

08

RAMADHAN
1447 AH
THURSDAY
FEB 26, 2026

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR

05:16 AM

DHUHR

12:25 PM

ASR

03:45 PM

MAGHRIB

06:13 PM

ISHA

07:23 PM

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INBRIEF



HM GETS MESSAGE FROM SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, dealing with the fraternal relations between the two countries. The message was received by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, when he received at his office in Muscat on Wednesday Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman.

CLOUD SEEDING STATION LAUNCHED

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has successfully completed the construction and operational launch of a cloud seeding station in the Wilayat of Khasab, Musandam Governorate, marking a significant milestone in Oman’s sustained efforts to enhance precipitation levels, develop groundwater reserves and advance comprehensive water sustainability objectives. The station’s effective operational range extends approximately 70 km from its strategic location towards both northwest and southern trajectories. **DETAILS ON P3**

Project to link historical landmarks in Wilayat of Rustaq

AL RUSTAQ: The Department of Heritage and Tourism in Al Batinah South Governorate has awarded engineering consulting services to a firm to prepare a development master plan for a project linking the tomb of Imam Ahmed bin Said with Al Rustaq Fort and Harat Qasra. The project also aims to connect historical landmarks surrounding the fort, the market and Harat Bait Al Qarn.

The project aims to highlight the historical and cultural value of the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, transforming it into an integrated heritage system. It seeks to consolidate its position as a



The project aims to highlight the historical and cultural value of the Wilayat of Al Rustaq.

Royal Decree establishes National Library of Oman

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued Royal Decree No 36/2026 on establishing the National Library of Oman and promulgating its system.

Article (1) states that a library shall be established under the name ‘The National Library of Oman’. The library shall have legal personality, enjoy financial and administrative autonomy and report to the Minister of Culture,

Sports and Youth, in accordance with the provisions of the system attached to the decree.

Article (2) stipulates that all allocations, assets, rights, obligations and origins relevant to the Manuscripts Department in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth shall be transferred to the National Library of Oman.

Article (3) states that employees of the Manuscripts Department in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and

Youth shall be transferred to the National Library of Oman, along with their financial grades.

Article (4) says that the competence of collecting, restoring, documenting, authenticating and publishing Omani manuscripts shall be transferred from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to the National Library of Oman.

Article (5) stipulates that the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Library of

Oman shall issue the regulations and decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this decree and the attached system.

Article (6) cancels all that contradicts this decree and the attached system or contravenes their provisions.

Article (7) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

VANCE SAYS TRUMP STILL PREFERS DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION

Iran sees ‘good outlook’ for deal in talks with US

AN Iranian delegation headed by its top diplomat set off for Geneva on Wednesday for talks with the US, as the Islamic republic’s president struck an upbeat tone about the prospect for a negotiated agreement to avert fresh conflict.

US Vice-President J D Vance said on Wednesday that President Donald Trump still preferred a diplomatic solution with Iran and that he hoped Iranians took that seriously in their negotiations on Thursday.

Vance told Fox News’ ‘America’s Newsroom’ programme that Trump has been clear Iran can’t have a nuclear weapon.

The US vice-president said Trump wants to achieve that goal diplomatically, but has other tools at his disposal.

Vance said he hoped the Iranians took Trump’s preference seriously in negotiations on Thursday.

But Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday that he had a ‘favourable outlook for the negotiations’, after Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his team left for Switzerland.

“We are continuing the process under the guidance of the supreme leader so that we can move beyond this ‘neither war nor peace’ situation,” Pezeshkian said in a speech.

Trump in his address claimed



A woman walks past a wall painting in the colours of the Iranian flag in Tehran on Wednesday. — AFP

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that he had a ‘favourable outlook for the negotiations’, after Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his team left for Switzerland for talks with US

that Tehran had “already developed missiles that can threaten Europe and our bases overseas, and they’re working to build missiles that will soon reach the United States of America”.

But Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeli Baqaei refuted those claims as “simply the repetition of ‘big lies’”.

The maximum range of Iran’s missiles is 2,000 km according to what Tehran has publicly disclosed, though the US Congressional Research Service estimates they top out at about 3,000 km - less than a third of the distance to the continental United States.

Hours before Trump’s speech,

Araghchi declared the two sides had “a historic opportunity”, saying a deal was “within reach, but only if diplomacy is given priority”.

He vowed Iran would “under no circumstances” develop atomic weapons, but insisted on its right to peacefully use nuclear technology.

Iran and the US held five rounds of nuclear talks last year, but those negotiations ended after Israel’s unprecedented attack on Iran triggered a 12-day war that Washington briefly joined.

Tehran residents who spoke on Wednesday were divided as to whether there would be renewed conflict.

Some said war was all but inevitable, while one salesman who gave his name as Mehdi predicted the negotiations would succeed, saying: “The Americans are bluffing.”

Emile Hokayem, senior fellow for Middle East security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said the huge military outlay carried a political cost for Trump.

“It looks like President Trump has cornered himself,” Hokayem said, adding the US leader may have predicted the “Iranians would cave quickly”, which they have yet to do.

“At this point, the force posture is such that if the US were to pull back without (an agreement), it could come at the credibility of the president himself.” — Agencies

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National Library: Beacon preserving culture, knowledge for generations

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK on Wednesday issued Royal Decree No 36/2026 establishing the National Library of Oman and promulgating its system, which is a Royal affirmation of the supreme commitment to preserving Omani culture, safeguarding national memory, and consolidating the status of knowledge as a defining feature of identity and a civilisational beacon for nations and peoples.

Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, stated in a press remark that the issuance of the Royal Decree represents a Royal foundation from His Majesty the Sultan that translates his enlightened vision aimed at preserving Omani culture, safeguarding national memory, and consolidating the status of knowledge as a hallmark of identity and a civilisational tributary for generations present and future.

The minister elaborated that the National



SAYYID SAUD BIN HILAL AL BUSAIDY
Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth

Library of Oman constitutes an integral component of the monumental Sayyid Tarik bin Taimour Cultural Complex, serving as a comprehensive national repository for Omani intellectual output. The library will dedicate its efforts to the systematic collection, enumeration, organisation and dissemination of Omani publications, facilitating access both locally and internationally in accordance with approved policies that preserve rights and intrinsic value while supporting education, learning, scientific research and enriching the cultural landscape.

He affirmed that this beacon of knowledge has charted its course to register its

distinguished presence in the forums of science, learning, research, and culture, with steadfast attention to preserving Omani intellectual heritage and an ambitious vision opening horizons of inspiration and discovery — enriching the passionate researcher, inspiring the discerning thinker and assisting the astute scholar in their noble pursuits.

The minister further emphasised that the Sultanate of Oman holds firm conviction that the authentic narrative of its history and civilisational journey must be presented from its original sources and through its own voice, expressing the depth of its cultural roots and the richness of its intellectual product. Through the National Library of Oman, the nation shall remain forever — as it has always been — a radiant planet in the cultural firmament, proceeding to bring the features of its identity and civilisational message closer to the world, and assisting

generations to advance with rooted foundations and conscious minds.

He described this establishment as a watershed moment in the cultural and intellectual trajectory of the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting a wise national commitment to preserving and protecting intellectual heritage, expanding its domestic resonance and enhancing its radiance within the international cultural sphere.

The establishment of this national landmark within the Sayyid Tarik bin Taimour Cultural Complex, situated in the Airport Heights area of Muscat Governorate, ensures the creation of a comprehensive national reference for Omani intellectual output, guaranteeing the sustainability of knowledge content, documenting its trajectories, and making it accessible to interested parties locally and internationally according to approved frameworks and policies. — ONA



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SHORT TAKES



The meeting emphasised the necessity of opening foreign markets for Omani products. — ONA

MOAFWR SEEKS TO EMPOWER YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) and the Oman Agricultural Association held a meeting on Wednesday to discuss a number of topics and challenges facing the agricultural sector in the Sultanate of Oman, within the framework of enhancing cooperation and integration between the two sides.

The meeting addressed the importance of empowering Omani youth in the fields of agricultural marketing and explored enablers to encourage their engagement in this sector. It also emphasised the necessity of opening foreign markets for Omani products and overcoming challenges that hinder their market access.

Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, affirmed the ministry's keenness to organise periodic meetings that contribute to consolidating institutional partnerships and enhancing the effective relationship between the two parties.

He noted the ministry's readiness to listen to the association's proposals, given its pivotal role in supporting agricultural production, strengthening the food security system and contributing to the development of the agricultural sector.

He stated that the ministry will serve as the primary supporter for the association in addressing the challenges facing the sector, thereby contributing to achieving sustainability and enhancing productivity. The meeting also included a review of the most prominent achievements associated with the Tenth Five-Year Plan related to the nature of Oman Agricultural Association's work. — ONA

TEMPERATURES LIKELY TO DROP IN GOVERNORATES



CAA urged everyone to exercise caution while driving in open areas.

MUSCAT: The Directorate-General of Meteorology at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said that the northern governorates of the Sultanate of Oman will be affected by northerly to northwesterly winds in the coming days, leading to a relative drop in temperatures.

The Met Office said that sea waves will rise to up to two metres along the coasts of the Sultanate of Oman. The northerly winds may cause dust and sandstorms in desert and open areas, reducing horizontal visibility.

On Wednesday, the northern governorates experienced active winds from the north and northwest, causing temperatures to drop below 20 Degrees Celsius and leading to high waves along the coasts and dust and sandstorms in desert and open areas.

The CAA urged everyone to exercise caution while driving in open areas and to observe maritime safety measures when engaging in activities along the coasts during active wind conditions.

CONCERT SERIES ON SPIRITUAL MUSIC STARTS TODAY AT ROHM

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 25

As part of its Ramadhan programmes, the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) is hosting Evenings of Sufi and Inshaad from Thursday (February 26) at 9.30 pm. It is a thoughtfully curated concert series dedicated to spiritual music.

Bringing together distinguished artists from Oman and across the region, the series offers audiences an opportunity to experience devotional traditions expressed through music that inspires reflection and a sense of shared heritage.

The series starts with renowned vocalist Mohammed Sarwat



The series concludes on March 9 at 9.30 pm with Omani Night, a celebration of the Sultanate of Oman's own spiritual heritage.

performing alongside his orchestra. In this special programme of Sufi and Inshaad, devotional vocals and instrumental textures are woven together in an orchestral setting, creating an atmosphere of spiritual

depth and quiet reflection to mark the beginning of the holy month. On March 5 at 9.30 pm, the Syrian Heritage Group, led by Mustafa Haji Hamdo, presents an evening dedicated to Syrian

Inshaad. Through expressive group vocals and established melodic forms, the performance reflects the communal spirit and enduring spiritual heritage of Syrian devotional music, honouring traditions passed down through generations.

The series concludes on March 9 at 9.30 pm with Omani Night, a celebration of the Sultanate of Oman's own spiritual heritage. Featuring Mohammed al Wahaibi, Yahya Bihaqi and Ali al Alawi alongside the Al Wifaq Choir Group and Awtar Al Takht, the evening brings the Ramadhan series to a close with a programme rooted in Omani devotional expression and collective spiritual experience.

Cloud seeding station to fortify water security

THE Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has successfully completed the construction and operational launch of a cloud seeding station in the Wilayat of Khasab, Musandam Governorate, marking a significant milestone in Oman's sustained efforts to enhance precipitation levels, develop groundwater reserves and advance comprehensive water sustainability objectives.

The station's effective operational range extends approximately 70 kilometres from its strategic location towards both northwest and southern trajectories, calibrated according to geographical parameters and prevailing meteorological conditions. This positioning optimises cloud formation opportunities and stimulates rainfall in carefully identified target areas, maximising the initiative's hydrological impact.

This project represents an integral component of Oman's advanced cloud seeding programme utilising ionic technology, which systematically enhances cloud condensation processes and increases precipitation probability. The facility constitutes the fourteenth operational station within Oman's expanding national network, which strategically encompasses eleven stations distributed across the Eastern and Western Hajar Mountains, one station in Musandam

This project represents an integral component of Oman's advanced cloud seeding programme utilising ionic technology, which systematically enhances cloud condensation processes and increases precipitation probability.



The initiative embodies a strategic commitment to adopting cutting-edge technologies. — ONA

Governorate, and two stations in Dhofar Governorate's mountain ranges — ensuring comprehensive geographical coverage and seamless operational integration of the national cloud seeding infrastructure.

The initiative embodies the ministry's strategic commitment to adopting cutting-edge technologies and innovative methodologies in water resource governance, reinforcing national water security imperatives while strengthening ecological systems' resilience and adaptive capacity in response to

climate variability. The project simultaneously advances broader sustainable development objectives through enhanced water availability.

The ministry continues its systematic evaluation of prospective sites where favourable climatic and topographical conditions converge, ensuring operational ranges remain non-overlapping with existing stations to guarantee optimal efficiency, maximum geographical coverage, and judicious distribution of national water enhancement projects. — ONA

6.4 million for dam maintenance across Oman

GHALIA AL DHUKHRI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

During the 2024-2025 period, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources carried out maintenance on 59 dams at a total cost of RO 6,438,437. This included 5 dams in Muscat Governorate, 6 dams in Al Buraimi Governorate, 7 dams in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, 4 dams in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, 9 dams in Musandam Governorate, 10 dams in Al Dhahirah Governorate, 9 dams in Al Batinah South Governorate, 4 dams in Al Batinah North Governorate, 4 dams in Dhofar Governorate and one dam in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

The maintenance operations involved the removal of silt deposits from the dam reservoirs, constructing 23 monitoring rooms, installing



The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources carried out maintenance on 59 dams.

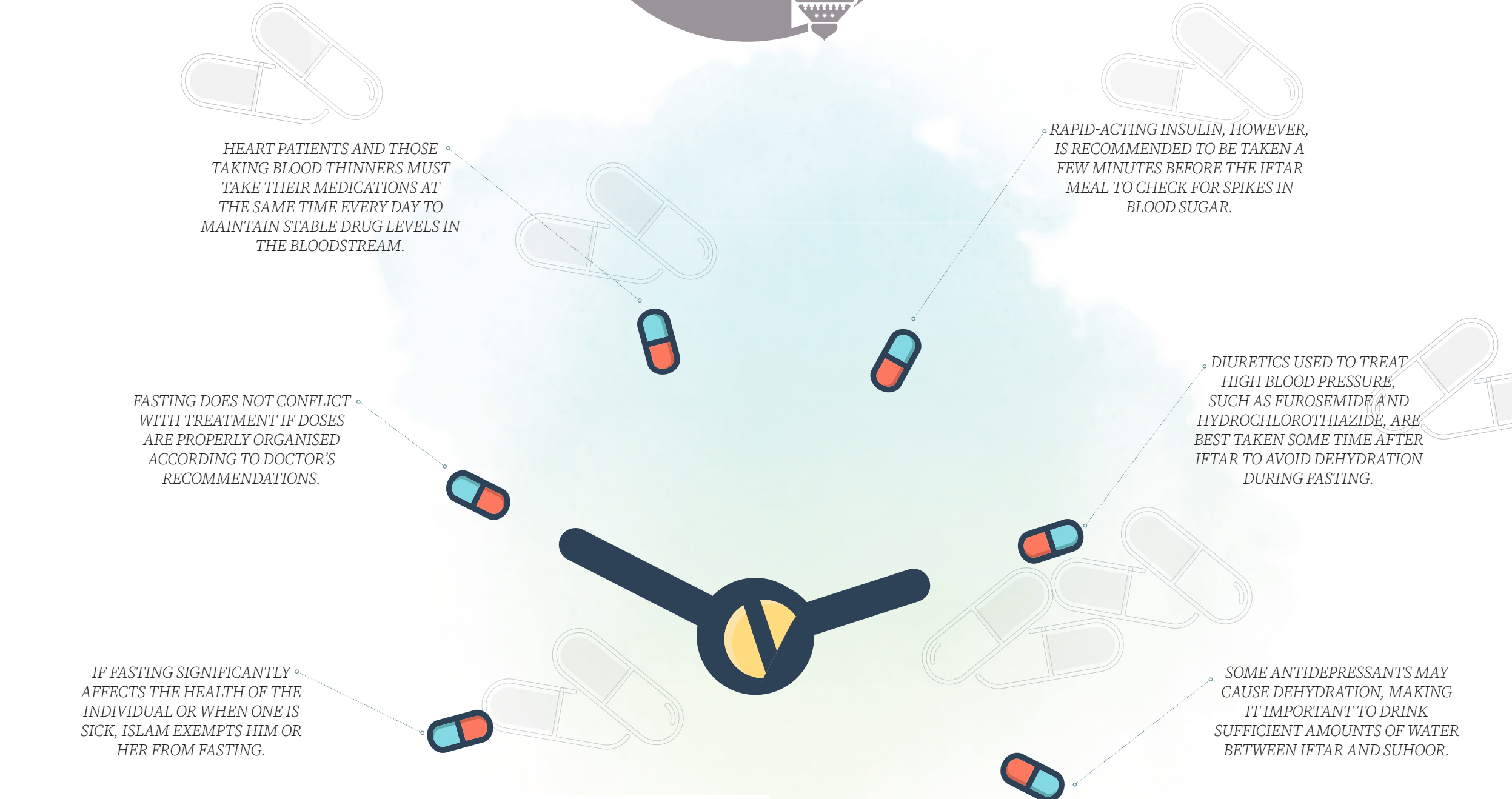
25 water level gauges in the dam reservoirs, installing 32 monitoring cameras, replacing 18 water discharge gates, in addition to lubricating, cleaning, and rehabilitation operations on 59 other gates. In addition, 12 information panels, 20 warning signs and 16

guidance signs were installed to boost dam effectiveness and ensure seamless operations, he said. Hilal bin Said al Siyabi, Head of the Dams Operation and Maintenance Department at the Ministry, said that groundwater recharge dams are typically

equipped with advanced devices for real-time flood monitoring which allows for determining the volume of water entering the dam reservoirs. This data also enables a precise comparison between the water retained behind the dam and the actual groundwater recharge reaching the aquifer, with the aim of verifying the effectiveness of the dams. The results obtained through periodic monitoring are a positive indicator highlighting the efficiency of dams in managing water resources.

