

HM greets Moldova president

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Maia Sandu of the Republic of Moldova on her re-election as President for another term. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes for success to President Sandu in leading the people of Moldova and achieving their aspirations. His Majesty also wished for further progress and growth in the cooperative relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Moldova.

|                    |
|--------------------|
| SUNRISE - 06:16 AM |
| PRAYER TIMINGS     |
| FAJR - 04:59 AM    |
| DHUHR - 11:56 PM   |
| ASR - 03:07 PM     |
| MAGHRIB - 05:30 PM |
| ISHA - 06:43 PM    |



P15

AL DHAHIRAH GOVERNOR HIGHLIGHTS KEY DEVELOPMENTS AHEAD OF NATIONAL DAY



P12

BRAZIL GRAND PRIX - THREE THINGS WE LEARNED



P20

AN EVENING OF DISCOVERY UNDER THE DESERT SKY AT BANDAR AL KHAIRAN



**MUSCAT**

**CRUDE PRICE AT \$74.05 A BARREL**

Oman oil price for January delivery on Tuesday reached \$74.05, comprising a rise by 63 cents compared to the price of Monday which stood at \$73.42. The average price of Oman oil for November delivery stabilised at \$73.49 per barrel, thus \$4.05 per barrel lower than October delivery. World oil prices held sharp overnight gains on delays to producers' plans for increased output, leaving benchmark Brent crude futures at \$75.29 a barrel after a 3 per cent rise on Monday. The dollar softened amid anticipation of the US presidential election, which sees a tight race between Republican candidate Donald Trump and his Democratic rival Kamala Harris.

Upon Royal orders, State Council to hold regular session

**MUSCAT:** Based on the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the State Council will open the second regular sitting of the eighth term (2023-2027) on Sunday, in accordance with the provisions of Article (38) of the Council of Oman Law.

The State Council undertakes

a prominent role in approving or amending draft laws and discussing development plans and the state's general budget.

Serving as a major partner in domestic development, the State Council seeks to achieve this role through various activities that it performs during its regular or joint sessions or the meetings of

its main bureau (State Council Office) or its permanent committees, sub-committees and special committees.

During the first regular session of the eighth term, the State Council carried out a remarkable activity in achieving a set of accomplishments, in line with the royal directives of

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik which came in his speech during the opening of the first session of the Council of Oman.

During the first regular session, the Council concluded discussions on several topics, including draft laws referred by the government, in addition to discussing the draft state general

budget for the fiscal year 2024 in public sessions held during the first regular session.

The Council held one joint session with Majlis Ash'shura to discuss the disputed articles in a number of draft laws, in implementation of the provisions of Article (49) of the Council of Oman Law. — ONA

**VALENCIA**

**SPAIN UNVEILS FLOOD AID PLAN**



Spain on Tuesday announced an aid package worth €10.6 billion (\$11.5 billion) to rebuild regions devastated by its worst floods in a generation that have killed 219 people. The exceptional Mediterranean storm that lashed eastern Spain a week ago triggered surging torrents of muddy water that have left a trail of destruction and an unknown number of missing. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced a series of measures including aid to small and medium-sized businesses, self-employed workers and households who have suffered deaths, incapacity and damage to homes and belongings.

**DETAILS ON P6**

**ERIE, UNITED STATES:** Election Day voting was under way on Tuesday after an extraordinary — and for many unnerving — US presidential race that will either make Kamala Harris the first woman president in the country's history or hand Donald Trump a comeback that sends shock waves around the world.

As polling stations opened, Democratic vice-president Harris, 60, and Republican former president Trump, 78, were dead even in the tightest and most volatile White House contest of modern times.

The bitter rivals had spent their final day of the campaign frenetically working to get their supporters out to the polls and courting any last undecided voters in the swing states expected to decide the outcome. But despite head-spinning twists in the campaign — from Harris's dramatic entrance when President Joe Biden dropped out in July to Trump riding out two assassination attempts and a criminal conviction — nothing has broken the opinion poll deadlock.

**VOTED EARLY**

Tens of millions of voters are expected to cast their ballots, on top of the 83 million who have already voted early. Americans lined up before dawn, including in Black Mountain, North Carolina, where the voting station was a makeshift tent erected after severe flooding.

Long queues also formed in Erie, a critical city in battleground Pennsylvania.

"It's way, way, way more people here than the last" election, Marchelle Beason,



A woman holds "I voted" stickers outside a polling station at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Election Day, on Tuesday. — AFP

46, said after casting her ballot for Harris at an elementary school and putting on an "I voted" sticker. "We're so divided right now, and she's about peace. And everything that her opponent has to say is really negative," she added. At the same school, 56-year-old Darlene Taylor, who said she lives on disability benefits, noted her main issue is to "close the border."

"We don't need another four more years of high inflation, gas prices (and) lying," said Taylor, who wore a homemade Trump shirt. Control of Congress is also at stake. All 435 seats in the House of Representatives are up for grabs, as are 34 of the Senate's 100 seats. A final presidential outcome may not be known for several days if the results are as close

as polls suggest, adding to tensions in a deeply divided nation.

And there are fears of turmoil and even violence if Trump loses, and then contests the result as he did in 2020. Barriers have been erected around the White House.

The world is anxiously watching, as the result will have major implications for conflicts in the Middle East, Russia's war in Ukraine, and tackling climate change, which Trump calls a hoax.

Harris and Trump are effectively tied in the seven main swing states.

On Monday, Harris went all in on must-win Pennsylvania, rallying on the Philadelphia steps made famous in the "Rocky" movie and declaring: "Momentum is on our side."

However, "this could be one of the closest races in history — every single vote matters," cautioned Harris.

Trump — who would become the first convicted felon and oldest person to win the presidency — cast himself as the only solution to an apocalyptic vision of the country in terminal decline and overrun by "savage" migrants. "With your vote tomorrow, we can fix every single problem our country faces and lead America — indeed, the world — to new heights of glory," Trump told his closing rally in Grand Rapids in swing state Michigan.

But she also struck an upbeat note — and notably avoided mentioning Trump, after weeks of targeting him directly as a threat to democracy for his dark rhetoric and repeated threats to exact retribution on his political opponents. **SEE ALSO P7**

**RAMALLAH**

**7 KILLED IN ISRAELI RAID ON WEST BANK**



At least seven people were killed on Tuesday during an Israeli military raid and airstrikes on the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said. Five of the seven people were killed in two separate Israeli attacks in and near the city of Qabatiya, while the two others were killed in the Tamoun area, the ministry said. Violence has surged in the West Bank since the start of the war in Gaza, with almost daily sweeps by Israeli forces that have involved thousands of arrests and regular gunbattles between security forces and Palestinians.

**MUSCAT:** The Majlis Ash'shura held its annual press conference in the presence of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the Majlis Ash'shura, on Tuesday.

The press conference was attended by the Majlis Ash'shura members, heads of the standing committees, representatives of

local media and stakeholders.

By holding the press conference, the Majlis Ash'shura aimed to enhance communication and make information available to the media to reflect the Majlis Ash'shura's performance within the scope of powers assigned to the Majlis Ash'shura by the Basic Law of the State and the Law of the Council of Oman. It was also aimed to provide a



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura

comprehensive presentation of the Majlis Ash'shura's works in terms of legislation and follow-up as well as the work of the standing committees during the first annual session. The meeting provided constructive dialogue and purposeful discussion with the local media representatives to enhance community awareness of the Majlis Ash'shura's roles and its handling of the national

issues and files.

At the outset of the press conference, Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali stressed that the Majlis Ash'shura embraces a clear approach derived from the Basic Law of the State and the Law of the Council of Oman. He pointed to the efforts undertaken by the Majlis Ash'shura in the legislative field in line with Oman Vision 2040. **SEE ALSO P2**

Majlis Ash'shura approach in line with Oman Vision 2040

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



Oman's delegation is headed by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. — ONA

WTM LONDON 2024 KICKS OFF WITH OMAN’S PARTICIPATION

**LONDON:** The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), is taking part in activities of the World Travel Market London 2024, which began in London on Tuesday.

Oman's delegation in the three-day event is headed by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

As many as 32 representatives of Omani travel, tourism and hotel institutions are taking part in the event. — ONA

CBO ISSUES A COMMEMORATIVE SILVER COIN



The selling price of this currency is RO 50 and the price is subject to increase

**MUSCAT:** The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a commemorative silver coin to celebrate the Sultanate of Oman hosting the annual meeting of the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds 2024. Overall 1,600 coins, the value of a coin is RO 1, the purity of silver is 0.999, the diameter is 38.61 mm and the weight is 28.28 grammes. The silver commemorative coins can be purchased from the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) or through the Oman Post sales window at the Opera Galleria from November 17.

The selling price of this currency is RO 50 and the price is subject to increase according to the changes in silver prices in global markets.



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Media plays pivotal role in conveying vision, goals

AFRAH AL BALUSHI  
@afrahalbalushia

**MAJLIS** ASH'SHURA, which reviewed the achievements for the first annual session of the tenth term, stated that media plays pivotal role in conveying it's vision and goals to the society.

Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Majlis Ash'shura, highlighted the efforts made in the laws referred to the Majlis, notably the “Media Law”. Through this law, the Majlis Ash'shura aimed to meet the aspirations of the media and media professionals by emphasising the importance of effective community participation and the ongoing partnership between the two parties.

Al Maawali stressed the pivotal role of the media in conveying the Majlis Ash'shura vision and goals to society. He also explained the Majlis Ash'shura supervisory role in monitoring economic sectors and national services in alignment with its competencies and responsibilities.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the Majlis Ash'shura, reviewed the achievements, emphasising that the current period (2023-2027) represents a crucial national stage in the



Majlis Ash'shura on Tuesday reviewed the achievements of the current period (2023-2027).

Majlis Ash'shura's journey.

He stressed the importance of the annual statement issued by the Majlis Ash'shura after each session as a pivotal mechanism for communicating with Omani society, enhancing transparency, and clarifying achievements and work in legislation and follow-up areas.

Committee heads also reviewed the most important achievements and work during the 1st term of the 10th term. Committees included Legislative and Legal Committee, Economic and Financial Committee, Health and Social Committee, Education, Scientific Research and Innovation Committee, Services and Public Facilities Committee, Youth and Human Resources Committee,

Media, Tourism and Culture Committee, and Food and Water Security Committee.

Statistics revealed that during the first term, the Majlis Ash'shura held 12 regular sessions, discussed four ministerial statements, received 20 projects referred by the government, answered 38 questions, issued four urgent statements, and received 15 requests for briefing.

Additionally, 89 topics in various sectors were completed, with 121 meetings held to follow up on various issues. Nine draft laws referred by the government were included, addressing a range of topics such as the protection of bank deposits, regulating trade in wild animals, media regulations, and more.

The job-seekers file was a significant topic of discussion, with the interim committee focusing on providing a comprehensive vision based on analysing skills in the labour market and market needs.

The committee also reviewed education and vocational training policies to address challenges in the labour market and employment in the Sultanate of Oman.

The importance of follow-up tools and the government's responses to the Majlis Ash'shura's reports and inquiries were also discussed, highlighting the level of interaction with these tools.

UAE delegation explores Oman’s judicial experience

**MUSCAT:** A judicial delegation from the Federal Supreme Court in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Tuesday visited the Supreme Judicial Council in Muscat where it had a close look at Council's experience in developing the judicial and justice systems.

The visit was part of a programme to explore the functions of GCC supreme courts and courts of cassation.

Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of the Supreme Court, and Falah Shaya al Hajri, Judge at the UAE Federal Supreme Court (who headed the visiting delegation) held a meeting that dealt with various aspects of judicial cooperation.



The visit was part of a programme to explore the functions of GCC supreme courts and courts of cassation. — ONA

The two sides commended the depth of bilateral relations and cordial bonds binding the peoples of Oman and UAE.

The UAE delegation later went on tour of the facilities of the Supreme Court and listened to a briefing about procedures

of lawsuits.

Issa bin Hamad al Azri, Secretary-General of the Supreme Judicial Council, also held a meeting with the UAE delegation about areas of judicial and legislative cooperation.

The UAE delegation watched a presentation about the Supreme Judicial Council's strategic plan and its role in achieving prompt justice and consolidating the rule of law.

Nasr bin Khamis al Sawa'ee, Attorney General, also discussed scopes for integration between the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE in the fields of public prosecution, investigation and judicial actions. — ONA

Solar bins to recycle food into fertilisers

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabyousef

A group of Omani women has initiated an idea to recycle the leftover food that happens with almost all households and hotels and to recycle them into fertilisers.

Titled 'Zeelah project', a group of seven women from the National Finance has won the best project award at the Springboard competition by the Ooredoo on Tuesday.

“Our project is all about recycling the leftover food that happens with commercial entities and households in Oman.

This is a noble concept that addresses the big issue of wasting food,” said Alia al Balushi, the key force behind the project.

“We have solar powered bins which will be distributed among the corporates and households, predominantly in Muscat to start with. However, the commercial production of the same has not been started yet,” Alia added.

She said the term ‘Zeelah’ is from Omani culture which means a bin where the households collect food for their animals and the project is in line with the national vision to support well-being of the environment.

“Upon successful implementation of the project in Muscat Governorate, we will move to other governorates



The team is in the final stages of creating a mobile app which will help households to cooperate with 'Zeelah' on an individual basis.

and inculcate a culture of ‘reduce’, ‘reuse’ and ‘recycle’ for the sake of environment protection,” she said.

The team of women feels that the best use of such a project is during the holy month of Ramadhan when households as well as corporates waste tonnes of both cooked and uncooked foods and raw materials.

Also, the team is in the final stages of creating a mobile app which will help households to cooperate with 'Zeelah' on an individual basis.

“We have some investors asking us to give a hand and we have already spoken to the ministries and

corporates and we are expecting some good feedback to take this project forward. Being selected to be the best project at the Springboard by Ooredoo gives us more confidence in marching ahead,” Alia said.

There have been concerns of excess food being cooked and wasted and in response to the cries, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) has initiated Oman Food Bank (Daima) and was able to save more than 100,000 meals weighing 60 tonnes with the value at an estimated at RO 100,000, according to the Daima representatives.



SPOTLIGHT



VINOD NAIR  
@vinod\_nair

**SOME** OF us might have been enjoying good lives today because the generations before us were not lured by consumerism and left some savings for the future. We can argue that that generation did not have to live with high inflation and currencies had more purchasing abilities or disposable income.

Such arguments may hold some ground, but that is not entirely the case because low inflation also meant low salaries and low yields for any produce, leaving little room for savings. On the occasion of World Savings Day, the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) said around 60 per cent of Omanis save part of their monthly income. The figures do not reflect how much of their monthly income is reserved for savings and in what form, but they certainly indicate that a lot more can be done to encourage savings because due to low inflation and a strong Omani Riyal, a household can save more than they do now.

Savings are part of the traditions which, in many societies, begin at home.

“It is about developing a particular type of temperament. By encouraging them to save a

”

*We should tell our children that loans should be reserved for meeting big goals such as buying a property or a vehicle, which cannot be achieved just by savings. Small desires such as buying a dream dress or travelling to a dream destination can be easily met by accumulating monthly savings.*

**SAMIRA**  
Entrepreneur

small part of their income, maybe it is from pocket money or that received as a gift,” we help them to manage money, which they can use in the future to meet some of their aspirations,” said Samira, an Omani entrepreneur. She added that today’s generation does not care for savings because they can meet their aspirations by taking loans. “We should tell our children that loans should be reserved for meeting big goals such as buying a property or a vehicle, which cannot be achieved just by savings. Small desires such as buying a dream dress or travelling to a dream destination can be easily met by accumulating monthly savings.”

Spending from savings can also make children spend wisely and feel independent because they do not have to depend on their parents to go to a movie or some restaurants with their friends, according to some other parents. According to an investment expert, “In some economies, people save their income via bank deposits or through investments in assets such as gold or even property.”

Recently, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) introduced the Bank Deposits Protection Law to safeguard deposits held at licensed financial institutions in Oman, particularly for small depositors who are most vulnerable in case of a bank’s insolvency. Such measures will instil greater confidence in the banking system, encouraging savings and long-term financial stability.

