

### HM sends greetings cables

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Susan Dougan, Governor-General of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, on her country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and well-being to the Governor-General, wishing further progress and prosperity for the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. His Majesty the Sultan has sent a cable of greetings to President Serdar Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan on the occasion of his country's National Day.

SUNRISE - 06:10 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 04:54 AM

DHUHR - 11:56 PM

ASR - 03:11 PM

MAGHRIB - 05:37 PM

ISHA - 06:48 PM



Established 1981. Editor-in-chief: Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om

editor@omanobserver.om

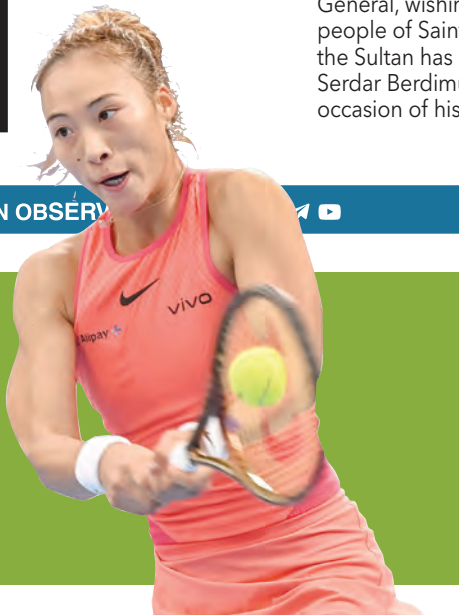
P15

12TH REGIONAL  
CYBERSECURITY WEEK  
TO TACKLE THREATS  
AND OPPORTUNITIES



P11

ZHENG TO FACE  
INJURY DOUBT  
KENIN IN TOKYO  
FINAL



P20

THIS WINTER, ESCAPE  
TO MUSANDAM  
WHERE FJORD  
ADVENTURE AWAITS



#### MUSCAT

### OMAN, BULGARIA REVIEW RELATIONS

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received a phone call from Dimitar Glavchev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, on Saturday. During the phone call, they reviewed regional developments and stressed the importance of de-escalation and enhancing diplomatic efforts to achieve peace and stability. The two sides discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and reviewed prospects of joint cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, tourism and renewable energy, stressing the continuation of joint work to enhance cooperation and partnership to serve joint interests and foster the bonds of friendship between the two countries.

### NEW PATH OF TRADE RELATIONS WITH US

Judith DelZoppo Pryor, First Vice-President and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors at the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM), said that the MoU signed between the Ministry of Finance and EXIM in 2023 represents a new step in the march of long relations between Oman and the US. In an interview with Oman News Agency (ONA), she said that the MoU outlined the partnership and cooperation between the two sides, worth \$500 million, and includes various sectors such as telecommunications, biotechnology, agriculture and manufacturing. She stressed EXIM's keenness to provide all banking and financing facilities to Omani companies and small and medium enterprises to reach the US market. **DETAILS ON P13**

#### TBILISI

### ALL SIDES CLAIM VICTORY IN GEORGIA



Supporters of the Georgian Dream party celebrate at the party's headquarters in Tbilisi. — Reuters

Georgia's ruling party and opposition parties claimed victory in a parliamentary election on Saturday that they say will determine if the former Soviet republic moves towards the West or leans back towards Russia amid the war in Ukraine. Rival exit polls gave sharply different projections for the election. One survey showed the ruling party, which has recently moved towards pro-Russian rhetoric, winning comfortably and two other polls showed the opposition would clinch a majority. An exit poll by the Georgian Dream-supporting Imedi TV channel showed the ruling party winning 56 per cent.

## Youth Day celebrated with awards and new centres

AHMED AL KAABI

MANAH, OCT 26

The Sultanate of Oman on Saturday celebrated Omani Youth Day at the Oman Across Ages Museum, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth. The event featured the announcement of the winners of the 2024 Youth Excellence Award, along with the inauguration of three new branches of the youth centres across various governorates, reinforcing efforts to empower youth and support their creativity.

The ceremony witnessed the announcement of the winners of the Youth Excellence Award for 2024, where several young people made outstanding contributions to society.

The results were as follows: In the Digital Economy field, Mustafa al Yahyaei won the Encouragement Award for the 'My School Programmes' project, while the private sector award went to the 'Bug Bounty' company for their 'Bug Bounty Platform' project.

In the Digital Media field, Abdulmalik



The Sultanate of Oman on Saturday celebrated Omani Youth Day at the Oman Across Ages Museum, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

al Balushi won for the 'Content Creation' project, while Amani al Rasbi won the Encouragement Award for the 'Taalemedia' project. In the youth initiatives category, Abdulaziz al Rashidi won the award for the 'Al Fayn Youth Magazine' project, and the Oman Film Society won the civil society category award for the 'Make Your Film' project, while the 'Pulse of Youth' channel affiliated with Ammar for Direct Digital Media won the youth institutions category award.

In the field of environment, Mira al Qaidi won for the 'Localisation of Biosensor Technology' project, and Rahma al Saifi for the 'Bee Forest' project, while Sharifa al Hinaí won the Encouragement Award for the 'Development of Biodegradable Plastic' project. In the youth initiatives category, Salwa al Maamari won the 'Using Banana Peel Waste as Door Coating' initiative, Aqlima al Hinaí won the 'Treating Landfill Leachate' initiative, while Dr Shabib al Rashidi won the Encouragement Award for the 'Mitigating Global Warming Using Biochar' project. **TURN TO P4**

## Oman condemns Israeli air strikes on Iran

MUSCAT/TEHRAN: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its strong condemnation and denunciation of the air strikes launched by Israel on the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Saturday, Oman said that this attack constitutes a flagrant violation of sovereignty and a clear breach of the rules of international law and an escalation that fuels the cycle of violence and undermines efforts aimed at calming, reducing tensions and containing crises through peaceful and diplomatic means.

While condemning these ongoing Israeli practices that threaten to drag the region towards further instability, Oman calls upon the international community once again to take effective action to stop the aggression and put an end to these blatant violations on the lands of the regional neighbouring countries.

The Sultanate of Oman reiterates its call for the necessity of addressing the roots and causes of the crises in the region by ending the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and stopping the aggression on the Gaza Strip, as stipulated and demanded by the resolutions of the United Nations and the Security Council.

Oman also stressed the importance of granting the Palestinian people their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent state on the 1967 borders within the framework of the two-state solution and in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, in a manner that ensures achieving a just and lasting peace for all parties.

Meanwhile, Tehran warned that it would defend itself after Israeli air strikes killed at least two soldiers and further stoked fears of a



A general view of Tehran after several explosions were heard in Tehran on Saturday. — AFP

full-scale war in the Middle East.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Iran was determined to defend itself after Israeli warplanes struck military bases and missile sites in several Iranian provinces, killing two soldiers.

"I think we've shown that our determination to defend ourselves knows no limits," Araghchi said in an interview with the official website of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The European Union called for all parties to exercise utmost restraint to avoid an "uncontrollable escalation" in the Middle East, warning: "The dangerous cycle of attacks and retaliations risks causing a further expansion of the regional conflict."

Other countries, including many of Iran's neighbours, condemned Israel's strikes and some, such as Russia, urged both sides to show restraint and avoid what Moscow dubbed a "catastrophic scenario". The Islamic republic insisted it had the "right and the duty" to defend itself, while Hezbollah said it had already launched rocket salvos targeting five residential areas in northern Israel. The Israeli army said 80 projectiles were fired across the border on Saturday. Iran confirmed Israel had targeted military sites around the capital and in other parts of the country, saying the raids caused "limited damage" but killed two soldiers.

SEE ALSO P6

### Situation in northern Gaza 'catastrophic': WHO chief

GENEVA: The World Health Organization chief warned on Saturday of a disastrous situation in the north of the war-ravaged Gaza Strip, with "intensive military operations unfolding around and within healthcare facilities".

"The situation in northern Gaza is catastrophic," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X, warning that "a critical shortage of medical supplies, compounded by severely limited access, are depriving people of life saving care".

He pointed in particular to the situation at Kamal Adwan, northern Gaza's last functioning hospital, which was stormed by Israeli forces on Friday, according to Gaza's health ministry.

The ministry charged that the raid on the facility in the Jabalia camp, where Israel launched a major operation earlier this month, left two children dead.

And it accused the Israeli forces of detaining hundreds of staff, patients and displaced people during the raid.

The Israeli military said its forces were operating around Kamal Adwan, but was "not aware of live fire and strikes in the area of the hospital".

Tedros said on Saturday that the Gaza health ministry had informed WHO, which had temporarily lost contact with its staff at the hospital amid the chaos, that the siege had ended. "But it came at a heavy cost," he said. Late on Friday, WHO said three health workers and another employee were injured in the assault and that dozens of health workers were detained at the hospital, where around 600 patients, health workers and others were sheltering.

— AFP

#### WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 33°C Min 28°C

SALALAH: Max 31°C Min 24°C

NIZWA: Max 36°C Min 24°C

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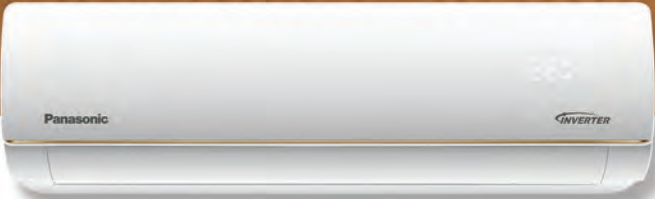
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# Oman voted VP of Arab Parliament

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman will assume the vice-presidency of the Arab Parliament after Said bin Hamad al Saadi, Deputy Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, won majority votes in the elections held for the position, on Saturday.

The results of the voting process were announced during the procedural session of the first session of the fourth legislative term of the Arab Parliament which was held at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo to elect the president, deputies, and the heads of the standing committees and their deputies. — ONA

## MoTCIT, NASA REVIEW SPACE COOPERATION

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, OCT 26

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), represented by the National Space Programme, and a delegation representing the space sector in the United States of America explored opportunities for cooperation and potential partnership in the space

sector.

The move comes as part of efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman to achieve the national visions of the space sector.

The US delegation comprised government officials, officials from Nasa and representatives from space firms and leading universities. Nasa deputy administrator gave a presentation highlighting, among other topics, the role

played by Nasa in the global space sector and pointing out possible areas of cooperation with friendly countries.

Over two days, the two sides discussed various aspects related to space services and applications, satellite technologies, capacity building efforts as well as ways to exchange knowledge, transfer technology and potential development of joint space projects.



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## Omani Day of Physical Activity marked in Seeb

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth on Saturday marked the Omani Day of Physical Activity at Al Sahwa Park in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, on Saturday.

A celebration was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education. It aimed at promoting community health and building a broad base of sustainable physical activity practitioners.

Saud bin Badr Ambusaidi, Assistant Director-General for Sports Affairs and head of the organising committee at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said that the ministry marks the the Omani Day of Physical Activity in October every year in all its directorates and departments in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman with the aim of increasing awareness of the physical activity for individuals. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The annual cancer awareness walkathon was held at Dahariz Beach on Friday

OCA WALKATHON PUTS THRUST ON CANCER PREVENTION AND SUPPORT

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH  
@patkaushal

The Oman Cancer Association's (OCA) Dhofar Branch organised an annual cancer awareness walkathon at Dahariz Beach on Friday, aiming to foster community solidarity in the fight against cancer.

The event saw widespread participation from the local Omani community, expatriates, associations and community groups, drawing men and women from across Dhofar Governorate.

The walkathon focused on raising awareness of cancer prevention, early detection and the range of treatments available within Oman, particularly highlighting breast cancer and colon cancer as the most common forms affecting women and men.

Speaking on the impact of this initiative, Salem bin Awad al Najjar, President of the Oman Cancer Association, Dhofar Branch, emphasised the critical need for ongoing education to empower communities with knowledge about cancer risks and the importance of early intervention.

Dr Muna Bait Ajzoon, Associate Dean at the Oman College of Health Sciences Dhofar Branch and Vice-President of the Oman Cancer Association, Dhofar Branch, highlighted the success of the campaign in driving greater community engagement.

"Screening has increased, and there is more and more participation of the communities in the awareness campaign," Dr Muna observed.

She also noted that "funding has improved due to the participation of private partners, hospitals and local organisations," which has enabled broader outreach and resources for cancer care and support.

Rakesh Jha, President of Indian Social Club Salalah, called the event important due to its message to the masses that calls for awareness for cancer and ways to prevent it. "The annual cancer awareness walkathon is a testament to Dhofar's diverse community spirit, where we come together as one to support a cause that impacts all of us. Events like this not only raise awareness, but also build a bridge of solidarity and hope," he said.

Olive oil sales in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar reach RO 200,000 last year

**AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR:** The production of olive oil in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar during the last season exceeded 10,000 litres, with sales valued at approximately RO 200,000, according to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Omair bin Mohammed al Fahdi, Head of the Agricultural Development and Water Resources Department in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, confirmed that the ministry is currently planting 5,000 olive tree seedlings imported from Italy, following the successful adaptation of this variety to the region's climate. This initiative is being supported by the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund.

He added that olive cultivation is gaining significant popularity among farmers in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar due to its economic potential, providing a valuable source of income for many families. The expansion of olive cultivation continues to be a priority.

The ministry, through the General Directorate of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, is



Omair bin Mohammed al Fahdi



The ministry is currently planting 5,000 olive tree seedlings imported from Italy

OSHRM, Elevatus partner for digital transformation

**ELEVATUS** and the Omani Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM) celebrated the launch of their strategic partnership at a ceremony held in Oman.

This partnership marks a significant step forward in Oman's digital transformation, empowering businesses to optimise their talent acquisition strategies and achieve sustainable growth. The event was attended by Sayyid Dr Munthir bin Hilal al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

On the sidelines of event, Al Busaidy said, "Oman is committed to leading the way in harnessing the power of artificial intelligence. With rapid digital transformation and technological advancements, AI has become a cornerstone for developing human resources and enhancing efficiency. Through data-driven performance evaluations, AI facilitates personalised training programmes that strengthen employee skills. It also revolutionises recruitment by analysing resumes and interviews, identifying top candidates based on objective, data-backed criteria."

Building on these insights about Oman's commitment to harnessing AI for human resource development, Faisal al Siyabi, CEO of OSHRM, emphasised, "Our strategic alliance with Elevatus is anchored in their cutting-edge AI-powered recruitment solutions, which are at the forefront of AI innovation. These solutions significantly enhance efficiency by automating and managing every stage of the recruitment process — from creating job requisitions to onboarding top talent — maximising the power of AI to transform the recruitment landscape."

The purpose of the gala dinner is to demonstrate how AI and automation can enhance not only recruitment but also essential



Elevatus and OSHRM launched strategic partnership at a ceremony last week.



With rapid digital transformation and technological advancements, AI has become a cornerstone for developing human resources and enhancing efficiency. Through data-driven performance evaluations, AI facilitates personalised training programmes that strengthen employee skills

**SAYYID DR MUNTHIR BIN HILAL AL BUSAIDY**  
Deputy Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit



business processes in sectors like oil and gas, government, healthcare, telecommunications and HR. By highlighting these technological advancements, the event seeks to illustrate how they can expedite the journey towards Oman Vision 2040, supporting the nation's objectives for digital transformation and economic development.

Yara Burgan, CEO of Elevatus, proudly stated, "We are honoured to launch this inaugural gala dinner in Oman alongside esteemed leaders. This event marks a pivotal moment as we join forces to showcase the transformative power of AI technology — not only in recruitment but across various sectors. By showcasing these advancements, we aim to empower Omani businesses to build exceptional teams and enhance their capabilities, ultimately driving sustainable growth and progress towards achieving Oman Vision 2040."

