

IAEA chief says to visit Iran

UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi said on Wednesday he might head to Iran in the coming days to discuss its disputed atomic programme and that he expected to work cooperatively with US President-elect Donald Trump. Grossi had previously said he hoped to go to Tehran ahead of the November 5 US vote as he seeks to resolve several long-standing issues that have dogged relations between Iran, the International Atomic Energy Agency and Western powers.

SUNRISE - 06:16 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 04:59 AM

DHUHR - 11:56 PM

ASR - 03:07 PM

MAGHRIB - 05:30 PM

ISHA - 06:42 PM



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OMA

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3D-PRINTED FISHERMEN SHADES LAUNCHED



P12

GYOKERES SHINES AS SPORTING STUN MAN CITY



P19

ON BELGIAN COAST, FISHING ON HORSEBACK – AND SAVING A TRADITION



Royal Decree ratifies visa agreement

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued Royal Decree No (57/2024) on the ratification of an agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria on mutual exemption of short-stay visa requirements for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports. The agreement was signed in New York on September 23, 2024.

Article (1) ratifies the abovementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this Decree.

Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

KUALA LUMPUR

OMANI RESEARCH CENTRE IN MALAYSIA

Represented by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA), the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday signed in Kuala Lumpur a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with the International Islamic University of Malaysia to establish an Omani Research and Studies Centre at the university. The MoC was signed by Shaikh Ahmed bin Saud al Siyabi, Secretary-General of the Iftaa Office at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Rector of the International Islamic University of Malaysia. The memorandum aims to introduce Oman, the people and the civilisation, and encourage academics and specialists to conduct studies and research about the country.

DETAILS ON P3

Trump wins White House for historic second term

HIS MAJESTY CONGRATULATES US PRESIDENT-ELECT

MUSCAT/WASHINGTON: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Donald Trump on the occasion of him being elected as a new President of the United States of America.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere congratulations to President-elect Trump, wishing him success in leading the US people towards further progress and welfare, as well as promoting efforts to spread peace and stability in all countries of the world. His Majesty also wished the cooperation and investment relations between Oman and the US further progress and expansion in a manner that serves the joint interests.

Earlier, Donald Trump was elected US president, capping a remarkable comeback four years after he was voted out of the White House and ushering in a new American leadership.

RHETORIC

Trump, 78, recaptured the White House on Wednesday after a campaign marked by rhetoric that deepened the polarisation in the country, prevailing after two attempts on his life and a late decision by Democrats to run Kamala Harris when President Joe Biden withdrew from the race in July.

The former president's victory in the swing state of Wisconsin pushed him over the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the presidency. As of 8 am ET (13:00 GMT) Trump had won 279 electoral votes to Harris' 223 with several states yet to be counted, Edison Research projected.

He also led Harris by more than 5 million votes in the popular count.



US President-elect Donald Trump

“America has given us an unprecedented and powerful mandate,” Trump said early on Wednesday to a roaring crowd of supporters at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in Florida. Trump's political career had appeared to be over after his false claims of election fraud led a mob of supporters to storm the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, in a failed bid to overturn his 2020 defeat.

But he swept away challengers inside his Republican Party and then beat Democratic candidate Harris by

capitalising on voter concerns about high prices and what Trump claimed, without evidence, was a rise in crime due to illegal immigration.

Republicans won a US Senate majority, but neither party appeared to have an edge in the fight for control of the House of Representatives where Republicans currently hold a narrow majority. Major stock markets around the world rallied following Trump's victory, and the dollar was set for its biggest one-day jump since 2020.

MORE REPORTS ON P7



Lebanese army soldiers and rescuers work at a site damaged in the aftermath of an Israeli strike on the town of Al Ain in the Baalbek region, in Lebanon, on Wednesday. — Reuters

Lebanon takes Israel to UN on pager attacks

GENEVA: Lebanon said on Wednesday that it had filed a complaint with the United Nations' labour agency over deadly attacks on communication devices across the country in September, which it blames on Israel.

Lebanese Labour Minister Mustafa Bayram called the attack an “egregious war against humanity, against technology, against work”, saying his country had filed the complaint with the International Labour Organisation in Geneva. “It's a very dangerous precedent,” he told journalists in the Swiss city at an event organised by the UN correspondents' association ACANU.

The move comes after Israel escalated its air raids on Hezbollah in south Lebanon, Beirut and the eastern Bekaa Valley on September 23, after nearly a year of cross-border fire, and a week later sent ground troops into southern Lebanon.

The escalation kicked off with sabotage attacks on pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah, which killed dozens of people and injured thousands more across Lebanon.

Israel has not officially taken responsibility for those attacks, but Bayram said it was “widely accepted internationally... that Israel was behind this heinous act”. “In a few minutes, more than 4,000 civilians fell, between martyrs and injured and maimed,” he said. He said many people had “lost their fingers; some have totally lost their eyesight”. — AFP



THE AMAZING CANYONS OF WADI FINS

One of my favourite canyons is Wadi Fins, which originates in the mountains near the village of Qarran. It flows downstream, passing in front of the impressive Al Tri resurgence that drains water from the four sinkholes of the Selma Plateau, and then meanders through the villages of Taab and Harima before emptying into the ocean near the village of Fins. The trail presents breathtaking views of the canyon several hundred metres below and the coastline near Fins, some km away. Along the path, one can find Zaatar (thyme), a delightful herb often consumed in infusion.

DETAILS ON P20

Black hole existed 1.5 billion years after Big Bang

WASHINGTON: At the heart of our Milky Way galaxy lurks a supermassive black hole about four million times the mass of the sun, called Sagittarius A. In fact, these objects, which increase in mass over time by eating material that wanders too close, reside at the centre of most galaxies.

But since Nasa's James Webb Space Telescope came online in 2022, astronomers have been surprised to find supermassive black holes inhabiting the early universe - earlier than they had thought possible considering the time needed to gather such great mass. New observations of one such primordial black hole



Black holes are extremely dense objects with gravity so strong that not even light can escape.

is offering insight into how this may have occurred — through episodes of supercharged growth.

“The existence of supermassive black holes in the early universe challenges our current models of black

hole formation and growth,” said astronomer Hyewon Suh of the International Gemini Observatory in Hawaii and the US National Science Foundation's NOIRLab, lead author of the study published in the journal Nature Astronomy.

The new Webb observations involve a supermassive black hole called LID-568 that existed when the cosmos was about 11 per cent its current age — about 1.5 billion years after the Big Bang event 13.8 billion years ago that initiated the universe. LID-568 has a mass about 10 million times greater than the sun, so 2-1/2 times that of Sagittarius A.

— Reuters

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

OMAN, US REVIEW
EFFORTS TO COMBAT
HUMAN TRAFFICKING



MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, received in Muscat on Wednesday Cindy Dyer, US Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The meeting reviewed the efforts exerted to combat human trafficking and the cooperation between the two countries in this field. — ONA



The exercise (Shams 34) aims to equip officers with the necessary military knowledge. — ONA

RAFO HOLDS
TACTICAL EXERCISE
SHAMS 34

SUHAR: The Sultan Qaboos Air Academy of the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) conducted a practical demonstration of a tactical exercise (Shams 34) for basic officer candidate courses, the university officer course, and the limited service course.

The event was held under the auspices of Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hamad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman, in the training area in Al Batinah North Governorate.

During the event, the attendees received a briefing on the exercise stages, objectives, and practical demonstration. Following the briefing, the practical demonstration was carried out according to the exercise plan. The exercise (Shams 34) aims to equip candidate officers with the necessary military knowledge and skills to handle tasks upon graduation. It also focuses on developing leadership and mobilisation skills in strategic planning and implementation. — ONA



MUSCAT: Firefighting teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) in Muscat Governorate responded to a blaze that erupted in Maabela Industrial Area in the Wilayat of Al Seeb. The fire quickly spread, igniting several vehicles parked in the vicinity. Firefighters successfully brought the situation under control and fully extinguished the flames and no casualties were reported.



Symposium calls to value
wisdom of elderly people

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

THE SULTANATE of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), recently hosted a symposium titled “Implementation Follow-up of the Arab Strategy for the Elderly: Possibilities and Challenges.” This event aimed to assess the progress of the ‘Arab Strategy for the Elderly’, with focus on social and political dimensions impacting its implementation.

Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, inaugurated the symposium, emphasising the value of the elderly in society. “The elderly are treasures of experience and wisdom, and our duty is to ensure they live with dignity, receiving the care befitting their invaluable status. We are here today to discuss the implementation of the Arab Strategy for the Elderly and to share best practices that enhance their quality of life, from essential healthcare to social services that promote their integration,” She said.

The symposium, based on the mandate of the 30th Arab Summit, addressed the existing care and protection services for the elderly, identified challenges in implementing the strategy, and explored mechanisms to leverage available resources. Jocelyn Venard, the representative of the UN Population Fund for GCC countries, noted that the symposium



Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, inaugurated the symposium, emphasising the value of the elderly in society.

offers an essential platform to assess progress and emphasise the importance of collaborative action across Gulf and Arab nations. He highlighted the need to develop policies that maintain the elderly’s active societal roles, ensuring their well-being and support.

Tariq bin Nabil al Nabulsi, Director of the Department of Development and Social Policies at the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, also addressed the symposium, commending Oman’s alignment with the Arab Strategy for the Elderly through Oman Vision 2040.

This vision aspires to a society of “creative people” who live with dignity and sustainable well-being, a vision that resonates with the goals of the Arab Strategy for the Elderly.

Al Nabulsi further expressed the Technical Secretariat’s readiness to support national-level strategy implementation alongside partners like the United Nations Population Fund and the International Organization for Helping Older Persons, adhering to international standards that bolster Arab efforts toward the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The symposium, continuing through November 7, sets a solid foundation for implementing the Arab Strategy for the Elderly by drawing on the experiences of member states and leveraging specialised presentations to establish guiding principles. These efforts aim to fulfil the strategy’s objectives and secure a dignified, integrated role for the elderly across Arab nations.

Combating palm dubas pest using drones

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The General Directorate of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, began implementing aerial spraying operations to combat the palm Dubas insect (autumn generation) using drones.

This campaign aims to protect palm trees from the damage caused by the pest, which is one of the most prominent challenges facing the palm cultivation sector in the governorate. The control programme will continue until November 10 and includes spraying an area of more than 1,200 acres in various wilayats of Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

Khalid al Hadhrami, Director of Agricultural Development in the governorate, stated that the ministry seeks to benefit from artificial intelligence technology to implement highly efficient control programs, especially the palm Dubas control program, which poses a major threat to Omani farms. Al Hadhrami explained that the use of drones contributes to enhancing the efficiency of spraying operations in terms of targeting accuracy and coverage speed, which reduces the use of chemicals and enhances environmental safety.

Al Hadhrami added that the campaign targets villages suffering from severe



The use of drones contributes to enhancing efficiency of spraying operations.

infestations of this insect. Coordination has been made with the Walis in the targeted states to notify them of the spraying schedule and the areas where the control will be implemented.

He pointed out that the wilayats included in the campaign are Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, Al Kamil W’al Wafi and Sur, with a focus on agricultural villages in these areas.

This campaign is part of the ongoing efforts made by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) to preserve the agricultural sector and enhance its sustainability, especially in light of the environmental and climatic challenges

that affect the growth of palm trees. These efforts reflect the commitment of the General Directorate of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources to use the latest technologies to improve the quality of agricultural production and reduce the damage caused by pests.

Al Hadhrami pointed out that artificial intelligence plays a pivotal role in identifying the most affected areas, based on accurate data collected by drones and the continuous monitoring system. He added that MoAFWR relies on this data to determine the amount of pesticides needed and the spraying area, which contributes to directing resources more efficiently.

The palm Dubas pest is one of the most dangerous pests that affect palm trees, leading to the weakening of the trees and reducing their production, which affects farmers’ income.

The campaign is a response to the urgent need of farmers to protect their palm trees and maintain agricultural production in the governorate.

Using drones to combat palm pests is part of the ministry’s future vision to adopt the latest smart agriculture technologies. These technologies aim to achieve food security and improve the quality of agricultural production, integrated with sustainable development plans to increase agricultural efficiency and support the local economy.

Fire erupts in Maabela, no casualties reported

SHORTTAKES

OMAN SIGNS MOC TO ESTABLISH OMANI RESEARCH CENTRE



The MoC was signed by Shaikh Ahmed bin Saud al Siyabi and Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar. — ONA

KUALA LUMPUR: Represented by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday signed in Kuala Lumpur a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with the International Islamic University of Malaysia to establish an Omani Research and Studies Centre at the university.

The MoC was signed by Shaikh Ahmed bin Saud al Siyabi, Secretary-General of the Iftaa Office at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Rector of the International Islamic University of Malaysia.

The memorandum aims to introduce Oman — the people and the civilisation — and encourage academics and specialists to conduct studies and research about the country.

The MoC signing ceremony was attended by Shaikh Abbas bin Ibrahim al Harthy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Malaysia, ambassadors of Arab and friendly countries and a number of researchers, academics and people interested in the field. — ONA



It is prohibited to change the colour or shape of the vehicle or use unpolished materials or stickers.

ROP issues guidelines for National Day stickers on vehicles

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police has issued guidelines for placing stickers on vehicles on the occasion of the 54th National Day between November 6 and 30.

The guidelines state that it is prohibited to place unsecured fabrics and place them on the engine cover. It is prohibited to change the colour or shape of the vehicle or use unpolished materials or stickers. It is prohibited to place stickers on the vehicle’s windows (front and side windows, licence plates and lights). The images in the rear window are only of the type that allows the driver to see. The posters should be limited to pictures and phrases related to the occasion.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The Mobile Planetarium, organised by Petroleum Development Oman at Oman Science Festival, takes visitors on a trip to discover the planets.

Advanced Cyber Security Academy, Oman National CERT, University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Global College of Engineering and Technology, Insight Information Security, Ministry of Education, represented by Department of Electronic Information Security, Knowledge Masterpiece International private School and Tatweer Cyber Security also organised various activities that aim to spread cyber awareness and help manage digital risks.

The Carbon Neutrality section is organised by Al Khaboura Vocational College, Climate Fresk Oman, Sultan Qaboos



Visitors at Oman Science Festival, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, on Wednesday

University, Oil and Gas Research Centre, Global College of Engineering and Technology, Sultan Qaboos University, Centre of Environmental Studies and Research, Million Plastic Caps, University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat and Al Rustaq. The activities inform people the importance to reach

sustainable living by reducing carbon emissions, recycling waste materials, air pollution measurement and protecting solar cells.

The Ibn Omaira Theatre’s programme included a number of activities among which a scientific competition “Knowledge Fields” carried out by the Social

Conference highlights demand for Omani products

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

CREDIT OMAN shed light on the rising global demand for Omani products at the First Omani Credit and Debt Collection Conference and Charity Auction, held at the Movenpick Hotel in Muscat on Tuesday, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim al Said.

Over the past year, Omani products have witnessed a notable rise in global demand, driven by several initiatives, including the ‘Made in Oman’ campaign launched by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. These efforts have been instrumental in enhancing the reputation and international appeal of Omani goods.

At the event, Ahmed bin Khalfan al Balushi, Director of Claims and Recoveries at Credit Oman, discussed the growing global interest in Omani products, attributing it to the high-quality standards established by recent initiatives. “The ‘Money Project’ has instilled confidence in the quality of Omani products, ensuring they meet global standards and boosting international demand,” he explained. This initiative has helped create a cluster of Omani goods that are increasingly recognised worldwide.