# Mubashir and Oman Cancer Association Join Forces to Support Cancer Fighters with Interactive DOOH Solutions



**MUSCAT:** Mubashir, Oman’s Leading Digital Out-of-Home Company announces its partnership with Oman Cancer Association (OCA), highlighting the value of community support in overcoming challenges experienced by cancer fighters, reinforcing the idea that **Nobody Fights Alone**.

Mr. Nadir Al Azri, Acting Director of OCA, stated, “The partnership between Oman Cancer Association and Mubashir demonstrates our shared commitment to raising cancer awareness through innovative, digital campaigns. By leveraging Mubashir’s cutting-edge technology and audience reach, we aim to amplify our message, educate the public on early detection, and ultimately save lives under the message “No one Fights Alone” Together, we’re turning awareness into action through sustainable technological solutions.”

In the past two weeks, Mubashir placed an interactive fundraising screen at OCA’s booth in Mall of Oman, where every donation made brought a unique visual impact. Each contribution transformed the image of a young girl on the screen

from sad to happy, symbolizing the hope and joy brought to cancer fighters. This interactive element captivated donors, making the experience both memorable and meaningful.

To further rally support, Mubashir promoted the Walkathon across **106** digital screens, reaching a total of **2,709,600** individuals. The event witnessed participation from **6,500** individuals and was honored by the presence of His Excellency, the Undersecretary for Health Planning and Regulations, Dr. Ahmed bin Salem Al Mandhari. This impressive turnout reflects the community’s dedication to supporting cancer fighters and the powerful role of collective action.

Mr. Khalid Al Awad, Chief Marketing Officer at Mubashir, concluded, “Our collaboration with OCA is a testament to our commitment to uplifting those in need. Together, we are not just raising funds; we are utilizing digital-out-of home to raise awareness and foster a community that stands by its members during challenging times.”

HUMAN RIGHTS



The visit included examining worker communities, accommodations, and interacting with employees in the area.

OHRC expresses satisfaction with labour care at Special Economic Zone

Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) reviewed the labour services and care offered to workers in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, observing adherence to protection standards, an appropriate work environment, and general compliance of facilities with occupational safety, health, and international standards for worker accommodations.

The Commission expressed its satisfaction after a field visit conducted by a delegation chaired by Prof Rashid bin Hamad al Balushi, Chairman of the Commission, to the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. The visit included examining worker communities, accommodations, and interacting with employees in the area.

The delegation's field visits included the labour camp at Ras Markaz managed by the Oman Tank Terminal Company, Al Nahda labour village accommodations, and Karwa Motors' labour camp. The delegation assessed the services provided to the workers, monitored their health and environmental conditions, and ensured the security and safety services meet international human rights standards.

During the visit, the delegation met with several workers, listened to their perspectives, discussed various topics concerning their rights, introduced them to the Commission's work, monitoring mechanisms, complaint procedures, and communication channels available to citizens and residents alike. The delegation concluded the visit by meeting with Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, reviewing the area's master plan, future development plans, and the zone's role in providing the best infrastructure, services, and business environment conducive to Omanis, residents, and investors. The Commission also verified ongoing monitoring of labour accommodations to ensure compliance with safety and occupational health standards.

This visit aligns with the Commission's mandates under its bylaws, issued by Royal Decree No. (57/2022), where Clause 6 of Article 11 stipulates that the Commission shall conduct field visits to prisons, detention centres, hospitals, and labour communities to monitor human rights conditions therein.

Oman Across Ages Museum hosts seminar

AMAL AL RIYAMI  
MANAH, NOV. 4

Oman Across Ages Museum hosted an international seminar and workshop titled "Improved Curatorship in Museums, Historic Sites, and Cultural Centers." The seminar was organised in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution and featured distinguished speakers such as Dr Paul Michael Taylor, Director of the Asian Cultural History Programme, and Nicolai Wacht, a researcher and programme manager at the Smithsonian.

Dr Taylor, a research anthropologist with a tenure at the Smithsonian Institution since 1981, has served as the Curator for Asia, Europe, and the Middle East in the Anthropology Department. He holds a Bachelor's degree summa cum laude from UCLA and a PhD. from Yale University. Dr Taylor has curated twenty-four museum exhibitions and has been



Dr Paul Michael Taylor

honoured with multiple international awards, such as Turkmenistan's 300th Anniversary Jubilee Magtymguly Medal in October 2024.

Nicolai Wacht, who joined the Smithsonian in May 2024, serves as the Programme Manager for the Asian Cultural History Programmes. A fluent speaker of Japanese and Korean, he coordinates a variety of international cultural initiatives and museum projects. In his role, he facilitates visits by diplomats and museum professionals from diverse countries, and he actively contributes to scholarly publications and events.



Nicolai Wacht

The seminar featured four main presentations focusing on the varied management styles and presentation methods employed in contemporary museums, highlighting the evolution of museum practices.

It also examined definitions from the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), while discussing the organisation of the Smithsonian Institution.

It also shed light on governance and funding, underscoring the strategies museums can employ to secure project-based funding for their operations. Participants were encouraged

to identify potential projects within their institutions for cooperative funding, alongside discussions on marketing, branding, and the vital roles of volunteers and supporters in fostering successful museum environments.

Another section delved into the administrative frameworks that encourage innovation within museums, underscoring their pivotal role in driving creative and forward-thinking initiatives. It provided examples of museum-based research and examined ways to integrate various museum activities—such as research, collections, exhibitions, and educational outreach—into comprehensive heritage projects.

The seminar underscored the significance of adapting to the dynamic museological landscape, emphasising the adoption of innovative practices to enrich museums' roles in safeguarding and portraying cultural heritage.

RNO COMMANDER RECEIVES KOREAN MILITARY OFFICIAL



During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on areas of naval cooperation between Oman and Korea. — ONA

**MUSCAT:** Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Tuesday Brigadier General Taekyu Park, Commander of the 8th Combat Training Group, Republic of Korea, and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides ex-



SQU researchers discover genetic mutation linked to early-onset Parkinsonism

Dr Patrick Versiken at the VIB Institute, researchers identified a novel mutation in the SGIP1 gene. Laboratory models using fruit flies confirmed that the SGIP1 mutation disrupts synaptic function, leading to movement disorders and neuronal degeneration similar to Parkinson's symptoms.

Sabine Koenen, co-researcher and co-author of the study, remarked, "The

identification of the SGIP1 mutation opens new pathways for understanding neurological disorders and demonstrates how small genetic changes can have profound impacts on brain function."

This discovery sheds light on the mechanisms underlying early-onset Parkinsonism and may pave the way for targeted therapies and further exploration into neurodegenerative diseases. — ONA



changed views on areas of naval cooperation between Oman and Korea.

The meeting was attended by some senior RNO officers and the Military Attaché at the Korean Embassy in Muscat.

Meanwhile, the Korean military official and his accompanying delegation visited the Marine Security Centre (MSC). They were

greeted upon their arrival by the acting head of the MSC. Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the maritime environment. They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties. — ONA

### Dhofar Poultry Company SAOC

#### Auction Announcement for the Sale of Fertilizer (Chicken Litter) for the Year 2025

Dhofar Poultry Company SAOC is pleased to announce auction for the selling of high-quality poultry fertilizer (Chicken litter) through an annual contract for the year 2025, the fertilizer is an ideal and essential source for soil nutrition and increasing the productivity of crops.

Accordingly, the company welcomes farmers, individuals, investors and companies to submit their bids, to cover the contracting period January to December 2025. The expected annual quantities between 7,000 to 8,000 tons.

**Bidding Conditions:**

1. The contract should cover the year 2025.
2. The bidding price starting from 8 Omani Rials.
3. Preference will be given to the Omanis and holders of Riyada card.
4. The successful bidder will bear the costs of transporting the fertilizer from the broiler houses.
5. The amount will be paid monthly in advance.
6. Offers are presented at the company's headquarters at the Dhofar Poultry Farm in Raysut.
7. Via email: khalid@dcfoman.com
8. For more details, please contact us by phone: 98009374.
9. Last day to receive offers 14/11/2024.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Masked police officers guard a house after having arrested suspects, in Dresden, Germany. — Reuters

GERMANY ARRESTS EIGHT MEMBERS OF FAR-RIGHT GROUP

**BERLIN:** German police on Tuesday arrested eight suspected members of a right-wing extremist group that had trained for what they expected would be the collapse of state order, prosecutors said. Hundreds of police in pre-dawn raids swooped on 20 locations linked to the militant group “Saxonian Separatists” in formerly communist eastern Germany and neighbouring Poland, with locations also searched in Austria. Federal prosecutors said the operation targeted “a militant group of 15 to 20 individuals whose ideology is characterised by racist and partially apocalyptic ideas”. The prosecutors said the group’s members, mostly young men, strongly rejected Germany’s liberal democratic order and believed the government was nearing “collapse” on an unspecified “Day X”. In anticipation of that day, the militants had planned to take control of parts of their state of Saxony and potentially other east German regions. Their plan was “to establish governmental and societal structures” that would have sought to target “unwanted groups of people”. — AFP



A Qatari voter casts his ballot at a polling station in Doha. — AFP

QATAR VOTES IN REFERENDUM ON LEGISLATIVE POLLS

**DOHA:** Qataris went to the polls on Tuesday in a referendum on ending a brief and limited experiment with legislative elections. Voters cast their ballots on constitutional changes that would scrap the legislative council polls. “I believe that it will not be a majority vote, but it may even reach a unanimous vote on a constitutional amendment,” Shaikh Saud bin Khalid al Thani, a prominent member of the ruling family, told journalists before voting. “Every country may have its own style that suits it, its personality and its citizens,” he added. Under the amendments, the Shura Council would again be wholly appointed by the emir, Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani. The Shura is allowed to propose legislation, approve the budget and recall ministers. At an election centre next to Ahmad bin Ali Stadium in suburban Doha, hundreds of voters arrived to vote in the first hours after polls opened. — AFP

SPAIN UNVEILS AID PLAN A WEEK AFTER CATASTROPHIC FLOODS

**VALENCIA:** Spain on Tuesday announced an aid package worth 10.6 billion euros to rebuild regions devastated by its worst floods in a generation that have killed 218 people. The exceptional Mediterranean storm that lashed eastern Spain a week ago triggered surging torrents of muddy water that have left a trail of destruction and an unknown number of missing. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez

announced a series of measures including aid to small and medium-sized businesses, self-employed workers and households who have suffered deaths, incapacity, damage to homes and belongings. Tax relief and reduction and a three-month postponement to repaying mortgages and loans were also among the announcements aimed at protecting the economy and citizens’ livelihoods. Security force and emergency services

personnel are working around the clock to repair damaged infrastructure, distribute aid and search for bodies. Sanchez said almost 15,000 troops, police officers and civil guards were in the eastern Valencia region which has suffered most of the deaths and destruction, up from 7,300 on Saturday. Firefighters painstakingly combed through piles of damaged vehicles and pumped out water from garages. — AFP

WHO eyes new big medical evacuation from Gaza

**GENEVA:** The World Health Organization said on Tuesday a large-scale medical evacuation was planned from Gaza this week, with more than 100 seriously ill and injured patients due to leave the war-ravaged territory. The WHO said that alongside its partners it would evacuate as many as 113 patients, with most going to the United Arab Emirates and some heading to Romania for specialised care. If it goes ahead, it would be the largest evacuation from Gaza since October 2023, according to data from the UN health agency. Rik Peepkorn, the WHO’s representative in the Palestinian territories, said he was hopeful the evacuation would go ahead. He said efforts were currently under way to bring patients from various hospitals across the Gaza Strip to the Gaza European Hospital near Khan Yunis in the south. They will be transported to the Kerem Shalom crossing and then flown on to the UAE and Romania, Peepkorn told reporters in Geneva, via video link from Gaza. Since the war in Gaza began following October 7, 2023 attack inside Israel, fewer than 5,000 people have been granted medical evacuations out of the territory. Only 282 have meanwhile been able to leave since Israel shuttered Gaza’s main Rafah border crossing in early May, Peepkorn said, adding that around a third of them had been children. Peepkorn lamented the “ad hoc” access to desperately-needed medical evacuations from Gaza. “What we need is regular access... which would be properly supported, facilitated and not made unnecessarily dangerous,” he said. “We need medical corridors, and the first medical corridor we basically request to be restored is the traditional referral pathway from Gaza to East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and... a second medical corridor to



Displaced Palestinians make their way after fleeing the northern part of Gaza. — Reuters

Egypt should be open again, and maybe to Jordan.” Meanwhile, Gaza civil defence agency said on Tuesday that at least 13 people, including some living in tents for displaced Palestinians, were killed in Israeli air strikes overnight. Four people were killed when an Israeli missile hit the home of the Shurafa family in eastern Gaza City, civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said. Three people were killed and several wounded when a tent housing Palestinians displaced by the

war was hit by an Israeli missile in the east of Khan Yunis city, Bassal said. Another tent housing displaced people in Deir el-Balah in central Gaza was also hit by an Israeli air strike overnight, killing at least four people, he added. Two other people were killed in separate incidents, Bassal said. Israel’s retaliatory campaign has killed 43,391 people in Gaza, most of them civilians, according to Gaza health ministry figures which the United Nations considers to be reliable. — AFP



Villagers flee during an eruption of Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki, Indonesia. — AFP

INDONESIA VOLCANO ERUPTS AGAIN AFTER KILLING NINE

**EAST FLORES:** A volcano in eastern Indonesia erupted again on Tuesday, blowing an ash column into the sky a day after it spewed fireballs on nearby villages that killed nine people. Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki, a 1,703-metre twin volcano located on the popular tourist island of Flores, shot flaming rocks at residential areas overnight on Monday, setting wooden houses on fire and pockmarking the ground. Authorities said it killed at least 10 people and injured dozens more, but on Tuesday revised the toll down by one.

Lewotobi Laki-Laki erupted again on Tuesday, shooting ash a kilometre into the sky. There were no immediate reports of fresh damage to villages surrounding the crater. The local search and rescue agency in the town of Maumere on Flores said in a statement that no residents had been reported missing, but rescuers were still combing through the volcanic debris as a precaution. Some nearby residents who appeared to have stayed in their homes were evacuating in trucks after the latest eruption. — AFP

CROSSING INCREASE

Greece says migrant arrivals rising



Some islands in the southeast of the Aegean sea, including Rhodes, are seeing an increase in migrants arriving by boat, Greek migration and asylum minister Nikos Panagiotopoulos said. “The southeast of the Aegean and the island of Rhodes are experiencing migratory pressure right now,” he said on public television station ERT, though he said the increase does not appear to be linked to rising tensions in the Middle East. — AFP

DATA VIOLATION

S Korea fines Meta for illegal collection



South Korea has fined Facebook-parent Meta more than \$15 million for illegally collecting sensitive user information from nearly a million people without consent and sharing it with advertisers, the country’s data watchdog said on Tuesday. The firm, which also owns Instagram, ran afoul of laws prohibiting the use of information on political opinions, religious beliefs and people’s private life unless the individual provides explicit consent. — AFP

WOODEN DEVICE

First wooden satellite launched into space



The world’s first wooden satellite has blasted off on a SpaceX rocket, its Japanese developers said, part of a resupply mission to the International Space Station. Scientists at Kyoto University expect the wooden material to burn up when the device re-enters the atmosphere -- potentially providing a way to avoid generating metal particles when a retired satellite returns to Earth. Particles may impact the environment and telecommunications. — AFP

US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2024



WHITE HOUSE RACE  
TEN COUNTIES  
TO WATCH IN US  
ELECTION

**WASHINGTON:** Seven battleground states — Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — are expected to play a decisive role in the US presidential election between Democrat Kamala Harris or Republican Donald Trump. Here are ten counties to watch in those states. Early results based on partial returns may not be predictive of the final vote tallies in the counties.

**MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA**  
Home to Phoenix, Maricopa County, Arizona, is key to winning the southwestern state as it makes up about 60 per cent of the statewide vote.

**COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA**  
Large and racially diverse Cobb County in Atlanta's northern suburbs is a spot Democrats could pick up the large number of votes needed to win the state.

**BALDWIN COUNTY, GEORGIA**  
In central Georgia, Baldwin County is much smaller than Cobb but an indicator of Black voter turnout, as about 40 per cent of voters in this county are Black.

**WAYNE COUNTY, MICHIGAN**  
Home to Detroit's 1.7 million residents, Wayne County, Michigan, is about 40 per cent Black.

**WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**  
In the northwest corner of Nevada around Reno, Washoe County has been trending more Democratic in recent elections.

**WAKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA**  
The city of Raleigh in Wake County, North Carolina, has boosted statewide turnout for Democrats in recent elections.

**ERIE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**  
Erie County in northwest Pennsylvania has voted for the winning presidential candidate in the last four elections.

**BUCKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**  
North of Philadelphia, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, is another highly competitive county due to its large population of working-class voters.

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**  
The suburbs of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania's capital, have supported Trump in the last two elections.

**WAUKESHA COUNTY, WISCONSIN**  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, have been a stronghold for Trump in his past two campaigns. — Reuters

Harris or Trump: America  
votes in nail-biting poll

**WASHINGTON:** Election Day voting began on Tuesday after an extraordinary — and for many unnerving — US presidential race that will either make Kamala Harris the first woman president in the country's history or hand Donald Trump a comeback that sends shock waves around the world. As the first polling stations opened, Democratic Vice-President Harris, 60, and Republican former president Trump, 78, were dead-even in the tightest and most volatile White House contest of modern times.

The bitter rivals spent their final day of the campaign frenetically working to get their supporters out to the polls and trying to win over any last undecided voters in the swing states expected to decide the outcome. But despite a series of head-spinning twists in the campaign — from Harris's dramatic entrance when President Joe Biden dropped out in July to Trump riding out two assassination attempts and a criminal conviction — nothing has broken the deadlock in the opinion polls.

Polling stations opened from 6:00 am (1100 GMT) in states including Virginia, North Carolina and New York. Tens of millions of voters are expected to cast their ballots, on top of the more than 82 million people who have already voted early in the preceding weeks. A final outcome may not be known for several days if the results are as close as the polls suggest, adding to the tension in a deeply divided nation.

And there are fears of turmoil and even violence if Trump loses and then contests the result as he did in 2020, with barriers erected around the White House and businesses boarded up in Washington. The world is anxiously watching, as the outcome will have major implications for conflicts in the Middle East, for Russia's war in Ukraine, and for tackling climate change — which Trump calls a hoax.

Harris and Trump are effectively



Former US president and 2024 presidential hopeful Donald Trump in Waterloo, Iowa, and US Vice-President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

The bitter rivals spent their final day of the campaign frenetically working to get their supporters out to the polls and trying to win over any last undecided voters in the swing states expected to decide the outcome

tied in the seven main swing states — Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin. On the eve of the vote, Harris went all-in on the must-win state of Pennsylvania, rallying on the Philadelphia steps made famous in the "Rocky" movie and declaring: "momentum is on our side." However, "this could be one of the closest races in history — every single vote matters," cautioned Harris, who was joined by celebrities including Lady Gaga and Oprah Winfrey.

Trump — who would become the first convicted felon and oldest person to win the presidency — cast himself as the only solution to an apocalyptic vision of the country in terminal decline and overrun by

"savag" migrants. "With your vote tomorrow, we can fix every single problem our country faces and lead America — indeed, the world — to new heights of glory," Trump told his closing rally in Grand Rapids in the key swing state of Michigan, after touring North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

Harris, meanwhile, hammered home her opposition to Trump-backed rights issues across the United States — one of her key vote-winning positions with crucial women voters. But she also struck an upbeat note — and notably avoided mentioning Trump, after targeting him directly as a threat to democracy for his dark rhetoric and repeated threats to exact retribution on his political opponents. — AFP

NEW HAMPSHIRE HAMLET TIED IN FIRST DAY VOTES



Residents of Dixville Notch cast their ballots in the US election, in Dixville Notch, New Hampshire. — AFP

**DIXVILLE NOTCH:** Voters in the US hamlet of Dixville Notch launched Election Day in the first minutes of Tuesday with a tied vote, mirroring the incredibly close national polls in the White House race.

Kamala Harris and Donald Trump each received three ballots in the tiny community in the northeastern state of New Hampshire, which for decades has kicked off Election Day at the stroke of midnight on Monday — hours before the rest of the country's polling stations open.

The Democratic vice-president and Republican ex-president have been battling in a tense and exceptionally close race, with opinion polls largely tied.

To a gathered crowd of journalists, the vote opened with a rendition of the US national anthem performed on an accordion. Electoral laws in New Hampshire allow municipalities with fewer than 100 residents to open their polling stations at midnight and to close them when all registered voters have fulfilled their civic duty. — AFP

Control of US Congress at stake in battle

**WASHINGTON:** Control of the US Congress is at stake in elections that could flip both the House of Representatives and the Senate, while still leaving Capitol Hill divided between Donald Trump's Republicans and Kamala Harris' Democrats. The outcome will play an important role in determining how easily the winner of the US presidential election will govern until the next congressional elections in 2026.

Non-partisan analysts say Republicans stand a good chance of taking back the Senate, where Democrats hold a 51-49 majority. But Republicans could also lose their grip on the House, where Democrats only need to pick up four seats to take back control of the 435-seat chamber. As in the presidential election, the outcome will likely be determined by a small slice of voters. The battle for the Senate hinges on seven contests, while fewer than 40 House races are seen as truly competitive.

"It's incredibly close," said Erin Covey, who analyses House races for the non-partisan Cook Political Report. Voters do not seem to be indicating a clear preference for either party. An October Reuters/



A general view shows the US Capitol, in Washington. — Reuters

Ipsos poll found 43 per cent of registered voters would back the Republican candidate in their district, while 43 per cent would back the Democratic candidate.

Democrats are playing defence as they try to retain their hold on the Senate, whose members serve six-year terms. Republicans only need to gain two seats to win control of the chamber, and they are expected to easily pick up one of those seats with a victory in West Virginia, where Joe Manchin, a Democrat-turned-independent, is retiring. The state's popular governor, Jim Justice, is forecast to easily capture Manchin's seat. Republicans could secure

their majority with a victory in Montana, where Democrat Jon Tester faces a difficult reelection battle, or Ohio, where Democrat Sherrod Brown likewise is locked in a close race. Republicans stand a chance to widen their Senate majority further if they win races in several competitive Midwestern states. That would allow them to block many of Harris' initiatives and personnel appointments if she were to win the White House, or help Trump deliver on his promised tax cuts if he wins. But they are unlikely to end up with the 60-vote majority needed to advance most legislation in the chamber.

In Nebraska, Republican Senator Deb Fischer faces a surprisingly strong challenge from an independent candidate, Dan Osborn, who has not said whether he would line up with Democrats in the Senate if he were to win. Republicans were also playing defence in Texas, where Senator Ted Cruz faced a challenge from Democratic Representative Colin Allred, for a seat Republicans have held for three decades. The picture is less clear in the House, where Republicans hold a narrow 220-212 majority. — Reuters

OPINION

Great leaders are forged during dark times



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is an academic and researcher

**DURING** LIFE’S turbulent times, we can easily falter and fumble. Conversely, pioneers and innovators often rise from challenging and chaotic periods. When the shadows loom large, the characteristics of great trailblazers begin to emerge, differentiating them from the rest. From dark times may emerge intrepid individuals who possess a deep sense of responsiveness, foresight, and drive. Great frontrunners can gain clarity of mind while formulating a clear roadmap that transcends immediate struggles — having a compelling vision always serves as a beacon of hope. Developing the aptitude to assess complex scenarios, weigh risks critically, and make informed choices in high-pressure environments, leaders learn to trust their instincts and rely on their experience, while remaining open to feedback. The capacity to make tough decisions while remaining calm serves as a pillar of strength, reinforcing confidence in their outlook. Turning hardships into leadership lessons is a powerful way to grow

personally and professionally. Reflection and introspection will aid in understanding our challenges better. Objective self-analysis helps us gain insight into our patterns of behaviour and decision-making capabilities during tough times. Learning to pivot when circumstances change while persevering and not giving up are key factors for growth and embracing challenges. Adversities often heighten our emotional awareness, which is crucial for effective leadership. Recognising our emotions and how they affect our decisions, and managing our reactions in difficult situations while being attuned to the feelings and needs of others are fundamental attributes of self-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness. Great leaders are forged in the crucible of dark times. Identifying key lessons is instrumental for resilience, adaptability, empathy, vision, decisive action, and commitment to learning. Their emergence acts as a testament to the human spirit’s capacity to adapt and flourish amidst adversity. The crises we face can be daunting, yet they also provide an invaluable opportunity to cultivate leadership that leads not just through

Great leaders emerge from dark times not merely as individuals who survived a crisis, but as those who have learned from it.

hardship, but also into a future of hope and possibility. Great leaders emerge from dark times not merely as individuals who survived a crisis, but as those who have learned from it. Leaders who embrace a mindset of continuous learning analyse what went wrong, what went right, and what could be improved for the future. This commitment to growth ensures they are better prepared for challenges that lie ahead. We are always a choice. When we take more of a bystander objective view of our otherwise harrowing experiences, we can actively choose to shift perspectives and reframe the narrative of the negativity. Transforming our suffering into moments of understanding will liberate us from the antagonising ‘woe is me’ victimhood feeling that can easily ensue. Transforming your woes into wonder is a continuous journey that involves self-reflection, resilience, and resourcefulness. By embracing your experiences and viewing them through a lens of possibility, you can uncover the beauty in life’s challenges, ultimately leading to a richer and more fulfilling existence. Remember, it’s not just about overcoming hardship but about finding meaning in every moment.

CAMEROON TO MARK 42 YEARS OF PAUL BIYA IN POWER

JEAN-BAPTISTE KETCHATENG

Supporters celebrate 42 years of Cameroonian President Paul Biya being in power on Wednesday, with rallies, special broadcasts and calls for an eighth term in office. Just over two weeks after the 91-year-old returned to the country after a six-week absence amid rife speculation about his health, members of the president’s party face calls to show their ardent support. “Let us mobilise as one behind President Paul Biya to ensure the stability and progress of Cameroon,” secretary general of the central committee of the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (RDPC) Jean Nkuete urged in a letter to party members. Published late last month as part of the preparations, the missive praised Biya’s “fantastic record” and called for an end to “malicious speculation and predictions” surrounding the leader, who took the helm in 1982 on the resignation of Ahmadou Ahidjo. In the west, dozens of activists and supporters signed a motion inviting “all Cameroonians, without discrimination based on political opinion, to join us in our call for the candidacy of the President of the Republic Paul Biya”. In the southern town of Ebolowa, at a screening of a documentary dedicated to “Paul Biya, a great statesman with a prodigious destiny”, Higher Education Minister and RDPC communication official Jacques Fame Ndongo likewise “solemnly requested” that Biya stand again. In keeping with his customary silence on the matter, Biya has given no indication of his intentions. Nor has he named a successor — the subject of who will replace him remains taboo. After highly contested elections in 2018, Biya further toughened his autocratic grip on power, with dissenting opinion firmly met with repression, arrests and prison terms, human rights activists say. His long-absence after leaving Beijing at the beginning of September following a China-Africa cooperation summit led to many questions. Health rumours swirled, prompting authorities to take the unusual step of releasing a statement on October 8 saying the president was well, was working from Switzerland and would return home in a few days. Biya — who has previously spent long periods in Switzerland for medical care or staying at luxury holiday resorts — finally re-appeared in Cameroon on October 21, to a rapturous welcome by his party. He was greeted at Yaounde airport by the secretary general of the presidency Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh and by his wife Chantal, though a lift for assisting passengers with reduced mobility could be seen nearby. — AFP

Why Trump’s fans should be wary if he returns to power

**I** DON’T know who will win the presidential election. Nobody does. But there’s obviously a substantial chance that Donald Trump will return to power. I’m worried for our country and I’m concerned about what my own life would be like under a second Trump term. And you should be, too. Trump’s first term, in which our democracy remained fairly intact, is a bad model for what will happen if he gets a second. The guardrails that constrained him last time are gone. If he regains power, this could very easily be America’s last more or less free and fair election for a long time. We should be so lucky. There are plenty of reasons to think that Trump and his most ardent supporters are itching to deploy violence against their opponents: Nearly four years ago, a violent mob descended on the United States Capitol and tried to overturn the results of the last presidential election. More recently, Trump, who has called his political adversaries “vermin,” suggested using our military against “the enemy from within.” Last week he criticised the hawkish views of Liz Cheney — who has endorsed Kamala Harris — then fantasised, “let’s put her with a rifle standing there” and see how she would feel “when the guns are trained on her face.” On Sunday at a rally, he declared that someone trying to get him “would have to shoot through the fake news and I don’t mind that so much.” It’s also important to realise that Trump wouldn’t need to use the military against American citizens to create a climate of fear and repression. All he would have to do is tacitly grant permission, to the many extremists who are among his supporters, to go vigilante. Still, you may imagine that even if America becomes MAGAified, you won’t personally be at risk. If that’s



People vote at a polling station in New York City on Election Day on Tuesday. — AFP



PAUL KRUGMAN

what you believe, you might want to think again. In the end, it won’t matter if you aren’t living in the US illegally or Puerto Rican or a vocal Democrat. Do you work for a news organisation? Unless your outlet has been an all-out cheerleader for him and his agenda, Trump considers you an “enemy of the people.” And the cheerleading had better have been loud; Trump has even accused Fox News of being “weak and soft on the Democrats.” Do you work at a government statistical agency? Bogus claims that numbers MAGA doesn’t like are fraudulent are now standard Republican practice. If, as surveys of economists suggest, Trump’s policies prove highly inflationary, I would not be at all surprised if there’s a purge at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, with professional civil servants forced out and replaced with loyalists who will produce more favourable numbers. Are you a librarian? We don’t need to speculate here: Once universally beloved members of their communities, many librarians have already faced harassment and threats from right-wingers who want to ban

books they don’t like. Expect it to get much worse if Trump takes power. Are you a doctor? Now that Trump says he’ll give Robert Kennedy Jr. a key role in health policy — “I’m going to let him go wild on health,” he said — at some point you may be putting yourself at risk if, say, you administer vaccines or even give patients advice based on the best medical science. Are you a businessperson who tries to stay out of politics? Even if I’m wrong in guessing that Trump would be worse than Orban, consider that much of Hungary’s economy has been taken over by crony capitalists with ties to the ruling party. Are you a billionaire? You may think that your wealth will protect you. Actually, however, it makes you a target, and an easy one, given the breadth of your business interests. Some of the ultra-wealthy seem to be realising this; my sense is that at least some have gone straight from greed (Trump will cut my taxes) to fear (better not criticise him, or he may retaliate). Finally, are you a longtime Trump supporter? Radical movements that take power often end up eating their own. Sometimes that’s because they weren’t radical enough — they were like John Kelly, who was one of Trump’s secretaries of Homeland Security and one of his White House chiefs of staff but now describes Trump as “an authoritarian” who “certainly falls into the general definition of fascist.” Sometimes, however, erstwhile supporters end up punished simply because they were on the wrong side of an internal power struggle. In sum, America may be about to become a very grim place. And those imagining that their lives would simply go on as before, untouched in any major way by the potential fear and chaos, are making a big mistake. — The New York Times.

# Check the AI hype and get back to reality



SAMUEL KUTTY  
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The writer is a freelance journalist and author who has worked in India and Gulf countries

IT'S NO hype that AI, the term that stands for Artificial Intelligence, is changing our daily lives more than what we really realise. It has dabbled into everything around us, from homes to hospitals; and schools to workplaces!

Despite this invasion “no one has written one that everyone agrees on” as far as the definition of AI is concerned. The Wikipedia page refers to it as “the intelligence demonstrated by machines, in contrast to the natural intelligence displayed by humans.”

According to Britannica, artificial intelligence is the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings.