Al Siyabi said that a periodic assessment of dam safety was conducted in 2025, covering 24 dams.

A topographic survey was carried out for 15 dams, and readings were taken from 132 monitoring wells to verify the safety of the dams and their facilities. It was found that they were operating at the required efficiency.



NBO Global Equity Fund	
Investment Manager Report For the period ending 31 st December 2025	
Global financial markets delivered resilient performance in 2025, with major equity indices trading near or at record highs for much of the year. Returns were primarily driven by stronger than expected corporate earnings, particularly in technology, AI linked sectors and select cyclical sectors. Earnings growth proved more durable than anticipated, offsetting concerns around slowing macroeconomic momentum. Monetary policy remained the dominant macro driver. The Federal Reserve initiated a gradual easing cycle with three rate cuts in total of 75 bps in 2025 and signaling a data-dependent path forward. In contrast, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England maintained a more cautious stance, reflecting stickier inflation dynamics in parts of Europe. Divergence in policy trajectories contributed to currency volatility and relative performance dispersion across regions. The MSCIs Global and Developed indices increased by 20.60% and 19.49% respectively while the Emerging Market index increased by 30.58% during the year. Among Developed Markets (DM), the S&P 500 Index (USA) increased by 16.39% while Nasdaq Composite (USA) increased by 20.36%, and the UK Index increased by 30.57%. The Euro Stoxx 50 Index (Eurozone) and Japan increased by 34.14% and 26.84% respectively. Among Emerging Markets (EM), the Taiwanese, Chinese and Korean markets increased by 31.24%, 23.67% and 79.57% respectively, while the Indian markets increased by 5.16% (USD returns considered for all indices). The US Dollar decreased by 9.37% during the year after hitting the lowest level in last 3 years during September 2025. For YTD 2025, USD is now down by 9.37% with the Dollar Index (DXY) at 98.32 on 31st December 2025 as compared to its peak level of 109.96 in early Jan 2025. In the bond markets, the US 10-year yields ended at 4.17% in 2025, as compared to 4.57% in the previous year. The Global Aggregate Bond Index ended the year up by 8.17%. The fund underperformed relative to the broader global equity index during the period. During the last quarter, we were positioning the portfolio to benefit from a constructive corporate earnings season. Looking ahead for 2026, further rate reduction will likely depend on the core inflation trajectory, jobs data, any geo-political risks that may prove inflationary in the future, and the likely trend of fiscal policy and US trade & tariff policies. Historically, a downward trending interest rate scenario should support global equities growth generally as valuations rise. However, we maintain a cautious stance in light of ongoing macroeconomic volatility. Our fund's strategy continues to focus on maintaining fund quality, and diversifying sources of fund returns, in order to preserve value during any possible downturns and also to grow the fund over the long-term, in line with the respective global indices.	
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025	
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	
	31 December 202531 December 2024
ASSETS	
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	4,035,6273,607,115
Cash and cash equivalents	23,28439,573
Dividend receivable	1,1751,569
Total assets	4,060,0863,648,257
LIABILITIES	
Accruals and other payables	13,84112,431
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	4,046,2453,635,826
Net asset value per unit	1.0551.018
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	
	31 December 202531 December 2024
INCOME	
Net realized gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	36,593139,777
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	429,876(29,640)
Dividend income	40,85615,172
Other income	352,088
	507,360127,397
Expenses	
Brokerage commission	23,24323,142
Management fees	39,34013,307
Fund Management Body fees	35,0004,200
Investment advisor fees	13,9585,068
Administration and custodian service fees	10,5895,019
Foreign exchange loss	7321,031
General and administration	40,11410,238
	162,97662,005
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the period	344,38465,392
Net profit per unit	0.0960.018
Investment Manager	
البنك الوطني العماني NBO	
Notes: The complete account in Arabic or English, as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholders within 7 days of written request addressed to the Administrator, Standard Chartered Bank.	

TAKE RIGHT DOSES OF PILLS AT RIGHT TIME

Proper medication management during Ramadhan is the true guarantee of maintaining therapeutic benefits without compromising the health of those who fast

AHMED AL KAABI

HOW to take medicines, especially if you are a chronically ill patient and fasting, during Ramadhan? According to the Ministry of Health awareness campaign under #Sustainable_Leading_Health_For_All, one must strictly follow his/ her doctor's guidelines.

Some patients require counselling and advice on how to manage their medications during the month of fasting. However, if fasting significantly affects the health of the individual or when one is sick, Islam exempts him or her from fasting.

During this month, eating habits and sleep schedules change for many members of society, making it necessary to reorganise medication routines in a way that ensures continued effectiveness and patient safety.

In this context, pharmacist Nawal al Alawi emphasised in the post the importance of adhering to medical guidelines throughout the month, affirming that fasting does not conflict with treatment if doses are properly organised according to professional recommendations and tailored to each patient's health condition.

Al Alawi explained that certain medical conditions require special attention when adjusting medication timings. She noted that heart patients and those taking blood thinners must take their medications at the same time every day to maintain stable drug levels in the bloodstream and ensure effectiveness. Any disruption in timing may affect treatment efficiency and expose patients to unwanted complications.

Regarding diabetes patients, she stated that most oral medications, such as metformin, can be taken with or immediately after

Iftar to reduce the likelihood of stomach discomfort and ensure optimal therapeutic response. Rapid-acting insulin, however, is recommended to be taken a few minutes before the Iftar meal to check for spikes in blood sugar. She stressed that insulin or tablet doses may need adjustment based on the treating physician's evaluation, particularly if meal patterns or fasting duration change.

She said diuretics used to treat high blood pressure, such as furosemide and Hydrochlorothiazide, are best taken some time after Iftar to avoid dehydration during fasting hours, especially in hot weather and with fluid loss, which may negatively affect the body's balance.

As for levothyroxine, used to treat hypothyroidism, Al Alawi explained that it is best taken one hour before Suhoor or three to four hours after Iftar on an empty stomach to ensure optimal absorption and prevent interference from food or drinks.

With regard to epilepsy and antidepressant medications, she stressed the need for strict adherence without interruption or modification unless medically advised, to prevent seizures or health relapses. She also warned that some antidepressants may cause dehydration, making it important to drink sufficient amounts of water between Iftar and Suhoor to maintain proper fluid balance.

Al Alawi concluded by emphasising that safe and healthy fasting begins with strict adherence to medication schedules and avoiding any changes in dosage or timing without consulting a doctor. Each case has its own considerations, and proper medication management during Ramadhan is the true guarantee of maintaining therapeutic benefits without compromising the health of those who fast.

SHORTTAKES



The meeting was chaired by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. — ONA

DHOFAR MUNICIPAL COUNCIL DISCUSSES DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

SALALAH: The Municipal Council of Dhofar Governorate held a meeting during which it discussed development projects, public health services, environment regulations and a new guideline governing commercial registers.

The meeting was chaired by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, Chairman of Dhofar Municipal Council.

The Municipal Council’s Legal Committee advised that the regulations governing commercial registers should be implemented in accordance with a new guideline issued by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The Council’s Social Affairs Committee unveiled the outcome of its meetings with specialists from the Directorate-General of Health Services in Dhofar Governorate. The Committee outlined the Directorate’s efforts to raise public awareness about genetic diseases and to conduct premarital medical examinations. — ONA

Development projects in Al Sharqiyah S reviewed

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

DR Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of Al Sharqiyah South, conducted an extensive field visit to a number of development projects in the wilayats of Al Kamil W'al Wafi and Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan. Accompanying the Governor were Abdullah bin Mohammed al Braiki, Wali of Al Kamil W'al Wafi; Shaikh Ali bin Samah al Shukaili, Deputy Wali of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan; members of the Municipal Council; the Assistant Director-General of Al Sharqiyah South Municipality; and a team of municipal engineers and technical specialists.

The delegation began the tour in Al Kamil W'al Wafi, where they reviewed several infrastructure initiatives, including the development of internal road networks, enhancement of stormwater drainage and rehabilitation of public facilities. Detailed briefings were presented by project engineers outlining current progress rates, implementation phases and expected completion schedules.

Dr Al Maawali stressed the importance of coordinated institutional efforts to ensure projects are delivered efficiently and in line with established technical specifications. He underscored that infrastructure development must not only meet functional requirements, but also reflect aesthetic and urban planning considerations that enhance the overall quality of life and preserve the architectural identity of Omani communities.

During discussions with municipal teams, the Governor emphasised the value of continuous monitoring and performance evaluation, calling for proactive solutions to address any challenges that may affect project delivery. He also highlighted the importance of engaging local communities,



Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of Al Sharqiyah South, conducted an extensive field visit to a number of development projects in the wilayats of the governorate.

noting that public feedback plays a vital role in refining services and strengthening development outcomes.

In Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, the delegation inspected projects focused on improving public amenities, upgrading road infrastructure and street lighting, and beautifying public spaces. Officials also reviewed select investment-related initiatives designed to stimulate economic activity and create employment opportunities for local residents.

Dr Al Maawali reiterated that balanced development across all wilayats of the governorate remains a strategic priority.

He further explained that field visits are a cornerstone of the governorate's governance approach, enabling direct oversight of strategic projects and reinforcing accountability at the implementation level. On-site engagement, he said, ensures that performance standards are maintained,

timelines are respected and service efficiency continues to improve.

The Governor also highlighted the importance of maximising local capabilities — both human and material — to achieve optimal developmental returns. He pointed to the growing role of public-private partnerships in supporting priority projects, noting that collaboration between sectors is essential for achieving long-term sustainability and strengthening regional competitiveness.

Municipal officials expressed appreciation for the Governor's hands-on approach, stating that field supervision provides practical support to project teams and facilitates swift decision-making.

Such initiatives align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises sustainable urban development, economic diversification and improved public services.



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E-mail: admin@soharpower.com, Website: www.soharpower.com

Notice and Invitation to Annual Ordinary General Meeting (AGM)

The Board of Directors of Sohar Power Company SAOG (hereinafter referred to as the "Company") is pleased to invite the Shareholders of the Company to the Annual Ordinary General Meeting to be held at 3:00 pm on Tuesday 10 March 2026 through the electronic platform of the General Meetings, which can be accessed through the Muscat Clearing and Depository website (www.mcd.gov.om), and in the event the quorum requirement for holding the AOGM has not been met, a second AOGM shall be held at 11:05 pm on Thursday 12 March 2026, to consider the following agendas:

1. To consider and approve the Board of Directors' Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2025.
2. To consider the Auditors' Report and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2025.
3. To consider the Auditors' Report and approve the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2025.
4. To consider and note the transactions carried out by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended 31 December 2025 (as in Annexure).
5. To consider and approve the transactions that will be carried out by the Company with related parties for the financial year ending 31 December 2026 (as in Annexure).
6. To consider and ratify the Board and Committees' sitting fees paid during the preceding year and specify the Board and Committees sitting fees for the coming year (as in Annexure).
7. To consider and approve Directors' remuneration in the amount of RO 28,100 for the financial year ended 31 December 2025.
8. To notify the meeting with the donation made by the Company on account of corporate social responsibility during the financial year ended 31 December 2025 (as in annexure).
9. To consider and approve the proposal to allocate up to OMR 20,000 for Corporate Social Responsibility activities for the financial year ending 31 December 2026.
10. To approve the report of the Independent Consultant on the performance appraisal of the Board of directors for the financial year ended 31 December 2025. (as in Annexure 5) this is to be noted that this report shall cover the term of the present board of Directors ending on 31 December 2027.
11. To appoint the statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31 December 2026 and approve their remuneration.

In accordance with the Company's article of association and Rules for Convening General Meetings of Public Joint Stock Companies via Modern Electronic means issued by the Capital Authority Market, we would like to inform you of the following:

- a) Every shareholder has the right to appoint any other person as his proxy to attend the meeting and vote on his behalf through electronic means, provided that the person has an investor number in the MCDC.
- b) Voting on any of the items on the agenda shall begin no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the meeting. In case the shareholder balance changes by increase or decrease, the voting process will be cancelled again on the day of the General Meeting.

For more information, please contact **Mr. Salah Issa al Farsi**, the Company's Admin Manager, telephone number (+968) 99219419.

Chairman	Legal Advisor	External Auditor
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Advertisement of e-auction for the Sale of Used Movables
The Ministry of Interior announces the holding of an electronic auction for the used movables through mzadat Platform www.mzadat.om according to the following statement:



Type of the auction

Used movables auction



Location of the auction

Storage of the Interior Ministry in Al Maabailah (Industrial Area)



Date & time of the inspection

Sunday- Wednesday
1-4 March 2026
from 8 am to 1:30 pm



Date of the auction (Electronic)

Wednesday-Thursday
4-5 March 2026
from 8 am to 3 pm

For those who desire to participate shall abide by the following requirements:

1. Registration shall be made through the website mentioned above.
2. A subscriber shall pay an insurance fee online amounted to RO 300 Three hundred Omani Rials.
3. Buyers shall pay fees totaling 1 per cent of the total prices of the purchased goods as a brokerage percentage, in addition to pay VAT on the brokerage fees amounted to 5%.
4. The Ministry of Interior and mzadat shall have no commitment towards any items whose picture and description are not matched, as well the validity of the auctioned items or guarantee its technical status. The buyers shall personally make the visual inspection during the period mentioned above.
5. The buyer shall pay the price of the purchased items electronically through banking transfer within three working days from completing the purchase process.
6. The buyer shall shift the purchased items no later than 5 working days from the date of concluding the purchase process. If they are not moved during the determined period, the Ministry is not responsible for lose or damage.
7. The purchased items shall not be returned or its price is reduced and no petition shall be made in the regard.

To acquaint with the electronic auction:
www.mzadat.om

For further information, please contact us through the email info@mzadat.om and the contact centre on +968 76617644

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



An Israeli soldier keeps watch as a Palestinian woman arrives at the Qalandia checkpoint, in Ramallah. — AFP

PA slams US offer of consular services in West Bank

TEL AVIV: The Palestinian Authority slammed a decision by the US Embassy to offer consular services in an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank as a “violation of international law”. The US mission said that as part of an initiative to mark the 250th anniversary of US independence, it would provide Americans with “routine passport services in Efrat on Friday, February 27... for one day only”.