Al Balushi also emphasised the importance of such events in supporting the national economy and reinforcing the credibility of Omani products on the global stage. Speaking on behalf of Credit Oman, he highlighted the company’s



The 1st Omani Credit and Debt Collection Conference and Charity Auction event attracted industry experts from a number of GCC states.

leadership role in the trade insurance sector. “Credit Oman now stands at the forefront of trade insurance in Oman, a milestone that has been achieved through strategic management and visionary leadership,” he stated.

The conference brought together over 500 industry experts from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, serving as a platform for discussing advancements in debt and loan collections. This gathering highlighted Credit Oman’s commitment to enhancing the growth and visibility of Omani products internationally while addressing challenges within the region’s credit and risk management sectors.

In addition to the conference proceedings, the charity auction aimed to

support financially distressed individuals, in collaboration with the Omani Lawyers Association and the “Fak Kurbah” initiative. This reinforced the event’s focus on social responsibility and community support.

As a key player in advancing credit and debt collection practices in Oman, Credit Oman continues to engage with the latest technologies and digital transformation strategies to tackle sector challenges. The discussions at the conference centred on improving operational efficiency, boosting productivity, and enhancing customer experiences in credit and risk management, providing insights into future trends and solutions for organisations navigating the evolving credit landscape.

Oman submits plea to amend ILO response decision

GENEVA: Acting in collaboration with the Arab Group, the Sultanate of Oman has submitted several amendments to a proposed resolution regarding the “International Labour Organization (ILO)’s support for the emergency response to the crisis in Lebanon”.

The amendments include calling for the protection of essential facilities that serve the Lebanese population, welcoming diplomatic efforts for a ceasefire and seeking a future report from the ILO Director-General on the impact of the crisis on the labour market in Lebanon, along with updates on the implementation of the emergency plan at the next session of the ILO Governing Body 353.

This was unveiled in a statement delivered by Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and International Organizations, on behalf of the Arab Group seeking support



Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari said the Arab Group feels deeply concerned about the serious impacts of the aggression on ILO activities in Lebanon. — ONA

for emergency response to the crisis in Lebanon. The statement was delivered during the ILO Governing Body’s 352nd session.

Al Khanjari said that the Arab Group feels deeply concerned about the serious impacts of the aggression on ILO activities

in Lebanon and the region at large.

He added that this aggression caused catastrophic conditions for workers and employers, coupled with long-term economic impacts of the indiscriminate bombing that struck the infrastructure of economic, industrial and tourism sectors and destroyed small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Al Khanjari pointed out that the Arab Group welcomes the ILO’s efforts to alleviate the suffering of Lebanese citizens and values the international organisation’s prompt action to assess the current situation, right from the first day of the war.

The statement also lauded the ILO’s devising an intervention plan based on response to the emergency situation, notably by strengthening social protection, restoring infrastructure, maintaining employment and supporting livelihoods. — ONA

Scientific awareness and innovation to drive development

Responsibility Department at Occidental Oman. The Directorate-General for Medical Supply at the Ministry of Health gave interactive presentations titled “Medical Interventions: Medication Journey in the Body”, whereas the National Centre for Paediatrics performed a play on diabetic children’s challenges to raise awareness among the festival’s visitors.

The Ministry of Education honoured the top performing students in the Knowledge Development Programme 2023/2024, under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation (MoHERI), at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The honouring ceremony began with the Ministry of Education’s speech delivered by Dr Maya al Azri, Adviser to the MoHERI and Acting Director of Scientific

Innovation and Olympiad Department.

“The Ministry of Education seeks to greatly enhance the innovation system in school education in line with the national visions that focus primarily on creating human resources with competitive capabilities and contributing to driving the wheel of economic development.”

On behalf of students, Fay al Mahrouqi delivered speech in which she said: “We are proud to be standing here today after continuous efforts and endless support from the Ministry of Education to provide us with appropriate environment for excellence and creativity. Having this honouring ceremony amidst Oman Science Festival is a step through which the ministry seeks to develop students’ skills and knowledge, and to provide them with modern technologies in preparation for the future.”

SPOTLIGHT



CRIME

AGAINST ENVIRONMENT

TREES PROVIDE
SHADE AND ARE
HOME TO MANY
BIRDS. THERE IS
NO EXCUSE FOR
FELLING THEM FOR
CONVENIENCE

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

AT a time when the government of Oman has been steadfastly working towards the goal of planting 10 million trees, some individuals are wantonly felling trees in their premises for the sake of convenience.

“There used to be a tree standing high and tall giving shade to the neighbourhoods, children used to play underneath and was home for birds, but today, only the stump of the tree is visible. The owner said the reason was the noise of the birds and falling leaves,” a resident of Darsait in Ruwi told the Observer.

Similar disappearances have been reported from different localities of Muscat. While there are laws governing the trees standing in public areas which belong to Muscat Municipality, there are hardly any rules governing trees in private plots.

“Climate change is threatening the environment and planting more trees can reduce heat stress,” said a senior official.

Both private and public sectors of Oman have several programmes for the protection of the environment and preserving trees in the public areas. Recently, thousands of students from public schools took their first lessons of converting their schools into an environment-friendly learning centre. The winners of the writing marathon were honoured by HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, at the National Museum recently.

The “Green Schools” an initiative, launched by be’ah Academy of the Omani Environmental Services Holding Company, helps children to participate in activities and projects aimed at solving environmental issues.

In October last year, the Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced its ‘Roots of Oman’ campaign, which aims to plant 5,000 trees across Oman by the end of the year, coinciding with the bank’s 50th anniversary.

Above all, the Environment Authority (EA) has, in a significant move towards environmental sustainability, signed a cooperation agreement with Oman Energy Association (OPAL) to implement an initiative called Green Alliance.

Green Alliance is aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and supports the country’s long-term goals of achieving zero carbon neutrality by 2050.

It underscores the optimal utilisation of natural resources, enhances the economic value of environmental resources and promotes community awareness on environmental sustainability.

“I think we need a strong law to protect trees owned by individuals, given its contribution to the environment, to be declared public property. Or at least, a rule that prevents cutting trees is subject to the approval from Muscat Municipality,” said a journalist.

Despite all these efforts, many trees seen in front of houses are disappearing. Environment lovers say those who own the trees may have many reasons to cut it down.

Medical City signs MoU with University of Ottawa

Muscat: Uday bin Hilal al Maawali, Head of the Medical City for Military and Security Services (MCMSC), received Chadi Asaad, Associate Director of Partnerships, Development and Innovation at the University of Ottawa, Canada.

During the meeting, a set of topics in the medical and healthcare fields were discussed.

As part of the visit, the Medical City for Military and Security Services signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the University of Ottawa, Canada.



Uday bin Hilal al Maawali with Chadi Asaad in Muscat on Wednesday

The MoU was signed by Ahmed bin Musallam al Rawas, Assistant to the Head of the Medical City for Military and Security Services for Administrative and Human Resources Affairs, and Chadi Asaad, Associate Director of Partnerships, Development and Innovation at the University of Ottawa, Canada.

The memorandum of understanding aims to establish a general framework that covers several main areas, including enhancing cooperation and exchanging scientific information

and expertise.

The Medical City and the University of Ottawa will be able to exchange specialised knowledge in the fields of healthcare, in addition to expanding the scope of training in the field of exchanging training and professional experiences to improve the efficiency of medical personnel, in addition to organising scientific forums and joint seminars that enhance the exchange of advanced ideas and visions on the latest technologies and sciences in the health sector.

— ONA

SQU conference to discuss media and AI

BALQEES ALORAIMI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

THE 4TH International Conference of the Mass Communication Department at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) will open on November 17 at the Intercity Hotel Muscat.

Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, will inaugurate the three-day event that aims to address how artificial intelligence (AI) is shaping the media landscape. The conference aligns with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises a knowledge-based economy, digital innovation and equipping Oman's media sector for future technological advancements.

This conference brings together over 70 experts, researchers and professionals from Oman and across the world. It will feature more than 60 scientific papers, aiming to establish a dynamic forum for exchanging knowledge and insights about the intersections between AI and media. Organisers highlight the



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, will inaugurate the three-day event

growing importance of AI in reshaping how information is produced, distributed and consumed. With an emphasis on ethical, legal and societal implications, the conference will cover new developments, future trends and the necessary skills for a workforce navigating a rapidly changing industry.

The conference's agenda is organised around five primary themes: the philosophical and conceptual

frameworks of AI in media and communication; AI applications in the media industry; the ethical and legal challenges of AI in media; education and training in AI for media professionals; and the future of the media industry in an AI-driven world.

The conference will open with keynote addresses from the organising committee and Dr Alexandra Wake, Associate Professor of Journalism at RMIT University in Australia. Dr Wake's expertise lies in understanding the evolving journalism landscape in response to digital transformation.

SQU's Mass Communication Department notes that the conference aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry, enabling participants to understand both the conceptual frameworks and real-world applications of AI in media. This dual approach is expected to benefit participants by providing both theoretical insights and practical knowledge, essential for students, academics and media professionals alike.

Renowned traveller shares his insights at Maanaviyam – 2024

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabyousef

Santosh George Kulangara, renowned Indian traveller who visited 48 countries, attended 'Maanaviyam – 2024' organised by World Malayalee Federation (WMF) held in Muscat recently.

Nearly 1,000 people from different walks of life listened to insights and experiences of Santosh, also known as SGK, founder of Safari TV, and Managing Director of Labor India Publications.

The 'Maanaviyam – 2024', held on the 68th Kerala Formation Day, November 1, at the Al Falaj Auditorium in Muscat, also featured a musical concert by playback singers Nadeem Arshad, Bhagyaraj, and their band, along with a comedy show by renowned mimicry artist Rajesh Adimali and his troupe, which promised a captivating and unforgettable evening for the Malayalee community in Oman. The event was managed by Red Cube Events.

Speaking to the media, Dr J Retnakumar, Global Chairman, expressed World Malayalee Federation's dedication to serving not just the global Malayalee community but humanity as a whole and highlighted the organisation's continued efforts to make a positive impact on society.

On the sidelines of the 'Maanaviyam – 2024', a magazine titled Viswakairali was launched by Santosh George Kulangara to Rajan V Kokkuri, Global Language Forum Coordinator.

The magazine, edited by Sapna Anu B George, talks about the global phenomena of sojourn and how their existence makes a difference to the world.

A short story competition was also held, in commemoration of the natural calamity in Wayanad as part of the celebrations and 3 stories were selected from across the globe to be the winners by an eminent panel of judges.

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees In Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
2024/17	Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, migration to DMZ, Support, and Maintenance of New Servers	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	26/11/ 2024

First

- All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender tender from the following website: www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Second

- Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone :

etenderhd@mtc.gov.om
+ 96824402200

Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان

وزارة التراث والسياحة

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Announcement of an Internal tender to companies registered within the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar

Tender No.	250/2024/MHT/HQ-64	Tender Name	Construction Works for Development of Rose Pathway at Al Jabal Al Akhdar.
Fees of Tenders Documents (Non-refundable)		25 O.R	
Tender Document Sales End Date		25/11/2024	
Last Date for Bid Submission		23/12/2024	
Grade	Third & Fourth Participation in this tender is limited to companies registered within the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar. This step is intended to support local companies and maximize the use of local expertise, ensuring the project's goals are achieved to the highest quality standards with local resources.		
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (companies registered within the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.
- The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.
- The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : solic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

هيئة تنمية المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة

SMEs Development Authority

In order to support and enable small and medium enterprises and provide a business environment that contributes to developing these establishments and enhancing their growth, SMEs Development Authority floats the following tenders:

SR.	Tender Name	Tender No.	Last Date for Collecting Tender Documents	Last Date for Bid Submission	Tender Price [Non-refundable]
1	Renewing licences and supporting of network's devices at the Data Centre of the authority's Diwan General	163/2024/SMES/HQ-36	17/11/2024	8/12/2024	RO 25 (Twenty Five Omani Rials)
2	Providing central devices along with their peripherals for the virtual infrastructure at the Data Centre of the authority's Diwan General 2024	161/2024/SMES/HQ-34	17/11/2024	8/12/2024	RO 25 (Twenty Five Omani Rials)
3	Renewing licences and supporting Gov Oman network protection devices	162/2024/SMES/HQ-35	17/11/2024	8/12/2024	RO 25 (Twenty Five Omani Rials)
4	Network detection and response	165/2024/SMES/HQ-37	18/11/2024	9/12/2024	RO 25 (Twenty Five Omani Rials)

Requirements for participating in the tenders:

Establishments and companies registered with the General Secretary of Tender Board, specialized in the tender's scope and interested in participating the aforesaid tenders can collect the documents related to the tenders electronically through Isnad Platform: (tenderboard.gov.om)

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Residential areas covered by volcanic ash are seen following the eruptions in East Flores. — Reuters

Indonesia to relocate thousands around volcano

EAST FLORES: Indonesia will permanently relocate thousands of residents from around a volcano that erupted in recent days, killing nine people after spewing fireballs and ash on homes, officials said on Wednesday.

Authorities raised Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki’s alert level to the highest of a four-tiered system after several eruptions since Sunday evening, telling locals and tourists to avoid a seven-kilometre radius of the crater.

More than 2,600 families living in the area around the volcano on the popular tourist island of Flores were advised to permanently relocate, the disaster mitigation agency (BNPB) said in a statement.

“The mountain cannot be moved. We must move,” agency head Suharyanto, who goes by one name, told residents at a temporary shelter, according to a video the agency released on Wednesday. “We must empty the 7-km radius.” The disaster chief said the government would help locals move to a new area or to build houses on land they already own. — AFP



An armoured police vehicle is pictured on the side of a road in Maputo. — AFP

South Africa closes main border with Mozambique

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa has temporarily closed its main border crossing with Mozambique over safety concerns, its border authority said on Wednesday, as protests against last month’s disputed election in Mozambique continued to escalate. At least 18 people have been killed in the protests, according to human rights groups, as opposition supporters demonstrate against what they say is a fraudulent election win by Frelimo, the party that has ruled Mozambique since 1975. Security forces have responded with tear gas and live ammunition while the government has restricted Internet access and threatened to deploy the army.

South Africa has closed the Lebombo port of entry in its Mpumalanga province after receiving reports of vehicles being torched on the Mozambican side, the authority said in a statement. “Due to these security incidents and in the interest of public safety, the port has been temporarily closed until further notice,” it said, adding that seven Mozambican officials had requested refuge in South Africa for safety and protection. — Reuters

UKRAINE SAYS HAS CAPTURED 717 RUSSIAN TROOPS IN KURSK

KYIV: Ukrainian forces have captured more than 700 Russian soldiers since they launched a surprise offensive into Moscow’s border region of Kursk in August, Kyiv said on Wednesday. President Volodymyr Zelensky said one of the objectives of the shock, cross-border attack was to replenish Ukraine’s stocks of war prisoners, to exchange for captured Ukrainian troops. Oleksandr Syrsky, the commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian army,

wrote in a social media post that his troops had captured 717 Russian troops in all.