Another description for AI is “a computer system that can perform tasks that typically requires human intelligence, such as problem-solving, learning and decision-making”.

Though viewpoints by experts and the hype created by vendors to promote their products vary, the fact is that all of us are living with AI-powered technology. In other words, AI has become part of our day-to-day life whether we realise it or not!

Look at healthcare, where various AI systems are used -- both to improve patient

care and to advance health research. In fact, as medical experts point out, it helps speed up the search for medical treatments by selecting and testing treatments for a particular disease, which otherwise can take ages to complete.

Similarly, in the education system, AI enables educators to understand students’ engagement, learning progress and well-being. It can help fill needed gaps in learning and teaching.

Since the students of today will need to work in a future where AI is the reality, it's important that our educational institutions expose students to and use the technology.

While AI offers immense potential to improve our lives, it also raises some critical and ethical questions about its future and potential impact on humanity.

Just look at jobs; we find that AI is already replacing some jobs, and this trend is likely to accelerate in the coming years. This can lead to widespread unemployment and economic hardship, particularly for low-skilled workers.

Experts also raise concerns about its potential for use in malicious purposes, such as weaponisation, cyber warfare and mass surveillance, in addition to other issues like its bias and discrimination.

Professional writing, especially content,

There is fear about the possibility artificial intelligence producing high-quality content more efficiently than human writers. This thought leaves many writers with the fear of AI replacing them!

is another area where AI seemingly poses a threat. The fear is part of apprehensions like, as if writers competing among themselves wasn't enough already, now you're also competing with technology.

There is also the possibility of AI producing high-quality content more efficiently than human writers. This thought leaves many writers with the fear of AI replacing them!

Of course, AI has the potential to bring significant changes to the content creation landscape and impact us, the writers.

While it can provide writers with tools to do research, do data analysis, check words, spelling and grammar, and free up more time to focus on the creative aspects of their work, it cannot add personal viewpoints.

This means skilled writing will not go anywhere. After all, AI is not capable of the same level of creativity and emotional depth that human writers are! With any new technology, the key is to adapt to use AI in a way that improves upon the unique strengths of human writers.

One thing is sure: AI is a tool that is becoming more useful and ubiquitous. As Prof Alan Brown reveals in the book, Surviving and Thriving in the Age of AI, “much of what we see today makes AI sound like a cross between magic and science fiction.”

## INDIAN CAPITAL STRUGGLES AS POLLUTION SURGES

ABHAYA SRIVASTAVA

The toxic smog season in India's capital has just begun, but those unable to escape cancer-causing poisonous fumes say the hazardous impact on health is already taking its toll.

New Delhi regularly ranks among the world's most polluted capitals, with a melange of factory and vehicle emissions exacerbated by agricultural fires blanketing the city each winter, stretching from mid-October until at least January.

Cooler temperatures and slow-moving winds trap deadly pollutants, suffocating the megacity of 30 million people in putrid fumes. Factory worker Balram Kumar returns home exhausted from work, but then is up all night coughing.

“I am barely able to sleep all night,” Kumar, 24, said as he waited outside a special pollution clinic, set up at the government-run Ram Manohar Lohia hospital. “My chest hurts every time I cough. I have been taking medicines but there is no relief,” said Kumar. He pointed dejectedly to an X-ray of his chest. “My cough is just not going,” he said.

On Tuesday, the level of PM2.5 particles -- the smallest and most harmful, which can enter the bloodstream -- topped 278 microgrammes per cubic metre, according to monitoring firm IQAir.

That is 18 times the daily maximum recommended by the World Health Organization.

On the worst days, levels can shoot up as high as 30 times the daily maximum.

Piecemeal government efforts to mitigate the smog, such as a public campaign encouraging drivers to turn off their engines at traffic lights, have failed to make an impact.

A study in the Lancet medical journal attributed 1.67 million premature deaths to air pollution in

New Delhi regularly ranks among the world's most polluted capitals, with a melange of factory and vehicle emissions exacerbated by agricultural fires blanketing the city each winter

the world's most populous country in 2019. Air pollution in Delhi has worsened after a fireworks ban was widely flouted for raucous celebrations last week for the festival of lights, Diwali. The cracker frenzy turned Delhi's winter skies dull grey.

Doctor Amit Suri, who heads the pollution clinic, said there is usually a surge of 20-25 per cent in the number of patients turning up with respiratory issues after the festival. This year, it is the same story. “Most of the patients are coming with complaints of dry cough, throat irritation, running of eyes and some of them are also having skin rashes,” Suri said. The hospital provides treatment and medicine free of cost.

None of its patients can afford private healthcare, and many cannot buy an air purifier for their homes. The WHO says that air pollution can trigger strokes, heart disease, lung cancer and other respiratory diseases.

A study published in the Lancet Planetary Health journal in July said more than seven per cent of all deaths in 10 of India's biggest cities were linked to air pollution. — AFP

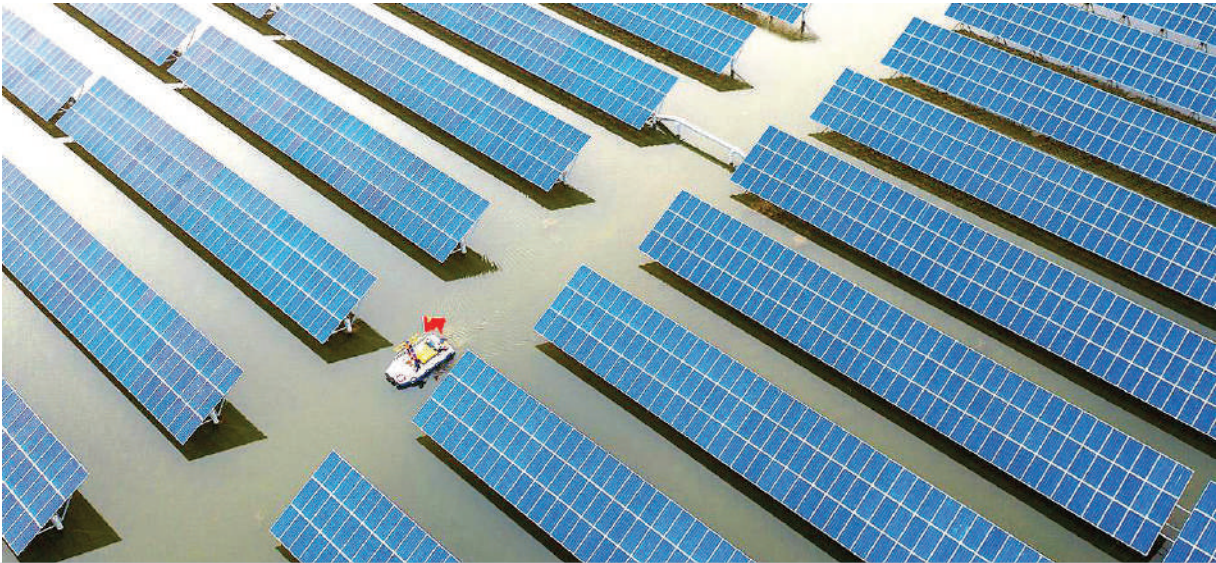
# Unleashing the solar power's bright future

SOLAR POWER has been the star of the clean-energy transition, delivering major benefits for the climate, the cost of living and energy security. With an average annual growth rate of almost 30 per cent over the last decade, the market for solar power has undergone a rapid transformation. What was once a heavily subsidised renewable-energy technology is now a readily available mainstream solution – whether one needs to power skyscrapers in large cities or deliver electricity to small businesses in rural areas.

Solar has become an increasingly attractive option for electricity producers and consumers alike. In 2023, additions to the world's renewable power capacity grew by 50 per cent, and most of that was solar PV. With supportive policies already in place in more than 130 countries, solar power looks set to continue playing its starring role for the rest of this decade. Compared with the previous five years, solar PV deployment through 2030 is expected to more than double in major economies such as the United States, China, the European Union, India and Brazil.

Falling costs have been a key driver of this growth, with solar-panel prices declining by almost 50 per cent in 2023. The combination of lower costs, scalable manufacturing and quick installation means that solar PV is cheaper than new fossil-fuel power plants in most markets. Moreover, the benefits of solar can be amplified when paired with energy storage such as batteries or connected to larger, flexible systems via grids to deliver reliable power supplies.

Still, despite the unprecedented growth of solar power in recent years, the world needs to triple its renewable-energy capacity by 2030. At the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai (COP28) last year, all countries agreed that meeting this goal is necessary to keep the 1.5° Celsius target for global warming within reach. The task for policymakers is to provide regulatory certainty for the private sector; ramp up investments in solar and other renewables, electricity storage and grid infrastructure; cut red tape and remove administrative barriers; and improve access to



Solar-panel prices have declined by almost 50 per cent in 2023.



AJAY MATHUR

The writer is a former director general of the Indian Bureau of Energy Efficiency, is Director General of the International Solar Alliance



FATIH BIROL

The writer is Executive Director of the International Energy Agency

finance, particularly for projects in emerging and developing economies.

Fortunately, even high inflation and tightening supply chains have not prevented the cost of solar PV from falling dramatically. But since this trend is largely due to China's massive investments in solar-panel production, the international solar supply chain has become highly concentrated. As the growth of solar PV continues, manufacturing will need to become more diversified to ensure resilient supply chains. Initiatives such as the US Inflation Reduction Act, India's Production-Linked Incentive and the EU's Net-Zero Industry Act will be crucial to building and revitalising homegrown clean-energy industries.

Solar will be essential to meet growing energy demands, not least in emerging and developing economies, where policymakers are seeking to help their citizens realise their economic aspirations while limiting greenhouse-gas emissions. For many countries, renewables like solar can also reduce reliance on energy imports, limit exposure to global supply disruptions and improve energy security over the long term. But as technologies and consumer behaviour evolve, the need for more sophisticated energy infrastructure will grow.

As matters stand, investments to expand grid infrastructure are not keeping pace with the growth of clean-energy technologies, and this is delaying the rollout of new

projects, including for solar. New electricity networks often take 5-15 years to plan and complete, whereas new renewables projects take only 1-5 years. Making matters worse, investment in grids – which needs to reach more than \$600 billion per year by 2030 – is not flowing to the regions that need it most. Grid investments in many emerging and developing economies have been well below the levels needed to meet robust growth in electricity demand and to expand access. This shortfall represents an opportunity that must not be squandered. Solar PV has enormous potential to provide electricity to the many millions of people who currently lack it, most of whom are in Africa. But access to finance is crucial. Many emerging and developing economies (with the exception of China) are missing out on the current wave of clean-energy investments because of the high costs of capital for new projects. The risk premium that investors demand to enter less-established markets is directly undermining solar power's competitiveness.

Removing this obstacle requires action from governments, multilateral development banks, and others to bring down the cost of capital in these markets. The situation is urgent. To limit global warming to 1.5°C, we must more than triple annual clean-energy investment in emerging and developing economies within the next decade. ©Project Syndicate, 2024

# SPORTS

## CLEANSPORTS



The stall of Oman Anti-Doping Committee.

### Oman Anti-Doping Committee attends Oman Science Festival

**MUSCAT:** The Oman Anti-Doping Committee is participating in the Oman Science Festival, being held from November 4 to 11 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. This participation aims to raise community awareness about the importance of clean sports and the harmful effects of doping on public health and athletic performance.

The committee's participation is part of its ongoing efforts to educate about the dangers of doping, which negatively impacts athletes' health and exposes them to penalties. The committee has prepared several interactive activities and awareness programmes targeting youth and athletes to deliver a clear message about the necessity of integrity in sports. These activities also cover the health and legal aspects of doping, including an introduction to the international and local regulations governing anti-doping in sports.

Through this participation, the Oman Anti-Doping Committee seeks to highlight its initiatives and efforts to protect sports integrity, as well as to strengthen partnerships with educational and scientific institutions to unify efforts in promoting health awareness across different community segments.

The Oman Science Festival 2024 features a range of diverse events designed to inspire creativity and scientific thinking among participants. These events include interactive science workshops, offering students and community members a hands-on approach to exploring science, along with a scientific innovation exhibition showcasing the latest ideas and inventions. The festival also includes scientific discussion sessions addressing contemporary scientific issues, science competitions that encourage excellence, and a science theatre presenting educational and entertaining performances that enhance scientific understanding in an engaging and enjoyable way.



## Oman coast to 8-wicket win over Netherlands



Man of the Match Shakeel Ahmed, who took 4 wickets for 26 runs, receives his award from Paul Sheridan, Vice-Chairman of Oman Cricket.

**OMAN'S** SPINNERS first worked their magic to restrict the Netherlands to a modest total, and then a skipper's knock of 58 by Jatinder Singh powered the hosts to an emphatic eight-wicket win in the Cricket World League (WCL) 2 at the Oman Cricket Academy ground on Tuesday. The commanding performance marked Oman's second consecutive victory, following an equally impressive win over the UAE on Friday.

Oman's spinners set the tone early, limiting the Netherlands to a modest 132 as the slow left-arm orthodox trio of Shakeel Ahmed, Aamir Kaleem, and Wasim Ali weaved their magic. Ahmed was the standout, finishing with 4/26, including two maidens, while Kaleem (2/27) and Ali (1/18) backed him up effectively. Leg-spinner Samay Shrivastav, who had shone in the UAE match with a four-wicket haul, also contributed with 2/36.

After winning the toss, Oman skipper's decision to bowl first proved wise as the spinners capitalised on the conditions, taking nine of the 10 Dutch wickets, with one dismissal of Aryan Dutt being a run-out. Ahmed struck early, dismissing openers Max O'Dowd and Vikramjit Singh, and Aamir Kaleem soon added to the pressure by taking the wicket of Dutch captain Scott Edwards. The Netherlands stumbled to 22/3, struggling to build any momentum.

Bas de Leede offered some resistance with a gritty 51 off 89 balls, while Noah Croes added a fighting 29 off 43. Their



Captain Jatinder Singh scored a composed fifty.

40-run stand briefly revived the Dutch innings, but it was short-lived as Wasim Ali removed Croes, and Ahmed returned to remove both Shariz Ahmad and De Leede, leaving the Netherlands in tatters at 114/6. The tail offered little, with Roelof van der Merwe falling to Kaleem and Shrivastav

finishing off the lower order to wrap up the Dutch innings at 132 in 40.2 overs.

Chasing 133, Oman's openers Jatinder Singh and Ashish Odedara put on a solid 81-run partnership in 20 overs, setting the platform for a comfortable chase. Odedara, the player of the match in the UAE game, scored 27 off 57 balls with three boundaries and a six before falling to Dutt.

Jatinder, demonstrating patience and poise, reached his half-century and took Oman close to the target, adding another 33 runs with Wasim Ali before being bowled by Van der Merwe for a steady 58 off 95 balls, including three boundaries. Wasim Ali (24 not out) and Hamad Mirza completed the chase, guiding Oman to 133/2 in 34.1 overs.

This victory added two valuable points to Oman's tally, bringing them level with Namibia on 10 points, though they trail in net run rate.

Oman now have two more games at home in this tri-series and, with continued success, could rise to third or fourth in the standings by the end of the tri-series. Currently, the USA lead with 16 points from 12 games, followed by Canada (16 points), Scotland (14 points), and the Netherlands (12 points).

**Brief scores:** Netherlands 132 in 40.2 overs (Bas de Leede 51, Noah Croes 29; Shakeel Ahmed 4/26, Aamir Kaleem 2/27, Samay Shrivastav 2/36) lost to Oman 133/2 in 34.1 overs (Jatinder Singh 58, Ashish Odedara 27, Wasim Ali 24 not out; Aryan Dutt 1/35, Roelof van der Merwe 1/43).

## Oman Paralympic Committee prepares for para athletics

**AHMED AL KAABI**  
MUSCAT, NOV 5

The Oman Paralympic Committee (OPC) has completed its preparations to organise the seventh edition of the Oman Para Athletics Championship, scheduled for November 8-9 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in the Wilayat of Bausher. The event will take place under the supervision of the International Athletics Federation for Athletes with Disabilities. Approximately 150 male and female athletes from Gulf clubs and international teams from the Czech Republic and Greece will participate. This forum provides a platform for interaction and competition among athletes from various categories and disabilities.



