

Oman's global soft power stable

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's soft power has remained unchanged with Global Soft Power Index 2025 ranking the sultanate 49th, same as 2024.

Now in its sixth iteration, the 2025 edition examines the perceptions of all 193 member states of the United Nations. The index is based on comprehensive fieldwork, with responses gathered from over 170,000 people across more than 100 markets by UK-based Brand Finance – an independent brand valuation and strategy consultancy.

The United States and China are the most influential soft power nations in the world. The UK is ranked third, followed by



Japan (fourth) and Germany (fifth).

In the GCC, UAE is the top ranked country at tenth place, followed by Saudi Arabia (20th), Qatar (22nd), Kuwait (40th)

and Bahrain (51st).

Oman has improved its ranking by five places in the 'Influence' and 'Culture and Heritage' categories to 44th and 70th respectively. In 'Governance',

Oman's rank is up two places to 33rd and four places to 39th in 'Sustainable Future'.

According to the report, after years of soft power gains, Middle Eastern nations lose momentum in 2025. Saudi Arabia has dropped two positions to 20th and Qatar has fallen one spot to 22nd. UAE is an exception, retaining tenth position globally, bolstered by strong perceptions of Influence (eighth), International Relations (ninth) and Business & Trade (tenth). This year, the UAE rises to second position globally for being 'easy to do business in and with' and ranks in the top ten for 'future growth potential' and 'strong and stable economy', driven by fiscal strength, a positive investment climate and ongoing economic diversification.

The 2025 index reveals a growing divergence in Soft Power potential between nations, with stronger ones - like China - advancing faster while weaker ones - like Kiribati - falling further behind. The top ten gained an average of +0.9 points in their Soft Power scores, while the bottom ten saw a sharp decline of -3.0 points.

Soft Power is defined as a nation's ability to influence the preferences and behaviours of various actors in the international arena (states, corporations, communities, publics etc) through attraction or persuasion rather than coercion. Each nation is scored across 55 different metrics to arrive at an overall score out of 100 and ranked in order from 1st to 193rd.

FSA calls on private health sector to link with Dhamani

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued a second and final reminder to all private health complexes and clinics offering health insurance services to integrate with the Dhamani platform by the end of March.

Dhamani is an electronic platform for the exchange of information, claim settlements, fund transfers, requests for approvals and verification, and audit of insurance coverage between regulators and supervisors.

The platform enhances the quality of insurance services and the level of transparency in all transactions. It also helps in providing accurate data on market conditions, minimising fraud, abuse and misuse to preserve market stability, and promoting confidence in the health insurance market.

The directive falls under the regulatory framework estab-

lished by the Regulation for Health Insurance Electronic Link, as specified in Ministerial Decision 83/2023.

Article 2 of the decision states: 'Health insurance practitioners will execute all health insurance transactions and exchange of information via the platform from the date of commencement of the policy until the end of its cover.'

FSA added that institutions failing to comply with the deadline will be removed from networks of health service providers affiliated with insurance companies. This exclusion will affect their ability to offer insured services, potentially impacting their business operations.

'Private health facilities are strongly encouraged to contact the Dhamani platform team for support with the registration process. Further information and contact details are available on FSA's official website and social media platforms,' it stated.

Oman condemns Israeli aggression, violence against civilians in Sudan

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman has condemned Israel's ongoing aggression in occupied Palestinian territories and the systematic violence against civilians in Sudan. The statement was made during the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women taking place in New York from March 10 to 21.

H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, led the Omani delegation at the session. In her speech, she reaffirmed Oman's commitment to strengthening partnerships among Gulf Cooperation Council countries to empower women across various sectors.

She condemned Israeli actions, citing severe violations of international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture and genocide. H E Laila also denounced the escalating violence in Sudan, particularly against women and girls subjected to multiple forms of abuse.



Oman is committed to fostering an environment that supports scientific innovation among women

H E DR LAILA AL NAJJAR

She highlighted the wider impact of conflicts, warning that wars and crises extend beyond directly affected nations, triggering forced displacement, migration and disruption in essential services such as healthcare, education and security.

On the domestic front, she outlined Oman's efforts to advance educational and vocational

infrastructure, including improving facilities, establishment of digital laboratories, and alignment of academic specialisations with labour market needs. She noted a rise in female enrolment in science and technology fields in the 2024/2025 academic year, with women accounting for 57.7% of students in pure mathematics, 57.2% in chemistry and 32.8% in physics.

She reaffirmed Oman's commitment to fostering an environment that supports scientific innovation among Omani women, contributing to regional and international advancements.

Welcoming political and legislative reforms related to women's empowerment in Arab countries, she praised regional progress in expanding women's role in social, educational and health sectors, as well as their growing participation in political and economic spheres.

She stressed Oman's dedication to enhancing women's leadership roles and participation in decision-making processes.



Najd region emerges as key agricultural hub

Our Correspondent
Salalah

The Najd region in Thumrait, Dhofar is rapidly developing into a major contributor to Oman's food security, generating revenues of RO66mn in the 2023/2024 season.

The livestock sector accounted for RO40mn, while wheat production contributed RO4.1mn, underscoring the region's expanding agricultural footprint. According to Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, these figures reflect the region's growing role in the sultanate's economic development.

Najd region generated RO66mn in revenues in the 2023/2024 season, including RO40mn in livestock and RO4.1mn in wheat production

projects. A major initiative includes a tender for constructing a 44km road connecting Saih al Khairat and Shisr to improve transportation and market access.

Additionally, an integrated centre for collection, sorting and marketing of agricultural products will be established in Saih al Khairat. "This will streamline the supply chain, enhance crop marketing efficiency and support local farmers," the ministry official said.

To ensure sustainable growth, a groundwater modelling study for the Najd Basin has been completed, a crucial step in managing long-term water resources.

Further investments in connectivity include construction of two communication towers, one of which has been approved for Saih al Khairat, while the second awaits approvals. A meteorological station is also planned to aid agricultural planning and weather forecasting. The ministry has also allocated 89 agricultural plots for various activities.

OMANI HOSPITALITY IN MUTTRAH SOUQ



People from all walks of life, including visitors, were treated to iftar and Oman's hospitality at Muttrah Souq on Tuesday. Organised by Kairali Muttrah Group, the iftar brought together traders, shopkeepers and shoppers to break their fast (v K Shafeer)

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'Expo Japan key opportunity for Omani business houses'

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Pakistan: Baloch army hijacks train

'Expo Japan key opportunity for Omani business houses'

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) hosted its inaugural Ramadan Evening on Tuesday under the theme 'The Importance of Expo Japan 2025 for the Private Sector', highlighting the strategic role of Omani businesses in promoting the nation's heritage, innovation, and sustainable development on the global stage.

Held under the patronage of H E Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, the event underscored how participation in global expos can create new avenues for economic cooperation and investment.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI, stated that Oman's participation in Expo Japan 2025 will reflect its national identity, rich heritage, and ongoing journey towards sustainable growth. "The exhibition provides an exceptional opportunity for Omani businesses to engage with major global economies, expand international partnerships, and explore the latest innovations across diverse sectors."

He added that participation



in Expo Japan 2025 "is a golden opportunity for the private sector to showcase its capabilities and innovations". It will also pave the way for partnerships that contribute to sustainable development and economic

Oman's participation in Expo Japan 2025 will reflect its national identity, rich heritage, and journey towards sustainable growth

FAISAL AL RAWAS

prosperity, he noted.

Rawas further explained that the OCCI's Ramadan Evenings initiative aims to create an interactive platform, fostering dialogue between the public and private sectors while identifying

investment opportunities aligned with Oman Vision 2040. "This initiative targets promising economic sectors to build a robust and sustainable economy."

He also urged entrepreneurs to capitalise on this opportunity to enhance their presence in international markets. "Expo Japan 2025 will focus on artificial intelligence, sustainability, digital transformation, and future technologies, providing an exceptional opportunity for the Omani private sector to engage with cutting-edge innovations. This will strengthen their capacity for growth and competi-

tiveness," he added.

Zakaria bin Abdullah al Saadi, CEO of OCCI, emphasised the chamber's commitment to strengthening dialogue between sectors and addressing economic challenges through its series of evening events.

"These gatherings are pivotal in fostering strategic discussions that contribute to enhancing the business environment and attracting investments. They align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and promote economic diversification."

Saadi added that the focus on Expo Japan 2025 is timely, as Oman finalises preparations for its participation in the global event, scheduled from April 13 to October 13 in Osaka.

The exhibition's theme, 'Designing the Future Society for Our Lives', aligns with Oman's commitment to innovation, cultural exchange, and sustainable development.

Saadi affirmed that the chamber is dedicated to facilitating private sector participation and ensuring that Oman's presence at the Expo reflects its heritage, present, and future aspirations. He encouraged businesses to leverage this platform to promote Oman's vision and expand their global reach.



Afghanistan seeks direct flights, better relations with Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Afghanistan has requested Oman to establish direct flights between the two countries during a meeting between Amir Khan Muttaqi, Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, and H E Sayyid Badr al Busaidi, Foreign Minister of Oman, on Tuesday evening.

Expressing gratitude to the Omani government for facilitating the operations of the Afghan Embassy in Muscat, Muttaqi outlined key priorities, including the issuance of work visas for Afghan nationals in Oman, facilitating Afghan exports to the Omani market, and resuming direct flights.

H E Sayyid Badr reaffirmed Oman's support for efforts aimed at integrating Afghanistan into the international community while preserving its constructive

role on regional and global platforms.

During the meeting, the two ministers discussed the historical ties between their nations and the shared cultural and civilisational values that bind them. Both sides expressed a common desire to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields, agreeing to encourage trade exchange and investment opportunities, particularly in food security. They also discussed collaboration in education and training programmes to promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

Muttaqi emphasised the importance of such meetings in opening new avenues for cooperation, commending Oman's foreign policy approach, which is based on respecting state sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, and promoting regional and global peace through dialogue and diplomacy.

Expedia to promote Oman's tourism offerings

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The National Travel Operator - Visit Oman and Expedia Group, one of the world's largest travel technology companies, entered into an agreement to integrate the tours and activities providers of Oman onto the Expedia's platform.

The agreement - signed at the world's leading travel trade show, ITB Berlin, last week - will enable the integration through API technology and create a global digital marketing campaign targeting the US, the UK and the Middle Eastern travellers. This is stated to be a significant



step forward in Visit Oman's strategy to enhance digital distribution and connectivity. Shabib al Maamari, Managing

Director of Visit Oman, said by leveraging Expedia's global reach and advanced digital marketing capabilities, they are bringing

Oman's rich cultural heritage and breathtaking landscapes to millions of potential travellers worldwide. "This collaboration not only strengthens our visibility as a premier destination, but also makes Oman's travel offerings accessible to a vast audience. We're committed to empowering local tourism providers and SMEs by placing Omani offerings on the global digital map," he asserted.

Jennifer Andre, Vice President of Business Development Expedia Group Media Solutions, said that the group is thrilled to partner with Visit Oman to showcase Oman's diverse travel offerings to targeted international mar-

kets. "By adding Omani activities onto our platform and creating impactful marketing campaigns to drive demand, we are helping to connect local tourism providers to the right traveller, at the right time, boosting awareness and economic value to the destination."

The strategic agreement aims to digitise and aggregate Oman's diverse tourism offerings, making them readily accessible to Expedia Group's vast global audience. This initiative aligns with Oman's National Tourism Strategy 2040, which emphasises the importance of digital transformation in expanding the country's tourism sector.

Call for startups to register for WIPO Global Awards

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) has invited small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and startups to register for the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Global Awards for the year 2025.

ASMED said that SMEs and startups with intellectual property in sectors such as health, food and agriculture, creative industries, and information technology are encouraged to apply for this prestigious recognition. The deadline for submitting

applications is March 31, and registration is available via global-awards.wipo.int.

Every year, the WIPO Global Awards celebrate small businesses, startups, and university spinouts that leverage intellectual property (IP)-backed innovation and creation in exceptional ways to achieve business goals and improve society. The awards specifically focus on transforming research and ideas into successful commercial ventures, achieving business growth through IP-driven strategies, and developing innovations that contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Buraimi municipal council discusses development of Harat Hamasa

Our Correspondent
Buraimi

The Municipal Council of Buraimi governorate held its third meeting of the year on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidi, Governor of Buraimi and the Chairman of the Council. The session focused on key developmental and heritage initiatives.

A presentation by the Heritage and Tourism Department outlined plans to rehabilitate the historic Harat Hamasa neighbourhood in the wilayat of Buraimi. The proposal aims to preserve the area's heritage character while enhancing its historical value and tourism appeal.

Harat Hamasa covers a vast area, including two neighbourhoods and a market. It features two towers - one restored by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture in the southern section and another in the northwest. The area also has two mosques, one of which has been rebuilt, and consists mainly of single-story houses, with two exceptions that have an additional floor.

The market within Harat



A presentation by the Heritage and Tourism Department outlined plans to rehabilitate the historic area and preserve its heritage character

Hamasa stands out for its architectural design, featuring a tower and several warehouses. Traces of pottery used for food preservation indicate a history of active trade and an advanced way of life. The layout and number of shops suggest that the area once thrived as a commercial hub.

The council also reviewed reports from its permanent committees. The Health and Environmental Affairs Committee proposed measures to im-

prove health and environmental services, stressing the need for public awareness initiatives and service quality enhancements.

The Governorate Development Committee examined the progress of various development projects, calling for their implementation in line with sustainability and infrastructure standards.

The committee also underscored the importance of generating employment opportunities for locals.



شانگریلا بر الحصة مسقط
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MARKET WATCH	
MSX30	4,405.42
Sensex	74,102.32
FOREX RATES (RO1 equals)	
India	226.39
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Bangladesh	315.65
Philippines	148.77
Sri Lanka	767.67
*Rates as on March 11 Source: xe.com	

BRIEFS

Citi cuts US stocks, upgrades China

Citigroup downgraded US equities to Neutral and upgraded Chinese equities to Overweight, citing a pause in the so-called "US exceptionalism," with expectations that growth momentum in the world's leading economy may lag behind the rest of the world in the coming months.

"In line with our view that US exceptionalism is at least pausing, we make changes to equities and credit in our Global Asset Allocation (GAA)," Citi strategists said in a note.

"We had downgraded equities from overweight to neutral in our last GAA and have been underweight credit. We think this remains the right view," they added.

The upgrade of China equities to Overweight comes despite the recent rally, as the market "screens well," the strategists noted.

OQEP, Genel Energy to develop Block 54

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals has entered into an Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) with OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) and Genel Energy to develop Concession Block 54 in the sultanate.

Block 54, known as the 'Karawan Concession', spans an area of 5,632 sqkm in Al Wusta Governorate. The agreement was signed by H E Eng Salim Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Ahmed al Azkawi, CEO of OQEP, and Paul Weir, CEO of Genel Energy.

Under the terms of the agreement, OQEP will hold a 60% operating interest in Block 54, while Genel Energy will retain the remaining 40% as a non-operating partner.

The initial phase of the agreement, lasting three years, will involve investments of up to \$25mn. This will include the execution of 3D seismic surveys, the drilling of exploration wells, and the re-evaluation of existing wells.

The agreement will come into effect upon the promulgation of a Royal Decree ratifying its terms.

H E Aufi said, "The execution of this agreement marks a pivotal step in Oman's efforts to enhance hydrocarbon exploration and development. Through the



The agreement was signed by H E Eng Salim Nasser al Aufi (middle), Ahmed al Azkawi (right), and Paul Weir (left)

Initial phase of the agreement, lasting three years, will involve investments of up to \$25mn. This will include the execution of 3D seismic surveys, the drilling of exploration wells, and the re-evaluation of existing wells

expansion of exploration activities in concession areas, in collaboration with OQEP and Genel Energy, we reaffirm our steadfast commitment to increasing hydrocarbon reserves and ensuring sustained production. This initiative reinforces Oman's appeal as a prime investment hub for the energy sector, underpinned by a competitive environment that offers unparalleled opportunities

use of our natural resources, building upon OQEP's proven track record, notably exemplified by the substantial production growth in the Bisat field. We are confident that this agreement will deliver tangible outcomes, sustaining oil and gas production and making a significant contribution to the national economy."

Azkawi said, "With the signing of EPSA for Block 54, OQEP demonstrates its unwavering commitment to leveraging our

substantial expertise to drive further growth. We are delighted to collaborate with Genel Energy. This partnership solidifies OQEP's achievements and integral contributions to Oman's upstream sector. The incorporation of Block 54 as our fourth operated asset, in partnership with a leading international player, validates OQEP's robust operational capabilities. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals for this opportunity and their trust in OQEP, and we are eager to foster a successful and enduring partnership with Genel Energy."

Paul Weir said, "We identified Oman some time ago as a preferred jurisdiction for geographical diversification, with its flawless track record and the significant steps it has taken in recent years to set its oil and gas sector up for an exciting future. It is therefore the ideal country for Genel to begin its strategic diversification, expand its portfolio and invest capital. We are delighted to be partnering with OQEP and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals on this exciting opportunity and look forward to working together to unlock and expand this contingent resource."

"We see this entry as an important first step towards achieving our strategic goal of diversification, establishing a significant and profitable presence in Oman, and diversifying our cash generation," he added.



OAB collaborates with FSA to launch five digital trading platforms

Muscat - Oman Arab Bank (OAB) played a key role in collaboration with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to launch five digital trading platforms for licensed brokerage firms on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

These platforms are part of broader financial sustainability initiatives aimed at facilitating and stimulating investment, driving comprehensive digital transformation in the Omani capital market, and expanding investor access to local markets.

Through this strategic partnership, OAB continues to play a leading role in fostering financial sector growth and promoting investment in the capital market. Recently, the bank introduced a suite of advanced digital ser-

vices, including collection solutions via virtual accounts, which enable clients to manage cash flows more efficiently by opening virtual accounts. These solutions enhance transparency, simplify the tracking of outstanding amounts for each project or product, and significantly streamline financial transactions among institutions operating in the financial sector.

In a press release, Sulaiman al Harthi, CEO of OAB, said, "The launch of digital trading platforms aligns with evolving regulatory requirements in modern financial markets, aiming to enhance service quality, ensure data protection, and promote transparency. At OAB, we are committed to leading the way in

financial service development and introducing initiatives that build investor confidence. Our collection solutions via virtual accounts represent a major advancement in electronic connectivity between financial institutions, strengthening financial inclusion and improving the investment landscape in Oman."

"These virtual solutions are among the most advanced of their kind, empowering clients to manage cash flows more effectively.

"They facilitate seamless transactions, including investment procedures and financial transfers for buying and selling securities, securely and effortlessly between OAB clients' bank accounts and their investment

portfolios on the MSX," he added.

Harthi also emphasised OAB's commitment to expanding strategic partnerships to drive financial sector growth in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The bank recently organised a dedicated training workshop for brokerage firms in collaboration with FSA, providing them with insights into virtual account collection solutions.

This initiative enhances companies' understanding of this innovative technology, accelerating its adoption across the financial sector, attracting new investor segments, increasing trading volumes on the MSX, and reinforcing oversight and investor protection.

