

HM's greetings conveyed to Malta

Myriam Spiteri Debono, President of the Republic of Malta, received at the Presidential Palace HH Sayyid Nizar bin al Julanda al Said who presented his credentials as a non-resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Malta. During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik along with his wishes of good health and happiness to the president, and further progress and prosperity to the people of Malta. **DETAILS ON P2**

SUNRISE - 06:14 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 04:57 AM
DHUHR - 11:55 PM
ASR - 03:08 PM
MAGHRIB - 05:32 PM
ISHA - 06:44 PM



P15

OMAN'S CENTRAL GREENMARKET SILAL TO EXPAND



P12

AL MASHAYKHI'S TRIUMPH INSPIRES OMAN'S FUTURE OLYMPIANS



P20

ASSALA VISITS MUSCAT CONNECTING GENERATIONS THROUGH SONGS



MUSCAT

HM SENDS CABLES OF GREETINGS

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

Sayyid Theyazin to open forum of sovereign wealth funds

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will officially open the annual meeting of the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSWF) on Monday, which will bring together more than 50 heads and members of sovereign wealth funds from 46 countries.

This year's meeting is set to be the largest since the forum's inception in 2009, featuring prominent speakers from around the globe. Among them is tech visionary Elon Musk, CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, who will deliver his address virtually. Joining him are Robert Smith, American businessman and investor; Antonio Crassis,

CEO of Valor; and Yan Yu, legal adviser to the International Monetary Fund. The conference and the accompanying meetings will review the latest topics related to global changes in the investment sector, such as energy transformation, artificial intelligence, supply chains and governance, in addition to the

social dimension in directing these investments. The meeting is also an opportunity to meet with senior executives from various sovereign wealth funds to discuss the most prominent contemporary global issues, exchange views on various investment and economic topics, and discuss the challenges facing

sovereign wealth funds. It is worth noting that the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds, in which the Oman Investment Authority obtained full membership in 2015, has a member wealth exceeding \$8 trillion, which represents 80 per cent of the assets of all sovereign wealth funds in the world.

VALENCIA

SPAIN FLOOD TOLL REACHES 211



The deadliest flash floods in Spain's modern history have killed at least 211 people and dozens were still unaccounted for, four days after torrential rains swept the eastern region of Valencia, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Saturday. In a televised statement, Sanchez said the government was sending 5,000 more army troops to help with the searches and clean-up in addition to 2,500 soldiers already deployed. "It is the biggest operation by the Armed Forces in Spain in peacetime," Sanchez said. "The government is going to mobilise all the resources necessary as long as they are needed." The tragedy is already Europe's worst flood-related disaster since 1967 when at least 500 people died in Portugal. **SEE ALSO P6**



The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has announced the first edition of (Raneen) contemporary art event, which will take place from November 21 to 30 in the historic town of Muttrah in the capital. Thirteen local artists, seven international artists and eight solo musicians will perform at three venues for 10 days. **DETAILS ON P2**

HAJ REGISTRATION BEGINS FROM MONDAY

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The online registration for performing Haj rituals for the Hijri year 1446 will begin on Monday, according to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. Omanis and expatriates aged 18 and above can log on to the website (<http://hajj.om>) for registration. The two-week long registration window will continue until November 17 following which the

ministry will scrutinise the applications and the results will be sent to the applicants. Speaking to the Observer, Abdulaziz bin Masoud al Ghafri, Deputy Chief of the Mission for the Affairs of Pilgrims and Haj Campaigns, said that as many as 14,000 applicants will be selected to perform Haj this year, and those selected will be informed in due course of time. Last week, the ministry issued a decision to form the Omani Haj Mission 1446 AH with Ahmed bin Ali al Kaabi as the Deputy Chief of

the Mission for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Abdulaziz bin Masoud al Ghafri, Deputy Chief of the Mission for the Affairs of Pilgrims and Haj Campaigns. Every year, the Omani Haj Mission is formed to extend support to pilgrims and assist them before, during and after performing Haj rituals. He further said that 13,586 applicants were selected to perform Haj last year, which included 6,683 men, constituting 49 per cent of the total and 6,903 women.

Israel strikes border crossing in Lebanon: UN

BEIRUT: UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi said an Israeli air strike hit "humanitarian structures" on Saturday at a border crossing between Lebanon and Syria that was previously hit last month. The crossing, known as Jousieh on the Syrian side, became a key escape route for those fleeing the Israel-Hezbollah war after the main border crossing between the two countries was hit. But it was put out of service late last month when an Israeli strike created a large crater that blocked vehicle traffic. "A new Israeli air strike hit the border post of Jousieh, where many Lebanese and Syrians cross from Lebanon to Syria," Grandi said on social media platform X. "Humanitarian structures were also struck," he said, adding that "even fleeing and taking care of those who flee are becoming difficult and dangerous as the war continues to spread." The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said two Israeli strikes hit the Jousieh crossing on Saturday. The raid came after the main crossing between Beirut and Damascus, known as Masnaa

on the Lebanese side, was forced to close by an Israel strike on October 4. There are six official crossings between Lebanon and Syria, although there are many unofficial routes across the porous border. Meanwhile, a suspected Israeli naval force landed in the northern Lebanese coastal town of Batroun and captured one person, a security source said, while another source confirmed the incident but did not say who was responsible. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said security forces were investigating the incident. There was no immediate comment from Israeli and Lebanese authorities. Pro-Hezbollah journalist Hassan Illaik said in a post on X that a large group of Israeli troops made a landing in the resort town and captured the man, before departing on speed boats. He shared CCTV footage appearing to show soldiers walking in a street, two of them holding a person. Lebanese Transport Minister Ali Hamiye, who represents Hezbollah in Lebanon's government, said the video was accurate but did not provide further details. **SEE ALSO P6**

Trump and Harris in last-minute election push

MILWAUKEE: Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump head to North Carolina on Saturday to try to clinch support in the southeastern battleground state just three days before Tuesday's US presidential election. It will be the fourth day in a row that Vice President Harris and former President Trump visit the same state on the same day, underlining the critical importance of the seven states likely to decide the race, which opinion polls show to be on a knife's edge. More than 70 million Americans have already cast ballots, according to the Election Lab at the University of Florida, below the record early-voting pace in 2020 during Covid-19, but still indicating a high level of voter enthusiasm. Saturday also marks the last day of early voting in North Carolina, where over 3.8



Supporters of Kamala Harris gather for a campaign rally in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday. – AFP

million votes have been cast, while the state's western reaches are still recovering from Hurricane Helene's deadly flooding. Harris plans appearances with rock star Jon Bon Jovi in Charlotte, the biggest city in North Carolina, which is tied with Georgia for the second-biggest prize of the swing states. Each has 16 votes in the Electoral College, where 270 are needed to secure the presidency. North Carolina backed Trump in 2020 by a narrow margin of less than 1.5 percentage points, and elected a Democratic governor on the same day, giving hope to both parties. "It is my plan and intention to continue to invest in American manufacturing, the work being done by American workers, upholding and lifting up good union jobs," Harris said on Saturday morning in Wisconsin, as she left for North Carolina. **SEE ALSO P7**



Displaced children play in the yard at a school turned into a shelter in eastern Lebanon's Deir Al Ahmar town on Saturday. – AFP

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

HM’S GREETINGS
CONVEYED TO
MALTESE PRESIDENT



MALTA: Myriam Spiteri Debono, President of the Republic of Malta, received at the Presidential Palace HH Sayyid Nizar bin al Julanda al Said who presented his credentials as a non-resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Malta. During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik along with his wishes of good health and happiness to the president, and further progress and prosperity to the people of Malta. For her part, the president of the Republic of Malta asked the ambassador to convey her greetings and good wishes to His Majesty the Sultan, wishing the Omani people further progress and prosperity under His Majesty’s wise leadership.

During the meeting, the president welcomed the ambassador wishing him a successful job and hoping that bilateral relations between the two countries would see further development and growth. — ONA



Preparations for Osaka Expo 2025 reviewed

PREPARATIONS
FOR EXPO 2025 OSAKA
REVIEWED

OSAKA: The main committee for the Sultanate of Oman’s participation in Expo 2025 Osaka, Japan, recently visited the site of Oman’s pavilion in Osaka to assess the latest preparations for the event. The delegation was led by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, who also serves as Vice-Chairman of the Main Committee for Oman’s Participation in Expo 2025.

During the visit, a meeting was conducted with the Expo Organising Committee to discuss the current preparations, developments and overall readiness for participation. Following this, the minister and the accompanying delegation conducted a field visit to the pavilion site to review and evaluate all details, ensuring the progress of work aligns with the established completion plan.

E-gates streamline travel
at Muscat Intl Airport

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, NOV 2

THE ELECTRONIC gates at the Muscat International Airport are helping passengers with ID cards (citizens) and expatriates with resident cards to clear the immigration process seamlessly both during arrival and departure with no human interaction.

The e-gate system, which is beneficial for arriving passengers, especially during peak travel, as it helps them avoid the queue and complete the formalities in a quick time, is also more advanced compared to previous ones that depended on fingerprint-based biometrics.

According to sources in Oman Airports, “The new gates have facial recognition that allows citizens and residents to use the system directly without showing their passports. Visitors to Oman will have to go through the normal immigration process, unlike some other airports in the region.” All a traveller has to do now is scan his or her ID card and wait for the camera to read their face which takes less than a minute under normal circumstances.

Speaking to Observer, some travellers, especially expatriates, are still skeptical about using the new system for obvious reasons. “If the e-gates do not accept our requests, we will have to return to the queue for staffed counters for stamping on passports, which is a time-



E-gates with facial recognition at Muscat International Airport

consuming process.”

Official sources admitted that there are chances of IDs of some passengers, including residents, being rejected due to technical reasons at the e-gates but that number is much less compared to a few months ago.

RÖP sources also suggested that ID card holders (except minors) should create a digital ID on their mobile app because as systems evolve, the entire immigration process can be completed just using the phone. Middle East passengers are the most likely to choose an airport for its facilities and services. A higher percentage book their flights through a channel where human interaction is involved than most other regions.

They are enthusiastic about using smartphones to store digital wallets, digital passports and loyalty cards for booking, payment and airport navigation. Over half have used biometrics instead of a passport for airport processes in the past 12 months, with nearly all reporting satisfaction with the experience, according to an IATA survey.

“Passengers are looking at speed and convenience at the airport. More are embracing biometrics, digital wallets and off-airport processes to make it happen,” said Nick Careen, IATA’s senior vice-president of operations, safety and security. The survey added that 70 per cent of passengers want to reach their boarding gate in 30 minutes or less when travelling with just a carry-on; 74 per cent expect it to take no longer than 45 minutes with a checked bag. 85 per cent are willing to share immigration data namely passport, and visa with authorities before departure to speed up the airport process.

About 89 per cent are interested in a trusted traveller programme to expedite security screening. 45 per cent said immigration procedures should be completed before reaching the airport, and 36 per cent feel the same about check-in. Additionally, 70 per cent of passengers said they’d be more likely to check in a bag if they could do so in advance. 46 per cent of travellers experienced airport processes using biometric identification.

Oman to host Arab Strategy for the
Elderly symposium on November 6

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 2

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, will host a symposium entitled ‘Implementing the Arab Strategy for the Elderly: Between Possibilities and Challenges’ on November 6, Wednesday. The symposium is being held with the aim of following up on the social and political dimensions of implementing the Arab Strategy for the Elderly.

This strategy was issued by the 30th Arab Summit, and the two-day symposium will be attended by approximately 200 participants interested in and working in the elderly sector from governmental, civil and private institutions from the Sultanate of Oman, and senior officials and experts specialising in the field of the elderly from Arab countries.

The symposium aims to follow up on the social and political dimensions of implementing the strategy, discuss the care and protection services

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The Sultanate of Oman will host the Arab Strategy for the Elderly symposium.

provided to the elderly, identify the challenges facing the implementation of this strategy and the mechanism for benefiting from the capabilities.

It has been organised by the Ministry of Social Development in partnership with the League of Arab States, the Ministry of Health, the Social Protection Fund, the Ihsan Association, the Omani Social Workers Association, the Omani Association for Elderly Health, the Omani Alzheimer’s Association, and a number of private sector institutions.

Robotics, scientific innovations contests conclude in Batinah South

AI RUSTAQ/AI BURAIMI: The Al Batinah South Education Department wrapped up its robotics, scientific innovations and drones competitions, marking the end of a three-day event at the Directorate-General of Education in Al Batinah South Governorate. Students from grades 5 to 12 across all schools in the governorate took part and attracted over 500 participants in 224 teams. The event included competitions in student scientific innovations, the ‘Sumo’ robot contest, and drone operations.

Khalil bin Mohammed al Luwaihi, Head of the Innovation and Scientific Olympiad Department, noted that these competitions serve as a local qualifier for the Student Scientific Innovation Competition and the Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Competition, allowing winning teams to advance to the ministry level. Successful projects will compete in the National Olympiad for Scientific Innovation, Robotics and Artificial

Intelligence, to be held in December at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. Al Luwaihi added that the winning projects will receive ongoing support to help refine students’ skills and talents for further national-level competitions.

The competition highlights and results are:

First Category: Shaikh Khalaf Bin Sinan Basic Education School emerged as the winner, followed by Thabet Bin Qais Basic Education School in second place and Mari Basic Education School in third.

Second Category: Al Ajal Primary School won first place, Asid Bin Hudhair Primary School took second, and Shaikh Khalaf Bin Sinan Primary School placed third.

‘Sumo’ Robot Competition: Third Category: First place went to Shaikh Khalaf Bin Sinan Basic Education School, with Wadi Bani Kharous Basic Education School and Shaikh Khalaf Bin Sinan Basic Education



Robotics, scientific innovations competitions concluded in Al Buraimi.

School taking second and third places, respectively.

Drone Competition: Wadi Bani Kharous Basic Education School secured first place, and Shaikh Khalaf Bin Sinan Basic Education School coming in second.

Student Scientific Innovations: Eight projects from various schools qualified



The robotics, scientific innovations contests concluded in Al Batinah South.

for the Sultanate-level competition in categories such as IT, science, biology, environmental sciences and engineering. Noteworthy projects include ‘Medicine on Time’ from Mari Basic School and ‘Auto Refiller’ from Abdullah Bin Ibadh Primary School.

The robotics, scientific innovations and drones competitions in Al Buraimi

Governorate concluded with students competing at the Al Buraimi Education Department. This year’s qualifiers included 28 teams in robotics, divided into three age categories. Winners from each category will represent Al Buraimi at the Sultanate-level competition.

In addition, 38 scientific innovation projects from different schools vied for top spots across four competition centres at the national level. These events provide students with an opportunity to showcase their skills and creativity in fields such as programming, robotics and AI. Besides technical development, the competition encourages a spirit of healthy competition and fosters an environment that supports innovation in modern technologies. Both events in Al Batinah South and Al Buraimi demonstrate Oman’s commitment to fostering scientific inquiry, creativity and technological advancements among students across Oman. — ONA

SHORT TAKES

OMANI DELEGATION
HOLDS TALKS WITH
PAKISTAN DY PM



Omani delegation engages with Ishaq Dar, Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister

MUSCAT: A high-profile delegation from Oman, representing the Pakistani diaspora, met with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Ishaq Dar, to discuss developments in business and community affairs. The meeting was led by Dr Farooq Sattar, Chairman of the Privatisation Committee, and included influential members from Oman's business and social sectors. The delegation featured Syed Harris Ali, CEO of AZ Engineering, known for infrastructure projects in Oman; C Mohammed Aslam, a prominent businessman; Qamar Riaz, CEO of Mountain Tops Investment; Shaandar Bukhari, renowned for his social welfare efforts; Ahmed Subhani, an entrepreneur; Imran Siddiqui, Country Manager of Eastern Gateway Shipping; and Zaib Jaffery, CEO of Syed Hassan Trad.

During the discussion, the delegation shared the success of the recent Pak Oman Expo and extended an invitation for the Deputy Prime Minister to visit Oman. Dr Farooq Sattar praised Dr Imran Ali, the Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman, for his dedication in organising the expo, revitalising community schools, and securing new premises for a school, alongside efforts to establish a new embassy building. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar lauded the delegation's efforts to enhance Pakistan-Oman relations, recognising the visit as a valuable step towards strengthening diplomatic and economic ties.

Plans to evaluate public
transport system in Oman

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, NOV 2

THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, Communications and Information Technology will have a complete evaluation of the public transport network in the country through a consultancy, which will be selected by a bidding process.

The selected consultant will be responsible for conducting an evaluation of current public transport services in Oman within and between major cities and as well as between the neighbouring countries.