Moscow and Kyiv, despite being at war for nearly three years, still coordinate on the exchange of prisoners of war and have held dozens of swaps since the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine

Meanwhile, Ukraine said on Wednesday it had carried out its first successful strike on Russian warships in the Caspian Sea — more

than a thousand kilometres from the Ukrainian border. “For the first time, the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine’s kamikaze drones hit enemy ships in the Caspian Sea,” a source in the Defence Intelligence said. The drones allegedly hit the “Tatarstan” and “Dagestan” missile ships in the city of Kaspiysk in Dagestan, according to the same source. Authorities in Dagestan, bordering the Caspian Sea, said they had destroyed a drone. — AFP

Israeli raid demolishes Palestinian homes

MUNICIPAL WORKERS demolished seven homes in occupied east Jerusalem’s Silwan neighbourhood, Palestinian residents and the municipality said, after an Israeli court called their construction illegal.

“This morning the Jerusalem Municipality, with a security escort from the Israel police, began its enforcement against illegal buildings in the Al Bustan neighbourhood in Silwan,” Jerusalem’s Israeli-controlled city hall said in a statement. Activist Fakhri Abu Diab, one of those affected by the demolition, confirmed that “at least seven homes have been demolished, and the operation is ongoing”. He said that both houses and apartments were affected. “They demolished my home, which I had renovated after it was previously demolished earlier this year, as well as my son’s house, Haitham Ayed’s family home, and four homes belonging to the Al Ruwaidi family,” Abu Diab said. He said around “40 people, including children, were affected by the demolitions in the neighbourhood, leaving them homeless”.

A photographer saw at least four bulldozers operating on Tuesday at demolition sites in the neighbourhood under tight Israeli police supervision.

In a statement, Jerusalem city hall pointed to court orders that call for the demolition of the buildings due to zoning laws that make them illegal. However, Palestinian residents and activists accuse the municipality of concealing its true intentions.

Israeli rights group Ir Amim argued that the true aim of the demolitions is to connect Israeli settler pockets implanted in



A member of the Israeli security forces stands guard as a bulldozer demolishes a house belonging to Palestinians, in the West Bank. — AFP

Palestinian areas to west Jerusalem.

The non-profit organisation said in a statement that demolition, “encouraged by Israel’s right-wing government”, is expected to affect “115 homes, housing around 1,500 residents” in the neighbourhood.

“The demolition of Al Bustan and the displacement of its residents is an integral part of settlement efforts aimed at Judaising Silwan and transforming the area into a public park, facilitating connections between isolated settler communities in Silwan and linking them with West Jerusalem,” Ir Amim said.

Abu Diab echoed Ir Amim, saying the

true aim of the demolitions was “to reduce the percentage of Arabs and alter the demographic composition of Jerusalem in favour of (Israeli) settlers”, connecting them to west Jerusalem.

Israel “is above international law, has escaped accountability, and is exploiting global focus on the wars in Gaza and Lebanon and the US elections”, he said. Some 230,000 Israeli settlers live in east Jerusalem, according to the United Nations. Another 3,000 live in Palestinian neighbourhoods within east Jerusalem’s boundaries, according to Israeli rights organisation Peace Now. — AFP



Commuters ride along a street engulfed in smog, in Lahore. — AFP

PAKISTAN SHUTS SCHOOLS IN SMOG-HIT MAIN CITIES

LAHORE: Pakistan’s most populated province of Punjab on Wednesday ordered schools closed in smog-hit main cities, shifting them to online learning until November 17, as the country battles record air pollution. The province, home to more than half of Pakistan’s 240 million people, had earlier closed primary schools, curbed tuk-tuks and shuttered some restaurants in megacity Lahore.

On Wednesday, it ordered all schools to be shut in several major cities enveloped by smog, a mix of fog and pollutants caused by low-grade diesel

fumes, smoke from seasonal agricultural burning and winter cooling. “Looking at the predicted air wind and air quality index, we are closing all higher secondary schools,” said Marriyum Aurangzeb, a senior minister in Punjab during a press conference in Lahore. The decision will affect millions of children in some of Pakistan’s largest cities, including Punjab’s provincial capital Lahore.

The minister said the air quality index (AQI), which measures a range of pollutants, spiked above 1,000 considered ‘dangerous’. — AFP

CONTROVERSIAL PLAN

Italian ship backs to Albania with migrants



An Italian navy ship set sail for Albania on Wednesday carrying a second small group of migrants, with Rome looking to salvage a controversial plan to process asylum-seekers abroad. Italy sent an initial group to Albania last month, but they were all brought back within days, the majority of them after a Rome court ruled they could not be held in the Balkan country due to concerns over their legal status. — Reuters

DRUG CATCH

Spain seizes largest-ever cocaine haul



Spanish police said that they had seized 13 tonnes of cocaine — the country’s largest-ever haul of the drug — and made one arrest. Police and customs agents intercepted the cocaine in the southern port of Algeciras from a container ship that had arrived from Ecuador’s largest city Guayaquil, a drug-trafficking hub. The ship carried crates of bananas that concealed identically designed boxes containing the cocaine. — AFP

URGENT CALL

NGOs seek UN rights meeting on Lebanon



A group of NGOs pressed countries to hold an emergency session of the UN Human Rights Council to set up an investigation into abuses committed in Lebanon. In a letter to diplomatic missions, 12 NGOs including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International urged states to act decisively over a situation “spiralling out of control”, citing incidents such as Israeli strikes on civilian infrastructure like homes and hospitals. — Reuters

TRUMP WINS

FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM TRUMP’S VICTORY

WASHINGTON: After predictions of a tight election and a long vote count, Donald Trump won an overwhelming victory to return the White House after a highly unusual campaign. Here are some of the key takeaways from the Republican’s election victory on Tuesday:

Unambiguous victory
Trump was ahead in every state that President Joe Biden swung back from the Republican camp four years ago, with rival Kamala Harris not scoring any surprise upsets. Early indications showed that Trump was on track not only to win the state-by-state Electoral College that determines US presidents but the popular vote, the first time a Republican would triumph in absolute vote numbers across the country since George W Bush 20 years earlier.

Unfettered power
The Republicans are projected to win back control of the Senate, as was widely expected. The House of Representatives remained too close to call, and even if Republicans win, they would enjoy the slimmest of majorities, effectively empowering fringe lawmakers as all votes are needed. Trump will likely face limited resistance from the Supreme Court.

Broadening Republican base
Trump gained ground in part by winning more Black and Hispanic voters, often seen as reliable constituencies for the Democrats, although he did not win a majority in either group. Trump won 45 per cent of Hispanic voters and 12 per cent of Black voters, according to an NBC News exit poll.

Quick campaign for Harris
Harris did not begin to run until July after Biden dropped out of the race following mounting concern about his age. At a closing rally a week before the election, she acknowledged it was not “a typical campaign” and that many voters “are still getting to know who I am.” Speculation immediately turned to whether an earlier exit by Biden would have improved Harris’s chances — or if he himself would have fared better.

White House, not courthouse
Harris had repeatedly warned of a threat to democracy from Trump, who was impeached twice in his first term and will be the first president with a felony conviction. Voters brushed aside any concern about ongoing cases against Trump. With his return, Trump is all but certain to try to stop cases against him. His supporters have mused of vengeance against Smith and others who have challenged him. — **AFP**

TRIUMPH 2.0

DONALD TRUMP won a sweeping victory on Wednesday in the US presidential election, defeating Kamala Harris to complete an astonishing political comeback that sent shock waves around the world. The polarising Republican’s triumph, following one of the most hostile campaigns in modern American history, was all the more remarkable given his criminal conviction, a near-miss assassination attempt.

“It’s a political victory that our country has never seen before,” the president-elect told supporters overnight in Florida. Supporters chanted “USA!” as the 78-year-old added that his “magnificent” win would “allow us to make America great again.” World leaders swiftly pledged to work with Trump, led by Israel and Ukraine where the course of raging conflicts could depend on the new president and his isolationist “America First” policies.

Opinion polls predicted a nail-bitingly close contest — yet the results came surprisingly fast, including Trump’s flipping of swing states Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin that Biden won four years ago.

Trump captured enough states to secure the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the presidency. By early on Wednesday the count stood at 277 for him and 224 for Harris, with five states yet to be called.

He appeared on track to win the popular vote too — the first time he has done so in three presidential runs. Republicans also seized control of the US Senate — crucial in helping Trump push his agenda through — although many House of Representatives elections remain undecided.

Trump is the first president in more than a century to win a non-consecutive second term. He is also the only person to be elected as a convicted felon — he will face



Former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures at supporters after speaking as he holds hands with former US First Lady Melania Trump at the West Palm Beach Convention Center in West Palm Beach, Florida. — **AFP**

sentencing in a New York court for fraud on November 26.

The brash businessman and former reality TV star is on course to break another record as the oldest-ever sitting president during his four-year term.

He will surpass Biden, who steps down in January at 82. The dollar surged, stocks rallied and bitcoin struck a record high as news of Trump’s victory emerged. But turmoil likely lies ahead.

He has repeatedly suggested he would end the conflict in Ukraine by pressuring Kyiv to cede land to Russia, and his threat of mass deportations of undocumented immigrants has stirred concern in Latin America.

He also returns to the White House as a climate change denier, poised to dismantle his predecessor’s green policies and

jeopardise global efforts to curb human-caused warming.

For all his dark promises of revenge against enemies, Trump remains famously unpredictable. His campaign rallies, filled with grievance, insults and misinformation, featured extreme rhetoric. But he earned viral online moments that played on his everyman appeal and showman’s instinct — like his appearance at a McDonald’s drive-thru and impromptu news conference from a garbage truck.

Star supporters like tech baron Elon Musk also helped him appeal to young men. Trump campaigned on tax cuts, less regulation and sky-high import tariffs to promote growth and boost manufacturing, despite warnings of trade wars and higher prices for consumers. — **AFP**

Opinion polls predicted a nail-bitingly close contest — yet the results came surprisingly fast, including Trump’s flipping of swing states Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin that Biden won four years ago

WALL STREET SMASHES RECORDS, DOLLAR SOARS



Trader Jonathan Mueller wears a Trump hat as he works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) at the opening bell in New York City. — **AFP**

LONDON: Wall Street rallied into record territory, the dollar soared and bitcoin scaled a new peak on Wednesday as the world gears up for another Donald Trump presidency. The Dow jumped three per cent while the S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite added two per cent in early deals.

“The rationale behind the US stock market rally is that Trump is seen as business-friendly and will be able to pass his tax cuts through easily without much resistance from the Democrats who have lost control of the Senate,”

said City Index and FOREX.com analyst Fawad Razaqzada.

Briefing.com analyst Patrick O’Hare said Trump’s policies “which feature lower tax rates and deregulation among the cornerstones, are being heralded by the stock market as pro-growth policies that will be a boon for corporate profit growth”. But in a sign that investors are also nervous about the impact of Trump’s protectionist policies, European stock markets gave up strong earlier gains to slip into the red in the afternoon. — **AFP**

JD Vance: One of America’s youngest VPs

JD Vance, a 40-year-old senator who transformed himself from a biting critic of Donald Trump to one of his fiercest defenders, was elected the next vice-president of the United States on Wednesday, becoming the third youngest and among the least experienced and most polarising politicians ever to hold the office. The country’s 50th vice- president will be sworn in just two years after assuming his first public office as a senator from Ohio. Vance is unlike any other vice-president before him in the modern era: None has started the job with such an extensive public record of condemning his or her boss.

He rose to national prominence with his 2016 memoir, “Hillbilly Elegy,” a bestseller that liberal voters devoured to better understand Trump’s victory and the frustrations of the white working class that had put him in the White House. Vance also seemed an ideal translator for Blue America as a Midwestern conservative who detested the new president, likening him in an essay to “cultural heroin.” But Vance then started professing a change of heart



JD Vance speaks to reporters in Cincinnati on Election Day. — **NYT**

and mind about the leader of his party as he prepared his own initial run for office. Trump not only forgave his young convert but also rewarded him with a game-changing endorsement in a fiercely competitive, four-way Senate primary and then, in the general election, helped push Vance’s underperforming campaign over the finish line.

Now, Vance is more politically indebted to Trump than any other vice-president has been to the top of the ticket in modern times, said Joel Goldstein, a professor emeritus at the St Louis University School of Law who has spent decades studying the vice-presidency.

Raised by his grandmother in a working-class town in

Ohio, Vance will soon be first in the presidential line of succession. His against-all-odds upbringing was a key component of his speeches on the campaign trail as he introduced himself to voters and sought common ground with Trump’s base of blue-collar supporters. But Vance also has strong connections to deep-pocketed donors in Silicon Valley, including Peter Thiel, the iconoclastic tech pioneer and billionaire investor. Thiel, who hired Vance at his investment firm in 2017, spent \$15 million on a super PAC that supported the Ohioan’s Senate bid in 2022.

Now, Vance has been all but anointed by Trump as the successor to the MAGA movement, driven by blue-collar voters who helped bolster two successful presidential campaigns in 2016 and 2024. He performed on the trail just as Trump had instructed, as an indefatigable critic of Vice-President Kamala Harris while delivering a sharp debate performance that cast himself as a more three-dimensional figure than the caricature portrayed by his critics. — **NYT**

OPINION

Harvesting hope in Oman’s changing climate



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

ENVISION A FUTURE where Omani farmers cultivate drought-resistant crops that flourish with minimal water, where livestock farming minimises greenhouse gas emissions, and where resilient agriculture withstands storms and extreme heat. This vision is becoming a reality through groundbreaking advancements in biotechnology, climate-smart practices, and sustainable innovation.

Technologies like precise gene editing, carbon-sequestering plants, and sustainable aquaculture are transforming how we address the challenges of a warming world.

For instance, researchers are engineering water-efficient varieties of sorghum by altering genes that reduce water loss. This adaptation can enable the grain to thrive in Oman’s arid environment while conserving precious water resources. Similarly, enhancing plant structures to withstand high winds and heavy rains prepares crops for the severe storms increasingly associated with climate change.

In livestock farming, genetic

innovations offer new avenues for sustainability. Cattle are significant producers of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. By altering the microbiome in their stomachs, scientists can reduce methane production, decreasing the environmental impact of livestock farming.

In Oman, where livestock is integral to rural life and the economy, such advancements could make agriculture more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Beyond gene editing, other biotechnological advances provide additional tools for building a climate-resilient food system. Genomic selection involves analysing the DNA of plants and animals to identify desirable traits without direct genetic modification.

Moreover, biotechnological advancements are directly combating climate change by enhancing carbon capture. Scientists are developing “carbon-hungry” plants that absorb and store increased amounts of CO₂, effectively turning agriculture into a tool for climate mitigation. Imagine Omani farms not only feeding the nation but also acting as carbon sinks contributing to global efforts against climate change.

Integrating advanced technologies into Oman’s food systems is about more than scientific progress; it’s about forging a future capable of adapting to and withstanding the impacts of climate change.

The immense potential of these technologies hinges on ethical deployment, supportive regulations, and a steadfast commitment to sustainability. Transparency and environmental stewardship are essential to ensure that these innovations benefit society as a whole. Integrating advanced technologies into Oman’s food systems is about more than scientific progress; it’s about forging a future capable of adapting to and withstanding the impacts of climate change.

With visionary leadership and strategic investment in climate-smart agriculture, Oman has the opportunity to lead by example. By embracing a multifaceted strategy that includes sustainable food security techniques and advanced biotechnology, we can demonstrate how science and innovation transform adversity into strength. A future where food security is assured, emissions are reduced, and natural resources are preserved is within reach. Oman can showcase the power of resilience and the potential for a sustainable future, turning the challenges of climate change into opportunities for growth and development.

Americans must wait for their first woman president

MARION THIBAUT

For the second time in eight years, a woman has won the Democratic nomination for US president, only to come up short in a campaign where gender was a central issue.