Port of Duqm, Oman Oil sign MoU to develop solar energy systems, EV charging stations

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Port of Duqm Company has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman Oil Marketing Company to explore and develop options for implementing solar energy systems, biofuels, and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at the Port of Duqm.

This agreement aligns with Oman Vision 2040 and the nation's ambitious goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, contributing to the development of sustainable infrastructure and the transition to renewable energy in the sultanate.

The MoU was signed by Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of Port of Duqm Company, and Tariq Mohammed al Junaidi, CEO of Oman Oil Marketing Company.

Vermeulen said, "We are committed to developing sustainable energy solutions at the port, and this agreement strengthens our efforts towards achieving an environmentally friendly operational environment that aligns with Oman Vision 2040. Our partnership with OOMCO will open new avenues in the clean energy sector, con-



The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Reggy Vermeulen (right) and Tariq Mohammed al Junaidi

tributing to the transformation of Port of Duqm into a sustainable logistics gateway at both regional and international levels."

Junaidi said, "At Oman Oil, we are committed to providing innovative and sustainable energy solutions beyond fuel. Our advancements in solar energy, EV charging infrastructure, and biodiesel support Oman's transition to clean energy. This MoU with Port of Duqm marks a key step in enabling the port to optimise energy use, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance sustainability. It also allows us to expand the reach of our green solutions, reinforcing our role in driving a more sustainable future for Oman."

This collaboration will enable Port of Duqm to enhance its operational efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and serve as a model for the development and operation of sustainable ports. Moreover, it represents a key step in establishing Duqm as a gateway for green and clean energy.

By adopting renewable energy solutions such as solar power and biofuels, Port of Duqm will become a central hub for sustainable shipping, storage, and transportation operations, reinforcing its position as a leading destination in the transition to a low-carbon economy and supporting national efforts to achieve carbon neutrality.

Saudi Aramco CEO calls for new global energy model at CERAWeek 2025

Dhahran, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Aramco President and CEO, Eng Amin H Nasser, has called for a fundamental overhaul of global energy transition strategies, advocating for a more balanced approach that supports the growth of both traditional and renewable energy sources, while maintaining a strong focus on achieving climate goals.

Speaking at the CERAWeek 2025 conference in Houston, Texas, Nasser emphasised that

the current energy strategy - prioritising renewable and alternative energy sources, while imposing increasingly restrictive regulations on traditional energy - has proven to be ineffective. He warned that if this approach continues unchecked, the world could face the need for an additional investment of \$6 to \$8 trillion annually. Nasser cautioned that the current path could lead to a grim future unless a shift in policy and strategy occurs.



Amin H Nasser

"The greatest illusion surrounding the energy transition is the belief that traditional energy can simply be phased out overnight," Nasser remarked.

"Traditional sources still account for more than 80% of the energy consumed in the United States, approximately 90% in China, and over 70% within the European Union. It is a misconception to think that new energy sources can replace traditional ones; in reality, they are meant to

complement them. In fact, new energy sources are unable to meet the rising demand for power. Effective traditional energy sources are being discarded in an increasingly irrational manner. This will ultimately lead us down a fast track to a dystopian future, one characterised by crisis and widespread hardship."

CERAWeek, an annual gathering of leaders from the energy sector, government officials, and industry executives, provides a

platform for important discussions surrounding energy security, supply, climate policy, technology, and sustainability.

This year's conference, titled "Moving Ahead: Energy Strategies for a Complex World," has drawn more than 10,000 participants from over 2,050 companies and 80 countries. The event has also seen more than 1,400 expert speakers addressing the pressing issues.

SFA

Oil prices edge higher despite fears of Trump tariffs

London, UK – Oil prices trimmed earlier losses on Tuesday despite concerns over the global economic impact of tariffs, a potential US recession, and OPEC+ output increase plans.

The international benchmark Brent crude increased by 0.5%, trading at \$69.32 per barrel in morning trade in London, up from \$68.97 at the close of the previous session. The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate rose by 0.48%, settling at \$65.98 per barrel, compared to

its prior session close of \$65.66.

As global concerns over inflation and recession persist, the trade war initiated by US President Donald Trump through tariffs is adding uncertainty to the country's economic outlook. Trump's comments on tariffs last week further fueled recession fears.

In an interview on Sunday, he did not rule out the possibility that tariffs could push the US economy into recession or drive up inflation this year.



Asked whether a recession was expected due to tariffs, Trump said he 'hates' making predictions, adding, 'There is a period of transition, because what we're doing is very big. We're bringing wealth back to America. That's a big thing. And there are always periods of -- it takes a little time. It takes a little time. But I think it should be great for us.'

Regarding inflation concerns, Trump acknowledged tariffs could have an impact but em-

phasised that interest rates have also fallen. 'Trump's comments triggered a wave of selling as investors started pricing in the risk of weaker growth in demand,' Daniel Hynes, a commodity strategist at the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group, said in an e-mail note.

'Sentiment wasn't helped by data in China that showed consumer inflation fell more than expected. The decline in services prices and a negative reading for core inflation were symptoms of

sluggish consumption,' he added.

As market sentiment continues to be shaped by Trump's tariff policy, a 25% tariff on all steel and aluminum imports is set to take effect on March 12.

On the supply side, as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, known as OPEC+, prepare to increase oil output from April, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said Friday that they are ready to adjust their approach.



Bitcoin price falls below \$80k amid recession, tariff risks

Bitcoin fell on Tuesday, briefly hitting a fresh four-month low as risk appetite was eroded by growing concerns over a US recession and uncertainty over more trade tariffs under President Donald Trump.

Broader crypto markets also sank, as Trump's recently announced national stockpile sparked little enthusiasm. A crypto summit held at the White House last week also offered few cues on Trump's plans for regulation.

Bitcoin remained under pressure after clocking three weeks of steep losses, with the crypto also taking little support from an announcement of a fresh capital raise from Strategy, the world's biggest corporate Bitcoin holder, to buy more of the crypto.

Bitcoin price fell 2.4% to \$80,289.1 by 05:50 GMT on Tuesday, having earlier fallen as low as \$76,677.1.

Bitcoin's losses tracked steep declines in global stock markets, as appetite for risk-driven assets was dented by increasing fears of a US recession.

Threats of more tariffs from Trump also weighed, as he lashed out against Canada for retaliatory measures over his 25% tariffs, while repeating his plans for reciprocal tariffs from early-April.

Trump in a recent interview also declined to rule out the pos-

sibility of a US recession, instead flagging some economic turbulence as his administration carries out its reforms.

Bitcoin and crypto assets tend to log a much stronger negative reaction to economic headwinds than other risk-driven assets, given their highly speculative nature. This trend has kept crypto markets trading consistently lower so far in 2025.

Bitcoin has lost nearly 14% so far this year.

Bitcoin also took little support from Strategy announcing a \$21bn share offering to raise more capital. The company said it will use most proceeds from the raise to buy more Bitcoin-a trade that has become its core business.

But Strategy is also sitting on a roughly \$4bn loss from its Bitcoin purchases through late-2024, when the price hit a series of record highs above \$100,000. Strategy spent \$21bn on Bitcoin since November 10, with declines in the crypto's price now valuing the purchases at \$17bn.

Broader crypto prices fell amid few positive cues for markets, with bargain buyers also steering clear amid increased economic uncertainty.

World No.2 crypto Ether fell 8% to \$1,900.70, its lowest level since late-2021.

(Source: Investing.com)

China's foreign exchange reserves rise to \$3.23tn



Beijing, China – China's foreign exchange reserves reached nearly \$3.23tn at the end of February, up by \$18.2bn dollars, or 0.57%, compared to the end of January, official data showed.

The US dollar index fell last month, and global financial asset prices were mixed, influenced by macroeconomic policies and data from major economies as well as monetary policies and expectations of key central banks, Xinhua reports, quoting the State Administration of Foreign Ex-

change.

China's foreign exchange reserves increased in February due to a combination of factors, including currency translation and changes in asset prices, according to the statement.

The country's economy has a solid foundation, enjoys multiple advantages, and exhibits strong resilience and great potential, all of which have contributed to the general stability of foreign exchange reserves, the administration said.

OMAN REINSURANCE COMPANY S.A.O.C

Reinsurance Protection Beyond Expectations

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Directors' Report

Dear Shareholders,



After Compliments,

The Board of Directors is pleased to present the Annual Report of OMAN Reinsurance Company S.A.O.C. ("Oman Re" or "the Company") along with the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2024. Details about basis of preparation of financial statements can be found in the notes to the audited financial statements.

The financial highlights for the year 2024 are summarized below:

	31 Dec 2024	31 Dec 2023
Reinsurance revenue	49,894,863	42,100,184
Reinsurance service results	2,932,777	3,581,614
Net reinsurance results	2,042,509	2,743,530
Investment and other income, net	3,455,991	2,713,361
General and administrative expenses	(1,605,439)	(1,676,514)
Foreign exchange losses, net	(298,048)	(764,004)
Net profit after tax for the year	3,011,199	2,555,695

The strong pricing trends that began in 2022 continued into the first half of 2024, reinforced by significant events such as the Dubai Floods. However, as the year progressed, pricing for loss-free accounts faced pressure due to increased market capacity. Oman Re maintained its prudent underwriting approach, leveraging favorable pricing conditions to strengthen its position in core markets and gradually expand its facultative book of business.

In 2024, Oman Re experienced a lower attritional loss ratio in both Facultative and Treaty segments, despite higher Natural Catastrophe (Nat Cat) and large loss activity. Strong underwriting performance in the last quarter, combined with the positive impact of premium rate improvements since 2022, resulted in reinsurance service results of OMR 2.9 million.

During 2024, the company's reinsurance revenue grew by 19%, reaching OMR 49.9 million compared to OMR 42.1 million the previous year. Despite the challenges of higher Nat Cat activity and large losses, Oman Re continued to deliver robust underwriting results. Additionally, the company achieved strong investment performance, with investment income rising by 27% to OMR 3.5 million, up from OMR 2.7 million last year. This led to an 18% increase in net profit after tax, which reached OMR 3.0 million compared to OMR 2.6 million the previous year.

Business Environment and Key Initiatives during the year 2024

Oman Re's Vision is "Reinsurance Protection beyond Expectations". The Company sees significant potential to achieve its Vision knowing that the MENA region specifically remains an attractive, high-growth market for reinsurance given its relatively low levels of insurance penetration. Furthermore, reinsurers in MENA region are expected to play an increasingly important part in supporting regional governments' economic diversification drives away from oil; Oman Re is no exception.

Over the years, Oman Re has made notable progress by means of various strategic initiatives, to strengthen its foothold in the Sultanate and in the wider territorial scope where it operates (Africa, countries). Further, support from a highly respected regulatory regime, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) and Qatar Financial Center Regulatory Authority (QFCRA), the stable economic environment of the Sultanate are additional factors in instilling market confidence in the Company, and for the Company to become the preferred reinsurance partner in Oman, Qatar and the broader region.

As part of its long-term vision to be a key player in the Omani and broader MENA market, Oman Re undertook the following key activities during 2024:

- Oman Re played a leading role in delivering the 34th General Arab Insurance Federation (GAIF) Conference, held from 18-21 February 2024 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat. The event, jointly organized by the Oman Insurance Association (OIA) and the Financial Services Authority (FSA), was the largest GAIF Conference in its 60-year history, attracting over 2,250 insurance leaders and professionals from 60 countries. As a strategic partner of the conference, Oman Re gained excellent media exposure and new business opportunities, in addition to receiving positive feedback and appreciation from various stakeholders and delegates. Furthermore, Team Oman Re conducted over 150 formal meetings during the event in which Oman Re's team discussed and navigated the appropriate business opportunities with various reinsurance players in the region.
- The Company conducted two knowledge-sharing activities during the year: (i) the "Property, Power, and Renewables Insurance" workshop for 30 delegates from 14 local insurance companies in Egypt, held from 22 to 24 September in Cairo; and (ii) the "Risk Beyond Boundaries: Understanding Probable Maximum Loss from a Risk Engineering Perspective" workshop for 30 representatives from 10 local insurance companies in Oman, along with participants from the Financial Services Authority and the Ministry of Finance, held on 26 November in Muscat.
- Considering the increased frequency of natural catastrophe events in Oman in the recent years, Oman Re initiated - a national dialogue with the regulator and Oman Insurance Association in view of mitigation and management of natural catastrophes affecting the Sultanate since 2018. In November 2021, following Cyclone Shaheen, Oman Re conducted in coordination with the Local Insurance Authority, a workshop on this subject involving the Omani Insurance Association and all decision makers of the local insurance companies. All participants concurred on the importance of the establishment of a Nat Cat Pool for Omani market. A Steering Committee with representatives from six local companies and chaired by Oman Re was formed and is actively working on the various technical aspects of the reinsurance pool formation. Oman Re was elected by the steering committee as the Nat Cat Pool Manager, which will positively reinforce our status as the reinsurance leader in Oman and boost our brand image regionally. The steering committee submitted their proposal on the Motor Nat Cat pool section and FSA took the decision of the implementation of the Motor Scheme in 1st Quarter 2025. Motor Nat Cat cover will be a compulsory part of Motor TP Insurance Policy (Compulsory Insurance) and all local insurance companies must reinsure this compulsory product with Oman Re.

- Oman Re and the steering committee members agreed to focus on successful implementation of the Motor Nat Cat Scheme before submitting their recommendation with regards to the Non-Motor Nat Cat pool to the FSA.
- Retakaful Window: To have a competitive advantage in accessing the Retakaful business, which is under regulatory regimes which puts restrictions on the local Takaful Reinsurers, Companies in ceding business to Non-Takaful Reinsurers, Oman Re initiated the discussion with FSA during 2022 to navigate the possibility to operate the Retakaful business through a window and FSA issued a regulation which allows the company to apply for Retakaful license. The Company obtained its license for Retakaful Window from FSA during 2024 which is valid till 14 February 2029. The Company has started operations of its Retakaful Window from 1 January 2025. The Retakaful Window will increase the product range of the Company and Company will be able to cater to its shariah compliant clients with more capacity.

Development of Omani Talent

- A key strategic initiative for Oman Re is continuous training and development of its human assets, especially the Omani cadre. In this regard Oman Re conducted the following:
 - The Company extended great emphasis towards people development activities, whereby all staff members collectively undertook over 265 courses via three online learning platforms, namely (i) Oman Re Learning Hub for business skills courses as well as health and safety course; (ii)

KnowBe4 platform for information security courses; and (iii) Thomson Reuters platform for the mandatory compliance course.

- Via the "Professional Certifications Incentive Scheme" at Oman Re, 30 staff members were engaged with various global qualifications from UK-based institutions, such as the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), the International Compliance Association (ICA), the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), and the following USA-based institutions - the Insurance Institute of America (The Institutes), and the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE). 10 staff members completed their respective qualifications during the year.
- 70 participants undertook 20 courses locally, regionally and internationally during the year within the technical, business skills and management domain. Additionally, all staff members participated in the Team Building Activity in May.
- Under the umbrella of Oman Insurance Association (OIA), Oman Re collaborated with the Foundation for Insurance and Finance Education (FIFE), Bahrain to conduct "Professional Certifications" webinar in September; and with Ripple Effect, Switzerland to conduct "Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Awareness" webinar in November. Both webinars were hosted by Oman Re with over 100 registrations each from the local insurance community.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Oman Re is fully committed to be a responsible business by contributing back to the society in which it operates. During 2024, Oman Re contributed the following to different charitable causes:

SNO	PARTICULARS	AMOUNT IN OMR
1	Imam Jaber Bin Zaid Waqf Foundation	2,000
2	Umm Al Qura Mosque	1,500
3	Special Olympics Oman	3,000
4	Oman Charitable Organisation	2,500
5	Cancer Association of Oman	2,000
6	Omani Lawyer Association (Fak Korba Initiative)	2,000
TOTAL		13,000

The Company will extend its CSR activities during 2025 in respect of health in general and will support the underprivileged members of society. The Company is planning to spend OMR 20,000 with respect to CSR activities in 2025.

Financial Performance

Reinsurance Revenue

During the year 2024, the total reinsurance revenue was OMR 49.9 million compared to OMR 42.1 million in 2023, an increase of 19% year on year. Treaty increased by 17% to reach OMR 24.7 million compared to OMR 21.2 million in 2023; Facultative increased by 21% to reach OMR 25.1 million compared to OMR 20.9 million in 2023.

Reinsurance Service Expense

The reinsurance service expense in IFRS 17 is composed of three components i.e. incurred claims and other insurance service expenses, amortisation of insurance acquisition cashflows and adjustment for liabilities for incurred claims. The details are given below:

(Amounts in OMR)			
Sr.No.	Description	2024	2023
1.	Incurred claims and other insurance service expenses	34,361,015	18,445,668
2.	Amortization of insurance acquisition cash flows	12,069,571	10,574,127
3.	Adjustments to liabilities for incurred claims	1,711,168	7,864,355
Reinsurance service expense		48,141,754	36,884,150

General and Administrative Expenses

IFRS 17 requires the expenses pertaining to acquisition and maintenance of reinsurance business to be allocated to underwriting results (net reinsurance results). Expenses which are not allocated are shown separately. Our general and administrative expenses decreased by 4% during 2024 due to stringent cost control initiatives by the Company.

(Amounts in OMR)			
Sr. No.	Description	2024	2023
1.	General and Administrative expenses	1,605,439	1,676,514
Total		1,605,439	1,676,514

Investment and Other Income

The investment and other income for the year 2024 was OMR 3.5 million as against OMR 2.7 million in 2023. There was a significant increase of 27% in investment and other income compared to prior year as per the below mentioned details:

(Amounts in OMR)			
Sr.No.	Description	2024	2023
1.	Interest on bonds and bank deposits	3,440,370	2,676,382
2.	Dividend income	44,763	57,900
3.	Realised (loss)/gain on sale of investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	21,830	(12,631)
4.	Unrealised fair value gains on investments at fair value through profit or loss	23,495	3,300
5.	(Loss)/gain on sale of fixture, furniture and equipment	296	(34)
6.	Custody expenses	(72,974)	(85,592)
7.	Miscellaneous income	-	198
8.	Reversal/(provision) for impairment on assets held amortized cost and IV through OCI	(1,789)	58,430
9.	Unrealised fair value gains on investment property	-	15,408
Total		3,455,991	2,713,361

Share Capital

In line with requirements from the Financial Services Authority (FSA) for licensees, Oman Re's paid up capital at 31st December 2024 stood at OMR 32.6 million (approximately USD 84.7 million), thus fulfilling one of the key licensing / regulatory requirements.

Reinsurance License

During the year, the Company successfully renewed its Reinsurance License from FSA for a period of five years up to 14th June 2029.

Internal Audit

Internal Audit Department (IAD) promotes action on audit advice and reinforces staff accountability and commitment to results. Its ultimate aim is to enhance Oman Re's risk management and control systems. In 2024, IAD fully executed the risk-based internal audit plan for 2024, which was approved by the Audit Committee.