The Palestinian Authority’s Colonisation and Wall Resistance Commission condemned the move, saying in a statement that it “constitutes a clear violation of international law and a blatant favouring of the occupation authorities”, referencing Israel. Minister Muayyad Shubban, head of the commission, called on the US to reverse the decision, and on the international community to refrain from legitimising the settlement system.

The Palestinian militant group Hamas also decried the US decision, describing it in a statement as “a dangerous step that supports (Israel’s) Judaisation plans”. The US Embassy in Jerusalem also announced that such pop-up consular services will be provided in the next couple of months in another Israeli settlement, Beitar Illit, as well as in the Palestinian city of Ramallah and three cities inside Israel. — AFP

Nepal’s leader says post-uprising polls on track



Election officials inspect ballot boxes before dispatched from the Election Commission office in Kathmandu. — AFP

KATHMANDU: Nepal’s interim government has said preparations are on track for parliamentary elections next week, the first since a deadly 2025 uprising, urging voters to exercise their right “without fear”. The Himalayan republic of 30 million people holds elections on March 5, less than six months after youth-led anti-corruption protests toppled the previous government. The unrest killed at least 77 people and left parliament in flames.

“The government will leave no stone unturned to conduct the election in a clean, fair, fearless, and peaceful manner,” Sushila Karki, the interim prime minister, said. “I urge all citizens to exercise their voting rights with confidence and without any fear.” The September 2025 violence was the worst since a decade-long civil war ended in a 2006 peace deal that abolished the monarchy and brought Maoist insurgents into government. — AFP

THAILAND ELECTION BODY CONFIRMS WIN BY PM’S PARTY

BANGKOK: Thailand’s Election Commission confirmed the victory of caretaker Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul’s conservative party on Wednesday, ratifying most of the results of this month’s vote. The commission certified the results for 396 newly elected MPs in the 500-seat lower house, with Anutin’s Bhumjaithai party winning 170 constituencies, the most of any party, according to a statement.

The reformist People’s Party —

which had been polling first ahead of the February 8 election — came in second, with 88 constituencies, the commission said. Pheu Thai, the populist party of jailed former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, came in third with 58 seats, according to the ratified results. With no party winning an outright majority, Bhumjaithai and Pheu Thai have agreed to form a coalition. Several smaller parties would also join, Bhumjaithai has said.

The pro-military and pro-

monarchy party had its best electoral performance ever, riding a wave of nationalism following two rounds of deadly border clashes with Cambodia last year. Pheu Thai, Thailand’s most successful party of the 21st century, meanwhile, had its worst election result ever. The two parties were previously coalition partners until Anutin pulled out in June following a leaked phone conversation of his predecessor, Pheu Thai’s Paetongtarn Shinawatra. — AFP

Germany’s Merz meets Xi in China, seeking closer ties

GERMAN Chancellor Friedrich Merz met with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing on Wednesday, hoping to bolster ties with his country’s largest trade partner and high-tech rival as Europe’s biggest economy struggles. Berlin and Beijing want to build on their decades-old economic ties at a time when US President Donald Trump has sparked global chaos with his tariffs blitz and other erratic foreign policy moves. China, the world’s number two economy, overtook the United States last year to become Germany’s biggest trade partner, but Berlin also regards the Communist Party-run state as a systemic rival to the West.



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (2nd L) participates in a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping (2nd R) at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing. — AFP

The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to developing closer strategic relations, with Merz saying he saw the trip as a “great opportunity” to boost economic ties. Xi, in turn, told Merz he was willing to take their ties to “new levels”, stressing that he “always attached great importance to Sino-German relations”. Merz also noted that he wished for joint consultations between their two governments, which had been interrupted by a change in Germany’s government and the pandemic, to resume “very soon”.

Export-dependent Germany needs “economic relations all over the world”, Merz said before leaving for Beijing with a large business delegation in tow. “But we should be under no illusions,” he added, pointing out that China,

Berlin and Beijing want to build on their decades-old economic ties at a time when US President Donald Trump has sparked global chaos with his tariffs blitz and other erratic foreign policy moves

as a rival to the United States, now “claims the right to define a new multilateral order according to its own rules”. Merz earlier met with Premier Li Qiang in Beijing’s opulent Great Hall of the People, where he called for “fair” cooperation, and representatives from both sides signed agreements and memorandums — including on climate change and food security.

In an apparent allusion to the United States, Li noted that “unilateralism and protectionism have gained ground and even become prevalent in some countries and regions”. “Against such a backdrop, China and Germany, as two major economies in the world with significant influence, should... jointly safeguard multilateralism and free trade,” Li said. China under Xi has grown far more assertive on

the world stage, built up its military, stressed its claim to self-ruled Taiwan, and pushed back strongly against criticism of its human rights record.

Flexing its muscle at times of tension, Beijing has restricted exports of critical minerals used in products from microchips and wind turbines to electric-car batteries and weapons systems. Last year, Beijing temporarily halted the export of Nexperia chips to Europe following a dispute with the Dutch government. More broadly, European businesses complain that China, with its low domestic demand, is flooding Europe with goods made cheap through state subsidies and an undervalued currency. Germany’s trade deficit with China hit a record 89 billion euros (\$105 billion) last year. — AFP

SPIRALLING CRISIS

Myanmar junta air strike kills at least 17



A Myanmar military air strike on a village market in the country’s westernmost state killed at least 17 people, two local sources said on Wednesday. The junta’s air force hit the village of Yoe Ngu in Ponnagyun township, around 33 kilometres northeast of the state capital Sittwe, according to the AA and a local volunteer group. AA statements listed the names of 17 “innocent civilians”, including three children, killed in the strike on a marketplace around 2:00 pm. — AFP

UNDER INVESTIGATION

Sri Lanka arrests ex-spy chief over bombings



Sri Lankan investigators arrested a former intelligence chief, the most high-profile official netted in the long-running investigation into the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings. Police said retired Major General Suresh Sallay was taken into custody at dawn in a suburb of the capital. “He was arrested for conspiracy and aiding and abetting the Easter Sunday attacks,” an investigating officer said. — AFP

BORDER EXPLOSION

Chad hit from Sudan after border closure



A rocket fired from Sudan caused damage in a Chadian border town, local authorities said, a day after Chad closed its shared border to prevent its neighbour’s conflict from spilling over. “The centre of Tine was hit yesterday by a rocket coming from Sudan,” Youssouf Hachim Abdoulaye, head of the Tine prefecture, said on Wednesday. Several homes and part of the town’s police station were destroyed, he added. The explosion caused no casualties. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Pope Leo XIV leads the Angelus prayer from the window of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican. — Reuters

POPE LEO TO TOUR COUNTRIES IN FIRST MAJOR OVERSEAS TRIP

VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo will visit four countries across Africa from April 13-23, the Vatican announced on Wednesday, with the pontiff making his first major overseas trip in 2026 to the continent where the Catholic Church is growing fastest. The pope will also make a one-day visit on March 28 to Monaco, the microstate on the French Riviera, and will visit Spain from June 6-12, the Vatican said. In Africa, Leo will visit Algeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. He is expected to draw large crowds, urge world leaders to support development on the continent, and highlight efforts at Catholic-Muslim dialogue. Vatican officials and African Church leaders say the upcoming papal tour in Africa is a sign of the priority the Church places on the continent. “Pope Leo’s visit will remind the world that Africa matters and the vibrancy of the Church in Africa remains at the heart of a thriving (global) Church,” said Reverend Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, a Jesuit from Nigeria. As part of the trip to Spain, Leo is expected to visit the Canary Islands, which has become a major point of entry for migrants trying to get to Europe. — Reuters

FRANCE APPOINTS LOUVRE PRESIDENT



The president of France’s famed Palace of Versailles took over as head of the Louvre following a litany of problems at the world’s most-visited museum including a \$100-million jewellery robbery. Christophe Leribault, who replaced Laurence des Cars, was appointed president of the iconic museum by the Council of Ministers on Wednesday. Government spokesperson Maud Bregeon said he will “lead major projects for the institution’s future” such as security and modernisation. Leribault will also have to “restore a climate of trust,” added the culture ministry. — AFP

ICE MELT THREATENS EMPEROR PENGUINS DURING ANNUAL MOULT

PARIS: Emperor penguins shed all their feathers once a year, a precarious ritual that may have become deadly as climate change pushes them into shrinking patches of Antarctic sea ice, researchers said on Wednesday. The flightless birds moult during summer, relying on stored fat to survive for several weeks until their waterproof coat grows back so they can swim and hunt in icy waters again. Researchers from the British Antarctic Survey, analysing

seven years of satellite images, accidentally discovered several moulting colonies along the extremely remote coastline of an area known as Marie Byrd Land. As sea ice melted, the penguins were forced onto smaller spaces in increasingly large and tightly packed groups, the UK polar research organisation said in a statement. In 2025, only 25 small groups of penguins were visible in the satellite images, it said. Prior to 2022, more

than 100 groups had been spotted in the same region. “While we don’t know for sure what happened to those penguins, we know they can find new suitable breeding sites after ice loss, so it’s possible they have established new moulting sites elsewhere,” said Peter Fretwell, lead author and mapping expert. “But also it’s possible that huge numbers of penguins perished after entering the Southern Ocean before they had replaced their waterproof feathers,” Fretwell said. — AFP

Trump hails ‘golden age’ in State of the Union speech

US President Donald Trump boasted in his State of the Union address on Tuesday that he had ushered in “the golden age of America,” seeking to project an aura of success despite sagging approval ratings and deepening voter frustration ahead of November’s midterm election. Heeding calls from Republican lawmakers worried they could lose their congressional majority later this year, Trump spent the first hour of his televised speech focused on the economy, saying he had slowed inflation, driven the stock market to record heights, signed sweeping tax cuts and lowered drug prices.

But it was unclear whether his rosy assessment would assuage Americans’ anger about the cost of living. Trump sought to blame his Democratic predecessor, Joe Biden, for high prices, but opinion polls show voters hold Trump responsible for not doing more to ease an affordability crisis after he campaigned relentlessly on the issue. “Our nation is back — bigger, better, richer and stronger than ever before,” Trump said after taking the stage to cheers of “USA, USA” from fellow Republicans in Congress, with dozens of empty seats on the Democratic side a reminder that many lawmakers skipped the speech for anti-Trump rallies outside. The annual speech to Congress came at a fraught moment for Trump’s presidency, with polls showing a majority of Americans have soured on his performance, anxieties rising over Iran and his signature tariff policy foundering after the US Supreme Court struck down most of his import taxes. For much of the speech, Trump was uncharacteristically disciplined, mostly appearing to stick to his prepared remarks and eschewing his usual stream-of-consciousness digressions. But he flashed his combative side while discussing his immigration crackdown, exchanging shouted insults with several Democratic lawmakers. Trump, who attacked the Supreme Court in personal terms after the tariff decision on Friday, held his fire on Tuesday, shaking hands with the four justices present as he



Campaign hats for Republican presidential candidate and former US President Donald Trump.

entered the chamber. He called the ruling “unfortunate” but argued that it would ultimately have little impact on his trade policy. Trump did not discuss artificial intelligence, at a time when the technology is fuelling both the stock market and growing worries among workers about the threat it poses to job security. He also spent little time on foreign policy, even though he has focused much of his energies in office on issues abroad. Trump again claimed he “ended” eight wars, an exaggeration, and barely mentioned Ukraine, despite Tuesday marking the fourth anniversary of Russia’s invasion. He did not discuss China, America’s chief economic rival, or Greenland, the semi-autonomous Danish territory he has threatened to take over. Trump also did not offer clarity regarding his plans for Iran amid signs he is inching closer to a military conflict with Tehran. “My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy,” he said. “But one thing is certain: I will never allow the world’s No. 1 sponsor of terror, which they are by far, to have a nuclear weapon.” When Trump turned to his favourite topic, immigration, he repeated the same rhetoric that animated his 2024 campaign, claiming

undocumented migrants were responsible for a wave of violent crime despite studies showing that is not the case. “You should be ashamed,” he told Democrats, chastising them for refusing to fund the Department of Homeland Security unless measures are taken to curb the aggressive tactics of immigration agents under Trump. Opinion polls show a majority of Americans believe Trump’s immigration crackdown has gone too far, after two US citizens were shot dead by masked federal agents in Minneapolis. As Trump praised his immigration enforcement, Democrat Ilhan Omar, who represents a Minneapolis US House district, shouted in his direction, “You have killed Americans!” Trump, who has falsely claimed for years that election fraud in the US is rampant, also attacked Democrats for not supporting a voter identification requirement. “They want to cheat,” he said. Democrats argue that the Republican-backed legislation would impose unnecessary burdens on voters and suppress turnout. Democratic US Representative Al Green was removed from the House chamber for the second consecutive year after waving a sign at Trump that read, “Black people aren’t apes.” — Reuters

Zelensky announces Ukraine-US talks in Geneva on Thursday

LEAD Ukrainian negotiator Rustem Umerov will meet with US envoy Steve Witkoff in Geneva on Thursday, Kyiv has announced, ahead of fresh trilateral talks with Russia expected in early March. The meetings are the latest round of negotiations spearheaded by US President Donald Trump that so far have failed to make meaningful progress on ending the Kremlin’s four-year attack on Ukraine. “Tomorrow he will meet with American negotiators Witkoff and (Jared) Kushner,” Ukrainian President Zelensky told a group of reporters. He added that the meeting was part of “preparations for a trilateral meeting with Russia, which we believe will take place in early March”. Umerov’s adviser told reporters separately that the meeting on Thursday will be in Geneva, which hosted talks with Russian, Ukrainian, and US officials earlier

this month. Other issues on the agenda for Thursday are prisoner-of-war exchanges and a “prosperity package” for the reconstruction of Ukraine, Zelensky said. Witkoff confirmed the talks earlier this week saying the aim was to “explore different iterations about how we might get to a peace deal.” United States has been pushing for an end to the war that has entered its fifth year and which has killed tens of thousands and destroyed much of eastern and southern Ukraine. Moscow and Kyiv remain at odds over who gets what land in a post-war settlement. Russia is pushing for full control of Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk region, and has threatened to take it by force if Kyiv does not cave at the negotiating table. But Ukraine has rejected the demand and signalled it would not sign a deal without security guarantees that deter Russia from attacking again.



Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy talks as he attends a press conference, in Kyiv. — Reuters

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian drone attack on a fertiliser plant in Russia’s western Smolensk region killed seven people and wounded 10 others, Russian officials said on Wednesday. The plant, just outside the Russian town of Dorogobuzh, lies around 290 kilometres (180 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

Unverified images published on social media purported to show the plant in flames early on Wednesday, with columns of smoke billowing into the night sky. “The enemy struck PJSC Dorogobuzh, a civilian plant producing nitrogen fertiliser,” Smolensk region governor Vasily

Anokhin said in a post on Telegram. Russia’s Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said later seven people were killed, updating a previous toll, in what would be one of the deadliest attacks on a Russian industrial site of the four-year war. Ukraine fired “at least 30 drones equipped with explosive devices,” causing “significant damage” it said in a statement. Rescuers had on Wednesday morning contained the fires, while authorities were considering evacuating residents from the neighbouring village for their safety, governor Anokhin added. The plant was also attacked in December last year, according to Russian media reports. Ukraine has fired thousands of drones over the Russian border since Moscow launched its Ukraine offensive in 2022, some of which have landed hundreds of kilometres from the front line. — AFP

OPINION

The architecture of absence



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

The writer is an environmental strategist advancing Middle East climate action and women's leadership

THE questions arrived this past couple of weeks on the back of the Winter Olympics. Reporters were asking athletes about melting snow, about venues that may not exist in a generation, about what it means to build a career on a surface the climate is slowly erasing.

Somewhere in that conversation, someone got in touch with me and asked why Arab athletes are silent on climate change. I have been sitting with that question ever since, not because it is simple, but because it is not.