### Tender



The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn) invites the reputable and experienced Companies / Bidders for participating of the below tender through E-Tendering System. This tender is strictly restricted to tender participation for the **Joint Venture between (Sultanate Oman and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Companies)** only. Any individual or other international companies' bids shall **not** be accepted. Tender award is exclusive to Joint Venture of Oman and Saudi companies only.

| Tender Number         | Tender Name                                                                                                     | Last date of Submission Bidder Authentication | Last date of Buying | Date of Submission | Type of Work | Register Degree | Fee (R.O) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 15/ 2024/ PEIE/ HQ-15 | Construction of Infrastructure Facilities for Mudhaibi Industrial City (Phase-1) at Sharqiyah North Governorate | 17-11-2024                                    | 21-11-2024          | 25-12-2024         | Construction | Excellent       | 2000      |

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer must enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (2 %) of the Tender value validity for (180) days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

**\*Companies that wish to participate in this tender must download (Bidder Authentication form) through the E-Tendering website and fill it according to the required data, and send it to the email [tender@madaayn.om](mailto:tender@madaayn.om) Forms submitted after the specified date will not be considered.**

**1. Tender Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

**2. eTendering System Inquiry:** All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: [etenderhd@gstb.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@gstb.gov.om) and **+968 24402200**.

**Note: Bid Submission will be online only.**

Madaayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.



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FROM PI

In the field of work and entrepreneurship, Hajar al Sunaidi won for the 'Financial Awareness' project in the individuals category, while Fatima al Balushi won the private sector category award for the 'Omani Women's Academy' project. In the civil society category, Suleiman al Sulaimani won for the 'Revival of the Waqf of Sur and Harat Al Aqar' project, while Hafeez al Shakiri won the youth institutions category award for the 'Mudad for Development' project.

As for youth initiatives, Mohammed al Busaidi won for the 'Green Library' project in the private sector category, and the 'Oman Volunteer Creators' team won for the 'Ehsan Volunteer Forum' project in the civil society category. Three youth initiatives also received appreciation awards: 'Chemical Club', 'Qudrat Initiative' and 'Nawat'.

The ceremony also included the inauguration of new branches of the Youth Centre in various governorates, as part of the efforts of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to expand the scope of services provided to youth across the country. These branches aim to support creativity and innovation among youth and enhance opportunities to develop their skills in stimulating environments.

The Youth Centre branch at Musandam Centre for Culture and Innovation in Musandam Governorate, Wilayat of Khasab, includes co-working halls, meeting rooms, multi-purpose laboratories and photography studios. This branch comes to provide an integrated environment that provides young people with the opportunity to create and innovate, and enhance the partnership between culture and the local economy.

The Youth Centre Branch at Sur Youth Cultural Centre in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, Wilayat of Sur, includes a youth centre and a cultural library. The branch provides co-working halls, multi-purpose laboratories, a theatre and photography studios, in addition to an incubator for small and medium enterprises and offices for the LNG company, reflecting the integration of efforts in serving youth and the local community.

The Youth Centre Branch in Harat Al Aqar in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Wilayat of Nizwa, is distinguished by its design inspired by the urban identity and unique architectural heritage of Harat Al Aqar, to reflect the authenticity of the governorate and serve the local community. The branch will provide young people with suitable spaces to practice creative and developmental activities in line with the cultural and historical character of the governorate. The Youth Centre announced a series of partnerships aimed at enhancing cooperation between public and private sector institutions to support youth and community programmes in the Sultanate of Oman.

# Omani Youth Day celebrated with awards and new centres



On this auspicious day, I am pleased to greet you — loyal builders of Oman and guardians of its glorious legacies — and to congratulate this benign country for bringing about this noble offspring whose honourable deeds make us proud before other nations, generation after generation. We deeply appreciate your enlightened thinking and self-denial aimed to make Oman relish the bounties of security, peace, generosity and prosperity

**HH SAYYID THEYAZIN BIN HAITHAM AL SAID**  
Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth



## Sayyid Theyazin's message on Omani Youth Day: Empower Oman's future

**MUSCAT:** HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Saturday addressed young people in Oman on the annual occasion of Omani Youth Day, which falls on October 26. In the speech, HH Sayyid Theyazin expressed his commendation and pride over the dedication of Omani youth.

**The speech reads as follows:**  
"On this auspicious day, I am pleased to greet you — loyal builders of Oman and guardians of its glorious legacies — and to congratulate this benign country for bringing about this noble

offspring whose honourable deeds make us proud before other nations, generation after generation. We deeply appreciate your enlightened thinking and self-denial aimed to make Oman relish the bounties of security, peace, generosity and prosperity.  
We value your resourcefulness and the good presence you portray wherever you might be. Your country counts on you to utilise your energies in promoting the blessed development process. It is entrusting you to keep the momentum of progress. In this spirit, we look forward to a society whose members are innovative —

a society that is capable of employing its identity and values for the realisation of a decent life for all those who live on this benign land. We envision a robust society that aspires to make this country a better place for all.  
Based on this stance, we would like to affirm our keenness to add weight to your tireless efforts and your persistent pursuit of comprehensive development in all governorates of Oman.  
Loyal Youth of Oman, Knowledge, technology and innovation constitute the basic pillars of the country's development process and they

comprise the engine that operates the economy. Yet, the cornerstone of this structure lies in Omani values in which we take pride and which are deeply depicted in our souls like a towering mountain.  
Armed with these lofty values, you proved your mettle in all the events in which you represented Oman — the land, the people and the civilisation, guided by the wise vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, in all that you aspire to achieve.  
On the occasion of Omani Youth Day, we are pleased to announce that we are determined to press

ahead with the march that we started since the establishment of the main branch of the Youth Centre. We will keep pace with the vision to expand this initiative in a number of governorates, according to our strategic plans.  
New branches of the Youth Centre will be established in the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Musandam and Al Sharqiyah South.  
We hereby reiterate our firm resolve to provide a suitable environment for the realisation of aspirations of Omani youth.  
Happy Omani Youth Day." — **ONA**

## MoI AT GCC LEADERS MEET IN AL ULA

**AL ULA:** The Ministry of Information, represented by the Government Communication Centre, participated in the second meeting of heads of government communication centres and offices in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, held in Al Ula Governorate in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The meeting discussed several topics, including proposals to establish a mechanism for exchanging various media to sup-



port Gulf communication efforts, particularly on national days and significant occasions.

Participants also agreed to develop an executive plan for training and exchange of expertise.

The event featured knowledge sessions that highlighted the communication experiences of government communication centres and offices in GCC countries and included discussions on joint Gulf media initiatives. — ONA

# Oman Air, Qantas offer loyalty programme

**MUSCAT:** Oman Air and Qantas, Australia's largest airline, have launched a new loyalty programme offering. Sindbad members will soon be able to redeem their Miles on flights with Qantas, which operates an extensive network including Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific, with Qantas members able to access the same benefits on Oman Air's network.

The airlines, who have an existing interline partnership, will add more attractive benefits, such as Mile-earning opportunities, as Oman Air prepares to join the oneworld alliance in 2025.

Oman Air CEO, Con Korfiatis, said, "Our partnership with Qantas reinforces our commitment to bring even greater value and rewarding experiences to our loyalty members.

This collaboration not only enhances the travel journey by offering more ways for members to redeem their hard-earned Miles, but also plays a key role in attracting Qantas' huge membership base to come and experience Oman. As we look towards our highly anticipated oneworld membership next year, we look forward to providing more rewards and seamless travel across all member airlines."

Qantas Loyalty CEO,



Oman Air and Qantas have launched a new loyalty programme offering.



*This collaboration also plays a key role in attracting Qantas' huge membership base to come and experience Oman. As we look towards our highly anticipated oneworld membership next year, we look forward to providing more rewards and seamless travel across all member airlines*

**CON KORFIATIS**  
Oman Air CEO

Andrew Glance, added, "We know how much our members love to use their points to book international reward seats, with record numbers redeemed in the last twelve months. Frequent Flyers also tell us that exploring new destinations is high on their pri-

ority list, so this partnership will be welcome news for members eyeing their next overseas adventure. Oman Air is an impressive airline with an expansive network, a modern fleet, and a premium offering that rivals any international carrier."

With an ever-growing range of partners, Sindbad, Oman Air's award-winning frequent flyer programme, allows members to spend Miles both in the air and on the ground. Membership has three tiers, each offering a wide range of exclusive benefits.

Qantas Airways is the national airline of Australia and a founding member of the oneworld alliance. Its frequent flyer programme has over 16 million members in Australia alone and offers four elite tiers: Silver, Gold, Platinum, and Platinum One.

## EXHIBITION CELEBRATES CREATIVITY OF HEARING-IMPAIRED ARTISTS

**MUSCAT:** The Scientific College of Design, in collaboration with Awj Business Solutions and Mall of Oman, hosted an art exhibition titled 'Bright Fingers' at Mall of Oman in Muscat.

The exhibition aligns with ongoing efforts by the Scientific College of Design and Awj Business Solutions to foster community integration and support for people of determination. It provided a platform for hearing-impaired artists to exhibit their talents, showcase their achievements, and raise



awareness about the challenges they encounter.

Several hearing-impaired artists participated, displaying a variety of unique and captivating artworks that shared their stories of perseverance and creativity. The exhibition featured two specialised workshops. The first, led by renowned Omani artist Anwar Sonya, explored artistic techniques and solutions, guiding students towards creating

remarkable artworks.

The second workshop, conducted by artist Yousef al Nahwi, encouraged students to draw inspiration from nature and express it through their unique perspectives.

This hands-on experience resulted in a collection of artworks that demonstrated promising talent in art and design, hinting at a bright future for these young artists. — ONA

## 280 join Nizwa charity race to raise breast cancer awareness

**NIZWA:** As part of an ongoing campaign to raise awareness about breast cancer, a charity race was held in the Wilayat of Nizwa.

The race coincided with the global Breast Cancer Awareness Month, underscoring the local community's commitment to increasing awareness and supporting cancer patients.

Organised by Intercity Hotel Nizwa, the race featured a 5-kilometre course for adults and a 2-kilometre course for children.

All proceeds will go towards supporting the Oman Cancer Association's Al Dakhiliyah branch.

More than 280 participants of diverse ages and nationalities joined the event, and a large audience of families and expatriates attended, showcasing strong community support for this humanitarian cause.

The opening and closing ceremonies were attended



A charity race was held in the Wilayat of Nizwa to raise breast cancer awareness.

by Majlis Ash'shura member and representative of the Wilayat of Nizwa, Ahmed bin Nasser al Abri.

The event saw broad participation from all age groups, reflecting the commitment of participants and attendees to health awareness and charitable support for the Oman Cancer Association's Al Dakhiliyah branch.

The success of the race

was made possible through the collaboration of the Department of Culture, Sports, and Youth in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Himam Events Team, with sponsorship from Oman Towers Company, Al Kemyani Ceramics, Al Safwa Company and Al Raghif Al Arabi Markets and Bakery.



### Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender:-

| Tender No. | Tender Subject                                                                                                      | Grade                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Last date for obtaining of Tender Document | Last date for Tender Submission | Tender Document Price (non-retundable) |                 |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------|
|            |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                            |                                 | Small and Medium Companies             | Local Companies |
| 450/2024   | Building a platform to prevent drug harm                                                                            | Companies specialized in the field of design, installation and maintenance of software and information systems   equipping information data centers registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with excellent or first degree | Sunday 03-11-2024 02:00 PM                 | Tuesday 12-11-2024 10:00 AM     | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |
| 451/2024   | General maintenance work for the Al-Wafa Center building for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities at Izki | Companies specialized in the field of construction contracting and maintenance and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second or third degree.                                                                  | Friday 15-11-2024 02:00 PM                 | Thursday 05-12-2024 10:00 AM    | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Sunday 27/10/2024**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website ([reg@tenderboard.gov.om](mailto:reg@tenderboard.gov.om)) tel. (**24402200**).

**" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"**

[www.mosd.gov.om](http://www.mosd.gov.om)

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Members of Sudanese armed forces sit on an army vehicle in Omdurman, Sudan. — Reuters file photo

PARAMILITARY ATTACK KILLS 50 IN SUDAN

**GEDAREF:** At least 50 people have been killed in a single attack by Sudanese paramilitaries who have besieged and raided villages in Al Jazira state, activists said. “The villages of Al Sariha and Azraq have been under attack” since Friday morning, the resistance committee in Hasaheisa, one of hundreds of volunteer groups coordinating aid in Sudan, said in a statement late on Friday.

In Al Sariha alone, the attack killed 50 and wounded more than 200, the resistance committee added, reporting a total inability to evacuate the wounded from the village due to the shelling and snipers from the RSF.

With a near-total communications blackout, tolls are impossible to verify and often hard to gather. The resistance committee said that the nearby village of Azraq had been placed under a total siege, suffering the same violations as Al Sariha, although it was not possible to provide a death toll. — AFP



Japan's PM Shigeru Ishiba (C) runs to greet supporters after an election campaign speech, in Tokyo. — AFP

FINAL CAMPAIGNING IN TIGHT JAPAN ELECTION

**TOKYO:** Candidates in Japan's super-tight election made last-ditch appeals to voters on October 26, 2024, with opinion polls suggesting the ruling coalition might fall short of a majority. Such a bombshell outcome in the vote would be the worst result for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) since 2009 and potentially a knockout blow to Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba.

After a tough internal contest, the 67-year-old former defence minister became premier on October 1. Days later, he called the snap parliamentary elections, promising a “new Japan”.

Ishiba pledged to revitalise depressed rural regions and to address the “quiet emergency” of Japan's falling population through family-friendly policies such as flexible working hours. But he has since rowed back his position on issues including allowing married couples to take separate surnames. He also named only two women ministers in his cabinet. Rising prices have rankled voters, and also dogging Ishiba is the fallout from a party slush fund scandal that helped sink his predecessor, Fumio Kishida. — AFP

G7 FINALISE \$50 BN UKRAINE LOAN BACKED BY RUSSIAN ASSETS

**WASHINGTON:** G7 leaders have finalised details surrounding a \$50 billion loan to aid Kyiv, backed by profits from Russian sovereign assets frozen after its attack on Ukraine, according to a statement released on Friday. Leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy democracies said they “have reached a consensus on how to deliver” the loans of approximately \$50 billion, with an aim to start disbursing funds by the end of this year.

“The loan proceeds will be disbursed through multiple channels to support Ukraine's budgetary, military, and reconstruction assistance,” G7 leaders added. Their announcement came as world financial leaders gathered in Washington this week for meetings hosted by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Finance ministers have “agreed on a technical solution ensuring consistency, coordination, fair distribution of

lending, and solidarity among all G7 partners,” the statement said. “We will not tire in our resolve to give Ukraine the support it needs to prevail,” the leaders added. They called on Moscow to end its war and pay for the damage caused to Ukraine. This week, US President Joe Biden said that as part of the G7 package, the United States would provide \$20 billion in loans to Ukraine, to be paid back by the interest earned from immobilised Russian sovereign assets. — AFP



Protesters gather in Parliament Square beside the Palace of Westminster after a Uniting the Kingdom march through central London. — AFP

RIVAL LONDON MARCHES BEGIN

Right-wing, anti-immigrant protesters and opposing anti-racism demonstrators began large rallies in London on Saturday, closely watched by a beefed-up police operation aimed at heading off any clashes between the rival gatherings. A few thousand joined the “Unite the Kingdom” march organised by anti-immigrant activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, known by the pseudonym Tommy Robinson, with the march heading towards Parliament, carrying English and British flags and banners reading “When will the government act for the British public?”.