The study will focus on bus route analysis, scheduling, ridership data and service coverage; as well as the intercity network coverage and cost. Additionally, the consultant will be responsible for analysing demographic and geographic data to identify areas of potential growth and need for additional service in alignment with the structure plans, including the one for Greater Muscat and other cities.

This evaluation involves a comprehensive analysis of potential routes, including the identification of key destinations, stops, service frequency, Omanisation, fleet age and added value elements. The consultant should recommend the metrics through which the results of the evaluation can be benchmarked to conduct gap analysis considering regional and global experiences and incorporating inputs from Oman economy, population, existing bus routes, culture and other logical criteria. Benchmarking should consider factors such as projected ridership, cost-effectiveness and community needs.

It may be noted that in 2014, an interna-



The study will focus on bus route analysis, scheduling, ridership data and service coverage; as well as the intercity network coverage and cost.

tional engineering and consultancy firm company prepared a Public Transport Master Plan (PTMP) for the Oman National Transport Company (ONTC), which included building a system for bus network in the capital.

The study focused on developing inter-city and city bus services. Subsequently in November 2015, the ONTC was rebranded to Mwasalat and bus services were expanded from two to the entire city, and later to Salalah and Suhar.

The Greater Muscat Structure Plan (GMSP)

places lots of importance on connectivity via public transportation and less dependence on private vehicles, according to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

The development of public transport is important to reduce dependence on private vehicles, traffic congestion, accidents and also carbon emissions. The proposed metro line will start from Sultan Haitham City and will have important stations at Muscat International Airport, CBD Ghala, Al Khuwair Downtown, and finally the CBD Ruwi.



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Directors' Report

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to present to you the financial results of the Company for the nine-month period ended September 30, 2024.

While the global economy has been resilient, with signs of steady growth and gradually looser monetary policy, the restrained business sentiments that were witnessed during the first half of the year have still not fully normalized. The continuing regional geo-political tensions are also contributing to a more cautious approach to business growth in our geographies.

With a well-diversified geographical presence across Oman (23 branches), coupled with a broad product profile, your company is well positioned to provide innovative and financial solutions for both Retail and SME segments. We continue to improve our technological capabilities to be aligned with the digital transformation happening across the world, in order to provide solutions that deliver best in class customer experience.

National Finance continues to adopt a prudent approach to credit approvals keeping in view the overall macroeconomic scenario and perceived increase in credit risk. Within this policy, our approach has been to target customers who satisfy our credit risk appetite. We anticipate a reasonable growth to our asset base in the medium term.

National Finance's total regulatory capital of RO 143.70 million is the highest among Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) which gives us a strong base

on which to build our business. Your company remains the largest finance and leasing Company in the Sultanate in terms of asset size, branch network, revenues and profit.

The operating profit (profit before provision and tax) was at RO 13.48 million (RO 11.25 million in September 2023), an increase of 19.81% during this period. The Net Investment in Lease was at RO 565.92 million (RO 486.86 million in December 2023), a growth of 16.24% during the period. Profit after tax was RO 8.75 million as compared to RO 8.01 million in September 2023 reflecting an increase of 9.34%.

The company remains committed to Omanisation and as of September 30, 2024, the number of Omani employees was 340 out of the total workforce of 372. The Omanisation percentage works out to 91.40% which is higher than the given target of 90%. Your Company continues to remain committed to providing career growth and development of Omani nationals through ongoing training programs in line with their job requirement. We will continue to maintain momentum on employee engagement initiatives, development of future skills, managerial and leadership capabilities for their professional development.

During Q3, 2024, your company won the "Best Employer" award at the Employer Awards-Oman 2024. The award is a testament to its dedication to fostering a vibrant work culture built on trust, team spirit and growth. The company remains dedicated to employee development,

contributing to a promising future for the country. In alignment with the company's ESG strategy and in order to enhance the positive impact on the community it operates in, National Finance has implemented several initiatives. The Company partnered with Environment Society Oman (ESO) to launch the "Green Campus" initiative. The initiative is designed to enhance environmental awareness and inspire a sense of environmental responsibility among youth. The company also continued its partnership with Dar Al A'taa to support its "Tamkeen Program" which aims to equip individuals from underprivileged backgrounds with essential skills and qualifications. This agreement aims to support individuals to become certified dental assistants. The Company renewed its tie-up with Injaz Oman, a program that supports students to establish student companies and provides guidance and support to accelerate their projects. The Company also launched a volunteer group "Himmah" that identifies volunteer opportunities to support the local community.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all stakeholders especially the regulators and customers for the support extended towards the growth of the Company. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we also thank the staff for their dedication and hard work which has enabled us to establish ourselves as the most trusted company in the sector.

Hani Muhammad Al Zubair
Chairman

Unaudited Condensed Interim Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income For The			
	Nine months ended 30 September 2024 RO '000	Nine months ended 30 September 2023 RO '000	
Income			
Income from financing activities	43,875	35,472	
Finance cost	(21,222)	(16,517)	
Net finance income	22,653	18,955	
Other operating income	2,050	1,888	
	24,703	20,843	
Expenses			
Operating expenses	(10,332)	(8,914)	
Depreciation	(615)	(415)	
Amortisation	(274)	(260)	
Net impairment loss on finance leases, working capital			
finance and factoring receivables	(3,037)	(1,811)	
Bad debts written off	(147)	(25)	
Total expenses	(14,405)	(11,425)	
Profit before tax	10,298	9,418	
Income tax expense	(1,545)	(1,413)	
Profit after tax	8,753	8,005	
Other comprehensive income			
<i>Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss</i>			
Movement on revaluation of Land & Building – net of tax	15	6	
<i>Items that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss</i>			
Change in fair value of cash flow hedge	(429)	(445)	
Other comprehensive loss	(414)	(439)	
Total comprehensive income	8,339	7,566	
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.015	0.014	
Unaudited Condensed Interim Statement of Financial Position As At			
	30 September 2024 RO '000	30 September 2023 RO '000	31 December 2023 RO '000
ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	7,496	7,592	5,559
Net investment in finance leases	448,917	381,793	397,162
Working capital	116,496	82,284	89,544
Factoring receivables	510	251	149
Advances, prepayments and other receivables	6,187	5,149	4,843
Asset held for sale	1,500	1,500	1,500
Goodwill	5,950	5,950	5,950
Intangible assets	231	482	424
Property, equipment and right-of-use assets	7,454	6,427	7,105
Statutory deposit	250	250	250
Total assets	594,991	491,678	512,486
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
LIABILITIES			
Creditors and accruals	15,553	13,472	9,889
Tax liabilities	2,095	2,360	2,798
Bank borrowings	381,514	334,885	351,736
Fixed deposits	50,570	36,732	40,343
Deferred tax liabilities	861	697	863
Provision for employees' end of service benefits	701	595	617
Total liabilities	451,295	388,741	406,247
EQUITY			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	57,370	57,370	57,370
Share premium	5,786	5,786	5,786
Revaluation reserve	1,405	1,017	1,420
Foreign currency reserve	-	-	-
Voluntary reserve	-	3,000	-
Cash flow hedge reserve	197	828	626
Impairment reserve	7,717	-	7,717
Legal reserve	11,487	10,376	11,487
Retained earnings	24,734	24,560	21,833
Total shareholders' equity attributable to the equity holders of the company	108,696	102,937	106,239
Perpetual bonds	35,000	-	-
Total equity	143,696	102,937	106,239
Total liabilities and equity	594,991	491,678	512,486
Net assets per share (RO)	0.189	0.179	0.185
Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests the company in either Arabic or English with 7 days of receipt of the request. The full set of financials are available in the website of Muscat Stock Exchange.			

SPOTLIGHT

WORRYING
TREND



SUICIDES
AMONG teenagers, which was unheard earlier, is now a worrying trend. Globally, suicide is the third leading cause of death among those aged 15–29 years old. This calls for a better understanding this behaviour as by discussing the developmental and psychological challenges faced during school years one may be able to develop effective strategies prevent suicide in this age group.

Dr Hamed al Sinawi, a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, says suicide can be attributed to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders. Family Environment can also play a part especially when there is Dysfunctional family dynamics, abuse, or neglect.

“Academic pressure and high expectations from parents and peers and fear of failure or getting low score can also lead to suicidal behaviours. Bullying is another factor that needs to be addressed whether it’s physical, verbal, and cyber bullying as there are evidence linking bullying to poor mental health which increases the risk of suicide. School children who are experiencing social isolation are also at risk as they tend to have more loneliness and difficulty in forming relationships.”

**KABEER
YOUSUF**
@kabeeryousef



DON'T
PUT YOUR
KID IN A
PRESSURE
COOKER

He goes further adding that easy availability of methods to attempt suicide and television movies and video clips showing suicide also provoke someone to self-harm. Many of the above-mentioned factors apply to the situation in Oman, particularly bullying which can have devastating impact on young people.

N Nandhini, a psychotherapist, says that she has personally seen how academic and social pressures can impact a child’s well-being through her elder son. “He struggled to balance his studies, playtime, and friendships, which began to affect him emotionally. We decided to enrol him in a residential school to give him more space for growth and social interaction, and we’ve noticed a remarkable positive difference.”

Dr Sinawi suggests some preventative measure need to be implemented to address suicidal behaviour starting from awareness programmes for parents and teachers to be mindful about behaviours that would single emotional distress on the student. “School should also adopt strategies to deal with bullying. One may ask if school children these days are less strong to face adversities? In my opinion, parenting styles have changed over the years. We see more overprotective parents who provide everything the child demands which teaches him or her that everything is available and when they are faced with the harsh reality they don’t know how to cope with it. Also, parents who demand high grades from their children put them under more stress and the child becomes constantly preoccupied with how not to let their parents down. Dr Vijay Ram Naresh, a psychiatrist, raises a few points which will answer all the questions that the parents have confronted with, helping the children handle adversities which is a social/cognitive skill just like any other skill.

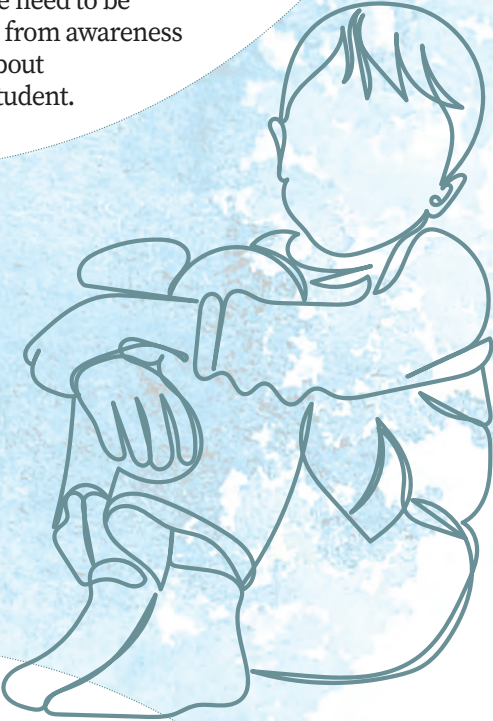
“Will our children ever learn swimming if we just visit the pool or sea without taking them along. They can’t learn to swim without getting into the water and wetting themselves.”

His second point is that both school and parents are not ready to accept the range of normalcy and uniqueness of an individual.

Lata Mangeshkar never played cricket. Sachin Tendulkar never attempted singing. But now every parent wants their child to be the best in everything (all-rounders). This definitely brings stress, he said.

“Thirdly, exposure to social media has increased the element of “fear of missing out, FOMO” in children so the current generation is stressed from within too,” said Dr Vijay.

Combination of these is keeping our “generationx” more stressed and vulnerable, he said.



SUICIDE
IS THE THIRD
LEADING CAUSE
OF DEATH

MENTAL HEALTH
DISORDERS



SHORTTAKES

National Museum approves report, plan



MUSCAT: The National Museum's Board of Trustees held its meeting under the chairmanship of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism and Chairman of the National Museum's Board of Trustees. The meeting discussed approving the Museum's annual report for 2024, along with the Museum's annual plan for 2025, as well as work plans and programmes related to cultural diplomacy and international cooperation. — ONA

SunExpress gets nod for Muscat flights



MUSCAT: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has approved the operation of Turkish airline SunExpress for regular services. The airline will operate two weekly flights per week between Muscat and Trabzon, starting October 30.

SunExpress, a joint venture of Lufthansa and Turkish Airlines, will operate two weekly flights on (Wednesday and Saturday) as part of its strategic expansion, aimed at providing Omani travellers with seamless access to one of Türkiye's most captivating destinations.

Booklet documenting fossils released

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 2



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) recently released the National Fossil Collection Data Booklet, the second part of a series of documentary releases based on data from the Natural History Museum.

The 111-page booklet contains a comprehensive introduction to fossils and their formations, types, and classifications. It includes documentation of the scientific names of fossils preserved in the Natural History Museum, along with their descriptive data, age, and the locations from which they were collected across the Sultanate of Oman.

The term 'fossils' is defined as the remains and traces of plants or animals

that lived in prehistoric ages and were preserved underground or on the earth's surface. Fossils are scattered across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, indicating the rich biodiversity that existed in the Sultanate of Oman due to diverse climates and environments throughout history.

The National Fossil Collection comprises over 1,400 rare specimens, including fossilised trees and plants, bones of extinct

animals such as dinosaurs, elephants, and monkeys that lived in Oman in ancient times, as well as reptiles and amphibians such as crocodiles and turtles.

The collection also contains various marine fossils, including molluscs, arthropods, and primitive fish. Additionally, it includes non-fossil formations such as geodes, desert roses, flints, and a multitude of minerals and rocks discovered in the Sultanate of Oman.

The oldest fossils in the museum date back 570 million years, including fossilised stromatolite, a primitive single-celled bacterial algae found in the Sidr area near the Wilayat of Al Duqm. This adds an exceptional scientific and historical dimension to the National Fossil Collection of the Natural History Museum.

FIERCE BEAUTY OF THE RED-BACKED SHRIKE



Text and photos by **Yahya Al Salmani**

The Red-Backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) is a fierce wild, attractive bird with a distinctive and beautiful appearance. The Red-Backed Shrike is found widely in Europe, Asia Minor, Russia, South Africa, and some Middle Eastern countries.

This bird can live in a variety of habitats, such as open forests, especially those rich in acacia tree. Like all birds, the Red-Backed Shrike feeds mainly on insects such as beetles and locusts, and small frogs and lizards.

It is easy to notice the difference between the male and female Red-Backed Shrike. The males are distinguished

by the black mask on their face and their body covered with light brown feathers without any lines, along with a black tail with white lines on the sides. The females have a brown head with a spot on their cheeks and their bodies are striped in gray and black.

In July, the male begins to choose a site to build the nest, which is usually more than 2 metres high in thorny or coniferous bushes. The nest-building process takes about a week. The bird can now be seen in the pastures and mountains of Dhofar, often found in thorny trees while trying to catch its food of insects and small creatures.

Accessible travel gains momentum in Oman

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

SIX German nationals, including four individuals with physical disabilities who use wheelchairs, along with two of their friends, are currently on a courtesy visit to the Sultanate of Oman, thanks to the emerging trend of Accessible Tourism.

Accessible travel, also known as Inclusive or Barrier-free Tourism, is a rapidly growing segment in the industry with significant economic potential, as well as being a meaningful social cause. This branch of tourism focuses on ensuring that tourist destinations, products, and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical or intellectual limitations, disabilities, or age.

“We have been working on creating products in Oman for this specific segment, and now we have the first group of people from Germany exploring various iconic landmarks and tourist locations in the Sultanate of Oman,” said Ejaz Kazi of Eazy Travel, the company that organised the trip.

“We are delighted to announce that we have a German group, along with a small group of other visitors, exploring different tourist destinations in Oman,” he added.

These physically challenged guests, accompanied by their friends, visited Salalah and then embarked on a detailed tour of Old Muscat, including a dhow cruise, providing them with a glimpse into the city's rich history, culture, and tradition. They also visited the Al Jalali and Al



Mirani Forts, where they learned about the forts' historical significance, particularly during the Portuguese occupation.

“This tour was carefully designed to provide a comfortable and engaging experience for wheelchair guests, combining historical landmarks, stunning architecture, and local culture,” said Robby, Head of Tours at EVOLVE by E Travel.

Although the forts themselves were not accessible, the guides ensured that the guests could admire them from accessible vantage points, sharing fascinating stories about Oman's history. The guides also assisted the guests in navigating the souq and finding unique souvenirs to take home. The day ended with a sunset dhow

cruise, where the guests were able to enjoy a tranquil experience aboard a traditional Omani dhow.