Risk and Actuarial

As part of its remit during 2024, the Risk and Actuarial Department (RAD) has been working on embedding the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework throughout the Company, supported by a comprehensive Risk Management Policy. It also monitors adherence to the risk appetite set by the Board by means of Top Risks report and Risk Tolerance Control reports, with the result of developing a risk-based decision-making process throughout the Company.

Future Plans

Based on our Vision, "Reinsurance Protection Beyond Expectations", we aim to position Oman Re as a reinsurer renowned for providing innovative and responsive solutions. Oman Re complies with best corporate governance practices. Through our commitment to the insurance and reinsurance industries, we will continue to build our reputation as a financially strong reinsurer with highly acceptable quality of security.

To achieve our vision, Oman Re will:

- Be guided by clear and sound underwriting principles and guidelines that lay emphasis on quality rather than volume in view of sustained and profitable growth to the satisfaction of our shareholders.
- Be committed to its values of Integrity, Dynamic Culture and Transparency within the workplace and in dealings with clients.
- Seek long-lasting and mutually beneficial partnerships with clients.
- Develop and retain a highly motivated professional team.
- Recognize and reward strong performance; individuals will be appraised for their contribution to the Company and rewarded appropriately.
- Embed and establish systems and procedures so the Company can manage risks and encourage creativity.
- Comply with Corporate Governance principles to ensure transparency and to protect the interests of the shareholders and the reputation of the Company.
- In order to obtain a sound financial rating, the Company will maintain risk-adjusted capitalization at levels sufficient to absorb our growth and follow a disciplined underwriting approach.

During the year 2024, we continued with our 3-year business planning cycle titled "SHAPING THE FUTURE OF OMAN RE" which was started in 2022. Oman Re focused on the following strategic objectives during 2024:

- To manage the rating exercise with Fitch Ratings, with the aim of improving the current rating
- Make the company attractive for existing and potential shareholders by capital restructuring.

- Work on setting up and promoting the Retakaful window
- Enhance IT infrastructure to automate operations and also to improve data analysis capabilities
- Focus on core markets and launch new products.

At the end of 2024, the BOD discussed the updates on the business plan and approved 2025-2027 business plan and budget.

Oman Re Property

The Company has obtained most of the necessary regulatory permits with respect to the approval of design and construction of the property. Due to the overall economic challenges of property market in Oman, the Board of Directors has deferred the project until there is improvement in the overall property markets.

Acknowledgements and Appreciation

On behalf of the Board of Directors, the Executive Management and the Staff Members, we are honoured to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said for his visionary leadership and we pray to the Almighty God to grant him every strength to continue to lead the Sultanate on the path of sustainable development. May almighty God save Oman, its leader and citizens.

The Directors of Oman Re wish to acknowledge the valuable guidance and assistance received from the Financial Services Authority, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qatar Financial Center Regulatory Authority and the property received from clients and business partners. We look forward to receiving their continued support and encouragement.

The Directors also wish to extend their thanks and appreciation and express their gratitude for the continuing commitment and dedication of its shareholders, the Executive Management and employees at all levels. The Directors are thankful to the esteemed shareholders for their support and the confidence placed in the Company and the Board.

Dr. Juma Bin Ali Al Juma
Chairman of the Board

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION As at 31 December 2024

	31 December 2024	31 December 2023
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,295,930	1,757,970
Bank deposits	21,978,961	22,164,526
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	2,195,444	1,311,942
Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	48,082,285	37,096,592
Reinsurance contract assets	845,087	34,095
Retrocession contract assets	20,345,974	14,106,678
Accrued income	1,375,177	1,013,431
Deferred tax asset	206,432	82,502
Other receivables	342,272	271,991
Investment property	2,100,000	2,100,000
Intangible assets	22,112	80,756
Fixtures, furniture and equipment	161,085	63,875
TOTAL ASSETS	99,950,759	80,084,358
LIABILITIES		
Retrocession contract liabilities	963,431	237,237
Reinsurance contract liabilities	62,401,126	47,280,824
Current tax liability	312,144	312,911
Other payables	956,397	44,473
TOTAL LIABILITIES	64,633,098	47,875,445
EQUITY		
Share capital	32,615,926	32,615,926
Legal reserve	1,247,772	946,652
Investment fair value reserve	96,027	(492,801)
Contingency reserve	11,138,292	8,428,213
Accumulated losses	(9,780,355)	(9,289,077)
TOTAL EQUITY	35,317,661	32,208,913
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	99,950,759	80,084,358
NET ASSETS PER SHARE	0.107	0.097

RETROCESSION CONTRACT LIABILITIES		
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Reinsurance contract liabilities	62,401,126	47,280,824
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TOTAL EQUITY	35,317,661	32,208,913
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	99,950,759	80,084,358
NET ASSETS PER SHARE	0.107	0.097

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME For the year ended 31 December 2024 (Expressed in Omani Rial)

	31 December 2024	31 December 2023
Reinsurance revenue	49,894,863	42,100,184
Reinsurance service expense	(48,141,754)	(36,884,150)
Net income / (expense) from retrocession	1,179,668	(1,634,420)
Reinsurance service results	2,932,777	3,581,614
Reinsurance finance expense for reinsurance contracts issued	(1,311,886)	(1,689,240)
Retrocession finance income for retrocession contracts held	421,618	851,156
Net reinsurance results	2,042,509	2,743,530
Investment and other income, net	3,455,991	2,713,361
Net reinsurance and investment result	5,498,500	5,456,891
General and administrative expenses	(1,605,439)	(1,676,514)
Foreign exchange losses, net	(298,048)	(764,004)
	(1,903,487)	(2,440,518)
Profit before income tax	3,595,013	3,016,373
Income tax expense	(583,814)	(460,678)
Net Profit for the year	3,011,199	2,555,695

Other comprehensive income:		
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss:		
Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income		
Valuation gains on equity investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	1,019,604	455,066
Deferred tax charge on valuation of equity investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	(5,217)	(63,302)

Items that will or may be reclassified to profit or loss:		
Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income		
Valuation (losses) / gains on debt instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income	(1,054,086)	1,084,914
Deferred tax charge on valuation of debt instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income	137,248	(162,333)
Total other comprehensive income	97,549	1,314,345
Total comprehensive income	3,108,748	3,870,040
Earnings per share - basic and diluted	0.0091	0.0077

Sohar International partners with Tawasul to train frontline employees in sign language

Reaffirming its commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible banking experience, Sohar International has successfully concluded a specialized sign language training program for its frontline employees.

Conducted in collaboration with Al Tawasul Institute for Training - an esteemed organisation dedicated to empowering individuals with hearing impairments across the Arab world - the initiative is a testament to the bank's dedication to serving all segments of society.

Commenting on the initiative, Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer at Sohar International, said that inclusivity is not merely a social responsibility; it is a defining attribute of progressive and forward-thinking organisations.

"Our partnership with Al Tawasul Institute underscores our commitment to working with industry experts who share our vision of fostering a society that values diversity and empowers every individual. By equipping our employees with sign language communication skills, we aim to eliminate barriers and enhance service accessibility for all."



Beyond training, he said, this initiative represents a broader effort to cultivate a culture of empathy, respect, and understanding - both within our organization and the wider community. "Through such endeavors, we aspire to set a benchmark for the industry, encouraging a more mindful and proactive approach to serving individuals with disabilities with dignity and care."

This initiative aligns with Sohar International's broader

strategy to enhance customer experience through innovative and inclusive solutions, ensuring banking services remain accessible to all, regardless of communication abilities. The sign language training program was meticulously designed to equip participants with both practical skills and cultural awareness, focusing on two key areas: sign language communication and the etiquette of engaging with individuals with hearing impairments.

These modules not only en-

hance employees' ability to interact effectively but also foster a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by this segment of society. By strengthening communication pathways, promoting cultural sensitivity, and cultivating an environment rooted in inclusivity, Sohar International reaffirms its commitment to nurturing a workforce that prioritises tailored customer engagement and values diversity in every interaction.

Sohar International remains

committed to financial inclusion by ensuring its products and services are accessible to all, including people with disabilities. Aligned with the Financial Consumer Protection Regulatory Framework (FCPRF), the bank continuously enhances its banking environment to meet diverse customer needs.

In 2024, Sohar International and Sohar Islamic implemented significant accessibility improvements, including the introduction of NFC-enabled and audio-sup-

ported ATMs to assist visually impaired users. These ATMs have been upgraded, with plans to expand this initiative with the addition of seven more units in 2025.

Furthermore, three strategically located ATMs now feature ramp access, sliding doors, and intuitive interfaces, further demonstrating the bank's commitment to inclusive banking. Through these enhancements, Sohar International continues to prioritize accessibility, ensuring

an improved and seamless customer experience across its network.

Sohar International remains steadfast in its investment in upskilling initiatives that empower its workforce to meet evolving customer needs. From advanced technological training to programmes that enhance soft skills, the bank ensures its employees remain agile, customer-centric, and forward-thinking. These efforts not only strengthen operational excellence but also reinforce the bank's commitment to delivering exceptional, inclusive, and personalised banking experiences.

Through pioneering initiatives such as this, Sohar International continues to set industry benchmarks, reinforcing its position as a socially responsible leader. The bank remains dedicated to fostering a future where inclusivity, equality, and mutual respect are embedded in every aspect of its operations. With the vision to become a world-class Omani services company that helps customers, community and people to prosper and grow, Sohar International operates with a purpose to help people.

ahlibank joins Al Rahma to carry out series of Ramadan charities

Reinforcing its commitment to social responsibility and community support, ahlbank has signed a strategic partnership with Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Child Welfare to launch a series of charitable initiatives during the holy month of Ramadan.

These initiatives aim to provide essential assistance to underprivileged families, enhance their living conditions, and support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by offering marketing platforms that foster economic empowerment.

As part of this collaboration, ahlbank will provide Eid clothing to over 250 underprivileged families, ensuring they can celebrate the festive season with joy. Additionally, recognising the importance of a comfortable living environment, the bank will also contribute essential household appliances, including air conditioners, to families registered under Al Rahma Association. This initiative is designed to enhance their standards of living



and alleviate financial burdens.

Additionally, the agreement includes a dedicated booth for home-based businesses supported by Al Rahma Association at the bank's third annual Ramadan Souq. This initiative will provide entrepreneurs with a valuable platform to present and sell their products, fostering financial independence and contributing to their growth and financial independence.

Jumana al Hashmi, AGM - Head of Marketing & Corporate

Communications at ahlbank, emphasised the bank's strong commitment to creating a positive social impact.

"At ahlbank, corporate social responsibility is at the heart of our values. We believe in creating meaningful and lasting change by extending our support beyond banking services," she said, adding that their initiatives aim to empower communities, foster financial independence, and promote a culture of giving.

"Ramadan provides the per-

fect opportunity to reinforce these principles, and we are confident that our efforts will make a tangible difference in the lives of those in need."

She further highlighted the significance of such collaboration with charitable organisations to maximize impact, noting that this partnership aligns with ahlbank's broader vision of expanding its community outreach and increasing the reach of its social initiatives. Supporting home-based businesses, she added, is a strategic step towards economic empowerment, contributing to sustainable development and aligning with Oman Vision 2040.

Through these initiatives, ahlbank continues to reaffirm its dedication to making a positive and sustainable impact on society. The bank remains committed to expanding its social contributions, implementing transformative projects, and enhancing the quality of life for individuals and families across Oman.

Ramadan spirit gets ignited with BYD's electric SUV Atto 3



Oman is getting excited this Ramadan to embark on a new journey with BYD's powerful fully electric SUV ATTO 3.

Crafted using high standards of luxury, advanced innovations, and world-class safety features, the BYD Atto 3 makes every trip memorable.

BYD, the world's #1 leader in new energy vehicle manufacturing, brings a great opportunity for customers to own a BYD Atto 3 at unbeatable prices. Starting at RO9,990, BYD offers service perks of up to five years O

100,000km, first-year free insurance, along with a chance to win a Qin Plus Classic in the grand raffle.

Head over to BYD showrooms in Wattayah, Al Mouj, and Mall of Oman to unlock unmatched value for money before the offer ends on April 24.

Drawing inspiration from the Chinese dragon, the Atto 3's design embodies strength and elegance. The BYD Atto 3 is an absolute dream to own, accelerating with 201HP. It reaches 0 to 100km per hour in just 7.3 sec-

onds, making it the fastest SUV in its segment. Recharge and explore the city with a range of 420km on a full charge. The ATTO 3 offers a smooth, fun, and efficient urban ride.

Designed to appeal to a younger, more energetic crowd, its gym-themed cockpit ignites excitement through innovation. The ATTO 3 boasts a dynamic waistline and 18-inch alloy wheels, ensuring excellent road handling with the exhilarating performance of the Blade Battery.

Ominvest celebrates Women's Day

Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest), a leading investment company in the region, proudly sponsored the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA) Iftar & International Women's Day Celebration, held in Muscat.

The prestigious event, co-organised by MEIRA and Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), brought together up to 70 influential leaders from the finance and corporate governance field. Attendees included investor relations professionals, sustainability executives, CEOs, CFOs and investment bankers from across the region.

The event created a unique synergy, blending the reflective spirit of Ramadan with

global focus on women's empowerment and advancement, highlighting the pivotal role women play in shaping the future of the finance and investor relations.

Abdulaziz al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest, said at Ominvest, they recognise that diversity and inclusion are fundamental drivers of innovation and sustainable value creation.

"We are committed to empowering women at all levels of our organisation and within the broader financial ecosystem," the Ominvest CEO said, noting that the women's "strategic insights and leadership are essential to our ability to deliver long-term growth and contribute to Oman's economic vision".

FUSO Oman wins 3 EliteClass 2024 MEA awards

General Automotive Company (GAC), the exclusive distributor of FUSO Trucks & Buses in Oman and a part of The Zubair Corporation, has been recognised once again at the prestigious EliteClass 2024 Awards.

This year, GAC secured top honours in Parts Performance, Service Development, and Facility, further solidifying its reputation for excellence in the MEA region. The EliteClass 2024 Awards ceremony in Dubai gathered 40 Daimler Truck Business Partners to celebrate outstanding achievements across the Middle East and Africa. The event recognised top-performing Distributors who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to operational excellence, customer service, and brand development.

Speaking at the ceremony, Michael Dietz, President & CEO of Daimler Truck Middle East &



Africa, highlighted the impact of these awards, saying, "EliteClass 2024 is more than just an awards ceremony - it is a testament to the hard work, commitment, and shared vision of our partners. Their achievements continue to drive our brand forward, setting new benchmarks in customer ex-

perience and operational excellence across the region."

GAC's continued recognition in the EliteClass Program reflects its unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction, innovation, and operational excellence.

Over the years, FUSO Oman has built a formidable reputation

This year, GAC secured top honours in Parts Performance, Service Development, and Facility, further solidifying its reputation for excellence in the MEA region

in the commercial vehicle segment, offering a diverse range of light, medium, and heavy-duty trucks and buses that cater to various industries across the sultanate.

In addition to this year's achievements, FUSO Oman has previously been recognised for its historical sales milestones, tailored driver training programs, and excellence in service cus-

tom retention and parts sales marketing.

Daimler Truck's EliteClub Program, launched in 2023, identifies and rewards the highest-performing distributors across its global network.

The best-in-class partners are invited to an exclusive gala event, where top executives from Daimler Truck personally present the awards in recognition of their dedication and contributions to the brand's ongoing success.

GAC remains committed to elevating the FUSO brand in Oman through unmatched after-sales support, nationwide service accessibility, and customer-centric solutions. With showrooms in Azaiba, Mabelah, Barka, Suhar, Nizwa, Ibbi, Sur, Jalan Bu Ali, and Salalah, FUSO Oman continues to provide its customers with reliable mobility solutions backed by world-class support.

Muscat in 'Advanced Tier' for digital transformation

Following the successful streamlining and digitisation of 24 services for beneficiaries, the Government Digital Transformation Programme 'Tahawul' has ranked Muscat governorate in the Advanced Tier for digital transformation.

The announcement was made in the programme's annual report released recently. Muscat was ranked alongside three other government service entities out of a total of 49 organisations evaluated for their digital transformation performance in the past year.

This achievement is a direct result of the governorate's long-term digital transformation strategy, which has been implemented to keep pace with rapid technological advancements across various sectors.

H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, expressed his pride in this milestone, stating, "We are proud that Muscat governorate has been ranked in the Advanced Tier for government digital transformation. This achievement aligns with our contribution to Oman Vision 2040, which places significant emphasis on utilising the latest technologies to enhance and simplify government services for beneficiaries in municipal sectors.

"We extend our gratitude to the digital transformation team of Muscat Governorate and Municipality for attaining this level of success. We aspire to provide a pioneering digital transformation experience that sets a



H E Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidi (left) and Ahmed bin Mohammed al Hamidi

benchmark for Oman's future," he added.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Hamidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, emphasised the crucial role of comprehensive digital transformation in advancing national development, stating, "With the unprecedented global technological acceleration, digital transformation is no longer a luxury but an urgent necessity to enhance service delivery and provide transparent, reliable channels for beneficiaries of government services.

"Accordingly, Muscat Municipality adopted a digital transformation strategy early on and has made significant strides in this field. Just last year, the municipality successfully simplified and digitised 24 essential services through its platforms, eliminating the need for physical visits to

municipal offices. Beneficiaries can now complete their transactions seamlessly, anytime and anywhere."

He further added, "We extend our gratitude to His Excellency the Governor and the digital transformation team for their continuous support of Muscat Municipality in its journey toward comprehensive digital transformation. This journey extends beyond service digitization to include workforce training and fostering a digital work culture to ensure a fully integrated and satisfying experience for municipal service beneficiaries."

The 24 services successfully digitised and streamlined in 2024 include, 'Building permit issuance, Certificate of completion for excavation permit deposit refund, Request for street lighting in residential areas, Permit is-

suance to commence construction, Security deposit refund, Request for a building completion certificate, Permit for additional work inside a commercial establishment, Burial services, Registration and cancellation of lease agreements, Request to host events at municipality-owned venues, Auditing of modern building systems, Tree planting services outside plot boundaries, Registration of requests with the Customer Service Department, Address update services, Soil transportation services, Request for additional copies of blueprints, "Eitimad" Platform, Electronic authentication of lease contracts, "Baladiati" mobile application, Renewal of building permits, Registration of consulting offices, Homogeneous activities service and Complaint service for scrap sales.

KR Eshraqa Foundation shares Ramadan spirit with 10,000 families

Reinforcing its commitment to community welfare, the Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa Foundation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), has successfully distributed 10,000 Ramadan essential food supply boxes across all wilayats in the sultanate.

The MoSD, working closely with dedicated committees led by the wali of each wilayat, ensured a seamless and equitable distribution process. The committees, in coordination with local charity teams, played a crucial role in delivering the Ramadan boxes to families in need, ensuring that support reached those who needed it most.

Highlighting the significance of public-private collaboration in advancing corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives under Oman's Vision 2040, Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group, stated: "At Khimji Ramdas, we believe that meaningful change is driven by collective efforts. The successful distribution of these Ramadan boxes reflects the power of strategic partnerships in addressing essential social needs and uplifting communities.

