submitted by the Education and Research Committee on the study entitled ‘Enhancing the Quality of Academic Achievement and Mastery of Competencies and Skills in School Education in the Sultanate of Oman: An Analytical and Legislative Study’, and a proposal submitted by the Technology and Innovation Committee on a study entitled ‘Digital Economy and Data Governance’.

The State Council also reviewed a number of responses provided by the Council of Ministers regarding the topics and studies referred to and concerning the State Council’s studies on the legislative and regulatory controls for e-commerce, the role of arts in supporting the national economy, electric cars and spending efficiency in the Sultanate of Oman.

Gen Al Numani receives ambassadors of Sudan, France

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Sunday Salaheldin Elhag M Elkando, Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to the Sultanate of Oman.

The discussion addressed the ongoing crises in Sudan, as well as regional and international efforts to resolve them.

The two sides also reviewed a set of regional and international issues. The meeting underlined the distinguished relations between Oman and Sudan.

Meanwhile, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, also received Nabil Hajlaoui, Ambassador of the French Republic to the Sultanate of Oman, in his office. Al Numani wished

Al Numani with Salaheldin Elhag M Elkando, Ambassador of Sudan

the ambassador success in his new duties. In this meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations between the Sultanate

Al Nuamani with Nabil Hajlaoui, French Ambassador to Oman

of Oman and the French Republic and discussed ways to enhance them to serve the interests of both countries. — ONA

MoSD sets conditions for private elderly care centres

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

THE MINISTRY of Social Development (MoSD) issued a decision on Sunday regarding the licensing of daycare centres for the elderly. The decision aims to ensure their rehabilitation, provide a safe environment for them to develop specific skills during their free time, and encourage community members to volunteer to serve the elderly and help them play an active role in society.

To apply for a licence to establish a care centre, Omanis aged 25 years and above with financial stability and a commercial register can apply. Companies registered with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) are also eligible to apply.

Applicants must hold a university degree recognised in the Sultanate of Oman in social or human sciences specialisations. They should not have any charges of felony or penalties for crimes involving dishonesty or trustworthiness, even if their reputation has been restored.

Civil society organisations must be registered under the law, with areas of work or objectives that include serving the elderly.

Elderly occupants of the daycare centre must be at least 60 years old for both genders, with exceptions granted in some cases with approval from the competent authority, provided that the age is not less than 45 years. They must be free of infectious diseases, severe psychological disorders, and mental

Elderly occupants of the daycare centre must be at least 60 years old for both genders, with exceptions granted in cases with approval from the competent authority, provided that the age is not less than 45 years.

illnesses, as proven by a medical report approved by the Ministry of Health. They should not be dependent on medical devices for cardiac care or breathing.

The licensee or director of the care centre must allow employees of the competent authority to enter the care centre at any time, providing necessary facilities for them to perform their duties. They must also allow access to records, data, or information requested regarding the care centre and the elderly beneficiaries, including camera

recordings if necessary.

The applicant is prohibited from announcing the opening of the care centre for registration or engaging in any activities before the licence is issued.

The care centre must provide periodic medical supervision and first aid for emergency cases, as well as procedures for referral to health centres and institutions if needed. It should be located in a suitable place, away from noise, close to residential neighbourhoods and public services.

Baby born on global journey excited to celebrate National Day

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabyousef

Three-year-old Prana, the daughter of globetrotters Jesse Hart and Catherine, is a global citizen. The couple, who are passionate about training yoga and fire dancing, hail from Oregon in the US. Prana is excited to celebrate her first Oman National Day this year in Muscat Governorate.

In her limited Arabic vocabulary, she utters, ‘Ana farhana’ meaning I am happy and ‘Ana uhibu Oman’ meaning I love Oman, captivating those who meet the little wonder born on a global journey.

The globetrotting couple, under the banner ‘Full Circle Phenomenal’, embarked on a journey in 2020 that would cover the globe and last for nearly a decade in a vintage 1983

Toyota camper truck.

Their journey of over 50,000 kilometres began in Oregon, covered Mexico, then Guatemala where they were stuck for six months due to Covid restrictions. They continued through El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, where Prana was conceived.

“She was conceived during our stay at the foothills of an active volcano called Volcan Concepcion and an inactive volcano called Maderas on an island called Ometepe in Nicaragua. The two landmasses are covered by an infinite highway making an ‘8’ shape.”

Prana was born months later in Ecuador after their illustrious journey through central American countries like Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia before reaching Ecuador.

Three-year-old Prana, the daughter of globetrotters Jesse Hart and Catherine, is a global citizen.

“It was only 4 hours of labour, I was at a high altitude and it was natural, although she was 3 weeks early. Luckily, we were near a city in Quito where we could get all the medical facilities,” Catherine said.

Their journey took them through Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, and Kenya before entering Oman in March of this year.

The family arrived in the Wilayat of Salalah and have been living in their camper vehicle as well as in hotels. The couple found a unique way to enjoy and contribute to the Dhofar Khareef Festival by entertaining festival visitors with their captivating fire shows.

As a result, the Dhofar Municipality extended their show for their fans. During the show in Salalah, the couple had to leave their daughter with an Indian family so they could focus on their performances.

“However, we are happy that she is learning new skills as well as Arabic

and she is truly a global citizen. We are planning to have our next child in due course where dual citizenship is allowed,” Catherine chuckled.

“What makes Oman different and why we chose to stay here for a longer period is because of the hospitality of the people around us. We have friends wherever we go in the Sultanate of Oman and they cherish spending time with us. We are immensely happy to be welcomed the way Omanis do,” said Jesse.

Full Circle Phenomenal specialises in health, entertainment, content creation, and dream life living. Yoga, Qigong, Flow Arts, Fire Spinning, Dream Job Creating/Pro-Traveler Training, and Photo and Video Content Creation are the activities that the couple is busy with through their years of travel.

SHORTTAKES

MUSCAT BOOK FAIR COMMITTEE MEETS



The panel focused on ensuring the quality and diversity of the events to help meet the aspirations of the book fair visitors. — ONA

MUSCAT: The main committee of “Muscat International Book Fair 2025” on Sunday held its first preparatory meeting under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, Chairman of the Committee.

The committee reviewed the cultural events scheduled to be held on the sidelines of the 29th edition of the book, which will take place from April 23 to May 3.

The panel focused on ensuring the quality and diversity of the events to help meet the aspirations of the book fair visitors. It laid emphasis on attracting prominent literary scholars, intelligentsia and media celebrities from the Arab region and the world at large.

The committee also discussed mechanisms for highlighting Al Sharqiyah North Governorate (Guest of Honour of the book fair) by showcasing the governorate’s historical and cultural features, as well as its investment and tourism resources.

The meeting looked into statistical reports about the previous editions of the book fair, in addition to proposed dates for Muscat International Book Fair for the next five years: 2026-2030 and means of addressing the expected challenges. — ONA

OMAN JOINS PREPARATORY TALKS FOR ARAB-ISLAMIC SUMMIT



Graduates Café 2024, hosted by UTAS Musannah, saw gathering of graduates and academics from various fields

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the preparatory meeting of foreign ministers for the extraordinary joint Arab-Islamic summit scheduled today in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The summit will discuss the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Palestinian territories and Lebanon and the current regional developments.

The Sultanate of Oman’s delegation was headed by Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the Arab League.

Al Rahbi told ONA that within the context of the Sultanate of Oman’s unwavering policy, which underscores the importance of security and stability in the Middle East, we renew our call to intensify international efforts to stop the cycle of violence and maintain sustainable peace in the region. He added that the Sultanate of Oman is committed to promoting peaceful solutions and finding just settlements to conflicts, most notably the Palestinian cause, based on its belief that a permanent solution will only be achieved through dialogue and respect for international legitimacy resolutions.

He pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman believes that the international community’s support for humanitarian action, especially for the UN organisations that provide relief to millions of Palestinian refugees, is indispensable to achieve balance, provide elements of a decent life, and restore hope for a just and secure future.

Al Rahbi called for the necessity of practical steps that reflect Islamic solidarity and have a tangible impact on the ground and clear positions towards the transition from condemnation to action. — ONA

Shura member urges reforms in social benefits

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 10

IN THE Majlis Ash’shura ’s recent session, Bader al Jabri, representing Nakhl, made a pressing call for reform of Oman’s social benefits and family income support system. He urged a thorough review of eligibility criteria, benefit calculations, and distribution mechanisms to ensure that support reaches those most in need.

Al Jabri argued that the current family income benefit of RO 40 falls significantly short of meeting basic living standards, especially for families with young children. He emphasised that benefits should reflect a ‘decent living’ standard and be regularly adjusted to address changing economic and social needs.

Proposing a data-driven approach, Al Jabri highlighted the importance of ongoing assessments to ensure that benefits meet families’ real needs,



advocating for a flexible and adaptable system that responds to economic shifts. He also recommended increasing support for families facing particular

hardships, such as elderly members or severe financial distress, and suggested that policies be updated routinely to remain effective and relevant.

In his address, Al Jabri called for simplification of the benefit application and distribution processes, suggesting that more accessible procedures would alleviate challenges faced by families trying to secure essential support.

Streamlined processes, he argued, would also promote transparency and encourage wider utilisation of the social protection system, especially among marginalised communities.

Al Jabri further highlighted the need for regular policy evaluations, advocating for a robust feedback system to incorporate the lived experiences of beneficiaries.

He also emphasised that by prioritising social equity and inclusivity, Oman’s social benefits framework could more effectively enhance the well-being of citizens and contribute to national development.

Election of Indian schools BoD in Oman on Jan 11

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabyousef

Elections to the Board of Directors of the Indian Schools in Oman will be held on Saturday, January 11, 2025 according to the Election Commission (EC) of the Board of Directors which held a press conference on Saturday.

Speaking to the media, the members of the election Commission of the BoD, which is governed by the Ministry of Education (MoE), said that the issuance of nomination forms for candidates would begin on November 17, 2024. The prospective candidates can start filing the nomination form on all working days between Sunday to Thursday from November 21, to December 7, till 1 pm.

The EC would complete the scrutiny of nominations latest by December 14. Candidates have the right to withdraw their nominations till 1 pm on December 26. The final list of candidates would be published on December 27. The brochure having the profile of candidates would be circulated among parents by the first week of January 2025. The same would be displayed in the EC Website too.

Speaking to Observer, Babu Rajendran, Election Commissioner detailed the preparations put in place by the EC to elect 5 members of the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman from among the parents of students of Indian School Muscat.

The Election Commission of the Board of Directors consists of Election Commissioner Babu Rajendran, and Commission Members Shakeel K M, Divesh Loomba, Mythili Ananth, Tapan Viz and Mariyam Cheriyen. The Election Commission will oversee the entire process of election under the supervision of the Ministry of



The EC of the Board of Directors announced January 11 as date for election to the BoD of Indian schools in Oman

Education, Sultanate of Oman.

“We are currently preparing the voters’ list and the first list of eligible voters will be displayed on the school notice board on November 16. We have also instituted a website [www.indianschoolsbodelection](#). Org through which the parents can not only get themselves updated about various activities of the EC but also can check their eligibility to vote using their parent ID,” he said, adding that parents are welcome to intimate to the designated email id of Election Commission [electioncommissionbod@gmail.com](#), if any discrepancy in their record is found.

The Commission urged all parents to exercise their voting rights to ensure that the most preferred and most eligible candidates are elected to the BoD. The voting shall begin at 8 am and close at 5 pm, when the gates of the school will be

closed. However, those voters who are inside the school premises for voting before 5 pm will be allowed to complete casting their votes.

The Election Commissioner also requested the parents to abide by the laws of the land while exercising their franchise.

Canvassing in any form in and outside the school premises is strictly prohibited during the election day and there will be strict vigilance to ensure that there is no clogging around the area due to voter turnout.

The Election Commission also urged the candidate to treat other candidates with respect and dignity and any form of defamation or malign propaganda against opponent candidates as well as the existing system of governance of the Indian Schools Oman will be viewed seriously by the Election Commission.

Graduates Café 2024 concludes with inspiring sessions

MUSCAT: The Graduates Café 2024, hosted by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Al Musannah and held at the Youth Centre in Muscat, concluded with an impressive gathering of graduates and academics from various fields.