"It was a marvellous experience cruising along the sea in Oman. We were pleasantly surprised by the beautifully crafted wooden boats, which have been used by Omani sailors for centuries," said the visitors.

Accessible tourism is becoming increasingly popular in Oman, with authorities working to improve amenities for people with limited mobility. Malls, retail outlets, tourist destinations, and new buildings under construction are being encouraged to provide facilities for individuals with disabilities, including ramps for wheelchair access.



سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology



إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCIT 267/2024	EVALUATION OF OMAN'S PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK	31-10-2024	14-11-2024	8-12-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST CLASSES)	(300/-) THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) (300/-) THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCIT 269/2024	PURCHASE NEW FIREWALL FOR ALL MINISTRY BRANCHES	31-10-2024	7-11-2024	1-12-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (ALL CLASSES)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCIT 270/2024	PREPARATION OF SHIP REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT OFFICES ON SOUTH ALSHARQIAH GOVERNORATE	31-10-2024	14-11-2024	28-11-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (THIRD & FOURTH CLASSES)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200, e-mail :etenderhd@gstb.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE



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www.mtcit.gov.om

WORLD

SHORTTAKES



Officials appear during the closing session of the UN COP16 nature summit, Colombia. — Reuters

UN NATURE SUMMIT AGREES ON BODY FOR INDIGENOUS

CALI, COLOMBIA: The world’s largest nature protection conference has agreed in Cali, Colombia, to establish a permanent body representing Indigenous peoples under the UN’s biodiversity convention. Representatives of Indigenous communities, many wearing traditional attire and headgear, cheered as 196 countries agreed to form a “subsidiary body” dedicated to issues relevant to Indigenous peoples and local communities. This decision marked the first major breakthrough at the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the UN’s Convention on Biodiversity, which began in Cali nearly two weeks ago and extended into overtime. “This is an unprecedented moment in the history of multilateral environmental agreements,” stated Camila Romero, an Indigenous representative from Chile, addressing delegates after the adoption at the summit themed “Peace with Nature.” She added, “Parties have recognised the urgent need for our full and effective participation, along with our knowledge, innovations and technology.” — AFP



People light candles to pay their respects to those killed in the roof collapse in Novi Sad. — AFP

SERBIA OPENS INVESTIGATION INTO BUILDING COLLAPSE

NOVI SAD: Serbia concluded a rescue operation and opened an investigation into a roof collapse that killed 14 people and injured three others at a railway station in the northern city of Novi Sad. At least two children were among those killed in the disaster, which occurred on Friday when a length of roofing along the entrance to the station collapsed on a sunny day. Rescuers worked into the night, using heavy construction machinery to recover the bodies of those killed and rescue the injured from beneath the rubble. The station, located about 70 km northwest of Belgrade, underwent renovations in 2021 and 2022. Other minor works continued until July this year, when the Transport Ministry stated that a total of €16 million had been invested in the renovation. Transport Minister Goran Vesic said the inquiry, led by prosecutors in Novi Sad, would involve the state Traffic Institute, the state railway company, and the Chinese consortium responsible for the renovation work. — AFP

FORECAST ALERT

Japan urges 200,000 people to evacuate



Nearly 200,000 people in western Japan were urged to evacuate as authorities warned of landslides and floods while the remnants of a tropical storm trickle. The Japan Meteorological Agency said “warm, moist air was causing heavy rainfall with thunderstorms in western Japan,” partly due to Kong-rey. The city of Matsuyama issued the top-level warning, urging 189,552 residents in its 10 districts to evacuate and immediately secure safety. — AFP

ZELENSKY SAYS KYIV COMES UNDER HEAVY RUSSIAN DRONE ATTACK

KYIV: Ukraine said on Saturday that Kyiv had come under a heavy drone attack overnight, as fresh explosions were heard in the capital and other regions were struck. ‘Unfortunately, the attack by Russian drones caused damage and casualties in various districts of Kyiv,’ President Volodymyr Zelensky said. He said that the ‘constant terrorist attacks on Ukrainian cities prove that the pressure on Russia and its accomplices is not enough.’

Reporters heard new explosions in Kyiv on Saturday afternoon amid an air raid alert. In the morning, Ukraine’s air force reported it had shot down 39 out of 71 drones launched from Russia overnight. The drones targeted the Kyiv region surrounding the capital, the Sumy border region, as well as the central Kirovograd and Poltava regions. Twenty-one drones were lost, and five returned to Russia, the air force said, adding that the drone attack was

continuing. The air force said debris from downed drones had damaged houses and blocks of flats in four regions, including Kyiv, Sumy and the Black Sea Odesa region. Kyiv’s military administration reported that debris from air defences shooting down drones fell in six districts of the capital, damaging blocks of flats and cars and sparking several fires in buildings, which were extinguished. A policeman was injured. — AFP



Members of the military work to clear mud and debris in the town of Catarroja, in Valencia, eastern Spain. — AFP

SPAIN SENDS MORE TROOPS TO FLOOD-HIT REGION

VALENCIA: Spain will deploy 10,000 additional troops and police officers to the eastern Valencia region devastated by historic floods that have killed 211 people, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Saturday. Hopes of finding survivors, more than three days after torrents of muddy water submerged towns and wrecked infrastructure, were slim in the European country’s deadliest disaster of this kind in decades. Almost all the deaths have been recorded in the eastern Valencia region, where thousands of security and emergency

services personnel are frantically clearing debris and mud in the search for bodies. Sanchez said in a televised address that the disaster was the second deadliest flood in Europe this century and announced a significant increase in security forces for relief efforts. The government had accepted the Valencia region leader’s request for 5,000 additional troops and informed him of a further deployment of 5,000 police officers and civil guards, Sanchez said. Spain was conducting its largest deployment of army and security force personnel in peacetime, he added. — AFP

Deadly Israeli strikes on ‘apocalyptic’ north Gaza

GAZA: Israel on Saturday again carried out deadly air strikes on north Gaza, where the UN describes conditions as “apocalyptic”, while Lebanon’s Hezbollah intensified rocket fire near Israel’s commercial hub of Tel Aviv on Israel’s second front. Since late September, Israel has been engaged in full-scale war against Hezbollah in Lebanon, with ongoing fighting against Palestinians in Gaza. The conflict risks further escalation as Israel and Iran have attacked each other over recent months. Iran’s supreme leader vowed on Saturday a further response to attacks against the republic and its allies. Since October 6, Israeli forces have launched a major air and ground assault on north Gaza, focusing on the Jabalia area, aiming to prevent Hamas from regrouping. “The situation unfolding in north Gaza is apocalyptic,” said a joint statement by UN agency heads. “The area has been under siege for almost a month, denied basic aid and life-saving supplies while bombardment and other attacks continue,” added the heads of the humanitarian, health, and other agencies. “The entire Palestinian population in north Gaza faces imminent risk from disease, famine, and violence.” Witnesses reported that Israeli warplanes hit Beit Lahia, near Jabalia, twice overnight. Medics and Gaza’s civil defence rescuers reported three fatalities on Saturday following a strike on Nuseirat in central Gaza, a day after images depicted blood-stained shrouds of those killed in an Israeli strike there. After nearly a year of exchanges on Israel’s northern border, Hezbollah escalated its support for Hamas on September 23, prompting Israel to intensify its bombing campaign in Lebanon and deploy ground troops. Hezbol-



Palestinians use bicycles to navigate a devastated street in Gaza City. — AFP

lah has since extended its attacks deeper into Israel. An attack in Israel’s Sharon area, north of Tel Aviv, injured 19 people, police said early Saturday, following army reports of three projectiles launched from Lebanon into central Israel. Four of the injured were described as “in moderate condition,” police added. Hezbollah announced further rocket attacks on Israel’s Gilot intelligence base near Tel

Aviv. On Saturday, the Israeli military reported intercepting three drones over the Red Sea, following the launch of seven drones from “multiple fronts” on Friday. Iraqi groups later claimed responsibility for a drone attack on Eilat, Israel’s southern port town. Israel’s ongoing military operations have reportedly resulted in 43,259 fatalities in Gaza, mostly civilians, according to Gaza’s health ministry, which the UN deems reliable. — AFP

DRAMATIC CLASHES

Morales supporters storm military barracks



Supporters of Bolivia’s former president Evo Morales stormed military barracks in central Chapare province and took around 20 soldiers hostage, marking a dramatic escalation in their standoff with the state. The hostage situation comes nearly three weeks after backers of Morales — the country’s first Indigenous leader — began blocking roads to prevent his arrest on what he calls trumped-up charges aimed at thwarting his political comeback. — AFP

BUDGET BOOST

Starmer pledges more growth reforms



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer promised on Saturday reforms to speed up the economy and overhaul the public sector after the Labour government’s first budget failed to send government bond prices into a two-day dive. Keir Starmer said the budget was a “first step on our mission for growth” but also opened the way for reform of “our creaking central state” and its public services as well as more private sector investment. — Reuters

US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2024



STRATEGIC SUPPORT



Hungarian PM Viktor Orban looks on during a panel discussion in Vienna. — AFP file photo

HUNGARY’S ORBAN BETS ON TRUMP VICTORY

BUDAPEST: It is no secret who Viktor Orban favours in the US presidential election on Tuesday, with Hungary’s nationalist leader saying publicly that he will celebrate if his “dear friend” Donald Trump wins. It is a political friendship that the Hungarian prime minister — whose illiberal policies and pro-Russian stance have made him a bete noire in the European Union — has spent years cultivating, and he could gain a powerful ally if Trump returns to the White House.

One of the key people tasked with making the connection between Orban’s “illiberal democracy” and US conservatives is Rod Dreher, a renowned American right-wing thinker and writer who works a few minutes’ walk from Orban’s seat of power inside Buda Castle. “He had nothing to lose by coming out 100 per cent for Trump,” Dreher said, adding that Hungary could “hit the jackpot” and gain a “powerful friend in its eternal struggle against the Brussels bullies.” Hungary, which currently holds the EU’s rotating presidency, has frequent run-ins with Brussels over the rule of law and a wide range of other issues.

A public bromance between the two has bloomed. Trump recently described Orban as “one of the most respected men” and “a tough person, smart.” The Hungarian leader said on X he had called Trump on Thursday to wish him “the best of luck” for the elections. They express strikingly similar political views, both fancying themselves as tough on immigration, for instance.

Orban was the first Western leader to have given Trump his support just after he was nominated by the Republicans as their candidate in 2016. “Project 2025 is reminiscent of Hungarian government practices of keeping the façade of democratic structures in place, but bringing strategic areas such as media, judiciary or education under political control behind the scenes,” independent analyst Mate Kalo said. — AFP

Harris, Trump go toe to toe in frenzied campaign

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris and Donald Trump enter the final weekend of the most tense US presidential campaign of modern times with a flurry of swing-state rallies that will test their stamina — and ability to persuade the country’s last undecided voters.

Harris, bidding to become the country’s first woman president, will use rallies in Georgia, North Carolina and Michigan to drive home her message that Trump is a threat to US democracy.

Trump — seeking a sensational return to the White House after losing in 2020 and then becoming the first presidential nominee to have been convicted of crimes — promises a radical right-wing makeover of the government and aggressive trade wars to promote his policy of “America first.”

The 78-year-old, who rallied in Milwaukee, Wisconsin late on Friday just miles from Harris’s event there, will all but cross paths with her again as Trump makes whistle-stops in North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Georgia.

Their frenetic schedule will run right into Monday, culminating with late-night rallies — in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for Trump and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for Harris.

Election Day is Tuesday but Americans have been voting early for weeks, with more than 70 million ballots already cast — including a record four million in Georgia, where Democrats seek to pull out all the stops to keep the state in their column.

Opinion polls continue to show a tied race, particularly in the seven battleground states likely to determine the result in the US electoral college system, leaving the Republican businessman and his 60-year-old Democratic rival fighting hard to peel off even slivers of support from one another’s camps.

Harris, currently President Joe Biden’s vice-president, is doing that by appealing to centrist voters and



Supporters of former president and Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump gather to wave American flags in Easton, Pennsylvania. — AFP

Election Day is Tuesday but Americans have been voting early for weeks, with more than 70 million ballots already cast — including a record four million in Georgia

propelling her base to the polls with a robust ground game and get-out-the-vote effort.

And by painting Trump as a toxic authoritarian, she is also encouraging voters to “finally turn the page” on the former president.

“He is someone who is increasingly unstable, obsessed with revenge, consumed with grievance — and the man is out for unchecked power,” she told supporters in Little Chute, Wisconsin.

Trump, meanwhile, has doubled down on his already extreme rhetoric in hopes of firing up his loyal base to turn out in massive numbers.

“Kamala’s closing message to America is that she hates you,”

Trump fumed on Friday night in Warren, Michigan, where he trashed the economy under Biden and Harris as a disaster — which economists say it clearly is not — and warned that “a 1929-style economic depression” would ensue if Harris were elected.

Citing her hawkish foreign policy views, Trump earlier had conjured the image of former Republican representative turned Harris supporter Liz Cheney being shot.

“She’s a radical war hawk. Let’s put her with a rifle standing there with nine barrels shooting at her, OK? Let’s see how she feels about it, you know, when the guns are trained on her face,” Trump said on Friday. — AFP

NORTH CAROLINA MARKS THE ELECTION EDGE



People queue as a child holds a picture of Republican presidential nominee and former US president Donald Trump, in Gastonia, North Carolina, US — Reuters

MILWAUKEE: Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump headed to North Carolina on Saturday to try to clinch support in the southeastern battleground state just three days before Tuesday’s US presidential election. Saturday marked the last day of early voting in North Carolina, where over 3.8 million votes have been cast, while the state’s western reaches are still recovering from Hurricane Helene’s deadly flooding. Harris planned appearances with rock star Jon Bon Jovi in Charlotte, the biggest city in North Carolina, which is tied with Georgia for the

second-biggest prize of the swing states. Each has 16 votes in the Electoral College, where 270 are needed to secure the presidency. North Carolina backed Trump in 2020 but elected a Democratic governor on the same day, giving hope to both parties. “We have an opportunity in this election to turn the page on a decade of Donald Trump, who has spent full time trying to have the American people point fingers at each other,” Harris said at a rally in Janesville, Wisconsin. Trump was set to hold a rally in Gastonia, west of Charlotte, before returning to the state in the evening. — Reuters

US election: fierce battle for Congress

WASHINGTON: For the wider world, the US election is all about who gets to move into the White House, but for many Americans, the battle for control of Congress is just as important — and looks set to go down to the wire.

While the presidential race sucks up all the oxygen, hundreds of congressional districts nationwide will determine whether the incoming leader gets a unified government dedicated to enacting his or her agenda or bureaucratic deadlocks.

“Congressional elections are just as important as the presidential race because Congress creates and passes the laws that directly impact people’s lives,” said Corryn Freeman of Future Coalition, an organisation that supports youth activists nationwide.

“The public should pay close attention since control of Congress determines the direction of key issues like health care, education and climate policy — often having a more immediate effect than presidential decisions.”

The US Capitol, the neoclassical citadel of American democracy overlooking Washington’s



A general view of the US Capitol building in Washington. — Reuters file photo

National Mall, is divided into the House of Representatives, where all 435 seats are up for grabs — and a 100-member upper chamber, the Senate, where 34 seats are available.

When Republican candidate Donald Trump was last in power, he was blocked by Congress as he sought deep cuts to the State Department and an end to the Obamacare health insurance programme, and lawmakers could stand in his way again if he returns to the Oval Office. The two sides vying for control of Congress could

hardly be more evenly matched in the final weekend before 5th of November.

Control of the House looks like a toss-up, while the Senate is likely to flip by a razor-thin margin to the Republicans because of the challenging election map for Democrats.

The party of Trump’s presidential rival Kamala Harris has a narrow one-seat Senate majority but is defending around two-thirds of the seats up for election.

Democrats begin election night with a default deficit of one as they have no chance of hanging on to retiring moderate Joe Manchin’s seat in West Virginia, one of the most fervently Trumpist states in the union.

Republicans need to flip just one other battleground to have an outright majority and are targeting Montana and Ohio, two more right-leaning states with longstanding Democratic incumbents.

Democrats are hoping to offset any losses by unseating Florida’s Rick Scott, whose lead has been cut to five points, or Ted Cruz, who is just four points ahead and in danger of relinquishing his party’s nearly three-decade grip on Texas. — AFP

OPINION

Introvert, extrovert, or just restless?



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

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

HAVE recently come across a podcast called ‘What It Means to Be a Nomad,’ where a traveller in his late twenties was sharing his unique experiences of being constantly on the move, discovering new worlds and cultures, and living new experiences. He talked about the freedom and continuous learning it offers and the challenges faced in balancing personal and professional life.