Meanwhile, a counter-protest of anti-racism campaigners and trade unionists also gathered, carrying banners saying “refugees welcome” and “smash the far right.” Deputy Assistant Commissioner Rachel Williams, who is leading a policing operation that drafted in officers from around the country, said they were well prepared. “We will have significant resources in place to respond to any incidents, to deal decisively with any offences, and to keep disruption to other members of the public and businesses to a minimum,” she said on Friday. — Reuters

Israel detains medics from Gaza hospital

**ISRAELI** FORCES withdrew from a hospital complex in northern Gaza on Saturday, one day after storming it, and the Palestinian enclave's health ministry said the troops had detained dozens of male medical staffers and some of the patients. Health officials said on Friday Israeli forces had stormed Kamal Adwan Hospital, one of three medical facilities struggling to operate in the area, and also stationed forces outside it. Footage circulated by the health ministry showed damage to several buildings after the Israeli forces withdrew.

Medics said at least 44 of the facility's 70-member team had been detained by the army. It later said the army had released 14 of them, including the hospital's director. An Israeli military spokesperson declined to comment on the hospital report. On Friday the Israeli military said it operated in the area of the hospital based on intelligence “regarding the presence of terrorists and terrorist infrastructure” there.

Medics said at least two children had died inside the intensive care unit after Israeli fire hit the generators and oxygen station in the facility on Friday. Medical staffers have refused Israeli army orders to evacuate the hospital or leave their patients unattended. Before the army raid, medics said at least 600 people had been in the hospital, including patients and their escorts. “The safety and lives of patients who are left inside Kamal Adwan Hospital without medical staff and much-needed medication are at risk now,” said Marwan Al-Hams of the health ministry. Three nurses were injured during the raid and three ambulance vehicles were destroyed, the ministry said.

Israeli military strikes on the towns of Ja-



People work to recover Palestinian casualties from the rubble of a house following an Israeli strike in Gaza City. — Reuters

balia, Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza have so far killed around 800 people during a three-week offensive, the Gaza ministry added. Senior Hamas official Basem Naim said Israel's incursions in northern Gaza and storming Kamal Adwan Hospital were a violation of international humanitarian law that it could not have committed without “the protection of Western countries”.

Separately, on Saturday Israeli forces killed a Hamas member during a raid in the city of

Tulkarm in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, the Israeli security force said in a statement. It said the man had been planning an imminent attack. The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the dead man as Islam Jamil Awda, 29. In a statement, Hamas said Awda had died “clashing with the occupation forces who besieged him for hours in a house in Tulkarm camp.” Violence has surged across the West Bank since the start of the Hamas-Israeli war in Gaza. — Reuters

BUILDING BLAST

Explosion in Spanish building kills three



An explosion early on Saturday caused a building to collapse in the northern Spanish city of Santander, killing three people and injuring 10, local authorities said. The cause of the blast is still unknown, and the explosion sparked a fire in the three-storey building. Residents from neighbouring buildings were evacuated as a precautionary measure. Local emergency services said that 10 people were taken to hospital, with two already released. — AFP

STRANDED RESCUE

Philippine rescuers battle floodwaters



Rescuers in the Philippines raced to reach people in areas made inaccessible by flooding from Tropical Storm Trami, which has killed at least 97 people. Trami battered the island of Luzon and forced nearly half a million people to flee their homes as heavy rain caused widespread floods. In the Bicol region, residents trapped on the roofs and upper floors of their homes were still awaiting desperately needed assistance. — AFP

ILLEGAL ACCESS

Police arrest four over database access



Italian police have placed four people under house arrest as part of a probe into alleged illegal access to state databases by a private intelligence business run by a former policeman. Milan prosecutors allege the business intelligence agency tapped into three key databases: one gathering alerts over suspicious financial activities; one used by the national tax agency with citizens' bank transactions, utility bills, income statements; and the police investigations database — Reuters

The New York Times

Obama tears into Trump in North Carolina



MAYA KING

The writer is a politics reporter, covering the Southeast and based in Atlanta

**FORMER** US president Barack Obama offered a stark warning on Friday night about the dangers posed by a second Donald Trump presidency, urging North Carolina voters to cast their ballots over the final days of early voting in the state. Speaking for nearly 50 minutes to a crowd of hundreds at the Charlotte Convention Centre, Obama highlighted Gen John Kelly's claims that Trump had spoken admiringly of Hitler. He raised concerns from former Trump administration officials and senior Republican White House staff members regarding what they viewed as abuses of power and authoritarian tendencies that made Trump a threat to America's democratic principles.

Referring to recent erratic behaviour — such as a town hall where Trump swayed on a stage to music for over 30 minutes — and incendiary remarks about his political opponents and Americans who died in war, Obama posited that Trump was unfit in multiple ways. “If a family member acted like that, you might still love them, but you wouldn't put them in charge of anything,” Obama said. “And yet, when Donald Trump lies or cheats or shows utter disregard for our Constitution, when he calls our service members who died in battle ‘losers,’ when he calls our fellow citizens ‘vermin,’ people make excuses.” He also repeated several of the themes that have animated his campaign speeches in recent

weeks, arguing that Trump's lack of policy plans would harm Americans in areas ranging from healthcare to housing to groceries. If elected, Obama stated, Trump's second term would be more damaging than his first, particularly for middle- and working-class voters.

Obama warned those who wish to “shake things up” by voting for Trump or who feel he would deliver a stronger economy, saying they are misinformed. He noted that it was his administration that built up the economy after the Great Recession. “Please do not give him credit for an economy he didn't have anything to do with making work,” he said. “Do not fall for the okey-doke. Don't get bamboozled.”

Democrats view North Carolina as a southern swing state within their reach after repeated presidential losses there. Polls show that Vice-President Kamala Harris is narrowly trailing Trump in the state, which is critical to his path back to the White House. But in key Democratic areas of the state, turnout among essential voting blocs is lagging, leading Democrats to rely on star power to bolster their closing argument in battleground states.

A visit from Obama offers the party a chance to increase turnout among key constituencies in the Tar Heel State, especially Black voters and young people — the voters who helped secure his first and only win

Obama laid out the concerns raised by former Trump administration officials about what they saw as abuses of power and authoritarian tendencies that made Trump a threat to America's democratic principles.

there. This year, the county's Democratic Party operation is reportedly better funded and more organised, according to state leaders. Obama is looming large — literally and figuratively — over the contest.

As the presidential race enters its final days, more than 2 million people in North Carolina have already cast ballots, surpassing turnout figures from 2020, according to the State Board of Elections. However, Democrats still have work to do in getting their voters to the polls. Turnout in Mecklenburg County has so far underperformed, with over 117,000 fewer voters casting ballots in the county by this time four years ago. Additionally, Black voter turnout is down by almost 40 per cent compared to 2020 — a concerning sign for Democrats in the state.

Before addressing the crowd gathered in the Crown Ballroom of the Charlotte Convention Centre, Obama delivered a short speech to supporters in an overflow space outside. Recognising the enthusiasm of those present, Obama remarked: “Let's face it. If you're here, you're probably going to vote.”

Obama has traversed several battleground states for Harris' campaign in its final stretch, emphasising his enduring popularity among Democratic voters. On Saturday, Harris was set to join former first lady Michelle Obama for a rally in Michigan.

WASHINGTON POST WILL STOP ENDORSING CANDIDATES

BENJAMIN MULLIN AND KATIE ROBERTSON

The Washington Post's chief executive told the newsroom on October 25, 2024, that it would no longer endorse presidential candidates, breaking with decades of precedent at the newspaper. “The Washington Post will not be making an endorsement of a presidential candidate in this election,” wrote Will Lewis, the Post's chief executive. “Nor in any future presidential election. We are returning to our roots of not endorsing presidential candidates.” The Post has endorsed presidential candidates since 1976, Lewis wrote, when it gave its stamp of approval to Jimmy Carter, who went on to win the election. Before that, it generally did not make presidential endorsements, though it made an exception in 1952 to back Dwight Eisenhower.

Questions about whether the Post would endorse a candidate this year have spread for days. Some people have speculated, without any proof, that the paper's billionaire owner, Jeff Bezos, was being cowed by a prospective Trump administration because his other businesses have many federal government contracts. Lewis, in his note to the

staff, said little about how the Post arrived at its decision, adding only that it was not “a tacit endorsement of one candidate, or as a condemnation of another.” He referenced an editorial the paper published in 1960 that it was “wiser for an independent newspaper in the

The Post's decision drew immediate blowback on social media, including from Marty Baron, the recent editor of the Post who led the paper through a period of editorial and business success

Nation's Capital” to avoid an endorsement. The Washington Post's editorial writers had already drafted an endorsement of Vice President Kamala Harris for president, according to four people who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive newsroom matters. The Post's editorial board had contacted the Harris campaign and the Trump campaign to request interviews before its decision to endorse, two of the people said. Harris declined the interview, and the Trump campaign didn't respond, one of the people said.

The Post's decision drew immediate blowback on social media, including from Marty Baron, the recent editor of the Post who led the paper through a period of editorial and business success. “This is cowardice, with democracy as its casualty,” Baron said in a post on the social platform X. He added that former president Donald Trump would see it as an invitation to continue to try to intimidate Bezos. “Disturbing spinelessness at an institution famed for courage.” The Post's move follows unfurling tumult at The Los Angeles Times, where the head of the editorial board and two of its writers resigned this week to protest the decision by the Times' owner, billionaire Patrick Soon-Shiong, to block a planned presidential endorsement.

N Korean troops assemble in Russia's Kursk region

**SEVERAL** THOUSAND North Korean soldiers have arrived in Russia's western Kursk region, where they are expected to participate in a coming counteroffensive meant to dislodge the Ukrainian troops who have occupied a portion of the region since August, one Ukrainian and two US officials said on Friday. The North Korean troops have not yet entered the fight, and it is not yet clear what role they will play, the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence matters. Whatever their role, the officials said, any significant contingent of North Korean troops will allow Russia to keep more of its forces in eastern Ukraine, where they can stay focused on seizing as much Ukrainian territory as possible before the harsh winter weather sets in.

For weeks, the governments of South Korea and Ukraine have warned that thousands of North Koreans were training alongside Russian soldiers, with Ukraine putting the figure as high as 12,000 troops. And this week, US officials confirmed that a contingent of North Korean troops had been transported by ship to Vladivostok, a large Russian city on the Pacific Ocean, in what US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin called a “very, very serious” escalation. On Wednesday, the first North Korean troops had made the nearly 4,000-mile journey to the Kursk region, with thousands more arriving each day since. A senior Ukrainian official with knowledge of the troop movements said that as many as 5,000 North Korean troops were expected to have mustered by Monday.

The troops, according to the officials, are part of an elite unit of the Korean People's Army. They are being flown from Vladivostok aboard enormous Il-76 transport planes to a military airfield in western Russia, then driven into the battle zone, the Ukrainian official said. There were mixed signals about whether additional North Korean troops would be sent to fight on Ukrainian territory, the Ukrainian official said. At the moment, they are only concentrating in the Kursk region.



JULIAN E. BARNES

The author is a reporter covering intelligence agencies and international security



MICHAEL SCHWIRTZ

The author is an investigative reporter with the International desk



ERIC SCHMITT

The author is a national security correspondent for The New York Times



A heavily damaged residential building, caused by Russian strikes, in Myrmohrad, Ukraine.

Ukrainian troops entered the Kursk region in early August, taking about 400 square miles of territory in the initial weeks of the incursion. But throughout October, Russian forces have been ratcheting up their attacks on Ukrainian positions in the region, taking back several villages, although Ukraine still occupies about 250 square miles. But after more than two months on Russian soil, Ukraine has so far failed to achieve one of its main goals in Kursk: diverting Russian troops from the fight in the Donbas region of Ukraine, where they are pushing back Ukrainian forces with slow but steady advances. On Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, citing his intelligence services, said the North Korean troops would be deployed to the battlefield as early as next week. “This is an obvious escalatory step by Russia,” Zelenskyy said. If sent to the front lines in Kursk, they will face a battle-hardened Ukrainian force that Russian troops have been unable to expel since their surprising incursion in August.

Beyond the immediate battle plans, another pressing question for the United States and its allies in Asia is what Russian President Vladimir Putin might have given North Korea in return for the troops. For now, US officials say they have seen no

evidence of a quid pro quo, but the worry is that for his trouble, North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, might receive some kind of significant military assistance that could enhance the danger North Korea poses to its neighbours and the United States. Officials and experts say that Kim is looking to improve the range of his intercontinental ballistic missiles and demonstrate that they are capable of hitting American cities.

For Putin, the benefits are clear. With more than 600,000 Russian troops killed or wounded since the start of the war, according to Western assessments, he needs more men to feed into his war machine. But he has also been reticent to spend the political capital on another large-scale draft. And so he has had to rely on atypical recruiting methods, such as enlisting imprisoned convicts and enticing mercenaries from poor countries such as Cuba and Nepal to join the fight for cash.

Almost all of those troops, including the bulk of Russia's domestic fighting force, have been thrown into the bloody, slogging offensive in Ukraine's east. Putin has been loath to divert troops from that main battle to expel the relatively small contingent of Ukrainians occupying a patch of Russian territory in the Kursk region.

OPINION

The man who did not have Alzheimer’s



DR HAMED  
AL SINAWI

@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

FEW years ago, a man in his late sixties came to my clinic, saying he had become very forgetful over two years and had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s at a hospital in a South Asian country. He wanted me to provide a report supporting that diagnosis.

After taking a full medical history and conducting a detailed memory assessment, I was not convinced of the diagnosis, especially as there had been no worsening of his symptoms. His brain scan was normal, and according to his daughter, he was fully independent, enjoying writing about his personal experiences with Alzheimer’s on his blog and being invited as a guest speaker at national and regional conferences. He told me he considered himself an advocate for people with Alzheimer’s. “The world needs to know about our suffering,” he said.

When I reassured him that his tests were normal and that I did not believe he had Alzheimer’s, he became angry and stopped attending appointments. However, he continued making public and media ap-

pearances to share his ‘experiences’.

Companies producing supplements, memory aids, and other products claiming to help Alzheimer’s patients sought him out to endorse their products and paid him well. He began appearing on TV shows, suggesting that people should take a particular supplement to avoid Alzheimer’s, even though this information was unsupported by medical research.

His supposed condition also attracted the attention of charities and non-profit organisations, who believed his story could help raise awareness and funds for research. The attention, publicity, and financial incentives fuelled his willingness to perpetuate the lie, and soon he was regarded as an ‘expert by experience’. This concept, where individuals with firsthand experience of an illness or condition are valued for their unique insights, can be incredibly beneficial in the medical field.

It bridges the gap between clinical knowledge and the realities of living with a condition. However, in the wrong hands, it can be manipulated.

Expert by experience is a relatively new concept where individuals with first-hand experience of an illness are valued for their unique insights, which can be incredibly beneficial in the medical field

People fake illnesses for various reasons: some for attention, fame, financial gain, or to escape work or even imprisonment. This is why it is crucial to be selective when choosing an expert by experience to maintain a balance between valuing patient stories and upholding rigorous standards of authenticity.

Guidelines recommend that ‘experts by experience’ should have a documented history of the condition, including references from healthcare professionals specialised in that field to verify their experience. They should also articulate their experiences clearly and effectively and be willing to collaborate with healthcare providers to ensure their contributions complement clinical perspectives. They must avoid conflicts of interest and have acceptance and acknowledgment from patient communities and healthcare professionals, making them true and trustworthy representatives of others with the same condition.

In my opinion, non-profit organisations need to be cautious in promoting experts by experience to avoid endorsing those who fake a condition for personal gain.

BULGARIANS SEEK REFUGE IN THEME PARK VILLAGE

VESSELA SERGUEVA

Dressed in the fashion of the ancients, Bulgarian history-lover and patriot Tsvetomir Tsonev proudly showed off the old-world village where he settled with his family.