"We extend our sincere gratitude to The Royal Air Force of Oman, Wali Offices, and the Ministry of Social Development for their invaluable support in making this initiative possible."

Acknowledging the efforts of all involved, H E Sheikh Rashid Bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social



The foundation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, has distributed 10,000 Ramadan essential food supply boxes across all wilayats

Development mentioned, "We extend our appreciation to the Eshraqa Foundation, charity organisations, and social clubs for their unwavering commitment to supporting families during the

holy month of Ramadan year on year. This initiative underscores our shared dedication to enhancing social welfare and strengthening community support across the sultanate."

The Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa Foundation has been established on the premise that the private sector has a responsibility towards the development of local communities and empowering talented individuals in the sultanate. By working towards nation-building at the grassroots, the Foundation aspires to contribute meaningfully by providing infrastructure that will lead to the enhancement of knowledge, skills, capabilities, health and overall wellbeing in society.

Knowledge Oman brings academia, industry closer

Knowledge Oman is all set to bridge the gap between academia and industry by formalising agreements with leading companies. This initiative will bring industry experts into academic institutions, equipping faculty members and students with practical skills that align with real-world industry demands.

"Creating a strong bridge between academia and industry is not just an opportunity - it is a necessity. To truly empower students and faculty, we must bring real-world expertise into the classroom, ensuring that education translates into impactful careers," said Knowledge Oman founder Tariq Hilal al Barwani, informing that "this is a key mission for Knowledge Oman this year and we are committed with the help of industries to making this a reality."

Knowledge Oman Academy launched last year received approximately 300 registrations till date from individual community speakers. Topics of speakers include Technical Skills, Business Entrepreneurship, Leadership & Management, Marketing & Sales, Sustainability & Corporate Responsibility, Health & Wellness, Finance & Wealth Management, Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence. Knowledge Oman has hosted hundreds of events in the form of seminars, workshops and community engagement across the sultanate since inception in 2008.

"Our initial goal was to capture individual community interest on their personal capacity to speak as an expert for the academia. Now, we are moving further by working also closely with different organisations from different industries to achieve the goal of



enriching the academia with latest developments from the industry," added Barwani.

Through upcoming industry partnerships, Knowledge Oman will facilitate guest lectures, mentorship programs, and collaborative learning opportunities that embed industry practices into academic settings. These efforts aim to create a seamless transition from education to employment, fostering a workforce that meets the needs of Oman's growing economy.

The initiative aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which recognises education and employment as key pillars for the nation's sustainable development. By investing in such learning, and development programs, Oman aims to create a highly skilled workforce that can drive economic growth and innovation, contributing to the realisation of the national vision.

Knowledge Oman has made significant contributions to the community, inspiring countless individuals and fostering a culture of continuous learning. With this new mission, Knowledge Oman aims to further its legacy by empowering academia to seize the opportunities of getting the latest developments from the industry.

Gulf Air announces partnership with SalamAir

Gulf Air, the National Carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, announced a strategic partnership with SalamAir, Oman's Low-cost carrier, formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

This MoU will see Gulf Air provide SalamAir with a comprehensive suite of technical services encompassing Line Maintenance, Base Maintenance and specialised workshop support.

This partnership not only offers SalamAir innovative operational solutions, it also positions Gulf Air as a key player in the regional MRO landscape.

Gulf Air Chief Technical Officer Mazin Saleh said, "This agreement with SalamAir is a significant step towards Gulf Air's vision to become a preferred provider of quality MRO services.



Adil al Sheibani

By sharing our expertise and resources, we are fostering new avenues of growth for Gulf Air."

Adil al Sheibani, Director of Engineering of SalamAir, said, "At SalamAir, we continuously seek strategic partnerships that not only enhance our operational



Mazin Saleh

efficiency but also ensure the highest standards of maintenance and reliability for our fleet." With the current fleet of six A320neo and seven A321neo aircraft, and the additional delivery of two new A321neos expected in June and July, he stated

that the collaboration with Gulf Air is fitting to support this expansion.

"As part of our growth strategy, we recently released an RFP for an additional ten A320neo aircraft, with deliveries planned from 2026 through 2028. Partnering with Gulf Air allows us to leverage their technical expertise and MRO capabilities, further strengthening our commitment to safety, performance, and a cost-effective operation," Sheibani further noted.

"We look forward to working closely with Gulf Air to optimise our maintenance support and drive operational excellence," he added.

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, has been operating since 1950, making it one of the earliest airlines established in the Middle East.

The airline operates scheduled flights from its hub at Bahrain International Airport to various destinations across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and the Far East. Gulf Air is recognized as a "Five-Star Major Airline" by APEX, based on verified traveler reviews, and has been awarded this prestigious status for the year 2025. The airline was also named "World's Most Improved Airline" in 2022 by Skytrax.

SalamAir is Oman's low-cost airline; SalamAir commenced operations in 2017 and focused on developing affordable air travel to Oman. Operating a fleet of 13 Airbus A320 family aircraft, SalamAir serves 6 Domestic destinations in Oman and 37 cities in 18 countries. SalamAir was voted as Oman's Most Trusted Brand in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Al Jenaibi International celebrates BMW Motorrad offers

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, the official importer of BMW Motorrad in Oman, is celebrating Ramadan with an exclusive offer for motorcycle enthusiasts, making it the perfect time to embrace the thrill of two-wheel adventure.

Whether you're hitting the open road or exploring the Sultanate's rugged landscapes, BMW Motorrad is here to elevate your riding experience this season.

Throughout the holy month, customers can benefit from BMW Motorrad Service for three years or 30,000km, whichever comes first, and BMW Warranty for five years with unlimited mileage. In addition, every new BMW Motorrad purchase comes with free first-year registration, ensuring a hassle-free start to the ownership experi-



ence. For those looking to take home a BMW Motorrad bike, exclusive Ramadan pricing is available across the range, ensuring that every rider finds their perfect companion.

The lightweight and agile GS 310 starts from just RO2,999,

while the iconic R 1250 GSA and R 12 begins at RO7,999, embodying BMW Motorrad's spirit of innovation and endurance. For those seeking pure grandeur on two wheels, the R 18 and K1600 B are available from RO8,999 and RO9,999 respectively, while

the all-new R1250 GSA debuts at RO8,888 + VAT and the R 1300 GS at RO10,999.

With adventure, performance, and innovation at its core, BMW Motorrad offers a diverse lineup suited for every type of rider.

Al Jenaibi International Auto-

mobiles is the exclusive importer for BMW, MINI, and authorized dealers for Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad in Oman. Al Jenaibi has achieved huge success since becoming the exclusive importer for the BMW Group in 2003, having one of the biggest premium car showrooms in the country and housing four brands in the Sultanate.

The trained and dedicated team of technicians and staff aim to provide unparalleled Sales and After Sales service to their esteemed premium clients. Al Jenaibi International Automobiles invest in training and development for their staff on a regular basis and invests regularly in state-of-the-art infrastructure and technical equipment to provide customers with the best available for products from the BMW Group portfolio.

US Senate Democrats unveil bill to reinstate fired veterans

Washington, D.C., US - US Senate Democrats unveiled a bill on Monday to reinstate veterans who were fired from the federal government as part of the Trump administration's efforts to reduce the size of the federal workforce.

Senator Tammy Duckworth and Senator Andy Kim, who introduced the Protect Veteran Jobs Act, said in a statement that veterans make up more than 30% of the federal workforce and it is estimated that

President Donald Trump and his adviser Elon Musk have already fired more than 6,000 veterans.

"Veterans who choose to continue their service to our country in the federal workforce deserve our utmost gratitude, but instead this Administration has kicked thousands of our heroes to the curb and left them without a pay cheque.

"The message of our bill is simple: Give our heroes their jobs back," Duckworth said in a statement. She also called on



Republicans to stop enabling Trump and Musk's 'chaos' and support their legislation.

Kim said the veterans 'not only stepped up to serve our country in uniform but chose to continue their public service in our federal workforce'.

"How dare anyone bring this chaos onto them and endanger them and their families' livelihoods in such a way," he added.

The act is cosponsored by Senators Richard Blumenthal, Mark Kelly, Ruben Gallego, Tim

Kaine, Amy Klobuchar, Cory Booker, Jacky Rosen and Dick Durbin.

The legislation would also require the Trump administration to report to Congress on a quarterly basis on the veterans who have been removed from federal employment and provide justification for their removal, according to the statement.

Meanwhile, US National Intelligence Director Tulsi Gabbard said on Monday that President Donald Trump or-

dered security clearances to be revoked for some officials from the administration of former President Joe Biden.

Gabbard said on X that she also barred access to classified information for some officials, including former Secretary of State Antony Blinken, former National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, former Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco and New York Attorney General Letitia James.

Anadolu Agency

Israel launches airstrikes on Syrian military sites in Daraa

Damascus, Syria - Israel conducted airstrikes on Syrian military sites in Daraa governorate on Monday, continuing a pattern of near-daily operations since the overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad.

Daraa governorate reported the strikes on its official Telegram channel, confirming that Israeli warplanes hit the 12th Brigade in the city of Izra and the artillery battalion of the 89th Regiment in the town of Jbab.

Israel's Channel 14 also reported that Israeli fighter jets targeted Daraa, striking former Assad regime positions.

"Our planes are attacking north Daraa in Syria now," the channel said, specifying that the targets included weapons depots, radar installations, tanks and artillery that 'rebels' attempted to seize.

After Assad's fall, Israel expanded its occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights by seizing the demilitarised buffer zone, a move that violated the 1974 disengagement agreement with Syria.



istry announced the end of military operations against loyalists of ousted President Bashar Assad along the Mediterranean coast

After Assad's fall, Israel expanded its occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights by seizing the demilitarised buffer zone, a move that violated 1974 disengagement agreement with Syria

on Monday, in what has been among the bloodiest conflicts in a decade.

The violence erupted after Assad loyalists ambushed a Syrian security patrol last week, leading to intense clashes and a series of revenge killings target-

ing Assad's Alawite sect.

The clashes killed 973 civilians, including women and children, according to the UK-based

able to resume work and offer services. "We were able to absorb the attacks from the remnants of the former regime and its officers. We shattered their element of surprise and managed to push them away from vital centres, securing most of the main roads," Abdel-Ghani said, in statements carried by the state news agency SANA.

The SOHR reported on Monday that a total of 39 'massacres' were reported since the violence erupted last week in Latakia, once the stronghold of the Assad family. It then spread to Tartus, Hama and Homs. The Mediterranean coast is seen as the Alawite heartland in Syria.

Widespread revenge operations against the Alawites were

reported amid the clashes, with the SOHR describing them as 'ethnic cleansing'. The killings have been accompanied by the burning of homes and forced displacement.

Tensions have been escalating since Assad's ouster last December, with sectarian attacks continuing despite promises from Syria's interim rulers of the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) to preserve inclusivity and protect minorities.

Assad loyalist gunmen overwhelmed government security forces during their ambush and briefly seized the hometown of the ousted president, Qardaha. Damascus struggled to send reinforcements.

Agencies



Curran sworn in as US Secret Service director

Washington, D.C., US - US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem swore in Sean Curran as the new director of the Secret Service on Monday.

President Donald Trump administered the oath of office to Curran at the White House. "I just want to say you're going to do a great job. I want to congratulate you as an exceptional guy with a great family," Trump said.

Curran, who previously served as the head of Trump's Secret Service detail, protected him from an assassination attempt at his campaign rally in Butler County, Pennsylvania last summer. When announcing his selection to lead the agency, Trump said that Curran 'distinguished himself as a brilliant leader, who is capable of directing and leading operational security plans for some of the most complex special security events'.

"He proved his fearless courage when he risked his own life to help save mine from an assassin's bullet in Butler, Pennsylvania. I have complete and total confidence in Sean to make the United States Secret Service stronger than ever before," Trump said in January.

The Secret Service has faced criticism over security failures and poor communication after the assassination attempt on July 13, 2024 which injured Trump during his campaign rally in Butler. A second assassination attempt was foiled near his golf club in Florida on September 15.

Meanwhile, the US Senate on Monday approved the nomination of Lori Chavez-DeRemer to lead the Department of Labor.

President Donald Trump's pick was confirmed in a 67-32 vote. Senator John Fetterman did not vote. Republican senators Ted Budd, Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul voted against the nominee.

Former Oregon Rep. Chavez-DeRemer pledged during her confirmation hearing last month that she will fight for American workers and the businesses that drive the US economy.

"To rebuild confidence and strengthen our workforce, we must invest in educational pathways beyond the traditional four-year degree, ensuring that every American worker has access to the skills and training for long-term success," she said.

Anadolu Agency

NATURE AT ITS BEST

An aerial drone photo shows Jiulong Waterfalls in Luoping County, southwest China's Yunnan Province, on Monday (Xinhua)

North Sea: Cargo ship hits tanker



The collision sparked a blaze on both vessels off the UK coast

London, UK - A cargo ship hit a tanker carrying jet fuel for the US government off the eastern coast of the United Kingdom on Monday, causing a large fire on both vessels and triggering a rescue operation.

The incident occurred in the North Sea near the city of Hull, and the alarm was first raised at 9:48am (UTC/GMT). Local lawmaker Graham Stuart said 37 crew members aboard the two ships had been brought to shore and assessed by ambulances.

According to the owner of the cargo ship, one of its crew is missing. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office said details surrounding the cause of the collision 'are still becoming clear'.

Lifeboats, firefighting vessels, a helicopter and a fixed-wing aircraft were deployed to respond to the incident. The oil tanker involved in the collision was US-flagged chemical and oil products carrier MV Stena Immaculate, which is managed by maritime company Crowley.

The ship was carrying jet fuel for the US military at the time of the collision.

"The Stena Immaculate sustained a ruptured cargo tank containing Jet-A1 fuel ... crew abandoned the vessel following multiple explosions onboard," Crowley said in a statement. A spokesperson for the US Navy's Military Sealift Command confirmed that the civilian-crewed ship was 'on a short-term charter' at the time of the incident.

DW

Saudi Arabia condemns Israel for cutting off electricity to Gaza Strip

Riyadh, KSA - Saudi Arabia on Tuesday 'strongly' condemned Israel's 'use of collective punishment' against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip by cutting off electricity to the area.

"The Kingdom reaffirms its absolute rejection of Israel's violations of international humanitarian law," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Israel cut off the electricity supply to Gaza on Sunday, in the latest move to tighten a stifling blockade on the enclave despite a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement.

It followed an Israeli decision last week to stop humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, prompting warnings from local and human rights groups of a return to widespread hunger for the Palestinian population.

"The Kingdom emphasises its call on the international community to take urgent actions to immediately and unconditionally restore electricity and ensure the flow of aid to Gaza," the ministry said.

Saudi Arabia also renews its call to activate international accountability mechanism for these 'blatant violations', it added.

Nearly 48,500 people have



Israel cut off the electricity supply to Gaza, in the latest move to tighten a blockade on the enclave despite a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement

been killed, mostly women and children, in a brutal Israeli war on Gaza since October 2023. The onslaught was paused under the ceasefire and prisoner swap deal, which took hold in January.

'One-off situation'

Meanwhile, US Secretary of

State Marco Rubio said on Monday that President Donald Trump's envoy Adam Boehler's meeting with the Palestinian group Hamas was a 'one-off situation'. "Well, that was a one-off situation in which our special envoy for hostages, whose job it is to get people released, had an opportunity to

talk directly to someone who has control over these people and was given permission and encouraged to do so. He did so," Rubio told reporters.

"As of now, it hasn't borne fruit. Doesn't mean he was wrong to try, but our primary vehicle for negotiations on this front will continue to be

(Trump's special envoy for the Middle East) Mr (Steve) Witkoff and the work he's doing through Qatar," he added.

He repeated his call on Hamas to release all hostages.

Boehler, in a series of interviews with Israeli and US television channels on Sunday, said he was speaking directly with

Hamas regarding the return of all Israeli hostages, including those holding American citizenship.

Rubio said Boehler is 'fantastic' at what he does and has already had 'tremendous success' in getting people released around the world.

His remarks came en route to Saudi Arabia, where a meeting between US and Ukrainian offi-

mediate negotiations on the second phase, which includes a full Israeli withdrawal and an end to the war.

One killed in West Bank

An Israeli army vehicle fatally struck a Palestinian man on Monday evening in the city of Jenin in the northern occupied

The Kingdom emphasises its call on international community to take urgent actions to immediately and unconditionally restore electricity and ensure the flow of aid to Gaza

SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTRY

cials will take place on Tuesday to discuss ways to end the Russia-Ukraine war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seeks to extend the first phase of the prisoner exchange to secure the release of more Israeli captives without fulfilling military or humanitarian obligations outlined in the agreement, appealing hardliners in his government.

Hamas, however, rejects this approach and insists that Israel abide by the ceasefire terms, urging mediators to push for im-

West Bank, said authorities.

The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the victim as 32-year-old Fathi Ahmad Salah.

According to the official Palestinian news agency WAFA, the incident occurred near the Al Dakhiliyeh Roundabout when the vehicle rammed into Salah, who was riding a motorcycle.

The collision left him with severe injuries and he was rushed to Ibn Sina Hospital, where medical staff later pronounced him dead, WAFA reported.

Anadolu Agency

Pakistan: Baloch army hijacks train

Balochistan, Pakistan - The Baloch Liberation Army on Tuesday in a statement said that it has taken as hostages passengers of the Jaffar Express train that it seized in Pakistan earlier today, adding that it will execute the captives if Pakistani forces launch an operation.

The Jaffar Express, with some 400 passengers on board in nine bogies, was on its way from Quetta in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province to Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa when the BLA opened fire on it, injuring the driver and taking the passengers as hostages.

In a statement, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) said that they have 'completely repelled the Pakistani military's ground assault following the seizure of Jaffar Express. After intense clashes, Pakistani ground troops



were forced to retreat, but airstrikes from helicopters and drones continue unabated'.

"The BLA issues a final warning: if the aerial bombardment is not halted immediately, all 100+ hostages will be executed within the next hour. Majeed Brigade, STOS, Fateh Squad, and ZIRAB Unit fighters are actively engaged

in countermeasures, and any further military incursion will have catastrophic consequences," the statement read.

"Over 100 enemy personnel remain in BLA custody. The occupying forces still have a chance to cease airstrikes and save their men, or else the Pakistani military will bear full responsibility for the

execution of all hostages," the statement by Jeeyand Baloch, spokesperson for the Baloch Liberation Army read.

Pakistan local media, earlier on Tuesday, reported that the Jaffar Express train was on its way from Quetta in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province to Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa when it came under intense firing in Balochistan. Over 450 passengers and staff are feared to have been taken hostage, local media reported.

The Balochistan government has imposed emergency measures and all institutions have been mobilised to deal with the situation, government spokesperson Shahid Rind said, according to the Dawn. As per ARY News, the driver of the train sustained severe injuries.