He spoke about the year he spent in Mexico during Covid-19 visiting small villages meeting the locals and living their simple lives.

He then travelled to Ethiopia and found himself caught in a civil war spending days in a dirty house with lots of bed bugs and limited access to food and clean water which led him to go days without showering.

His family was extremely worried about him. Luckily, he was able to call his embassy, and a group of locals were able to rescue him so he could fly out of Ethiopia.

As I listened to him, I was thinking how impulsive and careless he was hitchhiking in a foreign land sleeping in strangers’ homes, and subjecting himself to the risk of

being mugged or kidnapped, and for what? I was interested in finding out the possible motives behind these adventures. Was he simply an introvert who loves outdoor challenges or did he want to impress his social media followers or is he advertising his travel agency business?

The terms introverts and extroverts describe types of personalities based on preferences.

SOLITARY ACTIVITIES

Introverts prefer to be in a quiet environment spending time in their own space contemplating their thoughts and feelings. They prefer solitary activities such as reading, creating, writing, and engaging in activities alone.

Introverts usually feel drained from too many social activities, so they need solitary engagement to ‘recharge’ their social battery.

While extroverts enjoy being surrounded by people, interacting with the outside world, and sharing their thoughts and feelings with others.

They love being around people, creating conversation, and participating in many

I was interested in finding out his real motives behind these adventures. Is he simply an introvert who loves outdoor challenges or did he want to impress his social media followers

group activities. Such personality traits are not limited to what people choose as hobbies but can influence the type of job they do and their chances of being more or less successful in that particular job.

I was discussing the podcast with a friend who pointed out that people who love adventures are not necessarily reckless or impulsive.

I could see his point of view but that did not change my impression of the traveller in the podcast being impulsive and reckless especially when his choices place others in danger to save him.

In my experience, many individuals present themselves on a spectrum of introversion and extroversion.

I find that learning more about your personality traits can help you understand yourself and how to engage in the world.

It is important to help others understand your need to withdraw or to socialise and to seek professional help when some traits become problematic in your day-to-day living, especially during periods of stress.

Seeking therapy allows you a safe space to process growth and implement an authentic space for self-reflection.

WAR DECIMATES HARVEST IN FAMINE-THREATENED SUDAN

Ahmed Othman’s farm has been spared from the deadly fighting that has spread across Sudan, but the war’s toll on the economy and labour market has still reached him. “I had to sell two vehicles” to afford to harvest this season’s crops, he said from his large sesame farm in eastern Sudan’s Gedaref state.

A year and a half of war in Sudan between the army and paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has triggered one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises and devastated harvests.

Last month, United Nations experts accused the warring sides of using “starvation tactics” against 25 million civilians, and three major aid organisations warned of a “historic” hunger crisis as families resort to eating leaves and insects. Hundreds of farmers have been driven off their once-fertile lands and those who have managed to remain face tremendous hardships.

Gedaref state is key to Sudan’s corn production, a crucial crop for a population the World Food Programme warns is nearing famine -- a condition already declared at a displacement camp in the country’s western region of Darfur.

“The first challenge we faced was securing funding as banks are experiencing a cash crunch due to the war,” said Othman.

Cash shortages have occurred even in army-controlled Gedaref since the RSF took over the capital Khartoum and banks were ransacked.

The farmer said that without selling two out of his three vehicles he could not have afforded fuel for farm machinery or to pay workers to prepare the fields and tend to the crops.

“The second problem is the scarcity of farm workers due to the war, which has limited their movement across states,” he added. Most workers in Gedaref previously came from the adjacent states of Blue Nile and Sennar, as well as from Kordofan further away.

However, the war has restricted inter-state movement, leaving farm owners like Othman with only a small workforce.

Another local farmer, Suleiman Mohamed, said “the shortage of workers has driven up wages, so we are relying on those already in the area, mainly Ethiopians” who have long resided in Sudan’s east as refugees.

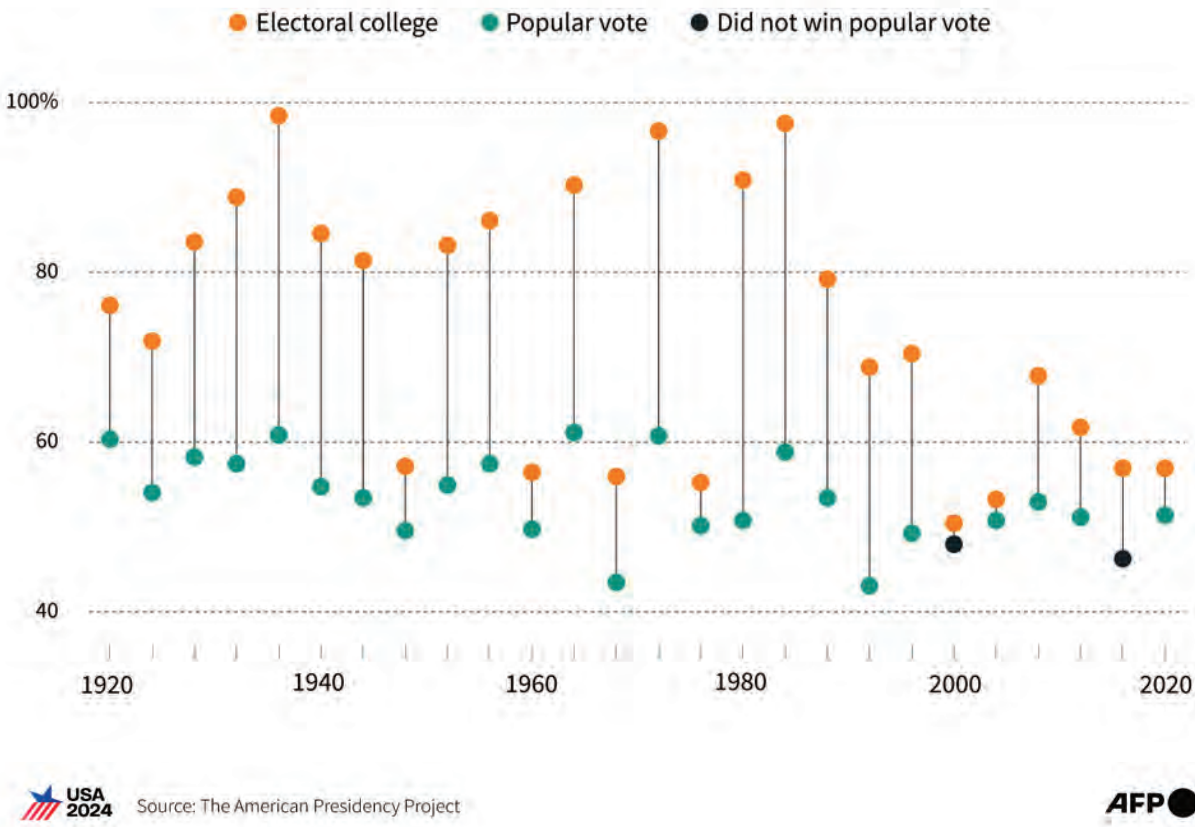
Disruptions to the harvest this season could exacerbate the hunger crisis, made worse by restrictions on aid entry.

European and North American nations issued a joint statement last month that accused the warring sides of “systematic obstruction” of aid efforts. They said both sides should urgently admit the assistance to millions of people in dire need. — AFP

In this two-horse race, my money’s on Trump

In US presidential elections, a small margin can deliver a big victory

Share of popular vote vs share of electoral college vote won by the successful candidate



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sionally even racist, his track record leans toward negotiation over conflict. Harris, on the other hand, has a history of backing more aggressive intervention, especially in supporting Israel without really pushing for restraint. Trump’s unpredictability has the pro-Zionist lobby pouring money into Harris’s campaign, desperate to keep the same old pro-Zionist policies in place. Trump’s focus on deal-making could change the US foreign policy towards Israel.

He prefers peace over war. Trump might be our only real shot at shak-

ing things up in this race. Trump is tough and quite capable of stopping Netanyahu. In comparison, Harris is weak and doesn’t have that ability. Netanyahu won’t listen to her. With Harris, we already know the score — she’s firmly stood by policies supporting Zionist agendas.

Trump’s unorthodox and unpredictable, but that’s exactly what we need to challenge the pro-Zionist policies that have dictated US foreign policy towards Israel for too long.

Big things look after themselves...



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The writer is a media consultant

FRENCHMAN DIDIER TRUCHOT has identified that, “In our world of rapid change, the need for reliable information to make confident decisions has never been greater,” so his company sets out to be one that mine’s the statistical information, then uses science, technology and intellect to produce “faster, smarter and bolder information.”

So, according to Truchot’s IPSOS, what worries us today? Coronavirus, and other viruses are still the key concern for most of us, whether it is what has gone before and the societal impacts of that challenging two years, it is probably that our vulnerability in the face of unseen viral threats akin to hundreds of ‘zombie’ movies, that still frightens us most today, three years on.

Unemployment is a perpetual presence in the ‘top ten’ of global concerns, and probably feeds into the third most pressing challenge for us all, which is the fight against poverty and social inequality. These three elements have, throughout history dethroned Kings, Emperors, Presidents and Prime Ministers, a la the French and Russian Revolutions. The great South African statesman, Nelson Mandela, once said, “As long as poverty, injustice, and social inequality persist in our world, none of us can rest.”

The emergence of financial and political corruption as concerns perhaps demonstrate that the silent majority is, at last, finding its voice. Banks and financial institutions

police themselves very loosely, while political corruption is raging out of control. Since the Marcos scandal in the Philippines, when Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos (the lady with all the shoes) were found to have benefitted to the tune of \$10 billion during the mid-1980’s, far from diminishing political corruption, it’s become almost legitimate.

Crime, drugs and violence will always concern us, and especially when we are close to violence. Crime though is an interesting one, as many ‘crims’ appear convinced they are ‘Robin Hoods,’ and no different to politicians. Drugs are a hard topic, because too many people are making money out of them, so like slavery a couple of hundred years ago, there will always be those who don’t care, turn a blind eye, or have nothing to do with them.

Healthcare concerns, the quality and costs of education for our children, can be lumped together and are possibly the greatest of all ‘real’ concerns for most families. Private healthcare and education costs continue to rocket almost out of control, while governmental education and healthcare are pressured by diminished funding, inept management, and low morale among front-line staff, who function on compassion and enthusiasm, though both are wearing really thin.

Inflation and taxation hurt the common people, not because of what they pay, but because of what the wealthy... do not! The

The emergence of financial and political corruption as concerns perhaps demonstrate that the silent majority is, at last, finding its voice

wealthy can set off their day-to-day expenses, cars, homes, education, healthcare, dining out, holidays... everything against their companies and trusts, effectively paying nothing, or very little. Equality is a fable in terms of earnings and taxation. The rich get richer, and the children of the poor have difficulty getting access to affordable homes.

Climate change and the environment rank around twentieth in terms of importance to us, and I can hear the ‘greenies’ howling, but while important to us all, and as civilisations we need to be aware and ‘doing’ rather than talking, the reality is that our kids need feeding now, need schools now, need healthcare now, need heroes, now!

Immigration likewise concerns us even less according to IPSOS, but not on humanitarian grounds, more on the profile, the morality, the need, of those who arrive here, as a lurking suspicion seeps through that the best characters, and those in genuine danger, stay behind to advocate for change. The reality is that as much as our world changes, it stays the same as nations, societies, communities, families and individuals, we all have our own needs, that change by the year, the month, and the day. We need to be fed, to be safe, to love and be loved, to be respected, and to become all that we have the potential to be... Its shape, its labels matter little to most of us, as we just focus on doing the little things well, and the big things... well, you know.

UK’S BATTERED TORY PARTY ELECTS BADENOCHE AS NEW LEADER

JAMES PHEBY

The UK’s battle-scarred Conservatives on Saturday elected “anti-woke” candidate Kemi Badenoch as its new leader, replacing Rishi Sunak, who quit after the party’s disastrous showing in the July general election. Badenoch, 44, came out on top in the two-horse race with former immigration minister Robert Jenrick, winning 57 per cent of the votes of party members. Badenoch, who becomes the first black leader of a UK-wide political party, said it was an “enormous honour” to assume the role, but that “the task that stands before us is tough.”

“We have to be honest about the fact we made mistakes” and “let standards slip,” she said.

“It is time to get down to business, it is time to renew,” she added.

The combative former equalities minister now faces the daunting task of reuniting a divided and weakened party emphatically ousted from power in July after 14 years in charge.

Badenoch will become the official leader of the opposition and face off against Labour’s Keir Starmer in the House of Commons every Wednesday for the traditional Prime Minister’s Questions.

However, she will be leading a much-reduced cohort of Tory MPs in the chamber following the party’s dismal election showing. She must plot a strategy to regain public trust while stemming the flow of support to the right-wing Reform UK party, led by Brexit figurehead Nigel Farage. Having campaigned on a right-wing platform, she also faces the prospect of future difficulties within the ranks of Tory lawmakers, which includes many centrists. Badenoch, born in London to Nigerian parents and raised in Lagos, has called for a return to conservative values, accusing her party of having become increasingly liberal on societal issues.

She describes herself as a straight-talker, a trait that has caused controversy on the campaign trail.

Badenoch was widely criticised after suggesting that statutory maternity pay on small businesses was “excessive” and sparked further furore when she joked that up to 10 per cent of Britain’s half a million civil servants were so bad that they “should be in prison”.

On immigration, she said that “not all cultures are equally valid” when deciding who should be allowed to live in the UK.

Jenrick, 42, had also staked out a tough position on the issue, and resigned as immigration minister in Sunak’s government after saying that his controversial plan to deport migrants to Rwanda did not go far enough. The pair faced off after Tory MPs whittled down the original six candidates during a series of votes. — AFP

Political protest and the university

ALTHOUGH THE war in Gaza has not ended, it has already had far-reaching effects on American universities. Following October 7 attacks, most campuses were initially sympathetic towards Israel. But as time passed and images from the war piled up, many young people began to protest what they saw as an excessive civilian death toll in Gaza. Campuses grew deeply divided as pro-Palestinian students demanded divestment from companies working with Israel, and as pro-Israel students argued that a hostile environment was threatening their safety and pursuit of an education.

University presidents and governing boards have struggled to find the right response, and many top administrators have resigned, including at my own university, following congressional hearings on the issue this spring. According to Harvard’s new president, the university will no longer issue official statements about public matters unless they directly threaten academic freedom or affect the institution’s core functions of teaching and research. Is this the right answer?

The policy is new, but the problem is not. Things were even worse during the Vietnam War. While this year’s tent encampments and protests over the Gaza war have often violated Harvard’s long-standing statement of rights and responsibilities regarding the time, place and manner of protests, the current protests have been relatively tame compared to the 1960s.

As I recall in my memoir, A Life in the American Century, my office in the 1960s was in the Center for International Affairs. Our building was occupied multiple times and subjected to a bombing and an attack that sent one staff member to the hospital. To quote a radical Weather Underground pamphlet that I kept from November 1969: “The people who run the CFIA are hired killers. They write reports for the government on how to keep a few Americans rich and fat. Professors who help the government are pigs. Isn’t there a pig you’d like to get?” Our assailants bragged about breaking into buildings, kicking the “swine” down the stairs, and shattering windows. Today’s obstructive encampments come nowhere close to this.



University presidents and governing boards have struggled to find the right response.



JOSEPH S NYE, JR

The writer is Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, is a former US assistant secretary of defence

Violence is not the only problem. Free speech is essential to a university, and protests that respect the appropriate limits on time, place and manner should be both expected and tolerated. But protests should be conducted by individuals or groups; they should not invoke the institution.

The role of the university was already being disputed in the 1960s, and not just by students. At a dinner with a small number of faculty colleagues, I argued that our democratic societies would be poorer if academics debased their search for truth, and if universities became just another pressure group. Some of my colleagues disagreed, arguing that the institution was obliged to dissociate itself publicly from immoral government policies like the Vietnam War. In another prelude to the current moment, they pointed out that university endowments were supporting companies that produced war materiel.

Protesters later argued for divestment with respect to other issues, such as apartheid in South Africa, climate change, and now Israel. When economists point out that such actions have little economic effect (because someone else quickly buys the divested stock), advocates reply that what matters is the political statement of naming and shaming. Divestment, they believe, is an institutional state-

ment that has a bigger impact than any effort driven by individual members of the university community.