I spent most of my youth as an athlete, and a scientist studying our environment for much of that time too. So I came to these questions from both sides, from the body that trained in heat and the mind that studied what that heat means at scale. And what I kept returning to was this: we live on a planet where the crisis does not stop at any border we have drawn. The athlete training in forty-five degree heat in Muscat and the skier watching her mountain lose snow in the Alps are inside the same emergency. The timeline differs. The visibility differs enormously. But the destination, if we do nothing, is shared by all of us equally.

And yet the conversation keeps dividing along the same lines. Western athletes speak, and the infrastructure exists to carry their voices globally. Media, sponsors, NGOs, communications teams, all of it organised around turning individual concern into a public movement. Here, the concern is just as real, often more visceral because the heat is already here, already inside the training session, already the reason you move your entire camp to higher ground when the coast becomes unworkable in summer. But the system to catch that concern and amplify it does not exist in the same way. So the silence gets misread as absence. As indifference. As falling behind. It is none of those things.

Michael Haddad, a para-athlete from Lebanon, walked five kilometres across the Arctic on an exoskeleton and crutches to deliver seed samples from twelve Arab countries, including Oman, to the Global Seed Vault in Svalbard. He carried this out as UNDP Regional Goodwill Ambassador for Climate Action, appointed in 2019, and he is now preparing a hundred-kilometre walk across the same terrain. The story is extraordinary by any measure. It is also, outside certain circles, largely unknown. Not because it lacks

And the crisis, in the end, does not pause for any of these distinctions. It is coming for all of us, in every kind of heat, on every kind of snow, under the same sky.

meaning or ambition or courage. Because the machine that turns meaning into reach is not evenly distributed across this world, and never has been.

The World Cup hosted in Qatar showed this region is capable of delivering climate-conscious sport at the highest scale, with cooling infrastructure, rescheduled fixtures and a compact design built around the environment we actually live in rather than the one we wish we had. These were not compromises. They were solutions developed from necessity and executed with precision. Oman's Olympic Committee is building in the same direction, working to embed sustainability into national sporting events and facilities in ways that reflect a longer view of what sport in this climate requires.

So when I am asked why Arab athletes are silent, I find I cannot answer cleanly. The silence is not what it looks like from the outside. Pointing at individuals when the architecture to support them is missing feels like the wrong place to look. And the crisis, in the end, does not pause for any of these distinctions. It is coming for all of us, in every kind of heat, on every kind of snow, under the same sky.

STARVED OF FUEL, CUBANS SCRAMBLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET

LISANDRA COTS, RIGOBERTO DIAZ

The US-imposed oil blockade on Cuba is upending the lives of everyday workers, who are switching jobs and ditching their cars to make do amid rolling blackouts and fuel shortages.

Yixander Diaz jettisoned both his ride and his work when the father of two, a taxi driver, turned to bricklaying. “Times are tough,” the 27-year-old, who now commutes by bicycle from his Havana suburb to the city centre, said.

Since toppling Venezuela’s leftist leader Nicolas Maduro in January, the US has stopped the new authorities in Caracas from shipping oil to Cuba and threatened to sanction any other country that does. The result is a crushing energy crisis in a country that has for years battled extended power cuts and shortages of fuel, medicine and food.

Vehicle owners have access to 20 litres of gasoline through a mobile application that organises distribution — but it can take months.

Due to the fuel shortage, Diaz had to “park the motorcycle, park the car” and return to his former profession “to survive.” Communist-run Cuba, which has faced a US trade embargo since 1962, has said it would maintain public sector salaries for the time being, but has instituted a four-day work week as transportation woes bite.

Diesel sales are banned and gasoline sales are restricted under the emergency measures instituted by the government to deal with the crisis.

At the Havana eatery where he works, the number of customers arriving by car has dramatically decreased, he said.

According to research by the private consulting firm Auge, 96.4 per cent of the country’s small and medium-sized private businesses are feeling “severe” or “catastrophic” impacts from the fuel shortage.

Local crude production, at roughly 40,000 barrels per day, barely allows the country’s power plants to operate. The lack of diesel has pinched electric generators that previously supplemented production. Solar has increased since early 2026 among those who can afford it — while others turn to charcoal or cook over open fires.

Even before the US blockade, an AFP analysis of official statistics found that the island generated only half the electricity it needed last year.

“They cut off the power here every day,” said Havana resident Eduardo, who said whether the lights are on or not affects when he can cook his meals that day. The crisis has trickled down to fruit and vegetable vendors in a country that imports 80 per cent of its food.

“We start work at nine in the morning and by noon we have to close,” said Yordan Gonzalez, 20, who works in a small shop in Havana. — AFP

Standing with Iran means standing with decency

THE first Iranian person I ever met was Arezu, a classmate in my university language programme in the United States. She taught me that her name means hope. She spoke proudly about Persian poetry, art, and history, and about her family’s departure after the 1979 revolution. Over the years, every Iranian I have met, in Iran and abroad, has carried that same blend of cultural pride, brilliance and resilience.

My academic interest in geopolitics later pushed me to study Iran more deeply. What I discovered was a country often reduced to headlines, yet far richer in reality. Iran is a nation shaped by a vibrant civilisation, revolution, war, sanctions and sustained geopolitical pressure. It is also a society of over 93 million people navigating modernity, identity and sovereignty under intense global scrutiny.

Understanding Iran today requires acknowledging its sophistication. The Islamic Republic of Iran holds regular presidential and parliamentary elections, and the president is chosen through direct popular vote. A democratic peaceful transition of power even the US is struggling to guarantee for the 2028 Presidential elections. Yet Iran’s political system is also shaped by unelected institutions, and candidates are vetted before elections take place. Perhaps the most obvious external judgement error of these unelected institutions was supporting militias that committed war crimes against the people of Syria, causing the suffering of millions of people, and making it hard for the Arab, Muslim world and the Global South to trust the narrative of the Iranian government. This duality, participation within limits, helps explain the wide range of political attitudes inside the country.

Sanctions are not abstract policy



KHALID
AL HURAIBI

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The real strategic question is not whether the world agrees with the Iranian government’s policies. The real question is whether you support people’s right to peaceful self-determination.

tools. Research consistently shows they weaken currencies, increase inflation, reduce investment, and limit job opportunities. A number of studies estimate that without sanctions, Iran’s economy could have grown closer to 4 to 5 per cent annually rather than around 3 per cent. Behind these statistics are real people navigating rising costs, limited opportunities, and uncertainty about the future. This is the reality often lost in geopolitical rhetoric and fails to capture how the country is full of talent and potential who would never think of change if it wasn’t for the imposed crippling economic hardship.

The Iranian public is not a monolith. Some citizens demand what they view as reform, greater personal freedoms, and deeper engagement with the global economy. Others prioritise sovereignty and stability in the face of external pressure. Many hold both views simultaneously. This tension is the hallmark of a society in transition.

This complexity matters because global narratives frequently reduce Iran to a geopolitical battleground rather than recognising its people as active participants in shaping their future.

History offers many warnings about isolating entire populations and freedom through Aircraft carriers and bombing campaigns. Sanctions, wars and economic pressure rarely affect elites first. They affect students, families, entrepreneurs and young people trying to build their lives. The Global South has already witnessed the devastating consequences of prolonged instability, from Iraq to Syria to Yemen, not to mention Venezuela and Cuba. The lesson is clear: Escalation rarely delivers peace or prosperity.

Standing with the people of Iran does not mean ignoring internal challenges or dismissing

legitimate right to participate in decision-making. I believe that all revolutions, after a while in power, are susceptible to becoming the perpetrators and victims of the very same rigidity and elitism that legitimised it, and that the right way for revolutions to serve its people is by actively listening to them and guiding them to and through a meaningful and decent standard of living that matches their fiery spirit and ambitions. There is no amount of violence and black operations that can silence free people forever.

The real strategic question is not whether the world agrees with the Iranian government’s policies. The real question is whether you support people’s right to peaceful self-determination.

To assess this developing situation with a framework, we can examine five aspects. Knowledge: Decades of sanctions, wars, and isolation across the region have repeatedly shown the same outcome: Unrest only serves agents of chaos and occupation. Narrative: The Iranian story is not one of a monolithic state, but of millions of decent individuals navigating identity, reform, sovereignty, and survival. Innovation: The next phase of global progress will depend on dialogue, economic integration, and technology-driven cooperation rather than escalation. A choice that the Sultanate of Oman always supports against all odds because history proves it worse. Framework: Sustainable security comes from inclusion and interdependence, not permanent confrontation. Elevation: Standing with the people of Iran is ultimately about defending the universal right of societies to pursue dignity, opportunity, and peaceful progress.

In an era defined by uncertainty, solidarity with people, not criminal bullying and hostility toward nations, remains the most humanly decent strategic path forward.

Cyberbullying and pre-teens’ depression



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is a journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

WHAT a world we live in! Young people can get depressed, too. I worry about the young who consume so much on-screen media, but I am most concerned about pre-teens navigating the shift from childhood to adolescence.

Scholars have associated cyberbullying with suicide, a phenomenon known as cyberbullicide. According to studies, the types of cyberbullying are becoming increasingly harrowing and pernicious, with pre-teens currently transitioning into high school at particularly elevated risk.

While social media offers benefits for young people, it is important to recognise its serious pitfalls, such as online challenges, social comparison, and imitation, which may directly provoke and worsen suicidal thoughts.

The literature has studied cyberbullying and Internet harassment, showing that, sadly, such behaviours are increasingly accepted and expected among adolescents. In the article Cyberbullying Victimisation and Suicide Attempt Among Adolescents: A Cross-National Comparison, the authors analyse data from six countries (Singapore, China, Iran, Indonesia, India, and Lithuania) as part of the Eurasian Child Mental Health Study. It has been identified that some effects on teens’ lives can be internalisation, externalisation, or a substance use problem.

Cyberbullying may take many forms, including embarrassing or hurtful comments or photographs being posted online or sent to

the victim; rumours being spread about the victim; gestures being posted; threats of harm being sent to the victim through messages; someone pretending to be the victim online; or offensive videos or web pages being posted about the victim.

The feeling of being laughed at or harassed by others can prevent teens from speaking up about the problem. Pressure on educational performance has also been linked to pre-teens seeking refuge on social media platforms.

In contrast to schoolyard bullying, cyberbullying grants potential anonymity to the aggressor; this anonymity increases the level of danger to a minor. The visual nature of online harassment causes severe anxiety, depression, and hopelessness, often exceeding the impact of traditional bullying. Visual platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube, as well as Facebook and Twitter, have gradually incorporated more visual content into their user interfaces and functionality.

The growing popularity of visual media emphasises how important it is for early teens to be digitally literate. Navigating a visually focused online world requires critical thinking, awareness of digital communication nuances, and responsible engagement.

Back to suicide and self-harming thoughts, suicide is frequently taboo in the Arab world, which might result in under reporting or being classified as an unnatural death. In several Arab nations, suicide and attempted suicide are prohibited. The topic is rarely discussed in public, media, or within families

While social media offers benefits for young people, it is important to recognise its serious pitfalls, such as online challenges, social comparison, and imitation, which may directly provoke and worsen suicidal thoughts

because of the extreme shame attached to it, therefore, creating a ‘taboo within a taboo.’ This creates challenges in establishing effective preventative measures and raising awareness.

As a pressing public health issue affecting pre-teens’ mental wellbeing, cyberbullying must be openly addressed within schools, families, and the media. Scholars recommend multi-faceted prevention strategies, including enhancing digital literacy for parents and educators to better protect young people.

Cybercrime prevention laws and Internet usage guidelines have evolved into a more effective framework. However, there are often limitations regarding the effectiveness of these programmes. A lack of understanding about cyberbullying, digital abuse, and content that encourages self-harm may hamper targeted campaigns and legislative solutions.

This is primarily due to a lack of up-to-date statistics and qualitative evaluations of the different forms of harassment. It may also reflect a laissez-faire approach to establishing clear, enforceable standards to combat emotional or physical harassment.

Studies need to examine regional risk variables to develop focused solutions. Other types of physical or mental anxiety should also be covered. Given the speed at which suicidal thoughts and behaviours develop, the analysis should embrace fresh viewpoints.

By prioritising open discussion, we can better support pre-teens through these challenges.

INDIA, CANADA TO FOCUS ON TRADE, ENERGY, DIPLOMACY

BHUVAN BAGGA

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is due in India this week, seeking to boost trade and mend fractured ties on the first stop of his Asia-Pacific tour. The two countries are aiming to reset their relations, which deteriorated following Canadian allegations that India was involved in the 2023 assassination of a Canadian Sikh leader - claims New Delhi strongly denied.

Carney will begin his visit in Mumbai, India’s financial hub, before travelling to New Delhi for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Both countries face rapidly shifting global trade policies and uncertainty over US President Donald Trump’s tariffs, adding urgency to efforts to diversify economic partnerships.

Carney’s office said discussions will focus on “ambitious new partnerships in trade, energy, technology and artificial intelligence (AI), talent and culture, and defence”.

India, the world’s fastest-growing major economy, is Canada’s seventh-largest goods and services trading partner. Annual two-way trade is more than \$21 billion, according to Canadian government figures. Last year, the countries agreed to resume negotiations on a proposed free-trade agreement aimed at taking bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030. “That means big new opportunities for Canadian workers and businesses,” Carney said in November, after meeting Modi on the sidelines of a G20 summit in South Africa. “India and Canada have great potential in strengthening trade and investment,” Modi said at the time. More than 600 Canadian companies are present in India, operating in sectors including information technology, banking, health sciences and financial services.

India’s main exports to Canada include pharmaceuticals, gems, jewellery and precious stones, and seafood.

New Delhi, which is seeking to attract more overseas investments, says Canadian pension and wealth funds have already invested \$73 billion in India. The government has eased foreign investment rules, opening up sensitive sectors such as defence, energy and insurance.

Mining giant Canada holds large rare-earth metal reserves, and New Delhi is looking at ways to ease its dependence on China.

Ottawa also brings technical expertise in mining and resource development. Energy-hungry India - the world’s most populous country, with 1.4 billion people - hopes Canada can support its ambitious plan to expand nuclear power capacity from its current 8 to 100 gigawatts by 2047. When Carney and Modi met in November, they reaffirmed civil nuclear cooperation, including potential long-term uranium supply agreements. A multi-billion-dollar deal on extended uranium supplies is reportedly under discussion. — AFP

Nepal’s rapper-mayor in pole position to become PM

AFTER Nepal’s historic youth-led uprising last September killed 77 people and forced then-Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli to resign, a 35-year-old rapper-turned-politician posted a typically terse message to millions of followers on social media.

“Dear Gen Z, the resignation of your killer has come,” Balendra Shah - popularly known only as Balen - wrote. “Now your generation will have to lead the country. Be prepared.” Five months on, the musician who cut his political teeth when he became the mayor of the capital Kathmandu in 2022, is dominating the race to become Nepal’s next prime minister after a general election on March 5.

There are no reliable opinion polls in Nepal but four political analysts and local media project him as the leading prime ministerial choice, pushing aside the country’s traditional political elite.



Balendra Shah interacts with locals ahead of Nepal’s general election at an RSP office in Damak in Jhapa district, Nepal, on Wednesday. — Reuters

“Balen Shah is so popular that now buses coming to Kathmandu have stickers on them saying, ‘Headed to Balen’s city’”, said Bipin Adhikari, a constitutional law expert who teaches at Kathmandu University.

If Shah is able to take power, it would cap a dramatic rise for a man who entered the public spotlight with rap music critical of the establishment and parleyed his popularity to ascend to high political office. It would also potentially reshape the politics of Nepal that has long been dominated by a handful of established parties.

These include Oli’s Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), which is seen as leaning towards China, and the centrist, Nepali Congress that is considered closer to India. Balen’s Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) is a centrist newcomer, which has said in its election manifesto it will maintain “balanced foreign relations” with its giant neighbours.

Some of Shah’s nationwide appeal is driven by the work he has



SAURABH SHARMA

The writer is a freelance journalist working for Reuters and 101 Reporters

done as the mayor of Kathmandu, where he focused on improving the urban infrastructure, such as waste management, and ensuring the delivery of services like healthcare.

He has also faced criticism, including from Human Rights Watch, for allegedly using police to seize the properties of street vendors and landless people. Shah - who resigned as mayor in January to contest the general election - did not respond to requests for an interview and questions from Reuters sent via email.