Like Hillary Clinton in 2016, Kamala Harris had a shot at becoming the first woman to occupy the Oval Office but stumbled at the final hurdle.

While the charisma of their opponent — Donald Trump, in both cases — clearly played a role in these historic defeats, many observers also saw misogyny as a factor. In their duelling campaigns, Harris and Trump laid out starkly different visions for women’s status and rights. Trump, who has faced multiple accusations of misconduct he denies, sought to present a tough, domineering image, appearing alongside mixed martial artists and offering praise for autocratic world leaders.

He and his campaign surrogates also made multiple comments that were criticised as insulting or contemptuous of women.

Harris, by contrast, relied heavily on female celebrities, betting that they would help her reach even conservative women voters.

Harris did not campaign openly on the fact that she would have been the first female president of the United States. But she made the defence of women’s rights, and abortion in particular, one of the cornerstones of her campaign.

This does not appear to have won over enough moderately conservative women.

At a campaign rally last month, former first lady Michelle Obama denounced the apparent double standard by which the two White House candidates were judged. “We expect her to be intelligent and articulate, to have a clear set of policies, to never show too much anger, to prove time and time again that she belongs,” she said of Harris.

“But for Trump, we expect nothing at all. No understanding of policy, no ability to put together a coherent argument, no honesty, no decency, no morals.” The Centre for American Women and Politics also pointed to that double standard in a statement on Trump’s victory.

Harris had been a “formidable fundraiser” who “connected with voters,” it said.

“Unfortunately, this contest also exemplified research on the obstacles women face when running for office, chief among them the unequal expectations placed upon women, and women of colour in particular, who run for office.”

Women have held “every political office in America. Except one,” it continued, vowing: “The work continues.” — AFP

This is why Trump won

DONALD TRUMP is returning to the White House, and while this will not change what most critics think of him, it should compel them to take a close look in the mirror.

They lost this election as much as Trump won it. This was no ordinary contest between two candidates from rival parties: The real choice before voters was between Trump and everyone else — not only the Democratic nominee, Kamala Harris, and her party, but also Republicans like Liz Cheney, top military officers like Gen. Mark Milley and Gen.

John Kelly (also a former chief of staff), outspoken members of the intelligence community and Nobel Prize-winning economists. Framed this way, the presidential contest became an example of what’s known in economics as “creative destruction.” His opponents certainly fear that Trump will destroy American democracy itself. Those who see in Trump a profound rejection of Washington’s present conventions are correct. He is like an atheist defying the teachings of a church: The challenge he presents lies not so much in what he does but in the fact that he calls into question the beliefs on which authority rests.

Trump has shown that the nation’s political orthodoxies are bankrupt, and the leaders in all our institutions — private as well as public — who stake their claim to authority on their fealty to such orthodoxies are now vulnerable. This may be exactly what voters want, and by allying herself with so many troubled and unpopular elites and institutions, Harris doomed herself.

Do Americans think it’s healthy that generals who have overseen prolonged and ultimately disastrous wars are treated with such respect by Trump’s critics? A similar question could be asked about the officials in charge of the intelligence community. Trump



DANIEL
MCCARTHY

is no one’s idea of a policy wonk, but the role his voters want him to serve is arguably the opposite: that of an anti-wonk who demolishes Washington’s present notions of expertise.

Trump’s victory is a punitive verdict on the authorities of all kinds who sought to stop him. In economics, creative destruction occurs when a new competitor reveals just how ill-suited existing businesses are to satisfying consumer demand. Like market competition, democratic political competition leads to similar upheavals. If the disruption that Trump represents seems unusually drastic, that’s a sign that American politics has been insufficiently competitive for too long.

Before Trump came along, power was in the hands of a political cartel, which, like the market cartels that Adam Smith had warned about, involved institutions that should have been in robust competition but were instead cooperating to exclude rival “products” or ideas. The cartel’s overpriced, shoddy goods failed to satisfy the public’s demands.

Perhaps Trump and the movement he brings to Washington will not meet them either. It’s worth remembering that most new companies that break up established market relationships do not last long — they only discover an opportunity that someone else later makes the most of. The rise of Trump has brought an end to the stagnation that characterised the Barack Obama era, when a Democratic president pursued a vision only incrementally different — in everything from foreign policy to health care — from what experts in both parties had prescribed in the 1990s, while Republicans in Congress devoted themselves to mere obstruction until the GOP could put another Bush or Mitt Romney in the White House to pursue their party’s variation on the same agenda.

And Trump’s successes from 2016 to today — successes which include those defeats that failed to vanquish him or shatter his coalition — indicate that the “mainstream” has already lost popular legitimacy to a critical degree.

The voters’ attitude surely extended to the federal and state indictments, which they dismissed as politics by other means. Trump’s enemies are as certain as his supporters are that he could be a force for radical change. Yet both the pro- and anti-Trump camps are prone to exaggerate what this once and future president wishes to do and can accomplish. Even Franklin Roosevelt, with unlimited terms in office and an overwhelming popular mandate, found his power as president frustratingly limited.

The Constitution is not weak, regardless of whether a Roosevelt or a Trump sits in the Oval Office. If Trump and his coalition fail to create something better than what they have replaced, they will suffer the same fate they’ve inflicted on the fallen Bush, Clinton and Cheney dynasties. A new force for creative destruction will emerge, possibly on the American left. To prevent that, Trump will have to become as successful a creator as he is a destroyer. At the start of his first administration he lost an opportunity to take advantage of the shock that Republicans and Democrats alike felt at this election. That was a moment when a positive message, rather than one of “American carnage,” could have elevated the new president above the fray of conventional politics.

Although his refusal to accept the results of the 2020 election did not prevent him from winning yesterday, he would have been even stronger if he did not have the baggage of the Jan. 6 riot to drag him down. Sometimes following the rules is the best way to change the game, as the most transformative presidents of our past recognised. — NYT

If Trump and his coalition fail to create something better than what they have replaced, they will suffer the same fate they’ve inflicted on the fallen Bush, Clinton and Cheney dynasties.

Rooted in the rich memory of The House of Wisdom



SONIA
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The writer is journalist, academic, researcher in media studies

TOURING abandoned ruins is one of my favourite activities. I enjoy visiting the places at intervals to observe these amazing storytelling locations and structures.

Some ruins have been destroyed, others were razed by the weather or have been incorporated within urban development, and some others have been plastered and restored.

The inspiration for this article sprang from reading a beautifully elaborated brochure detailing material found on Earth. The brochure’s ingenuity, along with its engaging, captivating, and solid content, prompted me to go for a short run amid the ruins I’ve visited in the past.

The approach to mini stories and embracing imperfections rang a bell in my head. Employing an attempt towards raw authenticity over crafted facades, I started paying closer attention to shapes, colours, methods, and the combination of natural elements.

I observed the amazing display of designs and forms over mountains and the intriguing makeup between rocks and water. Nature provides the most wide-ranging types of information. It is in front of our eyes; it is just waiting for whoever wants to see it; unfortunately, young and old people with their heads bent down on smartphones posting selfies may barely notice the beauty around them.

The imperfections within nature are so stunning that they turn out to be perfect for the eyes that can see; yes, because there are those eyes that can look but cannot see, ears that can hear but are unable to listen, and hearts that pulse but cannot feel. The natural blend of colours, shapes, light, and environmental sounds creates a sense that we live in heaven on Earth.

Then, like a wakeup call, the old traditional Arab houses, known as Dar or Bayt in Arabic, stirred my thoughts about their deep cultural significance. They are more than architectural structures; they represent the challenges of traditional practices, imagination, and identity.

Their distinctive features, including layouts that provide ventilation, natural light, and intricate designs on walls and ceilings, are robust narratives. The drawings, calligraphy, and paintings above the doors and walls are geometry in art with designs and patterns that we seldom pay attention to.

Lights and shadows through windows (mashrabiya) and doors play a dynamic of secrecy while allowing airflow. The interior of the old traditional Arab houses is fascinating, resembling a world of magic and elegance — the romance of nature in architecture! They were designed to be cool and shaded in the summer. The integration of small gardens, as seen in some restored ruins, gives a sense of connection with nature.

The conventional Arabian Gulf house

The inspiration for this article sprang from reading a beautifully elaborated brochure detailing material found on Earth

style reflects the region’s cultural heritage. It tells stories of tradition. To understand the work involved in the construction of Arab houses is to showcase the elements from different regions, climatical conditions, and topography.

The houses were built with whatever material was locally available. Builders used wind for ventilation, water wheels for irrigation, astronomy, a compass to set plans, chisels to cut stones, wood, and geometry for construction. These were some of the early Arab influences on modern inventions.

We are losing The House of Wisdom as time goes on. The translated content of philosophy, mathematics, and science manuscripts is being sidelined for less relevant material widely available on social media. We can hardly foresee another Muhammad ibn Musa al Khwarizmi emerging. Famous for his mathematical and cosmological works, he introduced the concept of the number zero, which was used for nearly 250 years throughout the Islamic world before Europe. The words algorithm and algebra come from his name.

There has been much talk lately about sustainable solutions and preserving ecosystems; however, they have always existed. Modernity and technological improvement have brought comfort, yet major developments and techniques have been inherited. We are in debt to Arab science and its great achievements.

China’s latest cry for more babies may fall on deaf ears

FARAH MASTER

Having three children is the best, says a vibrant neon pink sign at a wedding expo in the southern Chinese city of Changsha, where visitors can also pick up tips on tying the knot and men can strap on a pregnancy belly to experience childbirth pain.

The marriage-themed festival comes at a time when China is looking to spur weddings and births to counter a shrinking population, but it has drawn thin crowds and sparked criticism for being regressive, disparaging towards women and for putting people off marriage — contrary to the government’s aim.

Social media users called out slogans at the expo such as “Housework is the best”, “Best at raising kids” and “Best at tutoring homework” for reinforcing gender stereotypes.

“The slogans are all aimed at women. Shouldn’t sharing housework be the right thing to do?” said a user with the handle Jianguo on China’s Weibo platform. A user with the handle Xiaohong on social e-commerce site Xiaohongshu, known as China’s answer to Instagram, wrote the festival had probably “persuaded a lot of hesitant people to give up marriage”.

The number of marriage registrations in China in the first three quarters of 2024 dropped 16.6 per cent year on year to 4.75 million couples, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

Beijing rallied local governments just last week to direct resources towards urging people to marry and have children “at the right age”.

Beijing’s instructions included improving maternity and childcare benefits and offering housing support for families with multiple children, its most comprehensive framework to date, although lacking in details on funding and implementation.

“I believe the effectiveness of government policies will be limited” unless backed by measures such as cutting working hours and eliminating gender discrimination against women in the workplace, said Xiujian Peng, senior Research Fellow in the Centre of Policy Studies at Victoria University.

Local authorities have instead been offering women free vitamins and cold calling them to encourage pregnancy, according to multiple posts on social media.

“The cost of having children is still too high and the benefits too low,” said 32-year-old Shanghai-based Aiqi, who shrugged off the state council’s latest measures. She declined to give her last name for privacy reasons. — Reuters

It’s time India closes its gender employment gap

WHILE FEMALE workforce participation consistently lags behind men’s globally, there are deep regional disparities, with the largest gender employment gaps found in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and South Asia.

India is a striking example of this dynamic. Among women aged 25-60 in rural areas, the labour-market participation rate dropped sharply from 54 per cent in 1980 to 31 per cent in 2017 (National Sample Survey (1980) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017)).

In urban areas, the decline has been less dramatic, from 26 per cent to 24 per cent. Meanwhile, male employment rates remained relatively stable, further widening the gender gap in the world’s most populous country.

Given the well-documented economic benefits of higher female employment, Indian policymakers are eager to reverse this trend. Projections suggest that increasing the female workforce participation rate by just ten percentage points could increase India’s GDP by 16 per cent. In fact, improving female employment rates worldwide could add \$12 trillion to global GDP.

To encourage women to enter the labour market, policymakers must first understand the root causes of India’s low female workforce participation rate. Early research points to a range of supply-side barriers, such as the U-shaped relationship between income and education, the unequal division of domestic labour (particularly childcare and eldercare), and social norms that discourage women from working outside the home. The problem is also exacerbated by the preference for non-working women in the marriage market, limited mobility, inadequate skills training, and safety concerns at work and in public spaces.

Many of these barriers are rooted in household dynamics, but governments can still play a pivotal role in addressing them. One



Labour demand has not been favourable to Indian women.

way is to support export-oriented industries. While supply-side constraints affect economies across MENA and South Asia, countries like Bangladesh have experienced a rise in female employment thanks to growing demand from export-driven sectors. This mirrors the experience of Southeast Asian countries, where export-oriented manufacturing has led to a surge in women entering the labour market.

History also offers valuable insights. In the United States, the female employment rate rose dramatically in the space of 100 years, from less than 5 per cent in 1890 to more than 60 per cent in 1990.

The critical turning point came during World War II, when labour shortages led to higher wages, greater acceptance of women in traditionally male-dominated jobs, and the emergence of alternative care options.

In India, much of the policy debate has focused on the demand-side barriers that women face in the job market. Labour demand has not been favourable to Indian women, as mechanisation in the agriculture sector reinforces gender disparities while the lack of decent jobs and the dominance of small firms – many of which fail to provide essential amenities like maternity leave and child care — limit women’s work

opportunities.

The impact of such barriers is compounded by insufficient support for female entrepreneurship and widespread employer discrimination against married women and mothers. Moreover, well-intentioned regulations like the Maternity Benefit Act and the POSH Act, intended to increase the number of women in the workforce, also raise the cost of hiring them, inadvertently creating additional obstacles.

Recognising that low female employment impedes economic growth, the Indian government has allocated an unprecedented 6.5 per cent of its latest annual budget to programmes promoting gender equality in housing, pensions, education, and healthcare.

The budget also boosts funding for initiatives aimed at improving women’s safety, mobility, and caregiving options, such as establishing targeted skills-training programmes, hostels, and child-care facilities for working women, and expanding market access for enterprises run by women-led, community-based self-help groups.

But the real test will be the quality and reliability of these services. If child-care facilities provide substandard care, or hostels fail to ensure women’s safety, participation will remain low.

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SPORTS

NEOM TOURNEY



OMAN WOMEN’S 3X3 BASKETBALL TEAM WRAPS UP DAMMAM CAMP

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The Oman national women’s 3x3 basketball team has concluded its training camp held in Dammam from November 3 to 6, in preparation for participating in the NEOM Championship in Saudi Arabia, scheduled for November 7-8. Teams from GCC countries, including Muscat, Doha, Manama, Riyadh, Jeddah and Kuwait City will participate in the two-day tournament.

The team is led by Hiba bint Said al Naabiyah, a member of the Oman Basketball Association Board and Chair of the Basketball Sports Committee.

This participation is part of the collaboration between the Oman Basketball Association, the Women’s Sports Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), and the Women’s Committee and Gender Equality in the Oman Olympic Committee.

The four-day camp featured intensive training sessions under the leadership of Tunisian coach Wafaa Zaghdoud. The team members, Shams Al Duha al Khanji, Rabi al Kalbani, Noor al Kharousi, and Ghadeer al Ismaili took part in the drills.

During the camp, the team played three friendly matches against the Saudi team, providing the coach with opportunities to correct errors and refine the team’s performance ahead of the competition.

The Muscat team will compete in Group A, alongside ‘Al Zallaj’ from Bahrain and Doha from Qatar, while Group B includes teams from Riyadh, Kuwait and Jeddah.