The problem is that the costs to the university are much higher than the benefits gained for the cause being advocated. Far stronger political pressure groups are likely to outweigh the political impact of the divesting universities, which in turn will incur costs not only to their academic freedom and independence, but also to their internal community. As a recent report from Harvard’s “Institutional Voice” working group argues, “because few, if any, world events can be entirely isolated from conflicting viewpoints, issuing official empathy statements runs the risk of alienating some members of the community by expressing implicit solidarity with others.”

Self-restraint on political statements is only part of the solution. Equally important is the enforcement of existing rules. For a university administration to rely on the police is both tactically and morally problematic. This has been a point of tension on many campuses over the past year. Harvard erred in 1969 when it called in the state police (who overreacted). The enduring lesson for today is that such measures should be a last resort.

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SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Mohammed al Zubair (C), and Taha al Kashri (L)

OOC TAKES PART IN ANOC MEETING IN PORTUGAL

MUSCAT: Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) participated in the 27th General Assembly of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) held in Portugal from October 29 to November 1. The meeting was attended by representatives of more than 200 National Olympic Committees in the Portuguese city of Cascais, as well as Dr Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee, and representatives of the International Olympic Committee, international and continental federations, and organising committees for the upcoming Olympic sports tournaments. Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, OOC Chairman, headed the OOC delegation, accompanied by Taha bin Suleiman al Kashri, OOC Secretary-General.

During the meeting, a number of deceased sports leaders who influenced the Olympic movement were honoured, and Dr Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee, delivered an opening speech to representatives of the various National Olympic Committees. The meeting witnessed a review of several priority topics for the next stage, including the approval of the minutes of the 26th meeting of ANOC, which was held in South Korea in 2022. Several reports were also reviewed, represented by the report of the President of ANOC and the Secretary-General, who discussed the latest developments related to ANOC, the report of the ANOC Beach Games for 2023, and the report submitted by the Indonesian Olympic Committee.

The decisions of the Executive Office of the ANOC General Assembly were addressed, in addition to a visual report from the continental sports federations, the final report of the Organising Committee for the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic Games, and the report of the Organising Committee for the XXXIV Olympic Games (Los Angeles 2028). The report of the World Anti-Doping Agency, the report of the International Arbitration Agency, the report of the ANOC TV Digital Acceleration Programme, the ANOC strategic plan, the report of the International Federation of World Games, along with reports from the organising committees of the upcoming Olympic Games represented by the Winter Olympic Games in Milan Cortina 2026 and the Fourth Youth Games in Dakar in 2026 were also reviewed.



Oman unveils squad for upcoming matches

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 2

OMAN'S head coach Rasheed Jaber announced the team's lineup for the upcoming AFC Asian Qualifiers, with matches scheduled against Palestine on November 14 and Iraq on November 19. The squad, revealed on the OFA's social media accounts, features two new faces from Al Nahdha Club: Thani al Rushaidi and Hussain al Shahri. The 27-man roster also includes experienced players who participated in previous qualifiers.

Training camp will commence shortly in Muscat as the Red Warriors prepare for two crucial home matches this month. They will host Palestine at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on November 14, followed by a clash with Iraq at the same venue on November 19. The qualifiers will then pause for four months, with the Red Warriors resuming play against South Korea in Seoul on March 20, followed by a match against Kuwait in Kuwait City on March 25. The final two matches will be held on June 5 and 10, where the national team will face Jordan in Muscat and Palestine in Doha, respectively.

Oman's players are eager to bounce back after suffering a 4-0 defeat against Jordan in Amman on October 15, although



they had previously secured a convincing 4-0 win against Kuwait in Muscat on October 10.

The revealed squad comprises 27 members, including three goalkeepers: Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Fayez al Rushaidi and Ibrahim al Rajhi.

The defensive lineup features Mohammed al Musallami, Ahmed al Khamisi, Thani al Rushaidi, Khalid al Buraiki, Ghanim al Habashi, Ali al Busaidi and

Ahmed al Kaabi. The midfield is comprised of Hussain al Shahri, Harib al Saadi, Abdulaziz al Shamousi, Mulham al Sunaidi, Abdullah Fawaz, Arshad al Alawi, Sultan al Marzouqi, Yazeed al Mashani, Abdulrahman al Mushefiri and Zaher al Aghbari.

The attacking line includes Nasser al Rawahi, Salah al Yahyaei, Omar al Maliki, Mohsin al Ghassani, Essam al Subhi, Hatim al Roushdi and Jameel al Yahmadi.

Seeb Club secures quarterfinal spot with victory over Hilal Al Quds

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 2

Seeb Club achieved a well-deserved victory over the Palestinian team Hilal Al Quds, winning 3-0 in a match held on Friday at Seeb Sports Stadium as part of the third and final round of Group C in the AFC Challenge League. This triumph secured Seeb's place in the quarterfinals with an impeccable record.

The match kicked off with both teams showing intent, exchanging attacks in a bid to open the scoring early. In the 8th minute, Eid al Farsi nearly put Seeb ahead with a powerful shot from outside the box that went just over the crossbar. Hilal Al Quds responded quickly, with Mohamed Darwish attempting a shot from distance

Seeb Club will face Al Arabi from Kuwait in the first leg on March 5 in Kuwait, with the return leg set for March 11 in Muscat



in the 11th minute, but it missed the target. As the game progressed, Seeb began to assert their attacking style, employing diverse strategies to penetrate the defence, whether

from the flanks or through long-range efforts. In the 30th minute, Seeb created a dangerous opportunity when Zaher al Aghbari struck a fierce shot from outside the box, but goalkeeper Issa Obaidan made a brilliant save. Just before the end of the first half, sustained pressure finally paid off for Seeb; Zaher al Aghbari received the ball near the box and fired it into the left corner, concluding the first half with Seeb leading 1-0.

The second half saw Seeb continue their relentless pressure, aiming to widen their lead. In the 56th minute, they successfully doubled it with a well-coordinated team effort: Abdulaziz al Muqbali made a run down the right flank, delivering a perfect cross to Abdulrahman al Mashifiri, who tapped it into the net, delighting the fans. Seeb main-

tained their dominance, forcing Hilal Al Quds' defence to retreat.

The decisive moment came when the referee awarded Seeb a penalty after Abdulaziz al Muqbali was fouled inside the box. In the 70th minute, Al Muqbali converted the penalty with a powerful shot to the right corner, making the score 3-0 in Seeb's favour.

Hilal Al Quds attempted a few late attacks in hopes of reducing the deficit, but Seeb's defence held strong, thwarting all efforts. The match continued in this manner until the referee blew the final whistle, confirming Seeb's victory and perfect qualification to the quarterfinals.

They will face Al Arabi from Kuwait in the first leg on March 5 in Kuwait, with the return leg set for March 11 in Muscat.

SHORT TAKES



SALALAH WINS IN THRILLING OPENER BASKETBALL LEAGUE

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 2

In the opening of the Youth Basketball League (YBL) for the 2024-2025 season, the Salalah team marked a strong start by defeating Al Amerat 64-59 in a thrilling and competitive game held at Al Amal Club Hall in Ghala Heights. The game was filled with excitement and tactics, featuring numerous lead changes. However, Salalah managed to secure the win despite Al Amerat’s continuous attempts to narrow the gap. Salalah’s scoring was led by Mashaal Kafkaf, Muhib al Hambasi, Qaisar al Balushi and Sufyan Beit Tawfiq, while Al Amerat’s top scorers were Mazin al Owaisi, Al Hawari al Hashli, and Ibrahim al Balushi.

At the start of the game, Al Amerat’s Mazin al Owaisi scored two points from free throws, followed by Ibrahim al Balushi adding an extra point. Salalah responded with a free throw point by Mashaal Kafkaf. The teams continued exchanging scores, with Al Amerat hitting a three-pointer by Qusai al Amri, while Salalah answered back with consecutive points by Muhib al Hambasi and Qaisar al Balushi, ending the first quarter with Salalah leading 13-8.

Salalah maintained control in the second quarter, as Muhib al Hambasi scored two points for his team, and Al Amerat responded with a three-pointer from Al Hawari al Hashli. Salalah gradually widened the gap, thanks to their players’ performance, concluding the first half with a 36-20 lead. In the third quarter, Al Amerat came back strong, scoring eight consecutive points, including critical shots from Mazin al Owaisi and Ibrahim al Balushi. The score tightened, raising the excitement among the players. Despite this, Salalah retained their lead amid continued offensive efforts, finishing the quarter at 47-38.

In the fourth quarter, Al Amerat continued their offensive surge, starting with two points by Ibrahim al Maamari. Salalah responded with a two-pointer from Al Harith Beit Mabrouk, followed by a three-pointer from Muhib al Hambasi to extend the lead to 52-40. Al Amerat kept attacking and managed to close the gap to two points at 59-61. However, Salalah sealed their victory with a decisive three-pointer by Qaisar al Balushi, ending the game with a 64-59 win.

The game was officiated by international referees Thani al Khilasi, Ali al Salmani and Wahb al Sanani. The score table was managed successfully by Maryam al Zadjali, Rayan al Dhahaboni and Mahmoud al Ajmi.

Arsenal hopes hit by Newcastle defeat



Arsenal’s Bukayo Saka looks dejected. — Reuters

NEWCASTLE, United Kingdom: Newcastle put a huge dent in Arsenal’s title aspirations on Saturday, winning 1-0 to give leaders Manchester City the chance to move eight points clear of the Gunners at the top of the Premier League.

Alexander Isak scored what proved to be the winning goal in the 12th minute, heading home Anthony Gordon’s pinpoint cross from the right.

Arsenal struggled to get out of first gear and although they dominated possession, they produced just one shot on target in the entire game. Mikel Arteta’s men have now picked up just one point in their past three games as their title push quickly runs out of steam.

If defending champions City win at Bournemouth later on Saturday, they will be eight points clear of the Gunners. Liverpool, a point behind City, host Brighton at Anfield.

Arsenal have pushed Pep Guardiola’s City hard in each of the past two seasons and appeared to be well-equipped for another title challenge, but the gap already looks alarmingly big.

The injury-hit visitors started brightly in the opening seconds at St James’ Park, with Leandro Trossard dragging the ball wide. But the home side, who had not won for five matches, quickly settled, and



Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta. — Reuters

Sweden forward Isak got between Gabriel and William Saliba to head home from Gordon’s exquisite first-time cross.

Arsenal winger Bukayo Saka lacked penetration but headed just wide in the 18th minute after leaping above his marker. Newcastle defender Lewis Hall blocked Mikel Merino’s shot on the line after a Declan Rice corner caused chaos, but the visitors lacked rhythm and failed

to match the intensity shown by the home side.

Arteta opted against making changes at half-time and Newcastle came close to doubling their lead almost immediately, with Joe Willock’s shot saved by David Raya.

The Spanish boss threw on 17-year-old Ethan Nwaneri and Oleksandr Zinchenko for Gabriel Martinelli and Merino just after the hour mark. Isak fired a shot at Raya that the Arsenal goalkeeper pushed away before Rice muscled his way into the Newcastle area and flashed a shot wide. Arteta made further changes, introducing defender Ben White and forward Gabriel Jesus in the desperate push for an equaliser. Arsenal struggled to build up a head of steam as the clock ticked down, but they squandered a golden chance to equalise when Rice headed just wide from a Saka cross in stoppage time. The Gunners, still missing captain Martin Odegaard, suffered a shock defeat against Bournemouth last month and drew 2-2 with Liverpool last week.

They have tough games coming up against Inter Milan in the Champions League and Chelsea next week. The win lifts Eddie Howe’s Newcastle to eighth in the table ahead of the later kick-offs on Saturday. — AFP

Al Harthy to start on 7th row at Bahrain FIA WEC final

MUSCAT: Omani racing driver Ahmad al Harthy will begin today’s Bacpo Energies 8 Hours of Bahrain – the final race of the FIA World Endurance Championship season – from the seventh row of the LMGT3 grid, after qualifying 13th fastest during the grid-determining session on Friday.

Placing the lion’s share of focus on race set-up and race performance during the trio of practice sessions at Bahrain International Circuit, Team WRT driver Al Harthy was fairly satisfied with the qualifying run as a result – especially with the Sakhir track being one of the least favourable for his BMW M4.

Al Harthy and team-mates Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin ended the opening practice on Thursday, October 31, a credit-

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Oman supported racer is eying a big finish to his first year with Team WRT and BMW and determined to try and challenge for more silverware



able eighth quickest in LMGT3 and the trio went on to finish session two later in the day a consistent ninth on the timing screens.

After the third and final practice on Friday morning, Bronze graded driver Al Harthy took qualifying duty in the No.46 BMW M4 – as usual – and he hovered around the top eight during the opening minutes of the session, having been as high as second at one point.

Slipping outside the top 10 later on, and therefore missing out on the cut-off for the Hyperpole shoot-out session, the Omani ultimately had to settle for 13th on the timesheets with a best lap of 2m03.797 seconds, less than 0.2 seconds shy of 10th place.

Going into today’s eight-hour race, the OQ, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Oman supported racer is eying a big finish to his first year with Team WRT and BMW and determined to try

and challenge for more silverware.

Off the back of a magnificent performance in Fuji, Japan, in September where the team-mates achieved a superb third position, Al Harthy hopes for another major points haul as the squad looks to consolidate fifth in the LMGT3 driver standings. Ahmad al Harthy: “It was the best we could do, P13, and we usually race better than we qualify. We’ve worked a lot more for the race set-up so we’re all feeling positive for the race. I would say Bahrain is one of the toughest tracks for us this season in WEC, we have an eight-hour race ahead and the weather is likely to change a lot during the eight hours, so we’re looking forward to it. We will keep pushing and hope for a good conclusion to the FIA WEC season.”

SPORTS



Al Mashaykhi reflects, acknowledging the unique hurdles his condition presented. Through patience, practice, and sheer will, he learned to adapt, gradually building the strength that would later define his success in para-athletics

AL MASHAYKHI 'S TRIUMPH INSPIRES OMAN 'S FUTURE OLYMPIANS

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 2

OMAN 'S first-ever Paralympic medalist, Mohammed Al Mashaykhi, who contracted meningitis at age five, overcame tremendous challenges to stand on the podium at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games clinching bronze medal in Shot put F32 event. His inspiring story of grit, passion, and an indomitable spirit not only uplifts Oman's sports community but also motivates young athletes like talented paddler Talya al Rawahi, sprinter Ali al Balushi, and fencer Israa al Siyabi, who look to him as a role model as they strive to clinch the nation's historic Olympic medal.

At 33, Al Mashaykhi embodies resilience and is hopeful of repeating his medal-winning accomplishments in future competitions. Diagnosed with meningitis at five, few could have predicted the remarkable journey ahead of him. The disease left him with physical



TALYA AL RAWAHI
Table Tennis



ALI AL BALUSHI
Sprinter



ISRAA AL SIYABI
Fencer



The hardest part is when my mind sends a signal, but my body doesn't respond in time. I always feel the weight of responsibility and pride in representing my country

MOHAMMED AL MASHAYKHI

Paralympic medalist

challenges, but from a young age, he developed a relentless drive. “The hardest part is when my mind sends a signal, but my body doesn't respond in time,” Al Mashaykhi reflects, acknowledging the unique hurdles his condition presented. Through patience, practice, and sheer will, he learned to adapt, gradually building the strength that would later define his success in para-athletics.

Hailing from the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, Al Mashaykhi's unwavering dedication culminated in a monumental achievement—a bronze medal in the shot put at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. His victory marked Oman's first Olympic medal in over 50 years, forever cementing his place as a national hero. For young athletes like Talya al Rawahi in table tennis, Ali al Balushi in athletics, and Israa al Siyabi in fencing, his accomplishment serves as a powerful reminder of the rewards that come from hard work and resilience. Al Mashaykhi carries the weight of representing the Sultanate of Oman on the world stage with pride, stating, “I always feel the weight of responsibility and pride in representing my country,” recognising that his achievements inspire hope for a brighter future.

Al Mashaykhi's journey transcends personal victory; it is a guiding light for Oman's emerging athletes. Talya al Rawahi, a promising 12-year-old paddler, looks up to him as an inspiring figure as she prepares to join GV Hennebont Academy in France as part of her programme for the upcoming Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 2028. Israa al Siyabi, a potential star in fencing who recently won a silver medal at the 17th International School Games (Bahrain 2024), draws motivation from Al Mashaykhi. She is currently receiving support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to enhance her preparations for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics. Similarly, Ali al Balushi, a talented runner, finds encouragement in Al Mashaykhi's dedication, proving that dreams can be realised even in the face of challenges. For these young athletes, Al Mashaykhi's story serves as a reminder to persevere, trust in their potential, and embrace every obstacle as a stepping stone to success.