ANI

Saudi crown prince meets with US secretary of state

Jeddah, KSA - Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday following his arrival in the kingdom, according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

No further details were provided about the discussions.

Earlier, Rubio landed in Jeddah, a western coastal city, as reported by Saudi news channel Al-Ekhabriya. Hours later, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also arrived at Jeddah's airport, with plans to meet Rubio, according to the same outlet.

The meetings follow a March 8 phone call between Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha and Rubio, where they discussed the anticipated US-Ukraine talks



in Saudi Arabia.

Sybiha stated then that 'Ukraine wants the war to end, and US leadership is essential for achieving lasting peace'.

Saudi Arabia previously hosted a notable meeting on February 18, bringing Rubio together with Russian Foreign Min-

The meeting between Mohammed bin Salman and Marco Rubio took place after the latter's arrival in coastal city of Jeddah

ister Sergey Lavrov to explore peace prospects for Ukraine.

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a military offensive against Ukraine. Moscow demands Kyiv abandon aspirations to join Western military alliances as a condition for peace.

Anadolu Agency

Artisans keep Africa's cultural heritage alive through sculpture and painting

Banjul, Gambia - Africa preserves its cultural heritage through its centuries-old art and craft traditions, blending tribal motifs with modern artistic movements to maintain its identity.

With a growing appreciation for art, cities across the continent now feature open-air exhibits, craft markets, and biennials that support local artists. Street art is also on the rise, transforming murals into platforms for social messages, historical narratives, and expressions of cultural identity.

Seen in city centres, neighbourhoods, and historic districts, these murals serve as reflections of social change and public awareness. By integrating traditional motifs with modern interpretations, vibrant murals connect the past with the future, often featuring nature scenes and historical figures.

African handicrafts, shaped by diverse regional techniques and materials, remain a deeply rooted legacy.

Wood carving, ceramics, weaving, leatherwork, and metal

arts carry both functional and artistic significance.

In rural areas, these crafts continue to be passed down through generations, preserving artistic traditions. Handmade baskets, beaded jewellery, masks, and sculptures serve as more than decorative pieces - they represent cultural identity.

Displayed in local markets and international galleries, African art reaches global audiences while also playing a crucial role in economic growth.

Handicrafts, painting, sculpture, and textile design provide livelihoods for many, particularly as cultural tourism expands. Rising interest in traditional art has increased opportunities for artists to showcase their work at international fairs and on digital platforms.

Support for the arts is also inspiring younger generations to explore creative fields.

Art schools, workshops, and creative hubs nurture talent while ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage. Rural art coopera-



In rural areas, these crafts continue to be passed down through generations, preserving artistic traditions

tives, in particular, empower women and young people, helping them achieve economic independence through craftsmanship.

Handmade artworks, murals, traditional architecture, and artistic expression continue to keep Africa's rich cultural heritage alive, acting as a bridge between the past and the future.

'Anything I can do from the woods'

Craftsman Alpha Ciessey and Gambian painter Yougu Touray spoke with Anadolu about Africa's artistic traditions.

Ciessey carves wooden sculptures of animals, including lions, hippos, rhinos, and giraffes, along with figures of women carrying babies and the symbolic 'Mama

Africa'.

He began learning the craft at the age of 10 or 12 from his siblings and quickly developed a deep passion for it.

"I am developing. So, the developing brings me love to do these arts. I love arts," he said.

Tourists from the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Spain, the US, Morocco, Algeria, and

Turkey play a role in supporting Gambia's economy through their purchases, he noted.

"(With) the money we buy fish and rice and those things. So, our community is coming to grow," he added.

Ciessey also takes custom orders, crafting sculptures based on pictures provided by customers. "Anything I can do from the woods," he emphasised.

Painter Yougu Touray describes his work as semi-body_abstract and highly contemporary, while still deeply influenced by traditional African art.

He draws inspiration from Kanyalens, a women's group that was active in his community during his childhood.

"When I was very young, they were very active in this area. They were quite artistic. And it is their beliefs that inspired this work ... I heard this quote which says that 'art is making sense out of nothing and selling it for money'."

Touray explained that the group's primary focus was family

well-being, a theme he strives to reflect in his paintings.

Coming from a creative family - his father was a carpenter, and his mother worked in tie-dye and sewing - he was naturally drawn to artistic expression.

"I went to school and started to draw and to write, but then I realised that I was more of a visual person. So, I tend to draw more than I write in my books. So, that developed and developed, and I was noticed by my peers. So, with the helping hand of people around me and the support, I just continued to create things," he said.

Touray first started making lantern wood finials for Christmas with friends before expanding his artistic pursuits to painting on wearable items. As demand for his work grew, he continued painting on various surfaces.

"This went round. It was like a mobile gallery, and then I started painting on wood and on fabric and canvas, and that brought me to this level," he added.

Anadolu Agency

US, Ukraine begin talks in Saudi to find prospects for peace with Russia

Tuesday’s talks in Jeddah aim to strengthen US-Ukraine relations after weeks of tension

Jeddah, KSA - US and Ukrainian delegations began talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah on Tuesday to discuss prospects for a possible peace deal with Russia.

According to the Saudi television channel Al Arabiya, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha attended the talks, in the presence of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan.

Ukraine is expected to propose a plan for a partial ceasefire with Russia, aimed at restoring support from Washington, the broadcaster said.

Tuesday’s talks in Jeddah aim to strengthen US-Ukraine relations after weeks of tension, including a White House clash last month between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US President Donald Trump.

On Sunday, Trump said that the US expects Ukraine to demonstrate a willingness to pursue peace.

“We’re going to make a lot of progress,” he added.

On Monday, Zelensky said on Telegram that Ukraine has al-



Ukraine President office head Andriy Yermak (right) attends the meeting between the Ukrainian and US delegations in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday

Cyberattack on X from Ukraine: Musk

Washington, D.C., US - US billionaire Elon Musk said on Monday that a ‘massive cyberattack’ on X, formerly known as Twitter, originated from the Ukraine region as users worldwide experienced major disruptions.

“We are not sure what exactly happened. But there was

a massive cyberattack to try and bring down X system with IP addresses originating in the Ukraine area,” Musk said during an interview with Fox News.

Users started to report outages around 5:30am Eastern Time (0930 GMT), and while X was able to briefly restore service to most users just after

an hour later, reports surged roughly three hours later, according to the DownDetector website.

X continues to be plagued by myriad problems including pages refusing to load, and timelines failing to reload.

The source of the hack remains unknown.

‘May resume military aid’

The US may resume military aid to Ukraine if talks in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday go well, said Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

“I think all the notion of the pause in aid broadly is something I hope we can resolve. Obviously, I think what happens tomorrow will be key to that,” Rubio told reporters on Monday.

His remarks came en route to Saudi Arabia, where a meeting between US and Ukrainian officials will take place on Tuesday to discuss ways to end the Russia-Ukraine war.

He said the Ukrainians are al-

ready receiving all defensive intelligence information ‘as we speak’.

“Yeah, I mean, all of that came about because we felt that they were not committed to any sort of peace process or not interested in negotiations,” Rubio said, when asked whether the US is prepared to resume military assistance to Ukraine.

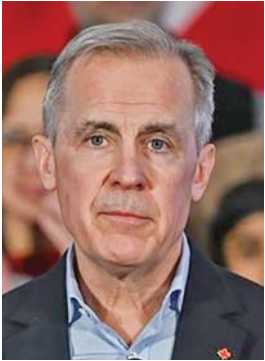
“If that changes, then obviously our posture can change. But I am not going to prematurely announce anything. Hopefully, we have a really good meeting tomorrow,” he added.

Turning to the prospect of a minerals deal between the US and Ukraine, Rubio said it is on the table, but it’s not the main topic on the agenda of Tuesday’s meeting.

“That’s continuing to be worked on. It’s not part of this conversation per se...Tomorrow can be successful without it. It’s certainly a deal the president wants to see done, but it doesn’t necessarily have to happen tomorrow,” he said, adding there are still more details to work out.

Rubio will meet with Ukrainian officials for the first time since President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky engaged in a fiery Oval Office exchange last month in which Trump and Vice President JD Vance repeatedly berated Zelensky, alleging he is ungrateful for years of American military and economic aid for his war-ravaged nation.

Agencies



Mark Carney

Canada to strengthen ties with India

Toronto, Canada - Canada’s Prime Minister-designate Mark Carney said that Canada looked forward to strengthen India-Canada ties. Carney said that Canada looked forward to strengthen ties with ‘like-minded’ countries, one of them being India.

“What Canada will be looking to do is to diversify our trading relationships with like-minded countries. And there are opportunities to rebuild the relationships with India- there needs to be a shared sense of values around that commercial relationship and if I am the Prime Minister, I look forward to the opportunity to build that,” he said.

Canada’s next leader is a relative political novice, coming instead from a decades-long career in finance where he steered governments through major global crises and periods of upheaval - experience he’s hoping to now leverage as he prepares to take over.

INDIA’S MODI IN MAURITIUS



Indian PM Narendra Modi receives a ceremonial Guard of Honour, in Port Louis on Tuesday. Mauritius PM Navin Ramgoolam is also seen (ANI)

Kremlin cautions against US pause of support to Kyiv

Moscow, Russia - The Kremlin spokesman on Tuesday cautioned against hastily adopting an optimistic outlook following the suspension of Washington’s support to Kyiv amid the ongoing Moscow-Kyiv conflict.

“There is no need to rush to put on rose-coloured glasses. One should always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst. And we must always be ready to defend our interests,” Dmitry Peskov said at a media conference at the Higher School of Economics University in Moscow.

Commenting on the potential shutdown of Starlink terminals in Ukraine, Peskov said Russia’s progress in the conflict does not depend on this.

Starlink, the satellite internet service of US billionaire Elon Musk’s SpaceX, has played a critical role in maintaining Ukraine’s



communications since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war.

“If Musk turns off his (equipment), they will immediately turn on something else. There are no empty niches in this world. But our guys don’t need shutdowns or pauses, they keep moving forward,” Peskov noted.

He also said that in the short term, suspending arms supplies to Ukraine will not have an im-

mediate impact, as large stockpiles have already been delivered.

“So many weapons have been supplied that even if deliveries stop, Ukrainians will still have enough to fight for many months,” he added.

About the role of media in modern warfare, Peskov urged journalists and those involved in information warfare to advance alongside the military.

South Korea: Court ruling on impeached president expected this week

Seoul, South Korea - South Korea’s acting president on Tuesday said ‘zero tolerance’ would be shown for any violent act in the country as the Constitutional Court is expected to rule on the permanent impeachment or reinstatement of the impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol.

The court is expected to announce its ruling soon, possibly this week.

“The government will guarantee the right to hold lawful and peaceful rallies to the fullest extent,” Choi Sang-mok said during a Cabinet meeting, according to the Seoul-based Yonhap News

Agency, adding that ‘any illegal or violent demonstrations, as well as any challenges to public authority, will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the law, without exception’.

He requested people to follow mature civic consciousness rules and highlighted that the international community was watching South Korea closely.

Protests both in support and against Yoon have been ongoing since his suspension in December over his brief martial law decree on December 3.

On Sunday, Seoul again saw protests following Yoon’s release from detention.



Suspended South Korean president Yoon Suk Yeol attends first impeachment hearing in Seoul

Police earlier said all available resources would be utilised and areas surrounding the Constitutional Court would be designated as special crime prevention areas on the day the ruling is announced.

day that they will go on a hunger strike in case of a ruling by the Constitutional Court on officially removing Yoon from office.

Yoon was released on Saturday from the detention centre where he had been held since

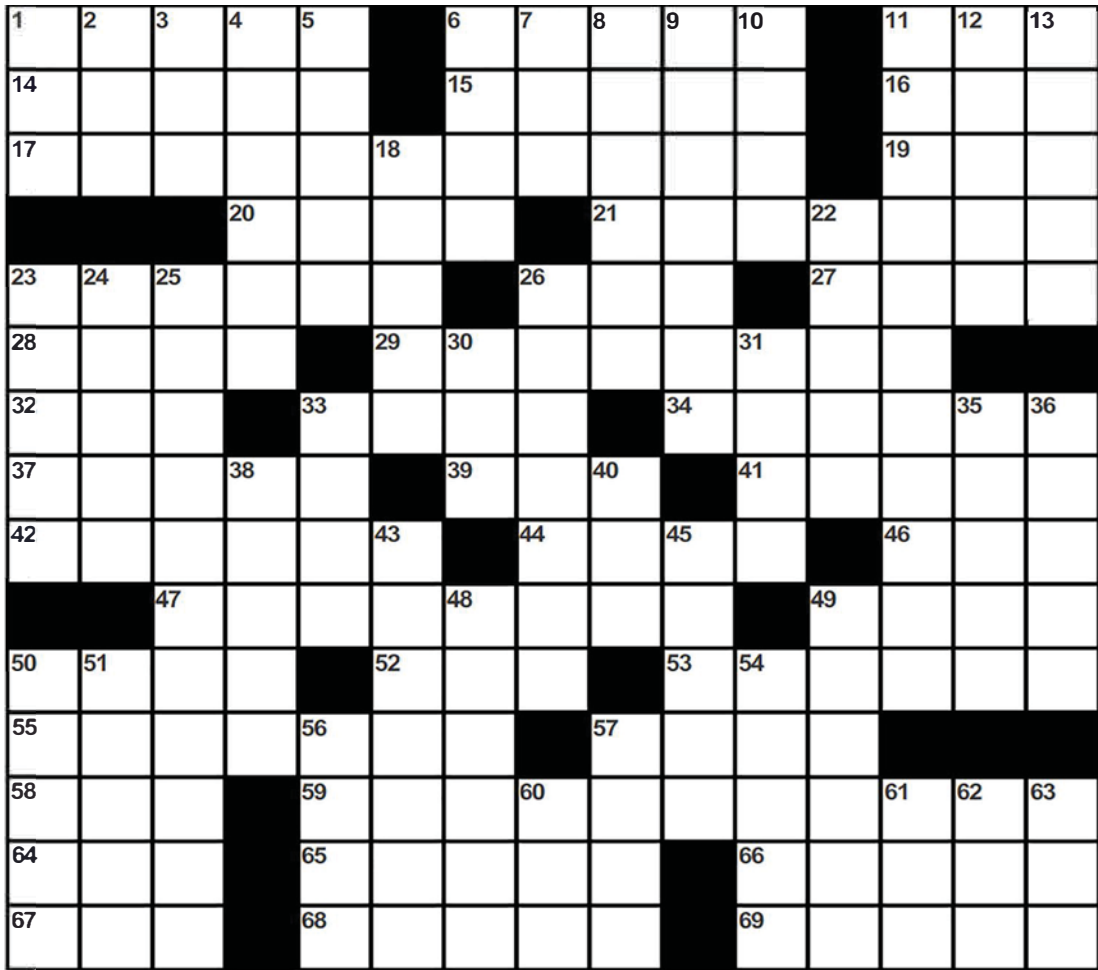
Protests both in support and against Yoon have been ongoing since his suspension in December over his brief martial law decree

Separately, some legislators, including from the main opposition Democratic Party, the Rebuilding Korea Party, and the Progressive Party, said on Tues-

mid-January over his botched martial law attempt in December, after a Seoul court declared his detention invalid.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1) Fat-nosed antelope
 - 6) Macho guys
 - 11) Sparring blow
 - 14) Let well enough alone
 - 15) Love to pieces
 - 16) One for the off-road
 - 17) Place for doubles
 - 19) Fight promoter King
 - 20) Old sideshow attraction
 - 21) One way to spell a baked Italian dish
 - 23) Full-size model
 - 26) Storage box
 - 27) Hangs a right on horseback
 - 28) Canyon sound effect
 - 29) Low beds
 - 32) Romanian currency
 - 33) Kid's beach item
 - 34) Not married
 - 37) Wee, as hours
 - 39) Out-of-date
 - 41) No longer fresh
 - 42) Unscheduled performance
 - 44) Curled-lower-lip expression
 - 46) Alternate sp., in crossword clues
 - 47) Like flats
 - 49) Cab and trailer truck
 - 50) NYPD broadcasts
 - 52) Ex-veep Quayle
 - 53) Parts of soft palates
 - 55) Bedroom furniture piece
 - 57) Ireland nickname
 - 58) "Atlas Shrugged" author Rand
 - 59) Testing time for a recent purchase
 - 64) "Just a..."
 - 65) Partner of " alas"
 - 66) "Are you game?"
 - 67) Monarch's letters
 - 68) Computer memory units
 - 69) Assembly of churchmen
- DOWN**
- 1) Filled a chair
 - 2) "...Maria"
 - 3) Lithium- battery
 - 4) Chinese ornamental tree
 - 5) French farewell
 - 6) Taxi driver
 - 7) Tokyo, in the days of the shogun
 - 8) "... Rouge" (Kidman movie)
 - 9) Saturday jobs, typically
 - 10) Clears after expenses
 - 11) It goes "Bang!"
 - 12) Make right
 - 13) Elaine on "Seinfeld"
 - 18) Dividing membranes, as in noses
 - 22) Star's go-between
 - 23) Knock-down drag-out
 - 24) It has a floor and swells
 - 25) Place to sit on Sunday
 - 26) Pitcher's place
 - 30) City on Guanabara Bay
 - 31) Santa's checking it twice
 - 33) Ignited funeral heap
 - 35) Camel's relative
 - 36) Unsettling
 - 38) Loamy soil deposit
 - 40) Hairdresser's repertoire
 - 43) Like geriatric patients
 - 45) Seize, as the throne
 - 48) It goes around in a roundup
 - 49) Beam of light
 - 50) "Add_ of salt"
 - 51) Inquisitive one
 - 54) Vantage points
 - 56) Near-random guess
 - 57) Reindeer relatives
 - 60) Blackjack card
 - 61) Home away from home
 - 62) Love of Lennon
 - 63) Palindromic parent

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19
Seeing your family members in this type of mood is a rare occurrence. They're fiery, assertive, and willing to say anything that crosses their mind, except when it comes to exactly what they're up to. You can tell something is going on, but no one will give you even the tiniest of clues. They're keeping quiet, and they're proud of it. Well, think about it. Might they be trying to keep a surprise from coming out? Leave it alone just in case.

LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22
Subtlety has never been your strong suit, but then you've never wanted it on your list of favorite qualities, so that's not a problem. You much prefer being known for your ability to cut to the chase and your very strong intuition when it comes to reading other people's faces. So when whatever you're thinking emerges immediately from your mouth, you won't be all that upset about it.

SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
If anyone can mingle, it's you. You can chat with anyone about anything, mostly because you know just enough about almost everything to carry on a convincing conversation. You'll be especially believable now. So if you're out with friends and you know that the person you've been introduced to thinks you're a doctor, a scientist, or an author because of the vocabulary you're flinging around, have some fun with it, temporarily.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

01. Which of these lies off the coast of Vietnam?

- A. Mauritius
- B. Straits of Johor
- C. Gulf of Tonkin
- D. Iwo Jima

02. What is the main substance or substances used to make most watch faces glow in the dark?

- A. Promethium
- B. Radium
- C. Strontium aluminate combined with europium
- D. Phosphorus

03. What is an informal name for the drug "E"?

- A. Exciting
- B. Ecstasy
- C. Excellence
- D. Enlivening

Answers: 1. C 2. C 3. B

TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20
It's time to stand up for yourself, which has never been something you've shied away from. Right about now, however, you'll be more determined than ever to ensure no one takes advantage of you. Your mission is to resist letting your feelings show in the meantime. It might not be easy because your feelings go very deep. But if you want to emerge victoriously, remember, a little bit of sugar goes a long, long way.

VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
Every now and then, you need to spend some time alone, thinking about what's really important to you. Take that time now. You really shouldn't let anyone convince you otherwise. Cancel your appointments and sit down quietly in a place you know you won't be disturbed. Take your time. When you're done, you'll want to share your thoughts with the ones you love. Call them. They'll be glad to hear from you.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
Better keep a box of tissues handy, because you're about to become unusually sentimental. Nostalgic, even. And maybe in the mood to reminisce. Whatever you're feeling at the moment will emerge, regardless of whether you're comfortable with letting others see it. So if you've been trying to hide your feelings for a certain someone, you should probably just forget about that. Why disappoint yourself?

GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21
You've always been drawn to strong, fiery people, the kind who make exciting company simply because you're never quite sure what they might say or do next. Just that type, your type, could be along shortly. But if you don't give yourself some time off from that caretaking job you've taken on, you'll never know. At least give yourself a couple of evenings off. Start with tonight and deck yourself out in your very best.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You're ordinarily far more concerned with home and family matters than with anything that involves your outer life. But right about now you really will be thinking about only one thing: how to let the powers that be know you're entirely capable of getting the job done. Fortunately, you've been working so hard lately that even without knowing what you're doing at the moment, the higher-ups can't help but see your efforts.

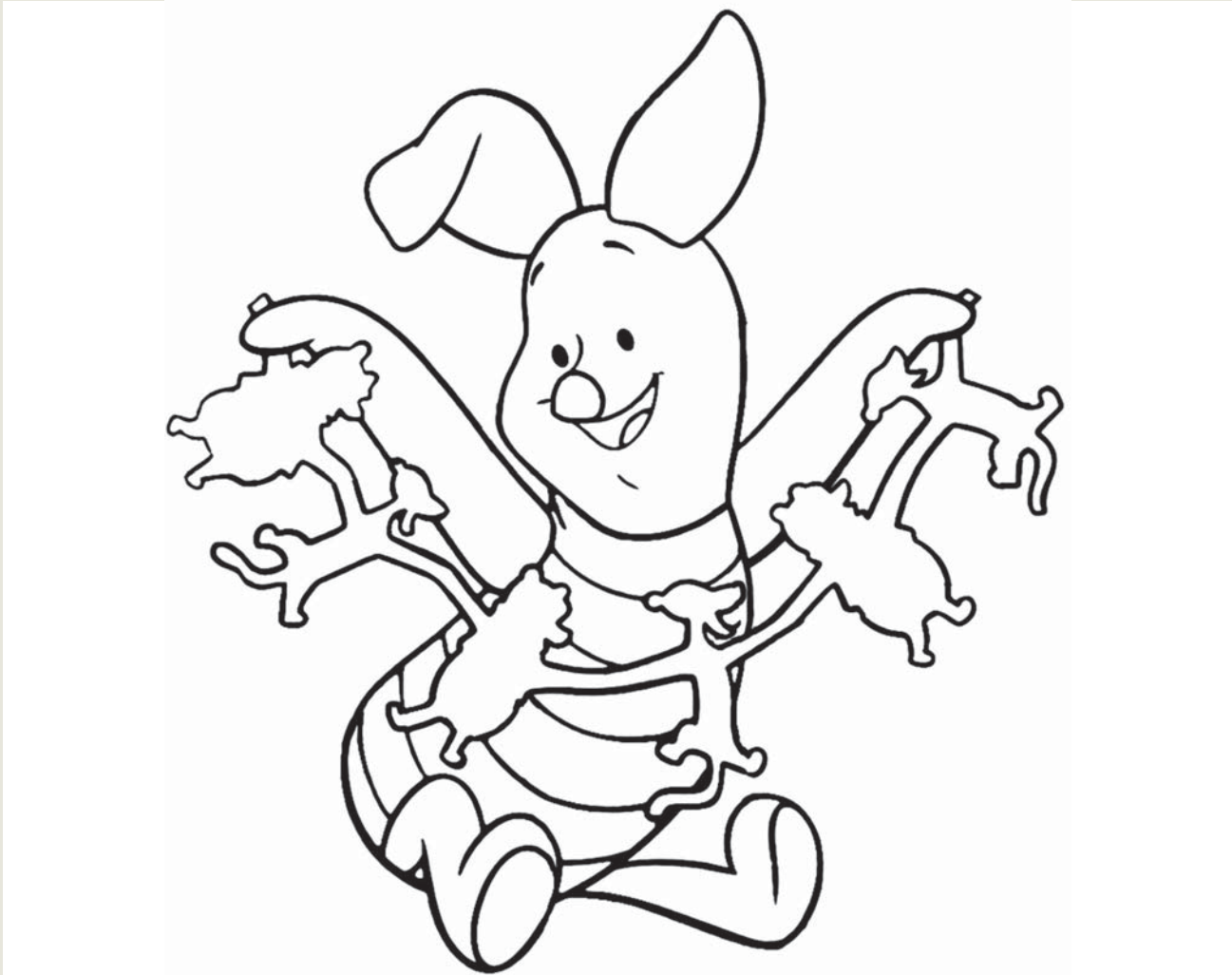
AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Enough is enough. It's time to break your routine in a very big way. You're thinking that even if you have to look elsewhere, it might be worth it, and "elsewhere" might mean another city, state, coast, or even country. If a long-distance move has been in the back of your mind for a while, then start doing more than just thinking about it. Make sure your passport is current, then figure out what to do with your plants.

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22
Throughout your life, pleasing the one you love has always been at the very top of your priority list. You need to find some time for yourself right now, however. After all, you really need to tend to a personal matter. And while it may end up being a balancing act, and not an easy one either, if anyone can manage, it's you. Now how about sharing your secret with the rest of the world?

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
If you're single, it's going to be a bumpy ride. The last person on earth you'd ever expect to reveal secret feelings to you will be the first one who'll do it. Of course, you've been trying to tell yourself those suspicions you've had were wrong. At this point, you need to buckle down and admit they were right on. And if you think about it, how could you possibly blame them?

PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
Life is working out just fine at the moment, and you're ready to celebrate. Now, when things go along this well, it's usually because two particular areas are as close to perfect as possible, and those areas are love and money. If that's the case, how about letting everyone else in on your secret? The rest of the planet would just love to know how to get both those departments working smoothly at the same time.

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

N	E	S	U
C	S	K	D
A	F	O	H
N	E	B	D

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

SOLUTION

20-25 words: Excellent,
15-20 words: Very good,
10-15 words: Good,
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

5		4	9	3			2	
	6				1			5
		2		7				
7					8	2	1	
4				5				8
	2	9	1					7
				8		1		
6			3				7	
	9			4	2	8		6

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

9	8	2	4	7	6	1	5	3
2	7	5	6	1	8	9	4	3
4	6	1	5	8	9	3	2	7
7	5	4	8	9	1	6	2	3
8	9	6	7	5	2	1	3	4
6	1	2	8	6	4	9	3	7
1	8	9	4	7	2	5	1	3
5	4	3	1	2	8	7	9	6
1	2	7	9	6	3	4	8	5



Al Nassr's Cristiano Ronaldo does his trademark celebration after scoring off a penalty against Esteghlal in the second leg of their AFC Champions League Elite Round of 16 tie on Monday

BIG STARS DAZZLE

Duran, Ronaldo power Al Nassr into Asian Champions League last eight

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Jhon Duran struck twice and Cristiano Ronaldo once as Al Nassr defeated Esteghlal 3-0 in the second leg of their AFC Champions League Elite Round of 16 tie at the King Saud University Stadium on Monday.

The Saudi Arabian side, seeking to win the title for the first time, advanced 3-0 on aggregate.

Ronaldo returned to the starting lineup after having missed last week's goalless first leg draw in Tehran with Duran and Sadio Mane providing support from the flanks.

But it was Esteghlal who had the first shot on target in the second minute when Mehran Ahmadi cut into the box from the right, but his tame effort was comfortably gathered by Al Nassr keeper Bento.

Al Nassr gradually took control, repeatedly targeting

Ronaldo with crosses into the box. The breakthrough came in the ninth minute when Duran capitalised on Seyed Hosseini's careless pass, calmly lobbing the ball over Esteghlal's keeper.

Hosseini denied Ronaldo's 18th-minute free-kick, but the five-time Ballon d'Or winner's persistence paid off when he intercepted Raphael Silva's poor back pass and cut it back to Mane, who was brought down by Mohammad Niknafs inside the penalty box with Ronaldo slotting home the spot-kick.

"I think we played well," said Mane. "We created many chances and we

scored three goals. I think we got our reward.

"We pressed well together, we pushed them and they made mistakes and from that we scored three goals. We have a clean sheet and we cannot expect more than this."

Al Nassr could have extended their lead in the 34th minute, but Mohammed al Fatil misdirected his header from Marcelo Brozovic's free-kick, while Ronaldo fired into the side netting after being played through by Brozovic.

Esteghlal's hopes of progressing into the quarter-finals suffered another setback in the closing stages of the half after Mehran Ahmadi was sent off for a second yellow for a foul on Al Fatil.

Iran's Esteghlal sent on former Al Nassr midfielder Jaloliddin Masharipov when the match resumed but Al Nassr came charging

off the blocks with Hosseini denying Brozovic from distance in the 48th minute before Duran rattled the bar from a similar position two minutes later.

Ronaldo had a chance to double his tally in the 59th minute after being sent clear by Aiman Yahya inside the box, but Hosseini pulled off another save to deny the Portuguese forward, before foiling Yahya's goal-bound effort.

Duran, a livewire all night, deservedly settled the tie in the 84th minute after collecting Angelo's pass inside the six-yard-box to strike home into the bottom left corner.

I think we played well. We pressed well, pushed them and they made mistakes and from that we scored three goals

SADIO MANE



Felix Sanchez

We were excellent, says Al Sadd coach Sanchez

Doha, Qatar - Felix Sanchez was a delighted head coach after his Al Sadd SC side showed their true colours to come from behind to defeat Al Wasl FC 3-1 on the night and 4-2 on aggregate.

Apart from the opening 10 minutes when they were put under tremendous pressure by the UAE side, Akram Aff-led Al Sadd produced a dominant performance with Sanchez now eyeing an extended run in the competition.

"We achieved an important victory and qualified for the quarter-finals which we deserved," said Sanchez. "We played an excellent match against Al Wasl, a big club. It is good to qualify for this stage, and we are moving in the tournament step by step until we reach the furthest point we can reach. "We thank the fans for their support and we promise them to continue to give our best, we are now among the best eight teams in Asia and we will strive to give more."

Afif showed why he's regarded one of Asia's finest talents after the 28-year-old kickstarted Al Sadd's revival after they had fallen behind to Fabio de Lima's strike by setting up Moustafa Mashal for the equaliser.

Jung Seung-hyun's unlucky own goal then put Al Sadd in front before Afif crowned an outstanding performance with a spectacular long range curler into the top corner with the attacking midfielder pleased to see the fighting spirit in the team.

"We succeeded in achieving our goal of qualifying for the quarterfinals of the championship after a period of absence from this stage," said Afif.

Duran: Al Nassr can only get better

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Jhon Duran is determined to play his part in taking Al Nassr all the way after the Colombian starred with two goals in their 3-1 win against Esteghlal in the AFC Champions League Elite Round of 16 on Monday.

Held to a goalless draw in last week's first leg, Duran netted the first and third goals with Cristiano Ronaldo converting a penalty as Al Nassr matched last season's feat of qualifying for the quarter-finals.

It was a thoroughly convincing performance and Duran warned that Al Nassr will be a force in the quarter-finals.

"I am happy with the result, and we worked well today, and step by step we will improve and develop," said Duran. "Nothing has changed between the first



Jhon Duran of Al Nassr celebrate his goal against Esteghlal on Monday

Things have not changed between my time in England and Saudi Arabia, here there are great players and all the matches are difficult

JHON DURAN

and second leg matches, the only thing that has changed is scoring goals. Things have not changed between my time in England and now in Saudi Arabia, here there are great players and all the matches are difficult, and the league here is difficult and beautiful."

It was a sentiment echoed by head coach Stefano Pioli, who is now focused on erasing last season's quarter-final defeat to eventual champions Al Ain FC.

"I am very happy with the qualification, our goal was to go to the final stages in Jeddah and we achieved this," said Pioli.

"I always have great confidence in the players because of our hard work in training, and sometimes the results do not do us justice but we know that we are on the right path."

Unstoppable Afif takes Al Sadd into quarters

Doha, Qatar - Akram Afif produced a virtuoso performance to spark Al Sadd to a 3-1 win over Al Wasl as the Qatari side advanced to the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League Elite with a 4-2 aggregate victory on Monday.

Afif made one and scored a stunner to inspire the Qatari side to a comeback victory as they stayed in the hunt for a third Asian title.

Just like a week ago, Al Wasl seized the early initiative and went ahead in the 10th minute when Alexis Perez' cross was met with a sweet first-time finish by Fabio de Lima into the bottom corner that gave Meshaal Barsham in Al Sadd's goal no chance.

The goal stunned Al Sadd into action with captain Afif leading by example, producing a long range effort that was pushed away by Khaled Al Senani in the 24th minute before notching his second assist in consecutive matches.

Two-time AFC Player of the Year Afif drove into the box from the left in the 27th minute before cutting back for Moustafa Mashal to sweep home to draw Al Sadd level.

Al Sadd pushed on and took



Al Sadd's Akram Afif celebrates his goal against Al Wasl on Monday

the lead three minutes later after Youcef Atal jinked his way into the box with his attempted cross deflecting off Jung Seung-hyun to wrong-foot Al Senani and end up in the back of the net.

With confidence soaring, Al Sadd increased their lead in the 37th minute when Afif played a

short free-kick to Claudinho, received the pass back and curled an unstoppable shot into the top corner.

Al Wasl thought they had pulled one back in the 58th minute when Joao Pedro climbed highest to nod towards goal but Barsham clawed the ball away.

Yokohama thrash Shanghai to advance in style

Yokohama, Japan - Yokohama F Marinos cruised through to the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League Elite on Tuesday as Steve Holland's side handed Shanghai Port a 4-1 defeat at International Stadium to complete a 5-1 aggregate win

over the Chinese Super League outfit. Daiya Tono built on the home side's 1-0 win from the first leg with the opener in the second minute before Anderson Lopes scored the first of his two goals on the evening in the 29th minute.

And while Leonardo gave Shanghai Port hope with a close range finish in the 35th minute, Yan Matheus hit the third just before half time and Lopes scored his second 11 minutes after the interval to put the seal on a comprehensive victory.

The win takes F Marinos into the last eight for the second season in a row following their run to the final last year, and the J1 League side made the perfect start by going ahead with less than two minutes on the clock.



Newcastle United's Bruno Guimaraes scores against West Ham United on Monday

GUIMARAES LIFTS NEWCASTLE

Brazilian midfielder’s goal helps Magpies beat West Ham and go sixth

London, England - Newcastle United's Bruno Guimaraes poked home the only goal in a 1-0 win at West Ham United that lifted his side into sixth place in the Premier League on Monday.

The Brazilian applied the finishing touch from close range to a pass by Harvey Barnes in the 63rd minute and it proved enough to secure the points.

It was an impressive display by Newcastle who could have

been excused having one eye on Sunday's League Cup final against Liverpool at Wembley and the win put them right back in the mix for a Champions League qualifying berth.

"It was a massive win, we want to fight for Champions League again," Guimaraes told Sky Sports.

"(The final) has been a little bit of a distraction to be honest. Impossible for the players not to

think about the final and we want to make history and be part of it."

Newcastle have 47 points from 28 games, level with Manchester City and two points behind fourth-placed Chelsea.

West Ham were seeking a third league win in a row but were disappointing and managed only a couple of efforts on target as they remained in 16th place with 33 points.

The closest they came to scoring was in the opening minutes when a mistake by Newcastle's Tino Livramento let in Tomas Soucek, but the midfielder fired over the crossbar.

Barnes was Newcastle's main threat in the opening half, wast-

We'll focus fully on Liverpool now. We'll take everything into consideration. I felt we were in need of a win to go into the final with a real boost and lift

EDDIE HOWE

chipped cross picked out Guimaraes, who stretched out his leg to deflect the ball into the net, although there was a suspicion that United forward Alexander Isak had shoved Max Kilman in the back as the ball came across.

"It's two hands on the back. It's a push. You can see from Isak's non celebration he thinks it's a push. Clear for us but I'm not VAR," West Ham manager Graham Potter said.

Having gone in front, Newcastle barely mustered another attack but were disciplined at the back against a West Ham side who huffed and puffed but offered little threat.

"We just need to carry on improving our attacking play. It's not easy to do it at mid-season but I'm pretty confident we can turn it around," Potter added.

‘Win a real boost for final’

Newcastle manager Eddie Howe said his team will go into the League Cup final against Liverpool in good heart.

"One of our best wins of the season, not in terms of performance but desire and heart," Howe said.

"We'll focus fully on Liverpool now. We'll take everything into consideration. I felt we were in need of a win to go into the final

with a real boost and lift.

"Will do us the world of good. Also for our league table position today was vital."

Howe hinted that the wait ahead of the final has been a distraction for his players but that Monday's display showed the ingredients needed to be a successful team.

"That's why for me it was such a good win, it would be easy for the players to be distracted but they were present," he said. "These games, we learned this last time can be quite a long wait, everyone talking about it but you have massive games ahead. Pleased it's here, hopefully we can perform well."

Arsenal manager Arteta downplays Champions League pressure

London, England - There are no added expectations or pressure on Arsenal to perform in the Champions League despite their recent struggles in the Premier League, manager Mikel Arteta said on Tuesday ahead of a last-16 return leg match against PSV Eindhoven.

Arsenal thrashed PSV 7-1 away last week in the first leg and all but guaranteed themselves a quarter-final spot.

However, their performances in the league have not been nearly as promising, with a run of three matches without victory leaving them trailing leaders Liverpool by 15 points,

albeit with a game in hand.

They have also been knocked out of the FA Cup and League Cup.

Asked if the Champions League represented their only realistic chance of winning silverware this season, Arteta told reporters: "It's a competition that we have a lot of enthusiasm in. A lot of energy, we're very consistent."

"Winning tomorrow puts us in a very good position, that's it... It's not adding pressure, it's the reality of where we are and what we want to deliver."

"We are very conscious that the demands of this football club is to reach the highest level and win competitions, that's it."

Arsenal could meet either holders Real Madrid or Atletico Madrid in next month's quarter-final.