The event featured interactive workshops and activities designed to support graduates in their career journeys through experience-sharing and skill-building opportunities. Highlights included professional development workshops and insightful discussion sessions, where a distinguished graduate shared his career journey, inspiring attendees



The Sustainability Hackathon offered school students opportunities to solve real-world problems in competitions

with practical advice on career success. The Training and Career Guidance Centre underscored the importance of such gatherings in equipping

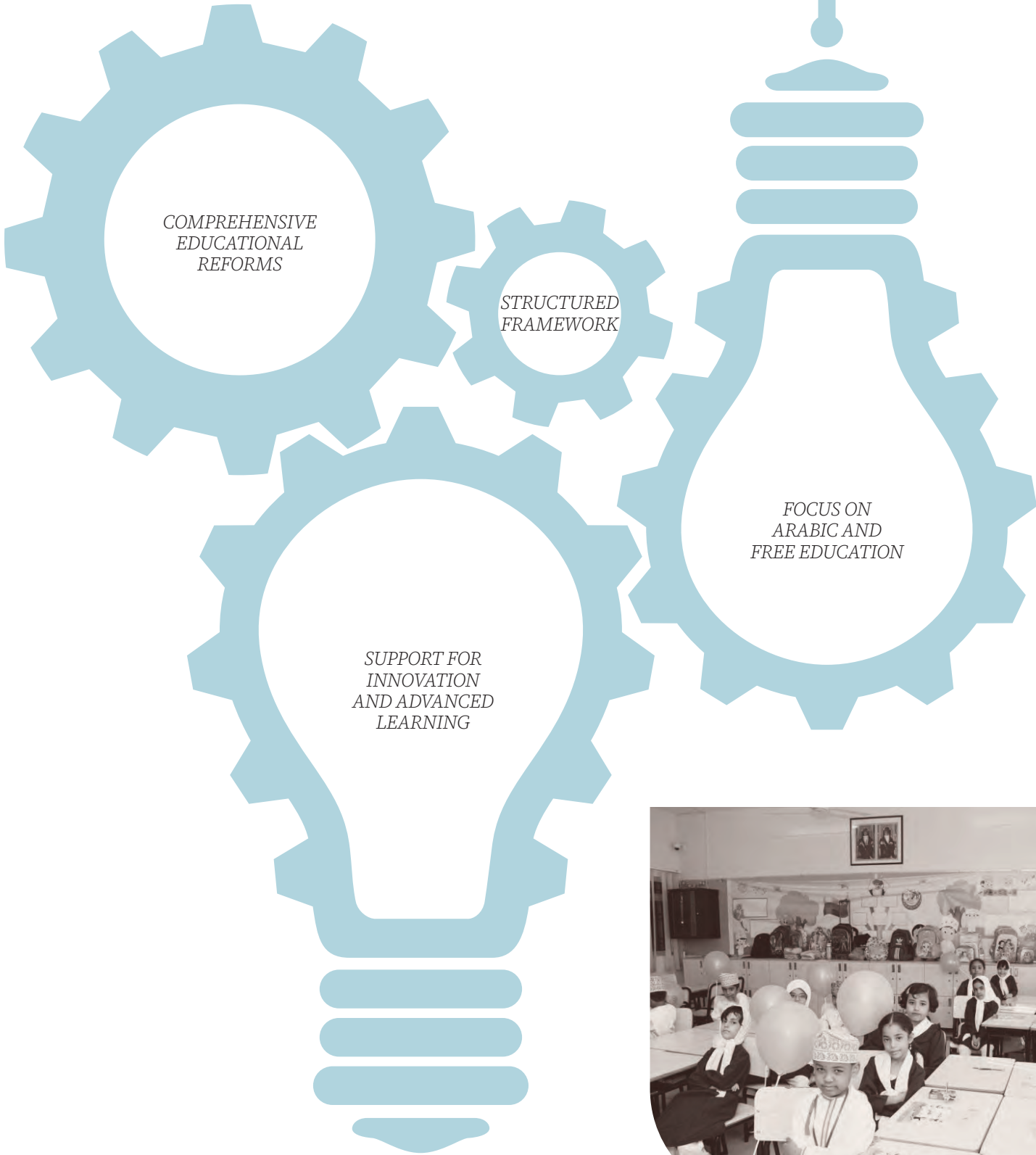
graduates with the tools and guidance needed to pursue their aspirations. The centre expressed its commitment to fostering an enriching environment for youth development through future workshops and events.

Organised by the Graduate Follow-up Department, the event aimed to strengthen the university’s connection with its alumni.

Participants expressed gratitude, noting it as a valuable opportunity for networking and exploring collaborations. The Graduate Follow-up Department looks forward to organising more initiatives to connect graduates with the job market.

AS PART OF OMAN’S 54TH NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS, THE MoE HIGHLIGHTS A TRANSFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN OMANI EDUCATION WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW SCHOOL EDUCATION LAW

BUILDING A BRIGHT FUTURE



AFRAH AL BALUSHI

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MoE) in Oman has introduced a transformative School Education Law, enacted through Royal Decree No 31/2023, that sets the course for a comprehensive, integrated approach to student learning and development.

This new legislation underscores the government’s commitment to fostering well-rounded individuals ready to excel in higher education and compete in a dynamic job market, aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

Comprising 97 articles across ten chapters, the law addresses essential aspects of education, including curriculum standards, faculty roles, special education programmes and student rights.

Its framework is designed to cultivate an educational environment that meets modern and future needs, while also fostering community engagement to encourage innovation and research.

For the first time, the law establishes standards across both

The law encourages lifelong learning, with pathways for adult education, supporting a skilled and adaptable workforce

government and private schools, upholding quality, accreditation, and inclusivity to ensure every student has access to an enriching and supportive educational experience.

The key elements of the law emphasise the importance of the Arabic language as the primary medium of instruction, while also allowing select subjects to be taught in other languages, making education accessible for diverse needs.

Basic education is now mandatory for children starting at age six, with specific obligations for guardians to ensure regular attendance and school participation, backed by penalties for non-compliance. These measures reinforce a stable and safe learning environment, fostering the well-being and academic growth of students.

The law also encourages educational innovation by promoting scientific research, creativity and specialised learning paths. Provisions support the establishment of specialised schools focusing on science, arts, and other fields, while enabling academically gifted students to advance quickly through their studies.

Scholarships for private education are available, creating new opportunities for students to thrive in learning environments tailored to their talents. Flexibility within the law allows for

homeschooling or remote learning for students whose circumstances prevent regular attendance, emphasising Oman’s commitment to accessible education for all.

In addition to academic reforms, the law prioritises a nurturing school environment, addressing school infrastructure, transportation and nutrition, as well as an enriched programme of extracurricular activities. Through community partnerships, the law seeks to extend learning beyond the classroom, engaging families and the local community in the educational process.

A unique feature of the law is its commitment to student well-being, aiming to balance academic rigour with the psychological, physical and social health of learners. Structured stages in the curriculum ensure a manageable pace that respects the needs of each age group, creating a school environment where students can thrive holistically.

Article 13 of the law is a notable step towards encouraging private sector investment in student innovation, ensuring that young Omani talents have the resources to transform their ideas into impactful projects. By fostering creativity and scientific exploration, the law supports Oman’s broader goals of strengthening its global position in science and technology.

Furthermore, the law includes specific pathways for adult learning, supporting lifelong education initiatives to ensure that all citizens can continue to develop their skills and knowledge. This aligns with Oman’s mission to build a resilient, skilled workforce prepared to adapt to the fast-paced advancements of the modern world.

As Oman’s educators, families and communities work together to implement this new law, there is optimism that it will address current educational challenges, close gaps and propel the nation’s students towards success in an evolving, technology-driven world.

The School Education Law stands as a milestone in Oman’s educational journey, laying a foundation that will benefit generations to come.

THE new law ensures the freedom of expression and guarantees the right of members of society to freedom of expression and exchange of opinions.

It will promote sustainable development and raise community awareness of important issues by emphasising the effective role of the media in community awareness and behavioural change.

The law ensures a safe environment for media work and prevents restrictions on the press and media while emphasising preventing the spread of misinformation and rumours that could harm the country's reputation and cause harm to the society with inappropriate content that can be an incitement to hatred and violence

The law seeks to promote transparency as a tool to combat rumours by providing information to the public and building an informed media culture with a clear legal framework for all media platforms such as print, visual, audio, or electronic.

It ensures raising the level of quality of media production through Government communication by encouraging media professionals to adhere to professional ethical standards and ensuring the compatibility of the content with societal/religious values and principles.

NEW LAW DEFINES RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS



1 The Media Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 58/2024 is based on a number of main foundations, namely: the Basic Law of the State, Oman Vision 2040 and the five-year development plans in addition to an objective evaluation of former legislations that governed the media activities in the Sultanate of Oman.

2 The law involves a definition of the rights and freedoms enjoyed by the media professionals in accordance with the Basic Law of the State. It specifies the restrictions on media activities exclusively without prejudice to the Basic Law of the State.

3 The law, which received wide participation from all parties, includes criminal penalties most importantly limiting the prison sentence and making it optional allowing the judicial authorities to impose a fine instead, criminalising the assault on media professionals while on duty, criminalising the disruption or interference on media activities and determining the criminal liability of legal persons involved in media activities.

4 It guarantees the right to respond and correct in the event of publishing or broadcasting incorrect information by any media outlet and the regulation of publications and artistic works subject to the provisions of the law.

5 The law involves a set of provisions, most notably the regulation of all media activities within the state whether wholly or partially, permanently or temporarily, including media activities provided by the units of the state's administrative apparatus and other public legal entities.

6 The law includes the definition of controls for practicing media activities in a clear and specific manner and states the rights and obligations of the media professionals subject to the provisions of the law.

7 The Royal Decree cancels the Publications and Publishing Law, the Law on the Censorship of Artistic Works, and the Law on Private Radio and Television Establishments.

Majlis Ash'shura approves draft laws

FROM PAGE 1

DRAFT STATE BUDGET

The Majlis reviewed the state's draft general budget for the 2025 fiscal year, aimed at supporting economic development and achieving financial sustainability. The Economic and Financial Committee began its study of the draft budget, with plans for extensive discussions in the upcoming sessions to ensure alignment with the economic and social objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and to review expenditure and revenue according to the next phase's needs.

FAMILY INCOME BENEFIT

Abdullah bin Hamad al Harthy, representative from the Wilayat of Ibra, delivered an urgent statement concerning Muscat Municipality's contract with Warner Bros, condemning the contract and noting that the company was founded by Jewish immigrants with dubious associations. He called for a review of this contract as a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people, warning that continuing with the contract might face public boycott, harming the economy instead of achieving expected benefits.

Additionally, Badr bin Nasser al Jabri, representative from the Wilayat of Nakhla, gave an urgent statement on the Family Income Benefit, calling for a review of eligibility criteria and simplification of the application process to meet the needs of the beneficiaries effectively. Al Jabri noted that the current minimum living standard set by authorities does not align with the RO 115 specified as the benefit, urging a suitable standard to ensure a dignified life for citizens.

The Majlis approved several air services agreements, including the one with the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and an air transport agreement with Djibouti. Dr Hamoud bin Ahmed al Yahyai, head of the Services and Public Facilities Committee, presented a report on the objectives of these agreements, aimed to promote civil aviation cooperation and support infrastructure development for the aviation sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Majlis endorsed a proposal from the Education and Research Committee regarding services provided by cultural attachés to Omani students studying abroad, emphasising the need to enhance support for

these students to achieve the best educational outcomes. Additionally, the Majlis approved a proposal to attract international universities to open branches in Oman, which would enhance educational quality in Oman and reduce the cost of overseas scholarships.

Badr bin Nasser al Jabri presented a proposal to establish a specialised authority for local content and government procurement, noting that Oman Vision 2040 aims to boost the national economy, increase non-oil private sector participation, and reduce the jobless rate. This requires establishing an authority to oversee local content development and encourage local companies to provide services to government sectors.

The Majlis approved the working plans of its permanent committees for the current sitting, which included scheduled programmes for addressing various national issues. Additionally, the Majlis approved the themes of the ministerial statements for the annual session, which will cover key developmental, economic, educational, and social issues, according to Article (69) of the Oman Council Law.



Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 10:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) Per set
4197/2024/ MOH/ HQ-320	Supply & Installation of Medical Equipments for The Royal Hospital	14-11-2024	11-12-2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	• ME: 10 • LO: 25 • INT:25
4198/2024/ MOH/ HQ-321	Supply of Consumables Items for Hematology Laboratory at The Royal Hospital	14-11-2024	11-12-2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	• SME: 10 • LO: 25 • INT:25
4216/2024/ MOH/ HQ-322	Supply of Laboratory Items (IVF)	21-11-2024	18-12-2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	• SME: 10 • LO: 25 • INT:25
4268/2024/ MOH/ HQ-324	Supply of Peritoneal Dialysis Items for The Royal Hospital	21-11-2024	18-12-2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	• SME: 11 • LO: 55 • INT:55
4291/2024/ MOH/ HQ-325	Supply of Surgical Consumables Items	18/11/2024	27/11/2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	• SME: 10 • LO: 25 • INT:25

- Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Voters queue to cast their votes at a polling station during the Mauritian general election at Beau Vallon. — AFP

MAURITIUS HOLDS ELECTION TO TACKLE COST OF LIVING

PORT LOUIS: Mauritius was holding a parliamentary election on Sunday, with Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and his main rivals all promising to tackle a cost of living crisis in the Indian Ocean archipelago. The country of about 1.3 million people markets itself as a link between Africa and Asia, deriving most of its revenues from a flourishing offshore financial sector, tourism and textiles.

Jugnauth’s Alliance Lepep coalition has promised to raise minimum wages, increase pensions and reduce value-added tax on some basic goods. It says it will use payments from the UK under an October agreement for Britain to cede the Chagos Islands while retaining the US-UK Diego Garcia air base.

“The alliance led by the prime minister is selling the economic prosperity card, with promises of more money to different segments of the population,” said political analyst Subash Gobine. The opposition is also pledging to increase pensions as well as introduce free transport and internet services and reduce fuel prices. — **Reuters**



Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leaders and supporters march, in Dhaka. — AFP

BANGLADESH TO SEEK ALERT FOR FUGITIVE HASINA LOYALISTS

DHAKA: Bangladesh said on Sunday it would request an Interpol “red notice” alert for fugitive leaders of the ousted regime of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who was toppled in a revolution in August. “Those responsible for the indiscriminate killings during the mass uprising in July and August will be brought back from wherever they have taken refuge”, Asif Nazrul, the interim government’s law advisor, told reporters on Sunday. “We will ensure they are arrested and brought to justice”.

Dozens of Hasina’s allies have been taken into custody since her regime collapsed, accused of involvement in a police crackdown that killed more than 700 people during the unrest that led to her ouster. France-based Interpol publishes red notices at the request of a member nation, based on an arrest warrant issued in their home country.

Supporters of Bangladesh’s ousted former leader were arrested after following her orders to protest bearing placards of Donald Trump, police said on Sunday, accusing them of trying to undermine relations with Washington. — **AFP**

CHINA, INDONESIA SEAL \$10 BN IN DEALS FOCUSED ON ENERGY, TECH

BEIJING: China and Indonesia signed deals worth \$10 billion at the Indonesia-China Business Forum in Beijing on Sunday, spanning sectors including food, new energy, technology, and biotechnology, Chinese state media reported.

The forum followed a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, who is in China through Nov. 10, the

first country he has visited since taking office last month. Prabowo also chose China as the first country to visit as president elect, underscoring Jakarta’s commitment to strengthening its strategic ties with Beijing.

In a joint statement issued after the leaders’ meeting, the two countries agreed to enhance collaboration in sectors such as new energy vehicles, lithium batteries, photovoltaics, and

the digital economy. They also pledged to strengthen the global energy transition partnership and jointly ensure the security of global mineral supply and industrial chains.