MOHAMMED'S LEGACY

The success of this son of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan has set a new benchmark for Omani sports, demonstrating what can be achieved through unyielding determination. His aspirations for the upcoming Los Angeles 2028 Olympics excite and motivate young Omani athletes. “Believe in God, trust yourself, be patient, and stay positive,” he advises aspiring athletes — a mantra that has guided him through numerous challenges.

For Talya al Rawahi, Ali al Balushi, and Israa al Siyabi, Al Mashaykhi is more than a Paralympian; he is a mentor, a role model and a testament to the heights that can be reached through perseverance. His legacy continues to inspire Oman's young talents to dream boldly and strive for excellence, bringing hope to a new generation of champions.

BUSINESS

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OMAN POISED TO BECOME GLOBAL INVESTMENT HUB

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, NOV 2

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN will host the largest-ever assembly of sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) as Muscat becomes the focal point of the global investment community from November 3 to 6.

This International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSWF) gathering, organised by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), will bring together heads and members from over fifty sovereign wealth funds across forty-six countries.

It marks a pivotal moment for Oman's aspirations to strengthen its position on the global investment map, with a conference featuring prominent speakers, including Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, and influential investors such as Robert Smith, the wealthiest African-American in the US.

The event promises to be a landmark in Oman's journey towards diversifying its economy, fostering international partnerships and attracting foreign capital.

Speaking ahead of the event, Duncan Bonfield, Chief Executive of IFSWF Secretariat, in an exclusive interview with the *Observer*, highlighted the significance of Oman's hosting role, emphasising its value as a platform for SWFs to network, collaborate and share knowledge.

ENHANCING OMAN'S GLOBAL POSITION

Bonfield explained that hosting the IFSWF conference would amplify Oman's visibility and reinforce its investment-friendly image internationally.

"It's a showcase not only for Oman but also for the Oman Investment Authority and the companies under its umbrella. Exposure to some of the world's leading investors is certainly beneficial," he said.

However, Bonfield cautioned against expecting immediate financial returns, suggesting instead that the event is a strategic step in Oman's long-term goal of enhancing its global reputation.

This reputation-building aligns well with Oman's political stability and governance standards, qualities that are attractive to global investors. "Oman is a well-governed country with a high degree of political stability," he added.

"That's always appealing for international investors looking for secure, stable environments."

ADOPTING AND STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

The IFSWF's Santiago Principles, a voluntary set of standards promoting governance, transparency and accountability among SWFs, will also take centre stage during the event. These principles are essential for members, allowing them to balance operational transparency with the confidentiality inherent to sovereign wealth management.

Bonfield highlighted the forum's role in promoting these principles, stating, "We help funds by allowing them to interact at

events like this. They learn from each other about best practices and innovations in governance."

A specific session on governance is scheduled during the conference, where members will explore trends and discuss effective implementations of the Santiago Principles.

For Oman, this focus on transparency and governance is likely to enhance its attractiveness to international investors, who often prioritise these standards when evaluating investment opportunities.

SPOTLIGHTING KEY INVESTMENT SECTORS

Oman's emerging sectors will be showcased to the assembled SWFs, including advanced technology and green hydrogen.

These areas align closely with OIA's priorities and Oman Vision 2040 economic diversification plan. Bonfield noted that the focus on sectors like technology and hydrogen reflects Oman's commitment to sustainable development and aligns with global investment trends.

"There's a number of sectors, not just focused on Oman, but technology and green hydrogen are certainly areas where Oman is very involved," he remarked.

Highlighting Oman's green hydrogen initiatives is particularly timely, as Oman aims to establish itself as a key player in the renewable energy sector.

The green hydrogen industry, backed by international partnerships and substantial investments, could serve as a lucrative opportunity for SWFs interested in environmentally responsible projects.

BALANCING TRANSPARENCY WITH CONFIDENTIALITY

With SWFs managing considerable resources on behalf of their citizens, transparency remains a critical topic. Yet, the Santiago Principles allow SWFs to operate within the legal frameworks of their respective countries, often imposing confidentiality on aspects like asset size. Addressing this, Bonfield noted, "Domestic law comes first... However, sovereign wealth funds today publish a lot more information about their activities and engage more with their citizens." **TURN TO PAGE 15**



Oman's emerging sectors will be showcased to the assembled SWFs.

Iron industry drives manufacturing and infrastructure growth in Oman

MUSCAT: Oman's iron industry continues to be a cornerstone of the manufacturing and infrastructure sectors, with seven major factories producing iron and its derivatives, collectively contributing approximately 2% to the national GDP. These factories, which generated exports valued at RO 687 million in 2022, directly employ 1,681 workers and provide thousands of indirect job opportunities, supporting an Omanisation rate of 45%.

Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, explained that Oman's iron sector is a strategic pillar of the Sultanate of Oman's industrial plan for 2024.

Due to rising local and global demand, the sector has seen substantial growth, fuelled by advancements in production technology and a shift towards renewable energy sources that

align with sustainability goals. The sector's downstream industries, including heavy machinery, equipment and transportation, all rely on iron as a primary material, amplifying the industry's role in Oman's broader economic framework. Highlighting recent developments, Dr Masan noted the successful signing of an agreement between Vale Oman and Jinnan Iron and Steel Group to establish the first iron ore concentration plant in Oman.

Set to be located in SOHAR Port and Freezone, this RO 240 million (\$624 million) plant is expected to produce up to 12.6 million tonnes of high-quality iron concentrate, with direct and indirect employment prospects and a positive impact on Oman's supply chain. The new plant reflects Oman's capacity to attract international partnerships from major markets in South America and East Asia, reinforcing its global standing in the iron and steel industry.



Tanmia Liquidity Fund

Fund Management Body Report

For the period ended 30th September 2024

Dear Unitholders,

The Tanmia Liquidity Fund (TLF) maintained its contribution to liquidity at the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) during third quarter of 2024, strengthening the market stability and depth. The fund continued to focus on boosting liquidity and deepening market engagement, in accordance with the pre-approved key performance indicators. This effort complements the broader evolution of Oman's capital markets, including the introduction of new IPOs and market-making activities, and supporting MSCI upgrade of the market. These efforts align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040

Market and Tanmia Liquidity Fund Performance

During the third quarter of 2024, MSX index remained broadly flat (+0.5% QoQ). Overall trading values surged by 46.7% Y/Y compared to Q3-2023, partly due to TLF's positive impact on market activity. Furthermore, trading values rose by 4.7% quarter-over-quarter relative to the Q2-2024. TLF contributed 10.2% to the overall MSX turnover and accounted for 16.7% of the TLF Universe turnover.

Brief Financial & Liquidity Indicators

For the period ended 30 April to 30th September RO	
Particulars	RO
Total value – Buy	23,487,646
Total Value - Sell	17,064,184
Total value of trades during the period	40,551,830
Total Net Asset	47,206,161
Number of outstanding units	47,750,000

* Fund operations began on 16th May 2024.

Outlook

Overall market conditions continue to demonstrate improvements in terms of liquidity and depth. We aim to be the leaders in the market in terms of our contribution and daily activities. We remain optimistic on market's ability to deliver on their upgrading efforts.

We pay our tributes to His Majesty, Haitham Bin Tarik, for his inspiring leadership and vision that will continue to lead us further on the path to greater prosperity. On behalf of the members of the Fund Management Body, I would like to acknowledge and thank his Majesty's government and our valued unit holders for their continued support. Finally, I would like to thank the Fund Manager for their services.

Chairman of the Fund Management Board

Managed By:

Oman National Investments Development Company S.A.O.C (Tanmia)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF 30 SEP 2024	
	Unaudited Sep 2024 RO
Assets	
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	35,724,091
Cash and cash equivalents	11,904,604
Total assets	47,628,695
Liabilities	
Accruals and other payables	73,740
Amount due to broker	348,795
Total liabilities	422,535
Net assets attributable to the unitholders	47,206,160
Total liabilities and net assets attributable to the unitholders	47,628,695
Net assets per unit attributable to the unitholders	0.989
INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD FROM 30 APRIL TO 30 SEP 2024	
	Unaudited for the period from From 30-April to 30 Sep 2024
Income	
Interest Income	340,304
Total income	340,304
Net realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	66,605
Net unrealised (loss) on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	(773,988)
	(367,079)
Expenses	
Management fees	(90,951)
Custody fees	(11,369)
Administrative expenses	(11,369)
General and administrative expense	(63,072)
Total expenses	(176,761)
(Loss) and total comprehensive income/ decrease in net assets attributable to the unitholders for the period ended 30 Sep 2024	(543,841)
(Loss)/Profit per unit	(0.011)



ADVERTORIALS



OTIS HOLDS ANNUAL DISTRIBUTOR GATHERING

MUSCAT: On October 21, 2024, Otis held its annual distributor gathering at the Movenpick Hotel Ghala in Muscat, Oman, uniting distributors from across the Middle East and CIS regions, including Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, and other CIS countries.

Titled “Elevate Together Tomorrow,” the event focused on deepening partnerships, sharing strategic insights, and fostering collaboration among Otis’s regional leadership, manufacturing teams, and its distributor network.

The meeting opened with a warm welcome from Otis regional leaders, setting the tone for a day centred on innovation and collaboration.

Keynote addresses by Mohammed Qaisi, Senior Director & Managing Director of Middle Eastern Territories, Gulf & CIS, and Youssef Wazni, Director & General Manager for Middle East Territories, CIS, and Qatar, underscored Otis’s commitment to growth through partnership and customer-focused innovation.

Wazni commented, “At ‘Elevate Together Tomorrow,’ we embraced collaboration and innovation, setting strategic growth initiatives that will drive our market leadership in the Middle East Territories and CIS. Together, we will elevate our partnerships and continue to lead with purpose and passion.”

The event featured hands-on workshops that explored the latest advancements in technology, customer service, and sales strategies. These interactive sessions allowed attendees to exchange practical insights and industry best practices, with notable participants recognised through achievement awards.

A key highlight was the extensive networking opportunities. Distributors from varied backgrounds connected, shared experiences, and discussed future collaborations, reinforcing the strong community within the Otis network.

The overarching theme, “Elevate Together Tomorrow,” resonated deeply with attendees, emphasising the importance of unity in overcoming industry challenges and seizing new opportunities.

Engaging directly with Otis manufacturing teams enabled distributors to discuss product developments and support needs, further strengthening Otis’s commitment to its partners.

As the event concluded, attendees departed with actionable insights, new strategies, and a shared spirit of collaboration that defines Otis’s ethos.

Otis remains committed to strengthening partnerships and leading the elevator and escalator industry across the Middle East and CIS, with plans to drive continued innovation and excellence in the years to come.

NBO offers 50 per cent discount on talabat

AS part of the Sultanate of Oman’s National Day celebrations, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) is rewarding its credit card holders with an exclusive offer throughout November, featuring a 50 per cent discount on their first two transactions on talabat app, Oman’s primary delivery platform.

Lasting for a month, the offer aims to make the most of this limited-time promotion, providing a maximum discount of RO 4 per transaction. Whether ordering food or any other product, this offer is designed to bring added value to the customer’s everyday purchases.

Commenting on the offer, Maha Saud al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Products at NBO said: “It gives us a great delight to celebrate this National Day by elevating our customers’ banking experience through offering a special discount in collaboration with talabat.

This offer reflects our ongoing commitment to provide exceptional value and convenience at all times. Not only will this initiative add joy but it surely underscores our dedication to make every interaction with NBO a rewarding one.”

To benefit from this special discount, customers must access talabat’s website or download the app on their devices and have their NBO Credit Card saved as the preferred payment method.

The discount applies only to electronic payments made through the talabat app or website



The offer aims to make the most of this limited-time promotion, providing a maximum discount of RO 4 per transaction

and does not cover cash on delivery or pick-up services. While customers can combine this discount with existing restaurant deals, it does not extend to service or delivery charges.

This promotion is exclusively available to NBO Visa Retail Credit

Card holders.

As part of NBO’s broader commitment to rewarding its loyal customers, this offer not only enhances the convenience and value of using NBO cards but also celebrates the pride of our nation during this significant time.

OMANTEL UNVEILS COST-EFFECTIVE, HIGH-SPEED INTERNET FOR NGOS

MUSCAT: Omantel has announced enhanced Internet packages with faster speeds for all non-governmental organisations (NGOs), non-profit organisations, and recognised voluntary institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

The most outstanding feature of the new plan for NGOs is faster download speeds of 100 Mbps.

Omantel emphasises the company’s commitment to community support through a variety of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. Recognising the crucial role that NGOs play in community



activities, Omantel offers them significantly faster speeds. The Company acknowledges their exceptional work and is dedicated to facilitating their efforts with improved connectivity and higher speeds.

The 100 Mbps unlimited In-

ternet package offers NGOs a suite of value-added benefits, including domain name registration, web hosting, marketing SMS, and Mobile PBX, all for just RO 30 per month.

Omantel’s innovative approach has contributed to

providing state-of-the-art solutions that meet the needs of individuals, institutions, and government entities alike. Omantel also supports the goals of Oman Vision 2040 by investing in emerging technologies and providing the latest solutions in the fields of ICT, such as cloud, ICT solutions, artificial intelligence, smart solutions, cybersecurity, and much more.

Omantel is also leveraging all its technical capabilities and partnerships to foster innovation and leadership in new and advanced technologies in the Sultanate of Oman.

Bank Muscat takes part in Oman Science Festival, promotes financial literacy

MUSCAT: Affirming its pivotal contributions to events that target various fields such as creativity, innovation, and community service, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its participation in the 4th edition of the Oman Science Festival 2024, which will take place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from 4-11 November.

This edition is themed “Our Sustainable Resources” and it aims to illuminate diverse areas of creativity, science, and knowledge, serving as a foundation for building a sustainable knowledge society.

Bank Muscat’s participation in this festival reflects the importance of the fields of science which will be focused on throughout the



event period and reaffirms the Bank’s pioneering role in sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and community service.

During the festival, the Bank will have a dedicated booth where a variety of educational activities

and competitions will be organised around the subject of financial literacy and its importance for different segments of society.

These knowledge-focused activities will play a pivotal role in enhancing public financial

awareness and financial management skills of the target segments, thus, contributing to the sustainable development of the Sultanate of Oman.

The dedicated booth is designed as a small educating city named “Maliyat Academy” and it comprises engaging activities targeting different age groups.

All visitors may take part in the variety the learning and engaging competitions and activities, aiming to provide them with a useful experience and encourage them to enhance their awareness about financial literacy.

Financial awareness is very important among individuals in the society, as it allows them to gain the confidence, skills, and knowledge needed to take proper financial decisions in multiple areas in

life.

Considering the present economic changes, gaining financial awareness constitutes an important practice as it helps individuals and families enjoy financially stable and decent lives and represents a crucial pillar for futuristic economic growth both for Omanis and non-Omanis.

Hence, it critical that all individuals be financially aware and knowledgeable in order for them to be able to set proper financial plans for their future, understand major terminology related to finance such as budgets planning, managing expenses, saving, investment, , and giving back to community, in addition to coping with unexpected life circumstances such as economic crisis and job loss cases.

OMAN SHOWCASES
TOURISM
OPPORTUNITIES
AT WTM LONDON



Oman's WTM participation aligns with the ministry's broader strategy of sustainable tourism development.

MUSCAT: Oman has begun its prominent participation in the World Travel Market 2024 (WTM) in London, an essential platform for showcasing the Sultanate of Oman's tourism offerings to a global audience.

Led by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, the Omani delegation includes 32 tourism entities and hotel operators, alongside strategic partners like Omran Group, Oman Air, Oman Airports, Oman Museum Through Time and the National Museum.

This diverse team represents Oman's commitment to positioning itself as a unique travel destination that combines rich heritage, stunning natural landscapes and distinctive cultural experiences.

Haitham al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion, emphasised that Oman's WTM participation aligns with the ministry's broader strategy of sustainable tourism development.

He highlighted that the ministry aims to present Oman's unique blend of natural and cultural tourism, appealing to a wide range of international travellers, and creating visibility for new and upcoming tourism initiatives.

Al Ghassani also noted that Oman's pavilion at WTM serves as a platform for the ministry to connect with global tourism leaders, foster strategic partnerships and attract investment to further enhance Oman's tourism sector.

During the event, Oman's pavilion will be a focal point for visitors and potential investors, showcasing a variety of tourism projects that underscore the ministry's vision of balancing heritage preservation with modern tourism. The pavilion will also enable direct meetings between Omani tourism companies and their global counterparts, allowing for discussions on partnership opportunities aimed at increasing visitor numbers and investments in Oman's tourism industry.