Clad in a red tunic and donning a 24-carat gold necklace, Tsonev said he sought a more “traditional life” dedicated to the Balkan country’s rich past amid all the “turmoil in the world,” far from any “political and economic upheavals.”

“It’s calm here and the focus is on history,” the 47-year-old former waiter said — though one of its star attractions has become embroiled in accusations of possible fraud targeting an anti-establishment politician.

Tsonev is one of dozens of Bulgarians who have put down roots in the village of Neofit Rilski, about 40 kilometres from the Black Sea coast, in search of a tranquil, traditional lifestyle. That search is helped in part by the village’s popular historical theme park, built by businessman-turned-politician Ivelin Mihaylov.

Having founded the Velichie, or Greatness, party last year, which entered parliament in June, the 47-year-old said his aim was to “make Bulgaria respect itself again.”

Instead of bowing down to what Brussels “dictates,” adopting the euro, and taking sides on the war in Ukraine, Mihaylov said Bulgaria should connect to its “glorious past.”

But Mihaylov and his park have recently been caught up in allegations of fraud, which he denies as “slander” by his political rivals ahead of Sunday’s national elections. Several residents of the 1,300-soul village said they appreciate its community spirit and respect for traditional values. Alexandra Beshevlieva left the capital, Sofia, years ago to settle in Neofit Rilski, where everything from the impeccable streets to the freshly mowed lawns appears perfect.

“You need to know your roots to know where you’re going — I’m bringing up my children as Bulgarians,” said the 37-year-old IT specialist, who lives with her family in a house with 19th-century architectural elements.

Beshevlieva said she enjoys the “healthy” food she buys from local producers, while praising the folk dancing activities her children take part in.

Tsonev said he has found happiness growing roses and medicinal plants in his garden, which he has opened to the public.

His children have Thracian names, harking back to the civilisation that once inhabited the Balkan Peninsula from the second millennium BC to the third century AD. The Thracians became famous for their production of exquisite gold objects, inspiring Tsonev’s handmade jewellery.

Politician Mihaylov similarly gave his daughter a name of Thracian descent. — AFP



NOUF AL SAIDI

The author is an Omani writer

WHILE OFFICIAL institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, particularly those in the entertainment sector, have shown respect for the Palestinian Nakba, a year after the genocide, they now seem to be returning to normalcy. Festivals, entertainment events, and celebrations are being revived, despite the fact that the occupation is pursuing its agenda more aggressively than ever. This has culminated in the ongoing siege of northern Gaza, which has now lasted three weeks. The situation is dire: hospitals are encircled and burned, essential supplies of food, water, and medicine are cut off, and electricity has been severed, leaving patients who depend on medical equipment in peril.

Doctors are forced to make heartbreaking choices about which patients to save, and deaths from starvation are increasing. The bodies of martyrs lie on roadsides or remain buried beneath rubble. Amidst this, symbols

of resistance are being lost, adding another layer of complexity to negotiations that could otherwise lead to a ceasefire — something the Israeli side shows no interest in pursuing.

**LIVE SHOWS**

In this context, Muscat Municipality announced on its social media channels: “Warner Bros characters are coming during Muscat Nights! Activities and games for the whole family, with live shows. Capture the best moments with your loved ones!” This announcement was met with widespread anger among Omanis, as Warner Bros is known for its support of the Israeli occupation (evidence of which will be provided later).

The public outrage was further fuelled by the fact that over RO 4 million had been allocated for the event, as reported by the Oman Daily Observer newspaper.

Warner Bros, an American film and entertainment company, became a



A man carries away a child that was rescued following Israeli bombardment on the four-storey Muqat family house in the Zarqa neighbourhood in the north of Gaza City amid the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas. — AFP

subsidiary of Warner Bros. Discovery (WBD) following a merger completed in 2022. The company’s chairman and CEO, David Zaslav, comes from a Jewish diaspora family and was born in New York. Zaslav is considered one of the world’s most influential people, having been named among Time’s 100 most influential people in 2022. After the Al Aqsa flood, Zaslav issued a memo to his employees, describing the event as a “terrorist attack” and calling it “inexcusable.”

As the head of a powerful media company, Zaslav emphasised the responsibility of his organisation to “shed light on injustice,” but only from the perspective of the occupying power. Given that CNN, which is notoriously biased toward the Zionist narrative and justifies the genocide of Palestinians, is part of his company, Zaslav praised its role in conveying events and narratives to the world.

This is where we see blatant double standards and the manipulation of public opinion in the West, which serves as an explanation rather than a justification. These institutions are responsible for promoting a biased and misleading narrative, as demonstrated by CNN’s report highlighting the psychological trauma Israeli soldiers face from killing Palestinian children or driving tanks over civilians, both dead and alive. The report even features the psychological suffering of a soldier who killed an eight-month-old Palestinian child, framing it as a tragic consequence for the perpetrator, not the victim.

Such propaganda highlights the moral and ethical blindness of Zionist rhetoric, where the Palestinian victim is entirely erased from the narrative. If Palestinians are acknowledged at all, it is only as fighters or future threats. This narrative distorts everything we understand about morality, humanity, and basic logic.

The decision by Muscat Municipality to invest such a large sum in an event during this sensitive time is perplexing and has understandably provoked public outrage. Now that the situation has escalated, the people’s demand is clear: cancel the event and cease cooperation with companies complicit in the ongoing genocide.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari  
The original version of the article was published in the print edition of Oman Arabic newspaper on October 24.

# Opening the books speaks volumes...



**RAY PETERSEN**  
*r.j.petersen52@gmail.com*  
  
*The writer is a media consultant*

**THE** GOVERNMENT, the public and the media rarely think alike, so it has been heartening to see the positive reaction to the recent State Audit Institution Report across the entire diversity of the Sultanate of Oman's commercial sector.

I must admit, that when I arrived in Oman during 2009, for a time subsequently, while understanding the cultural sensitivities of Oman, and absolutely engaging with the passive and pleasant nature of the people around me, and particularly my students, I was frequently disappointed with the lack of openness I encountered. I understood it wasn't personal, but always felt that the authorities needed to be more open, more transparent, and trust their people to respond responsibly.

On so many levels, this report, its revelations of past practices incompatible with national objectives, its criticisms of leading administrators and office holders, its implications for future compliance and its own clarity of purpose have proven a revelation.

Always, the Omani people have proven loyal, trusting and understanding, and within this report and its revelations is the top seal of approval, and its wisdom. The intangible honesty of the report, has, in a single stroke, proven that Oman, its leadership and governance, has evolved, transformed, morphed, into an incredibly mature over-arching entity, which will see

the local commercial and finance sectors, not only applauded for their transparency, but also become an ethically responsible avenue for international investment.

In finance, it is an old adage that transparency is what maintains and achieves integrity. This despite generations of civil servants around the world prioritising secrecy, the fact is that transparency is the only thing that ensures oversight on behalf of the populace, because without it, the checks and balances of governance are virtually meaningless. Civil servants do like to create their 'mini kingdoms'. Clearly though, in Oman, those days are over.

**SPOTLIGHT**

It's clear too, that honest governance doesn't leave those 'empty' spaces, or dark places, depending on how you look at them, that enable the corrupt, the idle and the incompetent, to flourish, so the state inspired audit report has shone a spotlight that, now, those who have sought to 'make hay while the sun shines,' or to 'do little or nothing,' will be wary of.

Though several state-owned and sponsored entities have been identified, there are many, many, more who may have sailed close to the wind, for whom this is a salutary message. "Get your house in order, or we are coming for you!" This may well be the message between the lines, spelled out loud and clear by a brave and inspirational

*This report, its revelations of past practices incompatible with national objectives, its criticisms of leading administrators and office holders, its implications for future compliance and its own clarity of purpose have proven a revelation*

leadership, unafraid to remove the imperfections, to demonstrate unequivocally to its people that their rights take precedence.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was established in 1960 to work with governments, policy makers and citizens, to establish evidence-based international standards and to seek solutions within those standards, to achieve equality and diversity within the social, economic and environmental challenges of its day. OECD Secretary-General, Angel Gurría, marking International Anti-Corruption Day, said: "Integrity, transparency, and the fight against corruption have to be part of the (financial) culture. They have to be thought of as fundamental values."

What this report shows is that Oman, more than any other global entity today, has embraced the needs and wishes of its people in not shirking from requiring those fundamental values. It has assumed the responsibilities all governments and leaderships should have done, or be doing. Ironically, of all people, Edward Snowden, the whistleblower, has said: "There can be no faith in government if the highest offices are not held to account." In holding these few entities to account, the faith the Omani people have in their hierarchy must surely now be underlined by trust and virtue, and they must be so excited for the future... their future.

## GEORGIA VOTES IN KEY TEST FOR DEMOCRACY

IRAKLI METREVELI

Georgians voted on Saturday in elections that will determine the fledgling democracy's European aspirations, amid growing concerns over the ruling party's pro-Russian drift.

The parliamentary election pits an unprecedented union of pro-Western opposition forces against the ruling Georgian Dream accused of stifling democracy and turning towards Russia.

Brussels has warned that the vote will determine European Union-candidate Tbilisi's chances of joining the bloc. Opinion polls in the country of four million indicate opposition parties could get enough votes to form a coalition to supplant Georgian Dream, controlled by powerful billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. Pro-Western President Salome Zurbishvili said the vote would "determine Georgia's future", while the chair of the United National Movement opposition party, Tina Bokuchava, promised a "great day of national victory".

Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said he was confident Georgian Dream would win a commanding majority in the 150-seat parliament, calling for "maximum mobilisation" of supporters.

The parliamentary election pits an unprecedented union of pro-Western opposition forces against the ruling Georgian Dream accused of stifling democracy and turning towards Russia

Central Election Commission spokeswoman, Natia Ioseliani, said turnout was 22 per cent by noon (0800 GMT), four hours after voting began.

At a polling station in central Tbilisi, 48-year-old musician Giorgi Kipshidze said: "I voted for the opposition, and I am sure they are going to win today."

"Most Georgians have realised that the current government is dragging us back towards the Russian swamp and away from Europe, where Georgia truly belongs." Analyst Gela Vasadze at Georgia's Strategic Analysis Centre warned that "if the ruling party attempts to stay in power regardless of the election outcome, then there is the risk of post-electoral turmoil."

Georgian Dream says it wants to win a supermajority which will allow it to pass a constitutional ban on all major opposition parties. In power since 2012, the party initially pursued a liberal pro-Western policy agenda. But over the last two years the party has reversed course.

Its campaign has centred on a conspiracy theory about a "global war party" that controls Western institutions and is seeking to drag Georgia into the Russia-Ukraine war. In a country still scarred by Russia's 2008 war, the party has offered voters bogeyman stories about an imminent threat of war, which only Georgian Dream could prevent. In a recent TV interview, Ivanishvili painted a grotesque image of the West where "orgies are taking place right in the streets". — AFP

# Islamic values at war in word and action

**WHEN** A WAR breaks out between two countries, prisoners and hostages, civilians/ servicemen, are often taken by one or both warring parties. They are held in what each party considers as a legitimate conflict and right, especially when a favourable circumstances comes forth.

Despite the fact that some people criticise Muslims for taking prisoners and hostages, especially when taking civilians and young children by force, the way the Muslim forces bear themselves towards prisoners and hostages sets a luminous, resplendent and shining example on how Islamic values apply during wars. Islam exhorts and urges strongly its worshippers to act and behave at war in a particular and especially in a controlled manner.

Muslims as per the Islamic doctrine should be free from harshness, definite hardness and severity of nature and manner towards their enemy personnel, especially those deprived of liberty and kept under involuntary restraint, confinement, and custody. In particular, Muslim forces and troops entering enemy territories, religious or irreligious, are instructed by Islam not to cause harm to, restrain or dominate by force women, children and elderly.

Islam is also very special in the treatment of women during the times of war. Mistreating women is condemned and forbidden as harmful and unlawful. Women should not be subjected to physical abuse nor should they be verbally condemned or vilified. The way women are treated is often marked by an absence and avoidance of extravagance, violence and extreme partisanship.

True Muslims should in such circumstances show strong and blind adherence to Islamic teachings in this regard as they should not also utter slanderous and abusive statements against women. Children are also another category protected by Islam at



A woman grieves between the tombstones of slain Hezbollah members during the funeral of Al Mayadeen TV's cameraman Ghassan Najjar, who was killed the previous day by Israeli bombardment, in Beirut's southern suburbs. — AFP



**DR MUSALLAM AL MAANI**  
  
*The writer is Dean of Al Zahra College for Women, Sultanate of Oman*

war. Young people are not considered combatants, who are engaged in or ready to engage in combat. Muslim fighters entering hostile dwellings should act or be in conformity with what is morally upright and good. The way children are treated at war should be marked by strong moral rectitude and integrity. This is part of Islamic doctrine and system of moral conduct.

Finally, elderly occupy a unique status in relation to others in Islam. Islamic doctrine and system of moral conduct revolves around certain fundamental bases, one of which is respect for elderly. Islam always emphasises respect, kindness and patience towards one's parents, especially in their old age, as well as towards old people within the society or at war.

Muslims should treat elderly during the times of war with high and special regard. The way that elderly are treated in armed hostiles conflict when a Muslim state is involved arises from and is characterised by the feeling and mental state brought about by sympathy and forbearance.

When you see an army treating women, children and elderly badly, it is actually arising from actual and imputed bad character and conduct. It is an evil impulse, that is morally reprehensible.

Highly injurious and destructive manners always go hand in hand with nations that do not respect humanity, nor do they have a sound doctrine and system of moral conduct.

# SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



## NIGERIA AWARDED 3-0 WIN OVER LIBYA AFTER AIRPORT DRAMA

**CAPE TOWN:** Nigeria have been awarded a 3-0 victory over Libya, and three vital points, from their scheduled Africa Cup of Nations qualifier earlier this month which they refused to play after being stuck in a remote Libyan airport for half a day before the match.

The disciplinary committee of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) on Saturday awarded the match to Nigeria 3-0, putting them on the brink of qualifying for next year's finals as they sit top of Group D.

The three points took Nigeria to 10 with two matches left to play, four ahead of second-placed Benin and five ahead of Rwanda. Libya have a single point from four games and are in last place. The top two teams in the group qualify for the 2025 finals in Morocco.

Nigeria had refused to play the match in Benghazi on October 15, citing mistreatment on arrival in the country some 48 hours before the scheduled kick-off.

Nigerian players and officials were kept in a locked airport for more than 16 hours, almost 250 km away from their intended destination, after their charter flight was redirected while on approach to Benghazi and instead landed in Bayda.

They said they had no access to food or water and no contact from Libyan officials during the episode, and they decided to fly back to Nigeria rather than fulfil the fixture. The Libya Football Federation said the incident was not deliberate, adding that their players had also faced travel difficulties when they played in Nigeria four days earlier.

But CAF found Libya in breach of competition rules that stipulate visiting teams must be properly received by the host association, who must see them through entry formalities and put a bus at their disposal.

CAF said Nigeria were awarded the match with a 3-0 scoreline and that Libya had been fined \$50,000.

Libya had earlier complained about the treatment of their players and officials on arrival in Nigeria for their qualifier in Uyo on October 11, when their flight landed hours away from the match venue and the players endured long travel delays.

— Reuters

## HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN CUP



## AHLI SIDAB, SAHAM, AL SHABAB, AL SALAM, IBRI ADVANCE TO LAST 16

**AHMED AL KAABI**  
MUSCAT, OCT 26

**THE** preliminary round of His Majesty the Sultan's Cup concluded with intense matches that led to several teams advancing to the Round of 16, following competitions held on Thursday and Friday.