On Sunday, Chinese battery materials producer GEM signed a deal with PT Vale Indonesia to build a high-pressure acid leaching plant in Central Sulawesi, partly to secure nickel resources, a Shenzhen filing showed. — **Reuters**

Gaza rescuers say 13 children killed in strikes

GAZA’S civil defence agency on Sunday said 30 people, including 13 children, were killed in Israeli strikes on two houses in the north of the Palestinian territory. The first strike early on Sunday hit a house in Jabalia, northern Gaza, killing “at least 25” people, including 13 children, and injuring more than 30, civil defence said. Since October 6, the Israeli military has been engaged in a withering air and ground assault on areas of northern Gaza, including Jabalia, saying they are seeking to stop Hamas militants from regrouping there.

Another strike on the Sabra neighbourhood of Gaza City killed five people, with others still missing in the aftermath, civil defence said. “A number of civilians are still under the rubble,” the agency added. The Israeli military said it was “looking into the reports” of the strikes. Israel’s retaliatory campaign has killed 43,552 people in Gaza, most of them civilians, according to figures from the Hamas-run territory’s health ministry that the United Nations considers reliable.

The United Nations human rights (OHCHR) office on Friday condemned the number of civilians killed in Israel’s war in Gaza, with women and children comprising nearly 70 per cent of the thousands of fatalities it had managed to verify. “Civilians in Gaza have borne the brunt of the attacks, including through the initial ‘complete siege’ of Gaza by Israeli forces,” the OHCHR said. “Conduct by Israeli forces has caused unprecedented levels of killings, death, injury, starvation, illness and disease.”

Israel’s mission to the UN in Geneva



Palestinians stare at the destruction following an Israeli strike in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip. — AFP

“categorically” rejected the report, decrying “the inherent obsession of OHCHR with the demonisation of Israel”. The heads of UN agencies in early November described northern Gaza as “under siege” and denied “basic aid and life-saving supplies.”

Israel’s main military backer the United States had on October 15 warned that it could withhold some of its billions of dollars in military assistance unless it improves aid delivery to the Gaza Strip within 30 days. With that deadline fast approaching, there has been little sign of

improving conditions, with a UN-backed assessment on Saturday warning famine is imminent in northern Gaza.

Aid shipments allowed to enter the Gaza Strip were now lower than at any time since October 2023, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report. The alert from the Famine Review Committee warned of “an imminent and substantial likelihood of famine occurring, due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in the Gaza Strip”. Israel’s military questioned the report’s credibility. — **AFP**



Rescuers use an excavator to search for survivors at the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted the village of Almat. — AFP

NORTH OF BEIRUT MARKS NEW DEADLY BOMBS

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s health ministry said an Israeli strike on Sunday killed 20 people including three children in the village of Almat, north of the capital Beirut. The village of Almat is located in a mostly Christian region. It is outside Hezbollah’s strongholds of south Beirut and south and east Lebanon which Israel has heavily bombed since late September in its war against the movement.

“The Israeli enemy strike on Almat in the Jbeil district killed 20 people including three children and injured six, in an updated toll,” the health ministry said in a statement. The ministry also

said Israeli strikes killed three Hezbollah-affiliated rescuers in the south. Earlier, Lebanese official media reported an Israeli strike on a house in the main eastern city of Baalbek, which was not preceded by an Israeli army evacuation warning.

“Enemy aircraft launched a strike on a house in the Al Lagees neighbourhood” of the city, the state-run National News Agency said.

Overnight and on Sunday morning, Israel conducted a series of air strikes on southern and eastern villages and locations, NNA said. — **AFP**

WARSHIP FIRE

Fire breaks out on Japan navy ship



Fire broke out on a Japanese warship sailing near the western part of the country, causing one crew member to be hospitalised due to smoke inhalation, while another was missing. The Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) said the minesweeper Ukushima was sailing off the coast north of Fukuoka in the island of Kyushu. The fire broke out in Ukushima’s engine room and multiple explosive sounds had been heard, but the cause was being investigated. — **Reuters**

MILITARY TIES

Saudi army chief to visit Iran on rare trip



A top Saudi military official was set to visit Tehran for talks with Iranian officials, state media reported, in a rare high-level meeting. “Fayyad al Ruwaili, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Saudi Arabia, will travel to Iran at the head of a high-ranking military delegation”. He is scheduled to meet with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Bagheri in an effort to bolster “defence ties” between the countries, it reported. — **AFP**

LANDMARK DEAL

Putin finalises North Korea defence deal



Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed off on a landmark defence pact with North Korea, a deal that comes amid reports that Pyongyang has dispatched troops in Ukraine. Putin struck the deal during a visit to North Korea in June, but it had to pass through Russia’s parliament and signed by the Kremlin leader to come into force. The Kremlin published the signed law ratifying the treaty on Saturday evening. — **AFP**

DEFENCEDEAL



A Swedish Air Force SAAB JAS 39 Gripen fighter jet flies during a media day. Reuters file photo

SWEDEN AND BRAZIL SIGN DEAL ON FIGHTER JETS

STOCKHOLM: Sweden and Brazil signed a letter of intent on Saturday to extend cooperation on aviation, with Brazil intending to buy SAAB fighter jets and Sweden intending to buy Embraer cargo planes, the Swedish government said. Saab and Brazil's Embraer have also started joint production of JAS planes on site in Brazil.

"Now Brazil says it plans to extend the JAS 39 Gripen plane contract by 25%," the government said in a statement. In return, Sweden has selected Embraer's C-390 Millennium as the country's new military cargo aircraft, Embraer said. The letter of intent was signed by Swedish Defence Minister Pal Jonson and his Brazilian counterpart Jose Mucio in Brazil. "We have taken note of the information. It is of course very good news for SAAB and Sweden. We know that Brazil is very happy with JAS as its fighter jet. Now we look forward to continuing discussions with Brazil about further orders," a SAAB spokesperson said. — **Reuters**



KING LEADS SILENCE FOR WAR DEAD

Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Princess Anne, Princess Royal, attend the Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Cenotaph on Whitehall in central London. Remembrance Sunday is an annual commemoration held on the closest Sunday to Armistice Day, November 11, the anniversary of the end of the First World War. — **AFP**

Cuba says it made arrests after protests over hurricane blackout

HAVANA: Cuba's government said on Saturday it arrested an unspecified number of people who staged demonstrations when a hurricane left the island without power for the second time in weeks. Street protests are very rare in communist-run Cuba. The prosecutor's office said those arrested in Havana and the central provinces of Mayabeque and Ciego de Avila were being charged with assault, public disorder and property damage.

Hurricane Rafael knocked power out on Wednesday after hitting the west of the Caribbean island of 10 million people as a major Category 3 storm. The

blackout lasted two days. It came just two weeks after Hurricane Oscar, which left eight dead in the east of the island during a national electricity blackout caused by the failure of the island's biggest power plant and a shortage of fuel.

The government said that half of the people of Havana now have electricity again but much of the capital and the neighbouring province of Artemisa do not. According to the prosecutor's office, those detained after protesting were being held "for acts of aggression against authorities and territorial inspectors, causing injuries and public disturbances."



A car drives past a high tension electric tower knocked down during the passage of Hurricane Rafael on the road linking Artemisa with Havana. — **AFP**

Russia, Ukraine launch biggest drone attacks

RUSSIA and Ukraine both launched record drone attacks on each other overnight, as the Kremlin said it saw "positive signals" from US president-elect Donald Trump over his desire to strike a deal to end the conflict. Russia fired 145 drones at Ukraine overnight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said — more than in any single night-time attack of the conflict so far.

"Last night, Russia launched a record 145 Shaheds and other strike drones against Ukraine," Zelensky said on social media, urging Kyiv's Western allies to do more to help Ukraine's defence. Russia also said it had downed 34 Ukrainian attack drones targeting Moscow on Sunday, the largest attempted attack on the capital since the start of the war in 2022.

While having publicly claimed to be backing Kamala Harris in the US election, the Kremlin is widely believed to have actually wanted to see Trump return to the White House, welcoming his scepticism over American aid to Ukraine and his chaotic leadership style. "The signals are positive. Trump during his election campaign talked about how he perceives everything through deals, that he can make a deal that can lead to peace," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in an interview with state media published on Sunday. "At least he's talking about peace, and not about confrontation. He isn't talking about his wish to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia -- that distinguishes him from the current administration," Peskov added. President Putin has demanded Ukraine withdraw from swathes of its eastern and southern territory as a precondition to peace talks.

Following Trump's election, Zelensky warned there should be "no concessions"



A resident removes debris from a garage heavily damaged by a Russian drone strike, in Odesa. — **Reuters**

to Putin, saying ceding land or giving in to any of his other hardline demands would only embolden the Kremlin and lead to more aggression. Zelensky has also previously warned that without US aid Kyiv would lose the conflict.

Talk of a US-brokered deal comes with Russia advancing on the battlefield. Moscow's troops made their largest territorial gains in October since March 2022, according to analysis of data from the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW). Moscow's defence ministry claimed on Sunday to have

captured another village in Ukraine's east. Kyiv's attempted drone strike on Moscow was its largest attack on the Russian capital of the conflict, with Moscow region governor Andrei Vorobyov calling it "massive". It forced the temporary closure of three airports, wounded a 52-year-old woman and set two homes on fire in the village of Stanovoye in the Moscow region, officials said. While the Ukrainian capital Kyiv is regularly targeted by massive Russian drone and missile strikes, attacks on Moscow are much less frequent. — **AFP**

Trump completes swing state sweep by taking Arizona

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump won the state of Arizona in this week's US presidential election, US TV networks projected, completing the Republican's sweep of all seven swing states. After four days of counting in the southwest state with a large Hispanic population, CNN and NBC projected Trump had obtained its 11 electoral votes as he defeated Vice-President Kamala Harris. Outgoing President Joe Biden scored a narrow but crucial victory in Arizona in 2020 that condemned Trump to defeat after his first term in office.

The scale and strength of Trump's comeback, which also saw the real estate tycoon win the popular vote by a margin of around four million votes, has sent shockwaves through the defeated Democratic Party.

The Republicans have already regained control of the Senate and look well set to retain a majority in the House of Representatives.

The other six swing states won by Trump in the presidential race are Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada and Georgia. The latest good news for Trump came as the White House said Biden would meet with the president-elect at the White House.

Trump sealed a remarkable comeback to the presidency in the November 5 vote, cementing what is set to be more than a decade of US politics dominated by his hardline right-wing stance.

Trump sealed a remarkable comeback to the presidency in the November 5 vote, cementing what is set to be more than a decade of US politics dominated by his hardline right-wing stance. This type of meeting between the outgoing and incoming presidents was considered customary.

Trump also broke with precedent by skipping Biden's inauguration, but the White House has said the Democratic president will attend the upcoming ceremony.

Biden's meeting with Trump will take place in the Oval Office, the White House said on Saturday, with the clock ticking down to the ex-president's return to power. Trump, the 78-year-old ex-reality TV star, won wider margins than before, despite a criminal conviction, two impeachments while in office and warnings from his former chief of staff that he is a fascist.

Exit polls showed that voters' top concerns remained the economy and inflation that spiked under Biden in the wake of the Covid pandemic. — **AFP**

Trump sealed a remarkable comeback to the presidency in the November 5 vote, cementing what is set to be more than a decade of US politics dominated by his hardline right-wing stance

OPINION

Fostering a scientific spirit for the benefit of society



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THE OMAN Science Festival (OSF) at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre is a testament to the importance of science and instilling a scientific temperament among the youth today.

While curiosity and the ability to be open to new ideas is always necessary for a productive society, it has never been as important as it is today.

Society is now at the brim of technological advances which are exciting, but are also challenging our world. Environmental concerns, together with the seemingly endless possibilities of Artificial Intelligence, are posing new questions to us every day.

On the one hand, the world is opening up with endless possibilities in robotics, driverless technology, augmented reality and workplace automation. All of this has implications for the way we work, and whether we work at all in the traditional occupations which still exist.

On the other hand, these technologies come with a whole set of challenges: the ever-present fear of unemployment, finding oneself at the rear of the technological race and trying to play catch up,

and other important concerns which are ethical and security-related.

But staying away from these debates or not confronting these issues is counterproductive.

As is often said, change is the only constant. Equipping the young with a scientific temperament will go a long way in ensuring that our society is in good hands for the future.

Studies worldwide have shown that students are keen to explore new opportunities in science and technology when they can see the direct effect it is having on their own communities. Examples include creating a model for flash flooding prevention, using mobile technology to access a nearby market to sell vegetables or actively engaging in conservation in school.

Engaging young learners in science is not only beneficial to society, but it also makes education more meaningful. Inviting nutritionists to a class to speak about food choices, having an in-class astronomy session or a first-aid class with a demonstration using students are all strategies which can be easily adopted for short bursts in a classroom.

Engaging young learners in science is not only beneficial to society, but it also makes education more meaningful

As we all know, students learn better by doing. Short classroom experiments involving everyday objects to understand principles of physics or chemistry will go a long way in creating sustained interest in children. This will help them with opportunities to create, share and collaborate on simple projects which use technology and are directly linked to their community.

Today, students can easily create real-world models of a sustainable city, whether in a diagram on paper or using 3-D technology to which they could be introduced. They could also work together on creating websites on areas which would be of interest to their community – including some on responsible consumption and careful use of natural resources.

A scientific spirit is built on a combination of curiosity, skepticism and openness. It is never too early to introduce science and technology to youngsters as it is an integral part of our lives today. In fact, not doing so would be a disservice to them as they are then not equipped to deal with the challenges facing them in their future.

BALI TOURISM
FREEZE LIKELY TO
RESTORE BALANCE

AGNES ANYA, SETYA

On Indonesia’s beach-fringed resort island of Bali, fed-up locals want to slow the mass tourism that is their biggest money earner -- hoping a plan to freeze hotel-building can restore some calm.

Anxious about runaway tourism, many Balinese yearn for a more tranquil yesteryear, much like residents in European hotspots Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca or Venice. In response, Indonesian authorities recently announced plans — yet to be confirmed by the new government — for a two-year moratorium on building hotels and villas.