WTM 2024 will also feature a series of conferences and discussion panels that explore current and future trends in tourism, including digital innovations, sustainable tourism and advanced travel experiences. This annual event, which attracts more than 4,000 exhibitors from over 185 countries, is expected to draw around 43,000 visitors, creating a dynamic space for Oman to strengthen its brand as a premier travel destination.

Oman's central green
market Silal to expand

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 2

THE Central Fruit and Vegetables Market (Silal), the premier wholesale hub for fresh produce in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced an expansion of its complex at Khazaen Economic City in the Wilayat of Barka.

Coming barely four months into its trial launch in June this year, the expansion underscores its pivotal role in strengthening Oman's food security, notably in the fruits and vegetables segment.

According to a senior executive of Silal, the expansion will add around 18,000 square metres of new real estate to the complex's current footprint of around 500,000 square metres.

"Silal Market has grown significantly, and we are thrilled to share that we have signed an expansion of over 18,000 square metres," said Ali al Maqbali, Business Development Head at Silal.

"This new development will play a key role in supporting food security in Oman, strengthening the supply chain of fresh produce, and creating new opportunities for exports and downstream industries in the country."

In a post, Al Maqbali described the expansion as a "milestone" in Silal's develop-



The latest agreement will see Silal adding around 18,000 sq metres to its footprint.

This new development will play a key role in supporting food security in Oman, strengthening the supply chain of fresh produce, and creating new opportunities for exports and downstream industries in the country.

ment. "In just four months since beginning operations at Silal, we have inspected over 5,000 trucks on-site and received more than 160,000 tonnes of fruits and vegetables from their origins—upholding the highest standards of efficiency and operational excellence," he stated.

Established with an investment of around RO 50 million, Silal is exponentially larger than Al Mawaleh Central Fruits and Vegetables Market, which served as Oman's main

greenmarket until its relocation to Khazaen.

It features advanced cold storage facilities, areas designated for inspection and plant quarantine, labs for food quality and safety inspections, state-of-the-art logistics facilities, and most modern technologies for food examination and customs inspections. Oman infrastructure investment fund Rakiza – a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) – is a significant shareholder in Silal.

OMAN POISED AS GLOBAL INVESTMENT HUB

FROM PAGE 13

This balancing act between transparency and confidentiality, according to Bonfield, is more about long-term trends than immediate shifts.

The event will explore how SWFs can continue increasing transparency while respecting local regulations, thereby fostering trust with their home countries' populations.

FOSTERING COLLABORATION AMONG SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUNDS

The gathering also underscores IFSWF's objectives to encourage collaboration, knowledge sharing, and co-investment among SWFs.

Through initiatives like this forum, IFSWF aims to facilitate a global investment

environment where capital flows freely, maximising returns for citizens. Bonfield outlined IFSWF's strategic priorities: "We try to help our members cooperate, collaborate, and ultimately co-invest if they choose to... so the returns to their citizens are maximised."

The willingness to co-invest in projects across borders strengthens the position of SWFs as crucial players in global economic development. For Oman, building relationships with these influential funds could translate into significant opportunities in sectors like renewable energy, logistics, and technology.

A LANDMARK FOR OMAN'S INVESTMENT FUTURE

With Oman set to welcome such an influential gathering, the IFSWF conference

could prove transformational for the nation's investment landscape.

The event reflects OIA's strategy of attracting capital by enhancing transparency, adopting best governance practices, and showcasing Oman's emerging sectors. As sovereign wealth fund executives gather in Muscat, Oman's position as a viable, stable, and forward-looking investment destination is likely to receive a substantial boost.

The IFSWF gathering will not only establish new opportunities for Oman but also foster international partnerships that could yield long-term economic dividends. For Oman, this marks a significant step in aligning its national objectives with the broader aspirations of the global sovereign wealth fund community.

International conference to explore AI opportunities in health sector

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 2

THE International Conference on Secure Transformation Towards Artificial Intelligence (AI) for System Integration will take place from November 10 to 11, 2024, at the Grand Hyatt Muscat. This highly anticipated event highlights Oman's commitment to advancing technological integration across various sectors, particularly in healthcare.

The conference will be inaugurated by Mohammed al Dhahli, Chief Executive Officer of the Omani Voluntary Authority for Projects. Omar bin Hamdan al Ismaili, CEO of Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), is set to participate on the final day, where he will honour distinguished attendees for their contributions to the field.



As healthcare continues to evolve, the potential of AI to enhance patient care and streamline operational efficiencies has garnered considerable attention.

This significant gathering aims to foster collaboration among key stakeholders, including influential figures from the region, and facilitate discussions on innovative

technological partnerships.

As healthcare continues to evolve, the potential of AI to enhance patient care and streamline operational efficiencies has gar-

nered considerable attention.

Experts will engage in in-depth discussions about the integration of AI in health electronics, exploring its capacity to improve diagnostics, treatment plans, and overall patient outcomes.

Notable speakers, including Dr Nader Ghazal, Chairman of the African-Asian Council for AI & Cybersecurity, will address the transformative impact of AI on healthcare systems.

Dr Ghazal is expected to highlight how AI can enable predictive analytics, improve decision-making processes, and ultimately lead to better health outcomes for patients.

Additionally, Dr Hamad al Marri, a certified life coach recognised by the International Coaching Federation, will discuss the implications of AI on workforce dynamics within the healthcare sector,

emphasising the importance of upskilling and reskilling healthcare professionals in response to AI advancements.

The conference will also explore other vital aspects of AI integration, including its application in interactive educational technologies, database management systems, and strategic planning and management processes.

These discussions are critical for building a comprehensive healthcare ecosystem that leverages technology to meet the needs of patients and healthcare providers alike.

Furthermore, the event will feature a showcase of innovations from the International Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Biotechnology Excellence, reinforcing Oman's commitment to being at the forefront of AI and health technology development.

OPINION

Nvidia leads tech revolution as Intel exits Dow Jones



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

THE global technology landscape witnessed a significant shift this week as Nvidia, the artificial intelligence chip giant, was selected to replace Intel in the prestigious Dow Jones Industrial Average. This change, marking the end of Intel's long-reign in the blue-chip index, reflects a fundamental transformation in the semiconductor industry and global technology markets. Nvidia's ascension comes amid spectacular growth that has seen its market value surge to \$3.3 trillion, making it the second-most valuable publicly traded company after Apple. The company's shares have climbed over 170% in 2024 alone, driven by unprecedented demand for its AI processors. Meanwhile, Intel, facing manufacturing challenges and increased competition, has seen its shares decline by more than half, prompting a significant restructuring that includes 16,500 job cuts. This reshuffling in the Dow Jones follows BlackRock's launch of a new ETF designed to look beyond the so-called "Magnificent Seven" tech stocks. The iShares Top 20 US Stocks ETF aims to provide investors with broader exposure to mega-cap companies, addressing concerns about market concentration in

a handful of tech giants. The Magnificent Seven, which includes both Nvidia and Intel alongside Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, and Alphabet, has seen its collective value fluctuate dramatically, recently losing \$615 billion in market cap in a single day. The volatility in tech stocks was further highlighted by Microsoft's recent performance. Despite reporting better-than-expected earnings with revenue rising 16% to \$65.59 billion, the company's shares suffered their steepest sell-off in two years, dropping 6% after a disappointing forecast for the current period. The market reaction underscores growing concerns about the massive investments required for AI development, with Microsoft's property and equipment spending growing 50% year over year to \$14.92 billion. The company's substantial \$14 billion investment in OpenAI, now valued at \$157 billion, further illustrates the scale of financial commitment required to compete in the AI race. However, the tech sector's growth story isn't without its cautionary tales. Super Micro Computer, a company that had benefited from the AI boom through its Nvidia processor-equipped servers,

The Magnificent Seven, which includes both Nvidia and Intel alongside Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, and Alphabet, has seen its collective value fluctuate dramatically, recently losing \$615 billion in market cap in a single day

faced a dramatic 45% stock plunge this week after losing its second auditor in less than two years. The company's market value has dropped by approximately \$55 billion since March, highlighting the risks in rapidly growing tech sectors. The evolving tech landscape has also sparked international debate about nurturing innovation and maintaining competitiveness. In the United Kingdom, technology entrepreneurs and investors have expressed concern about recent tax policy changes, arguing that increased capital gains tax and National Insurance contributions could hinder the country's ability to develop the next global tech giant. The British government's decision to raise various business taxes has led to warnings about potential impacts on hiring and innovation in the tech sector. For Gulf economies, these developments present both opportunities and challenges. The rise of AI-focused companies like Nvidia signals the growing importance of technological infrastructure investment, while the challenges faced by traditional tech leaders like Intel underscore the need for economic diversification strategies that can adapt to rapid technological change.

OIL GLUT RENDERS INDUSTRY'S APPEAL PURELY RELATIVE

WHEN there's excess oil, as is the case today, it's easier to pick a winner. Exxon Mobil's balance sheet and diversification make it appealing, but only on a relative basis. The abundance of crude suggests industry returns will only get weaker.

Exxon said on Friday it generated \$8.6 billion of net profit in the third quarter, as production surged 25% from a year earlier.

Much of it is attributable to the \$60 billion acquisition of rival Pioneer Natural Resources. Falling commodity prices, however, translated into 5% less earnings. Rivals Chevron and ConocoPhillips suffered even worse declines, of 31% and 25% respectively, despite extracting more crude.

Gluts augur more of the same. The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies are sitting on record spare capacity. Excluding Libya, Iran and Russia, they had more than 5 million barrels per day available within 90 days and which can be pumped for a sustained period, according to the International Energy Agency.

It further estimates that worldwide demand will grow by no more than 1 million barrels per day in 2024 and 2025, while supply rises 1.5 million barrels per day in both years. Most of the increase comes from beyond OPEC. US production exceeds 13 million barrels per day, and gaining, making it harder for the cartel to trigger a rise in prices.

The bigger problem is waning growth in oil purchases. Electric vehicles will exceed 23% of new car sales this year, according to research outfit Rystad Energy, a proportion that promises to keep swelling. It helps explain why the IEA projects that supply capacity will exceed demand by 8 million barrels a day by 2030.

For energy-focused investors, Exxon is the safer option. Nearly a third of its income comes from chemicals, refining and other businesses. Moreover, net debt of about \$15 billion is far outweighed by the \$74 billion of forecast EBITDA this year, according to estimates gathered by LSEG. It also trades at 14 times estimated earnings, only a small premium to peers.

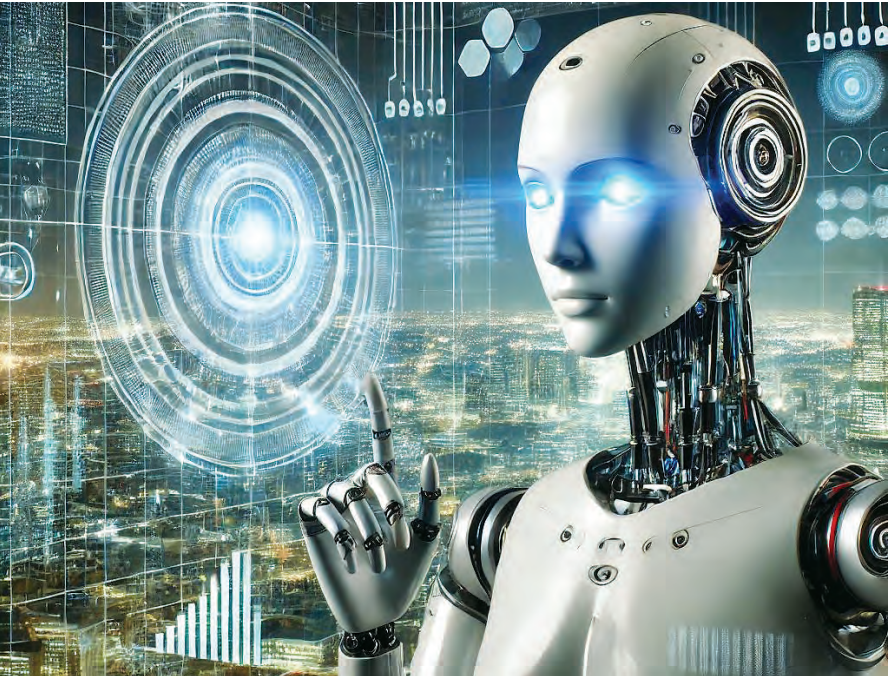
At the same time, Exxon's 90% total shareholder return over the past decade — even with its generous dividends included — is less than half the roughly 240% from the S&P 500 Index. It's a similar story for Chevron and Conoco.

As the most recent financial results show, even companies sensibly managing capital and bracing for the energy transition will struggle when there's too much oil. Better to drill for investment ideas elsewhere. — Reuters



QASIM AL
MAASHANI

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



The strategic roadmap aims to increase the contribution of the digital economy to Oman's GDP, reaching 10% by 2040.

OMAN'S National Programme for the Digital Economy outlines a transformative vision for the future, with clear and ambitious goals for boosting the country's economic growth through digital innovation.

The strategic road map aims to increase the contribution of the digital economy to Oman's GDP, reaching 10% by 2040. This initiative is more than just a technical upgrade — it represents a fundamental shift in how the nation will operate, engage with technology, and participate in the global economy.

One of the most significant insights from the programme is the projected rise in the digital economy's contribution to GDP over the next two decades. Starting at 2% by 2025, the programme anticipates a leap to 5% by 2030 and eventually 10% by 2040.

This gradual growth indicates a steady, methodical approach to integrating digital technologies across sectors, ensuring that each phase is carefully aligned with national priorities.

However, the bulk of this growth is forecasted to occur after 2030, signalling that Oman is focusing on building a strong foundation in the first phase.

This requires ensuring the readiness of key sectors such as government, education, and industry to fully embrace and leverage digital solutions in the long-term.

The timeline is ambitious but necessary, given the rapid pace at which global digital transformations are unfolding.

PILLARS OF EXECUTION

The programme is built on five primary initiatives that will drive Oman's digital transformation:

• **Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technologies Programme:** AI is no longer just a buzzword—it is the backbone of future digital economies. By prioritising AI and advanced technologies, Oman is positioning itself at the forefront of global innovation. This move is crucial for enhancing efficiency, solving complex societal challenges, and enabling smarter decision-making across all sectors.

• **Digital Government Transformation (2021-2025):** This programme focuses on modernising government operations through digitisation, enhancing service delivery, and boosting transparency. Efficient governance, powered by digital tools, will streamline processes and make government more accessible to citizens and businesses.

• **Digital Industry Programme:** A digitally enabled industrial sector is essential for improving productivity and innovation. This initiative underscores Oman's intention to integrate digital technologies in manufacturing and production, leading to greater efficiency and opening new markets for Omani products.

• **Electronic Commerce Programme:** As the global marketplace shifts online, e-commerce becomes an indispensable part of any modern economy. By fostering a robust e-commerce ecosystem, Oman can support small and medium

enterprises (SMEs) and empower businesses to reach broader, global audiences.

• **Space Programme:** Although still emerging, Oman's focus on space technologies highlights the country's long-term commitment to pioneering in fields like satellite communication and data technologies. A strong space sector could serve as a critical enabler for future tech-driven economic activities.

CORE FOCUS AREAS: GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, AND SOCIETY

The digital transformation plan is built on three interconnected pillars: digital government, digital business, and digital society. These pillars recognise that successful transformation requires a unified approach across all sectors.

• The government's role is to lead by example, transforming public services through digitisation and making interactions with the state more seamless and efficient.

• The business sector must fully adopt digital tools to remain competitive in both local and international markets. Omani companies, especially SMEs, will benefit from increased access to global markets and enhanced operational efficiency.

• A digitally empowered society is fundamental to the success of this transformation. Without widespread digital literacy, Oman risks leaving parts of its population behind. Ensuring that all citizens can participate in the digital economy is critical for fostering inclusive growth.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While the vision is inspiring, several challenges must be acknowledged to ensure successful implementation:

• **Infrastructure Development:** For Oman to meet its digital economy goals, the country must significantly invest in modern infrastructure, including 5G networks, cloud technologies, and AI-powered platforms. Without this foundation, the projected economic contributions may not materialise.

• **Workforce Readiness:** Digital transformation is as much about people as it is about technology. Oman needs to prioritise education and skills training to build a workforce capable of thriving in the new economy. Investment in STEM education, vocational training, and digital literacy will be critical to prepare youth for the jobs of tomorrow.

• **Global Competition:** Oman's digital economy will not evolve in isolation. Regional competitors, especially in the Gulf, are also rapidly advancing in areas like AI and e-commerce. Oman must create niche competitive advantages, such as sector-specific expertise or attractive investment climates, to stand out.