Dr Mansour al Touqi, OPC Chairman, emphasised the importance of this event, which has become an annual sporting tradition highlighting the talents and abilities of athletes with disabilities.

He noted that this year's edition has expanded to include international teams from outside the Gulf region, such as Khorfakkan Club from the UAE, Al Madina Club, Jazan Club from Saudi Arabia, the Bahrain team, as well as two teams from the Czech Republic and one from Greece, adding a distinctive international flavour to the event.

Dr Al Touqi confirmed that all recorded results will be accredited by the International Paralympic Committee, enhancing the event's global significance.

He added that the goal of organising this championship is to provide opportunities for Omani and Gulf athletes to gain experience and develop their skills. It also serves as a test of Oman's readiness to host the West Asia Games scheduled for 2026.

The competitions will cover various events for athletes with motor, visual, cerebral, and intellectual disabilities, including sprint races of 100, 200, 400, 800, and 1500 metres, along with long jump, javelin, discus, and shot put events. This diversity in activities offers a chance for athletes to develop individual skills and compete within a motivating sports environment.

On the sidelines, a training course for Omani referees will be held on Wednesday, under

the supervision of international lecturer Dr Tariq al Suwaiji. This two-day course, running from November 7-8, will feature an intensive theoretical programme aimed at enhancing referees' skills. The para athletics championship provides a practical opportunity for referees to apply the skills they learn, enabling them to officiate the competitions according to international standards.

Dr Al Touqi emphasised that this course builds on last year's refereeing course, which included around 25 male and female referees. This year, it targets new referees to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the refereeing team in upcoming championships, including the West Asia Championship.

ATP FINALS



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates with the trophy after winning the final against Italy's Jannik Sinner in the ATP Finals at Pala Alpitour, Turin in Italy on November 19, 2023. — Reuters

INJURED DJOKOVIC GIVES UP ON THIRD TITLE DEFENCE

**ROME:** Novak Djokovic said on Tuesday he will not defend his ATP Finals title due to an “ongoing injury” which has ended the 24-time Grand Slam champion’s season.

Tennis icon Djokovic was one of four players still battling for one of three remaining places at the season-ending event in Turin, which kicks off on Sunday, but said on social media that he wouldn’t be making a bid for a third straight Finals title.

“I was really looking forward to being there, but due to ongoing injury I won’t be playing next week,” Djokovic said.

“Apologies to those who were planning to see me. Wishing all the players a great tournament. See you soon!” The 37-year-old Serb, currently ranked fifth in the world, sits sixth in “The Race”, the ATP’s annual rankings to determine the eight competitors at the Finals.

Jannik Sinner, Alexander Zverev, Carlos Alcaraz, Daniil Medvedev and Taylor Fritz had already qualified before Djokovic’s announcement. His decision opens up the final three places to Casper Ruud, Alex de Minaur and Andrey Rublev.

announcement. His retirement from the tournament automatically opens up the final three places to Casper Ruud, Alex de Minaur and Andrey Rublev.

Ruud and Rublev are playing in Metz, France this week, with De Minaur in action in Belgrade.

Djokovic’s withdrawal was not a surprise as he had already pulled out of the Paris Masters, effectively ending what has been a difficult season.

He hasn’t won a single ATP title in 2024, the first time that has happened since 2006, and has been shoved aside by young stars Sinner and Alcaraz at the top of the game.

Djokovic did, however, win singles gold at the Paris Olympics, adding the final major honour which was missing from his record-breaking list of career achievements. — AFP

Sabalenka advances to last four Zheng ousts Rybakina at WTA Finals



Belarus’ Aryna Sabalenka reacts after winning against Italy’s Jasmine Paolini at the WTA Finals Championship in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. — AFP

**RIYADH:** Aryna Sabalenka has secured qualification for the semifinals stage of the WTA Finals with a 6-3, 7-5 victory over Jasmine Paolini, as Zheng Qinwen ended Elena Rybakina’s chances of moving on in Riyadh on Monday.

With two round-robin wins in as many matches this week in Saudi Arabia, Sabalenka guaranteed herself passage to the final four as the winner of the Purple Group.

The Belarusian top seed is also just one victory away from locking down the year-end number one ranking, which she is in a direct battle with Iga Swiatek.

Sabalenka bounced back from 0-2 down in the second set, and saved two set points at 4-5 to overcome Italian fourth seed Paolini and has now won 22 of her last 23 matches on tour.

“The second set was quite tricky. Honestly, I just tried to stay aggressive and show her that I’m going to fight for this set no matter what and I’m really happy I was able to win in straight sets,” said Sabalenka.

“Halfway through the second set I was already thinking about the third set. But I was like, wait, wait, it’s not the third set until it’s the third set. I’m happy all those shots on set points went in.”

**ZHENG BOUNCES BACK**

Earlier at King Saud University Indoor Arena, Zheng improved her chances of advancing to the semifinals with a 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 6-1 victory over world number five Rybakina.

The seventh-seeded Zheng rebounded



China’s Qinwen Zheng makes a return to Kazakhstan’s Elena Rybakina in Riyadh. — AFP

from her opening round-robin defeat to Sabalenka by claiming her first win from three meetings with Rybakina.

Meanwhile, Rybakina suffered her second defeat of the week in Saudi Arabia, and has no chance of reaching the semifinals, with one more round-robin clash to go against Sabalenka on Wednesday.

Zheng apologised to the crowd during her on-court interview for yelling, ‘Don’t shout more’, at some of her supporters at a crucial moment in the final set.

She thanked them for their support and later acknowledged she could have handled the moment better.

“I felt to in such an important moment, when they shout so hard my name, my heart rate goes up. So I hold and hold, until one moment I can’t hold more,” Zheng said during her post-match press

conference.

“After I’m feeling a bit bad because if I can control my emotions a bit better, I was supposed not to say that to my crowd.”

Zheng arrived in Riyadh on the back of an impressive second half of the season that saw her win titles in Palermo and Tokyo, and an Olympic gold medal in singles in Paris. No woman has won more matches than her within that span.

The first Chinese player to qualify for the WTA Finals since Li Na in 2013, Zheng amassed a 12-2 win-loss record during the Asian swing last month and is the tour leader in most aces struck and percentage of first-serve points won.

Zheng made the first move, breaking Rybakina en route to a 4-1 advantage but her lead was erased as Rybakina attacked her second set to draw level.

The set fittingly went to a tiebreak which Zheng sealed on a long forehand from Rybakina on the 58-minute mark.

In a pattern similar to the opening set, Zheng carved out a lead in the second frame, only for Rybakina to strike back and even the score. This time though, the 2023 Wimbledon champion took four games in a row, to claim the second set and force a decider. Zheng shook off early trouble on her serve in the final set before surging ahead 4-1. It was the boost she needed to wrap up the win - the ninth of her career against a top-10 opponent.

The Chinese Olympic champion now owns a tour-leading 20 three-set wins in 2024 - the highest tally by a WTA player in a single season since 2016. — AFP

Oman gears up to host major international boxing event

AHMED AL KAABI  
MUSCAT, NOV 5

In an unprecedented event, the Sultanate of Oman is set to host the world’s largest boxing event on November 8, organised by the Oman Martial Arts and Self-Defence Committee (OMSDC) and Futbox Fighting Championship (FFC).

This international event will bring together top athletes from various countries, including Oman, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, Russia, India and Iran. Twenty professional players will participate in 10 matches, with two fighters vying for the organisation’s main belt.

Ali Kerdi, the owner of the FFC organisation and the official in charge of the event, stated that securing approval from the World Boxing Council

(WBC) was essential for achieving this exceptional event. He explained that the global organisation only approves such events after ensuring the highest standards of organisation and safety.

“We had to meet precise conditions and high-level arrangements to ensure the event upholds the reputation of both the organisation and Oman as a host for this global event,” Kerdi added.

Kerdi noted that the OMSDC made great efforts in preparing for this event, including coordinating with international bodies to secure participation from professional players outside of Oman. “We wanted the event to be inclusive and reflect a diverse range of competitors, so we ensured that players from different countries would challenge Omani players, contributing to their skill development and pushing them towards international competitions,” he said.



Discussing the event’s objectives, Kerdi said, “We are not only striving to host a successful championship but also aim to put Oman on the global boxing map. We want the world to see that we have the passion and the capabilities to develop this sport and inspire Omani youth to take up boxing.”

Kerdi also spoke about initial challenges, noting that boxing was not historically part of Omani culture, which led to establishing the ‘Fit Box’ club to introduce people to boxing’s fundamentals in a safe, structured manner. He mentioned that the community’s acceptance of the sport has grown over time. “Initially, it was difficult to change perceptions of boxing as a violent or risky sport, but through training sessions and introductory events, people began to understand that boxing is a disciplined and professional sport suitable for all ages.”

Iqbal al Raisi, Secretary-General of the OMSDC, stated that the committee plays a crucial supervisory role, collaborating with organising bodies to support the event from various angles. He said, “Our role includes providing moral support and all resources necessary for the success of the championship, such as securing sponsorship, reserving the sports complex, and ensuring player adherence to safety measures and regulations.” He explained that the committee also acts as a liaison with government entities, like Civil Defence, Ambulance and Medical Services, to ensure top security standards.

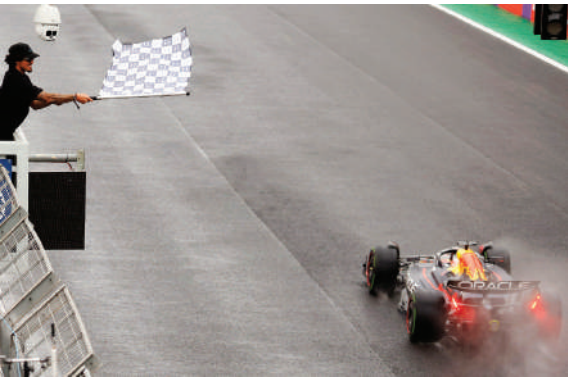
Al Raisi highlighted the importance of training local personnel, noting that special halls have been allocated for conducting training lectures aimed at educating and developing the skills of Omani referees.

SPORTS/FORMULA ONE

RED BULL TRIUMPH



Red Bull’s technical director Pierre Wache (L), Alpine’s French driver Esteban Ocon (2nd L), Red Bull Racing’s Dutch driver Max Verstappen (2nd R) and Alpine’s French driver Pierre Gasly, pose for a picture at the podium of the Formula One Sao Paulo Grand Prix, at the Jose Carlos Pace racetrack, aka Interlagos, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP



Brazilian surfer Gabriel Medina waves the chequered flag to Red Bull Racing’s Dutch driver Max Verstappen after winning the Formula One Sao Paulo Grand Prix. — AFP



Verstappen proves ability to turn it around in Brazil



Red Bull Racing’s Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates at the podium with the trophy of the Formula One Sao Paulo Grand Prix, at the Jose Carlos Pace racetrack, aka Interlagos, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP

**MAX** VERSTAPPEN proved that he has not only the talent and determination to claim a fourth drivers’ world championship, but also the individual virtuosity to perform beyond the potential of his Red Bull car.

While others, notably McLaren’s pairing of Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri, revealed their inexperience and vulnerability in the most difficult conditions during Sunday’s spectacular rain-hit Sao Paulo Grand Prix, the 27-year-old Dutchman proved to be imperious. Three things we learned from a dramatic day at Interlagos:

**VIRTUOSO VERSTAPPEN**

In Formula One there are days when the conditions dictate the unfolding of events and only the greatest of drivers can cope and not only survive but demonstrate their supreme talent. Sunday was one such day.

Verstappen was without a win in 10 races and his Red Bull car, though much improved, was no match for McLaren and pole-sitter Lando Norris.

He qualified a frustrated 12th and faced a five-place grid penalty and reacted with a controlled rage that carried him from 17th to one of his most memorable triumphs.

It was a drive of majestic purity, perfectly executed by team and driver, fuelled by fury and a desire to respond to his critics, perceived to be British, who had slammed his wild driving in Mexico where he collected

two 10-second penalties.

And in choosing a strategy that depended on a red-flag stoppage, which always seemed inevitable, it gave him the ideal opportunity to take advantage of Norris’s more cautious approach as his first set of intermediate tyres deteriorated in the rain.

In heavy rain, fortune favours the bravest and best as Verstappen demonstrated, his skill supporting the belief that a wet track gives greater value to a driver than a car’s performance.

Significantly, when the rain intensified and both Norris and Mercedes’ George Russell pitted, Verstappen and the Alpine pair of Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly stayed out.

Norris declared it a gamble but it was a calculated call by the Red Bull team who knew that their champion could handle the worsening conditions that were likely to deliver a stoppage.

It came when Williams’ Franco Colapinto crashed and thus the ultimate podium finishers took advantage with a ‘free pit stop’ that decided the outcome of race and maybe the championship.

**SIEGE MENTALITY**

Norris’s defeat, his loss of straight-line speed and ability to stay on track, came from a cool and dispassionate approach that was no match on the day for the controlled hurricane of a near-faultless Verstappen.

After the key red flag delay, Verstappen

soon swept into the lead while Norris skidded off track and lost two places. Norris put it down to luck but it was a classic strategic call in a magnificent race.

“Of course, I was very frustrated with qualifying,” said Verstappen, who failed to make Q3 because of an ill-timed red flag. “So, we tried to just use it as a good motivation in the race and luckily we had a great start and from there onwards, the car was perfect. I hoped for points, but this is crazy.”

**PASSPORT TO PEACE**

Verstappen’s victory gives him a chance to lift the title in ‘Sin City’ at the Las Vegas Grand Prix and it also calmed growing international tensions between the Dutchman’s media corps and his British critics.

It gave him a chance, too, to rub a little salt into the wounds after Norris’s crushing defeat.

“I have a quick question here,” he told a post-race news conference.

“I mean, I appreciate all of you being here, but I don’t see any British press? Did they have to run to the airport? Or do they not know where the conference is?”

He had previously suggested his European passport was the wrong one to use in a paddock heavily populated by Britons following comments by former drivers including 1996 world champion Damon Hill.

A peaceful conclusion to a memorable season is now in prospect. — AFP



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QUALITYTOUR

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**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in partnership with the National Employment Programme and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, has introduced the “Freelancer Registry” for Oman’s tour guides, aiming to boost quality and professionalism within the industry.

Launched by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, the initiative was attended by officials from both the public and private sectors at the Ministry’s headquarters.

This registry provides a structured framework for tour guides, ensuring legal support and regulating freelance work in tourism. It offers tour guides an environment conducive to growth, facilitating procedures and providing access to training opportunities that elevate service quality and align with Oman’s tourism ambitions.

Al Busaidy emphasised the pivotal role of tour guides, noting that the quality of a tourist’s experience often hinges on a guide’s ability to present Oman’s attractions with authenticity and engaging storytelling. He added that the Ministry requires a formal licence and training for tour guides to reinforce quality standards and ensure continual development in the sector.

As of September, Oman boasts 906 licensed Omani tour guides, a testament to the growing professionalism within the industry. The registry also aims to attract new entrants, fostering career opportunities in tourism and enhancing local employment in this vital field. — ONA



This registry provides a structured framework for tour guides, ensuring legal support and regulating freelance work in tourism.

Align vocational training  
with market demands

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
MUSCAT, NOV 5

In an era of rapid economic change, aligning educational pathways with labour market needs is no longer just an advantage — it’s a necessity. The call for reform in Oman’s vocational education system was voiced by Jamal al Abri, a member of the Education, Scientific Research and Innovation Committee in Majlis Ash’shura.

At the committee’s annual meeting, Al Abri presented a comprehensive vision for updating vocational and technical education in Omani schools, arguing that these reforms are essential to prepare young Omanis for real-world opportunities and address the nation’s evolving economic demands.

Al Abri’s address served as a wake-up call to the fundamental misalignment between educational training and industry requirements in Oman. As he pointed out, many of the vocational programmes available to Omani youth today fall short of addressing the needs of high-growth sectors such as healthcare, tourism and defence.