"Since the day we had the teams (set out) you are looking at the others for sure, and then the ones we knew as well. We know them all because they are so good, so you put in your head 'what if?' But that's it, then you have to earn every right to be in that position."

The Spanish manager also hinted at giving some of Arsenal's younger players game time against PSV.



‘Some Man United players not good enough’

Manchester, England - A number of Manchester United players are "not good enough" while some others are being "overpaid", the club's co-owner Jim Ratcliffe said on Monday as manager Ruben Amorim faces an uphill task to turn around the side's fortunes.

Ratcliffe gave his backing to Amorim, who took charge in November following the sacking of Erik ten Hag, even though the Portuguese has struggled to turn around the team's fortunes with United down in 14th place in the Premier League.

Since the 40-year-old Portuguese took charge, United have won five of 17 league matches and exited both domestic cups.

Thousands of fans protested about the club's ownership before Sunday's draw with Arsenal and British chemicals billionaire Ratcliffe attempted to address their concerns in a wide-ranging



If I actually look at the squad which is available to Ruben, I think he is doing a really good job to be honest. I think he will be there for a long time

JIM RATCLIFFE

BBC interview on Monday, saying many of the problems were already there when he acquired a 25% stake in his childhood club

and took charge of football operations.

"We're buying Antony, we're buying Casemiro, we're buying

(Andre) Onana, we're buying (Rasmus) Hojlund, we're buying (Jadon) Sancho... whether we like it or not, we've inherited those things and have to sort that out.

"For Sancho, who now plays for Chelsea and we pay half his wages, we're paying 17 million pounds (\$21.87 million) to buy him in the summer."

Sancho, whose fee was 73 million pounds when he joined in 2021, is currently on loan at Chelsea while winger Antony, who cost \$1.5 million pounds, is on loan at Spanish club Real Betis.

"Some players are not good enough and some probably are overpaid, but for us to mould the squad that we are fully responsible for, and accountable for, will take time."

Ratcliffe has some sympathy for Amorim, saying the former Sporting coach is an "outstanding young manager".

"If I actually look at the squad which is available to Ruben, I think he is doing a really good job to be honest," Ratcliffe said. "I think he will be there for a long time."

"You are beginning to see a glimpse of what Ruben can produce. I think you saw a glimpse of it against Arsenal."

Ratcliffe, whose buy-in to the club was largely welcomed by the fans, said the 20-times English champions are in a period of transformation and that tough decisions were being made.

United have made job cuts this season and the 72-year-old Ratcliffe said the club would have run out of money by the end of the year if no corrective actions were taken.

He did, however, rule out selling youngsters such as Kobbie Mainoo and winger Alejandro Garnacho to help balance the books.

Man United plan to build ‘world’s greatest stadium’

Manchester, - Manchester United plan to build a new two billion pound (\$2.59 billion) 100,000-seat stadium that will be the biggest in Britain, next to the existing Old Trafford, the club announced on Tuesday.

"Today marks the start of an incredibly exciting journey to the delivery of what will be the world's greatest football stadium, at the centre of a regenerated Old Trafford," United's co-owner Jim Ratcliffe said in a statement.

The British billionaire had

been open about his desire for a new, state-of-the-art "Wembley of the north" since he became a minority owner in February of last year, and the club have been studying whether to redevelop the existing stadium, which has been the club's home since 1910, or build a new one.

United appointed Foster + Partners in September to develop a masterplan for the area around Old Trafford as part of a regeneration project.

Medics who treated Maradona go on trial

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Seven members of the medical team that treated Argentine football great Diego Maradona before his death are on trial for homicide starting Tuesday in Buenos Aires.

The case revolves around allegations that negligence by the health care professionals contributed to the World Cup winner's death in 2020 at the age of 60, which triggered an outpouring of grief in his native Argentina and across the world.

Maradona suffered a heart attack at his rented house in Tigre, an affluent district north of Ar-



More than four years after the death of Diego Maradona, seven healthcare professionals are on trial accused of negligence

gentina's capital Buenos Aires, where he had been recovering from surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain weeks earlier.

Widely perceived as one of the sport's greatest players, Maradona famously led Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup and inspired his compatriots with a rags-to-riches story that vaulted him from poverty in the hardscrabble outskirts of Buenos Aires to international reverence.

Maradona had struggled with drug addiction, obesity and alcoholism for decades, and reportedly came close to death in 2000 and 2004.

But prosecutors concluded that—were it not for the negligence of his doctors—his death could have been avoided.



Carlos Alcaraz put in a flawless performance to ease past Denis Shapovalov in the third round at Indian Wells on Monday

ALCARAZ CRUISES AT INDIAN WELLS

Second-seed Spaniard gets the better of Shapovalov to reach round of 16

Indian Wells, US - Carlos Alcaraz kept his Indian Wells "three-peat" campaign on track with a pristine 6-2 6-4 win against Canadian Denis Shapovalov in the third round on Monday, as a crowd of Americans fed off the home fans to reach the final 16.

The second-seeded Spaniard Alcaraz was never in doubt as he won the first five games, sending over 10 winners in the first set alone, as Shapovalov - who was fresh off a confident win in Dallas - struggled to find his usual intensity.

The four-times major winner never faced a break in a nearly flawless second set and he held to love in the final game, clinching the affair in under 90 minutes with a mighty overhead smash.

"I knew at the beginning of the match that I had to be really focused. I had to start the match really strong, knowing it was going

to be a really tough battle," said Alcaraz.

Alcaraz wants to become only the third man to win three straight titles at the Masters 1000 tournament after retired great Roger Federer and former number one Novak Djokovic, who crashed out in the second round.

"I'm just really pleased about my performance today, about everything I have done," said Alcaraz. "Few things that I have to improve, but I'm really happy."

Alcaraz will face Grigor Dimitrov in the round of 16 after the Bulgarian 14th seed beat Frenchman Gael Monfils 7-6(4) 4-6 7-6(2) in a three-hour battle.

Right-handed Dimitrov was 3-1 up in the third set when his forehand smashed into his left thumb, leaving it bleeding. He continued after receiving treatment but lost the next three games, before fighting back to

force a tiebreak and seal the win.

Belarusian world number one Aryna Sabalenka used her powerful serve to wallop Italian Lucia Bronzetti 6-1 6-2, bringing her best form to the tournament after suffering early exits at the Qatar Open and in Dubai.

It took little time for Sabalenka to find her footing, as she sprinted through the first set and quickly recovered after dropping her

about with compelling third-round victories.

Third seed Gauff overcame late nerves to beat Greek Maria Sakkari 7-6(1) 6-2, getting over the finish line even as she produced six double faults in the final game before closing it out on her sixth match point with a forehand winner.

"Except the last game I thought I played a great match.

I knew at the beginning of the match that I had to be really focused. I had to start the match really strong, knowing it was going to be a really tough battle

CARLOS ALCARAZ

serve early in the second. She will play British lucky loser Sonay Kartal next.

"It wasn't as easy as the score looks like. It was tough conditions out there, and happy with the way I managed that," she said.

Players battled tricky winds in the California desert, as Americans Coco Gauff, Madison Keys, Taylor Fritz and Ben Shelton gave the home fans plenty to cheer

Just trying to look at the positives," said Gauff, who had revenge on her mind after losing to Sakkari in the semi-final last year.

"Obviously I was a bit disappointed with the last game but that's just the perfectionist in me."

She will next play Swiss Belinda Bencic, whom she has beaten twice before, most recently in the round of 16 in Melbourne this year.

"It was a bit tricky conditions. I think we were both struggling a little bit with finding the rhythm, and I was just trying to stay solid on my end of the court," said Gauff.

Newly minted Australian Open champion Keys saved 12 of the 15 break points she faced to beat Belgian Elise Mertens 6-2, 6-7(8), 6-4, securing her 14th straight match victory.

The fifth seed, who lost to Mertens in their two previous meetings, fired five aces to set up a fourth-round meeting with Croatian Donna Vekic, and said she had come to expect another level from herself after her maiden major breakthrough.

"Overall in Australia I played some really good tennis, and I think the further away from it you get, the more you kind of forget about the lulls of matches and the moments where you weren't playing great," said Keys.

"As great as Australia was and all the wins that I got, there were still some moments in matches where I didn't play great or things got away from me. So just being really conscious of that."

Hamilton's quest for glory in Ferrari begins

London, England - Lewis Hamilton winning a record eighth Formula One title in the red overalls of Ferrari at the age of 40 would be a story straight out of Hollywood, whose own Brad Pitt movie is scheduled to race across cinema screens in June.

The Briton, a co-producer on the film directed by Joseph Kosinski of "Top Gun: Maverick" fame, has fired up the fans as he seeks to bring a championship to Maranello for the first time since 2008.

Sunday's season-opener in Melbourne will be Hamilton's first race for the Italian glamour team, after winning his seven titles with McLaren and Mercedes, and already the level of excitement is off the scale.

One fan cut down a tree to get a better glimpse of the 105-times race winner driving for the first time at Ferrari's Fiorano test track.

An Instagram post on his first day at the factory, with Hamilton standing in a smart black suit and overcoat next to a Ferrari F40 car, drew 5.7 million likes from 39 million followers.

"Oh my God, he'd be the king of all kings," 1978 world champion Mario Andretti told *Time* magazine when asked about the chance of the Briton succeeding in what seems to some an improbable quest.

Hamilton was featured on the iconic red-bordered cover, standing shirtless in a white suit in front of a rearing black stallion.

"The old man is a state of mind," he told the magazine, a line he could have taken from Pitt, 61, who plays a 40-some-

thing driver. "Of course, your body ages. But I'm never going to be an old man."

The fairy-tale script is written, but it could easily be torn up and recast.

The task, to secure a title he felt robbed of when a controversial change to the safety car procedure late in the 2021 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix handed Red Bull's Max Verstappen a first title, will be as tough as any Hamilton has faced.

Teammate Charles Leclerc, a Ferrari protege and eight-times race winner who has driven for the team since 2019 and been blisteringly quick over a single lap, will fancy his chances if the car has title potential.

Sunday's season-opener in Melbourne will be Hamilton's first race for the Italian glamour team, after winning his seven titles with McLaren and Mercedes

McLaren are the reigning constructors' champions and Hamilton's compatriot Lando Norris, runner-up to Verstappen last season with four wins, is installed as the bookmakers' favourite.

Australian Oscar Piastri, Norris's teammate, is another contender in what could be one of the closest seasons ever as well as the last before major rule changes and the start of a new engine era in 2026.



Lewis Hamilton (L) and Charles Leclerc

Historic Australia-England Test to be played under lights

Sydney, Australia - Australia's clash with England to mark the 150th anniversary of the first Test match will be played as a day-nighter at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in March 2027, Cricket Australia said on Tuesday.

The MCG hosted the first test ever played in 1877 and the centenary match between Australia and England 100 years later.

The hosts won both matches

by 45 runs.

The 150th anniversary match, which will take place outside Australia's summer holiday period from March 11-15, will be the first men's test played under lights at the

100,000-capacity venue.

"(It) will be one of the great cricket events and playing under lights will be a fantastic way to celebrate both our game's rich heritage and test cricket's modern evolution,"

Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg said in a statement.

"It will also help ensure more people are able to attend and watch what will be a fantastic occasion."

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بنك عُمان العربي

OMAN ARAB BANK



Rashad bin Mohammad Al Zubair, Chairman

as a resilient and forward-looking economy in the region.

Oman's fiscal and external positions have improved significantly, leading to an upgrade of its sovereign credit rating to investment grade. Public sector debt declined, while fiscal and current account balances remained comfortably in surplus. These achievements underscore the government's commitment to sustainable economic management, including the continued implementation of tax reforms, targeted subsidy reductions, and enhanced public financial management.

Oman has benefited from steady oil prices, which averaged around USD 82 per barrel in 2024, supporting fiscal stability. However, the government has proactively expanded its non-oil revenue base, reducing reliance on hydrocarbons. Key sectors such as renewable energy and industrial manufacturing have emerged as pillars of the nation's economic diversification strategy.

The banking sector remains a cornerstone of Oman's economic transformation. With ample liquidity, strong asset quality, and profitability recovering to pre-pandemic levels, the financial sector is poised to support the government's objectives. OAB, in particular, is aligned with national priorities, leveraging its capabilities to foster innovation, enhance customer experiences, and contribute to the nation's growth.

Consolidated Financial Performance

OAB recorded a net profit after tax of RO 30.4 million for the year ended 31 December 2024, up 48% compared to RO 20.6 million in 2023, driven by growth in core operations and lower cost of risk along with an increase in debt recoveries.

Net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing services increased by 3% to RO 99.5 million for the year ended 31 December 2024 due to an increase in interest and finance income, which was offset by higher cost of funds, attributable to the high interest rate environment.

Operating revenue increased by 5% to RO 126.5 million for the year ended 31 December 2024 compared to RO 120.2 million in 2023. Operating expenses reached RO 72.2 million compared to RO 71.3 million in 2023. This has led to a healthy growth in operating profit, which grew 11% to reach RO 54.3 million in 2024 compared to RO 49.0 million for the last year. Net allowances for expected credit losses decreased by 27% to reach RO 18.1 million in 2024 compared to RO 24.7 million in 2023.

Net loans and advances, including Islamic finance, grew 5% to RO 3,447 million at 31 December 2024 compared to RO 3,275 million at 31 December 2023, while customer deposits reached RO 3,534 million by the end of 2024, up 5% compared to RO 3,357 million at 31 December 2023.

Parent Company Performance

The parent company recorded a net profit after tax of RO 30.7 million for the year ended 31 December 2024, up 55% compared to RO 19.8 million in 2023. Interest income grew 11%, driven by growth in loans and advances, which was offset by higher interest expense.

Operating revenue reached RO 101.4 million for the year ended 31 December 2024, up 5% compared to RO 96.9 million in 2023, driven by growth in net fees and other operating income by 7% and an increase in the share of profit from the subsidiary by 28%. Operating expenses declined by 0.6% to reach RO 52.6 million for the year ended 31 December 2024 compared to RO 52.9 million in 2023 and resulted in a healthy growth of operating profit at 11%. Net allowances for expected credit losses decreased by 35% to record RO 14.1 million for the year ended 31 December 2024 compared to RO 21.8 million in 2023, driven by lower impairment charges and higher recoveries.

Net loans and advances grew 3% to RO 2,373 million as of 31 December 2024, compared to RO 2,306 million for the same period last year. Customer deposits increased by 4% to RO 2,440 million as of 31 December 2024 compared to RO 2,344 million for the same period the previous year.

The Parent Company has adopted the equity method to account for investments in subsidiaries in its separate financial statements. This amendment has been applied retrospectively, and the previous year's figures have been restated accordingly.

Alizz Islamic Bank performance

Alizz Islamic Bank's net profit grew by 28% to RO 10.0 million for the year ended 31 December 2024 compared to RO 7.8 million in 2023. Growth has been observed across all the core activities, with operating income and operating profit growing by 12% and 20%, respectively.

Net financing receivables amounted to RO 10,773 million as of 31 December 2024, 11% higher than RO 969 million for the same period last year. Customer deposits reached RO 1,094 million as of 31 December 2024, up 8% compared to RO 1,014 million as of 31 December 2023.

Awards and Recognitions

In 2024, OAB continued to solidify its position as a leading financial institution through numerous prestigious accolades, reflecting its commitment to excellence, innovation, and customer service.

One of the most notable achievements was OAB's consistent recognition with the 'Straight Through Processing' (STP) Excellence Award, received from both the Bank of New York Mellon (BNY Mellon) and Citibank. This prestigious honour, earned annually since 2018, underscores OAB's dedication to secure, accurate, and efficient transaction processing. Notably, OAB achieved an exceptional 100% accuracy rate for treasury payments

and 99.8% for customer payments, driven by its pioneering adoption of automation and advanced banking technologies. These achievements highlight OAB's leadership in streamlining operations to deliver faster and more reliable services.

Further enhancing its reputation, OAB was honoured with two key awards at the 2024 Oman Economic Review 'OER' Business Summit Awards, organised by Oman Economic Review. It received the Business Excellence Award in celebration of 50 years of innovative leadership in Oman's banking sector. Additionally, it was awarded the Excellence Award in Human Resources for its contributions to national talent development through initiatives like the 'Ruwad Al Arabi' Programme.

Alizz Islamic Bank additionally received various awards in recognition of its achievements across multiple milestones, including the award for 'Best Islamic Bank in Shar'a Compliance & Governance in Oman for 2024' by the World Union of Arab Bankers. Al Al Mani, the CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank, was also honoured with the 'CEO of the Year – Islamic Banking' award at the prestigious CXO Awards 2024.

These accolades reaffirm OAB's strategic commitment to innovation, customer satisfaction, and workforce empowerment, ensuring it remains at the forefront of the financial sector while aligning with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Products and Services

In 2024, OAB continued to have a lead in the banking sector by introducing innovative products and services designed to enhance customer experience, support economic growth, and leverage advanced financial technologies.

The year began with the launch of the Corporate Internet Banking platform, a cutting-edge solution providing government and corporate clients with enhanced financial management capabilities. OAB also introduced the Ramadan Auto Loan, enabling customers to secure competitive interest rates and extended financing tenures conveniently via the mobile app.

As part of its ongoing digital transformation, OAB introduced the Direct Debit Service, integrated with the Central Bank of Oman's system, to facilitate secure and instant recurring payments for retail and corporate clients. OAB also launched the Al Dar Housing Loan, featuring 48-hour approval times for eligible applications, making homeownership more accessible.

In wealth management, OAB collaborated with Ubhar Capital to provide high-net-worth clients with comprehensive financial planning, brokerage services, and personalised investment advisory. Supporting SMEs, OAB launched Tumouhi, a value proposition offering waived fees, competitive loan rates, and workshops on financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

To enhance customer convenience, OAB signed an agreement to upgrade its network of ATMs with state-of-the-art machines that enable secure and fully digital self-service banking, reinforcing OAB's leadership in adopting advanced financial solutions.

Catering to high-net-worth individuals, OAB unveiled the Elite Exclusive Programme, offering premium services such as dedicated relationship managers, wealth management solutions, and exclusive lifestyle privileges through the Visa Elite Exclusive metal card.

Alizz Islamic Bank further expanded its footprint with new branches in the Wilayats of Jalaan Bani Bu Ali, Rustaq, and Ibbi, together with its first-ever Smart Branch in Wilayat Bawshar, offering customers a unique way of banking. Alizz Islamic Bank also introduced 'Alizz Connect' and 'Alizz Business'. The former includes many features that meet corporate business requirements and demands, while the latter offers a value proposition tailored for SMEs. Alizz Islamic Bank also launched innovative initiatives such as 'The Little Entrepreneur', a financial literacy game for children.

Furthermore, Alizz Islamic Bank has made a substantial investment to boost its IT architecture to support and sustain its aggressive growth plans and is planning to introduce new innovative products and services in 2025.

These initiatives underscore OAB and Alizz Islamic Bank's commitment to driving innovation, empowering customers, and contributing to Oman's Vision 2040 through impactful banking solutions.