The goal of the women’s 3x3 basketball team’s participation is to promote women’s sports in Oman, empower Omani women to compete in GCC championships, provide a supportive environment for fair competition, and showcase their talents, fostering pride and a sense of belonging to the nation.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

THE Sultanate of Oman represented by Oman Hockey Association is all set to host the 49th FIH Statutory Congress in Muscat starting from Thursday and will run until Saturday. A total of 500 participants representing 141 countries from across the world will take part in the top annual FIH meeting. The three-day event will take place at the Sheraton Hotel in Muscat. This edition of the Congress is a special event as FIH is celebrating its 100 years anniversary.

A series of events will be held during 49th FIH Statutory Congress including FIH Executive Board meeting which will be the first event as it will take place on Thursday during morning session. This meeting will be followed by continental federations meetings which will occur during the afternoon session while the day will conclude with pro league meeting discussion in the evening session.

On Friday, the day will begin with FIH Empowerment and Engagement Forum starting from 9:00 am and will run until 17:00. Later, the FIH continental and awards nights event will be held and all the individual stars for this season will be unveiled.

The concluding day on Saturday will feature the 49th FIH Congress which will begin at 9:00 am and will end at 15:00. The Congress meeting will be followed by FIH Executive Board Meeting and then a press conference for media representatives to unveil the key matters discussed and outcomes of the congress. The Congress will include also electing the FIH’s new board directors for the upcoming term.

All the FIH Congress meetings will cover various ideas and



“The meetings will cover crucial topics and strategic plans that will shape the sport’s direction for the next years with discussions focused on key strategic objectives.

DATO TAYYAB IKRAM
President of the International Hockey Federation

proposals aimed at advancing the sport of hockey on multiple levels. The Congress participants will discuss and review several reports and presentations from different associations including the French Hockey Association who will highlighted on the strategy and legacy benefits from hosting the Paris 2024 Olympics. The Belgian and Dutch Hockey Associations will unveil the 2026 FIH World Cup that they’re co-hosting while the Croatian Hockey Association is gearing up to host their first-ever FIH World Cup – namely, the FIH Indoor Hockey World Cup – in February.

Dato Tayyab Ikram, President of the International Hockey Federation (FIH), affirmed that Oman has a deep-rooted history in hockey with the sport having been established in the Sultanate of Oman long ago. “Hosting the FIH Congress in Oman coincides with the centennial of the federation, founded in 1924 adding even more significance to

this annual event,” he said.

“Oman’s recent successes in hosting regional, continental and international hockey tournaments including Hockey5s Asia Cup in Salalah last year, FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Muscat and FIH Hockey5s World Cup Oman 2024 in last January at the state-of-the-art facility (Oman Hockey Stadium) in Al Amerat. This series of successful events paved the way for Oman to be selected to host the International Hockey Congress, bringing together representatives from all FIH member nations to discuss and develop hockey sport in Muscat,” he added.

Ikram opined that the timing of the Congress is ideal following Oman’s recent achievements in hosting major international hockey events. “The meetings will cover crucial topics and strategic plans that will shape the sport’s direction for the next years with discussions focused on key strategic objectives.”

“The FIH Empowerment and Engagement Forum will include several discussions including empowering different hockey stakeholders including Continental Federations (CFs) and the National Associations (NAs) to discuss and lead the development of hockey in their respective continents and countries and engaging with all FIH members and hockey stakeholders,” Ikram said.

“The main Congress will cover an intensive agenda including presidential, administrative, technical and financial reports. Starting early in the morning and running until the afternoon, the meeting aims to bring significant decisions and update core regulations. The Congress will also include elections for various positions, marking a new phase in FIH leadership,” he ended.

OMAN GEAR UP FOR PALESTINE, IRAQ TIES

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

Oman players are underway in their domestic training camp which started on Monday at Seeb Stadium under watchful eyes of head coach Rasheed Jaber. The camp is part of the team’s preparations for the Fifa World Cup 2026 qualifiers against Palestine which is scheduled to be played on November 14 and against Iraq on November 19. Both matches to be played at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex and the kick off is at 8:00 pm.

All the called-up players by Jaber attended the training sessions except Seeb players who finished recently their assignment at AFC Challenge League. Seeb confirmed their progression to the quarterfinals after securing top place in Group C. Mohsin al Ghassani, who is playing at Bangkok United Club, will join in the coming days besides Salah al Yahyaei (Bahrain’s A Khaldiya FC).

During the opening training sessions, the coaching staff focused on the physical side of the players. Furthermore, the players went



under intensive physical sessions on Wednesday to enhance their endurance, speed and strength besides ensuring each player can maintain top performance levels throughout every game.

It is expected that the coaching staff will raise their focus in the coming days on the critical areas to develop performance on the green field. Under guidance of the coaching staff headed by coach Rasheed Jaber, the players will implement some technical and tactical training sessions including the strategic gameplay drills which will reinforce positioning, spacing and role clarity across all phases of play.

Red Warriors will chase for securing maximum points as

possible in the forthcoming games to keep their hopes alive in the qualifiers. The team suffered three defeats in the qualifiers against Iraq, South Korea and Jordan while they registered a sole victory over Kuwait in Muscat by 4-0. The last 4-0 defeat against Jordan in Amman last month dropped Oman to fourth position with three points while South Korea led the table by 10 points and Jordan are second with seven points. Iraq are third with seven points too. Kuwait (3 points) and Palestine (2 points) are in the fifth and sixth places respectively.

OMAN SQUAD: Goalkeepers: Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Fayeze al Rushaidi and Ibrahim al Rajhi; **Defenders:** Mohammed al Musallami, Ahmed al Khamisi, Thani al Rushaidi, Khalid al Buraiki, Ghanim al Habashi, Ali al Busaidy and Ahmed al Kaabi; **Midfielders:** Hussain al Shahri, Harib al Saadi, Abdulaziz al Shamousi, Mulham al Sunaidy, Abdullah Fawaz, Arshad al Alawi, Sultan al Marzouqi, Yazeed al Maashani, Abdulrahman al Mushaifri, Jameel al Yahmadi and Zاهر al Aghbari; **Forwards:** Nasser al Rawahi, Salah al Yahyaei, Omar al Maliki, Mohsin al Ghassani, Esam al Subhi and Hatim al Roushdi.



Sultanate of Oman
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH
TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects

Tender No.	Project Category	Tender	Last day to Purchase Tender Documents	Last date of Tender Submission
36/2024	Constriction & Maintenance	STRUCTURAL RECTIFICATIONS AND ALLIED CIVIL AND MEP WORKS IN AL AMAL CLUB	19/11/2024	16/12/2024
37/2024	Constriction & Maintenance	DESIGN AND BUILD FACILITIES AT ALWUSTA CLUB - HAIMA	19/11/2024	16/12/2024
38/2024	Constriction & Maintenance	CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE WORK AT BASHAYER SPORTS CLUB	19/11/2024	16/12/2024
39/2024	Services	CONSTRUCTION OF SYNTHETIC TURF FOOTBALL PITCH AT SUR SPORTS CENTER	19/11/2024	16/12/2024
40/2024	Consulting Offices	MASTER PLAN, CONCEPT DESIGN AND DETAILED DESIGN AT AL DUQM	19/11/2024	16/12/2024
41/2024	Consulting Offices	MASTER PLAN, CONCEPT DESIGN, DETAILED DESIGN AND RESIDENTIAL SUPERVISION FOR SPORTS HALL AT IBRI SPORTS COMPLEX	19/11/2024	16/12/2024

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

STAND-IN SKIPPER



Australia's Josh Inglis in action. — Reuters

INGLIS TO LEAD AUSTRALIA IN WHITE-BALL MATCHES AGAINST PAKISTAN

MELBOURNE: Josh Inglis will stand in as captain for Pat Cummins and Mitchell Marsh in Australia's third one-day international against Pakistan and the following T20 series.

Selectors promoted wicketkeeper-batsman Inglis ahead of senior players including Glenn Maxwell, Adam Zampa and Marcus Stoinis.

ODI skipper Cummins will be rested for the third and final one-dayer in Perth on Sunday along with test regulars Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith.

T20 captain Marsh is on paternity leave.

"Josh is an integral member of the ODI and T20I teams and a highly respected player on and off the field," selector George Bailey said in a statement on Wednesday.

"He has led Australia A previously and will bring strong tactical nous and a positive approach to the role."

None of Australia's test players will feature in the three-match T20 series, which starts on November 14 at the Gabba in Brisbane, as they warm up for the five-Test series against India beginning on November 22 in Perth.

Australia took a 1-0 lead in the three-match ODI series with a two-wicket win over Mohammad Rizwan's Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Monday.

The hosts will look to seal the series with victory in the second match at Adelaide Oval on Friday.

Selectors have recalled pace stalwart Hazlewood for the second ODI after he missed the MCG match to play Sheffield Shield cricket.

Pace bowlers Xavier Bartlett and Spencer Johnson, and wicketkeeper-batsman Josh Philippe, have been added to the squad for the third ODI.

Australia have yet to decide on a Test opener to replace David Warner, who has retired from international cricket, but Bailey hinted at the leading candidates in revealing the batting order for the second Australia A match against India A.

Australia A captain Nathan McSweeney has been promoted to open with 14-Test batter Marcus Harris for the four-day match starting at the MCG on Thursday, having scored 39 and an unbeaten 88 in the first fixture at Mackay. — Reuters

GAUFF BEATS SWIATEK TO ENTER SEMIFINALS

SABALENKA EARNs YEAR-END NO 1 SPOT AFTER SWIATEK DEFEAT

COCO GAUFF posted a rare victory over Iga Swiatek to punch her ticket to the semifinals of the WTA Finals in Riyadh on Tuesday, ensuring Aryna Sabalenka will finish the year as the world number one.

Swiatek, the defending champion, was in a direct battle with Sabalenka for the top spot this week but needed a win over Gauff to keep her chances alive of leapfrogging her Belarusian rival.

Gauff, 20, entered the contest having lost 11 of her 12 previous meetings with Swiatek, with the American's sole victory coming in Cincinnati last year.

But she turned the tables on Swiatek on Tuesday, defeating the second seed 6-3, 6-4 to make it two straight-sets wins from two round-robin matches in Riyadh this week.

"It feels great. I knew going into the match that despite our head-to-head I had a lot of confidence going in," said Gauff, who hit 11 double faults during the one-hour 48-minute showdown.

With the exception of the opening game of the match, Gauff had break point opportunities in every Swiatek service game in the first set.



US' Coco Gauff plays a return to Poland's Iga Swiatek during the WTA Finals match in Riyadh. — AFP

The American third seed made her move in game seven, breaking for 4-3, and she closed out the set with a second break of serve, taking the lead in 49 minutes.

Swiatek needed six break points in a marathon third game of the second set to finally take down the Gauff serve but she couldn't consolidate her advantage.

They traded breaks again, as Gauff's double-fault tally went up to double digits and Swiatek racked up the errors. It was Gauff who eventually steadied the ship, and wrapped up the victory on Swiatek's 47th unforced error of the match.

Swiatek, a five-time major champion, admits her two-month break between the US Open and the WTA Finals and the fact she is playing her first tournament with her new coach Wim Fissette have made things "a bit more tricky and different than usual".

"But I'll force myself to work even better in the next match," the Pole added.



Czech Republic's Barbora Krejickova in action against Jessica Pegula of the US. — Reuters

KREJCIKOVA OUSTS PEGULA Earlier in the day, Barbora Krejickova ended Jessica Pegula's chances of qualifying for the semifinals, defeating the sixth-seeded American 6-3, 6-3.

A runner-up at the WTA Finals last year, Pegula suffered her second straight-sets defeat of the week and enters her final

round-robin match against Swiatek on Thursday anchoring the Orange Group with zero sets won.

Eighth-seeded Krejickova bounced back from her opening loss to Swiatek to keep her hopes of making the final four alive.

"I was fighting for every ball and I felt that I really have to play my best tennis and I was trying to be really solid and trying to put as many balls to the other side as I could," said Krejickova, who picked up just her 20th match win of the season.

"I'm definitely proud. I had some very high parts of the season, especially winning Wimbledon, that's something indescribable. And being here in the Finals is a huge privilege. It's nice to get the win and still be part of the event."

Despite being ranked number 13 in the world, Krejickova qualified for these WTA Finals thanks to a new rule introduced by the WTA that gave priority to a player who has won a Grand Slam this season, while maintaining a ranking between 9 and 20, over a player ranked number eight in the Race.

As the reigning Wimbledon champion, Krejickova claimed the final qualifying spot in Riyadh over world number eight Emma Navarro.

Krejickova squandered a 6-4, 3-0 lead against Swiatek in her opener two days ago and made sure there was no repeat scenario against Pegula on Tuesday.

The crafty Czech fired 11 aces and broke Pegula four times to wrap up the win in 69 minutes.

Both Krejickova and Swiatek will have to wait until Thursday's matches to learn their qualification fate in Riyadh. — AFP

Al Nasr dominate Al Suwaiq, Ahli Sidab win thriller over Nizwa

AHMED AL KAABI MUSCAT, NOV 6

AL NASR defeated Al Suwaiq 82-12, while Ahli Sidab edged Nizwa 61-56 in the Oman Basketball League for the 2024-2025 season. The matches were held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Tuesday.

In the first game, Al Nasr encountered little resistance from Al Suwaiq, with their players shining through experience and focus.

They started the first quarter with a strong offensive push, scoring 20 points through Masoud Hashemi, Mohammed al Amri, Bassam al Musallami, Abdulaziz al Balushi and Zain Ayman, while Al Suwaiq managed only 4 points from Mohammed al Maamari and Hamad al Mashrefi.

Al Nasr maintained their dominance in the second quarter, ending the first half with a 36-8 lead as Al Suwaiq continued to miss scoring opportunities. In the third quarter, Al Nasr extended their lead, finishing it at 56-10, and



Al Nasr and Al Suwaiq players in action.

capped off the game with a final quarter adding 26 more points to Al Suwaiq's 2 points, ending the match at 82-12.

The game was officiated by an experienced team, with international referee Rashid al Mushaifri as the first referee, Mazen al Athali as the second, and Al Mahdi al Amri as the third. On the scoring table were Munira al Omani, Mahmoud al Ajmi and Huda al Hinai.



Nizwa and Ahli Sidab players fight for the ball.

CLOSE CONTEST The second game witnessed fierce competition between Ahli Sidab and Nizwa, with Ahli Sidab clinching a close victory at 61-56. The match was filled with excitement and intensity, with both teams alternating control over different periods. Scoring leaders for Ahli Sidab included Jaylin Kay, Ahmed al Hassani and Hamir al Hassani, while for Nizwa the key scorers were Agasel

Tonian, Saif al Toobi and Qasim al Qasimi.

Ahli Sidab began the first quarter strongly, opening with a quick three-pointer from Abdulaziz al Balushi, followed by additional points from Hamir al Hassani, ending the quarter at 15-10. Nizwa, however, tried to recover in the final moments.

In the second quarter, Nizwa narrowed the gap with a three-pointer by Agasel Tonian and

more points from Mohammed al Wahaibi, raising the game's energy. Despite Nizwa's efforts, Ahli Sidab maintained their lead, ending the first half ahead 30-28.

The third quarter continued the intense rivalry, with Ahli Sidab advancing through Adil al Battashi's moves, while Nizwa countered with strong scoring by Saif al Toobi, keeping the scores close. The quarter saw several ties, including at 34-34 and 43-43, adding to the match's suspense and excitement for the crowd.