This skills gap not only hampers individual career prospects, but also limits the national economy by forcing Oman to rely on imported talent for specialised roles. With these challenges in mind, Al Abri and the Education Committee have laid out a clear plan to reorient vocational training, calling for strategic updates that will empower Omani youth with the skills necessary to thrive in a competitive job market.

In his address, Al Abri identified Oman’s skills gap as both a challenge and an opportunity. While current vocational programmes provide a foundational education, they often fail to equip students with the specialised skills needed in Oman’s fastest-growing sectors. As the country strives to diversify its economy, this gap has become a



Jamal al Abri, Member of the Education, Scientific Research and Innovation Committee in Majlis Ash'shura.

pressing issue. The proposed solution, according to Al Abri, involves a robust review and restructuring of vocational curricula to align more closely with industry needs. By doing so, Oman could create a dynamic workforce ready to step into vital roles across sectors, including healthcare and tourism, that are critical to its economic future.

A significant element of the committee’s proposal involves strengthening partnerships between educational institutions and industry stakeholders.

Al Abri stressed that these collaborations are essential for designing curricula that accurately reflect the needs of employers. When educational institutions work directly with industry leaders, vocational programmes can be fine-tuned to ensure students are not just well-educated but also job-ready upon graduation.

Engaging industry in the education process could revolutionise how vocational skills are taught, shifting the focus from theoretical knowledge to practical expertise. Such industry-aligned programmes can offer hands-on training that prepares students for the exact environments they’ll encounter in their

careers, whether in healthcare, tourism, or defence.

Al Abri also recommended increasing funding for these programmes, emphasising that proper investment is crucial to expanding and enhancing vocational education in Oman. This investment, he argued, is not only an educational priority but an economic one, as it will allow Oman to build a resilient workforce capable of driving future growth.

To advance its vision, the Education Committee has proposed several concrete reforms:

- Adding New Specialisations:** The committee recommends the introduction of vocational programmes specifically designed for high-demand fields such as healthcare, tourism and defence. These specialisations would address critical workforce shortages and direct young Omanis towards stable, rewarding careers in sectors with substantial growth potential.
- Enhancing Practical Training:** Recognising the importance of real-world experience, the committee advocates for expanding practical training within vocational programmes. By incorporating more hands-on learning opportunities, students can build the technical skills and workplace readiness needed to excel immediately in their chosen fields.
- Ongoing Curriculum Updates:** The committee proposes regular updates to vocational curricula to ensure continued alignment with labour market needs. This proactive approach would allow the education system to adapt to changing industry demands, ensuring that graduates possess the skills that employers value most and are better positioned to find employment upon graduation.

Through these targeted reforms, the Education Committee is ensuring that Oman’s education system is equipped to meet the needs of a complex and competitive global economy.

Oman’s OQBI sees potential for expansion into clean fuels

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, NOV 5

OQ Base Industries (OQBI), the Omani state-owned integrated producer of methanol, ammonia and LPG products, has outlined the potential for a significant expansion of its methanol plant’s capacity in the Salalah Free Zone in the south of the Sultanate of Oman. Additionally, it envisions options to capitalise on blue and green ammonia production opportunities to support, among other areas, the decarbonisation of the global maritime industry.

OQBI, wholly owned by OQ Group – the integrated global energy group of Oman – announced earlier this week that it intends to offer 49 per cent of its shares for public investment via an



OQBI boasts a combined nameplate production capacity of 1,816 ktpa across its methanol, ammonia and LPG production plants in the Salalah Free Zone.

Initial Public Offering (IPO) on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

According to OQBI, there are significant opportunities for capacity expansions and inroads into the low-carbon clean fuels sector, as well as the green energy value chain. Foremost among these is the potential for a brownfield expansion of its existing 1,095 ktpa capacity methanol plant by around 550 ktpa—a move that will also increase demand for lean natural gas due to LPG production at the integrated complex.

OQBI also sees prospects in the transition to clean methanol and ammonia to meet the emerging demand for clean fuels. “Management believes that as a unique integrated petrochemical player of scale in the region, with secured feedstock

supply at competitive pricing and locational advantage, the company is well positioned to benefit from a potential industry shift towards blue methanol and blue ammonia in the medium term, subject to feasibility and market development, as well as a potential further shift towards green ammonia in the long term, subject to the availability of green hydrogen locally and the development of global markets and competitive terms,” it noted.

OQBI cited expert projections of an upsurge in global clean ammonia demand, which is expected to soar to over 200 million metric tonnes by 2040, with the marine fuels segment accounting for the lion’s share at around 170 million metric tonnes. Similar demand trends are also foreseen for

green methanol, which, along with green ammonia, is set to support the decarbonisation of the global shipping industry.

Significantly, carbon capture — envisioned as part of its Decarbonisation Plan—will also bolster OQBI’s future forays into the sustainable fuels ecosystem. “The company has developed a Decarbonisation Plan targeting Net-Zero emissions by 2050, in line with Oman Vision 2040. In the long term, the company is considering the adoption of carbon capture technology in the methanol reformer and the introduction of carbon credit certificates, which could allow ammonia to be classified as blue or green ammonia in certain markets, leading to potential pricing advantages,” it added.

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**MUSCAT:** ahlibank recently reported its performance for the third quarter ending 30 September 2024, in which the Bank's net profit increased by 5.3% reaching RO 30.83 million, in comparison to RO 29.29 million during the same period in 2023.

Key Performance Indicators for the third quarter ending September 30, 2024, reflected impressive growth, with total assets surging by 10.0%, reaching RO 3,468.8 million; an increase in customer deposits by 12.7%, to RO 2,672.1 million; the net loans, advances, and financing increased by 8.4%, to RO 2,892.2 million, compared to the same period in 2023. The Bank's

operating income showed strong growth of 5.4%, reaching RO 77.65 million for the nine-month period ended 30 September 2024 compared to RO 73.67 million during the same period in 2023.

Commenting on the impressive results of the third quarter of 2024, Said bin Abdullah al Hatmi, CEO of ahlibank,

said, "These positive results strengthen ahlibank's standing as a leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, reinforcing our commitment to pursuing excellence. The Bank's making steady progress with various achievements that actively contribute to realising the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040."

"The Bank continues to successfully deliver advanced banking solutions that meets the evolving needs of our expanding customer base while setting new standards for excellence in the banking sector. This, in turn, strengthened the Bank's commitment to continuous innovation to achieve its strategic goals and contributed to the advancement of the banking landscape within the Sultanate of Oman," he added

Al Hatmi stressed that, in addition to the positive financial indicators, the achievements of ahlibank during the first nine months of 2024 included many aspects that support the Bank's mission as a "Partner in Excellence", and highlight its core values of innovation, integrity, responsibility and sustainability.

Shedding the spotlight on this regard is ahli islamic having opened its latest branch in Al Khoudh 6 in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, with the aim of bringing Sharia-compliant banking products and services closer to its growing customer base.

Al Hatmi stated that ahlibank has been consistently recognised for its achievements. Recently it has received two prestigious awards at the Alam Al Iktisaad Awards 2024: "Excellence in Corporate Banking & Innovative Solutions" and "Best Performing Company – Large Cap."

ahli islamic, received the "Excellence in Retail Islamic Banking" award for its cutting-edge Shariah-compliant products. Additionally, ahlibank added to its accolades the "Excellence in Digital Banking" award at the OER Live DX Awards Oman, organised by the Oman Economic Review (OER) magazine in recognition of its innovative contributions to the digital banking landscape.

National Bank of Oman empowers young minds at its youth event

**MUSCAT:** As part of its dedication to nurture the skillsets and capabilities of our local youth, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) organized the NBO Youth Event at its Head Office in Muscat. The event provided a platform to equip younger minds with necessary financial and entrepreneurial insights and concepts while inspiring them to connect, learn, grow and become independent.

A number of activities took place during the Youth Event, including the "Finance to Freedom" workshop, which aimed to develop professional and personal skills among

participants, alongside other engaging sessions designed to empower young minds. Additionally, the event featured the Financial Planning for Future Entrepreneurs Panel Discussion, which highlighted key strategies and considerations for young entrepreneurs. This discussion offered practical advice and inspiration, encouraging youth to view financial planning as an integral part of their entrepreneurial journey.

Commenting on the event, Ali bin Mustafa al Lawati, Head of Private Banking at NBO, said: "At NBO, we are committed to foster a generation of



The event provided a platform to equip younger minds with necessary financial and entrepreneurial insights and concepts.

financially literate and empowered youth. Events like these provide an

invaluable opportunity for young individuals to gain knowledge, develop skills,

and build networks. We aim to support their ambitions, guiding them towards a

A new companion for  
your journey: Kia K3

**THE** all-new Kia K3 is the latest progressive sedan that is set to make a mark in the evolving consumer market. Adhering to Kia's brand ethos 'Movement that Inspires', with the K3, Kia has tapped into the demands of buyers seeking all-rounder vehicles that deliver high-tech, design and advanced safety features at par with the global trends.

The brand-new Kia K3 features a futuristic sleek style with a 4-door fastback profile. Set to elevate your journey, Kia has embodied a modernised outlook with bold side character lines, black cladding, LED Daytime Running Lights (DRL), and the 16-inch alloy wheels complementing the traditional tiger nose grille in its design. In the rear, the horizontal rear lamp emphasises wideness and star-map signature graphics provide stunning depth.

The Kia K3 has a 1.6-litre 4-cylinder engine producing 120 HP at 6,300 rpm mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission. The sedan delivers excellent fuel efficiency at 16.8 litres/100 km while minimising CO2 emissions into the atmosphere.

Built for the trendsetter and the go-getters, the Kia's K3 is a dreamy mix of striking looks and interiors that ensure a smooth driving experience with utmost passenger comfort and safety. For a sedan of its league, the K3 provides a massive 544 litres of rear storage capacity, a smart key with a button start system that saves time



The brand-new Kia K3 features a futuristic sleek style with a 4-door fastback profile.

The Kia K3 has a 1.6-litre 4-cylinder engine producing 120 HP at 6,300 rpm mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission

and easy access, an 8-inch audio display screen integrated with Apple Car Play and Android Auto and a Bluetooth voice recognition functionality that sets a benchmark for seamless connectivity. In the K3, experience comfortable longer drives. Turn on Cruise Control while the rear seat passengers can enjoy convenience features such as rear AC vents, 60:40 split back seats, armrests, and cup holders.

The sedan demonstrates Kia's vision of safety and increased driver's awareness while navigating busy highways or cramped city spaces. Kia ensures high-level safety of its passengers and

pedestrians high-tech security systems include; Hill-Assist Control, Engine Immobiliser, Rear View Camera, Manual Speed Limit Assist, Driver and Front Passenger Airbags, Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Stability Programme (ESP), Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS).

Moreover, Kia offers the best car service facilities. Ensure smooth running by getting your car serviced by professionals, and spare parts are easily available.

The Kia K3 is impressive on all fronts offering the latest technologies and convenience features for passengers.

Bahar rewards loyal customers with Tesla

**MUSCAT:** Bahar, the flagship brand of National Detergent Company (NDC), held an exciting prize distribution event for its "Buy Bahar Own Your Dream Tesla" campaign at Oman Avenues Mall on Friday. The highlight of the event was the announcement of the grand prize winner of a Tesla Model Y, marking a significant first for Oman, alongside 75 additional high value prizes for Bahar customers.

Running from July 25 to October 7, 2024, the "Buy Bahar Own Your Dream Tesla" campaign encouraged customers to purchase any product from Bahar, No.1, Pinex, Farah, or Spark for as little as RO 3, making the promotion accessible to a broad audience. By simply entering their details, participants had the chance to win the grand prize of a Tesla Model Y and an array of valuable gifts, including gift vouchers, washing machines, iPhones, and Samsung Galaxy phones. This campaign stands out as the first of its kind in Oman to offer a Tesla as a prize, adding a unique allure to the promotion.

Mohamad Abdul Hussain Bhacker,



The highlight of the event was the announcement of the grand prize winner of a Tesla Model Y, marking a significant first for Oman.

Chairman of National Detergent Company, commented on the campaign's impact: "This campaign has been a testament to our dedication to rewarding our customers in extraordinary ways. We are thrilled to present Oman's first-ever Tesla prize in a promotion, and witnessing the excitement from our customers has been

incredibly fulfilling. Our aim has always been to create great moments and lasting memories, and today we achieved exactly that."

Murali Sundar, CEO of NDC, added, "The success of the 'Buy Bahar Own Your Dream Tesla' campaign has been unprecedented. The level of engagement and excitement from our customers has exceeded our expectations. Seeing the joy on the winner's face as she received her Tesla is a highlight we'll cherish. This campaign strengthens our commitment to offering more innovative promotions that resonate deeply with the community."

As a leading supplier of home and personal care products in the region, Bahar, a 100% Omani brand, remains dedicated to delivering outstanding value and quality to customers across the Sultanate of Oman. The company is devoted to introducing engaging campaigns and quality products that enhance everyday life, fostering a deeper connection with customers and making a tangible difference.

NEWSERVICES

TENDER FOR MAIN ROADS AND SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE SYSTEM AT EZAD



The tender includes the construction of roads and roundabouts.

**MUSCAT:** The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones OPAZ has announced the launch of a tender for the main roads, protection channels and surface water drainage system at Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah (EZAD), along with the accompanying services. The tender, which is funded by the Saudi Fund for Development, includes the construction of a 14.8-kilometre one-way main road, a 2-kilometre two-way road, the creation of two roundabouts on the existing national road (N10) and five roundabouts on the main road. The works will also include the construction of dedicated entrances to the roundabouts and the necessary sidewalks, along with essential excavation works, the construction of surface water drainage system, protection works, parking facilities, traffic signs, road markings, and other related services.

The tender also includes the construction of a 6.3-km long and 250-metre-wide channel for the wadi, aimed at protecting the area from flood risks. This will include excavation for levelling, construction of protective dams, and box culverts that cross the existing national road (N10).

As part of the integrated Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah (EZAD), the tender also covers the rebuilding of part of the existing national road at the proposed wadi crossing, including the paving of the dirt road, road protection, installation of traffic signals and road markings, as well as the protection of the existing gas pipeline according to the approved plan and necessary approvals.

OPAZ has invited experienced Omani and Saudi consortiums to submit their bids through the electronic bidding platform “Esnad”. The deadline for purchasing the tender documents is set for November 18, 2024, while the deadline for bid submission is January 2, 2025.

Eng Ibrahim bin Yusuf al Zadjali, Project Manager for Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah (EZAD), confirmed that the project is part of the OPAZ’s plan to develop the zone near the Oman-Saudi border. It is being developed in collaboration with the Saudi side to enhance bilateral trade between the two countries. He also noted that the tender follows the recent awarding of the consultancy services contract for the design and supervision of the infrastructure facilities for the first phase of the Integrated Economic Zone to a consortium of an Omani company and a Saudi company.

CEOTALK

Sohar Cement boosts production, sustainability

JOMAR MENDOZA  
MUSCAT, NOV 5

**SOHAR** Cement Factory, part of Oman’s Raysut Cement Group, has achieved major advancements in production capacity, energy efficiency and sustainability, positioning it as a key player in Oman Vision 2040 and the booming GCC construction market. By increasing its production capacity to 5,000 tonnes per day, Sohar Cement is primed to meet growing regional demand while reinforcing its commitment to eco-friendly operations.

The factory’s expansion brings its annual production capacity to 1.75 million tonnes—a significant increase aimed at addressing Oman’s growing infrastructure needs and projects across the GCC. Located in Suhar Industrial City, Sohar Cement now offers a range of cement types—Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC), Sulfate Resistant Cement (SRC) and Portland Limestone Cement (PLC)—both in bulk and bagged forms to support diverse construction requirements.

In an interview with the Observer, Dr Hilal al Dhamri, CEO of Raysut Cement Group, said, “We have taken strategic steps to enhance operations and support our commitment to sustainability. Increasing our production capacity not only allows us to meet regional demand but also actively contributes to Oman Vision 2040. By enhancing our capacity, we aim to serve our clients efficiently, playing a key role in advancing Oman’s infrastructure and regional development.”