Strategic Collaborations & Partnerships

In 2024, OAB continued to solidify its role as a key enabler of economic development and innovation through strategic collaborations and impactful partnerships.

In Q1/2024, OAB partnered with TickOn, providing Omani youth with access to career training opportunities aligned with the National Employment Programme and the Ministry of Labour. This was complemented by the sponsorship of the Dawam App, a digital platform connecting job seekers with employers, offering self-employment opportunities and training programmes to catalyse economic growth.

Building on these efforts in Q2/2024, OAB signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the Ministry of Labour, focusing on developing human skills, supporting Omani cadres, and expanding work opportunities. This partnership enabled training programmes, workshops, and knowledge exchanges aimed at equipping Omani employees with cutting-edge skills. Additionally, OAB collaborated with the National Hospitality Institute, providing funding support for students and job seekers in the tourism and hospitality sector, further contributing to the professional development of national talent.

Alizz Islamic Bank also engaged in strategic initiatives, partnering with The Oman Vision 2040 Follow-up Unit to issue the region's first corporate innovation guides, as well as with Abraj Energy Services and Oman Group to finance projects that drive innovation and development.

In Q3/2024, OAB entered into a collaboration with the Badir Fund, managed by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, to enhance support for SMEs in Oman. This partnership aims to strengthen entrepreneurial ventures, expand business opportunities, and contribute to economic diversification in the Sultanate.

Additionally, Alizz Islamic Bank launched the 'Azziz & Azziza' financial education series in partnership with the Ministry of Finance's National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Oman's first children's magazine, Mushrid. This initiative highlights Alizz Islamic Bank's commitment to raising financial awareness among children and instilling sound financial habits from an early age.

Through these strategic partnerships and initiatives, OAB and Alizz Islamic Bank continue to play a pivotal role in supporting national economic growth, empowering communities, and fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration across various sectors.

Events and Participation

In 2024, OAB actively participated in prominent events, showcasing its commitment to innovation, collaboration, and economic growth while reinforcing its leadership in the banking sector.

In Q2/2024, OAB made a significant impact at COMEX 2024, Oman's most prominent technology exhibition held at the Oman Exhibition and Convention Centre (OCCC). Under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Thayyan bin Haitham Al Said, OAB highlighted its digital banking innovations, presenting advanced technical solutions and electronic services. This participation underscored OAB's role as a pioneer in Oman's digital transformation journey and its alignment with the nation's vision for technological advancement.

During the same quarter, Alizz Islamic Bank organised the first-ever Shar'i Index Forum in collaboration with the Muscat Stock Exchange. The forum emphasised the importance of Shar'i-compliant investments in attracting local and international investors and highlighted the prospects of the Shar'i index within the framework of Oman Vision 2040.

In Q4/2024, OAB hosted the third edition of its annual CEO Summit. The event brought together over 450 business leaders, experts, and decision-makers, fostering knowledge exchange and inspiring discussions aimed at accelerating transformation across various sectors. The summit featured insights from distinguished speakers, including His Excellency Tahir Salim Al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman, who discussed trends in monetary policy and the banking sector's role in economic growth. Randa Sadik, CEO of Arab Bank Plc and Deputy Chairman of OAB's Board of Directors, shared valuable insights on adaptability and innovation in the rapidly evolving financial landscape.

Through its participation in these impactful events, OAB reaffirmed its commitment to driving digital transformation, fostering economic development, and supporting Oman's Vision 2040.

Development of Human Resources

In 2024, OAB demonstrated its unwavering commitment to cultivating a skilled and engaged workforce through comprehensive training programmes, leadership initiatives, and employee-centric activities. These efforts reinforce OAB's role as a leader in talent development within Oman's financial sector.

OAB conducted 374 training courses through a blend of in-person and online sessions. Topics ranged from leadership and banking certifications to customer service and technical skills, ensuring employees were equipped to meet evolving industry demands. Leadership initiatives, such as the second cohort of the 'Ruwad Al Arabi' Leadership Development Programme, engaged 50 employees in partnership with Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning, further strengthening OAB's future leadership pipeline.

OAB also provided 160 internships to college students and job seekers, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical experience. The 'Manahil Alizz' Internship Programme and workshops led by senior industry professionals underscored Alizz Islamic Bank's dedication to nurturing young talent and fostering professional development.

Alizz Islamic Bank continued to train and develop its team across various competencies, successfully training 398 employees in 2024. One of its main initiatives was the 'Ruwad Alizz' Leadership Programme, held in coordination with Harvard Management Mentor. The leadership programme saw the successful graduation of more than 90 internal and external candidates since it began. Moreover, Alizz Islamic Bank strives to recruit talented and ambitious Omani nationals and provide them with appropriate training in Islamic Banking and other leadership programmes to prepare them for future roles in line with its vision. This is reflected in its high Omanisation ratio of 90%, which it continues to strive to increase further.

Employee engagement remained central to OAB's strategy. Initiatives such as 'Happy Thursday', 'Breakfast with the CEO', and branch visits fostered a collaborative workplace culture. Regional activities, including treasure hunts and wellness events, created a supportive and inclusive environment.

By investing in its people and leveraging technology to enhance processes, OAB continues to set a benchmark for excellence in human resource development. These efforts ensure a highly skilled, engaged, and empowered workforce, driving OAB's success and contribution to Oman's Vision 2040.

Community Engagement

OAB continued to demonstrate its commitment to social responsibility in 2024 through a series of impactful community initiatives. These efforts focused on inclusivity, empowerment, education, and fostering entrepreneurial growth, reinforcing OAB's dedication to creating a positive societal impact.

During Ramadan, OAB launched the 'Giving Made Easy' campaign, encouraging donations through its mobile app and ATMs. OAB also hosted a special Qaransho celebration under the auspices of Her Highness Sayyida Hujaja Al Said, welcoming over 80 children, including those with disabilities, for an evening of activities and live entertainment. This inclusive event reflected OAB's focus on celebrating diversity and creating a sense of belonging.

OAB extended its community contributions with initiatives such as a blood donation drive, organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, to promote a culture of giving and support for critical healthcare needs. Alizz Islamic Bank complemented these efforts through the 'Tamkeen Programme', renovating a school and equipping it with modern amenities, enhancing educational opportunities for children and job creation in the region.

In line with its mission to empower the next generation, OAB hosted school visits to its Kids Branch at its headquarters, providing students with hands-on exposure to real-world banking. The initiative encouraged financial literacy and introduced young learners to entrepreneurship fundamentals.

Additionally, Alizz Islamic Bank continued its support of a school located in Wilayat Al Awabi through the sponsorship of seven students for the academic year and the training of ten full-time faculty members, supporting them with digital solutions to efficiently meet their educational objectives.

OAB also focused on fostering entrepreneurial growth through the Tumouhi Programme, organising workshops for SMEs in Wilayat Sohar. These sessions equipped participants with skills in financial planning, governance, and marketing while providing opportunities to network with larger corporations.

In Q4/2024, OAB opened a disability-friendly branch in Saham, featuring advanced facilities for customers with disabilities, including ramps, Braille signage, and staff trained in sign language. This pioneering initiative exemplified OAB's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity in its services.

Alizz Islamic Bank relocated its Head Office to a new location in Wilayat Bawshar. The new facility houses a Grand Hall and several training rooms that cater to knowledge sharing and collaboration. It has since activated its hall for external partners, hosting more than 50 community events so far.

2024 also saw Alizz Islamic Bank enter into partnerships with organisations that focus on sustainable initiatives under the banner of 'Alizz Cares'. Alizz Islamic Bank also published its first ESG report this year, reflecting its unwavering commitment to enhancing Oman's socioeconomic landscape while ensuring sustainability and community well-being.

Through these initiatives, OAB and Alizz Islamic Bank reinforced their role as socially responsible institutions, empowering individuals and communities while fostering growth and inclusivity across the Sultanate.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on leveraging opportunities presented by Oman's dynamic economic landscape to deliver sustainable growth. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may the Almighty protect and preserve him, for his visionary leadership and to our shareholders, customers, and employees for their continued trust and support. Together, we will achieve new milestones and drive a prosperous future for OAB.

Sincerely,

Rashad Al Zubair
Chairman of Board of Directors

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (AUDITED) AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024					
	Consolidated		Parent Company		
	31-Dec-24	31-Dec-23	31-Dec-24	31-Dec-23	1-Jan-23
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	Restated RO'000	RO'000
Cash and balances with Central Bank of Oman	180,450	151,581	117,845	84,685	31,034
Due from banks	67,222	130,125	65,876	124,068	48,161
Loans, advances and financing to customers	3,446,694	3,274,724	2,373,253	2,306,160	2,164,984
Investment securities	450,320	326,561	328,419	253,644	268,426
Investment in subsidiary	-	-	135,095	125,291	117,316
Property and equipment	39,586	43,096	34,254	37,394	35,659
Intangible assets	6,280	6,590	-	-	-
Other assets	100,816	86,326	63,512	53,696	55,545
Total assets	4,291,368	4,019,003	3,118,254	2,984,938	2,721,034
Due to banks	54,599	32,228	31,293	32,228	59,101
Customer deposits	3,534,336	3,357,417	2,440,157	2,343,619	2,089,284
Borrowed funds	9,625	-	9,625	-	-
Other liabilities	116,899	107,146	92,115	87,097	71,114
Taxation	10,145	5,236	9,181	5,236	3,412
Total liabilities	3,725,604	3,502,027	2,582,371	2,468,180	2,222,911
Share capital	166,941	166,941	166,941	166,941	166,941
Share premium	36,565	36,565	36,565	36,565	36,565
Legal reserve	53,626	50,551	53,614	50,539	48,557
General reserve	25,560	25,560	25,560	25,560	25,560
Special reserve	3,837	3,837	3,837	3,837	3,837
Fair value reserve	(1,707)	(1,075)	(1,975)	(1,343)	(3,428)
Impairment reserve	16,800	9,130	16,800	9,130	9,130
Retained earnings	77,876	79,217	78,275	79,279	72,158
Shareholders' equity	379,498	370,726	379,617	370,508	359,320
Perpetual Tier 1 capital bonds and sukuk	186,266	146,250	156,266	146,250	138,803
Total equity	565,764	516,976	535,883	516,758	498,123
Total equity and liabilities	4,291,368	4,019,003	3,118,254	2,984,938	2,721,034
Net assets value per share (RO)	0.227	0.222	0.227	0.222	0.215
Contingent liabilities and commitments	377,039	437,849	238,523	302,171	272,193

MINIMUM DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS IN YEAR-END FINANCIAL STATEMENTS					
ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS OF 31 DECEMBER, 2024					
Assets (Net of total ECL)	Consolidated		Parent Company		
	Current Year RO'000	Previous Year RO'000	Current Year RO'000	Previous Year RO'000	
1. Cash	28,780	26,850	22,762	21,085	
2. Balances with CBO	150,645	123,706	94,583	63,100	
3. Capital Deposit with CBO	1,025	1,025	500	500	
4. Government & other Securities	439,916	321,387	320,520	249,769	
5. Treasury Bills & Other Bills	-	-	-	-	
6. Due from H.O., branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	1,976	25,756	1,976	25,756	
7. Due from banks:					
i) Placements	65,246	104,369	63,900	98,312	
ii) Loans & Advances	-	-	-	-	
8. Other Money Market Placements	-	-	-	-	
9. Investments	10,404	5,174	142,994	129,166	
10. Loans and advances	3,446,694	3,274,724	2,373,253	2,306,160	
11. Tangible Fixed Assets	39,586	43,096	34,254	37,394	
12. Losses carried forward	-	-	-	-	
13. Other Assets	107,096	92,916	63,512	53,696	
Total Assets	4,291,368	4,019,003	3,118,254	2,984,938	
Liabilities	Consolidated		Parent Company		
	Current Year RO'000	Previous Year RO'000	Current Year RO'000	Previous Year RO'000	
1. Deposits (incl. Govt.)					
a) Demand	1,255,221	918,772	817,101	645,256	
b) Savings	585,703	524,913	405,710	342,726	
c) Time	1,693,412	1,913,732	1,217,346	1,355,637	
2. Certificate of Deposits	-	-	-	-	
3. Due to H.O., branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	8,310	7,239	8,310	7,239	
4. Due to Banks:					
i) Placements	46,289	24,989	22,983	24,989	
ii) Borrowings	-	-	-	-	
5. Other Money Market Deposits	9,625	-	9,625	-	
6. Borrowings from CBO	-	-	-	-	
7. Capital	166,941	166,941	166,941	166,941	
8. Reserves	134,681	124,568	134,401	124,288	
9. Retained Earnings	77,876	79,217	78,275	79,279	
10. Capital Bonds	186,266	146,250	156,266	146,250	
11. Other Liabilities	127,044	112,382	101,296	92,333	
Total Liabilities	4,291,368	4,019,003	3,118,254	2,984,938	

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (AUDITED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024				
	Consolidated		Parent Company	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	Restated RO'000
Interest income	162,482	145,730	162,191	146,086
Interest expense	(90,112)	(75,033)	(90,112)	(75,033)
Net interest income	72,370	70,697	72,079	71,053
Income from Islamic financing and investing activities	69,651	61,194	-	-
Profit paid on participatory deposits and banks	(42,514)	(35,000)	-	-
Net income from Islamic financing and investing activities	27,137	26,194	-	-
Net fee and commission income	19,803	18,937	15,181	14,357
Net income from investment securities	577	285	422	224
Other operating income	6,578	4,128	3,751	3,432
Share of profit from subsidiary	-	-	10,011	7,802
Total income	126,465	120,241	101,444	96,868
Operating expenses	(72,182)	(71,279)	(52,559)	(52,880)
Net allowances for credit losses	(18,144)	(24,729)	(14,139)	(21,803)
Profit before tax	36,139	24,233	34,746	22,185
Income tax expense	(5,700)	(3,678)	(3,997)	(2,370)
Net Profit for the year	30,439	20,555	30,749	19,815
Other comprehensive income / (loss)				
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss in the subsequent years				
- Equity investment at FVOCI – net change in fair value	(670)	182	(379)	51
Items that are or may be reclassified to profit or loss in the subsequent years				
- Debt investment at FVOCI – net change in fair value	(81)	1,903	(139)	1,861
Share of OCI from subsidiary	-	-	(206)	173
Other comprehensive income / (loss) for the year	(751)	2,085	(724)	2,085
Total comprehensive income for the year – net of tax	29,688	22,640	30,025	21,900
Earnings per share:				
Basic and Diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.011	0.006	0.011	0.005



Model Naomi Campbell wore a black slip dress under a brightly coloured robe



Actor Lily James looked elegant as she attended the Dior show in a minimal black ensemble



Actor Gemma Chan goes full boho with a flowy dress and platform shoes at Chloé

PARIS FASHION WEEK

GALA *girls*

At the nine-day Fall-Winter edition of Paris Fashion Week, running until March 11, high-wattage shows staged by the world's biggest brands, such as Chanel, Hermès and Louis Vuitton, drew some of pop culture's biggest celebrities (and their stylists) several of whom are keeping their eyes peeled for their next red carpet outfit.

For other famous faces, it marks an opportunity to mingle with their peers. From actors Keira Knightley and Michelle Yeoh to models Naomi Campbell and Gigi Hadid, many were spotted flocking to a lit-up Louvre after hours on Tuesday for the first 'Grand Diner du Louvre' gala, to fete the museum's first fashion-focused exhibition.

Some stars arrived fresh off awards

season - Doja Cat took a front row seat at Balmain after taking part in a James Bond tribute performance at the Oscars in Los Angeles over the weekend. Others showed up to support their designer friends - see '90s icons Cameron Diaz and Kate Moss clocking in for Stella McCartney's off-ice-inspired show on Wednesday.

Plenty of K-pop stars were also expected throughout the week - Blackpink's Jisoo was already spotted at Dior, for whom she has been the global face since 2021. Fellow band members Rosé, Jennie and Lisa may make similar appearances at Saint Laurent, Chanel and Louis Vuitton, where they are global ambassadors, respectively.

See a selection of celebrity attendees' looks below:

THE FALL-WINTER 2025 EDITION OF PARIS FASHION WEEK IS UNDERWAY, WITH INFECTIOUS ENERGY AND EYE-CATCHING LOOKS SEEN BOTH, ON AND OFF THE RUNWAYS



Pink-haired twins Ami and Aya have become fixtures on the front row



Actor Natalie Portman and Blackpink's Jisoo on the front row at Dior



Model Natalia Vodianova opted for a Grecian style as she arrived at the Dior show



Actor Michelle Monaghan looked smart wearing a gray Dior jacket and ankle-skimming skirt



Rapper Doechii embraced a geek-chic look with a tartan skirt-set and glasses at Acne Studios



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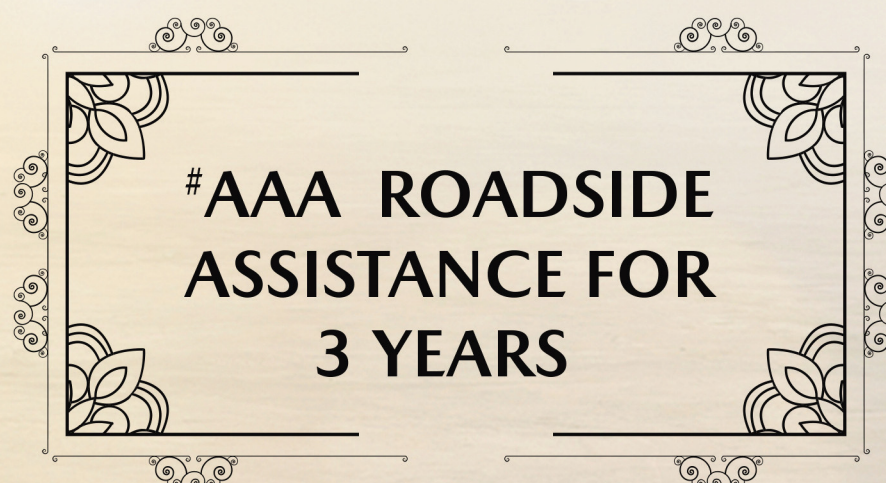


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The offer is valid on all models from 24th February to 15th April, 2025. The prices mentioned are for base mode variants of CX-60 2.5L, Mazda 6 2L and base model variants of all other models & VAT extra. * Free service is linjaz service package and applicable to all variants of MY 2024 Mazda6 2.5, CX-5, CX-60 & CX-90. #AAA roadside assistance is valid for the first 3 years from the date of retail purchase. Raffle draw is applicable for all customers purchase any Mazda model during this offer period from any of the authorized Mazda showrooms after completing the invoicing and registration formalities. Total of 4 raffle draws will be held and each winner will receive a Mazda 6 2.0L as the raffle gift. 1st Raffle on 16th March 2025, 2nd raffle on 23rd March 2025, 3rd raffle on 6th April 2025 and 4th raffle on 17th April 2025. The vehicles shown are for illustrative purposes only and specifications are subject to change without notice. Offer valid only for private vehicles and not applicable to fleet, Ministry, taxi, rental, or commercial car purchases.