Unlike much of Nepal’s political elite comprising veterans from older generations, Shah has made it a habit to largely shun the mainstream press. Instead, it is his prolific social media presence, with over 3.5 million followers on platforms like Facebook, that enables him to connect directly with young Nepalis. In recent weeks, Shah’s Facebook feed has included a carefully curated collection of his photos on the campaign trail, almost always in trademark dark sunglasses and a salt-and-pepper beard.

“What makes Balen special is that he stays connected with the

youth through his short messages on social media, but it would not be a cakewalk for him after becoming prime minister,” said independent political analyst Puranjan Acharya.

Born to a father who practiced traditional Ayurvedic medicine and a homemaker mother, Shah showed an early inclination towards poetry that evolved into a love of rap music, influenced by American artists including Tupac Shakur and Curtis “50 Cent” Jackson, according to an aide. After securing an undergraduate degree in civil engineering in Nepal, Shah went on to study for a master’s degree in structural engineering in southern India - by which time he had already emerged as a rap star in his home country.

His songs, often taking on Nepal’s ruling class, struck a chord with many in a country. Released in 2019, one of Shah’s best-known songs, “Balidan” - or sacrifice in the Nepali language - has over 12 million views on YouTube.

Last December, Shah joined the RSP, led by former TV host-turned-politician Rabi Lamichhane, as its prime ministerial candidate.

SPORTS

ELIGIBILITY ROW



Seeb and Ibri players in action during the Jindal League match on February 7.

OFA DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE REJECTS SEEB PROTEST OVER IBRI PLAYERS

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

The Disciplinary Committee of the Oman Football Association (OFA) has rejected Seeb Club’s protest concerning the eligibility of three players who featured for Ibri Club in their domestic top-tier Jindal League fixture.

The decision followed a review of a complaint previously submitted by Seeb on February 8, in which the club alleged that the three players had participated illegally, citing what it described as invalid contracts and a breach of Fifa regulations, the OFA Statutes, and the principles of sporting integrity and equal opportunity. Seeb had requested a formal investigation and that Ibri be considered to have forfeited the match.

In its ruling, the committee stated that it examined all documents and procedures related to the registration of the three players, including the circumstances surrounding the formation of Ibri’s temporary board of directors. The committee found that the initial contracts were signed on February 1 by a representative of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, which was overseeing the club’s affairs at the time.

It further noted that on February 4, new contracts signed by the chairman of the temporary board were submitted to rectify the legal status of the earlier agreements. The relevant department at the OFA uploaded the updated contracts to the electronic system during the valid registration period, replacing the previous versions.

According to the committee, the three players took part in the match held on February 7, three days after the completion and approval of the corrected registration procedures by the Players’ Status Committee. As such, it concluded that the protest lacked legal basis, as the initial contracts had been superseded by duly approved agreements.

Seeb are expected to file an appeal against the decision, arguing that the committee acknowledged the existence of earlier non-compliant contracts and that the players had already been issued registration cards. The club also maintains that signing two contracts for the same players contradicts established regulations.

Separately, reports indicated that Ibri Club had earlier warned of a possible withdrawal from OFA competitions should any ruling infringe upon what it described as its legally completed and officially approved procedures.



OAA to run new Baja as FIA Candidate event in March

THE Oman Automobile Association (OAA) is putting the finishing touches to the new Oman International Baja, which will run as an official FIA Candidate event for inclusion in the 2027 FIA Middle East Baja Cup on March 26-28.

A regular organiser of world-class international drifting events and the famous Oman International Rally, the OAA aims to take advantage of some of the most spectacular off-road terrain in the Sultanate of Oman to prepare a challenging three-day route for its inaugural Baja. The event will also be open to motorcyclists and quads running in the FIM category.

The Baja will be based in the heart of Bidiyah among the Sharqiya dunes and surrounding sands with a 12.76 km Oman Oil Prologue stage planned at Al Wasil from 13.10 hrs onwards on March 26. Two desert stages of 240.90 km and 168.45 km will then take place on March 27 and 28 across the remote Bidiyah and Al Qabil areas.

Bidiyah is located in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate — around 233 km from Muscat — and shares its northern border with the Wilayat of Al Qabil. The Rimal Al Sharqiya are a vast array of red and brown dunes covering around 10,000 square kilometres. They are a major attraction in the region and will play host to the inaugural Baja.

Neighbouring Al Qabil is a Wilayat in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate and is located in the northwest corner of the Rimal Al Sharqiya. Wadis divide the Rimal Al Sharqiya in the south from the foothills of the eastern Al Hajar Mountains to the north.

The event is being held under the chairmanship of Brigadier Jamal al Tai with vital support from vice-chairman Sulaiman al Rawahi, Anwar al Zadjali, clerk of the course Khalid Zakariya, his deputy Sanad al Rawahi and Nicolas Hindy.

NEW CHAPTER

Brigadier Jamal al Tai said: “The Baja marks an exciting new chapter in the motorsport history of the Sultanate of Oman. The country has a proud legacy in stage rallying dating back to the late 1970s but this is the first official cross-country Baja to be hosted in the country.



Competitors can look forward to stunning desert terrain similar to southern Jordan at the inaugural Oman International Baja from March 26 to 28.



Motorcycles will race in their own class at the Oman International Baja.

“The choice of Al Sharqiyah North, particularly the renowned desert landscapes of Bidiyah, provides the perfect setting for this historic debut.

The towering dunes, the vast open desert and demanding terrain offer an ideal environment for Baja-style competition. The launch of the Baja reflects the country’s ongoing commitment to expanding its motorsport portfolio and is a proud moment for Oman.”

The Baja will be based out of the Jawharat Bidiyah Resort with the service park located at the nearby Bidiyah Green Homes Park.

This will also host the ceremonial start, while the finish location will be based at the Bidiyah 4x4 Club.

The event will run in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate with sponsorship from Shell Oman.

Administration and scrutineering checks will take place on March 25 at rally headquarters and the service park. The pre-event press conference and ceremonial start have been scheduled for 17.30 hrs and 18.00 hrs respectively, on March 26.

Registration for both the FIA and FIM sections is now available from the following link: Oman International Baja — Oman Automobile Association. The closing date for entries has been set for March 17.

Muscat University, OLA post wins at OLA tourney

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
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The second day of the inaugural Oman Logistics Academy Football Championship for Higher Education Institutions 2026 continued at Goal One Stadium in Al Athaiba, delivering exciting performances and strong student engagement under the ‘Koorathon’ initiative, which aims to strengthen university sports culture and promote teamwork and leadership among students.

In Group 2, the University of Muscat faced the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (A) in a high-tempo contest marked by tactical discipline and attacking intent from both sides.

Al Moayad al Riyami gave the University of Muscat an early advantage, capitalising on a swift attacking move. However, Sultan al Alawi responded for the University



The Oman Logistics Academy (A) team.

of Technology and Applied Sciences, leveling the score at 1-1 before half-time.

At the start of the second half, Al Riyami continued his standout performance, netting his second goal of the match to restore his team’s lead. Despite persistent efforts from UTAS to equalise, the University of Muscat maintained defensive composure to secure a hard-fought 2-1 victory.

Al Riyami was deservedly named Man of the Match for

his decisive contribution.

OLA (A) DOMINATE

In Group 3, Oman Logistics Academy (A) faced the College of Engineering and Management in a competitive encounter. The Engineering College took the lead in the first half through Al Sibat al Hathali, finishing off a quick counter-attack.

The OLA responded through Abdullah al Riyami, who equalised before the break to

restore balance.

In the second half, Oman Logistics Academy (A) asserted control through organised possession and attacking discipline. Laith al Tuwajjri scored the go-ahead goal, shifting momentum firmly in the OLA’s favour. As the Engineering College pushed forward in search of an equaliser, Mohammed al Zadjali capitalised on late spaces to score a decisive third goal in the final minute, sealing a 3-1 victory.

Al Zadjali earned the Man of the Match award for his influential performance and late goal that confirmed his team’s superiority.

With competitive fixtures and high-quality performances, the championship continues to highlight the growing strength of university football in Oman, reinforcing the success of the ‘Koorathon’ initiative in blending sports with academic excellence.

EXCITING RETURN



Ahmad al Harthy’s career has been much defined by his successes in the GTWCE Endurance Cup.

DOUBLE CLASS CHAMPION AHMAD MAKES GTWCE SERIES RETURN

MUSCAT: Ahmad al Harthy, two-time class champion in the GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Endurance Cup, has on Wednesday announced an exciting return to the globe’s most competitive GT series with the Oman Racing by Century Motorsport entry. Marking the Omani’s first full GTWCE Endurance Cup campaign since 2024, the hugely successful GT racer – who has focused on the FIA World Endurance Championship for the past few seasons – says he is absolutely delighted to have agreed the Oman Racing partnership with top team Century.

Remaining a BMW ambassador in 2026, Al Harthy and new team-mates Calan Williams, from Australia, and Spain’s Javier Sagrera will share a potent BMW M4 GT3 EVO as they make a very real bid for glory in the Bronze Cup class. Both Williams and Sagrera have very strong pedigrees, the former a two-time GTWCE Sprint Cup Champion and the latter making his first foray into GT endurance racing after a formative career in Eurocup-3 and Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine (FRECA) single-seaters. Al Harthy’s career has been very much defined by his successes in the GTWCE Endurance Cup, an incredible CV since he first debuted in the championship back in 2013 – the category then known as the Blancpain Endurance Series. Making history in his maiden campaign as the first driver of Arabic origin to stand on the series podium, in 2017 he hit the heights of becoming a title winner by sealing the Pro-Am crown with one class win and three other podiums.

Taking his second Pro-Am championship victory in 2019, with a perfect unbroken run of five class podiums, the Omani made headlines once more with class victory in the prestigious 24 Hours of Spa, remarkably achieved from a pitlane start. Making selected appearances in GTWCE over subsequent years, alongside full campaigns in the likes of the Asian Le Mans Series and FIA WEC, Al Harthy’s next complete GTWCE season came in 2024. With then team-mates Jens Klingmann and Sam De Haan, the BMW trio made history at Monza in Italy as the first ever Bronze Cup entry to win a GTWCE Endurance Cup race outright. Added to his many glories in GTWCE, Al Harthy is also a multiple podium finisher in the FIA World Endurance Championship where he has teamed for the past couple of years with MotoGP legend Valentino Rossi. Last season, the Omani was named FIA WEC Sports Racer of the Year. One of Al Harthy’s most treasured successes came in 2023 when he was runner-up in the LMGTE Am class at the world-famous 24 Hours of Le Mans. Ahmad Al Harthy: “I’m absolutely delighted to be returning to GTWCE Endurance Cup this year. It’s going to be my first opportunity to work with Nathan [Freke – Team Principal] and the whole Century Motorsport team, I can’t wait for the season to start. I’m really looking forward to coming back to GTWCE, it’s the place where I’ve done most of my racing since 2013 and have enjoyed a lot of success for Oman. It is the most competitive GT championship in the world, so I really can’t wait to get to work and to do the best we can for Oman Racing by Century Motorsport.” Round one of the 2026 GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Endurance Cup, at Circuit Paul Ricard in France, will take place on April 11. The five-event championship will conclude at Portimao in Portugal on October 17/18.



Inter Milan’s Swiss defender #25 Manuel Akanji (L) heads the ball challenged by Bodo/Glimt’s Norwegian midfielder #20 Fredrik Sjoqvold and Bodo/Glimt’s Norwegian forward #26 Hakon Evjen (R) during the Uefa Champions League second-leg play-off match at San Siro stadium in Milan, northern Italy. — AFP

Bodo/Glimt knock Inter out; Newcastle, Atletico through

NORWAY’S Bodo/Glimt pulled off one of the most remarkable results in modern Champions League history on Tuesday, beating last season’s runners-up Inter Milan 2-1 at San Siro to reach the last 16 with a 5-2 aggregate triumph, while Newcastle United, Atletico Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen also went through. Bodo/Glimt, the modest outfit from north of the Arctic Circle, were looking to follow up their stunning 3-1 win last week in Norway in the first leg of their knockout phase play-off tie. Inter, the three-time European champions who are currently 10 points clear at the top of Serie A, were expected to pummel their visitors in an attempt to turn the tie around. But Bodo/Glimt survived at the back before finishing off the tie in the second half. Jens Petter Hauge, who played for AC Milan in 2020/21, gave his team the lead just before the hour mark after a mistake by Manuel Akanji had allowed Ole Blomberg in for an initial shot which was saved. Hakon Evjen made it 2-0 on the night and 5-1 on aggregate, leaving Inter with too much to do, even if Alessandro Bastoni pulled one back with a shot that just crossed the line. Bodo/Glimt, who had won four Norwegian Eliteserien titles in five years before finishing as runners-up last season to Viking Stavanger, are the first side from the country to go so far in Europe’s elite club competition since Rosenborg reached the quarterfinals in 1997.

“For us it’s been unbelievable. We knew it would be very hard against Inter who are a very strong team and played in the final last season,” said Hauge. They will find out their last-16 opponents on Friday but already know it will either be Sporting of Portugal or Manchester City next — they defeated City 3-1 at home last month during the league phase. What makes their success all the more striking is that Kjetil Knutsen’s team are currently in their off-season, with the Norwegian league ending in late November and the new campaign not beginning until mid-March. For Inter, exiting at this stage is a bitter blow after they made the final last season only to suffer a 5-0 hammering at the hands of Paris Saint-Germain. SORLOTH HAT-TRICK Newcastle followed their 6-1 win away to Qarabag in Azerbaijan in last week’s first leg with a 3-2 victory in the return at St James’ Park, as Eddie Howe’s team ensured there will be six English clubs in the next round. Sandro Tonali and Joelinton both scored inside the opening six minutes, leaving



Atletico Madrid’s Norwegian forward #09 Alexander Sorloth (L) celebrates with teammates after scoring his team’s fourth goal, his hat trick, against Club Brugge KV in Madrid. — AFP



Newcastle United’s Joelinton celebrates scoring their second goal against Qarabag at St James’ Park, Newcastle, Britain. — Reuters

Qarabag facing another heavy defeat. However, Camilo Duran pulled one back early in the second half. Sven Botman headed in Newcastle’s third, but Elvin Jafarguliyev made it 3-2 as he followed in

to score after Marko Jankovic’s penalty was saved. Newcastle can now look forward to a heavyweight tie in the next round against either Chelsea or Barcelona. “I think if you look at the score over the two legs it’s been fantastic from the players even though today feels like a bit of a hollow win for us,” said Howe. Atletico had been held to a 3-3 draw by Club Brugge in Belgium last week but they ran out 4-1 winners in Tuesday’s return in the Spanish capital to advance 7-4 on aggregate. Norwegian striker Alexander Sorloth was the star of the show with a hat-trick, including the opener midway through the first half which came from a long kick downfield by goalkeeper Jan Oblak. Joel Ordonez headed the away side level before the break, but USA international Johnny Cardoso restored Atletico’s lead just after the interval. Sorloth scored his second and Atletico’s third on the night on 76 minutes after a brilliant one-two between Ademola Lookman and Antoine Griezmann. Sorloth then completed his hat-trick to round out the scoring with his 15th of the season in all competitions. Diego Simeone’s team will play either Tottenham Hotspur or Liverpool in the next round. “I’m not thinking about Liverpool or Tottenham, I’m enjoying today’s game and being in the last 16 for another season is very important,” Simeone told broadcaster Movistar. Meanwhile, Leverkusen followed a 2-0 win away to Olympiacos in Greece last week with a 0-0 draw at home in the return. The 2024 German champions now face a huge test next against either Arsenal or Bundesliga rivals Bayern Munich. — AFP UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON TUESDAY: Knockout phase play-offs, second legs In Madrid Atletico Madrid (ESP) 4 (Sorloth 23, 76, 87, Cardoso 48) Club Brugge (BEL) 1 (Ordonez 36) Atletico Madrid win 7-4 on aggregate In Leverkusen, Germany Bayer Leverkusen (GER) 0 Olympiacos (GRE) 0 Bayer Leverkusen win 2-0 on aggregate In Milan, Italy Inter Milan (ITA) 1 (Bastoni 76) Bodo/Glimt (NOR) 2 (Hauge 58, Evjen 72) Bodo/Glimt win 5-2 on aggregate In Newcastle, England Newcastle (ENG) 3 (Tonali 4, Joelinton 6, Botman 52) Qarabag (AZE) 2 (Duran 50, Jafarguliyev 57) Newcastle win 9-3 on aggregate

SPORTS

QUARTERSENTRY



Russia's Daniil Medvedev celebrates after winning his round of 16 match against Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka. — Reuters

AUGER-ALIASSEME, MEDVEDEV MARCH ON IN DUBAI

DUBAI: Felix Auger-Aliassime stamped his ticket to the quarterfinals of the Dubai Open on Wednesday with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, while Daniil Medvedev put an end to Stanislas Wawrinka's tournament.