Before foreign surfers discovered its waves decades ago, Canggu was a quiet, southern Balinese beachside village perched on the Indian Ocean and dotted with rice paddy fields.

Now, it bristles with hotels and lodgings, its streets clogged with cars, scooters and trucks.

Locals like 23-year-old Kadek Candrawati fear the environment is taking second place.

“Canggu is now busier... its tranquillity and greenery are gradually disappearing,” said Kadek, who owns a motorcycle rental service that earns her seven million rupiah (\$453) monthly. “The government and the community need to work together to ensure that Bali stays green, sustainable, and the local culture is preserved,” she said.

“I hope that Bali’s tourism can continue to grow, while maintaining a balance between development and the environment.”

Bali’s lush canvas of rainforests, paddies and surf beaches that host luxury resorts and backpacker haunts has kept tourists coming back.

When tourism numbers slumped during the Covid pandemic, the authorities tried to coax foreigners back into Bali with digital-nomad and golden-investor visas.

Bali attracted nearly three million foreign visitors in just the first six months of this year -- mostly from Australia, China and India, official figures show.

Foreign tourists spent an average of \$1,625 per visit last year, up from \$1,145 in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic, Indonesia’s statistics agency said.

Meeting island officials recently, he pledged a second international airport to turn Bali into “the new Singapore, the new Hong Kong... an economic centre”.

Indonesian environmental group Walhi says the boom in tourism accommodation has already gone too far. “Bali is now overbuilt, with green spaces turning into structures,” said executive director Made Krisna Dinata. — AFP

Leadership of today: A
call to shape the future

IN THE grand arena of leadership, a familiar refrain often echoes: “You are the leaders of tomorrow; prepare yourself for the mantle that shall fall upon your shoulders.”

This idea is noble, inspiring, and laced with the hope of a brighter, more enlightened future. However, it raises a critical question: What of the leaders of today?

While the world looks towards future generations to guide society, industry and governance, are the current leaders addressing the pressing issues of the present?

Leaders like Travis Kalanick, the former CEO of Uber, and Elizabeth Holmes, the founder of Thera-nos, demonstrate the dangers of leadership that disregards ethics, accountability and the well-being of those it governs.

Kalanick’s toxic corporate culture and the scandal surrounding Uber, coupled with Holmes’ deceptive practices at Theranos, reveal the fragility of leadership that fails to prioritise integrity.

Meanwhile, Jeff Bezos, despite his success in building Amazon into a global titan, has also come under fire for fostering a culture of extreme pressure and burnout.

These examples show that today’s leaders must first reflect on their own actions and the environments they create. Leadership is not just about making decisions for the future, but about handling the present with wisdom, compassion and responsibility.

If we are to truly prepare future leaders, we must examine the leadership of today. How can we expect the leaders of tomorrow to succeed when their predecessors have failed to address critical issues?

Leaders must confront the reality of their own failures and shortcomings. It is not enough to simply pass the baton to future



Jeff Bezos has also come under fire for fostering a culture of extreme pressure and burnout



MOHAMMED ANWAR AL BALUSHI

The writer is a senior lecturer at Middle East College

generations. Today’s leaders must lead with integrity and vision, addressing the challenges of the present - whether it’s economic instability, environmental crises, or social inequities - before offering advice to the next generation.

The legacy of today’s leadership will directly shape the world that future leaders inherit. What lessons are being passed down?

If today’s leaders fail to act with transparency, fairness and resolve, they will leave behind a fractured world for the next generation to fix. The future cannot be a mere continuation of past mistakes.

True leadership requires courage to confront the issues of the

moment and address them in a way that builds trust, fosters innovation and creates environments where individuals can thrive.

The responsibility of leaders today is clear: they must lead with purpose, embrace accountability and create a foundation that allows future generations to build upon.

Only by addressing the challenges of today can we hope to craft a tomorrow that is free from the burdens of past failures. Leadership is not merely about preparing others for tomorrow - it is about acting decisively today to create the future we all hope to see.

We all need a recharge...



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SELF-DEVELOPMENT is not just a one-time event; it is an ongoing journey of growth and transformation. It involves intentional efforts to improve oneself through learning, reflection, and the consistent refinement of skills. Whether in our careers, relationships, or personal well-being, self-development forms the foundation for a fulfilling life. By continuously striving for growth, we unlock our hidden potential, overcome challenges, and evolve into the best version of ourselves.

In a world that is ever-changing, the pursuit of self-development is no longer optional — it is essential. It is a pathway to a life of purpose, success, and happiness. By dedicating ourselves to personal growth, we can discover untapped talents, strengthen our resilience, and face the future with confidence. Self-development goes far beyond simply recharging our energy or reviving our spirits. It is a profound process of self-discovery, where we learn to recognise our inner strengths and potential. In doing so, we foster emotional and mental growth, which leads to deeper fulfilment in every aspect of our lives. Without self-development, we risk becoming stagnant like machines stuck on autopilot, repeating the same patterns without ever evolving.

To avoid this, we all need a personal development plan — something that helps

us enhance our values, elevate our personal charisma, and transform our identity. This plan is not just about changing how we present ourselves to the world. Instead, it is about improving our attitudes, abilities, and overall potential. Personal development helps us build human capital and reach higher levels of achievement, both in our personal and professional lives.

Moreover, self-development plays a key role in realising our dreams and aspirations. The most exciting part of this process is that the benefits extend beyond us. As we develop our own skills and strengths, we become better equipped to help others, whether as mentors, teachers, life coaches, or in any other role that requires us to inspire and support others on their journeys. At its core, self-development is a constructive process that encourages us to assess our skills, set meaningful goals, and unlock our full potential. It is a roadmap for the future, guiding us towards growth and success. However, this journey is not without its challenges. Along the way, we will face obstacles that test our patience and persistence. But the rewards of personal growth far outweigh the difficulties.

The path to success is often fraught with challenges that push us to develop our resilience. Those who achieve great things are not those who avoid struggle, but those

We all need
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who embrace it. As the saying goes, “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” True strength is not found in moments of victory, but in how we navigate adversity. It is about facing hardships and refusing to give up. As another saying goes, “You can’t change the direction of the wind, but you can adjust the sails.” This mindset is key to overcoming life’s obstacles and achieving your dreams. Achieving our dreams is never easy. It often requires sacrifice, patience, and unwavering commitment. But no matter how hard the journey may seem, we should never give up. Success belongs to those who stay focused on their goals, no matter the cost. The key is to keep hope alive, maintain persistence, and stay committed to your vision.

For anyone looking to embark on a journey of self-development, the first step is to set a positive, purposeful intention. You must believe in the power of change, because change is the catalyst for improvement. It all begins with hope, persistence, and the determination to grow.

Albert Einstein once said: “A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.” Everyday offers new opportunities for growth and progress. By embracing challenges and staying open to change, we ensure that our journey towards self-development remains fruitful and transformative.

WHAT WENT WRONG DURING SPAIN’S FLOOD DISASTER

DAVID LATONA AND CORINA PONS

The water was already knee-high on the ground floor of the hotel where Aitana Puchal had taken refuge when she received a text alert from the regional government of Valencia at 8 pm on October 29 warning people to shelter in place from severe flash floods.

“We could have done with (the warning) about six hours earlier,” said the 23-year-old, who had fled with other local residents and guests to the first floor of the hotel near the town of Paiporta. “We were all calming down a little from the panic and drying our feet.” Others were not so fortunate. Carlos Martinez, another Paiporta resident, told local television the flood alert came when he was stranded in a tree “seeing bodies floating past.”

Dozens of inhabitants of flooded communities said that by the time they received the regional

government’s alert, muddy water was already surrounding their cars, submerging streets of their towns and pouring into their homes. After days of storm warnings from the national weather service since October 25, some municipalities and local institutions had raised the alarm much earlier. Valencia University had told its staff the day before not to come to work. Several town halls across the region of eastern Spain had suspended activities,

As climate change exacerbates weather patterns along Spain’s Mediterranean coast, floods are becoming commonplace and some previous incidents have been deadly

shut down public facilities and told people to stay home. But the mixed messages and confusion cost lives, dozens of local residents and experts said. More than 220 people died and nearly 80 are still missing in what is the most deadly deluge in a single European country since 1967, when floods in Portugal killed around 500. The national weather service AEMET had raised its threat level for heavy rains to a red alert at 7.36 am on October 29, following heavy rains in mountainous areas west of the city of Valencia from the early morning. In the 12 hours it took for the regional government’s shelter-in-place order to come through, waters running through the usually dry Poyo ravine — the epicentre of the flooding — had surged to more than three times the flow of Spain’s largest river, the Ebro.

As climate change exacerbates weather patterns along Spain’s Mediterranean coast, floods are becoming commonplace and some previous incidents have been deadly. But after at least five decades without a major catastrophe, many people in Valencia were unaware of the grave dangers posed by flash flooding or how to respond.

Puchal, the 23-year old who sought refuge in the hotel, said she had never received much information about the risks of floods. “At school, they gave talks about fires,” she said. “But not floods.” — Reuters

Living in Trump’s world

AS EUROPEAN leaders wake up to the reality of Donald Trump’s impending return to the White House, they must take care to avoid two big traps: panic and denial. It won’t be easy, but the stakes are too high to fail.

The reasons for panic are obvious. Trump may be unpredictable and mercurial, but there is little doubt that his political instincts and stated plans will shake the pillars of Europe’s security, economic, and political order.

On security, Europeans have every reason to fear that Trump’s proposed “peace plan” for Ukraine will deprive that country of its territorial integrity and leave it demilitarised and permanently excluded from Nato. And Nato itself may well go “dormant,” with America radically reducing its participation and handing responsibility for the alliance’s military command and resources over to the Europeans.

In the Middle East, Europeans rightly worry that Trump’s plan to secure peace will mean supporting the expansionist plans of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s extremist coalition, perhaps even including the Palestinians’ expulsion from Gaza and the West Bank and their resettlement in Egypt and Jordan. The economic scenarios are even scarier. Trump has talked about imposing a universal import tariff of 10-20 per cent, and a 60 per cent tariff on goods from China. Such a policy risks triggering a global trade war, with governments introducing retaliatory measures against the US. If China is shut out of the US market, Europeans will be even more vulnerable to the supply effects of its manufacturing overcapacity.

Making matters worse, Europe’s response to another Trump presidency may well be hampered by the “illiberal international,” which includes Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

For all these reasons, European leaders are on the verge of panic and feel tempted to rush to Washington to cut bilateral deals — as many did during Trump’s first term. If they do, it will come directly at the expense of European unity.



If European leaders fall into denial about the scale of the threat Trump poses, they will not take the necessary steps to build resilience.

But the second trap is just as dangerous. If European leaders fall into denial about the scale of the threat Trump poses, they will not take the necessary steps to build resilience. Europeans have known for the past four years that Trump could return, and they have made some progress towards addressing their new geopolitical vulnerability with higher defence spending (collectively, Europeans now spend over 2 per cent of their GDP on defence) and diversification away from Russian gas. But overall, they have been far too slow. Some are buoyed by false confidence, telling themselves that if they survived one Trump term, they can survive another. But the Trump of 2017-20 was an outsider who had been surprised by his own election and craved establishment recognition. This time, he is dead set on revenge against the establishment that thwarted him before, and he has had plenty of time to prepare for office. European leaders must take him at his word and brace themselves. Confronted with these scenarios, the most urgent task for European leaders is to use the 70-odd days between now and January 20, 2025, to agree on their common interests and work out how to defend them — together with the US if possible, but alone if necessary. That means drafting a concrete plan to protect Europe from both security and economic pressures.

The most immediate concern is Ukraine. To prevent a deal that leaves Ukraine demilitarised

and shut out of Nato, Europe needs to ensure a steady flow of ammunition and air defences in the short term, while providing Ukraine with credible long-term security guarantees. It also must figure out how to spend more efficiently on defence, increase the volume of combat-ready forces available to Nato and the European Union, and — if necessary — strengthen its own nuclear deterrence.

The second most challenging issue will be trade. If Trump keeps his promise of levying across-the-board import tariffs, a trade war between the EU and its biggest export market is inevitable. In a world where geopolitics and geo-economics are increasingly intertwined, the bloc should prepare countermeasures against the US and seek to expand trade with the rest of the world.

Trump’s victory also completely changes the context for the EU’s relationship with the United Kingdom. Since the Labour Party took office in July, cross-channel contacts have increased significantly. But now there should be an accelerated push to make a big, bold offer to the UK to create a new partnership.

For his part, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer should commit to working towards a stronger and more united Europe. He should put everything on the table, including exploring how Britain’s nuclear deterrent can contribute to collective European security.

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MARK LEONARD

The writer is Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, is the author of The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict

SPORTS

BALANCED DRAW



‘GULF 26’ DRAW SETS STAGE FOR OMAN’S CLASH WITH KUWAIT

Waleed al Jahwari
MUSCAT, NOV 10

The draw for the 26th edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup, ‘Gulf 26’, was held on Saturday, and the tournament will be hosted by Kuwait from December 21 to January 3, 2025. The draw resulted in anticipated confrontations, with the first group including the host Kuwait, along with Qatar, the UAE, and Oman. The second group consists of Iraq, the title holder, alongside Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Yemen.

The Oman national team will open the 26th Gulf Cup by facing Kuwait at Jaber Al Ahmad International Stadium on the opening day of the tournament. The national team will also play Qatar on December 24 at 6:25 pm, and will face the UAE on December 27 at 6:30 pm Oman time. Both matches will take place at Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Stadium, respectively.

The tournament will be held under the slogan “The Future is Gulf”, in a single-round league system, with the first and second teams from each group qualifying for the semi-finals, which will be contested in a single-match knockout format.

Kuwait is hosting the Gulf Cup for the fifth time in its history, the most of any country. The Oman national team is preparing for its 24th participation in the Gulf Championships, which began with the third edition in Kuwait in 1974 and has continued sequentially through to the last edition in Basra at the beginning of 2024.

The most notable appearance of the national team was in Kuwait in 2017, when they won the Gulf title under the leadership of the late Dutch coach Pim Verbeek.