**AHLI SIDAB EDGE SAMAYIL WITH A NARROW WIN**  
Ahli Sidab secured a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Samayil in a match played on Thursday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. Mohamed Diallo scored the only goal of the match, ensuring Ahli Sidab's qualification for the Round of 16.

**SAHAM TRIUMPH OVER SUR WITH 3-1 WIN**  
At the Sohar Sports Complex, Saham

earned a well-deserved 3-1 win over Sur in an open game filled with chances. Bas-sam al Saadi opened the scoring for Sohar in the 51st minute, followed by Zuhair al Hassani adding a second goal three minutes later after a brilliant midfield pass. In stoppage time, Abdulaziz al Balushi sealed the win with a goal in the 90+7 minute. Sur's lone goal came from Mohamed Nasser in the 90+5 minute, but it was too late for a comeback. With this victory, Saham advance to face Ahli Sidab in the Round of 16.

**AL SALAM OVERCOME AL MUDHAIBI IN EXTRA TIME**  
The match between Al Salam and Al Mudhaibi, held at the Ibra Sports Complex, ended in a goalless draw in regular time. At the start of extra time, Al Salam scored their first goal through Omar al Musallami from a penalty

kick. Hussein al Maamari then doubled the lead after a quick counterattack, securing Al Salam's spot in the next round, where they will face Dhofar in the Round of 16.

**AL SHABAB DOWN MUSCAT IN THRILLING ENCOUNTER**  
In an exciting match at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, Al Shabab defeated Muscat 3-2. Mohamed al Ghafri shined, scoring two goals for Al Shabab in the 18th and 46th minutes, with Issam al Subhi adding a third in the 87th minute. Muscat fought back with goals from Mundhir al Wahaibi in the 66th minute and Mohamed al Kharassi in the 72nd, but their efforts fell short of levelling the score.

**IBRI ADVANCE WITH A BIG WIN OVER SALALAH**  
Ibri secured a commanding 3-0 victory over Salalah at Al Saada Sports Complex. Yousef al Khalili opened the scoring from a penalty kick, with Mohsen al Khamisi adding a second goal by following up on a rebound. Branly Augustin confirmed the win with a third goal, ensuring Ibri's advancement to face Al Rustaq in the Round of 16. The tournament will continue in a knockout format in the Round of 16, with the preliminary stage setting the tone for intense competition in the upcoming rounds.

## Afghanistan A stun India A to reach final

**MUSCAT:** It was a day of double upsets as Afghanistan A stunned fancied India A by 20 runs to set up a summit clash with Sri Lanka A on Sunday in the ACC Men's T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup at the Oman Cricket Academy ground on Friday.

Earlier in the day, Sri Lanka A knocked out defending champions Pakistan A in the first semifinal.

In the evening match, India's Ramandeep Singh's gritty half-century (64 off 34 balls) went in vain against Afghanistan A.

Opting to bat first, Afghanistan A capitalised on a commanding 137-run opening partnership between Sediqullah Atal (83 off 52 balls) and Zubaid Akbari (64 off 41 balls) to post the tournament's highest total, reaching 206/4.

In response, India A struggled,

*With India needing 53 runs from the last three overs, the momentum swung as Nishant (23 off 13 balls) was run out following a miscommunication*



losing half their lineup by the 13th over before Ramandeep launched a spirited fightback with Nishant Sindhu, building an exhilarating 68-run stand in just 31 balls.

With India needing 53 runs from the last three overs, the momentum swung as Nishant (23 off 13 balls) was run out following a miscommunication.

Tasked with defending 30 runs in the final over, Abdul Rahman (2/32) held his nerve, dismissing Ramandeep on the last delivery and restricting India to 186/7, sealing Afghanistan's place in the summit clash.

In the first semifinal, Sri Lanka A put up a splendid bowling show to restrict Pakistan Shaheens to a modest 135/9 before cruising to a seven-wicket win. They chased down the target in 16.3 overs.

SHORTTAKES



SANTNER SEAL HISTORIC NEW ZEALAND TEST SERIES WIN IN INDIA

**PUNE, INDIA:** New Zealand made history with their first Test series triumph in India as spinner Mitchell Santner inspired a 113-run win in the second match on Saturday to stun the Pune crowd. The visitors bowled out India for 245 in their chase of 359 on day three to take an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

It is India's first Test series defeat at home since December 2012, when Alastair Cook's England beat them 2-1. Before now, New Zealand had never won a Test series on Indian soil dating back to 1955, and the Black Caps celebrated in stunned silence.

"Immensely proud to be in a position of winning two Test matches here. Proud of the group," skipper Tom Latham said of his history-makers. "Lot of New Zealand teams have come over the past 69 years and 13 series, and to be the first team to win a series here is special." Santner, whose 7-53 in India's first innings of 156 set up the famous win, rattled the Indian chase with six wickets on a turning pitch and trumped the hosts at their own spin game.

"Every time you take wickets you get a little more confident," player of the match Santner said. "I felt that today. Every time I got a wicket, it got a little better." The left-hander bowled unchanged from one end, returning figures of 6-104 in 29 overs. Ajaz Patel took the final two wickets and ended Ravindra Jadeja's resistance on 42 when the batsman holed out in the deep. With the series defeat, India's record of 18 consecutive bilateral home series wins—the longest such run for any team—came to an end. "I don't think we batted well enough to get runs on the board," India skipper Rohit Sharma said. "It is a collective failure. The team has failed to accept the challenge thrown at us."

New Zealand have now won four Tests in India after their opening triumph, which marked their first on Indian soil since 1988. — AFP

Zheng to face injury doubt Kenin in final



Zheng hits balls into the crowd after the winning. — AFP

**OLYMPIC** champion Zheng Qinwen moved into the Tokyo final, but her opponent Sofia Kenin was left sweating on her fitness after retiring from her doubles match on Saturday. Kenin, the 2020 Australian Open champion, beat Britain's Katie Boulter 6-4, 6-4 to advance to the Pan Pacific Open final and was then joined by China's Zheng, who beat Russian Diana Shnaider 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

Kenin went back out on court to play her doubles semi-final with partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands, only to retire with a leg injury while 5-2 down in the first set. Kenin said she hurt herself towards the end of her match against Boulter but would do her "best to get ready for tomorrow".

"The plan is to play," said the American. "I'll do everything I can for tomorrow."

Kenin was visibly distressed as she received treatment for her injury in her doubles match, and later reappeared with ice strapped to her upper leg. "It was a long rally and she hit a backhand down the line pretty flat," she said of the incident in her match against Boulter. "I tried to go for it, and then I felt something and after that I was trying to somehow get through it. I'm not going to lie, if it had been a few more games, I don't know what would have happened."

Zheng took a 4-0 lead in the first set against Shnaider but let her opponent back into it and was forced into a tiebreak. The Chinese world number seven came through and then took the second set to reach her fourth final of the season, including the Paris Games.

"The match was tough," said the 22-year-old Zheng. "I had a lot of set points in the first set, but I wasn't able to take the chance. Generally, I'm just happy to win this match." Zheng reached the final in Tokyo two years ago, losing to Russia's Liudmila Samsonova.

"Two years later, I'm here again in the final," said Zheng. "I'm going to try one more time, so let's see what's going to happen tomorrow." — AFP

Sainz fastest after Russell crashes in Mexico practice

**MEXICO:** Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was fastest in Formula One's Mexico City Grand Prix practice on October 25, 2024, after Mercedes' George Russell led the opening session and then crashed heavily in the late afternoon.

On an eventful day at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, Red Bull's championship leader Max Verstappen was sidelined by an engine problem and failed to set a lap time in the second session.

The triple world champion, who is 57 points clear of McLaren's Lando Norris with five rounds remaining, has won five of the last six races in Mexico but is currently on a nine-race losing streak.

"This noise is very disturbing, this can't be normal," Verstappen said of the noise coming from his engine when he did venture out early on.

Sainz's fastest lap of one minute 17.699 seconds, set on 2025 prototype tyres, was 0.178 quicker than McLaren's Oscar Piastri, with RB's Yuki Tsunoda surprisingly third

The triple world champion, who is 57 points clear of McLaren's Lando Norris with five rounds remaining, has won five of the last six races in Mexico but is currently on a nine-race losing streak



Carlos Sainz Jr. during practice. — Reuters

in both sessions. Alex Albon missed second practice after colliding with Ferrari reserve Oliver Bearman and crashing out of first practice, leaving his Williams mechanics with plenty of work.

Albon called Bearman, who will race for Haas next season, an "idiot" but stewards decided it was a racing incident and took no further action. Bearman had been driving Charles Leclerc's car in the hour-

long opening session, and Ferrari got it repaired in time for Leclerc to use in the later session and lap fourth fastest.

Russell had lapped in 1:17.998 in practice one, with Sainz 0.317 slower, but the Briton's later crash at turn eight brought out more red flags.

The Mercedes spun and slammed into the barriers sideways, with Russell also taken to the medical centre before being released.

"He's physically OK but it was a significant impact," said a team spokesman.

Norris sat out the first session while Mexican IndyCar regular Pato O'Ward took a turn in the McLaren, to the crowd's delight, and ended up 13th. The Briton returned for the second stint and was fifth on the regular medium tyres.

Mercedes' seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton was also absent in session one, handing over his car to Italian Kimi Antonelli, who will replace him next season, but was seventh later on. — Reuters

# INAUGURATION TODAY

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## OQEP TO LIST ON MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE ON OCT 28



From September 30 to October 10, investors showed overwhelming interest, with demand reaching RO 1.8 billion and oversubscription hitting 2.4 times.

**MUSCAT:** The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) is set to list shares of OQ Exploration and Production Company this Monday, October 28, marking a pivotal event in Oman's financial landscape. Following an immensely successful public subscription, OQ's IPO has set records as the largest offering in Oman's history, with the company releasing 25% of its capital — equivalent to two billion shares.

From September 30 to October 10, investors showed overwhelming interest, with demand reaching RO 1.8 billion and oversubscription hitting 2.4 times.

Azzan bin Mohammed Redha al Abdulatif, Vice-President of Acquisitions and Exit Projects at OQ Group, described the listing as a historic milestone for Oman, noting it is the first in the energy sector to focus on exploration and production.

This move aligns with the Oman Investment Authority's strategy under Oman Vision 2040 to partially divest state-owned assets to drive economic diversification and market vitality.

Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, Chairman and CEO of United Securities Company, highlighted the positive impact of OQ's listing on MSX. He noted that such a large-scale offering strengthens Oman's bid to be included in the emerging markets index.

Salman's assessment suggests that the company's market value could exceed RO 3 billion upon its debut, boosting confidence in MSX and attracting further foreign investments.

He also pointed out the expected quarterly dividends, with OQ planning to distribute 90% of its available cash every quarter, an attractive incentive for both local and foreign investors.

— ONA

# Tender for Al Mudhaibi Industrial City launched

**THE** Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has officially launched a tender for the development of Al Mudhaibi Industrial City in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. This ambitious project is expected to create an integrated industrial environment, supporting a range of sectors such as mining, food and tourism.

Located near key raw material sources and major transportation routes, Al Mudhaibi Industrial City aims to boost regional economic development and attract new investments.

Eng Saleh bin Salman al Abri, Director General of Facilities and Infrastructure at Madayn, said that all preliminary steps for the project, including soil testing, traffic analysis, and topographical studies, have been completed.

The first phase will span approximately 2.5 million square metres and include essential services like roads, water, sewage systems, lighting, and security infrastructure.

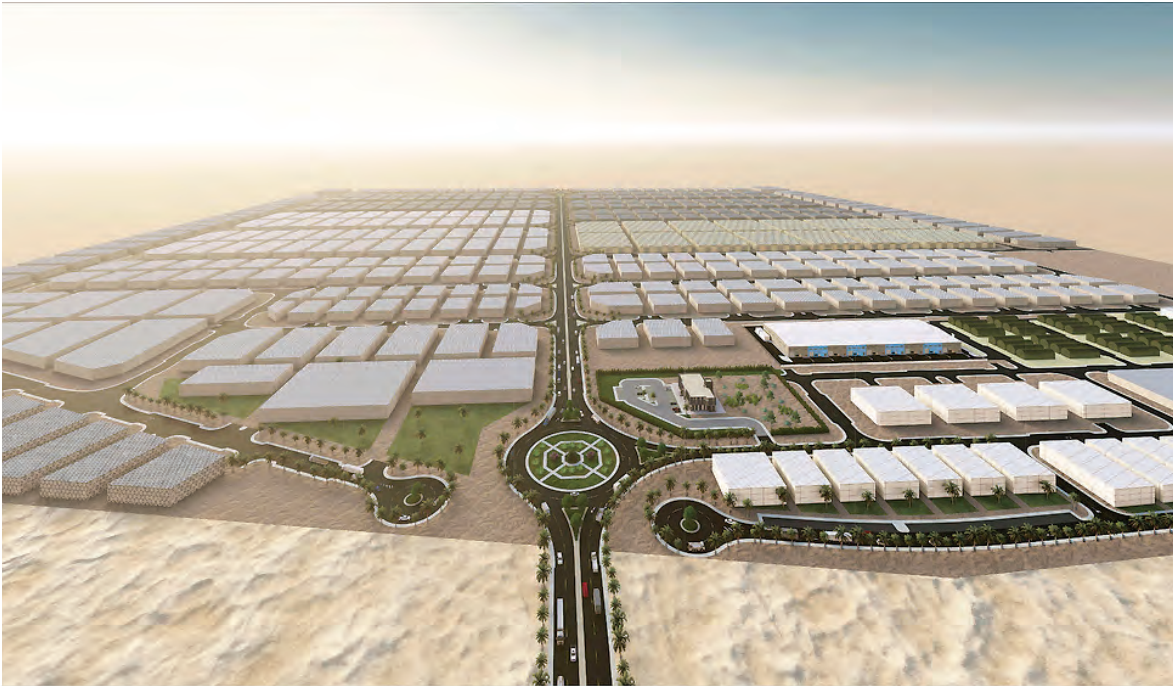
In addition, a service centre called “Masar” will act as a one-stop shop for investors, offering administrative support and meeting facilities.

The industrial city is strategically located near Oman's primary road networks, connecting it to major ports and border crossings.

An area of 100,000 square metres has been set aside for logistics, reflecting Madayn's commitment to fostering a competitive logistical ecosystem.

There are also designated zones for agricultural investment in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR). This is intended to promote the development of food security projects that utilise local resources, as well as support transformation industries in the governorate.

Eng Saeed bin Khalfan al Shabibi, Acting Director General of Al Mudhaibi Industrial



Al Mudhaibi Industrial City aims to boost regional economic development and attract new investments.

An area of  
**100,000 SQUARE METRES**  
has been set aside for logistics, reflecting Madayn's commitment to fostering a competitive logistical ecosystem

City, stated that the new industrial city will serve as a catalyst for economic growth in Al Sharqiyah North by providing a conducive environment for a range of industrial, commercial and service-oriented activities.

He highlighted the attractive incentives and exemptions available to investors, po-



**ENG SALEH AL ABRI,**  
Director General of Facilities and Infrastructure at Madayn

sitioning Al Mudhaibi as an appealing location for new ventures. By inviting businesses to submit investment applications, Al Mudhaibi Industrial City signals the beginning of a new phase in Oman's industrial sector, aimed at diversifying the economy, creating jobs, and strengthening the region's appeal as a hub for manufacturing and industrial growth. The city also aims to promote renewable energy and knowledge industries, working closely with educational institutions to foster innovation in these sectors. — ONA

## EXIM-Oman partnership: Strengthening economic ties

**MUSCAT:** The 2023 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Oman's Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) marks a significant milestone in the enduring US-Oman relationship, now over two centuries old. This \$500 million MoU opens a new pathway for economic collaboration, spanning vital sectors such as telecommunications, biotechnology, agriculture, and manufacturing. Judith DelZoppo Pryor, EXIM's First Vice-President and Vice Chair of the Board, underscored the MoU's potential to deepen economic ties and enhance trade. Pryor highlighted EXIM's commitment to supporting Omani businesses, particularly SMEs, by expanding their access to the US market.