Canadian top seed Auger-Aliassime overcame the big-serving Frenchman thanks to an impressive break-point conversion rate as he managed to make the most of three of the five break-points he forced on Mpetshi Perricard's serve.

Consecutive breaks in the seventh and ninth games of the opening set allowed the world number eight to seize the initiative.

Auger-Aliassime pounced again early in the second set to get his nose in front and then managed to serve out to book a meeting with Jiri Lehecka in the last eight.

The Czech eliminated Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta 7-6 (8/6), 6-4 to progress through the round of 16.

In a battle of former Grand Slam winners, Russia's Medvedev beat Wawrinka 6-2, 6-3.

The 40-year-old Swiss will retire at the end of the season and was honoured on-court after his defeat.

"It's my last time here, but I always had amazing support from you guys," 2016 champion Wawrinka told the crowd.

"It's always special. The reason why I kept playing for so long is because of those emotions that I receive on court, but I think at 40 it's time to play for one last year. I'm enjoying it a lot."

Third seed Medvedev will face Jenson Brooksby in the next round, after the American defeated seventh-seeded Russian Karen Khachanov in straight sets. — AFP



Canada's Felix Auger Aliassime in action during his Round of 16 match against France's Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard. — Reuters



New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner (L) and teammate Cole McConchie run between the wickets during the 2026 ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup Super Eights match between Sri Lanka and New Zealand at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Wednesday. — AFP

New Zealand knock sorry Sri Lanka out of T20 WC

NEW ZEALAND knocked co-hosts Sri Lanka out of the T20 World Cup on Wednesday with a 61-run win in Colombo that boosted their semifinal hopes.

Sri Lanka needed an emphatic win to stay alive but instead exited with a whimper, limping to 107-8 chasing New Zealand's 168-7.

A win for New Zealand against England on Friday at the same R Premadasa stadium would see them top the Super Eights group and qualify for the semifinals along with Harry Brook's side.

A defeat would open the door for Pakistan, who would probably need a big win against Sri Lanka in Kandy on Saturday to sneak through on net run rate.

Sri Lanka were never in the chase as Matt Henry dismissed their leading batsman Pathum Nissanka with the first ball of the innings.

Henry also removed Chairth Asalanka with the first ball of his second over to leave Sri Lanka in trouble at 6-2.

Sri Lanka crawled to 20-2 at the end of the six-over power play, the lowest in the competition and Sri Lanka's second lowest ever in T20 internationals.

Part-time spinner Rachin Ravindra found turn to put the game beyond Sri Lanka with a career-best 4-27.

Ravindra had a charging Kusal Mendis stumped and then removed Pavan Rathnayake in similar fashion in the same



New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra celebrates after taking the wicket of Sri Lanka's captain Dasun Shanaka at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. — AFP

over as the sellout crowd was stunned into silence. "It is very embarrassing to disappoint the home crowd," said Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka.

"We started really well, but to be honest, the Santner-McConchie and that partnership, it was a good one, which took the game away from us."

MINI-COLLAPSE

New Zealand earlier recovered from a mini-collapse to reach 168-7.

"I think it was obviously a nice score there with the amount of spin on the ball. They squeezed us a lot," said New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner.

Sri Lanka were right in the game as New Zealand slumped from 84-3 to 84-6 in the space of six deliveries.

But an 84-run stand off just 47 deliveries for the seventh wicket between Cole McConchie and Santner enabled them to set a tricky target on a turning pitch.

Skipper Santner top scored with 47 off 26 balls with two fours and four sixes.

McConchie, recalled to the side, posted an unbeaten 31 off 23 balls

New Zealand were struggling to read Maheesh Theekshana as the spinner claimed 3-9 in his first three overs.

New Zealand blasted 70 off the last four overs, including 21 off the final one from Theekshana.

Pace bowler Dushmantha Chameera finished with 3-38. — AFP

Oman Club go top as Muscat revive title race in Handball League

RIYADH AL BALUSHI @riyadhbaluch

Oman Club strengthened their grip on the First Division Handball League (2025-26) second round finals, climbing to the top of the standings, while Muscat Club reignited the title race with a commanding victory over Nizwa, setting the stage for an intense third round.

At the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex main hall in Bausher, defending champions Oman Club edged Seeb 28-25 in a highly competitive clash marked by tactical discipline and physical intensity.

The first half unfolded evenly, with both sides exchanging goals

through swift, well-structured attacks. Oman Club narrowly led 14-13 at half-time, reflecting the tight contest.

In the second half, Seeb pushed hard to level the score, capitalising on fast breaks and wing play. However, Oman's experience proved decisive in crucial moments.

Their composed defensive organisation and efficient finishing allowed them to extend their advantage in the closing minutes and secure a deserved 28-25 victory.

The win lifted Oman Club to four points, underlining their determination to retain the title and maintain momentum in the final stage.



Muscat posted an emphatic 33-23 win over Nizwa. — Ammar al Musafir

MUSCAT RESPOND IN STYLE

In the second fixture, Muscat bounced back from their opening defeat with an emphatic 33-23 win over Nizwa.

Muscat led 16-14 at half-time in a competitive first period where Nizwa showed resilience and defensive discipline.

However, Nizwa's performance dipped in the second half, while Muscat capitalised on their squad depth and experience to widen the gap and comfortably seal the match.

The result earned Muscat their first two points of the round, while Nizwa suffered a second consecutive defeat, having previously lost to Seeb.

Round three will take place on

Friday, with Oman Club facing Nizwa, followed by Muscat against Seeb, both at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

In the first round, Oman topped the standings with 14 points, followed by Seeb (10), while Muscat and Nizwa collected eight points each. Majees, Al Shabab, Sohar and Salalah failed to reach the second round.

The second phase follows a two-leg round robin format among the top four teams. The league leader advances directly to the final, while the second and third-placed teams meet in a single playoff, with the winner advancing to face the table topper for the championship title, making every point in this stage crucial in the race for glory.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,387.686

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$70.06
BRENT \$70.93
LIGHT \$65.91



SHORTTAKES



The Joint Statement was signed by India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal and GCC Secretary General Jasem Mohamed al Budaiwi.

INDIA, GCC SIGN STATEMENT TO START FTA TALKS

NEW DELHI: India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on Tuesday formally launched negotiations for a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the signing of a Joint Statement in New Delhi.

The Joint Statement was signed by India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal and GCC Secretary General Jasem Mohamed al Budaiwi.

Goyal said the Joint Statement, along with the Terms of Reference for the FTA signed earlier this month, marks a key step forward in India's economic engagement with GCC countries. He said the proposed agreement would build on the deep-rooted historical, cultural and commercial ties between the two sides.

The minister said that at a time of global economic uncertainty, the decision to begin negotiations for a robust and mutually beneficial trade arrangement was timely and would help harness complementarities between India and the GCC economies.

GCC Secretary General Jasem Mohamed al Budaiwi said the FTA would play an important role in strengthening trade and investment ties by providing greater predictability and certainty to businesses on both sides.

The agreement holds strong potential to unlock and expand trade between India and the GCC region. The GCC is India's largest trading partner bloc, with bilateral trade reaching \$178.56 billion in FY 2024-25.

India's exports to the region stood at \$56.87 billion, while imports were valued at \$121.68 billion. The bloc accounts for over 15 per cent of India's total global trade.

Over the past five years, India's trade with GCC countries has registered an average annual growth rate of 15.3 per cent. India's key exports to the region include engineering goods, rice, textiles, machinery and gems and jewellery. — Agencies

Asyad Shipping net profit rises 9 per cent in 2025

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, FEB 25

ASYAD Shipping, Oman's national maritime transportation company, reported a solid financial performance for the year ended December 31, 2025, recording a 9 per cent year-on-year increase in net profit alongside strong operating margins and high fleet utilisation.

The results were filed with the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Wednesday, underscoring the company's resilience amidst continued volatility in global shipping markets.

Net profit after tax rose to RO 56.4 million in 2025, compared with RO 51.6 million a year earlier, supported by disciplined cost management, portfolio optimisation and a young, efficient fleet.

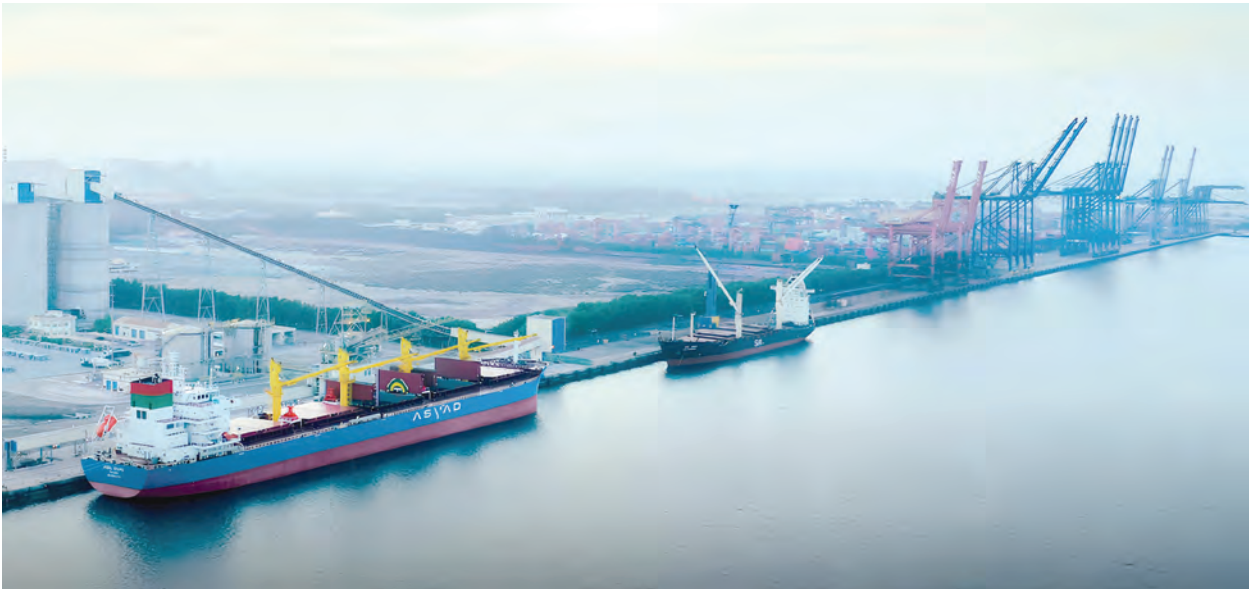
Gross revenue stood at RO 336.4 million, down from RO 366.1 million in 2024, reflecting softer freight markets, while EBITDA reached RO 205.4 million, translating into a robust EBITDA margin of 61 per cent.

Operating cash generation strengthened markedly during the year, with net cash from operations increasing to RO 197.2 million from RO 155.5 million in 2024.

Cash balances rose to RO 164.0 million as at December 31, 2025, compared with RO 139.7 million a year earlier. Net debt increased to RO 562.5 million, driven mainly by fleet expansion, with net debt to EBITDA at 2.7x, remaining within management's targeted range.

The company also highlighted contracted revenue of \$2.2 billion extending beyond 2030, providing long-term cash-flow visibility.

Commenting on the results, Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, Chief Executive Officer, said: "At the time of our IPO, we articulated a focused growth strategy centred



Net profit after tax rose to RO 56.4 million in 2025, compared with RO 51.6 million a year earlier.



Although 2025 delivered strong strategic and operational progress, it also brought headwinds associated with fluctuations in the global shipping cycle. Despite these market conditions, the business has demonstrated its resilience

DR IBRAHIM AL NADHAIRI
CEO, Asyad Shipping

on disciplined fleet expansion and renewal and business optimisation.

We have continued to execute against this strategy successfully, investing in 16 modern vessels to our portfolio and selling six older vessels in line with our plan".

He added that the fleet now maintains an average age of just over seven years, enhancing competitiveness and long-term earnings capacity.

Despite challenging market conditions, operational performance remained strong. Fleet utilisation averaged 97 per cent in 2025, compared with 99 per cent in the previous year.

The company also reported zero lost-time incidents, zero major incidents and zero ship detentions, reflecting what management described as a strong culture of operational discipline and risk management.

During the year, Asyad Shipping acquired two Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) for a total consideration of RO 79.3 million, both delivered in mid-2025 and placed on time-charter contracts.

The company also strengthened its dry-bulk segment with an investment of RO 80.5 million in three Newcastlemax vessels, each

secured by 10-year contracts of affreightment and scheduled for delivery in early 2026.

As part of its fleet renewal programme, the company divested one older VLCC and four older LNG vessels for a combined RO 65.4 million.

As at end-2025, total fleet size stood at 91 vessels, with 80 vessels operating, eight under construction and three second-hand vessels due for delivery.

Looking ahead, Dr Al Nadhairi said: "Although 2025 delivered strong strategic and operational progress, it also brought headwinds associated with fluctuations in the global shipping cycle. Despite these market conditions, the business has demonstrated its resilience".

He added that 11 additional vessels are scheduled for delivery in 2026 and 2027, with a significant portion already contracted.

The company expects to distribute dividends of RO 57.8 million and has increased its long-term growth capital expenditure guidance to RO 1.4 billion through 2030, reinforcing its strategy of balancing long-term contracted income with selective exposure to spot markets to capture upside when conditions improve.

Oman's OQEP to boost oil and gas output to 300,000 boe/d by 2030

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 25

OQ Exploration & Production SAOG (OQEP) — the majority Omani state-owned upstream energy company — is targeting a significant ramp-up of its hydrocarbon output, encompassing oil, gas and condensates, to around 300,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boe/d) by 2030 across its vast portfolio spanning 14 operating and non-operating upstream assets.

This compares with an average production of 230,000 boe/d at the end of 2024.

The new production target is one of the cornerstones of a new "growth strategy" approved by OQEP's Board of Directors last December, according to Mahmoud al Hashmi, Chief Executive Officer.

"The strategy adopts a balanced growth model centred on domestic development, complemented by selective international expansion. Near term growth is expected



Publicly-listed OQEP oversees a portfolio of 14 operating and non-operating upstream assets across Oman.

to be driven primarily through disciplined M&A, with exploration playing a greater role over the longer term.

The strategic growth of OQEP's

production base will continue to provide a balanced portfolio of oil and gas assets which will generate growing and resilient cash flows to enable investment in future

growth and shareholder returns", Al Hashmi stated in the company's Management Discussion and Analysis Report for the year ended December 31, 2025.

In 2025, OQEP delivered a solid operational performance marked by higher liquids output despite a softer pricing environment.

Crude oil and condensate production rose 6.9% year-on-year to 21.7 million barrels (mmbbl), compared with 20.3 mmbbl in 2024, reflecting improved field performance and production optimisation efforts.

However, the average realised sales price declined by 12.5% to \$70.7 per barrel, down from \$80.8 per barrel in the previous year, mirroring broader global oil price trends. Gas volumes recorded a marginal 2.4% decrease to 121.2 billion cubic feet (bcf), compared with 124.2 bcf in 2024.

On the financial front, revenue declined 6.7% year-on-year to RO 1,159.0 million, down from RO 1,242.8 million in 2024, while gross profit fell 8.7% to RO 657.0 million.

EBITDA decreased 6.9% to RO 941.1 million. Net profit after tax recorded a sharper 14.9% drop to RO 278.0 million, compared with RO 326.6 million a year earlier.