MILESTONE IN POWER EFFICIENCY

One of Sohar Cement’s key achievements is a 25 per cent reduction in power consumption, made possible by new process optimisations and advanced technologies. This shift demonstrates the factory’s alignment with Oman’s sustainability goals, reducing its environmental impact while also lowering operational costs.

“Achieving a 25 per cent reduction in power consumption is a testament to our commitment to sustainable practices,” Dr Al



Sohar Cement is primed to meet growing demand while reinforcing its commitment to eco-friendly operations.



DR HILAL AL DHAMRI  
CEO of Raysut Cement Group.

Increasing our production capacity not only allows us to meet regional demand but also actively contributes to Oman’s Vision 2040. By enhancing our capacity, we aim to serve our clients efficiently, playing a key role in advancing Oman’s infrastructure and regional development. - Dr Hilal al Dhamri, CEO of Raysut Cement Group.

Dhamri explained. “Through advanced energy-efficient systems, process automation and innovations such as variable-speed drives and power management, we’ve significantly reduced our energy use and carbon footprint. These optimisations lower costs and position Sohar Cement as a leader in eco-friendly production within the industry.”

ENHANCED LOGISTICS FOR CUSTOMER EFFICIENCY

Sohar Cement has also improved its bag loading efficiency by 30 per cent, reducing delivery times and increasing reliability for customers. The upgrades minimise lead times and support more precise delivery schedules, critical for construction clients working on tight timelines.

“With a 30 per cent improvement in bag loading efficiency, Sohar Cement has streamlined its logistics to deliver products faster and with greater precision,” Dr Al Dhamri said. “This automation and enhanced efficiency minimise lead times, reduce loading duration and ensure reliable, timely delivery, directly benefiting our customers’ supply chains.”

LAUNCH OF ‘SAMHAN’: AN ECO-FRIENDLY CEMENT

As part of its sustainability commitment, Sohar Cement has introduced “SAMHAN,” an eco-friendly cement that minimises carbon emissions without compromising performance. Produced with a low-clinker formula and supplementary cementitious materials,

SAMHAN aligns with both Oman’s environmental goals and international standards, offering a sustainable alternative for the construction sector.

“SAMHAN represents a major step forward in our sustainability journey, embodying our dedication to innovation and environmental responsibility,” Dr Al Dhamri stated. “This product exemplifies our commitment to supporting sustainable building practices, offering our clients a low-carbon option that meets international standards.” Looking forward, Sohar Cement plans to expand its product line, invest in AI-based predictive maintenance and explore the use of alternative raw materials and fuels. These innovations will further strengthen Sohar Cement’s role as a sustainability leader in the cement industry.

“Central to our vision is empowering our skilled team, particularly our young Omani talents, who drive our innovation and embody the excellence that defines Sohar Cement,” Dr Al Dhamri shared. “We are committed to leading the industry towards a sustainable future that contributes positively to Oman’s industrial and environmental landscape.”

Through these strategic upgrades, Sohar Cement is not only enhancing its market position but also supporting the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Its advancements highlight its role as a regional leader in cement production, offering eco-friendly solutions to meet the evolving demands of Oman and the GCC region.

Al Dhahirah Governor highlights key developments ahead of National Day

NASRULAH AL AJMI  
MUSCAT, NOV 5

As the Sultanate of Oman celebrates its 54th National Day, Najeeb bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, highlighted the significant developmental strides the governorate has made under the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

“The Omani citizen remains the focal point of our achievements and initiatives, as we strive to empower them to perform their roles with efficiency and capability,” he stated, underscoring the governorate’s commitment to growth and progress. In Al Dhahirah, significant developmental projects have been launched to align with the overarching goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The governorate has witnessed comprehensive development,

receiving attention in key sectors across its three wilayats: Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank. The governor emphasised that the governorate is dedicated to utilising all available resources to achieve its objectives with high levels of efficiency and accuracy.

This year, Al Dhahirah has rolled out an annual plan to implement several developmental projects based on the specific needs of each wilayat, funded through the approved budget allocated for the governorate. Notable projects include the construction of two developments in Yanqul and Dhank, each spanning 65,000 square metres, with a total cost of RO 4 million. Additionally, a science and innovation centre in Ibri is underway, with a budget of RO 1.5 million, co-financed by OQ and Petroleum Development Oman.

The governorate has also established a partnership with



A series of urban development initiatives will help boost Al Dhahirah’s tourism appeal.

the Oman Towers Company to design and implement decorative communication towers and has allocated over RO 7 million for road paving projects across the wilayats. This includes 60 km in Ibri, 25 km in Yanqul and 25 km in Dhank. Furthermore, over RO 2.7 million

have been earmarked for repairing internal roads damaged by the recent tropical weather system.

As part of its commitment to digital transformation, Al Dhahirah is working to enhance the services it offers through various digital projects. Several agreements have been signed to strengthen business continuity and improve technological infrastructure in line with the governorate’s strategy to collaborate with the private sector.

Preparations are also underway for the second edition of the Al Dhahirah Tourism Festival set for 2025, alongside the consultancy tender for the Youth Centre in Ibri and the construction of the Ibri slaughterhouse, which is currently in the contracting phase. Plans for the Ibri Public Park are also on track, with tenders expected to be announced by the end of the year.

Numerous developmental and

service projects are ongoing under the 2023-2024 plan, including internal road paving and maintenance, with 16 km currently under construction across the governorate. Other significant initiatives include the dualisation and development of the commercial area in Dhank, a health walking path in Al Nahda neighbourhood of Ibri, and the health walking path in Al Hamra, all showing promising progress.

Among the completed projects are the paving and maintenance of several internal roads in residential, commercial and industrial areas, the installation of LED lighting poles, and enhancements to various parks and recreational areas. The Friday Market in Yanqul has also seen improvements, alongside the launch of the governorate’s e-portal, aimed at accelerating digital transformation and leveraging modern technologies in service delivery.

OPINION

Gender pension gap gradually closing in Ireland



ANDY JALIL  
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The author is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

**AMONG** THE states in the European Union, Ireland has been one of the leading in matters of equality and diversity. According to a new study, the gender pension gap being experienced by Irish women could be eliminated by 2049.

Currently, Irish women have 31 per cent less than men in their pension pots when they retire. This is for a variety of reasons, including being paid less, and because motherhood usually leaves them with less recorded service during their careers. Women are also typically less likely to make additional contributions to their pension plans, both because they have less spare money than men and have other financial priorities.

The study by The Future Laboratory, which was commissioned by AIR, concludes that, due to policy changes and social shifts, the already closing gender pension gap could be gone by 2049. The gap has fallen from 38 per cent in 2018 to 31 per cent today. This could accelerate due to the introduction of pension auto-enrolment next year, the impact of compulsory reporting on the

gender pay gap by companies, as well as economic and demographic shifts, the study finds.

“There’s a lot of doom and gloom around this topic, and a lot of predictions that it could be 70 years before the gap is closed — or perhaps that it would never close,” said Miriam Rayman, fore-sight editor at The Future Laboratory and author of the paper.

“Based on a linear projection of the decrease seen in the data so far which shows the gap is closing, we estimate it will close just before 2050. That’s based on evidence we can see already, and interviews with the experts.”

Rayman said that exciting changes in the workplace such as more women in leadership and demanding equality, plus the effect generative AI is having on diversity in the workplace, is why the study has come down on the more optimistic side of the projection.

Other trends that will have an impact on the speed at which the gender pension gap closes are the expected wealth transfer over the next decade to the Gen X and millennial generations from their “boomer” parents, which should lead to more savvy and long term investment.

While on the matter of gender equality, it is noted that a new EY report has warned, the UK economy risks jeopardising a £7 bn contribution from female-founded companies unless there is a stronger support for rising women entrepreneurs.

The study also says: “Particularly impactful is the planned introduction of pension auto-enrolment next year in Ireland — which will not only bump up female participation but will also raise awareness about the importance of planning for retirement, encouraging women to take steps to close the pension gap and provide for their retirement.”

Ciara Ryan, AIB’s head of wealth, said: “It is promising to know that gender pension parity will likely be achieved in Ireland in the next 25 years. There are several factors that contribute to this, but one that we are very encouraged to see, is that women are expected to take a more active role in managing their financial future, to accelerate pension parity.”

While on the matter of gender equality, it is noted that a new EY report has warned, the UK economy risks jeopardising a £7 billion contribution from female-founded companies unless there is a stronger support for rising women entrepreneurs. The report identified over 240 business founded or led by women with revenues between £20 million and £50m that could grow into so-called ‘super-scalers’ with the right resources and backing.

INDIA’S SLOWDOWN IS TOUCHING THE UNTOUCHABLE

India’s biggest companies no longer offer a rose-tinted window onto the world’s fifth-largest economy. Shoppers have been tightening their purse strings for years. Now the austerity is spreading from the rural poor to the urban rich.

That is the opposite of the recovery story that was supposed to play out.

GDP is growing at 6.7% but the reality is that consumption has been weak in India since at least 2020. Income growth is anaemic: casual and regular workers in 2023 earned a monthly wage 1% lower than in the previous year, per an International Labour Organisation report based on government data. For a while, big companies that dominate the country’s stock benchmarks like the Nifty 50 Index seemed well insulated.

The latest set of company earnings suggest otherwise. Hindustan Unilever’s net profit fell 2% year-on-year for the three months ended September. Reliance Retail — a unit of \$215 billion Reliance Industries — reported a 1%, opens new tab drop in revenue in the same quarter and shrank store space by 2% from its June level; boss Mukesh Ambani’s execution on strategy looks as much of a problem as a softening economy. Shoppers Stop, an upscale department store, logged its second straight quarter in the red. The list goes on. The hope was always that the incomes of the poor who were buying fewer biscuits would improve.

GDP is growing at 6.7% but the reality is that consumption has been weak in India since at least 2020. Income growth is anaemic: casual and regular workers in 2023 earned a monthly wage 1% lower than in the previous year.

Instead, urban demand is showing weakness too - sales of fast-moving consumer goods groups in cities are growing at nearly one-fifth of last year’s rate — just as rural sales inch up from a prolonged slump.

India’s festival season is usually a time people spend but carmakers struggled to clear inventory in the run up to the Diwali holiday last week: Revenue growth at Maruti Suzuki, the country’s top carmaker by sales, crawled at its slowest pace in three years during the September quarter.

Even luxury marque BMW is slashing prices; discounts could get bigger going forward, the Times of India reported on Oct. 28, citing unnamed industry analysts.

Nearly half of the top 100 listed firms that have reported earnings for the September quarter missed estimates by more than 4%, the highest since March 2020, according to Venugopal Garre and his colleagues at Bernstein.

Garre says companies are not acknowledging “the elephant in the room” and are hoping the slowdown is a one-off anomaly.

For the country’s eye-wateringly expensive equities — MSCI India is valued at more than 23 times earnings — that sets up a lot of potential pain. — Reuters

**GLOBALISATION IS ON** its deathbed, which is reflected in the bipartisan disdain for free trade in the United States. Both former president Donald Trump and Vice-President Kamala Harris have seemed tariff-happy in the run-up to the presidential election.

This backlash poses more danger to the rest of the world than it does to America. After the 2008 global financial crisis, the US economy staged a remarkable rebound starting in 2016. Following that year’s fractious election battle between Trump and Hillary Clinton, the US outpaced other Group of 7 countries in growth, productivity and stock-market returns.

Compared to its partners, America looks more vibrant and better equipped — with its enormous internal market of 340 million people — to weather the trade storm. Exports account for just 11 per cent of US gross domestic product, but nearly 50 per cent of German gross domestic product. While China vacuumed up factory jobs in the 1990s, thanks to its massive low-cost labour force, executives across the US are now finding that the country’s harsh regime and rising wages have sullied the “Made in China” brand.

At the same time, America’s vast energy resources and innovation centres in Silicon Valley, Austin and Raleigh-Durham are reinvigorating the “Made in the USA” option.

History puts things in perspective. By the summer of 1944, an Allied victory in World War II was looking more certain: American, British and Canadian troops were storming Normandy’s beaches, while the Pacific Fleet had clawed back nearly all the territory seized by Japan. So, what shape would the world take once the smoke cleared?

The US bestowed an enormous post-war gift upon allies and former enemies alike by promoting free trade. Although America had the military firepower and the manufacturing muscle to assert imperial dominance, it chose economic openness instead.

The US government convened finance ministers at Bretton Woods to devise new rules for the international monetary system and flung open its borders to imports, allowing American consumers to buy Sony pocket radios, Volkswagen Beetles, and much more. (Of course, the US also imposed some

protectionist measures.)

Why did America choose this route? Two words: Cold War. The US government, with its eye on the next conflict, began playing economic chess while the Soviets were still figuring out how to set up the board. Capitalism had turned into a team sport, and the US had to recruit more players.

This policy bucked recent history. The US could have reverted to the protectionism of the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which had raised average tariffs on more than 20,000 goods by 60 per cent, cutting imports by two-thirds. Instead, something remarkable happened.

The navy deployed more than 6,700 vessels to ensure the safety of shipping lanes, and globalisation was reborn. Countries could now focus on producing goods that aligned with their comparative advantage and access products that were unavailable domestically. Soon the Germans, the Japanese, and later the South Koreans were experiencing economic miracles.

As a result, the world became fabulously wealthy. Global GDP soared from around \$1 trillion in 1960 to more than \$100 trillion in 2022, while global extreme poverty fell from 54 per cent to under 10 per cent, and life



An employee works on the assembly line at an equipment company’s plant in Brillion, Wisconsin. — Reuters



TODD G BUCHHOLZ

The author is the recipient of the Harvard Department of Economics’ Allyn Young Teaching Prize.



MICHAEL MINDLIN

The author is a venture-capital and growth-equity investor focusing on energy and enterprise software.

expectancy surged from 50 to 73 years.

But three and a half decades after the Cold War’s end, Pax Americana has lost its lustre. The navy has shrunk to just 296 ships, and once-great cities like St Louis and Baltimore have withered after manufacturing industries decamped to China and Mexico.

In the eyes of populist politicians and struggling voters, globalisation seems more like a Trojan horse than a pillar of American national security. That is largely because of the rise of China, which is perceived as globalisation’s biggest beneficiary.

But the prophecy that the Chinese economy would eclipse that of the US has not come to pass. In fact, China’s labour costs have increased fivefold since the early 1990s, and the country now faces a demographic collapse.

America, on the other hand, is enjoying a resurgence. With the Covid-19 pandemic exposing the fragility of supply chains, industrial-construction spending in the US doubled from 2020 to 2022, and again from 2022 to 2024. Phoenix, Arizona, and Columbus, Ohio, are becoming semiconductor-manufacturing hubs, while even Detroit is rumbling again.