The MoU is designed to empower Omani private sector firms, providing financial resources to support expansion, job creation, and economic growth

**JUDITH DELZOPPO PRYOR,**  
EXIM's First Vice-President and Vice Chair of the Board



Pryor highlighted EXIM's commitment to supporting Omani businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), by expanding their access to the US market.

This support aligns with the broader goals of the 2009 free trade agreement between the United States and Oman, which has already helped strengthen investment and commercial partnerships. The MoU is designed to empower Omani private sector firms, providing financial resources to support expansion, job creation, and economic growth. It provides targeted financing tools to help companies expand in areas crucial to Oman's Vision 2040 goals, such as renewable energy, biotechnology, agriculture, and water and wastewater management. This agreement not only opens doors for new projects in Oman's industrial sector but also aims to bolster the capabilities of Omani companies within the global economy. Pryor's visit to Oman included meetings with officials from econom-

ic, commercial, and banking sectors to discuss the MoU's implementation and explore further areas of collaboration. She emphasised that EXIM's support would help Omani firms establish or expand manufacturing facilities, potentially paving the way for joint ventures and collaborations with US companies. A key part of the MoU's mission is to facilitate technology and knowledge transfer, allowing Omani firms to benefit from advanced manufacturing and technological practices in the US. This partnership not only strengthens bilateral relations but also aligns with Oman's drive toward economic diversification and resilience. By creating opportunities for innovation and growth, this agreement lays the groundwork for a more dynamic and interconnected future for both nations. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

ESSENTIAL ROLE

OMANI YOUTH INVITED TO SHAPE GLOBAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

**MUSCAT:** Oman celebrates Omani Youth Day by acknowledging the talents and impact of its younger generation, recognising their essential role in building the nation's future.

With climate change posing a critical challenge, the youth are key stakeholders in driving sustainable solutions. By actively participating in environmental efforts, young Omanis are at the forefront of promoting clean energy, protecting natural resources, and adopting sustainable practices to create a greener, more resilient future.

In alignment with these goals, the Future Climate Leaders Competition, taking place from February 24–25, 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), Muscat, provides youth with the opportunity to spearhead climate change solutions across the key themes of Oman Climate Week, including climate mitigation, adaptation, finance, carbon markets, technologies, loss and damage and social inclusion.

As part of Oman Climate Week 2025 (February 21–28), this competition offers young climate innovators a unique platform to showcase their solutions globally and be recognised as future climate leaders.

Supported by Oman's Environment Authority, the event will include conferences, masterclasses, exhibitions, and highlights like the Future Climate Leaders Awards, Women & Climate, Gala Dinner, alongside field trips and community events.

The pioneering Future Climate Leaders competition, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, is open to all youth currently enrolled in STEM undergraduate programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics).

The top ten finalists will have the unique opportunity to present their groundbreaking projects during Oman Climate Week 2025.

Students are to submit their entries by November 14, 2024. For registration and submission details, visit Future Leaders Registration.

As part of the event, the organisers are also promoting eco-friendly initiatives such as beach clean-ups, water sports activities, art competitions, and awareness campaigns highlighting Oman's marine ecosystems, all aimed at fostering environmental stewardship.

# Dreamlab Technologies Oman and NSSG merge

**SWISS** cybersecurity firm Dreamlab Technologies and Oman International Development and Investment Company SAOG (Ominvest) announce the strategic merger of their respective entities, Dreamlab Technologies Oman and National Security Services Group (NSSG).

This merger will establish a leading provider of cybersecurity solutions and services for Oman and the region. The new entity, operating under the name “Dreamlab Technologies,” will combine Swiss engineering excellence with deep regional expertise to safeguard critical infrastructure and empower organisations to navigate the digital landscape confidently.

This merger represents a significant milestone in Ominvest’s strategy to foster innovation and enhance national capabilities in the critical cybersecurity sector.

Sanjay Kawatra, Deputy Group CEO of Ominvest, stated, “This transformative merger establishes a robust cybersecurity entity poised to serve as a trusted partner for both government and commercial organisations across Oman and the region.

By providing world-class cybersecurity solutions, we are not only fortifying the nation’s digital resilience but also actively contributing to its global competitiveness in



The new entity, operating under the name “Dreamlab Technologies,” will combine Swiss engineering excellence with deep regional expertise to safeguard critical infrastructure

the digital age. This strategic move represents a pivotal step in Ominvest’s long-term growth strategy, demonstrating its proactive approach to capitalising on emerging opportunities in the dynamic cybersecurity landscape.”

Adding to this, Waleed al Yaarubi, Chief People, Corporate Communication and Sustainability Officer at Ominvest, highlighted the strategic importance of this merger: “This investment transi-

tion signifies our commitment to building a future-ready portfolio that aligns with Oman Vision 2040.

By consolidating our cybersecurity strengths under Dreamlab Technologies, we are creating a regional leader capable of addressing the evolving cybersecurity landscape and driving digital transformation securely.”

Nicolas Mayencourt, Global CEO of Dreamlab Technologies, added, “Dreamlab’s Swiss-engineered software solutions, trusted by governments and critical infrastructure providers worldwide, will provide a secure foundation for navigating the complex cyber dimension.

This merger allows us to leverage our cutting-edge technology and deep local knowledge to proactively address the evolving cybersecurity challenges facing the region.”

Faiz al Raisi, who has successfully led Dreamlab Oman since 2017, has been appointed CEO of Dreamlab Technologies. Al Raisi stated, “Our combined team of highly skilled cybersecurity experts is dedicated to delivering exceptional value and innovative solutions to our partners.

By integrating international best practices and local insights, we will empower organisations to proactively manage cyber risks and confidently build a secure digital future.”

## KHIMJI RAMDAS, YOUTH CENTER PARTNER TO EMPOWER OMANI YOUTH

**MUSCAT:** Khimji Ramdas and the Youth Center have entered into a strategic agreement aimed at empowering the youth of Sultanate of Oman through a series of training workshops and initiatives designed to equip them with skills for the job market.

The agreement was formalised during the closing ceremony of the 2024 summer programme, held under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat Governorate.

On behalf of Khimji Ramdas, the agreement was signed by Kairavi Khimji, Director, while Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth.

Signed on behalf of the Youth Center. This collaboration will deliver training workshops across various governorates



of Sultanate of Oman, with the goal of enhancing youth competencies and preparing them to meet the challenges of the job market.

The initiative reflects Khimji Ramdas’ and the Youth Center’s shared commitment to supporting and enriching youth in the Sultanate of Oman.

As part of the agreement, Khimji Ramdas and the Youth Center will also

continue their collaboration on the “Mindarah Omania” photography competition, now in its third edition. Launched in 2022, this competition has garnered significant attention, inspiring young Omani photographers to showcase their talent and creativity.

Kairavi Khimji, Director of Khimji Ramdas, said, “Aligned with the Sultanate of Oman’s Vision 2040, this partnership reflects our unwavering commitment to empowering Omani youth as key contributors to the nation’s socio-economic development.

Through these training programs and creative platforms like the photography competition, we aim to equip the next generation with essential skills that will not only enhance their professional prospects but also support the Sultanate’s long-term vision of sustainable growth and innovation.”

## Meethaq Islamic Banking honoured as best Islamic banking institution

**MUSCAT:** As part of its commitment to advancing the Islamic Banking Industry in the Sultanate of Oman, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat was recently recognised as the best institution in Islamic Banking for 2024 by The Arabian Stories.

The award was presented at the inaugural edition of Islamic Banking Conference “Themar,” held in the Governorate of Muscat, under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), and attended by esteemed officials and specialists in the Islamic banking sector. During the event, Al Murshidi presented the award to the Meethaq’s Management Team.

The first edition of “Themar” Conference placed strategic emphasis on key areas such as Islamic financial transactions, economic stability, and issues concerning recent developments in the Islamic bank-

Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking, delivered the main presentation that highlighted the sector’s growth trajectory locally, regionally, and globally focusing on both opportunities and challenges within the Islamic finance sector



ing sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

During the event, Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking, delivered the main presentation that highlighted the sector’s growth trajectory locally, regionally, and glob-

ally focusing on both opportunities and challenges within the Islamic finance sector as well as highlighting Meethaq’s pivotal role in developing Islamic financial markets in terms of providing finance and capital market instruments.

Additionally, the conference featured panel discussions for stakeholders and experts in Islamic banking to exchange views, share insights, and propose strategies for enhancing the current state and future outlook of the sector.

Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Personal Banking, contributed insights on “Islamic Finance in the Era of Digital Transformation: Visions for Achieving Sustainable Development.”

He underscored the crucial role of Islamic finance in driving qualitative transformations, with a focus on the sector’s role in developing various industries in the upcoming phase. Additionally, the discussion highlighted the expected contribution of the Islamic finance in line with Oman Vision 2040, emphasising its strategic importance in fostering sustainable development and driving economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman.

12TH REGIONAL  
CYBERSECURITY  
WEEK TO TACKLE  
THREATS AND  
OPPORTUNITIES



**MUSCAT:** Muscat will host the 12th Regional Cybersecurity Week starting on Monday, a premier event organised by the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Regional Cybersecurity Center and hosted by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Set to draw 600 participants, including decision-makers and experts from more than 60 countries, the event will delve into the latest advancements in cybersecurity, lasting for four days at the Grand Millennium Hotel. This year's theme, "Cybersecurity Enhances Economic Growth," reflects the increasingly strategic role of cybersecurity in fostering a robust digital economy. The agenda includes the 12th Regional Cybersecurity Conference, the FIRST Symposium for Arab and African Countries, the 16th Annual Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Cybersecurity Centers, and a hands-on cybersecurity exercise involving nations from the Arab region, OIC member states, Asia-Pacific, and Africa.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, stressed that Oman plays a pivotal role in enhancing cybersecurity on both regional and global stages. According to Dr Al Shaithani, the ministry has initiated an executive programme to support innovation in the cybersecurity industry, viewing it as an essential pillar of the digital economy. The ministry's efforts, he explained, are further evidenced by Oman's leadership of the Regional Cybersecurity Center and its commitment to nurturing cybersecurity capabilities.

In addition to panel discussions and workshops, the Cybersecurity Week will also unveil new initiatives aimed at bolstering regional cybersecurity infrastructure and enhancing cooperation across sectors.

He emphasised the importance of fostering innovation in cybersecurity, particularly as the sector continues to evolve to meet new challenges. This year's event will also recognise achievements in cybersecurity through national, regional and international awards, underscoring Oman's commitment to setting high standards in the field.

— ONA

Leverage AI to place Oman on global competitive map: Expert

**QASIM AL MAASHANI**  
MUSCAT, OCT 26

**ARTIFICIAL** intelligence (AI) has rapidly emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, offering unparalleled opportunities to reshape economies, enhance competitiveness and drive innovation.

In Oman, the integration of AI and future management tools is not merely a trend but a strategic move aimed at positioning the country as a global leader in these fields.

Dr Rami Shaheen, a consultant in artificial intelligence and Secretary-General of the Global Association for Artificial Intelligence (GAIA), sheds light on Oman's current efforts and future prospects in this area.

At the forefront of AI initiatives in Oman, Dr Shaheen and his team are working towards placing Oman on the global competitive map.



**DR RAMI SHAHEEN,**  
Secretary-General of the Global Association for Artificial Intelligence

*In this phase, we are focusing on making Oman a key player in artificial intelligence and future management tools.*

"In this phase, we are focusing on making Oman a key player in artificial intelligence and future management tools. This is a collaborative effort that has already seen significant contributions from various government bodies and institutions," he explains.

Dr Shaheen highlights the success of the recent Generative AI Conference held in Oman, where over 200 participants attended a workshop that introduced global best practices in AI. The workshop, which attracted widespread attention, showcased Oman's growing interest in this technology.

"During the workshop, we were able to develop a rapid AI solution for one of the telecom companies, such as Ooredoo, applying these global best practices. This demonstrates our ability to innovate and implement AI-driven solutions quickly and effectively," Dr Shaheen notes.

One of the key outcomes of these efforts is the introduction of an in-

ternational AI licence. This initiative aims to empower Omani citizens by equipping them with the necessary skills to contribute to Oman Vision 2040.

As Dr Shaheen explains, "The AI licence will enable Omanis to become proactive citizens, capable of playing an active role in the country's future development. AI is not just a technological tool; it is a means to elevate human potential and foster a culture of innovation."

However, the rise of AI has not been without its concerns. Many fear that AI could replace human jobs, a common misconception in the discourse surrounding technological advancement.

Dr Shaheen dismisses this notion, stating, "AI will not replace employees, but it will redefine their roles. The focus must be on enhancing both institutional and individual capabilities to align with the demands of the AI era. In doing so, we can create new job opportunities and reduce unemployment, while

integrating AI into Oman's national security strategy."

He stresses the importance of preparing Oman's workforce for the AI-driven future.

"We need to equip Omanis with the skills required to thrive in an AI-dominated world. This includes not only traditional AI skills but also broader areas such as bioinformatics, nanotechnology, neurotechnology, quantum computing and cyber immunity. These fields represent the next frontier of knowledge production and innovation," Dr Shaheen explains.

Dr Shaheen's vision for Oman is clear: a future where artificial intelligence is a catalyst for progress, creating new opportunities for the country and its citizens.

"The potential of AI to drive Oman's economic and social development is immense. By embracing this technology, Oman can secure its place on the global stage and become a hub for innovation in the Middle East."

Dhamani set to be fully operational in 2025

**CONRAD PRABHU**  
MUSCAT, OCT 26

**THE** Dhamani electronic platform — marking the culmination of a multi-year initiative spearheaded by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to underpin the implementation of a robust health insurance system in the Sultanate of Oman — is now approaching key milestones in its complete operationalisation.

A significant majority of the market participants and stakeholders of the health industry in Oman have now been onboarded, with the Authority having announced further deadlines — distributed over the course of 2025 — designed to integrate private clinics and pharmacies onto the platform.

"We are pleased to announce that the first phase of the Dhamani platform project has been completed, and the market onboarding process reached 86 per cent completion, integrating (system to system) hospitals, insurance companies and third-party administrators," said Dr Hatim bin Dawood al Lawati, In-charge of Dhamani.

"Starting from 1 am on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, all transactions will be processed through the Dhamani platform. In addition, within the next two months, banks will be linked to the platform to facilitate electronic payments, with full implementation scheduled for January 1, 2025.

"We are now focusing on developing Phase 2's products, which are set to launch in 2025," Dr Al Lawati stated in a newsletter outlining the progress made in the implementation of the landmark initiative.

According to the official, the Dhamani



The Dhamani platform was officially launched on October 1, 2024

system will contribute significantly to improving the quality of health insurance services in the country. This will be achieved by "crediting all health insurance transactions and accelerating the pace of treatment approvals to be instantaneous and direct", he noted. "It will also ensure transparency in dealings among all parties providing health insurance services under the supervision of regulatory authorities."

The Dhamani platform was officially launched on October 1, 2024, enabling all 9 insurance payers, 3 Third Party Administrators (TPAs) and 33 hospitals to exchange data on all health insurance transactions within the Authority's sandbox environment.