Khaled al Rawas, national football team manager, said, “The draw is largely balanced, and has produced two equal groups. It is perhaps one of the tournaments that has witnessed perfect balance.”

Red Warriors rally for crucial WC qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 10

THE national football team players are gearing up for two decisive World Cup qualifying matches, which are scheduled against Palestine and Iraq on November 14 and November 19, respectively. Under the guidance of the experienced national head coach Rasheed Jaber, the team’s training camp has completed one week since it started last week at the Seeb Stadium as the team sets the stage for their pursuit of a coveted spot in the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The coaching staff recently bolstered the squad by calling up two more players, including Motaz Saleh and Ali al Rushaidi, enhancing the team’s depth and flexibility.

Meanwhile, Ali al Busaidy suffered a setback after sustaining a right-leg injury and is currently under medical treatment. His health status will require some recovery treatments until he gets fit to return to the field, and it is expected that he will miss the two upcoming games. Moreover, Salah al Yahyaei is suffering an injury too, alongside the injury of Yazeed al Maashani. Nearly all selected players are now in attendance, and Mohsin al Ghassani of Bangkok United is set to join shortly.

The camp started with rigorous physical conditioning designed to enhance players’ stamina, speed, and strength. The focus has since shifted to technical and tactical drills that hone team cohesion, positioning, and strategic clarity across every phase of play. The ‘Red Warriors’ will aim to secure crucial points in their upcoming games on Thursday and November 19 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, with the expectation of a large home crowd to support the team and help clinch the winning points.

Following a challenging qualification journey so far, the Red Warriors currently hold fourth place in the standings with three points, trailing leaders South Korea with 10 points. Jordan and Iraq follow the leaders with 7 points.

The recent 4-0 defeat against Jordan in Amman underscored the need for a strong comeback, with the squad now



rallying to turn the tide in these must-win home fixtures to keep their hopes alive.

The team’s lineup boasts a robust mix of experienced players and young faces in almost all positions. The defensive side is anchored by experienced players, including Mohammed al Musallami and Ahmed al Khamisi, while a dynamic midfield is led by Harib al Saadi and the new young player Hussain al Shahri, alongside their teammates in this position.



The attacking front features key players like Omar al Maliki, Mohsin al Ghassani and Hatim al Roushdi, who will seek to exploit every opportunity to push Oman’s tally forward.

With support from home fans and meticulous preparation by the national team’s committee campaign, ‘We are all with you’, the Red Warriors are working hard to deliver their all as they step onto the pitch to keep their World Cup dream alive.

Al Nokhedha programme concludes in Al Wusta

MUSCAT: Duqm Refinery and Petrochemicals Industries Company (OQ8), in collaboration with Oman Sail, successfully concluded the 2024 edition of the Al Nokhedha programme, aimed at empowering women and youth across Oman.

The programme attracted students from public schools throughout Al Wusta Governorate, targeting tenth and eleventh-grade male and female students, along with 20 teachers who participated in specialised workshops to enhance communication and leadership skills. The programme seeks to support both students and educators in Al Wusta Governorate, equipping them with essential skills in communication and leadership through an extensive series of workshops tailored to build personal and professional competencies. A special programme track was dedicated to female students, reflecting a commitment to strengthening women’s roles in Oman’s future.

From October 17-19, Duqm

Refinery hosted workshops for tenth and eleventh-grade students, with a focus on leadership, decision-making, and environmental awareness—contributing to the development of a generation of young leaders.

In addition, a dedicated series was held for female students from October 24-26, designed to enhance their leadership, communication, and teamwork skills, as well as to foster a deeper connection to Oman’s heritage, contributing to the empowerment of Oman’s future women leaders.

The programme also included a workshop for teachers from October 22-23, where 20 educators from Al Wusta Governorate participated in sessions aimed at developing effective classroom communication skills. This segment equipped teachers with modern verbal and non-verbal communication tools to enhance the overall quality of education across Al Wusta Governorate.

Commenting on the programme, Saif al Manji, Head of Value Creation at OQ8,



Al Nokhedha programme

said, “As the students prepare to pursue higher education or enter the workforce, or embark on entrepreneurial journeys, acquiring skills that allow them to identify and enhance their strengths while addressing areas for growth represents a vital step toward their future success. We are proud of the Al Nokhedha programme as an effective tool for developing the capabilities of youth and preparing future leaders, hoping that the skills participants have gained will leave a lasting positive impact in their communities.”

Khamis al Anbouri, Oman Sail’s Commercial Director, added, “The fourth edition of ‘Al Nokhedha’ programme showcases the diversity of promising talent in Oman deserving of support and empowerment. The programme has fostered a positive spirit and newfound confidence among students while providing teachers with innovative tools to engage with their students. This approach has allowed all participants to broaden their horizons and aspire

toward a better future. We are proud of the results achieved and extend our heartfelt thanks to Duqm Refinery for its exceptional and continued support.”

Mohammed al Junaibi commented, “Through my participation in the ‘Al Nokhedha’ programme, I realised that I am capable of achieving what I once thought was out of reach, by adopting the right mindset and paths. The workshops were rich in information, easy to understand, and, most importantly, enjoyable. The experience of working as a team to achieve a common goal was incredibly satisfying. I look forward to sharing this knowledge with others in the future.”

OQ8 reaffirms its commitment to supporting national goals through its social investment programmes. The Al Nokhedha programme is part of the company’s ongoing efforts to empower women, youth, and communities in Oman, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 to build a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

MDO CELEBRATES GROUNDBREAKING OF MAZOOON COPPER PROJECT IN YANQUL

THE LARGEST INTEGRATED COPPER CONCENTRATE PRODUCTION PROJECT IN THE SULTANATE

Al Dhahirah Governorate, Yanqul – November 11, 2024: Mazoon Mining, a subsidiary of Minerals Development Oman (MDO), marked a significant milestone with the official groundbreaking of the Mazoon Copper Project in the Wilayat of Yanqul, Al Dhahirah Governorate, on 10 November 2024. The ceremony was held under the patronage of His Excellency Abdul Salam bin Mohammed Al-Murshidi, Chairman of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA). The project is set to play a key role in meeting the growing global demand for copper while positioning Oman as a strategic hub for high-quality copper concentrate production.

Mazoon Copper Project is the largest integrated copper concentrate production project in the Sultanate of Oman, covering 20 square kilometers and consisting of five open-pit mines with an estimated 22.9 million tons of copper ore reserves. The project also includes the construction of a state-of-the-art processing plant, spanning 56,000 square meters, with the capacity to process 2.5 million tons of copper ore annually. It is projected to produce 115,000 tons of copper concentrate per year at a 21.5% copper grade.

The project underscores a strong commitment to environmental sustainability, integrating advanced technologies in the management of both mining operations and the processing plant to adhere to the highest environmental standards. Furthermore, it aims to enhance local impact by investing in the social and economic growth of the Yanqul community, reinforcing the company's dedication to fostering sustainable development across economic and social dimensions.

Mazoon Copper Project's journey began with extensive exploration activities, culminating in the signing of a concession agreement in 2022 for Concession Area 12-A1. To ensure the successful delivery of the project, the Canadian firm Lycopodium was appointed to provide engineering, procurement, and construction management services. With the project now in its initial development stages, site preparations are well underway, and tenders are being issued, signaling the next steps for the project.

Construction of the processing plant is planned to begin in the first quarter



of 2025, and production of copper concentrate is set to commence in the first quarter of 2027. This strategic timeline will play a crucial role in ramping up copper production and meeting both local and international market demands.

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will play a crucial role in ramping up copper production and meeting both local and international market demands.

His Excellency Abdul Salam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of the Oman Investment Authority, stated: "This project marks a transformative step in positioning Oman as a strategic copper hub, contributing to the diversification of our national economy and creating sustainable job opportunities for Omanis. We are confident that the project will have a significant positive impact on the local community, supporting SMEs and driving economic development."

Dr. Badar bin Saud Al Kharusi, Chairman of Minerals Development Oman, commented on the progress of the project: "We are proud to witness the Mazoon Copper Project come to fruition after an extensive series of exploration activities. This project marks a milestone for Minerals Development Oman, adding invaluable assets to our portfolio. The company began

copper ore extraction from Block 4 in Wilayat of Sohar in 2024 and has continued its exploration efforts across its 23,644 square kilometer concession area. We are excited to see our resource base grow. With the necessary financing secured, the project reflects both our financial stability and the trust we have garnered locally and globally. We are committed to ensuring that each phase of the project meets the highest environmental and social standards."

Sustainability is a core pillar of the Mazoon Copper Project. The project has adopted a zero-water discharge system, ensuring that treated water is recycled to minimize water consumption. Additionally, waste management systems are in place to preserve the surrounding environment, safeguarding air quality, and protecting groundwater.

His Excellency Najib bin Ali Al-Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, praised the collaboration with Mazoon Mining, saying: "We are committed to working hand-in-hand with Minerals Development Oman to establish a strong community partnership that focuses on achieving both social and economic development in Yanqul. By collaborating with various government entities, we aim to strike a balance between the company's business goals and its responsibility toward community growth. This project will significantly bolster economic development in Al Dhahirah and empower SMEs, which are vital to the local economy."

In addition to the Mazoon Copper Project, MDO continues to advance its exploration campaigns across a diverse range of strategic minerals, including copper, chromite, gypsum, limestone, dolomite, and silica. The company has also initiated the redevelopment of copper mines in Sohar and Liwa, aiming to produce 800,000 tons of copper ore annually, with confirmed reserves of 2.78 million tons of copper ore. These efforts reflect MDO's ongoing commitment to strengthening its market position and driving sustainable economic development across Oman.

For more information about the Mazoon Copper Project and other initiatives, please visit the Minerals Development Oman website at (<http://www.mdo.om>).



SPORTS

GAUFF FIGHTS BACK TO BEAT THE MVP FOR WTA FINALS TITLE



COCO

GAUFF became the youngest player to win the WTA Finals title in 20 years with a gruelling 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) victory over Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen in Riyadh on Saturday.

The 20-year-old Gauff rallied back from 3-6, 1-3 down, and erased a one-break deficit twice in the decider, to overcome Zheng in three hours and four minutes - the second-longest WTA final in 2024.

“This means a lot to me,” said Gauff.

“This is the first professional women’s tennis event here in Saudi Arabia and I’ll forever be etched in history in that standard.

“It’s the second biggest title in our sport, so it means a lot. And just to be etched in history forever, it’s pretty cool and hopefully there’s more events here.”

By clinching the trophy, Gauff pocketed a record \$4,805,000 - which is the largest ever payout at a professional, sanctioned tour event.

Gauff had knocked out the world’s top two players, Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek, en route to the final and picked up her fourth top-eight win of the week with an impressive physical performance against Zheng.

The American was unaware she had earned a record prize cheque and laughed when she was told how much she made by a reporter.

“I don’t know what I’ll do with it, that’s a lot of money. What you said? 4.8 (million)? I hope I’m one of the highest paid female tennis players this year, or athletes, so that would be exciting,” she said.

By clinching the trophy, Gauff pocketed a record

\$4,805,000 – which is the largest ever payout at a professional, sanctioned tour event.



Gauff celebrates with the trophy with runner up Qinwen. — Reuters

Zheng is just the second Asian woman, behind Li Na in 2013, to reach the singles championship match at a WTA Finals.

The Chinese star wraps up her breakthrough 2024 campaign having won 31 of her last 37 matches, and will rise to a career-high number five in the world on Monday.

“The match today came down to just a couple of important points. It was very close. And at the end, when you play these type of matches, it’s not about tennis, it’s about choices on court,” said Zheng.

“It hurts to lose this match of course but I think it’s better I forget it and move on for my next steps.”

Youngest finalists in two decades Contesting the youngest final at the WTA Finals since Maria Sharapova’s win over Serena Williams in 2004, Gauff and Zheng, 22, brought their A-game from the start.

It was Zheng who faced more pressure on serve in the opening games, saving a number of break points to keep things on level terms with her American opponent.

The rallies got longer and more

physically taxing and it was Gauff who cracked first, double-faulting to hand Zheng a 5-3 lead.

Zheng had to save a break point while serving for the set, which she closed on a netted backhand from Gauff.

The seventh seed kept up her momentum and clinched a fifth game in a row to go up 2-0 early in the second set.

Gauff stopped the bleeding though and fought her way back to level for 3-3, finally claiming her first break of serve on her sixth opportunity of the match. Zheng appeared to have lost a bit of her speed and Gauff took full advantage of the situation.

The American made it four games in a row to put herself in the position to serve for the second set but couldn’t close, as Zheng saved a pair of set points to peg her opponent back and break. Gauff retaliated the next game to scoop the second set and force a decider.

Gauff dropped serve at the start of the final set but pulled off an incredible stretch volley to strike back and even the score 2-2.

Zheng mustered all the power she could, unleashing huge serves and groundstrokes to create another gap and surged ahead 5-3.

Gauff would not relent and once again wiped her deficit. Zheng saved two championship points on her own serve in game 12 and carried the match into a deciding tiebreak. — AFP

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SHORTTAKES

Muscat had the lowest increase at 0.19%.

INFLATION CLIMBS 0.4% IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 0.4 per cent in September 2024 compared to the same month in 2023, based on the 2018 Consumer Price Index from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Price increases were noted in several key categories: goods and services (+4.33 per cent), food and non-alcoholic beverages (+2.81 per cent), health (+2.44 per cent), and entertainment (+0.71 per cent).

Price increases were noted in several key categories: goods and services (+4.33 per cent), food and non-alcoholic beverages (+2.81 per cent), health (+2.44 per cent), and entertainment (+0.71 per cent).

The restaurant and hotel sector recorded a 0.4 per cent increase, while clothing and tobacco saw minor rises.

In contrast, transportation costs dropped by 3.41 per cent, household goods by 0.59 per cent, and education by 0.41 per cent. The prices for housing, utilities, and communications remained unchanged. Within the food category, vegetables experienced the highest increase (+8.15 per cent), followed by fruits (+6.15 per cent) and dairy products (+5.5 per cent).

Meanwhile, fish and seafood prices fell by 3.42 per cent.