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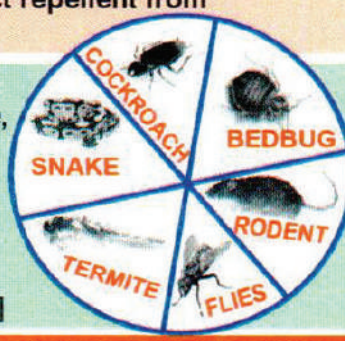
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Mechanical Engineer with 3 years experience in Automotive and Manufacturing industry with good Knowledge of AutoCAD and CATIA seeking full time employment in Oman. Available immediately for interviews. Contact: 99467878 Email: jamesmathew240@gmail.com

29 years old Indian female, MBA holder with 2 years experience. Seeking a suitable position. Currently in Muscat on visit visa. Contact: 78641071, shazashakeel@gmail.com

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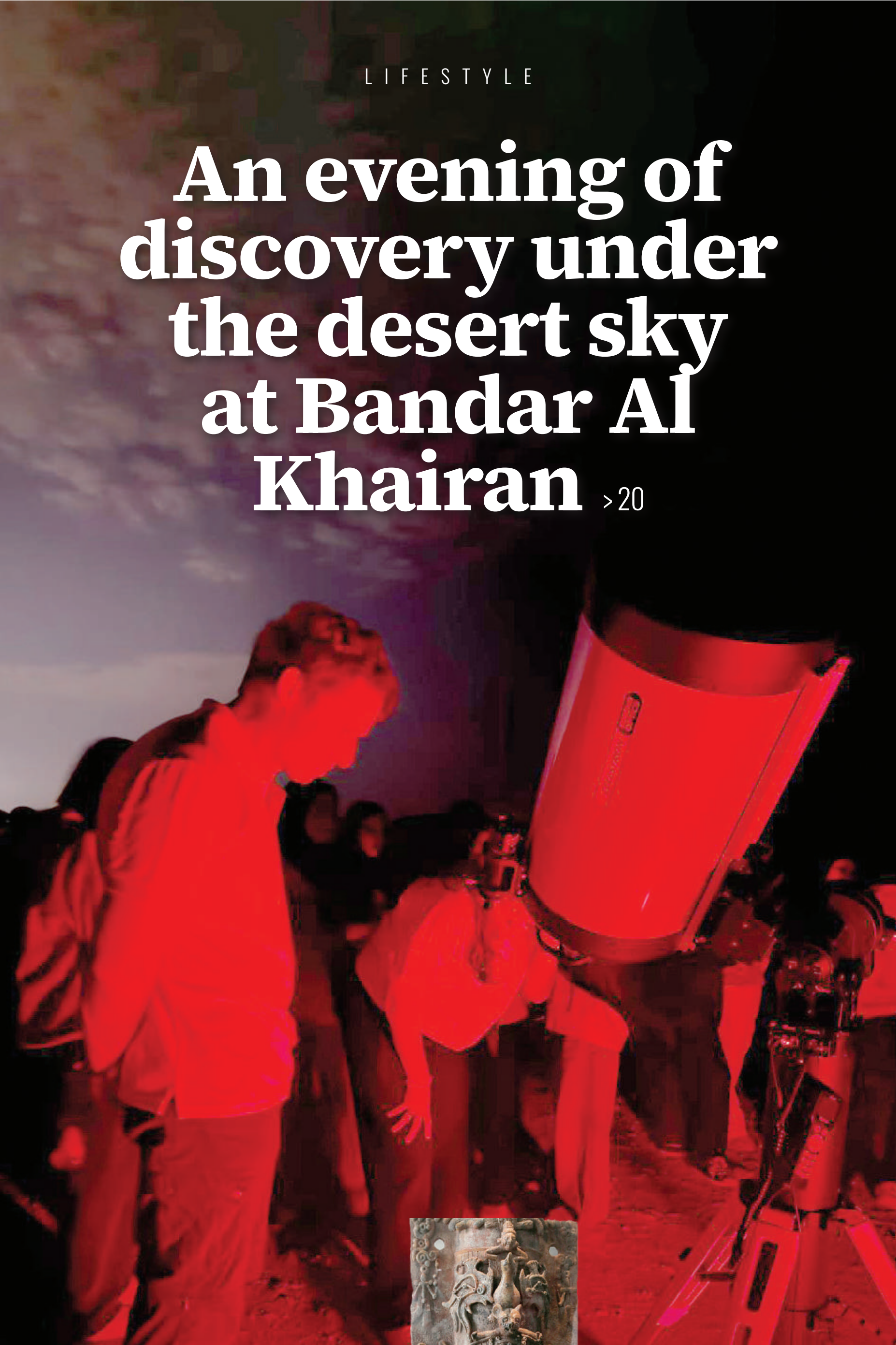
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# ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

## An evening of discovery under the desert sky at Bandar Al Khairan >20

CHANGING **WORLD**

### Europe’s last Lenin museum closes in Finland for revamp



Europe’s last Lenin museum — located in Finland — was closed for revamp, a move that has spurred conspiracy theories in Russia, the museum’s director said.

Of the handful museums dedicated to former Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin established across Europe in the 20th century, the Finnish Lenin museum in the city of Tampere, was founded in 1946.

However, the museum, housed in the building where Lenin and Stalin’s first met during a secret Bolshevik gathering in 1905, closed its doors to be revamped.

Director of the museum Kalle Kallio said the decision to close the museum had been made as the name failed to “reflect the story we want to convey”.

“Some people believe this is some kind of an evil temple because of its name,” he said.

While the state-funded museum shifted its focus from Lenin’s life story to Soviet history in 2016 and is not in any way linked to the Russian state, the name had “become a burden” especially after Russia’s war of Ukraine in 2022, Kallio explained.

“We have a lot of visitors, but not for example schools, since teachers don’t want to ask parents if they can take children here,” he said.

According to Kallio, the decision to rename the Lenin Museum has spurred misunderstandings and fuelled conspiracy theories in neighbouring Russia — which Finland shares a 1,340-kilometre (830-mile) border with.

“In Russia, news has spread claiming this is another unfriendly act by Finland after we joined Nato, and that the decision was actually made in Washington,” he said.

The museum will reopen under the name “Nootti” (Note in English) in February 2025, and will focus on how Finnish-Russian relations have evolved in the 20th and 21st century.

Visitors to the museum have reached record numbers in recent weeks, Kallio said, as people hurried to get a final glimpse before its closure.

—AFP

Q U I C K

FESTIVAL

A Nihang Sikh warrior rides on a horse as he displays his skills on the occasion of Fateh Divas in Amritsar. — AFP



F E A T U R E S

ENTERTAINMENT

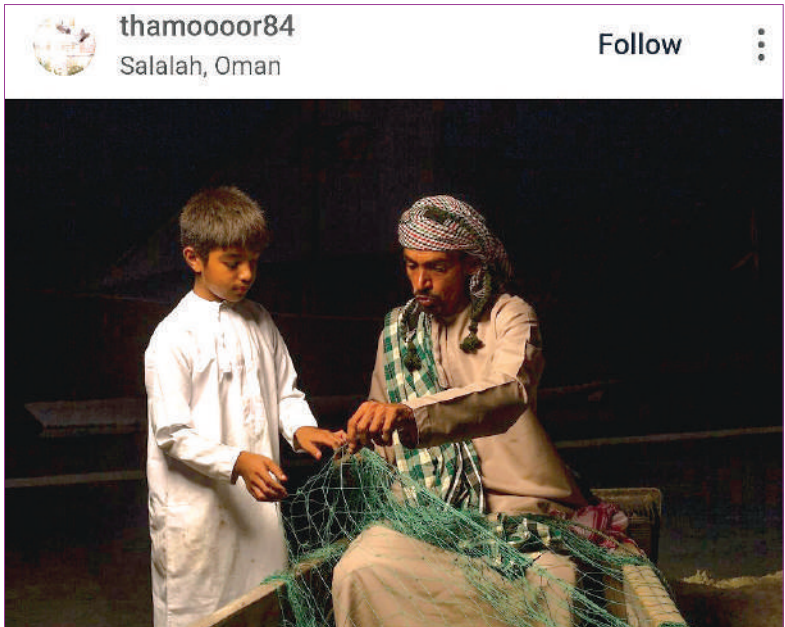
A repatriated archaeological Mayan censer to Mexico from the US is on display to the media during an event where Mexico reopens the Templo Mayor museum, which was rebuilt after being damaged by a major storm, in Mexico City. — Reuters



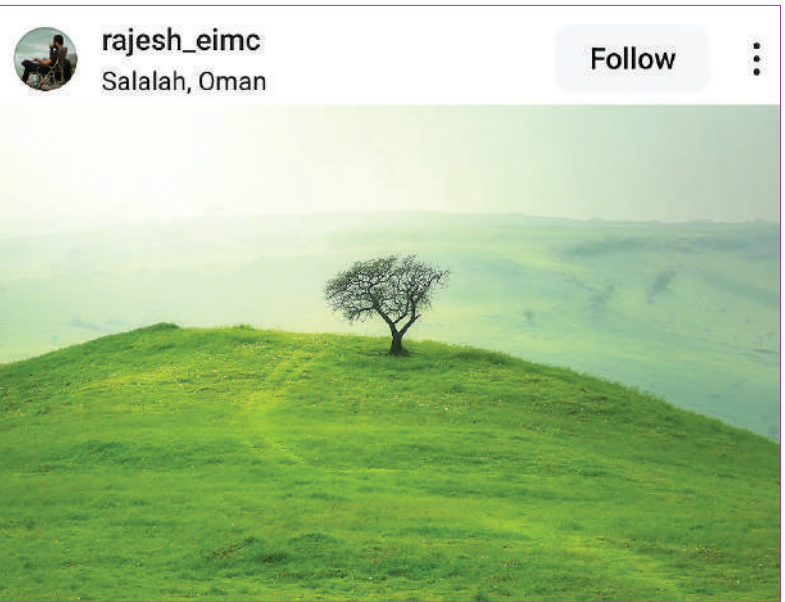
LIFESTYLE

People spend time in the sealine desert south of Doha, Qatar. As winter comes, desert activities also start to pick up. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Passing On The Culture



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‘HERE’ REUNITES TOM HANKS AND ROBIN WRIGHT AS YOUNGER SELVES



In the film “Here”, Tom Hanks and Robin Wright had to remember what it was like to be in their 20s to portray de-aged versions of their characters. “It was fun to do because we had to see playback immediately with this visual effect tool,” Wright said. “Oh, my eyes are 19 and my smile is 19 years old. Now I know how to walk in the room and put my shoulders back and squeeze my arms into my ribs, because that’s how you move and you’re like, you know, it would help you re-remember what it felt like living in the body of a 20-year-old, right?” she added.

Similarly, Hanks had to adjust to acting like a younger version of himself for the film. “I had to leap off that couch in a way one does when they are 22,” Hanks said, laughing. “Here,” directed by “Forrest Gump” film-maker Robert Zemeckis, reunites the leads of the Oscar-winning film for this American drama that explores a generational story about families and the special place they live. Hanks plays Richard Young and Wright plays his character’s wife, Margaret Young. The movie, distributed by Sony Pictures, arrives in theatres on Friday after making its debut during AFI Fest in October. —Reuters



4,000-year-old town discovered hidden in Arabian oasis

THE discovery of a 4,000-year-old fortified town hidden in an oasis in modern-day Saudi Arabia reveals how life at the time was slowly changing from a nomadic to an urban existence, archaeologists said on Wednesday. The remains of the town, dubbed al Natah, were long concealed by the walled oasis of Khaybar, a green and fertile speck surrounded by desert in the northwest of the Arabian Peninsula. Then an ancient 14.5 kilometre-long wall was discovered at the site, according to research led by French archaeologist Guillaume Charloux published earlier this year. For a new study published in the journal PLOS One, a French-Saudi team of researchers have provided “proof that these ramparts are organised around a habitat”, Charloux said. The large town, which was home to up to 500 residents, was built around 2,400 BC during the early Bronze Age, the researchers said. It was abandoned around a thousand years later. “No one knows why,” Charloux said. When al Natah was built, cities were flourishing in the Levant region along the Mediterranean Sea from

present-day Syria to Jordan. Northwest Arabia at the time was thought to have been barren desert, crossed by pastoral nomads and dotted with burial sites. That was until 15 years ago, when archaeologists discovered ramparts dating back to the Bronze Age in the oasis of Tayma, to Khaybar’s north. This “first essential discovery” led scientists to look closer at these oases, Charloux said. **SLOW URBANISM** Black volcanic rocks called basalt concealed the walls of al Natah so well that it “protected the site from illegal excavations”, Charloux said. But observing the site from above revealed potential paths and the foundations of houses, suggesting where the archaeologists needed to dig. They discovered foundations “strong enough to easily support at least one- or two-storey” homes, Charloux said, emphasising that there was much more work to be done to understand the site. But their preliminary findings paint a picture of a 2.6-hectare town with around 50 houses perched on a hill, equipped with a wall of its own. Tombs inside a necropolis there contained metal weapons like axes and daggers as well as stones such

as agate, indicating a relatively advanced society for so long ago. Pieces of pottery “suggest a relatively egalitarian society”, the study said. They are “very pretty but very simple ceramics”, added Charloux. The size of the ramparts — which could reach around five metres (16 feet) high — suggests that al Natah was the seat of some kind of powerful local authority. These discoveries reveal a process of “slow urbanism” during the transition between nomadic and more settled village life, the study said. For example, fortified oases could have been in contact with each other in an area still largely populated by pastoral nomadic groups. Such exchanges could have even laid the foundations for the “incense route” which saw spices, frankincense and myrrh traded from southern Arabia to the Mediterranean. Al Natah was still small compared to cities in Mesopotamia or Egypt during the period. But in these vast expanses of desert, it appears there was “another path towards urbanisation” than such city-states, one “more modest, much slower, and quite specific to the northwest of Arabia”, Charloux said. — AFP



The trip coincides with the anticipated launch of Oman's first satellite. It aligns with Oman's National Day celebrations, offering students a unique opportunity to represent Omani culture while engaging in cutting-edge scientific research.



# An evening of discovery under the desert sky at Bandar Al Khairan



BY KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabeeryousef

**BANDAR** Al Khairan is a stunning oasis bathed in the soft glow of the morning sun. With its majestic mountains and serene waters, it captivates visitors as a beautiful retreat during the day. However, as night comes, this enchanting landscape transforms into an entirely different realm — a celestial stage where the wonders of the universe unfold. Recently, this breathtaking backdrop provided the perfect setting for an unforgettable stargazing event that attracted esteemed scientists and eager students alike.

Three telescopes were strategically positioned on the top of one of Bandar Al Khairan's mountains. An air of anticipation filled the gathering as astrophysicists, astronomers and students from



Abdulwahab al Busaidi, an executive member of the OAS, presented a compelling narrative on the historical significance of astronomy in Omani navigation, drawing attention to renowned navigator Ahmed bin Majid, whom he referred to as the 'Lion of the Seas'. Al Busaidi affirmed Oman's potential for future contributions to space exploration.

As Waheeda Said, an ABM Board Member, noted, "This memorable event is a vital precursor to the Nasa programme our students will engage in this November. The programme aims to inspire the next generation of female scientists and astronomers through awareness of space exploration, action research opportunities and cultural exchanges during their visit to the Kennedy Space Center."

This trip coincides with the anticipated launch of Oman's first satellite. It aligns with Oman's National Day celebrations, offering students a unique opportunity to represent Omani culture while engaging in cutting-edge scientific research, as highlighted by Abdulwahab al Busaidi. In Florida, students will participate in a Nasa exploration journey, touring facilities and engaging in interactive learning sessions on space exploration and innovation.

The evening concluded with an engaging Q&A session, where students inquired about careers in space exploration, Nasa's ongoing missions, and how they could contribute to the evolving field of space science. The students expressed that their motivation soared following their interaction with Casey Swails, whose captivating speech left a lasting impact.

Oman stands out as one of the world's premier locations for stargazing, owing to its vast, unpolluted skies, minimal light interference, and unique geography. These factors create optimal conditions for observing celestial phenomena, making Oman an unrivalled destination for astronomers and stargazing enthusiasts alike.



the Ahmad Bin Majid International School (ABM) awaited the arrival of nightfall. Patience was key as the darkening sky unveiled its secrets, revealing the moon, stars, planets like Saturn and Venus, and the Milky Way, creating a breathtaking panorama of cosmic beauty.

The students from ABM were specially selected to participate in a cultural exchange and STEM exploration programme at Nasa's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, scheduled for mid-November 2024.

Organised by the Oman Astronomical Society (OAS), this event underscored the critical role of education and international collaboration in space exploration. During a two-day immersive experience at the Space Center, students will engage directly with Nasa in a STEM learning project that aims to enhance their scientific research capabilities. The highlight of the stargazing evening was a guest appearance by Nasa's Deputy Associate Administrator, Casey Swails, who significantly enriched the event with her presence.

Alex Mueller from the Ras Al Hamra Astronomical Society provided a detailed overview of the evolution of telescopes, tracing their development from rudimentary magnifying glasses to tonight's advanced instruments. Attendees were captivated by the stunning clarity of Saturn's rings and the brilliance of Venus that illuminated the night sky.

Casey Swails delivered an inspiring address encouraging students to pursue their passion for space and science. She emphasised that such events not only deepen understanding of the universe, but also highlight the importance of global cooperation in astronomy.