A circular issued by the Authority last

month has set the following deadlines for the few remaining market participants to be fully integrated with the Dhamani platform: Private health polyclinics and their branches (December 31, 2024); Private pharmacies (December 31, 2024); Private pharmacies with five or less branches (will be invited to join the platform on January 1, 2025 and complete the process by the year-end); and Private Clinics (also will be invited to join the platform on January 1, 2025 with a deadline to complete the process by December 31, 2025).

Significantly, the health insurance sector accounts for a remarkable 35 per cent of total insurance premium portfolio in Oman, underscoring its strong growth potential, say FSA authorities.

OMAN ADVOCATES GREEN HYDROGEN AT INT'L ENERGY WEEK

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Energy and Minerals recently represented the Sultanate of Oman at Singapore's "International Energy Week," where Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, highlighted Oman's green hydrogen ambitions.

His working paper emphasised policy formation and partnerships with both international and local stakeholders to drive Oman's green hydrogen economy forward.

Accompanying him was Dr Firas bin Ali al Abduwani, Director-General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen, who contributed insights into Oman's renewable energy



Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

initiatives. The conference explored a wide range of energy topics, such as the future of traditional and clean energy, global energy transition strategies, and the critical role

of international collaboration in achieving sustainable goals.

The event marked the inauguration of the International Energy Agency's first regional office outside Paris, underscoring Singapore's leading role in energy transition and international cooperation.

The sessions focused on the integration of renewable energy and the importance of global energy connectivity to secure supplies while reducing emissions.

The topics included fossil fuels' role in energy stability, advancements in carbon capture and storage, and new nuclear reactor

technologies.

The event also showcased pathways for industries crucial to clean hydrogen, like steel and electricity generation.

Bilateral meetings were held between various international delegations, fostering cooperation on electricity market reforms, renewable energy advancements and clean hydrogen development.

The accompanying exhibition allowed participants to explore the latest innovations in renewable energy, hydrogen and emissions management, offering Oman insights into pioneering technologies for a sustainable economy.

OPINION

Asian energy demand rises amid global tech



STEFANO VIRGILLI  
stefano@virgilli.com

The author is a member of the International Press Association

THE global markets continue to showcase the complex interplay between traditional and emerging sectors, as evidenced by developments across energy, technology and regulatory landscapes this week. Oil markets exhibited notable resilience amid persistent geopolitical tensions, with prices heading for a weekly rise despite ongoing concerns about demand. While traders remain cautious about potential escalations in the Middle East, attention has also turned to Asia's growing energy appetite. India's oil demand is projected to increase by 4% in Q4 2023, driven by post-monsoon industrial activity and festival season consumption. This growth, coupled with China's 6% increase in crude import quotas for private refiners, signals robust energy demand from Asia's largest economies. The surge in Asian demand comes at a particularly crucial time for global energy markets. India's consumption patterns are especially noteworthy, with diesel fuel showing only a minor decline of less than 2% during the monsoon season, while gasoline demand expanded by

3% during the same period. This resilience in fuel consumption underscores India's position as one of the world's largest oil importers, with imported oil covering approximately 85% of the nation's requirements. The country's ambitious plans to expand its refining capacity by 20% to 6.19 million barrels daily by 2028 further emphasises the long-term nature of this demand growth. The technology sector provided a counterpoint to traditional energy markets, with Tesla's remarkable Q3 performance highlighting the accelerating transition toward sustainable transportation. The electric vehicle manufacturer reported earnings that exceeded analyst expectations, with shares surging over 30% in response. Tesla's achievement of record-low production costs per vehicle, at approximately \$35,100, demonstrates the increasing viability of electric vehicles as mainstream transportation options. The company's ambitious outlook, including projected delivery growth of 25-30% next year and plans for a self-driving taxi service launch in California and Texas by 2025, signals confidence in

Tesla's achievement of record-low production costs per vehicle, at approximately

\$35,100, demonstrates the increasing viability of electric vehicles as mainstream transportation options

the continued evolution of sustainable transportation solutions. This transition in the transportation sector arrives alongside significant developments in global industrial standards. The Consolidated Mining Standard Initiative (CMSI) has introduced a comprehensive framework aimed at harmonising environmental, social and governance practices across the mining industry. This initiative, supported by major industry bodies including the World Gold Council and the Mining Association of Canada, is expected to impact approximately 600 operations across 60 countries, marking a significant step toward standardised sustainability practices in resource extraction. The CMSI's framework introduces three distinct levels of practice: Foundational, Good, and Leading Practice, providing a clear pathway for mining operations to improve their environmental and social performance. This structured approach to industry standards could serve as a model for other sectors undergoing similar transitions toward more sustainable practices.

BIDEN'S PRECISE INDUSTRIAL POLICY MAY SOON MUTATE

JOE BIDEN'S industrial policy legacy depends on who replaces him. Two years into the US government's attempt to lure manufacturing of semiconductors and renewable energy back home – and less than two weeks before the end of Biden's term - the president's top national security aide, Jake Sullivan, offered a defence of his boss's major economic choices. In a speech at the Brookings Institution think-tank in Washington on Wednesday, Sullivan sketched out how the US and its allies could use targeted investments, tariffs and sanctions to protect and nurture jobs and know-how from China's threat. But that fragile success has a major asterisk next to it: Donald Trump may use the same weapons to wage a more straightforward trade war.

Sullivan's chief economic goal in office has been to reset the US post-Cold War approach to trade, which has been under political attack from the Republican presidential candidate and others for a decade. Sullivan's Democratic version was heavier on public investments in strategic sectors such as chipmaking, and greener in its focus on renewable energy like solar panels. It also attempted to be more friendly to other countries by envisaging the shifting of supply chains to American allies and neighbours – a stark contrast to Trump's "America First" approach. The US is also not alone. Sullivan pointed to similarly ambitious domestic industrial policy plans released by the European Union, Canada, Japan, and India as a sign that US allies had also recognised the dangers of being too dependent on China. Sullivan conceded that the US approach has forced its partners to adjust on the fly. While China uses subsidies and aggressive exports to dominate overseas markets, US sanctions and tariffs have forced other countries to shift production and shun Chinese buyers.

While China uses subsidies and aggressive exports to dominate overseas markets, US sanctions and tariffs have forced other countries to shift production and shun Chinese buyers. In the long-run, supply chains will be less dependent on China. In the meantime, the switch means higher prices and shortages. The Biden administration has tried to target its measures with surgical precision. In a previous speech at Brookings last year, Sullivan described the US approach to technology measures as protecting a "small yard with a high fence." But in a global economy where every gadget contains several dozen computer chips and inflation remains a bitter recent memory, the risk is that policymakers get carried away with jingoism. That's far more likely to happen if Trump returns to the White House and implements his threat to impose an across-the-board 20% tariff on imports. Though Sullivan can claim his targeted approach involved as few trade-offs as possible, the Biden administration kept nearly all, opens new tab of the China tariffs introduced by Trump. In different hands, US tariffs and sanctions may once again become blunt weapons. — Reuters



QASIM AL MAASHANI

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

Amid oil revenue declines, Oman strengthens non-oil sectors and navigates global economic shifts toward sustainable growth



Oman has made notable progress in reducing its fiscal deficit despite lower oil revenues.

LIKE many global economies, Oman faces a series of economic challenges that require careful planning and effective strategies to manage ongoing changes. The September 2024 Economic Performance Bulletin offers a comprehensive snapshot of the country's current economic landscape, highlighting key areas of concern while also pointing to emerging opportunities. As the Sultanate of Oman moves forward, this moment represents a pivotal opportunity to foster sustainable economic growth and development. One of the main challenges outlined in the report is the significant drop in oil revenues, with a year-on-year decline of 15%. Given the continued volatility of global oil markets, this decrease comes as no surprise but serves as a stark reminder of Oman's reliance on oil. It underscores the urgent need for economic diversification, reducing the dependence on oil as a primary revenue source. The report also points to challenges in foreign trade, where exports have declined while imports have increased, creating a trade imbalance. This situation calls for efforts to enhance Oman's export capacity and attract foreign direct investment, particularly in non-oil sectors that are critical to driving long-term economic sustainability.

Despite these challenges, the report reveals promising developments, most notably the robust growth of Oman's non-oil sector, which expanded by 12%. This growth reflects the government's strategic initiatives to promote key industries such as tourism, logistics, and manufacturing, all of which are vital components of its economic diversification plan. Furthermore, the bulletin highlights improvements in Oman's fiscal management. Oman has made notable progress in reducing its fiscal deficit despite lower oil revenues, a testament to the government's commitment to financial reform and spending efficiency. These measures are essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the national budget. As global economies shift towards greener and more digital frameworks, Oman has a unique opportunity to leverage these trends to its advantage. The move towards renewable energy presents an exceptional opportunity for Oman to become a regional leader in clean energy production, thanks to its abundant natural resources and favourable conditions for green energy initiatives. Oman can also capitalise on the growing digital economy by investing in digital infrastructure and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the tech sector. Doing so will not only diversify its economic base but also position Oman as

a regional hub for technological advancement, attracting investment and creating new employment opportunities for its citizens. The success of Oman's response to these challenges will hinge on the effectiveness of government policies. Thus far, the Omani government has demonstrated a flexible approach, adopting balanced economic policies aimed at controlling public spending while promoting growth. Key initiatives include comprehensive financial reforms, encouraging private sector involvement, and fostering an investment-friendly environment. Looking ahead, the government's ability to develop and implement long-term strategies that respond to evolving global economic conditions will be crucial. Oman's future growth will depend on its capacity to adjust to fluctuations in energy markets, enhance trade partnerships, and attract sustainable investments. With the right policies in place, Oman is well-positioned to achieve a major economic transformation. Continued focus on financial reform, enhanced efficiency, and strategic investment in emerging sectors will be instrumental in driving long-term prosperity and economic resilience. The path forward will require determination, flexibility, and innovation, but Oman has the resources and the vision to succeed.

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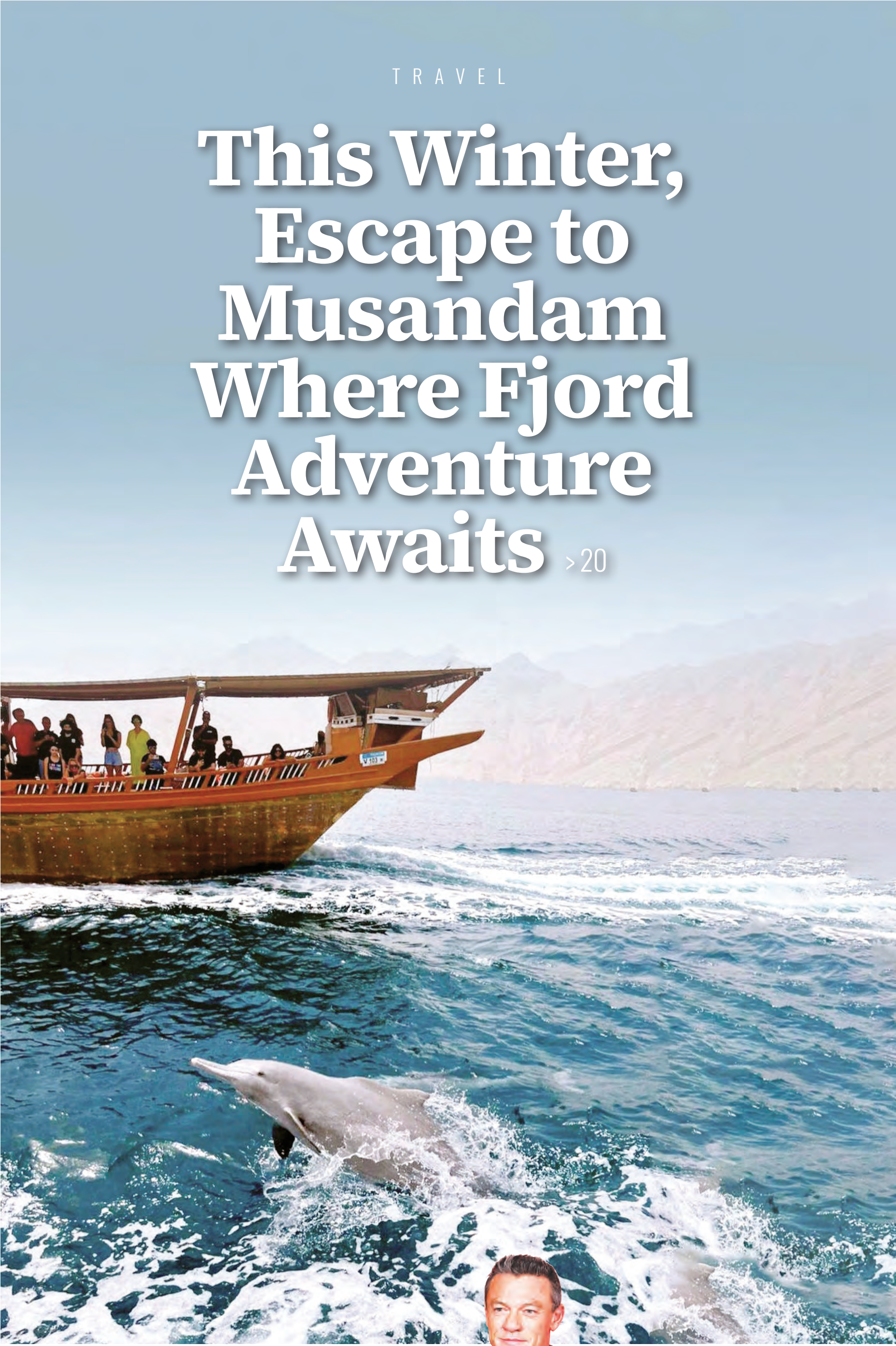
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# ART/LIFE



TRAVEL

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### A LOOK AT THE ACADEME

#### The washback effect theory



BY DR ZAINAB AL AJMI  
zeinbf@moe.om

Dr Zainab possesses a profound passion for education and is a keen observer of the sector's developments

Policy makers use tests to meet teaching and learning goals. This theory is rooted in the notion that tests or examinations can and should drive teaching and learning. The idea that testing influences teaching is familiar in educational and applied linguistics literature. Many researchers have worked on the influence of examinations on classroom practices. Exams are believed to affect the “teachers, learners, and parents’ attitudes, behaviour, and motivation”. To be considered, this influence is often seen as negative. In general, the washback effect theory addresses the relationship between assessment and teaching practices, particularly how tests influence curriculum, pedagogy, and learner outcomes (Rahimi, Esfandiari, & Amini, 2016). Theoretical frameworks developed by scholars such as Alderson and Wall (1993) and Bailey (1996) offer a structured approach to analysing the effects of testing on educational stakeholders, processes, and outcomes. Specifically, Alderson and Wall’s (1993) washback framework posit several hypotheses that highlight the influence of tests on both the content and methods of teaching. Messick (1996), for example, introduced the concept of construct validity into the study of washback, suggesting that the extent to which a test accurately measures the intended skills and knowledge significantly influences its effects. (Arthur & Partey, 2023, p. 100). In this context, Arthur & Partey (2023), positive washback pertains to the positive influence of tests and examinations on teaching and learning, believes that a test’s washback will be positive if it promotes teaching and learning. When a testing procedure encourages “good” classroom instructional practices, syllabus implementation, and learning practices of students, positive washback occurs. Positive washback occurs when the testing procedure aligns with the skills and abilities taught in the subject. It inspires students to work harder, enables teachers and learners to achieve their teaching and learning goals, and encourages teachers to pay closer attention to students’ interests and needs. Thus, if the methods and materials utilised in teaching and learning a subject are aligned with those employed in preparing for a test, it can be inferred that the test has a positive washback effect. To have a positive impact on teaching and learning, a test must provide beneficial washback that influences what and how teachers teach, what and how learners learn, and allows learners to prepare for the test purposefully. In such cases, the test serves as a motivator for both teachers and students to focus on critical skills, ensuring alignment between what is taught and what is assessed. For example, performance-based assessments or formative evaluations can stimulate creative and thoughtful teaching strategies that engage students in meaningful learning. Negative washback occurs when assessments encourage ineffective teaching methods, such as rote memorisation and a narrow focus on test preparation. This pressure to “teach to the test” can result in a limited curriculum, where students excel at passing exams without fully understanding the material. The washback effect highlights how deeply assessments can influence teaching practices and learning outcomes. To enhance educational practices, future research should investigate ways to design assessments that promote positive washback and foster deeper learning experiences for students.