Oman's National Programme for the Digital Economy is not just a technical upgrade — it is a strategic leap into a new era.

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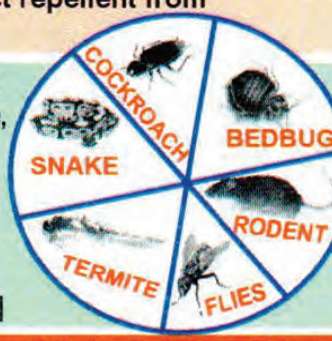
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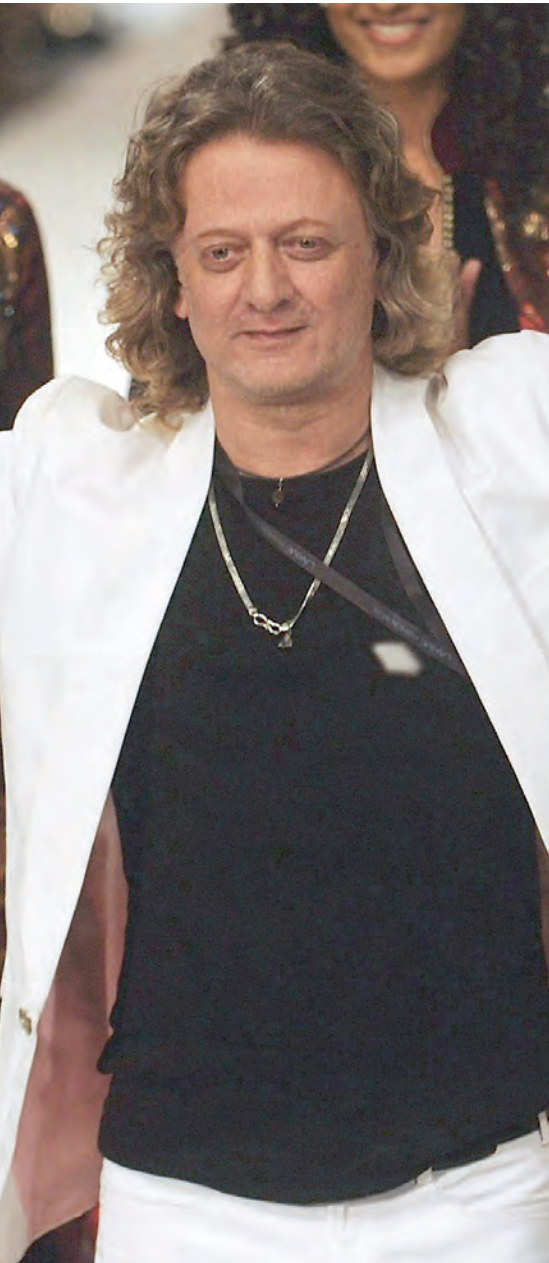
ART/LIFE



Assala visits Muscat connecting generations through songs > 20

FASHION

Famed Indian designer Rohit Bal dies: fashion group



Rohit Bal, one of India's most acclaimed fashion designers, has died, his colleagues said Friday. Media reports said he died at the age of 63 after a long illness.

"We mourn the passing of legendary designer Rohit Bal," the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) said in a statement on Instagram.

"Known for his unique blend of traditional patterns with modern sensibilities, Bal's work redefined Indian fashion, and inspired generations."

According to his website, Bal graduated from St. Stephen's College in New Delhi with a degree in history.

He then worked in his family's export business for a few years before launching his label and designer line in 1990.

In his work Bal "draws from influences, wide and varied," says a promotional statement on his site.

"From the village crafts and traditional methods of design that India is so rich in, to the transient phenomenon of the subcontinent's urban landscape, the designer brings them all to life."

FDCI chairman Sunil Sethi said on Instagram that the passing of Pal, popularly called Gudda, "will leave a void in the fashion design space forever."

"Everyone admired him for his attention to detail, how beautifully his lotus bloomed on modern shapes and his understanding of what modern women desired," Sethi said. —AFP

QUICK FEATURES



CULTURE

Visitors enjoy day of the dead decorations honouring late Mexican director Roberto Gomez Bolanos outside the cathedral in Santiago, Nuevo Leon state, Mexico. —AFP



LIFESTYLE

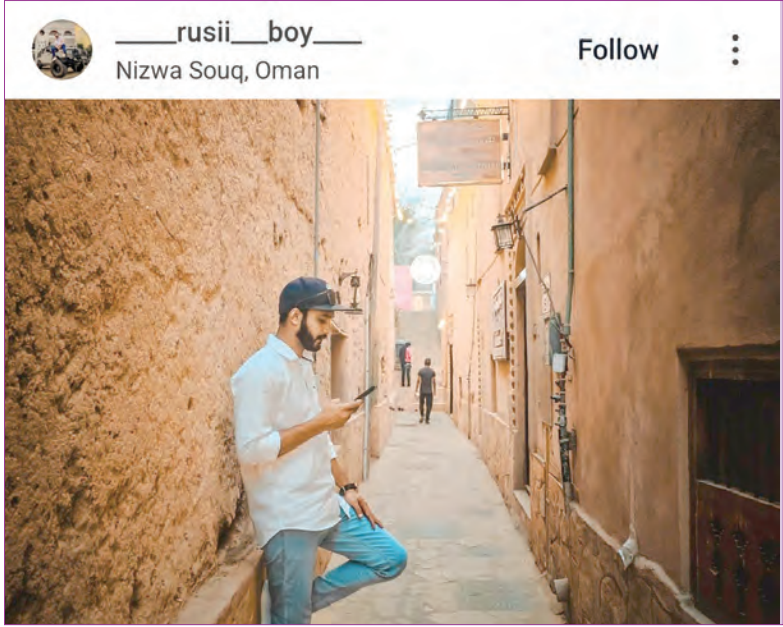
Canadian fashion model Linda Evangelista attends the Wall Street Journal Magazine's Innovator awards at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. —AFP



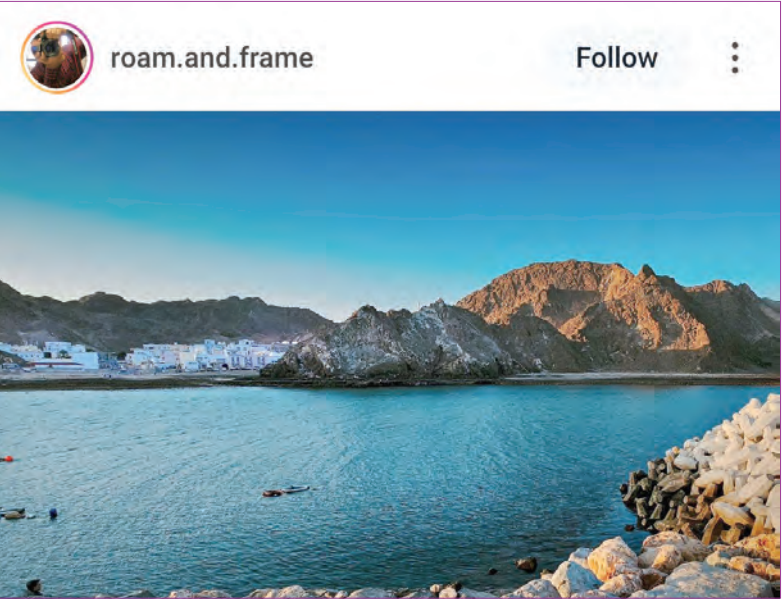
ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood actress Dia Mirza poses as she prepares to celebrate 'Diwali', the Hindu festival of Light, in Mumbai. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Old Streets

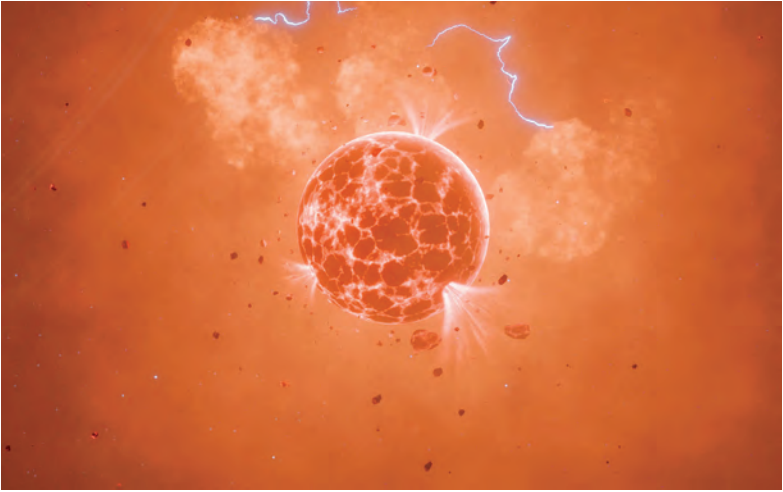


The Beauty of Oman's Coast

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A Distant Planet May Host a Moon That’s Spewing a Volcanic Cloud



Astronomers have identified many planets orbiting distant stars using sophisticated observatories. But there’s something they have yet to spot with any certainty: moons around those worlds.

Now a recent discovery around a Saturn-size planet 635 light-years from Earth offers one of the best potential clues that exomoons orbit exoplanets out there in the Milky Way.

And this possible moon, as described by scientists, is putting on an explosive show, blasting volcanic matter and noxious gases that then drift off into its stellar neighbourhood like a comet’s serpentine tail.

The possible evidence of an erupting satellite was described in The Astrophysical Journal Letters. Astronomers have

observed a puffy planet named WASP-49 b for years, but the new paper argues that a sodium cloud whizzing around it does not come from the planet. It might be created by a hypervolcanic companion moon spewing 220,000 pounds of the material every second.

The abundance of moons in our own solar system implies that exomoons certainly exist. But as they are so tiny, researchers have been conjuring up ways to indirectly detect them. Searches in recent years have identified several promising candidates, and the cloud around WASP-49 b offers the latest strong prospect — a satellite that may resemble Io, the moon of Jupiter that is the most volcanically active world in our solar system. — ROBIN GEORGE ANDREWS / NYT



Nepali women’s flowering prosperity from garland industry

THE FLOWER fields of Nepal’s Gundu village glimmer yellow, orange and purple as women harvest blooms, a flourishing industry changing tough village lives by providing garlands for Hindu festivals.

Nestled on the rim of Kathmandu Valley, Gundu is renowned for supplying the brightly-coloured globe amaranth and marigold flowers, with demand surging for this week’s Tihar celebrations, also known as Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. At dawn, the village women gather in the fields to harvest the blooms, that will, by the day’s end, be woven into garlands to adorn homes and temples. The women of Gundu have turned this seasonal bloom into a thriving industry, despite a labour-intensive process of picking and weaving them into garlands.

“This has provided more jobs for women of our village,” said flower farmer Saraswoti Bista, 56.

“We don’t have to leave home, and by weaving garlands, we earn a good income,” she added.

FLOURISHING Nepal, a majority-Hindu Himalayan nation, has a GDP per capita of \$1,324, according to the World Bank.

The flourishing trade has transformed Gundu into a model for flower production, with nearly 500 households supplying over one million garlands every year, generating over \$133,000, according to the local village authority.

As the festival peaks, garlands spill from rooftops and porches, filling the village with vibrant purple, red, and orange, a floral hub in Nepal. The dramatic deep purple-coloured globe amaranth, known in Nepal as makhmali, is in special demand during the five-day festival of Tihar. The dried blooms can last for months — or even years — with proper care. The garlands are given by sisters to their brothers on the fifth day of Tihar,



as a symbolic offering wishing for their long-life. Nepal produced an estimated 2.5 million garlands of globe amaranth flowers in 2024, a 10 per cent increase since last year, according to the Floriculture Association Nepal. “It also supplies to different countries,” said flower association representative Dilip Bade. The country is set to export



200,000 garlands, valued at \$1.4 million, to the United States, Australia, South Korea, Japan, and Europe, according to the floriculture association. But while the flower industry is blossoming, heavy flooding worsened by climate change hit the floriculture sector hard, resulting in estimated losses of over \$1.1 million. —AFP

This was not Assala's first time in Oman; during a brief media interview, she expressed her love for Omani culture and her desire to try the traditional muzzar headgear. Her ability to resonate with diverse audiences and dialects further enhances her appeal, reinforcing her status as a beloved performer capable of transcending cultural boundaries



Assala visits Muscat connecting generations through songs



BY YERU EBUE

LATE last week, the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre was thrumming with excitement, alive with the energy of music lovers and ardent admirers eagerly awaiting renowned Syrian singer Assala Nasri. The venue, adorned with vibrant lights and a tangible buzz in the air, welcomed fans who began to arrive as early as 7 PM, despite the concert not starting until 9 PM. As the minutes ticked away, the anticipation grew; the air was thick with the collective excitement of multiple generations who had found inspiration in Assala's timeless music. Her remarkable ability to transcend age and connect with audiences deeply made this gathering feel like a celebration of emotions and shared memories.

lyrics and melodies. In concert, Assala often expresses a special fondness for songs that resonate deeply with her audience, frequently featuring tracks such as “Ya Rait” and “Ahebak W Aheb” in her setlists. These selections allow her to connect personally with fans, sharing their emotions and experiences. Through her performances of these poignant songs, Assala creates a shared experience that amplifies the overall magic of her concerts, reinforcing her enduring popularity and the heartfelt connection she maintains with her listeners. As the clock struck 9 PM, the audience erupted in cheers and heartfelt applause as Assala graced the stage. The atmosphere transformed into a whirlwind of loud whistles and clapping. With her first notes, she set the tone for what would become a magical evening. Within those first three songs, attendees experienced the stunning versatility of her repertoire, showcasing her vocal range and emotional delivery. Her long, illustrious career shone brightly as she commanded the stage with a charismatic presence. Each song is delivered not just through lyrics but through the palpable emotions intertwined in her performance. She engaged the audience between tunes, fostering an intimate atmosphere that left everyone mesmerised. The orchestra and her backup performers revelled in the artistry she brought to the night, completely enthralled by her talent. Throughout the performance, Assala's ability to convey sorrow and joy through her crooning required no grand production or elaborate staging; her voice alone carried the power to evoke deep feelings among her fans. Applause flooded the hall continuously, a clear testament to her immense popularity and the warmth she inspired in Oman. As she sang an ode to Oman, interspersed with mentions of ‘Hilwa Oman’ and an appreciation of the Sultan, the audience erupted in frenzied love and devotion. The connection was palpable, a beautiful exchange between artist and audience, embodying the spirit of unity through music. In a way, Assala's approach to music parallels the style of Western superstar Adele. Both singers eschew the need for elaborate dance routines, instead letting their powerful voices and heartfelt performances speak volumes. This comparison highlights a nuanced beauty in their artistry — each relies heavily on emotional storytelling and vocal prowess. However, Assala benefits from a lifelong adoration across the Arab world, a status earned through years of dedication that has made her not just a star, but an emblem of musical excellence cherished over generations. This was not Assala's first time in Oman; during a brief media interview, she expressed her love for Omani culture and her desire to try the traditional muzzar headgear. Her ability to resonate with diverse audiences and dialects further enhances her appeal, reinforcing her status as a beloved performer capable of transcending cultural boundaries. As the night drew to a close, it was clear that Assala's performance was one that would linger in the hearts of those present. The evening was not just a concert; it was a vivid celebration of music, culture, and the bond shared between an extraordinary artist and her fans. Indeed, it was a night to remember, one that undoubtedly deserves to happen more often—a testament to the enduring power of music and a singer whose performance was truly worth seeing.



Assala Nasri embarked on her musical journey at a young age and quickly became one of the most celebrated vocalists in the Arab world. Her career ignited with her debut album in the early '90s, showcasing her incredible vocal talent and unique musical style that blends traditional Arabic sounds with contemporary influences. Over the years, Assala has cultivated an impressive discography that includes numerous hits, encompassing genres such as pop and classical Arabic music. Her music often weaves themes of love, nostalgia, and resilience, resonating strongly with listeners across generations. From heart-wrenching ballads to uplifting anthems, her songs have become cherished staples in many homes. Assala's personality shines through in her music; she is known for her authenticity and emotional depth, effortlessly drawing her audience into the world she creates with her lyrics. Some of her most popular songs include heartfelt ballads like “Ya Rait,” which showcases her stunning vocal range and emotional depth, and “Ahebak W Aheb,” a romantic tune resonating with themes of love and longing. Another fan favourite, “La Takhaf,” is an empowering anthem encouraging resilience and strength. Her lively track “El Naimi” beautifully blends traditional Arabic elements with contemporary sounds, while “Kalam El Nasa” highlights Assala's storytelling ability through poignant