In the fourth quarter, the game reached its peak, with both teams exchanging attacks and displaying a strong determination to win. Despite Nizwa's efforts to come back, Ahli Sidab held their lead and managed the final minutes expertly, winning the match 61-56.

The match was officiated by Ahmed al Balushi as the first referee, Issam al Siyabi as the second and Thani al Khalasi as the third, with Miad al Hamdani, Moosa al Siyabi and Majid al Akthami handling the scoring table.



Sporting CP's Viktor Gyokeres in action with Manchester City's Jahmai Simpson-Pusey during the Uefa Champions League, league phase match at the Jose Alvalade stadium in Lisbon. — Reuters

GYOKERES SHINES AS SPORTING STUN MAN CITY

LIVERPOOL, MILAN CLAIM FINE WINS IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

VIKTOR GYOKERES scored a hat-trick as Ruben Amorim's Sporting stunned Manchester City with a 4-1 win in the Champions League on Tuesday, while Liverpool trounced Xabi Alonso's Bayer Leverkusen and AC Milan beat holders Real Madrid in Spain.

Sporting stole the show with their performance in Lisbon, but the Portuguese champions had to come from behind after Phil Foden put City ahead early on.

Amorim was hoping to sign off from the Champions League in style as Sporting coach before he leaves for Manchester United, and Gyokeres then took centre stage.

The Swedish striker equalised seven minutes before half-time, holding off Champions League debutant Jahmai Simpson-Pusey as he ran through to finish.

Sporting then went ahead 19 seconds into the second half as Maximiliano Araujo finished off a fine move,

and shortly after that Gyokeres converted a penalty following a foul by Josko Gvardiol.

City could have pulled one back, but Erling Haaland hit the bar from the spot. Gyokeres showed Haaland how to do it as he scored his second spot-kick to complete a hat-trick, condemning City to their heaviest losing margin in Europe since a 3-0 loss to Liverpool in April 2018.

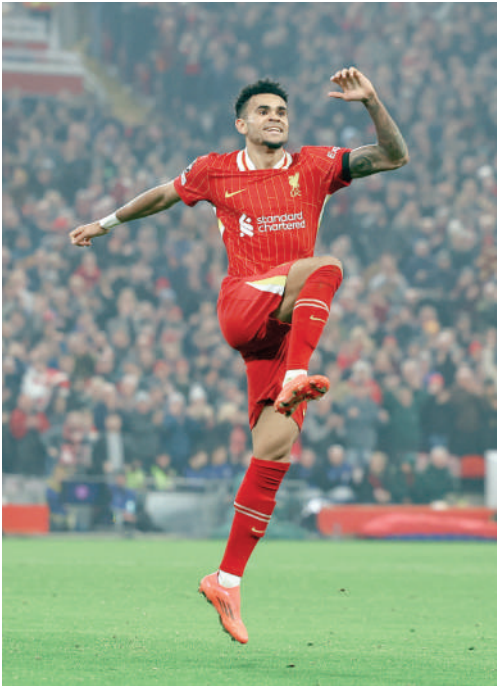
Gyokeres has 23 goals in 17 games in all competitions this season and will surely be the next star to leave Sporting for a bigger club elsewhere following Amorim's departure.

"It was written that it had to be like that I think, there is no other explanation," Amorim, at Sporting since 2020, said of a famous victory.

"I think everyone who has been here in the last four years deserved this. It was a special night."

DIAZ HAT-TRICK

City have seven points at the halfway stage in the new-look Champions League, while Sporting are second on



Liverpool's Luis Diaz celebrates scoring their third goal. — Reuters



AC Milan's Spanish forward Alvaro Morata (L) celebrates with their French defender Theo Hernandez after scoring their second goal against Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

10 points, behind only Liverpool, who are the sole team with the maximum 12 points.

Luis Diaz scored a hat-trick as the Anfield club secured a statement 4-0 win over Leverkusen on the night Alonso returned to Merseyside, with all the goals coming in the second half.

Diaz put Liverpool ahead just after the hour mark and Cody Gakpo headed in shortly after. Diaz scored again to make it 3-0 and then got his third and his team's fourth in stoppage time, leaving the German champions on seven points after four outings.

"I think it's a good result against a very good team," Gakpo told Amazon Prime.

"They played a very good game, but we kept going, trying, creating chances, defending well."

REAL SLUMP AGAIN

Madrid suffered their second loss in four games in the competition this season as they went down 3-1 at home to Milan.

The Italians, whose tally of seven European Cups is bettered only by Real's 15, went ahead early on through Malick Thiaw, but the hosts soon drew level through a Vinicius Junior penalty.

However, Alvaro Morata put Milan back ahead before the interval against his old club, following in to finish after a Rafael Leao shot was parried.

Milan got their third on 73 minutes after great play by Leao set up Tijjani Reijnders to score, and Antonio Ruediger had a late effort disallowed for Real.

"When we are 11 lions on the pitch, it is very difficult for a team to beat us," Morata said at full-time.

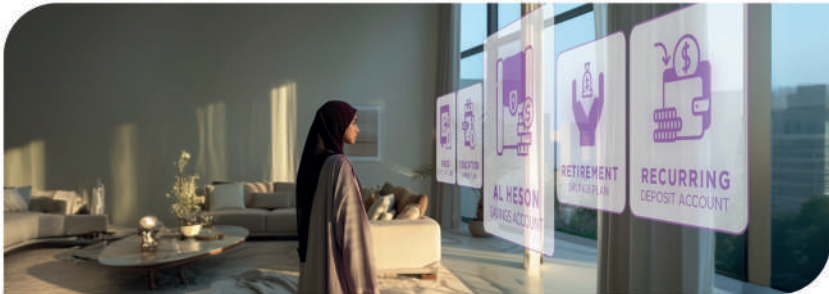
Monaco are third in the standings with 10 points following a 1-0 victory at Bologna, secured thanks to captain Thilo Kehrer's late goal.

Dortmund are fourth on nine points after Donyell Malen's 85th-minute goal gave them a 1-0 win at home to Sturm Graz. — AFP

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IFSWF’s ‘Muscat Dialogue’ concludes

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 6

THE 16th Annual Meeting of the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSWF) concluded in Muscat, marking the largest gathering in its history. The event, which was hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Investment Authority, took place during November 3 to 6, and set a record for the number of attendees, with more than 300 participants from over 46

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said stated that Oman's selection as host reflects the country's exemplary commitment to global standards in governance and sustainability in wealth management, as well as its proficiency in promoting and investing its resources.

sustainability in wealth management, as well as its proficiency in promoting and investing its resources. He affirmed that Oman will continue on its path of stability and prosperity, welcome global investments and strengthen relations with sovereign wealth funds worldwide, while building strategic partnerships that benefit all. Under the directive of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, presided over an official dinner hosted by Oman Investment Authority on Sunday, November 3, at Al Bustan Palace

Hotel. The dinner was attended by senior officials, including ministers, high-ranking dignitaries and officials from Oman Investment Authority, in honour of the distinguished guests of the annual forum. The annual meeting witnessed several side meetings focused on exploring investment cooperation. Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), welcomed David Ranibok Adeang, President of the Republic of Nauru. During their meeting, they discussed ways to enhance economic and investment collaboration between the two friendly countries and explored opportunities for establishing strategic partnerships across various sectors. Additionally, Al Murshidi signed a cooperation agreement with Ghanem al Ghenaiman, Board Member and General Manager of the Kuwait Investment Authority. This agreement aims to strengthen the investment partnership between Oman and Kuwait, building on their strong relations and shared desire to foster economic growth and expand cooperation in mutually beneficial areas. According to the agreement, the parties will begin discussions on establishing a joint venture in Oman, as well as exploring investment opportunities in sectors managed by Oman Investment Authority, including energy, utilities, social infrastructure, communications, transportation and logistics services.

‘MUSCAT DIALOGUE’
In recognition of the rich discussions held during the meeting, forum members decided to elevate the status of the accompanying conference, renaming this edition to the ‘Muscat Dialogue’. The gathering will take the name of the host city each year, creating a dynamic platform that promotes dialogue and cooperation on investment, sustainable development and global economic issues. **TURN TO P15**



More than 300 participants from over 46 countries, including ministers and CEOs representing over 50 sovereign wealth funds, attended the Muscat Dialogue.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Site Visit Date	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/ 2024/016	Provide Maintenance Services for Nama Electricity Supply Company Head Quarter for 2 years	17/11/2024	27/11/2024	Specialist	18/11/2024	26.250
NESC/ 2024/017	Consultancy Service, Design and Supervision for construction of fifth floor of Nama Electricity Supply Company	18/11/2024	27/11/2024	Specialist	19/11/2024	26.250
NESC/ 2024/ 012-2	Supply and Installation of Air fresheners for Nama Electricity Supply Company Head Quarter Building for 2 years.	18/11/2024	27/11/2024	Specialist	18/11/2024	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -						
Participation	• Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. • The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. • The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). • To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.					
Enquiries	• Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om , using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. • Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.					
Tender Submission	• Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.					
Guarantee	• The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of not less than Ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. • The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. • Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.					
Terms and Conditions	• The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. • If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. • NESC is not bound to accept the lowest Tenderer. • Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization • NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. • Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.					
Incentives and exemptions	• Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees • Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. • Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.					

Announcement
(11/2024)

As the end of the financial year 2024 is approaching, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Investment Promotion announces that the last date for receiving any financial claims related to the year 2024 is Thursday, 28/11/2024.

Therefore, all companies, establishments and individuals dealing with the Ministry are requested to submit their financial claims to the Department of Financial Affairs before the end of receipt period. The Ministry is not responsible for any delay in payment of any claims received after the date stated above.

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ADVERTORIALS

NEWACHIEVEMENT

OAB WINS BNY MELLON AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN STP



This achievement reaffirms OAB's position as a leading financial institution driving the evolution of Oman's banking sector.

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has received the 2024 Excellence Award in Straight-Through Processing (STP) from the Bank of New York Mellon Corporation (BNY), a global financial service company. This achievement reaffirms OAB's position as a leading financial institution driving the evolution of Oman's banking sector. This award reflects OAB's commitment to enhancing customer service, achieving accuracy and efficiency in treasury and clients' payments, and maintaining high STP rates in customer payments.

The BNY Award adds to OAB's impressive track record, highlighting its strategic vision to maintain a leading position in Oman's banking market and ensure long-term growth through a comprehensive shift towards digitalisation and automation of all services. Winning this award underscores OAB's dedication to investing in its human resources and expanding its use of advanced financial technologies, such as straight-through processing, which enables real-time, precise, and secure transaction automation.

Commenting on this achievement, Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of OAB, expressed his delight, noting that it marks another milestone in the bank's journey of excellence.

He stated: "Our long-term growth strategy is proving highly effective in advancing the technological infrastructure of OAB's banking services and in preparing our team to meet the highest global standards, ensuring the efficiency of the services we provide to our clients. We also recognise the significant role that modern payment systems play in enhancing financial and economic stability in Oman."

Al Harthy added, "We take great pride in OAB's ability to keep pace with the continuous advancements in the financial sector by providing services that meet the highest standards of accuracy, efficiency, speed, and security. As we celebrate this new achievement, we greatly value the wise directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who emphasised the importance of the financial sector as a cornerstone of modern economies during his meeting with business leaders.

At OAB, we are committed to translating these royal directives into action, supporting the sector's growth, and enhancing its ability to keep up with the evolving global financial services landscape. Our aim is to contribute to the success of Oman Vision 2040 and to strengthen Oman's financial and economic stability.

NBO hosts health day to champion well-being

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) organised its annual Health Day event at its Head Office in Al Athaiba. The celebration comes as an initiative to promote mental and physical health among employees, while fostering their welfare and wellness.

The event, held in collaboration with Howden Oman, brought together various health experts and wellness providers to encourage a healthier lifestyle, featuring contributions and participation from prominent hospitals, clinics, gyms and health-oriented restaurants. This provided employees with access to a range of health services and consultations.

Among the primary highlights of the day was the announcement of the long-awaited "Biggest Winner" weight loss challenge, tailored to inspire employees to adopt healthier lifestyle habits. The initiative comes as part of the Bank's broader commitment to employee well-being, creating a working environment that prioritises health and supports



The celebration comes as an initiative to promote mental and physical health among employees.

positive lifestyle choices.

To emphasise the importance of mental health, an insightful lecture on 'Self-Care' was also organised

to encourage attendees to value their mental well-being alongside physical health.

Through events like Health Day, NBO continues

to demonstrate its commitment to nurturing a supportive workplace that enables employees to thrive professionally and personally.

National Finance posts 19.81% increase in profit

DRIVEN by a robust growth strategy, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance company, records an impressive financial performance for Q3 ending September 30, 2024. The company's performance reflects its proactive approach to strategy execution, prudent risk management, and adaptability to evolving economic conditions, underscoring its pivotal role in shaping the finance sector in the country.

With a keen focus on resource optimisation and a disciplined approach to cost control, National Finance achieves a remarkable 19.81 per cent increase in operating profit, reaching RO 13.48 million, up from RO 11.25 million in the same period last year. The company's net investment in lease assets rises to RO 565.92 million, representing a significant 16.24 per cent increase since December 2023. Profit after tax increases to RO 8.75 million, a 9.34 per cent rise from RO 8.01 million in September



TARIQ BIN SULAIMAN AL FARSI
Chief Executive Officer of National Finance

2023, illustrating effective risk management and strategic diversification into profitable segments. With regulatory capital of RO 143.70 million — the highest among Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) in the country — National Finance further consolidates its strong financial foundation, supporting its sustainable growth.

Commenting on the results, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, expressed pride in the company's accomplishments, saying, "Despite prevailing market challenges, National Finance continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience. Our strong presence nationwide, coupled with a diverse array of products, uniquely positions us to deliver exceptional financing experiences."

He further emphasised, "We remain persistent in our commitment to optimising operations while simultaneously investing in innovation and service enhancements that

provide significant value to our customers. As we advance in our strategic transformation, our robust financial position underpins our growth initiatives and aligns with our long-term objectives. I commend our team for their hard work and dedication, as well as express gratitude to our customers and partners for their continued trust in National Finance."

Recognising that its employees are the cornerstone of its success, National Finance fosters an environment encouraging innovation and professional development. National Finance has achieved an impressive 91.40 per cent Omanisation rate, with 340 Omanis out of a total workforce of 372. Through targeted training and development programmes, the company nurtures local talent and cultivates future leaders. This commitment to a supportive work culture is reflected in the company's recent recognition as the 'Best Employer' at the Employer Branding Awards 2024.

OETC leads Omani tree day campaign in Al Musannah

MUSCAT: In its commitment to advancing environmental sustainability and protecting Oman's natural landscape, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) celebrated Omani Tree Day with a community campaign held at the Sultan Scout Camp in the Wilayat of Al Musannah. Organised in collaboration with the Oman Scouts and Guides and the Environment Authority, the initiative aimed to expand green spaces, elevate environmental awareness, strengthen environmental and social sustainability, and promote a culture of volunteering within the community.