Commenting on the company's overall performance, Ashraf bin Hamed al Mamari, Chairman of the Board of Directors — OQEP, added: "In 2025, the Company delivered strong operational and financial results. Despite a decrease in average oil prices by \$10.1 per barrel (12.5%) compared to the same period in 2024, the Company increased oil and condensate sales by approximately 1.4 million barrels.

This sales growth effectively offset the revenue impact of lower oil prices.

Net Profit remained robust, even in the absence of Profit from Discontinued Operation following the transfer of the Company's 51% stake in Abraj to OQ SAOC in the first half of 2024 and higher financing costs associated with a new loan facility initiated in September 2024".

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



This reflects the scale of Meethaq’s investments in advanced technologies, digital transformation and the development of modern banking platforms.

MEETHAQ WINS ‘BEST DIGITAL ISLAMIC BANKING SERVICES’ AWARD

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has been awarded the “Best Islamic Digital Bank 2025” by Global Finance, in a new testimony to its leading position and excellence in delivering innovative Sharia-compliant digital banking solutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

This prestigious global recognition reflects the scale of Meethaq’s investments in advanced technologies, digital transformation and the development of modern banking platforms focused on user-friendliness, enhanced security and operational efficiency.

It also highlights the success achieved in expanding its digital ecosystem, including enhancements to electronic channels, digital financing journeys, intelligent customer service tools and the integration of secure digital payment options.

On this occasion, Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking, said: “We are proud to receive this recognition from Global Finance, which reflects our commitment to delivering world-class Islamic banking experiences and providing financial solutions that meet the evolving needs of individuals and corporate customers.

We will continue investing in our digital capabilities to address growing customer expectations while maintaining the highest standards of innovation, compliance and operational excellence. We sincerely value the trust our customers place in our banking products and services”.

Meethaq Islamic Banking continues to play a vital role in supporting Oman’s digital transformation journey in line with Oman Vision 2040, by delivering innovative solutions that empower individuals, institutions and the wider community through accessible and trusted Islamic financial services.

Over the past period, Meethaq has upgraded its core banking systems to better serve retail and corporate customers, further strengthening its digital services through fully integrated mobile and online banking platforms to offer a seamless and secure banking experience.

Among the products and services offered to individual customers are savings accounts, current accounts, children’s savings accounts, Meethaq Savings Plan and a wide range of financing solutions including personal finance, auto finance, home finance, travel finance, education finance, marriage finance and personal purchase finance.

For corporate and SME customers, Meethaq provides a comprehensive suite of banking solutions, including current accounts, project financing solutions, short- and long-term facilities, in addition to trade finance solutions such as Tjarah and large-scale project financing.

KHEDMAH REDEFINES CUSTOMER VALUE WITH EVERY TRANSACTION

MUSCAT: Khedmah continues to elevate the everyday digital experience of its customers by maximising value with every transaction through Khedmah Rewards, its integrated loyalty programme available across both the Khedmah and Khedmah Delivery applications.

Purpose-built to reward customer loyalty while streamlining daily payments and services, the programme allows users to earn rewards on every transaction,



turning ordinary interactions into rewarding experiences and unlocking an array of meaningful benefits.

Khedmah users are automatically

enrolled in Khedmah Rewards upon using either application and reward points can be redeemed seamlessly across partner merchants and for payments made through the Khedmah platform.

Commenting in this context, Mohammed al Jabri, Manager — Customer Experience at Khedmah, stated, “Our goal has always been to deliver maximum value to our customers through the Khedmah and Khedmah Delivery applications”.

Denza B5 sets benchmark for off-road SUVs in Oman

SINCE

its introduction to the Omani market, the Denza B5 has rapidly redefined the standards of the premium automotive sector. As a high-performance Super Hybrid SUV, the B5 is no longer just a newcomer; it has firmly established itself as the definitive benchmark for drivers who demand the raw power of a traditional off-roader paired with the refined intelligence of a modern luxury vehicle.

By seamlessly blending rugged capability with sustainable innovation, the Denza B5 continues to dominate both the vast desert landscapes and the sophisticated urban streets of the Sultanate of Oman. To mark the spirit of the season, Denza is now offering the exclusive five benefits package, ensuring that this world-class driving experience is accompanied by unparalleled peace of mind.

The Denza B5 is powered by the revolutionary DMO (Dual Mode Off-road) platform, a technological marvel that delivers a massive 570 HP and 760 Nm of torque.

This Plug-in Hybrid (PHEV) powerhouse allows drivers to experience a blistering 0-100 km/h acceleration in just 4.8 seconds, all while maintaining a combined range of over 780 km. Whether navigating the steep inclines or cruising through the city, the B5 offers an unparalleled driving experience



The Denza B5 is powered by the revolutionary DMO (Dual Mode Off-road) platform, a technological marvel that delivers a massive 570 HP and 760 Nm of torque.

that makes it the most versatile hybrid SUV currently available in the region. Engineered to conquer the wild, the Denza B5 features the advanced DiSUS-P intelligent active hydraulic suspension and electrically actuated front & rear differential locks.

These systems work in tandem with the Cell-to-Chassis (CTC) technology, which integrates the ultra-safe Blade Battery directly into the vehicle’s high-strength steel frame. This design not only provides superior underbody protection for off-road

excursions but also ensures maximum stability and safety, with a body structure capable of withstanding up to 12 tonnes of pressure.

Inside, the Denza B5 offers a sanctuary of sophistication that stands in stark contrast to its rugged exterior. The cabin is a fusion of heritage and high-tech, featuring Nappa leather massage seats and a premium 14-speaker Devialet audio system that creates an intimate, exclusive sound environment.

BankDhofar and Dhofar Municipality sign pact

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has signed a strategic partnership agreement with Dhofar Municipality, reinforcing its commitment to environmental sustainability and its active contribution to the goals of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in reducing carbon emissions and advancing green development.

The agreement was signed on behalf of Dhofar Municipality by Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality and on behalf of BankDhofar by Ahmed bin Saeed al Ibrahim, Chief Government Banking Officer.

Sustainability forms a core pillar of BankDhofar’s long-term strategy and corporate philosophy, alongside its role in supporting the economic and social development of the Sultanate of Oman. Through this partnership, the bank aims



The agreement was signed by Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani and Ahmed bin Saeed al Ibrahim.

to further strengthen collaborative efforts that promote responsible environmental practices and sustainable growth.

BankDhofar continues to align its strategy with Oman Vision 2040 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals by fostering innovation, expanding green financing initiatives, empowering local communities and upholding strong governance standards.

The bank views sustainability not merely as a compliance requirement, but as a driver of long-term value creation.

As part of its environmental agenda, BankDhofar is implementing initiatives to improve resource efficiency across its operations. These include recycling and waste-sorting programmes within its buildings, measures to reduce its carbon footprint and enhanced energy-efficiency practices.

Al Jenaibi celebrates Ramadhan with exclusive BMW offers in Oman

MUSCAT: In celebration of the holy month of Ramadhan, Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, the official importer of BMW vehicles in Oman, is unveiling a range of exclusive seasonal offers designed to deliver exceptional value and peace of mind to customers purchasing a brand-new BMW.

Throughout Ramadhan, customers purchasing a new BMW can enjoy a range of ownership benefits, including five years of BMW Service (or 100,000 km), five years of BMW warranty and roadside assistance (or 200,000 km), free first-year registration and complimentary AutoSpa services.



Customers purchasing a new BMW can enjoy a range of ownership benefits.

Adding to the spirit of giving this Ramadhan, customers purchasing a new BMW will also be entered into an exciting draw for the chance to win one of four MINI vehicles, making this season an even more rewarding time to upgrade their drive.

Commenting on the campaign, Rachid Zamani, Managing Director at Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, said: “Ramadhan is a time for reflection, generosity and togetherness.

Our Ramadhan offers are designed to make owning a BMW more accessible, while providing customers with complete confidence

through comprehensive service and warranty packages.

We look forward to welcoming customers to our showroom and supporting them on their ownership journey”.

These limited-time Ramadhan offers present the perfect opportunity to experience the hallmark BMW blend of cutting-edge technology, refined design and dynamic driving performance.

Customers interested in taking advantage of these exclusive offers can visit the BMW showroom at Al Jenaibi International Automobiles in Al Qurum or contact 80050008 for more information.

SHORTTAKES



A model of an oil pump is seen in front of an Iranian flag in this illustration. — Reuters

Oil hovers near seven-month highs ahead of US-Iran talks

WASHINGTON: Oil prices edged higher on Wednesday, as investors weighed the threat of military conflict between the US and Iran that could disrupt supply and a big build in US crude inventories.

Brent futures were up 6 cents at \$70.93 per barrel at 09:57 GMT. WTI futures rose 4 cents to \$65.91 per barrel.

Brent prices reached their highest since July 31 on Friday, while WTI hit its highest since August 4 on Monday, as the US positioned military forces in the Middle East to try to compel Iran to negotiate an end to its nuclear and ballistic missile programme.

An extended conflict could disrupt supplies from Iran, the third-biggest crude producer in the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other countries in the key Middle East producing region.

Supporting oil prices, US President Donald Trump briefly laid out his case for a possible attack on Iran in his State of the Union speech on Tuesday, saying he would not allow a country he described as the world’s biggest sponsor of terrorism to have a nuclear weapon.

“This uncertainty means the market will continue to price in a large risk premium and remain sensitive to any fresh developments”, ING commodities strategists said on Wednesday.

US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner are due to meet an Iranian delegation for a third round of talks on Thursday in Geneva. — Reuters

DHL Express expands Oman gateway push

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

DHL Express is stepping up its investment and air-network connectivity in Oman as it positions the sultanate of Oman as a faster link to global markets and tries to grow outbound shipments from local businesses, the company’s general manager said.

Alexandr Aboymov, General Manager of DHL Express in Oman, told the Observer the company launched a new air-side state-of-the-art facility last year worth about €30 million investment and has been operating near-daily air connectivity from Bahrain to Oman since 2021 to plug the market into the firm’s global network — an operating commitment he put at around \$10 million per year.

“We strongly believe Omani businesses deserve the best possible connection to the world”, Aboymov said, adding that DHL is looking to grow not only import volumes but “actively develop exports from Oman”.

DHL has publicly signaled a broader build-out around Muscat International Airport. The company inaugurated a logistics facility there in January 2025, according to local reporting, describing it as part of a long-term development programme and highlighting stronger processing capacity and higher security standards.

In its 2025 service guide for Oman, DHL Express said it has invested in a “new airport facility” for smoother operations, daily



We strongly believe Omani businesses deserve the best possible connection to the world. DHL is looking to grow not only import volumes but ‘actively develop exports from Oman’.

ALEXANDR ABOYMOV
General Manager,
DHL Express Oman



DHL has publicly signaled a broader build-out around Muscat International Airport.

flights to Muscat and a new facility on the Al Wajajah Border to speed clearance of road shipments — part of efforts to “future-proof” the network.

The Muscat airport facility spans 12,621 sq metres and includes import/export gateway functions and ground operations, with reported capacity of roughly 2,400 shipments per hour, while serving more than 4,200 customers.

The company also framed the site as supporting greener operations, citing solar panels and efficiency upgrades as it works towards net-zero by 2050.

Aboymov said DHL Express operates in Oman “as a local organisation” and stressed workforce localisation, adding that about 70% of staff are Omani.

The interview comes as Oman pushes to make logistics a major diversification engine under Oman Vision 2040 and the Logistics Strategy 2040, with government targeting higher

throughput across ports, airports, borders and logistics zones.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said the logistics sector contributed about RO 2.25 billion to GDP in 2024 (around 5.9%) and that total investment in the sector in 2024 was around RO 2.3 billion, with the sector’s contribution projected to rise to about RO 36 billion by 2040.

Separately, the US International Trade Administration notes that Oman aims to become one of the world’s top ten logistics hubs by 2040, leveraging deep-water ports and Indian Ocean access.

For DHL, the Oman moves sit within a wider regional bet.

DHL Group said in June 2025 it plans to invest more than €500 million across the Middle East between 2024 and 2030 to expand infrastructure, networks and capacity across its divisions — an effort it linked to shifts in global trade and growing export potential in the region.

Strategic health sector projects supported by RO 1 billion budgetary outlay

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

The implementation of new health projects continues apace in line with health priorities outlined in Oman Vision 2040, according to the Ministry of Health.

This is being achieved by increasing spending efficiency through the application of programme and performance budgeting; and by shifting from a purely financial to an economic approach in setting priorities and allocating funds.

The health infrastructure is experiencing unprecedented expansion with the completion of more than 11 projects, most notably the Central Public Health Laboratory, Khasab Referral Hospital and Al Suwaiq Hospital.

More than 15 projects are currently under construction during 2026-2027, including Al Namaa Hospital, Samayil Hospital, Mahout Hospital, Sur Al Balush Health Centre, Al Duraiz Health Centre, the



The MOH 2026 budget, amounting to approximately RO 1 billion, reflects Oman’s commitment to developing the health sector and expanding comprehensive coverage.

dialysis units in Suhar and Bidiyah and other projects.

Salalah is also preparing for the trial opening in October of the new Sultan Qaboos Hospital, one of the largest health projects in Oman.

The hospital, built at a total cost of RO 138 million, occupies an area of 100,000 square metres and comprises seven floors with a capacity of 700 beds distributed across 3,238 rooms.

Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry

of Health for Planning and Health Regulation, also announced that a national guide for health services planning methodology has been prepared.

This guide includes gap analysis, investment prioritisation and the involvement of governors’ offices.

Envisioned in the Ministry’s future plan is the establishment of more than 20 projects, most notably the National Centre for Women’s and Children’s Health in Sultan Haitham City, the National Centre for Ophthalmology, the National Genome Programme, the National Rehabilitation Centre, Al Seeb Referral Hospital, Bahla Hospital, Al Duqm Hospital and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Hospital, as well as the expansion of several health units and centres.

Oman’s health sector witnessed a significant leap forward between 2020 and 2024, with the number of healthcare facilities increasing by 50 per cent to reach 2,384, compared to 1,592 just four years prior.

According to the 2025 health

statistics, private clinics constituted more than half of these facilities (51 per cent), indicating the growing role of the private sector in strengthening the national healthcare system.

The Ministry’s 2026 budget, amounting to approximately RO 1 billion, reflects the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to developing the health sector and expanding comprehensive coverage.

This budget enhances the Ministry’s ability to implement its expansion and development projects across the various governorates.

Investment in the health sector is considered promising, given the government’s focus on improving and developing the healthcare system and the increasing demand for healthcare services.

The Ministry also seeks to boost investment in this sector as a strategic step within the framework of economic diversification efforts, supported by existing infrastructure, a robust regulatory framework and promising future prospects.

TRADE TENSIONS

China defends deal, warns tariffs



China said it has fulfilled commitments under Washington’s Section 301 trade statute, warning the United States against imposing new tariffs as investigations continue.

China said a 2020 agreement linked to the statute had been implemented and urged Washington not to shift responsibility or provoke disputes. The US said ongoing probes involving China could still result in tariffs. — Reuters

MARKET POLITICS

Trump touts stocks, retirement pledge



Donald Trump highlighted repeated stock market records in his State of the Union address, while pledging government contributions of up to \$1,000 to workers’ retirement savings.

Markets remained uneasy as Trump offered few details on tariffs and trade policy. He said strong equity gains had lifted 401(k) balances and promised matching contributions next year for workers lacking plans. — Reuters

BULLION OUTLOOK

JP Morgan lifts gold view



JP Morgan raised its long-term gold price forecast by 15% to \$4,500 an ounce, citing stronger central bank buying and a shift away from the dollar.

The bank kept its 2026 year-end target at \$6,300, pointing to reserve currency diversification. Other banks, including Macquarie Group, also lifted forecasts as spot gold climbed about 20% this year on renewed investor demand globally. — Reuters

OPINION

A strategic step in advancing digital transformation in Oman



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

THE Sultanate of Oman is witnessing the establishment of specialised companies in the field of modern technologies aimed at strengthening the country’s economic ecosystem and providing more expertise and job opportunities for Omani talent in these specialised sectors.