Across the governorates, the Governorate of Musandam recorded the highest inflation rate at 1.5 per cent, followed by the Governorate of Al Wusta at 1.33 per cent, and the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah South at 1.22 per cent. Muscat Governorate had the lowest increase at 0.19 per cent, and the Governorate of Al Batinah South saw a slight decrease of 0.12 per cent. — ONA

Mazoon copper project launched in Al Dhahirah

THE Sultanate of Oman's mining ambitions took a significant step forward with the launch of the Mazoon Copper Project, a major development by Minerals Development Oman (MDO) aimed at enhancing the country's copper production capabilities.

In a ceremonial foundation stone laying event held in the Wilayat of Yanqul, Al Dhahirah Governorate, officials celebrated what will be the largest copper concentrate production facility in the nation, projected to produce 115,000 tonnes of copper concentrate annually with a 21.5 per cent purity level.

Spanning over 20 square kilometres, the Mazoon Copper Project positions Oman as a serious player in the global copper market.

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of the Oman Investment Authority, described the project as a substantial step in bolstering Oman's role in copper production worldwide, reinforcing the growing mining sector as part of a diversified economy.

"This project addresses a rising demand for copper globally, aligning with our mission to utilise the Sultanate of Oman's mineral wealth to drive growth and diversify our economy," said Al Murshidi.

Highlighting the anticipated economic benefits, Al Murshidi noted that the project will stimulate significant development in Al Dhahirah Governorate, particularly within the local Yanqul economy. The economic ripple effects are expected to create jobs, attract investments, and promote local industry.

Najeeb bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, added that his office is committed to supporting MDO's vision, especially in fostering community engagement and expanding local business opportunities, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). "We aim to facilitate sustainable economic growth by working closely with MDO to maximise

Officials celebrated what will be the largest copper concentrate production facility in Oman.

The project positions Oman as a serious player in the global copper market.

the project's benefits for Yanqul and the surrounding areas," said Al Rawas.

The project's local impact is further supported by MDO's high Omanisation rate of 70 per cent, demonstrating the company's commitment to employing Omani talent in mining operations.

Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed al Busaidy, Wali of Yanqul, praised MDO's commitment to investing in social initiatives that benefit the region, emphasising that the project strengthens

local capacity and ensures the benefits are deeply rooted within the community.

Dr Badr bin Saud al Kharousi, MDO Chairman, highlighted that the Mazoon Copper Project is part of MDO's broader strategy to transform Oman into a key player in mining on the global stage. Exploration at the project site has yielded promising results, revealing an estimated 22.9 million tonnes of commercial copper reserves. "Our investments in this project reflect our ambition to leverage Omani natural resources responsibly, creating lasting value for our economy and society," said Al Kharousi.

The Mazoon Copper Project also represents a significant commitment to environmental responsibility. MDO has incorporated advanced, eco-friendly technologies that will minimise the project's environmental impact while ensuring efficiency.

Al Kharousi emphasised that MDO's approach to mining is guided by sustainable practices to balance economic gains with environmental stewardship.

Al Wusta's RO 25 million development projects fuel growth

HAIMA: The Al Wusta Governorate is investing over RO 25 million in 140 development projects across multiple sectors to boost regional growth and align with Oman Vision 2040. Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri, Governor of Al Wusta, emphasised the strategic role these projects play in advancing economic and social development, focusing on urban expansion, environmental preservation and sustainable resource management.

Out of the total RO 25 million allocation, RO 4 million has been invested in 59 completed projects, while RO 9.9 million covers 37 ongoing initiatives.

The remaining RO 11.6 million will support 44 additional projects within the current five-year plan, including infrastructure improvements and community-focused developments. Key projects underway include

Out of the total RO 25 million allocation, RO 4 million has been invested in 59 completed projects, while RO 9.9 million covers 37 ongoing initiatives.

six service hubs along major highways and a "Knowledge Park" in the Wilayat of Haima featuring a heritage museum and urban green spaces.

Al Kathiri also highlighted projects in the wilayats of Mahout and Al Duqm, such as beachside

amenities and commercial area upgrades, aimed at enhancing community facilities and tourism appeal. Al Wusta's location makes it a strategic hub for maritime logistics, especially in Al Duqm, where the Special Economic Zone has attracted over RO 6 billion in investments as of Q3 2024.

The governorate is further positioning itself as a prime site for clean energy investments, with five out of eight national green energy projects located here, covering solar, wind, and green hydrogen initiatives valued at RO 18.8 billion.

In addition to energy, Al Wusta is exploring "blue carbon" projects to rehabilitate coastal wetlands, investing RO 38.5 million to create artificial lakes for mangrove planting. These projects aim to capture environmental and economic benefits by supporting biodiversity and offering

sustainable tourism opportunities.

The fisheries sector is a substantial economic driver, contributing 37 per cent to the local GDP. Key investments include the Al Jazar shrimp farming project, valued at RO 462 million with an annual production capacity of 220,000 tonnes.

Additional projects in fish and food processing, totalling RO 105 million, and the construction of fishing ports and fish markets further underscore the sector's growth. Al Kathiri emphasised the tourism potential of Al Wusta's pristine coastal areas and desert ecosystems, highlighting iconic sites such as Bar Al Hakman, Ras Madrasah, and the pink lakes of the Wilayat of Al Jazar.

These natural assets not only offer recreational appeal but also present profitable investment opportunities within the region.

ADVERTORIALS



The Guerlain Spa brings the esteemed French brand's sophistication and innovative therapies, creating a sanctuary of holistic rejuvenation.

THE ST REGIS AL MOUJ MUSCAT RESORT INTRODUCES OMAN’S FIRST GUERLAIN SPA

MUSCAT: Ushering in a new era of luxury and wellness in the Sultanate of Oman, the Guerlain Spa is now open at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort as the brand’s debut outpost in Oman. Fringed by the ocean and a pristine golf course, the Guerlain Spa brings the esteemed French brand’s sophistication and innovative therapies, creating a sanctuary of holistic rejuvenation.

The first Guerlain Spa in the country will be a place of serenity with eleven treatment rooms including two exclusive couple suites, steam rooms and saunas. A dedicated relaxation haven will invite tranquillity, while the spa’s boutique will present Guerlain’s iconic collections of skincare, fragrances and makeup, alongside a captivating scent bar for sensory exploration.

It will also offer bespoke beauty and a wellness menu inspired by Omani philosophy and traditions, promising a journey of unparalleled immersion.

Guests can experience a plethora of treatments that meticulously follow Guerlain’s protocols executed with precision and personalised attention from diagnosis to therapy. Signature treatments include the “Imperial Face Sculpt”, a high-tech sculpting facial massage bringing firmness, radiance and youthfulness to the skin, and the “Ultimate Black Orchid”, a Guerlain masterpiece from the Orchidée Impériale Age Reverse Collection harnessing the power of the Black Orchid.

Other treatments include massages, body sculpting and polishing, youth repairing, hand and nail therapy, and specialised treatments for expectant mothers. Stand-out experiences comprise an Oriental Hammam and a lavish three-hour Rose and Oud sensory escape. Dedicated treatments tailored for men are also available to combat aging, soothe sore muscles and promote a commitment to self-care.

Additionally, one treatment has been specially designed for the property, honouring the rich traditions of Oman and infusing them with the spirit of Guerlain. Exclusive to The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, “Legend of Incense” invites guests to embark on a sensory journey with the enigmatic fragrance of Oud Nude.

Creating a stunning sanctuary, the interiors of the Guerlain Spa at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort are meticulously designed to preserve Muscat’s unique identity.

The design features soft, serene colours, enhancing the tranquil ambiance with a play on textures, both raw and smooth. Arches and rounded architectural elements are prevalent throughout, contributing to a gentle and regenerative environment.

Al Mouj Muscat signs pact with Oman Broadband

AL MOUJ Muscat, Oman’s premier hospitality, commercial and residential waterfront development, has signed an agreement with Oman Broadband to enhance the Internet cabling infrastructure.

This partnership aims to boost the competitive edge among local Internet operators, ensuring that residents have a variety of high-quality Internet service options.

The agreement marks a significant milestone for Al Mouj Muscat as it transitions to a more competitive market framework.

Oman Broadband, responsible for providing and maintaining broadband infrastructure for some of the nation’s leading service providers, will facilitate this shift by promoting fair competition among Internet service providers.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, “This partnership with Oman Broadband will provide our community and customers with resilient and high-speed broadband Internet infrastructure.

Our customers will have the ability to choose from various service providers and enjoy the best experience based on their unique needs.”

Eng Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Broadband Company, emphasised, “Our partnership with Al Mouj Muscat is a key step in realising our commitment to delivering high-quality, accessible and competitive fibre optic network to provide ultra high-speed Internet services and multiple smart cities solution to every resident across Oman.

We are thrilled to play an integral role in advancing the digital landscape of Al Mouj Muscat, setting a new standard for connectivity and digital growth.”



Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, and Eng Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Broadband Company, sign the agreement.

The agreement marks a significant milestone for Al Mouj Muscat as it transitions to a more competitive market framework.

This move is expected to benefit Al Mouj Muscat’s 19,000+ residents by offering more choices and improved service options, reinforcing AMM’s status as a premier living destination.

By fostering a competitive environment, Al Mouj Muscat continues to lead in delivering top-tier amenities and services, ensuring a superior living experience for its diverse community.

NBO hosts dinner for priority banking customers

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) recently hosted an exclusive dinner for Sadara customers at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Suhar. The event was a gesture of appreciation and an opportunity for NBO to strengthen its connections with top-tier customers, showcasing its commitment to providing personalised and exceptional service. The evening featured an elegant dinner, creating a welcoming environment where customers could interact directly with NBO representatives, exchange insights and discuss the bank’s latest initiatives and service enhancements.

This gathering is part of NBO’s broader strategy to engage more deeply with customers across Oman.



The event was a gesture of appreciation and an opportunity for NBO to strengthen its connections with top-tier customers.

Ali bin Mustafa al Lawati, Assistant General Manager and Head of Private

Banking and Segments at NBO, commented, “Our Sadara customers are central to NBO’s commitment to exceptional service. This evening’s gathering reflects our dedication to building strong relationships and recognising our customers’ trust in us.

We aim to offer financial solutions specifically designed to meet their needs, and events like these allow us to connect more meaningfully with our customers.”

Through its exclusive Sadara Priority Banking services, NBO provides customers with a range of personalised services, including wealth management advice, bespoke financial solutions and access to a network of global privileges.

BankDhofar expands its branch network in Muscat

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, a leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the opening of three new branches in key locations in Muscat Governorate; The Village branch in Al Hail North, Al Ansab branch in Lulu Hypermarket and Al Bahja Complex branch.

These strategic expansions mark a significant step in the bank’s mission to provide accessible and convenient banking services to more communities across the Sultanate of Oman. The opening ceremonies were held in the presence of a number of prominent members of the community and BankDhofar’s executive management team.

The official opening of the Village branch was held under the auspices of Sayyid Khalid bin



The branches will serve as financial hubs for residents and businesses in each area.

Mahfoudh al Busaidy, Head of the Office of the Minister of Housing and Urban Planning.

The opening of Al Ansab branch was held under the auspices of Ali bin Khalfan al Hassani, Member of Majlis Ash’shura. The official opening of Al Bahja Complex was held under the auspices of Mohsin bin Talal al Bahrani, Director at Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC - Infrastructure, Technology,

Industrial and Consumer Solutions. The branches will serve as financial hubs for residents and businesses in each area.

They offer a wide range of banking services, including personal and business accounts and investment solutions.

The bank is committed to expanding its footprint to better serve its customers in opening those three branches in key locations. These expansions underscore BankDhofar’s dedication to supporting local communities and businesses.

These new branches feature modern and customer-friendly design elements, ensuring that customers enjoy a comfortable and efficient banking experience.

Additionally, BankDhofar continues to prioritise

digital banking solutions, complementing the physical branch network to provide a seamless banking journey for customers. BankDhofar is the second largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of number of branches as its national wide network currently consists of 129 branches including Dhofar Islamic.

The network also includes more than 360 (ATMs – CDMs – FFMs – MFKs) for BankDhofar and Dhofar Islamic. BankDhofar invites the community to visit these new branches and explore the wide range of financial products and services available. The bank aims to become a trusted partner in the financial journey of the residents and businesses in Al Hail North, Al Mawaleh North and Al Ansab.

SHORTTAKES



The meeting aims to build upon the outcomes of the previous sessions.

OMAN HOSTS KEY MEETING ON MIDDLE EAST AIR NAVIGATION

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman inaugurated the 20th Board of Directors meeting of the Regional Air Traffic Monitoring Agency for the Middle East, a key gathering that runs for two days.

Hosted by Oman’s Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the event brought together representatives from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Air Transport Association, and the Federal Aviation Administration, as well as regional member states.

The meeting aims to build upon the outcomes of the previous sessions, focusing on regional air navigation advancements, vertical separation standards, and air traffic safety.

Eng Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the CAA, emphasised Oman’s dedication to bolstering air traffic management efficiency, especially in the face of rising demand for air travel. He underscored the importance of collaboration with ICAO standards to support regional aviation safety.

Al Abri affirmed that Oman’s commitment to hosting global aviation forums highlights its stature within international civil aviation, with a continued focus on optimising air traffic monitoring and fostering security across regional skies. — **ONA**

OCCI REVIEWS SOCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY



MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) Social Investment Centre, led by Chairwoman Her Highness Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice- Chancellor for International Cooperation, Sultan Qaboos University, and Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Children’s Association, held a strategic meeting to discuss its 2025 plan and budget, focusing on sustainable social investment initiatives.

The meeting emphasised the need for collaboration with similar institutions locally and internationally to foster knowledge exchange and adopt best practices. Discussions also covered proposed financial and administrative regulations to ensure effective governance.

The Centre aims to elevate its social programmes from short-term initiatives to sustainable investments with lasting impact, aligning efforts between the public and private sectors for integrated, socially responsible development.

MSX INDEX CLOSES UP 0.18 PER CENT

MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange Index 30 closed yesterday at 4, 714.33 points, up 8.5 points and 0.18 per cent compared to the last trading session of 4705.83 points.