The campaign featured the planting of 100 indigenous trees, a workshop on environmental sustainability, and an exhibition showcasing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It brought together OETC employees, local organisations, and community members, fostering a shared commitment to environmental stewardship. The event is part of OETC's ongoing initiatives in partnership with key government and community institutions to enhance environmental awareness and motivate community-led



The initiative aimed to expand green spaces, elevate environmental awareness, strengthen environmental and social sustainability, and promote a culture of volunteering within the community.

environmental action. Fahad bin Nasser al Kiyumi, General Manager of Quality, Health, Safety,

Security and Environment (QHSSE) at OETC, emphasised the company's dedication to embedding

environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles within its operations. He stated:

"Environmental protection is a priority in our strategic plans and projects. As a company managing large-scale projects with significant impact, we are committed to implementing eco-friendly practices and reducing environmental risks. Through our efforts, we aim to raise environmental awareness and advance sustainability goals across Oman. This campaign underscores OETC's mission to incorporate sustainability within its organisational goals, supported by comprehensive policies and procedures that align all operational plans with its ESG objectives."

GLOBAL SPEAKERS



Officials representing OQ Group and GPCA at the media briefing on Wednesday

OQ TO HOST 18TH GPCA FORUM IN OMAN

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by OQ group, the global integrated energy company, is hosting the 18th annual Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA) Forum from December 2 to 5.

The forum will feature a distinguished lineup of energy ministers, CEOs from the petrochemical industry, and globally recognised speakers who will discuss and promote opportunities for growth, integration, and sustainability in the sector.

As Ashraf bin Hamed al Maamari, Group CEO of OQ, noted, “We are delighted to host the 18th Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association Forum for the first time in Oman. This exceptional event brings together distinguished energy ministers from the region, CEOs of petrochemical companies, and a select group of global speakers to discuss and promote opportunities for growth, integration, and a sustainable future for the sector.”

In remarks to the Observer, Mustafa al Balushi, Vice-President of People & Culture at OQ, emphasised the importance of hosting the GPCA Forum in Oman, stating, “At OQ Group, we place great emphasis on conferences and exhibitions, actively working to strengthen our presence in this field. The choice to host the forum in Oman was strategic, drawing on our two decades of experience in the petrochemical sector. This move aligns with our commitment to support and promote growth within the sector.”

Al Balushi explained that OQ, in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM) and the Oman Investment Authority, obtained official approval to host the forum in Oman in the latter half of last year. He highlighted the critical role of extensive logistical, infrastructure, and data preparations in securing the endorsement of forum members and participants, adding, “With support from partners such as the Omran Group, we’ve made plans to organise the forum to reflect the Sultanate of Oman’s esteemed reputation.”

OQ Group leads various industrial projects in Oman, following an integrated approach across its operations—from exploration and production to refining, petrochemicals, polymers and alternative energy. This strategy strengthens its global presence and enhances competitiveness, supporting the development of Oman’s industrial sector and advancing petrochemical-based industries, which play a key role in the country’s economic diversification efforts.

Oman’s hosting of the GPCA Forum not only strengthens its role as a hub for petrochemical innovation but also signals a deepened commitment to collaboration and strategic growth in the industry across the GCC region.

3D-printed fishermen shades launched

BUSINESS REPORTER
LIWA, NOV 6

JUSOOR Foundation, in collaboration with the Directorate-General of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Batinah North Governorate, celebrated the launch of the Fishermen Shades project, utilising concrete printing technology in the wilayats of Liwa and Shinas.

The project, valued at around RO 90,000, was inaugurated under the auspices of Shaikh Hilal bin Sultan al Kalbani, Wali of Liwa, and attended by members of the Municipal Council in the wilayat and directors of government and private institutions.

Jaber bin Sulaiman al Busaidy, Executive Manager of Jusoor Foundation, affirmed that the project is one of the significant initiatives implemented by Jusoor, funded by OQ, Vale in Oman, and Sohar Aluminium in the fishing sector. It aims to serve fishermen and meet their needs by providing high-quality areas that facilitate marine fishing.

“The project we are celebrating today involves the construction of concrete shades for fishermen using concrete printing technology, which aims to create suitable fishing areas that enable them to organise and store their fishing equipment, covering a total area of 580 square metres, making it the largest building area constructed using concrete printing technology,” he added.



3D-printed fishermen shades unveiled in the Wilayat of Liwa.

Each site includes six storage areas in addition to the innovative design of fishermen’s shades that align with the marine environment and the beneficiaries. Solar panels have also been installed to provide electrical power for the project and storage spaces.

Regarding the locations of the project, Al Busaidy explained that it has been implemented in four designated sites in the wilayats of Shinas and Liwa. Each site includes six storage areas in addition to the innovative design of fishermen’s shades that align with the marine environment and the beneficiaries. Solar panels have also been installed to provide electrical power for the project and storage spaces.

Eng Sultan bin Hassan al Marzouqi, Director of the Fisheries Department in Al Batinah North Governorate, said the project provides a suitable environment for fishermen, especially artisans, as the umbrellas and their

accompanying storage facilities contribute to preserving their fishing tools and equipment.

Additionally, these facilities offer an opportunity for fishermen to gather and connect, assisting them in preparing for their marine fishing trips.

The project also represents a new addition to the governorate, enhancing its aesthetic appeal and modern character in line with urban development. Furthermore, it is an important step to reduce the random construction of traditional umbrellas along the coastline. He hopes to complete the project in other wilayats of the governorate in future phases.

IFSWF’S ‘MUSCAT DIALOGUE’ CONCLUDES

FROM PAGE 13

The 2024 sessions and the accompanying conference included a wealth of panel discussions and meetings, where participants addressed key investment topics chosen to align with Oman Vision 2040’s national priorities. These discussions covered areas such as energy transition, artificial intelligence, supply chains, the advancing roles and responsibilities of sovereign wealth funds, and the rise of multi-purpose funds. Among the highlights was a dialogue with Elon Musk on artificial intelligence, space technology, alternative energy, investment opportunities in AI, investing in a dynamic policy environment, and how energy transition impacts the investment landscape in developing economies. The increasing importance of governance



Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority.

within sovereign wealth funds and their social impact was also discussed.

Oman Investment Authority emphasised the Omani perspective throughout the IFSWF event. 15 Omani speakers from public and private sectors, including economy, development, energy, logistics, innovation and artificial intelligence, contributed insights and ideas reflecting Oman’s aspirations

for economic advancement. They highlighted the diverse investment opportunities in Oman, further strengthening Oman’s position as a promising investment destination and a land of opportunity.

IFSWF members elected a new Board of Directors, chaired by Israfil Mammadov, CEO of the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan, succeeding Obaid Amrane, CEO of Ithmar Capital. Additionally, the UAE’s capital, Abu Dhabi, received the handover to host the 17th Annual Forum in 2025, while Greece won the bid to host the 18th Annual Meeting in 2026 following a members’ vote.

A commemorative stamp for the event represents Oman’s identity as a “land of opportunity,” capturing its welcoming spirit. On the stamp’s right side is a traditional Omani door, symbolising hospitality, while the meeting logo inspired by Al Mandoos is

displayed within, and beneath are Al Mirani Fort, the old port of Muscat and the Badan vessel, representing Oman’s rich cultural, historical and commercial heritage. The base of the stamp features Omani frankincense, symbolising Oman’s ancient trade vitality; frankincense was a key commodity on the Incense Route, historically transported to global markets by Al Baghlah trading vessel. The left side of the artwork showcases projects representing Oman’s promising economic sectors, in line with Vision 2040 and Oman Investment Authority’s strategy. Alila Jabal Akhdar Resort symbolises tourism, while wind and solar power stations, a hydrogen energy project, the Oman LNG Company, and OQ represent various energy sectors. Salalah Port highlights Oman’s focus on logistics and supply chains.

Oman’s Spazers inks satellite tech pact with Australian firm

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, NOV 6

Omani satellite manufacturing JV Spazers announced that it has signed an agreement with Australian space science company Southern Cross Space. According to a statement published by Spazers, the agreement will enable the company to use advanced technologies by Southern Cross Space to provide high-resolution satellite imagery and analytic solutions.

Founder and CEO of Spazers,



Founder and CEO of Spazers Tariq al Bulushi and Co-founder and CEO of Southern Cross Space Peter Kinne at the recent agreement signing

Tariq al Bulushi, underscored the significance of the event: “We are excited about this strategic partnership with Southern Cross Space. This partnership will enable us to provide integrated solutions to our customers, starting with obtaining high-resolution satellite imagery and up to analysing it using the latest artificial intelligence technologies.”

Co-founder and CEO of Southern Cross Space, Peter Kinne, shared the following: “We are pleased to cooperate with Spazers to provide these advanced services to customers in the region. We

are confident that this partnership will contribute to the development of the space sector in the region.” The launch of Spazers was announced earlier this year during the 1st Middle East Space Conference in Muscat Governorate.

The company, which will offer satellite manufacturing and space launch services, is a multinational joint venture between Omani ETCO Space, Polish satellite manufacturer SatRev, and Polish tech company Tuatara. The same consortium was behind the successful launch of Oman’s first satellite, Aman-1.

The agreement aligns with Oman’s plans of becoming a regional and global hub for space activities, in line with the government’s plans to grow its digital economy.

Contributing currently 2 per cent to the local GDP, the plan aims to grow this figure to 5 per cent in 2030 and by 10 per cent in 2040. Last year, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology unveiled the National Space Policy and Executive Programme, a 10-year framework aimed at growing the sector.

OPINION

Trump re-election entrenches global instability



GABRIEL RUBIN

The writer is a US columnist for Reuters Breakingviews covering business and economics in Washington, DC.

DONALD Trump’s victory over his political opponent Kamala Harris ushers in a perilous new era for the United States and the rest of the world. The former president promised a “golden age for America” after his third election campaign produced his most convincing victory. But any short-term gains for corporations and investors must be set against his authoritarian instincts and willingness to further question the US-led international order. That puts an already fraying global balance at even further risk.

Over the coming four years, businesses can expect a cascade of tax breaks, regulatory rollbacks, and favourable court decisions. The chances of Congress, which now includes a Republican majority in the Senate, raising the corporate tax rate above 21 per cent during next year are now virtually nil; Harris wanted to raise it to 28 per cent.

Spending cuts to pay for other tax reductions are likely, as well, although control of the House of Representatives remained up for grabs early on Wednesday morning. Divided government would make it harder

for Trump to overhaul the Affordable Care Act, after Republicans failed to do so during his first term. Wall Street will cheer new appointees for major banking and markets regulators who are sure to be friendlier than outgoing President Joe Biden’s. And the crypto industry will likely get its long-sought regulatory legitimacy, a force multiplier for its potential growth. The dollar, US stock futures, and bitcoin all rallied in anticipation of Trump’s victory.

But broaden the scope, and a second Trump presidency has consequences well beyond a short-term sugar rush in financial markets.

The former reality TV host has promised to go after his political opponents, including the media and business interests that may oppose his decisions. He has pledged to step up deportations and raids on companies that employ immigrant labour.

Around the world, American allies will have to deal with a president who has cozied up to enemies like Russia, has been sceptical of European alliances, and has weakened the fight against climate change. He promises to supercharge the growing confrontation with China, with 60 per cent tariffs just the beginning of

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possible disagreements between the countries. He could strengthen Russian President Vladimir Putin’s hand in the war with Ukraine.

The new administration will also impose costs on the world’s largest economy. Trump’s obsession with imposing across-the-board 20 per cent tariffs on all imports, even if modified, will directly transfer to higher prices for consumer goods. If he appoints a dovish or sycophantic Federal Reserve chair in 2026, inflation could return. If implemented, Trump’s policies would add nearly \$8 trillion in new debt by 2035, according to the research outfit Centre for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Trump on Wednesday thanked Elon Musk, who went all-in on Trump’s re-election. Promises that the Tesla co-founder will slice some \$2 trillion from annual government spending show the outlandishness of the plans: total discretionary outlays were \$1.7 trillion in 2023. If Trump succeeds in rolling back Democrats’ climate legislation, emissions goals will fall further out of reach, causing untold environmental damage and putting US companies at a disadvantage in developing renewable technologies. — Reuters

UK FISCAL SPLURGE LIMITS BOE’S RATE-CUTTING SPACE

Rachel Reeves’ big fiscal feast risks giving the Bank of England indigestion. The new Labour finance minister’s decision to hike spending, taxes, and borrowing in the budget will provide a short-lived boost to growth next year. However, it will also reduce BoE Governor Andrew Bailey’s ability to cut rates and keep pace with his European and US counterparts.

Reeves’ plan to reduce economic slack may leave Bailey without any of his own. Her budget will raise spending by £70 billion a year until 2030, according to the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). That fiscal jolt will double GDP growth from 1 per cent this year to 2 per cent in 2025.

Strapped to the public spending rocket, Britain’s economy will go from growing below its full potential – when demand is low and there is a surplus of products – to outstripping it. The “output gap” – the difference between annual GDP growth and its potential – will swing from minus 0.3 per cent in the last three months of

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2024 to 0.4 per cent in early 2026, the OBR calculates. Before the budget, it expected the gap to remain negative or zero until 2030.

That’s bad news for Bailey. A negative output gap helps central bankers because weak demand and excess supply keep inflation quiescent. By contrast, an economy

growing above potential can easily stoke inflation. The BoE is almost certain to lower its benchmark rate from 5 per cent to 4.75 per cent on Thursday because inflation is on course to end the year around the 2 per cent target. However, if Labour’s spending gives the economy a sugar rush, Bailey will find it harder to cut rates in 2025.

Investors expect UK interest rates to be 4 per cent by the end of 2025, according to derivatives prices collected by LSEG. That’s more than double the level in the eurozone and higher than in the United States, where GDP is set to grow by 2.2 per cent next year, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). And since the IMF projects that consumer prices will grow by around 2 per cent in the three blocs next year, the UK will have by far the most restrictive monetary policy.

That may be a necessary evil if Reeves’ choices nudge up inflation. The OBR reckons that the budget’s impact on growth will dissipate after 2025, opening the door to looser policy. However, a prolonged period of high interest rates will exacerbate Britain’s growth challenge by denting investment and delaying the housing recovery.

This means bond markets, chief executives, and homeowners won’t be able to rest easy for a while. — Reuters

Why do countries prosper?

EACH autumn, a telephone call from Stockholm launches one or a few scholars to international fame with the bestowal of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences—a process that Irving Wallace dramatised in his 1962 potboiler The Prize.

This year, the call went to three renowned figures: economists Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and political scientist James A. Robinson from the University of Chicago. The three were recognised for their “studies of how institutions are formed and affect prosperity,” marking the 15th anniversary of Elinor Ostrom’s Nobel recognition for her own work on institutions, particularly “for her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons.”

Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (or AJR, as they are known) received the award primarily for their research into the role of colonialism in determining the economic fate of nations. Prominent social-science works like Max Weber’s The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Jared Diamond’s Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies have long sought to explain the “great divergence” between Europe and its affluent offshoots and the rest of the world. While AJR pursued similar goals, they took a novel approach by examining why societies once prosperous are now relatively poor, and vice versa.

In their influential 2002 paper, “Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution,” AJR concluded that the key determinant of future growth is whether a country has “inclusive institutions” that allow economic gains to be widely shared, as opposed to “extractive institutions” that funnel wealth to a narrow elite.

The type of institutions a colonial power left behind was influenced by various environmental and other factors. In their widely cited paper, “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development,” AJR argued that the best predictor of future economic growth was the suitability of the terrain for European settlers. Colonisers invested in sound institutions in regions where their own survival



Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (or AJR, as they are known) received the award primarily for their research into the role of colonialism in determining the economic fate of nations.