### QUICK FEATURES

#### ART

A woman observes *The Swan (Group IX)*, ahead of the opening of a retrospective of works by Swedish abstract art pioneer Hilma Af Klint, at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. —AFP

#### ENTERTAINMENT

US actor Luke Evans attends “Weekend in Taipei” premiere at SoloTech LA in Los Angeles. —AFP

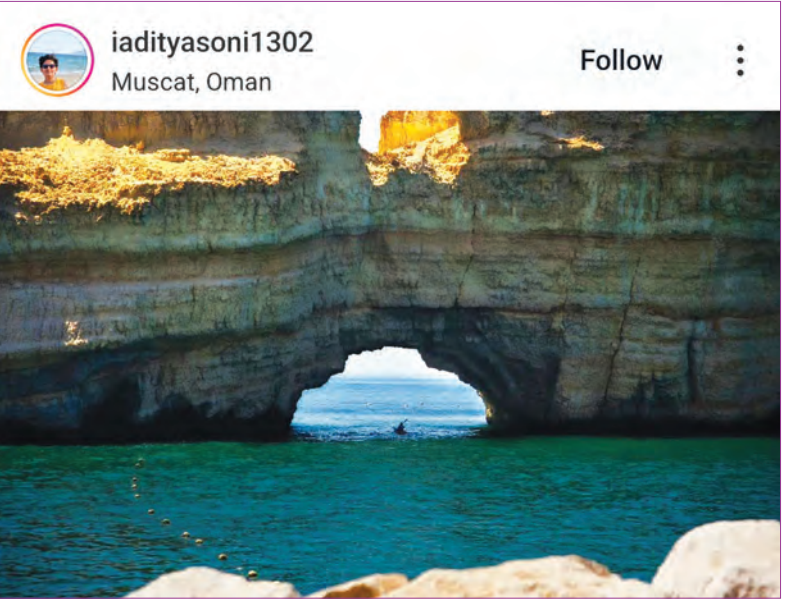
#### GASTRONOMY

Lee Ha-yeon, a recognised kimchi grand master and her apprentices prepare kimchi at the Kimchi Culture Institute in Namyangju, South Korea. —Reuters

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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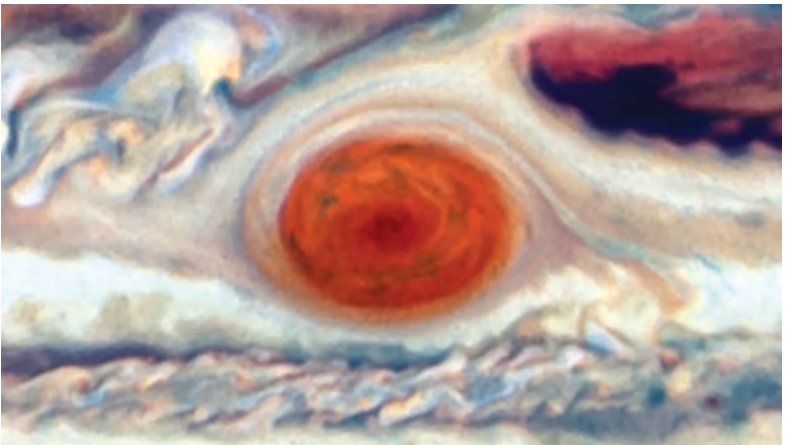


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Jupiter’s Great Red Spot Moves Like the Solar System’s Biggest Kickball



The Great Red Spot of Jupiter is one of the solar system's most astonishing marvels. An elliptical storm with swirls of burnt orange and dulled copper, it is longer than the Earth is wide, and its winds go through the tops of the planet's clouds at 400 mph.

The spot may seem like an unchanging fixture from a distance. But scientists have now discovered that it is jiggling and changing shape, repeatedly elongating and then contracting as it circumnavigates Jupiter's southern hemisphere like a bright red kickball bouncing through a schoolyard.

Astronomers say that the Great Red Spot hasn't always looked as it does today. But finding that it was able to transform during a 90-day period of observation came as a shock. "We were very surprised," said Amy Simon, a planetary astronomer at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and an author of a study published in The Planetary Science Journal. The storm "behaves like a slug,

contracting and stretching as it moves around the planet," said James O'Donoghue, a planetary astronomer at the University of Reading in England who wasn't involved with the study.

But astronomers have no clue as to why the spot is behaving this way. The Great Red Spot, which rotates counterclockwise, has been continuously observed for the past 150 years.

That the storm has been around so long probably has something to do with two jet streams sandwiching it in place, O'Donoghue said. They keep the spot's edges spinning while also preventing the storm from wandering off toward the equator or poles, where atmospheric forces and the planet's rotation could tear it apart.

But the storm isn't rooted in place. It "drifts slowly westward, taking a few years to circle the planet," Simon said. And as it migrates, it speeds up and slows down over a three-month cycle. This cycle has yet to be explained. — ROBIN GEORGE ANDREWS / NYT



A view shows the site of test excavations at the newly rediscovered medieval Silk Road city Tugunbulak, located in the mountains of southeastern Uzbekistan. — Reuters

Scientists document lost mountain cities

In the mountains of Uzbekistan, archaeologists aided by laser-based remote-sensing technology have identified two lost cities that thrived along the fabled Silk Road trade route from the 6th to 11th centuries AD - the bigger one a centre for the metal industry and the other reflecting early Islamic influence.

The fortified highland cities, located 5 km apart at around 6,560-7,220 feet above sea level, are among the largest known from the mountainous sections of the Silk Road, the sprawling web of overland trade routes linking Europe and the Middle East to East Asia.

"These cities were completely unknown. We are now working through historical sources to find possible undiscovered places that match our findings," said archaeologist Michael Frchetti of Washington University in Saint Louis, lead author of the study published in the journal Nature.

The bigger of the two, called Tugunbulak, covered about 120 hectares, with a population perhaps in the tens of thousands, the researchers said. It was one of the largest cities of its time in its region of Central Asia, rivaling even the famed trade hub Samarkand situated about 110 km away. It existed from around 550 to 1000 AD.

"Tugunbulak is many times larger and more enigmatic than other highland castles or settlements that have been documented in high-elevation Central Asia," Frchetti said.

The other city, Tashbulak, was only a tenth the size of its neighbour, with a population perhaps in the thousands, the researchers said, lasting from around 730-750 to 1030-1050 AD.

Founded in early medieval times in what is now south-



Researchers excavate medieval pottery at the newly rediscovered medieval Silk Road city Tugunbulak located in the mountains of southeastern Uzbekistan. — Reuters

“These cities were completely unknown. We are now working through historical sources to find possible undiscovered places that match our findings

**MICHAEL FRACHETTI**  
Archaeologist, Washington University in Saint Louis

eastern Uzbekistan, the cities were eventually abandoned and forgotten until archaeologists came across the first evidence of them while scouring a rugged mountain area, with deep ravines, steep ridge lines and forests. They deployed the drone-based lidar remote scanning to map the scale and layout of the sites.

"Lidar is a technology that floods the landscape with lasers to measure the topography, in this case, in highly refined detail," Frchetti said.

It revealed evidence of numerous structures, plazas, fortifications, roads, habitations and other urban features.

Preliminary excavation at one of Tugunbulak's fortified buildings - girded by thick earthen walls - yielded the remains of kilns and furnaces, indicating it was a factory where metalsmiths

may have turned rich local deposits of iron ore into steel.

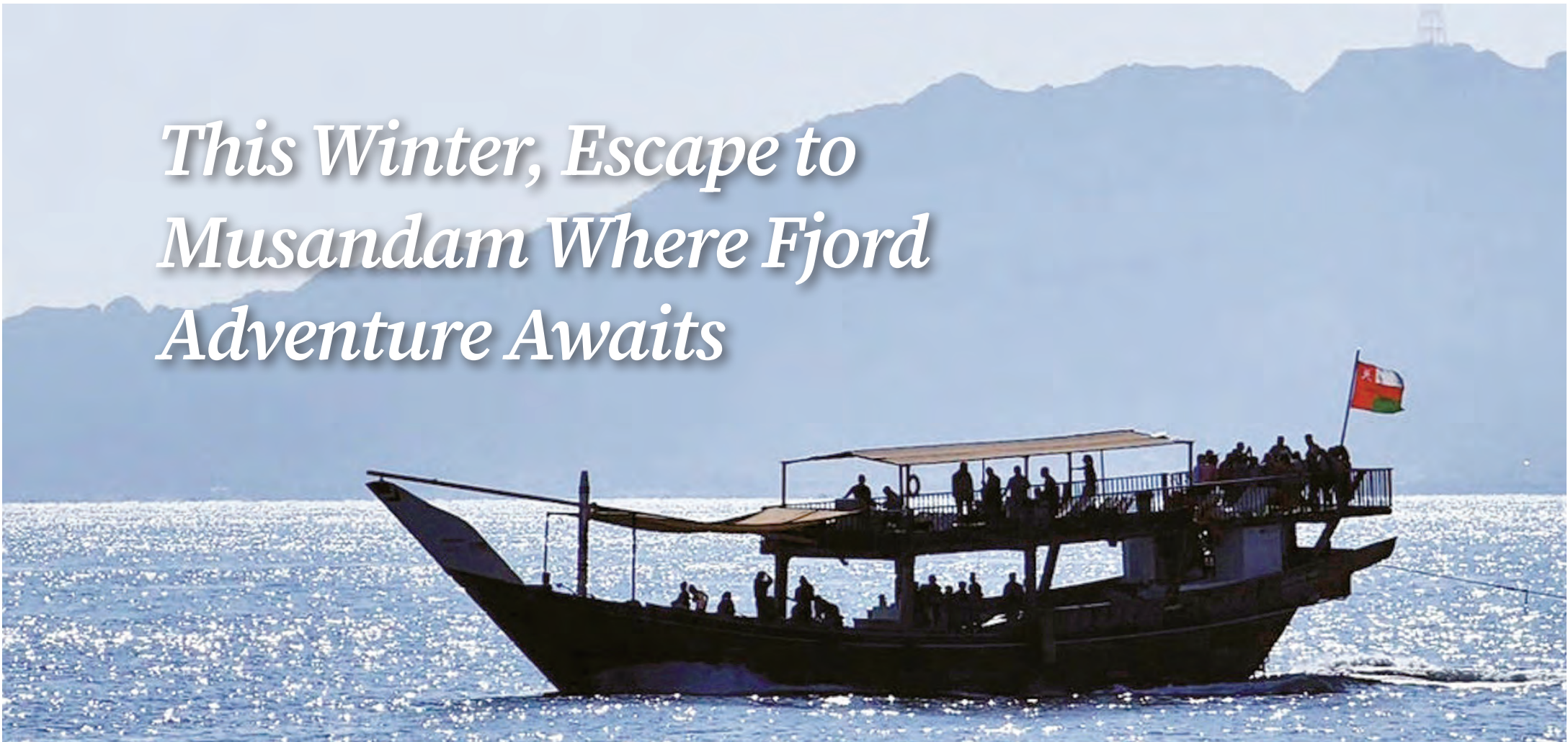
The researchers are working to confirm steel was made there by chemically analyzing slag - a byproduct of iron and steel production - found at the site. The region in the 9th and 10th centuries was known for steel production.

The metal industry may have been a central feature of Tugunbulak's economy, along with trade in animals such as sheep and cattle and animal products including wool, Frchetti said.

"Tugunbulak in particular complicates much of the historical understanding of the early medieval political economy of the Silk Routes, placing both political power and industrial production far outside the regional 'breadbaskets' such as Samarkand," Frchetti said. — Reuters

# This Winter, Escape to Musandam Where Fjord Adventure Awaits

Tucked away at the northeastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, this hidden gem beckons with its breathtaking fjords and towering mountains, a true testament to nature's artistry



BY YERU EBUEN

AS THE chill of winter starts to settle in, I find myself longing for an escape, and there's no place quite like Musandam to satisfy that craving. Tucked away at the northeastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, this hidden gem beckons with its breathtaking fjords and towering mountains, a true testament to nature's artistry.

Each time I think about Musandam, I'm reminded of its rich history, steeped in tales of ancient trade routes that once thrived in this strategic corridor. It's fascinating to realise that I'm in an area that plays a crucial role in the global oil trade, right next to the vital Strait of Hormuz. People often refer to this stunning governorate as the "Norway of Arabia," and it's easy to see why—its dramatic coastline and tranquil waters offer a peaceful retreat from the skyscrapers and hustle of nearby Dubai. In Musandam, I feel a world away, surrounded by rugged landscapes and a deep sense of history. The invitation to explore this stunning corner of the earth is irresistible, especially as winter wraps its lovely arms around the governorate.

Accessing Musandam is straightforward. Visitors can fly into Khasab's small airport, which has daily flights to Muscat, the capital of Oman. Alternatively, adventurous travellers can drive from Ras Al Khaimah, navigating through the stunning landscape that includes a single paved road and several rocky trails.

This route not only showcases the natural beauty of the region but also immerses visitors in its historical significance. Wilayat of Khasab, the capital of Musandam, has seen influences from the Portuguese and British empires, remnants of which are still visible today in the form of ancient forts and the historic Telegraph Island.

### DHOW CRUISE EXPERIENCE: FJORDS LIKE NO OTHER

During my winter trip to Musandam, one of the highlights was undoubtedly the dhow cruise through the fjords. As we glided along the crystal-clear waters, surrounded by towering mountains, the beauty of the landscape took my breath away. The traditional Omani boats, adorned with comfortable Arab cushions, provided a cozy atmosphere for relaxation. The cruise typically lasts two to three hours and includes stops for swimming and snorkelling in the vibrant coral reefs. The crew made the experience seamless by providing refreshments and snorkelling gear at no additional cost. The fjords of Musandam are simply a must-see for anyone visiting Oman. The combination of stunning scenery, the opportunity to spot playful dolphins, and the thrill of swimming in such pristine waters creates an experience that is both exhilarating and tranquil. I particularly recommend taking the early morning trip, where the likelihood of dolphin sightings increases, making for an unforgettable encounter.

In addition to the fjords, Musandam offers various activities for thrill-seekers and nature lovers. For those looking for



adventure, kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding along the coastline provides a unique way to explore the secluded bays and inlets. Hiking opportunities abound in the governorate's rugged mountains, where trails lead to panoramic views of the surrounding landscapes. Furthermore, local culture and hospitality shine through in traditional Omani cuisine, which can be savoured at local eateries and resorts.

### ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR TRAVELLERS

When planning your visit to Musandam, it's important to note a few logistical details. Visitors from many countries can obtain an Omani entry visa at the border, but it's essential to clear both Emirati and Omani customs. If travelling in a rental car from the UAE, ensure that you have appropriate insurance coverage for driving in Oman. The border crossing is generally quick and efficient, allowing you to focus on enjoying the natural beauty awaiting you. As I reflect on my adventures in Musandam, there's a strong feeling to convince people to consider this enchanting destination for your winter getaway. The serene ambiance of the fjords, the thrill of water activities, and the rich cultural experience make Musandam a perfect choice for those seeking both relaxation and adventure.