The trading value amounted to RO 10.467 million, up by 12.7 per cent compared to the last trading session of RO 9.284 million.

The report issued by Muscat Stock Exchange indicated that the market value decreased by 0.099 per cent from the last trading day and amounted to approximately RO 27.52 billion.

The value of non-Omani purchases in the stock exchange amounted to RO 389,000 , representing 3.72 per cent, while the value of non-Omani sales amounted to RO 1.374 million, representing 13.13 per cent, while the net non-Omani investment decreased by RO 985,000, representing 9.41 per cent. —**ONA**

Report highlights areas of improvement at Oman Air

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 10

THE recent annual report of the State Audit Institution of Oman brings valuable insights into potential enhancements for Oman Air’s financial and administrative management from 2018 to mid-2023. It outlines opportunities for better handling of operational costs, improving the timeliness of dues settlement, and refining decision-making processes to enhance operational efficiency.

Since 2016, Oman Air has been actively addressing outstanding payments, which amounted to RO 117 million.

By February 2024, the company made significant progress by clearing RO 5 million and established a structured plan to further reduce outstanding dues by paying RO 1 million monthly.

The audit also identified RO 229 million in payments made to fuel suppliers between 2018 and 2021 through “letters of goodwill.”

Oman Air has responded positively by committing to formalise future contracts to ensure compliance with legal standards, showing its dedication to robust administrative practices.

Operational insights indicate that Oman Air encountered challenges with certain European routes due to feasibility study inaccuracies. Learning from this,



Oman Air has strengthened its policies on compensations for delays caused by technical factors.

Since 2016, Oman Air has been actively addressing outstanding payments, which amounted to RO 117 million. By February 2024, the company made significant progress by clearing RO 5 million and established a structured plan to further reduce outstanding dues by paying RO 1 million monthly.

Oman Air has embraced a more thorough approach to feasibility analysis, which now integrates comprehensive economic and operational evaluations.

Additionally, Oman Air has strengthened its policies on compensations for delays caused by technical factors, enhancing its procedures for documentation and claim processing to support fair and justified outcomes for all involved.

For Oman Airports, the report suggests areas to enhance receivables management, optimise investments, and improve technical operations.

Proactive efforts are underway to address these areas, including collaboration with relevant authorities to ensure operational readiness of unused assets, like a RO 3.7 million cargo scanning device.

Salalah Airport’s operational resilience is also set for advancement, as repairs to backup power systems and resolution of water and fire system issues are prioritised. Oman Airports has issued a tender for an in-depth assessment to establish a lasting solution, underscoring its commitment to operational integrity.

Efforts to collect outstanding payments from airport service clients have shown progress, with legal measures in place to ensure timely recovery.

This initiative supports sustained financial health across Oman’s airports.

FORUM ADVOCATES GREEN CITIES AND SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

MUSCAT: The Oman Green Building and Sustainable Cities Forum opened in Muscat, aiming to promote green building practices, sustainable urban planning, and renewable energy use. This two-day event focuses on providing insights into modern building techniques and fostering partnerships between public and private sectors to help Oman achieve its climate goals.

Sponsored by Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, the forum’s agenda includes legislation,



sustainable urban design, green building materials, energy and water efficiency, and

facility management.

Eng Fahd bin Hamoud al Mahrouqi, Chairman of the Organising Committee, highlighted the forum as a key platform for sharing ideas and adopting green standards to support Oman’s transition to an environmentally friendly society.

Organised by Petroleum Development Oman in cooperation with Raya Services, the forum also features an exhibition showcasing advanced green solutions, from energy-efficient building systems to smart city management technologies. — **ONA**

Oman wraps up showcase at World Travel Market

LONDON: The Sultanate of Oman, through its Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), concluded a successful presence at the World Travel Market (WTM) in London, held from November 5 to 7, 2024.

Drawing considerable attention from global travel industry leaders, Oman’s pavilion underscored the nation’s appeal as a prime destination with diverse cultural and natural offerings.

Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, expressed appreciation for the engagement and highlighted Oman’s dedication to becoming a global tourism hub, crucial to the country’s economic diversification efforts. He thanked both government agencies and private stakeholders for their contributions.

The event featured a notable performance by the Royal Muscat Philharmonic Orchestra and Royal Guard of Oman Opera Choir at Drury Lane’s Royal Theatre, organised in collaboration with the Omani Embassy in the UK.

The concert was supported by entities including Oman Petroleum Development Company, Oman LNG, the Global Integrated Energy Group,



Oman’s pavilion underscored the nation’s appeal as a prime destination.

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and Asyad Group.

The Ministry launched “Stop,” an initiative aimed at promoting Oman as a transit destination for global travellers, in partnership with Oman Air and the national travel operator Visit Oman. Additionally, a new promotional film debuted, showcasing Oman’s unique landscapes and cultural heritage.

Meetings with officials from various countries, including representatives from Visit Britain, explored new tourism collaborations.

Oman’s industry stakeholders also connected with international partners; Qusay al Shabibi from Golden Highlands Company shared that the event fostered valuable global connections, while Mohammed al Shehhi of Khasab Tour Company emphasised the strategic partnerships gained, aiding Oman’s tourism objectives. — **ONA**

OPINION

Why video games should be considered as real job experience



NASRULAH
AL AJMI

The writer is a
business reporter
at Oman Daily
Observer

FOR decades, video games have been written off as distractions, often criticised for keeping kids indoors and creating escapist distractions for adults. But today, research and real-life examples are flipping that narrative, revealing video games as platforms for skill development and even job training.

Consider the story of Gran Turismo—not just the popular PlayStation game but also the new movie inspired by it. Gran Turismo tells the true story of Jann Mardenborough, a British gamer who beat over 90,000 players in the 2011 GT Academy competition to become a professional race car driver.

The film, starring Archie Madekwe as Mardenborough alongside Orlando Bloom and David Harbour, dramatises his incredible journey from simulator to track. For most of us, video games are the closest we'll get to being a champion racer like Jeff Gordon or Max Verstappen. But Mardenborough's path shows that gaming can lay the groundwork for real-world success.

Many video games involve complex strategy, resource management, and quick decision-making. In games like Civilisation, players analyse intricate situations, prioritise tasks, and make critical decisions—just as one would in managing

a project or making strategic business decisions. Similarly, Mardenborough honed his racing instincts in the virtual world before transferring those skills to real tracks. These kinds of experiences can help gamers develop transferable competencies that are highly valuable in professional environments. The rise of multiplayer games has emphasised communication and teamwork, especially in games like Overwatch and League of Legends. In these games, players coordinate, distribute roles, and manage high-stakes situations, just as they would on collaborative work projects.

Like the support team that guided Mardenborough from simulation to real-world racing, players learn to trust and rely on each other, building skills that are essential in team-based workplaces.

Games create a safe environment for failure. Players in competitive games, especially racing simulators like Gran Turismo, analyse what went wrong after each attempt to improve their strategy.

This iterative process builds a growth mindset that's sought-after in the workplace, where constructive feedback is essential to success.

Gamers accustomed to learning from failures are often more resilient and open to improvement.

As the job market evolves, tech-savviness is crucial. Gamers develop comfort with

Gran Turismo tells the true story of Jann Mardenborough, a British gamer who beat over 90,000 players in the 2011 GT Academy competition to become a professional race car driver.

complex interfaces, new technologies, and digital tools through gaming. For Mardenborough, his early expertise with the racing simulator smoothed his transition into the advanced technology of real-life racing.

The same digital fluency can give gamers an advantage in jobs that require navigating sophisticated software and digital tools.

For careers requiring precision, like engineering or surgery, video games provide a foundation for developing spatial awareness and motor skills.

For Mardenborough, simulator training built essential hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness. Many gamers develop similar skills that translate to fields where precision is paramount, giving them a head start. In online games, players interact with people from different cultures, building global awareness. This cultural exchange, a key asset in globalised workplaces, helps gamers become more empathetic and adaptable. Whether racing against international competitors or teaming up with players worldwide, gamers gain cultural insights that serve them well in global roles.

Video games can build a skill set that translates into success across a range of fields. So, next time you pick up a controller, remember: you could be preparing for your next career move.

FED'S VICTORY LAP RUNS INTO TRUMP-SHAPED DETOUR

Jerome Powell's hard work is in danger of coming undone. The US Federal Reserve chair and his Federal Open Market Committee colleagues reduced benchmark interest rates again on Thursday, after having threaded the needle of taming inflation without impeding GDP growth or hurting the job market. Former president Donald Trump's avowed policies and meddling tendencies threaten to cut the success story short.

After voting to lower borrowing costs by a quarter percentage point to a 4.5 per cent to 4.75 per cent target, Powell was put in the awkward position of fielding questions about the Fed's future.

High prices during President Joe Biden's tenure contributed to Trump's Oval Office comeback. Even though inflation is back down to a 2.4 per cent annualised rate and unemployment sits at 4.1 per cent, the Fed will face a hostile White House.

Trump's stated plans to impose 20 per cent tariffs on foreign goods, extend existing tax cuts and implement new ones, and roll back regulations are changes that could easily push up prices again. Importers will pass the cost of higher levies onto consumers and the government will have to borrow more to cover the loss in revenue, thus raising its interest payments and inflation. The Fed only works with the fiscal policy

it is given: It isn't Powell's job to tell Trump or Republican congressional leaders to think again before adding \$8 trillion to a national debt already dangerously approaching a level equal to economic output.

A Fed empowered to focus on its remit of keeping prices stable and employment full might be able to manage the effects of Trump's agenda. The problem is that the president-elect has already shown his willingness to undermine the central bank's hard-won independence.

Few policymakers would welcome a return to the era of Chair Arthur Burns, who was pressured by President Richard Nixon to ease monetary policy, which left growth to stagnate and inflation to soar. "I respect his independence," Nixon said of his friend.

"However, I hope that, independently, he will conclude that my views are the ones that should be followed."

It's a sentiment shared by Trump, raising the spectre that he might appoint a sycophant to lead the Fed or implement rules that limit its flexibility to interpret economic indicators.

His aides have advised against firing Powell, who said on Thursday that he would not step down if asked to do so. — Reuters

Key to Oman's charter aviation tourism success

OMAN'S tourism sector is witnessing a remarkable transformation. The latest figures from the 2023-2024 season indicate that Oman's charter aviation has welcomed over 74,000 travellers, marking a 15% increase from the previous season. This unprecedented growth underscores Oman's potential as a competitive tourist destination, attracting visitors from around the world and showcasing the country's unique appeal.

However, as promising as these numbers are, they also spotlight a critical need: the importance of sustainable growth strategies to ensure that Oman's tourism sector thrives in the long term. The focus cannot solely rest on increasing tourist arrivals but must also address infrastructure development, service quality, and market diversification. As Oman continues to cement its status as a tourism hub, it is essential to consider how this growth can be managed and maintained in a way that benefits the broader economy, supports local communities, and preserves Oman's cultural and natural heritage.

DIVERSE MARKETS

One of the most encouraging aspects of Oman's tourism growth has been the rise in visitors from Eastern European markets, particularly Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. This shift demonstrates the success of Oman's tourism strategy in diversifying its sources and attracting new markets. It also signals a broader opportunity to expand the focus to other untapped markets, including Spain, Russia, Asia, and even the Americas.

Such diversification is not only beneficial for immediate visitor numbers but also adds resilience, making the sector less vulnerable to fluctuations in any single market.

Expanding target markets will require well-planned marketing initiatives and partnerships with global travel agencies. By presenting Oman as a distinctive and accessible destination, these efforts can attract a broader demographic and introduce



For Oman's tourism sector to thrive sustainably, robust infrastructure must be at the heart of its development plans.

more travellers to the country's unique landscapes and cultural offerings. For Oman's tourism sector to thrive sustainably, robust infrastructure must be at the heart of its development plans. Increasing visitor numbers will put a strain on existing resources if they are not met with matching improvements in accommodation, transportation, and tourist facilities.

The focus should be on creating high-quality hotels, modern transport networks, and eco-friendly tourism facilities that meet the expectations of today's international traveller.

Moreover, Oman has the opportunity to position itself as a leader in eco-tourism. By investing in sustainable infrastructure, such as environmentally friendly hotels and renewable energy sources for tourist facilities, Oman can attract environmentally conscious visitors. This approach not only aligns with global tourism trends but also helps preserve the country's natural beauty and resources for future generations.

To avoid concentrating tourism solely in the capital, Oman must look toward regional tourism hubs like Duqm and Suhar.

By expanding tourism infrastructure in these areas and making regional airports

operational, Oman can distribute tourist traffic more evenly across the country, reducing pressure on Muscat and supporting economic growth in other regions.

This approach has the added benefit of promoting Oman's lesser-known attractions, allowing visitors to experience a wider range of landscapes and cultures. Regional development will not only diversify the tourism offering but also create jobs and stimulate local economies, thereby making tourism a truly nationwide industry.

STRESS ON SERVICE QUALITY

As Oman becomes more visible on the global tourism map, the quality of service provided to tourists will play a crucial role in shaping the country's reputation. For Oman to compete on an international level, service quality must meet the high standards that tourists expect. This requires investment in specialised training programmes for hospitality staff, focusing on customer service, cultural awareness, and language skills.

By fostering a culture of excellence in service, Oman can ensure that tourists leave with a positive impression, leading to repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations.



QASIM AL
MAASHANI

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

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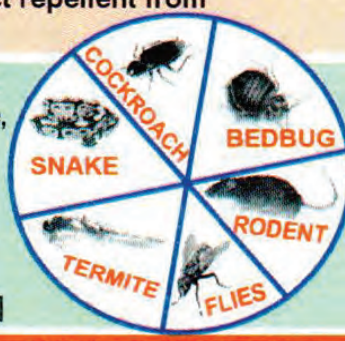
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ENTERTAINMENT

Female artists set to dominate MTV Europe Music Awards



Taylor Swift, Charli XCX and Billie Eilish are among the female artists tipped to dominate the 2024 MTV Europe Music Awards to be held in Manchester, northwest England, on Sunday.