ANTARA HALDAR

The author is a visiting faculty member at Harvard University and the principal investigator on a European Research Council grant on law and cognition.

chances were high—such as the New World colonies of North America, Australia, and New Zealand.

AJR’s scholarship is both sophisticated and innovative, and I, for one, appreciate their emphasis on institutions. They have continued the tradition established by Nobel laureate economist Douglass North in his magnum opus, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. However, their recommendations are not novel. Traditional “law and economics” theories, along with the Washington Consensus, have long highlighted the importance of rule of law for economic growth.

By contrast, Ostrom’s research on community-driven institutional solutions truly broke new ground. She fundamentally changed our understanding of the role played by “polycentric institutions” that go beyond the binary of market and state. Until her pioneering work (summarised in Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action), it was widely assumed that common property—such as ecological resources like forests, water systems, fisheries, and the global atmosphere—was inherently inefficient.

Ostrom’s extensive empirical research—from water management in California to

irrigation in Nepal—demonstrated that this assumption is not always correct. Her laboratory experiments showed that people are more willing to enforce mutually agreed rules than previously thought.

Most significantly, Ostrom’s work investigated the factors that correlate with, or create conditions for, cooperation to solve collective-action problems, showing (contrary to Garrett Hardin’s classic work) that commons-related challenges need not lead to tragedy. By illustrating that the success of institutions heavily depends on participants’ engagement with and investment in them, she offered an alternative perspective on AJR’s results.

Consider AJR’s assertion that countries with Western institutions, where European settlers also thrived, later experienced rapid and robust growth. In a recent paper, I argue that the success of these societies may not stem from the inherent superiority of their institutions, but from the inhabitants’ relative psychological familiarity with them. The cognitive and contextual mismatch between institutions and their environment has long been known to play a part in the difficulties surrounding “legal transplantation” (the importation of foreign legal codes).

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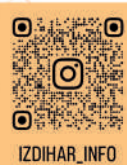
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ART/LIFE



ENTERTAINMENT

‘Back to the Future’ to Close on Broadway and Move to Germany



“Back to the Future,” a nostalgia-rich and spectacle-laden musical adaptation of the much-loved 1985 film, will end its Broadway run January 5, succumbing to the difficult economics of the commercial theatre business.

The show had a decent run — the first performance was on June 30, 2023, and for more than a year it grossed over \$1 million most weeks — but it was costly to mount and expensive to sustain. Its grosses took a dive in late summer and early fall, and although it had rebounded somewhat more recently, sales were still insufficient to justify continuing. Thus far it has been seen by 720,000 people at the Winter Garden Theatre.

The long-gestating show began its production life in England and won the 2022 Olivier Award for best new musical in London’s West End, where it has been running for more than three years. It has not been so fortunate on Broadway, where it won no Tony Awards. It cost \$23.5 million to capitalise, according to a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Ultimately it did not run long enough or make enough money each week to defray its New York costs.

But this is not the end of the line for the show. The Broadway set will move to Germany, where “Back to the Future” plans an open-ended run starting next season. The London run is ongoing, there is a North American tour now underway, and productions are planned in Japan and on a Royal Caribbean cruise ship.

“Back to the Future” is about a teenager who travels back in time, aided by a mad scientist with a souped-up DeLorean, and must figure out how to deal with the unintended consequences of his trip. One of the highlights of the stage production is the soaring car.

The musical, directed by John Rando, features a book by Bob Gale, who wrote the movie with Robert Zemeckis; the songs are by Alan Silvestri, who wrote the film’s score, and Glen Ballard. The lead producer is Colin Ingram, a British theatre producer.

American critics were mostly unimpressed; in The New York Times, chief theatre critic Jesse Green wrote, “Though large, it’s less a full-scale new work than a semi-operable souvenir.”

The show is the seventh musical to announce a closing date since early May, following “Lempicka,” “The Heart of Rock and Roll,” “The Who’s Tommy,” “The Notebook,” “Water for Elephants” and “Suffs.” — NYT

QUICK FEATURES



FESTIVAL

A woman wears face paint during an All Saints Day celebration to remember deceased relatives and loved ones, at the municipal cemetery in Santiago Sacatepequez, Guatemala. —AFP



FILM

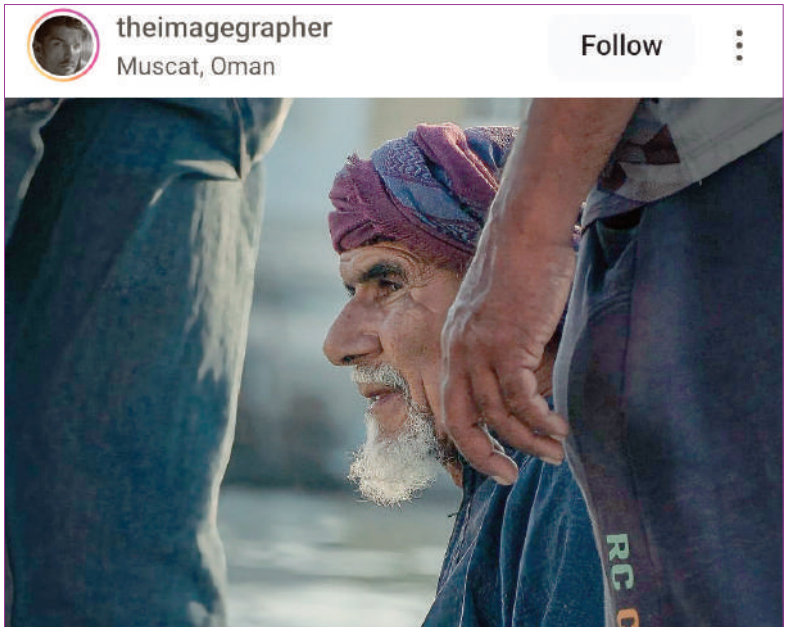
British actor Nicholas Hoult attends the LACMA Art+Film Gala at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in Los Angeles, California. —AFP



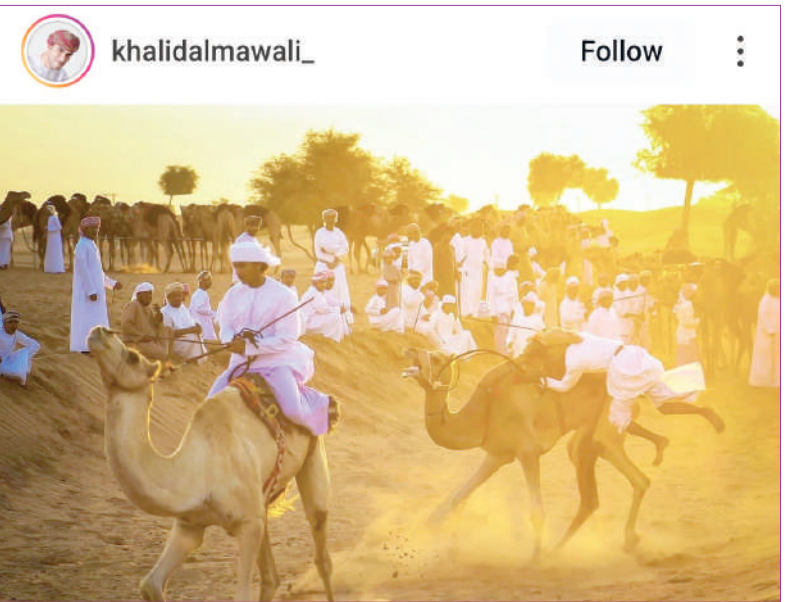
LIFESTYLE

Workers make firecrackers at a factory ahead of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, in the village of Vanch, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, India. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



The Watcher



Fun In The Desert

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Bumblebee Queens Prefer to Live in a Toxic Home



North-facing, sloping ground with loose, sandy soil — if you're a bumblebee queen on the market for a winter home, these features will have you racing to make an offer. But scientists were recently stunned to find there's something else these monarchs like in a place to hibernate: pesticides.

In a paper published last month in the journal *Science*, of *The Total Environment*, researchers described an experiment that gave common eastern bumblebee queens a choice: hibernate in clean soil, or in soil laced with pesticides. The insects behaved in a way that was the opposite of what was expected.

"Queens did not avoid any of the pesticides," said Sabrina Rondeau, an ecologist at the University of Ottawa. "Even at high concentrations they

didn't, and still seem to prefer the soil contaminated with pesticides."

S. Hollis Woodard, a bee biologist at the University of California, Riverside, said, "It wasn't just one pesticide at one concentration, it was across the board." That's scary, she said, because our soils are full of pesticides. Gravitating toward these pesticides may put queens at risk for direct exposure, with potentially damaging consequences.

Most of the roughly 250 species of bumblebee have annual life cycles, where queens start new colonies in the spring that grow throughout the summer before dying out in the fall. As winter nears, queens that have mated then burrow into the soil to sleep through the cold before restarting the cycle. — DARREN INCORVAIA / NYT



On Belgian coast, fishing on horseback — and saving a tradition

PANNIERS strapped to their haunches, a team of horses waded collar-deep through North Sea waters — hauling wide nets along the Belgian coast as cawing seagulls swirled all around.

In the saddle, clad head to toe in yellow oilskins, riders steered them parallel with the beach in Oostduinkerke — the last place on Earth, they say, where the tradition of shrimp-fishing on horseback lives on.

Once practised throughout Europe, the custom has all but died out — but a community of enthusiasts has kept the flame going in this coastal town, earning a spot on Unesco's intangible heritage list.

They do not fish for profit, but the rare spectacle they offer has become a tourist draw for the small town, situated half an hour from the French border.

Back in the day, historians explain, poor farmers used to ride to the coast to fish — as a way to supplement their diet.

At first, they pulled their nets by hand, later using mules then eventually workhorses able to haul much larger, heavier loads. The method was used in Belgium, the Netherlands, northern France and the south of England.

UNIQUE

On this sunny day in late October, a group of five headed out at low tide to fish for grey shrimp.

"This is the only place in the world where shrimp-fishing is still practiced with horses," fisherman Gunther Vanbleu said as he sorted his catch on the beach — surrounded by a curious crowd of smartphone-wielding onlookers.

"You're working with your horse, you're in the sea and the combination of everything at the same time — the pleasure of catching fish or catching shrimp, all of that together makes it fun," he said.

This time around, some 200 people gathered — in rubber boots or barefoot — to watch the afternoon show under crisp blue skies.



"There is always a lot of interest from people because it is unique," Vanbleu said.

NOT FOR SALE

The day's catch — a few kilogrammes of shrimp — is not for sale: it will be cooked up by the dozen families who keep the tradition going and shared among friends.

But the sight alone continues to draw tourists from April to October.

"I think that this will always exist in the municipality," said Vanbleu.

After the custom won Unesco recognition in 2013, a committee was set up whose purpose is to ensure it is kept alive, he explained.

"I think that it will continue forever," he said.

Asked about the possible impact of climate change, Vanbleu said he has seen some shifts over the years.

"We do notice that something has changed a little, such as the temperature of the water — it's maybe a little warmer than usual."

"And we are seeing other animal species arrive here," he said. "Maybe if the water gets too warm, the shrimp will move to colder water... in 30 or 40 years."

"If it comes to that, we will see," said Vanbleu — who for now, come rain or shine, plans to keep riding out to sea. —AFP

Going on a hiking adventure in Wadi Fins reveals stunning landscapes and geographical features and a memorable encounter with local flora. One will also come across a crucial water spring, highlighting both nature's beauty and the significance of community.



The amazing things you didn't know about the canyons of Wadi Fins



BY DR KHALED ABDUL MALAK

ONE OF my favourite canyons is Wadi Fins, which originates in the mountains near the village of Qarran. It flows downstream, passing in front of the impressive Al Tri resurgence that drains water from the four sinkholes of the Selma Plateau, and then meanders through the villages of Taab and Harima before emptying into the ocean near the village of Fins.

The journey begins along a trail leading to Al Tri Cave, where I first met my esteemed friend, Yusuf al Ghadani. This encounter occurred during my inaugural trip to the cave in 2001, accompanied by my climbing mentors, Patrick and Nathalie Cabiro, and an English journalist writing articles on extreme outdoor activities available in the Sultanate of Oman.

The trail presents breathtaking views of the canyon several hundred metres below and the coastline near Fins, some kilometres away. Along the path, one can find Zaatar (thyme), a delightful herb often consumed in infusion.

After approximately one hour of hiking, we encountered a tributary canyon that joins the main wadi. This section begins with a 30-metre abseil, revealing wooden sticks secured in rock crevices to serve as steps, a testament to the ingenuity of local residents in accessing a small hamlet nestled in the wadi below. This settlement, known as Mazraa, is situated on the left bank of the canyon and features empty terraces that, according to Yusuf, were historically utilised for wheat cultivation.

This area is magnificent, comprising numerous abseils ranging from a few metres to the longest at 30 metres. In certain locations, we established anchors for our ropes, while in others, we utilised natural anchors, such as rock threads or trees. It was here that I first encountered the remarkable black flower of the Dhagaa, a cactus reputed for its medicinal properties, as shared by local elders. If you ever come across a blooming Dhagaa, be sure to take a moment to appreciate its fragrance.

Upon reaching the main canyon, we performed a small abseil before tackling a magnificent dry waterfall, approximately 35 metres high, culminating in a vast cauldron roughly 40 metres in diameter. To escape this “pot trap” and continue downstream, I had to establish multiple anchors to ascend a wall approximately 12 metres tall. The subsequent section of the wadi remains predominantly dry, with only a few small ponds that we preferred to circumvent by climbing along the sides, as they often contain stagnant, unappealing water.

The most impressive segment of the journey occurs near the end, featuring a 50-metre traverse along a narrow ledge on the right bank. Here, we set up anchors for safety, as a slip could result in a fall of approximately 15 metres. Additionally, there are three more locations where we utilised ropes to abseil, culminating in a final descent of about 7 metres, adjacent to a spring emerging from the cliff. During our initial exploration of the canyon with Patrick and Nathalie, we were relieved to discover this spring, as we had nearly run out of water, risking dehydration. We affectionately named it “The Spring of Life.”

From this point, one must carefully descend a steep slope to reach the falaj of Taab, which channels water from the spring to nourish the beautiful terraces adorned with date palms, lime trees, banana, mango, papaya trees and animal fodder. Following the falaj through the gardens for another 45 minutes leads to the village, where



some rooms are almost embedded in the cliffs. Upon reaching the village, one may conclude their journey or opt to continue exploring further downstream.

It is important to note that embarking on adventures in canyons and outdoor settings can be exhilarating; however, it is essential to recognise that such activities can also pose significant risks, particularly when undertaken alone. To enhance safety, it is advisable to travel in groups whenever possible, as this provides both support and assistance in case of emergencies. Additionally, informing a friend or family member of your plans—including your intended route and expected return time—can be a critical safety measure.

Before setting out, it is vital to check weather conditions, as weather can change rapidly in outdoor environments. Equip yourself appropriately by wearing suitable clothing and footwear, and ensure you have the necessary gear, including a first aid kit, ample water, food, and navigation tools. Understanding your limits is also crucial; assess your skills and fitness level before attempting challenging routes, and be prepared to turn back if conditions become unfavourable.

Awareness of local wildlife is important, so familiarize yourself with the species you may encounter and learn the appropriate safety measures to minimise risks. Finally, practising Leave No Trace principles is essential for protecting the environment; respecting natural habitats by minimising your impact, packing out trash, and preserving the area's beauty for future visitors. By adhering to these guidelines, you can help ensure a safer and more enjoyable outdoor experience.