The ceremony's 30th edition, which brings together the biggest names in world music, gets under way at the city's new Co-op Live venue from 8:00 pm (2000 GMT).

British singer Rita Ora will host the awards, which are being held in Britain for the seventh time.

Ten of the eleven artists with the most nominations are women, with megastar Taylor Swift leading the way.

The American, whose ongoing "Eras" tour is the most lucrative in history, is nominated in seven categories following the release this year of her 11th album "The Tortured Poets Department".

In the Best Artist category she will go up against compatriots Beyonce, Eilish, male rapper Post Malone and British star Raye, who won a record six gongs at this year's Brit Awards.

Sabrina Carpenter, one of the stars of the summer with her hit "Please Please Please", completes the nominees.

Best Song is between Eilish's "Birds of a Feather", Carpenter's "Espresso", Beyonce's "Texas Hold 'Em", "Beautiful Things" by Benson Boone, Chappell Roan's "Good Luck, Babe!", and "We Can't Be Friends" by Ariana Grande.

Rising female stars in contention in other categories include Lisa of the ultra-popular K-pop group Blackpink, and Nigerian star Ayra Starr.

As with the US music industry's Grammy awards, Latino artists, including stars such as Puerto Rican Bad Bunny and Colombian Karol G were left out of the top categories this year despite their global hits.

Both have been included in the Best Latin field, alongside Shakira, who has revived her career with the hit "Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53".

Other artists up for awards include Travis Scott, Dua Lipa and Charli XCX, who is nominated in four categories. Busta Rhymes is due to receive the global icon award.

This is the first MTV Europe Music Awards since 2022 after last year's edition, to be held near Paris, was cancelled because of the war between Israel and Hamas. — AFP

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



FASHION

Models present creations by Chanel during the Chanel Cruise 2024/25 fashion show at the Hong Kong Design Institute in Hong Kong. —AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

American actor Johnny Depp (R) poses with French actress Antonia Desplat during a photocall for his film Modi at the Seville European Film Festival in Seville. — AFP



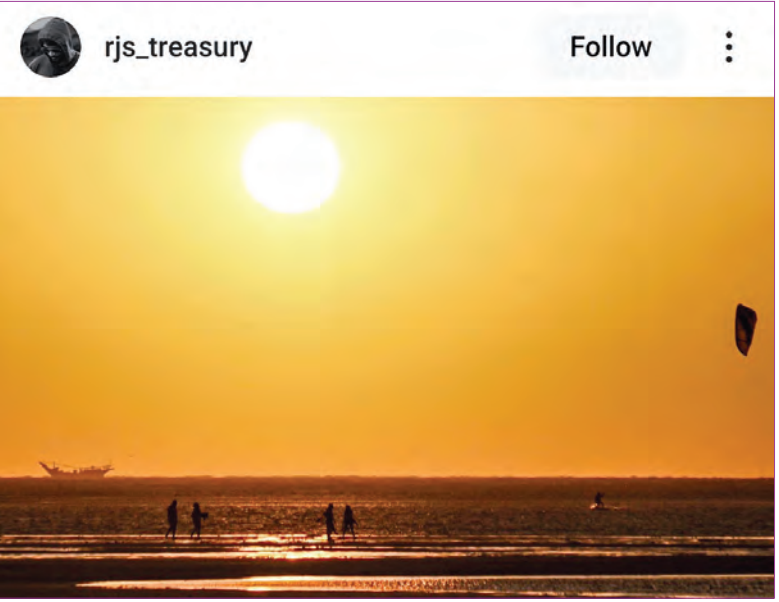
LIFESTYLE

A waiter serves Gaza-style shawarma sandwiches, wrapped in paper with the Kefiyeh pattern, at the 'Hay Al Rimal' Palestinian-owned restaurant in Cairo. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Desert Adventure



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New ‘Star Wars’ film trilogy in the works at Disney



A new “Star Wars” film trilogy written by “X-Men” producer Simon Kinberg is in the early stages of development at Walt Disney Co, a source familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

Kinberg, who co-created animated series “Star Wars Rebels,” also will produce the movies alongside Lucasfilm President Kathleen Kennedy.

Disney has not released a “Star Wars” film in theatres since 2019’s “The Rise of Skywalker.”

The new trilogy will begin with a fresh story and is not related to the Skywalker saga, the source said. No other details on the plot or the timeline were provided. “Star Wars,” created by George Lucas, is one of the most successful film franchises of all time.

The movies have collected

more than \$5 billion in global ticket sales since the release of the first instalment in 1977.

Disney has several “Star Wars” projects in the works. “The Mandalorian and Grogu,” based on the Disney+ series about a helmeted warrior and his companion, is scheduled to reach theatres in May 2026.

As of now, the most profitable Star Wars movie is “Star Wars: The Force Awakens,” released in 2015. It grossed over \$2 billion worldwide, making it not only the highest-grossing Star Wars film but also one of the highest-grossing films of all time.

The Star Wars franchise has generated over \$10 billion at the box office, with total earnings exceeding \$65 billion, making it one of the most successful franchises in history. — Reuters



Cristina Branco: Redefining the boundaries of fado

BY GEORGINA BENISON

FADO — the traditional Portuguese singing style — defies definition; it is purely and uniquely fado. So it was a huge privilege to attend the sold-out performance of ‘Mais Que Fado’ with Cristina Branco at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts on Tuesday evening this week.

An outstanding feature of the evening was the professional sheen stamped on the presentation by Cristina and fellow musicians. The show opened in pitch darkness while performers dressed in black walked silently on stage. A single spotlight penetrated from above upon the singer as she began, alone and soul-stirring.

‘Fria Claridade’ immediately allowed the resonance of Cristina’s clear, warm voice to come through the gorgeous Portuguese diction and modulation of her voice so passionately. Surely fado could be sung in no other language while maintaining its unique style! At times, fado becomes the Zarzuela of Portugal.

The ‘guitarra’ or Portuguese guitar usually used to accompany fado has 12 steel strings in 6 double courses and is a pear-shaped mandolin-styled instrument, more like a lute. Tonight it was played throughout the performance by Bernado Romão with astounding dexterity.

Cristina welcomed the audience to her concert as pianist, Luís Figueiredo, introduced, ‘Liberdade’ (Fado Alexandrino do Estoril) in a slow chordal bass, clearly influenced by his jazz background, while the simple yet lyrical vocal melody suggested a soulful folklore.

Similarly, the tender folksong accompanied by guitarra, ‘Senhora do Mar Redondo’ from her 2016 album, ‘Menina’, “resulting in unique and innovative interpretations of fado”, showed Cristina’s control over her whole range, to a strong Latin rhythm from piano and double bass. Each song tells a story, melancholic and heartfelt.

“There are 180 original fado



songs, but only 6 forms of poetry - dating from the 1820s and usually performed in cafés, restaurants and bars - and I have fado in my veins” we heard, as Cristina launched into, ‘Não Há Só Tangos em Paris’ (There are not only Tangos in Paris) by Silver Martins. Now the stage was bathed in red light as a traditional tango rhythm on piano and bass supported a short guitar improvisation.

Double Bass player, Bernado Moreira betrayed his affiliation with the ‘Hot Clube de Portugal’ in Lisbon, with some fine jazz techniques in his improvised fingerwork. Cristina left the stage for the instrumental, neo-baroque, ‘Ciombra Fado’ from Luís’ hometown, which featured some stunning technique on piano and flamenco-like folk strumming from Romão on guitarra, later developing into a broad and contemporary filmic style.

A baffling white cloud, like a billowing candlewick bedspread, descended from the flies, and Cristina slipped back on stage with an evocative, trance-like entry over a very slow and tender motif on piano. Bass player Moreira interpreted an exquisite solo, high in the string range, finishing with a poignant, compelling vocal line.

There was a delightful song with traditional Beguine

rhythm, a charming folk song, a contemporary pastiche of classical accompaniment, and an operatic spoof over quasi-waltz piano rhythms. The overhanging cloud mysteriously disappeared as the pianist played a 2/2 stride bass accompaniment. (A conundrum to ponder over, or a deeper metaphor for the tragedy of fado that is life?) Cristina Branco performed, ‘Água e Mel’ with unfailing accuracy in her placing and intonation. To sing for 80 minutes with a break, maintaining an intensity and quality of voice control without faltering once is an unbelievable feat.

Cristina introduced her incredible band, said how lovely it was to be here in Muscat and shared her music and culture. She said thanks to all mothers, grandmothers, and especially her own mother to whom she dedicated the Soul or emotion of her songs. Finally, she would sing the oldest fado of all with the heart-rending pathos of her distinctive, sublime delivery. ‘Meu Amor é Marinheiro’ (My Love is a Sailor) from Lisbon 1850, and was first recorded by Branco in 2001.

A standing ovation was clearly not enough to bring the musicians back on stage; after a steady hand-clap for some considerable minutes, Cristina eventually reappeared with the words, “It is not only my job, it is my passion to sing fado, and the silence in fado is what makes fado”.

“Este Silêncio” began with just piano and voice, so controlled, so minimal it barely spoke. There was just enough vibrato in the clarity of Cristina’s singing to reflect the deep emotional depths and delicate nuances demanded by the song and the genre. After a brief moment, Figueiredo lent into the body of the grand piano and created a tribal beat, a primal rhythm—joined by bass and guitarra - which was sustained behind a haunting vocal line, demonstrating for the last time tonight Cristina’s enormously wide vocal range in, “Tonada de La Luna Llena” (Simón Díaz). And then there was pure silence. The audience left, spellbound by an evening’s impossible charm.

Murjana is a beautiful creation, a product of a collaboration between geologist Laith Khalifa and architect Mohammed al Kiyumi, both from Muscat. Their vision is drawn from the majestic heights of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, where fossilised corals and vibrant pomegranates coexist.



This Omani art installation reminds of resilience of nature in urban setting



BY YERU EBUEN

IN THE warm glow of the late afternoon sun, light filters through a maze of PVC pipes assembled to create a modular space that people can interact with. Weeks earlier, this structure had nestled within the pomegranate garden of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar temporarily resting atop ancient corals, telling the story of a time when the land was submerged underwater.

As part of the Rummana Festival, Murjana was carefully dismantled, travelled by truck, and reassembled at the bustling entrance of Dubai's design district. Amidst the towering glass and steel structures, this artwork stands as a poignant reminder of the natural world's beauty woven into the fabric of urban life.

Murjana is a beautiful creation, a product of a collaboration between geologist Laith Khalifa and architect Mohammed al Kiyumi, both from Muscat. Their vision is drawn from the majestic heights of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, where fossilised corals and vibrant pomegranates coexist. By intertwining these elements in a modular format, they celebrate the unity of nature and craft a narrative that spans various disciplines.

Laith and Mohammed are both happy that they were selected to take part in the 10th edition of Dubai Design Week. For Mohammed, it was important to showcase Oman's natural wonders, suggesting that these fossilised corals not only reveal history, but also spark conversations about identity and culture. "Every coral branch has a story of resilience," he says, highlighting the intricate connections between the patterns found in corals and pomegranate seeds.

Murjana invites viewers to reflect on the rich history of the Arabian Peninsula, where ancient marine life once thrived. The coexistence of corals and pomegranates symbolises the cyclical essence of life, showcasing how nature intertwines with urban environments.

"By utilising PVC pipes, we create a bridge between the natural world and the city," Laith explains, illustrating how inspiration can thrive even in concrete jungles.

As observers engage with the geometric interplay of natural forms, the installation emphasises the unity between various elements. The sunlight creates a sculptural quality, inviting contemplation of the connections that shape our world. Laith shared that it was refreshing to have the opportunity to take their installation beyond Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and show it to an even wider audience.

"For me, in an urban context, I wanted Murjana to act as a bridge between nature and a fast-changing world. By juxtaposing these natural forms, the installation transcends its specific origins, prompting deeper contemplation of the materials, patterns and connections that shape our perception of the world."

Highlighting the talents emerging from Oman, Dubai Design Week Director Natasha Carella said she is particularly proud that artists from Oman are delivering world-class installations aligned with what the design week is looking for.

In a separate interview with media, she said, "We strive to challenge singular narratives, adding depth to our artistic scene" and is proud that the design week has transformed into a hub for local talent, emphasising the diverse voices from across the MENA region.

Through engaging workshops and exhibitions, Dubai Design Week aims to make design accessible



to all. "Our mission is to inspire everyone to embrace their potential as designers, regardless of their background," Natasha affirms, reflecting the collaborative spirit that flows through Murjana — a timeless embodiment of the connection between nature and the urban experience.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN: A CELEBRATION OF REGIONAL TALENT

As one of the key highlights during the Dubai Design Week, Director of Downtown Design, Mette Degn-Christensen, is thrilled to highlight the perfect opportunity for regional talents to showcase their creativity and craftsmanship. "Editions was born from a clear observation of a gap in the market," she explains. "Years ago, we noticed that while visitors loved attending exhibitions, many were hesitant to purchase the displayed art and design. Our goal with Editions is to bridge that gap, offering unique collectable pieces across various price points."

Mette emphasises that Editions isn't merely about creating an "affordable art fair". Rather, it's about inviting individuals to embrace the world of collecting. "We want it to feel welcoming and accessible, rather than intimidating," she adds. The initiative caters to a culturally curious audience, allowing them to appreciate quality craftsmanship without the elitist barriers that often accompany the art world.

Visitors to Dubai Design Week will discover a wealth of engaging installations that epitomise contemporary aesthetics and the innovative spirit of local artisans. "We carefully curate selections that resonate with both the market and our audience, allowing artisans to shine in their creative expressions," Mette notes. This year's featured installations provide an immersive experience, reflecting the vibrant creation process inherent in the local design community.

For those eager to participate in this dynamic event, Mette encourages regional talents to seize the opportunity. "We invite local creatives and businesses to reach out to us," she urges. "Participation is simple — just get in touch through our website, and we'll assist in tailoring an experience that suits your vision."

Attendees can explore highlights such as emerging designers and lesser-known brands within the local landscape, offering an authentic glimpse into the region's rich creative diversity. Mette suggests discovering installations by these localised talents, as they are often the most evocative and engaging experiences the event has to offer.