The launch of “OTECH” by Omantel represents a strategic step in areas related to technology and digital transformation. It is not merely a traditional telecommunications services company, but rather a provider of advanced technologies that enables digital transformation for government and private sector institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, while also strengthening public–private partnerships.

OTECH has much to offer the Omani economy, particularly in accelerating digital transformation across institutions through advanced solutions in cloud computing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things and systems integration.

These are all essential technologies for driving digital transformation in the country, supporting improved operational efficiency and creating new economic value.

The company can also contribute to enhancing Oman’s technical infrastructure readiness and localising data within the country — an extremely important factor

for data sovereignty and information protection.

Other aspects of OTECH’s role include building national capabilities by contributing to the development of the national workforce’s skills in various technological fields. This supports the creation of high-quality jobs and strengthens local competencies.

In addition, the company can enhance integration across other sectors by developing comprehensive digital solutions that enable operations in the financial, healthcare, logistics, administrative and other sectors — ultimately increasing productivity and reducing operational costs in the long term.

Such specialised companies can play a significant role in digital transformation by equipping institutions with the necessary services in these fields, as well as undertaking major digital projects and infrastructure initiatives, investing in the establishment of data centres across multiple countries.

This could provide OTECH with future opportunities to adopt Omani projects in countries that require such essential services, restructuring operations using data, artificial intelligence and cloud computing.

Today, OTECH represents an advanced model contributing to the diversification

OTECH is not merely a traditional telecommunications services company, but rather a provider of advanced technologies that enables digital transformation for government and private sector institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, while also strengthening public–private partnerships.

of the Omani economy away from oil dependency, while strengthening technological capabilities in the country and providing integrated solutions for both the public and private sectors.

This transformation — without doubt — is part of a broader vision to position Oman as a regional digital hub, similar to the approaches adopted by many countries and global technology institutions investing in such fields.

Many Omani youths place their hopes in this modern company as a comprehensive technology provider for future digital transformation, particularly in training and qualification, where it can play a significant role.

This requires enhancing the capabilities of Omanis within the company to raise their competitiveness in advanced technological roles.

OTECH can also partner with international and local educational institutions and investors in joint training programmes — especially with global universities and technology companies — while providing practical and field training opportunities, building career pathways for national talent and Omani graduates with directly employable skills, creating quality job opportunities in the technology sector and supporting entrepreneurship in these fields.

INDIA BANK SELLOFF EXPOSES A TRUST DEFICIT

SHRITAMA BOSE

Confidence in India’s financial sector is always provisional. The latest reminder comes from IDFC First Bank, whose shares have struggled to rebound after plunging 16 per cent on Monday, when the \$7 billion lender flagged a suspected fraud involving Haryana state government accounts.

The selloff looks excessive. But the bank’s inconsistent earnings record since its enlargement from a 2018 merger between IDFC Bank and Capital First — a non-bank lender once favoured by foreign investors — helps explain why the market is reluctant to give management the benefit of the doubt.

The institution, backed by Warburg Pincus with a 10 per cent stake and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority with 5 per cent, is investigating the episode, which involves old-school cheque deception and amounts to 5.9 billion rupees (\$65 million).

Chief executive V Vaidyanathan has described it as “a specific isolated incident” confined to a single branch. The bank has suspended employees and ordered a forensic audit.

IDFC has moved quickly to contain the damage. It has paid out the full amount claimed by Haryana after Nayab Singh Saini, the state’s chief minister, accused the bank of delaying action on the fraud.

The hit more than wipes out earnings for the three months to December 2025 and equals about 38 per cent of full-year profit.

Yet IDFC’s blunt response should reduce the risk of other states following Haryana in cutting ties with the lender; government deposits account for roughly 10 per cent of its funding base.

Vaidyanathan, founder of Capital First — the lender Warburg Pincus originally backed — has steered the enlarged bank well.

He has built a low-cost liability franchise that now accounts for 52 per cent of total deposits, the highest share among mid-sized private banks. Its tier-1 equity capital ratio of 14 per cent is also comfortably above the 9 per cent regulatory minimum.

Yet despite net profit having trebled over the past four financial years, earnings have been uneven. Microcredit problems cut profit by 48 per cent in the year to March 2025, while provisions for stressed infrastructure loans dragged on results in earlier years.

Investors scarred by years of misreporting by Indian banks will sell on any sign of weakness.

— Reuters

IMF: UK set to lag behind advanced economies

THE UK economy is set to grow at a slower pace than the average across advanced economies in each of the next two years, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said, in a warning on the Labour government’s ability competitiveness against world powers.

The IMF has kept its UK growth figures for 2026 and 2027 at 1.3 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively in its latest world economic outlook report.

Each of the futures is lower than the average growth for advanced economies in 2026 and 2027, with the UN-backed body suggesting GDP would rise by 1.8 per cent and 1.7 per cent in each of the next two years. It revised up the UK growth estimate for 2025 by 0.1 percentage point to 1.4 per cent.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves said the IMF’s latest report put the UK “on course to be the fastest growing European G7 economy”.

Her Conservative counterpart Mel Stride accused the government of “gaslighting the country” over its comments on the upgrade, adding IMF forecasts showed the UK economy was “flatlining”.

Economists suggested that investment in technology across the UK “contributed to activity” though lagged far behind the US economy, which grew 4.3 per cent in the third quarter of 2025.

The IMF also suggested that trade had remained “relatively robust” in the face of higher tariffs and “occasional flare-ups” between two of the world’s largest economies, the US and China.

Both countries saw their growth forecasts revised up for 2026, though the US was projected to suffer from slower growth in 2027 than previously expected.

The report said risks were “tilted to the downside” given worries over the impact of AI on productivity triggering “abrupt financial market correction” and political tensions erupting and adding “new layers of uncertainty.”

High sovereign debt levels and larger fiscal deficits run by major economies could “put pressure



A pedestrian shelters under a Union Flag umbrella in front of the Bank of England in London. — Reuters



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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

on long-term interest rates”, economists also said.

New IMF forecasts come in the midst of a new trade dispute as President Trump announced he would impose 10 per cent tariffs from February on Nato allies backing Greenland’s sovereignty which includes the UK and Denmark.

Despite the latest set of trade threats, economists at the IMF said: “Against this backdrop of stabilising trade tensions and supportive financial conditions, the global economy has continued to be remarkably resilient”.

However, trade volume growth is set to decline from 4.1 per cent in 2025 to as low as 2.6 per cent while conflicts in the Middle East, Latin America and Ukraine could increase prices for consumers and investors.

Furthermore, a growing number of Britain’s business chiefs expect the country’s economy to decline over the next year, a survey of CEOs has revealed.

Some 25 per cent of UK’s CEOs expect the nation’s economic fortunes to worsen this year, a figure up from 13 per cent in 2025 according to the latest survey by PwC.

The percentage now expecting economic growth stands at 38 per cent, down from 61 per cent in 2025, in a blow to business confidence in the government’s growth agenda.

In a more positive news for the Chancellor, the UK has strengthened its position as a global investment hub over the last twelve months.

Britain remained the second most attractive destination for international investment for chief executives last year, according to PwC, but now shares the position with Germany and India.

All three respective countries were cited as locations likely to receive the greatest share of investment this year at 13 per cent each, marking a one per cent drop for the UK and a one per cent rise for Germany.

India had the greatest rise, jumping from seven per cent, while the US kept a firm grip on the top spot, with 35 per cent of chief executives citing it as the most attractive destination.

CLASSIFIEDS

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SALES professional with 5 yrs Experience in Medical sector. Graduate, Available in Muscat. akhilmanu777@gmail.com Contact: 76323324

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. 90789282

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in “MEP” construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

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15+ experience in building material, project sales & Trade market, deal with corporate project customers, looking for a suitable job. Contact 78384283

INDIAN male MBA Graduate with 15yrs experience in Oman seek suitable senior position in finance office admin., sales DTC. Contact: 94158080

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LOGISTICS Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field Mob: +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

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We are actively seeking a Highly skilled Electrical Engineer to join our Team. The ideal candidate should have a minimum of 8 years of experience in 33/11 KV Substations. Candidates with Oman working experience will be preferred for this Position.
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SIT. WANTED

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SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com Mobile: 95544641

LOOKING for part time or full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

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- Marketing Manager
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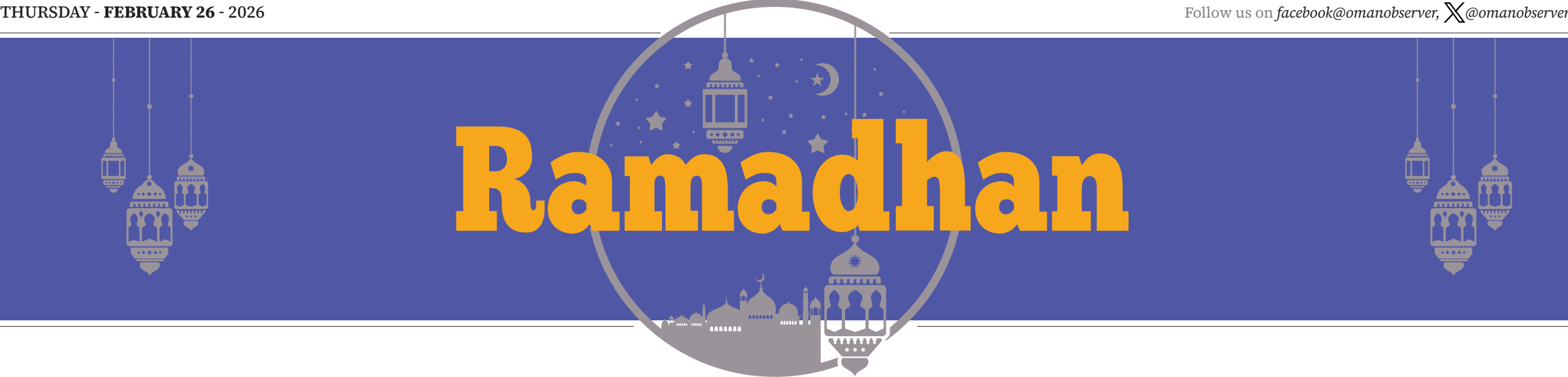


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A STORY OF EXILE AND RESILIENCE



BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

FOR Fatema, Ramadhan is a date that awakens unforgettable memories, a silent present and a long-awaited future. While many welcome the holy month with joy, it stirs in Fatema a quiet sorrow tied to one day that changed everything. In Sudan, before the war, Ramadhan carried familiar rituals. Before dawn, young men walked through neighbourhoods calling families to wake for suhoor, creating a shared spirit of devotion. The suhoor table was simple, milk, dates and often hilu mur, the traditional Sudanese drink present in

Leaving everything behind reshaped Fatima's understanding of what truly matters. Possessions can vanish in a moment, but faith remains.

every home. Days continued with work, school and prayers at nearby mosques. At sunset, families gathered for iftar. Ramadhan was never solitary; it was rooted in belonging. Family gatherings defined the month. Every Friday, Fatema and her relatives shared dishes like Assida and Tagliya, meals that symbolised unity more than sustenance. Then came the 24th of Ramadhan. Instead of peaceful night prayers, war erupted. "Every Ramadhan takes me back to that night", she says. The holy month has never been separate from that memory. During a brief two-hour ceasefire, just before iftar, Fatema's family made the painful decision to leave Khartoum. There was no time for preparation or

proper goodbyes. They packed a few clothes into school bags and left behind documents, certificates, passports, money and gold. "On the road to exile, you leave your home, but you never know where your feet will take you", she recalls. They fled between soldiers and gunfire. For a year, they lived displaced and Ramadhan carried uncertainty instead of peace. Safety became the only shared priority. Two years ago, Fatema moved to Oman. The Ramadhan atmosphere felt different from Sudan, yet she found something she had long missed: peace. "We found safety and reassurance for the first time", she says. Now Ramadhan holds layered meaning. It marks the beginning of war

and displacement, but also renewal of faith. "Ramadhan reminds us not to hold too tightly to this world", she reflects. Leaving everything behind reshaped her understanding of what truly matters. Possessions can vanish in a moment, but faith remains. Each year, the month deepens both her grief and gratitude. When she returns to Sudan one day, she hopes her suitcase will carry lessons of patience, resilience and the kindness she experienced in Oman. At every iftar, she sends a quiet prayer, wishing to return to the 23rd of Ramadhan, the last day before everything changed and hoping that safety will one day return to her homeland.

FATWA

QUESTION & ANSWER

QUESTION

Can a woman read or recite the Quran at home without wearing a hijab?

ANSWER

Yes, a woman may read or recite the Quran at home without wearing a hijab. The obligation of hijab applies in the presence of non-mahram men or in public settings, not when a woman is in the privacy of her home.

QURAN

VERSE OF THE DAY

{إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ }

"The worst animals before Allah (God) are the deaf and dumb, those who do not use their reason".

[Surat Al Anfal] — Verse 22

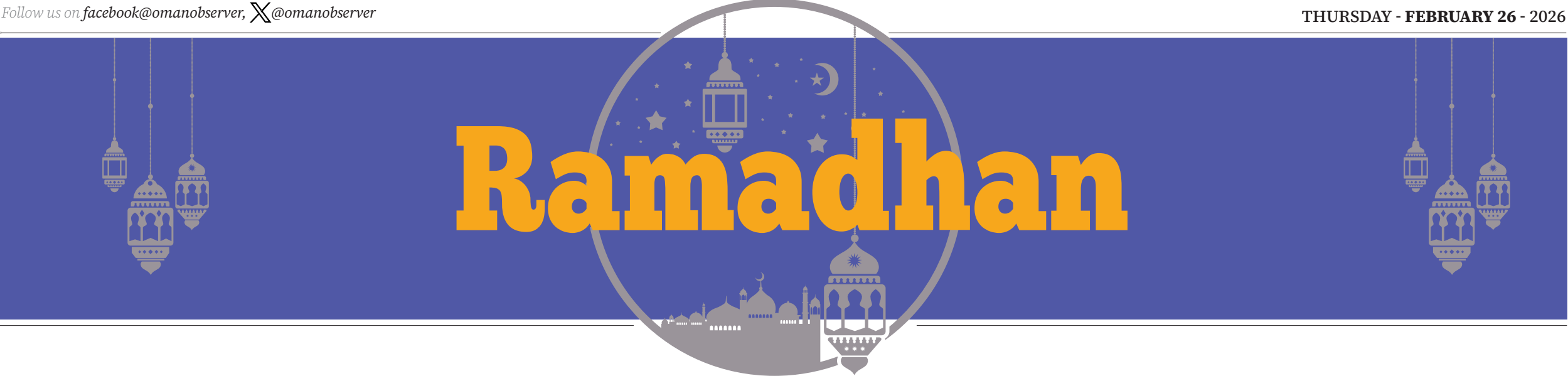
HADITH

A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Narrated Abu Huraira:
Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said:

"When the month of Ramadhan starts, the gates of the heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained".

[Sahih Al Bukhari]



PRODUCTIVITY VS WELLBEING

RETHINKING WORK DURING RAMADHAN

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

AS Oman enters the holy month of Ramadhan, office lights dim earlier, emails slow after midday and the country's rhythm adjusts. Reduced working hours are intended to support fasting employees, yet the same debate returns each year: do shorter hours weaken productivity, or can they strengthen wellbeing and long-term performance?

Under Oman's labour regulations, working hours for Muslims are reduced in both public and private sectors. While rooted in cultural and religious values, the policy also carries economic implications, particularly as the nation advances under Oman Vision 2040 with a focus on competitiveness and efficiency.

Research suggests productivity is not simply a function of time spent at work. A 2023 OECD analysis found that countries with shorter average working hours often record higher productivity per hour than those with longer schedules. Fatigue erodes focus, while concentrated, well-managed hours tend to deliver stronger results.

In Oman, Ramadhan shifts peak performance periods. Many employees report sharper concentration in the early morning, followed by a gradual energy dip later in the day. Employers who adjust by scheduling key meetings earlier often experience smoother workflow and clearer decision-making.

Human resources specialists observe that Ramadhan can enhance morale. Reduced hours lower stress and allow time for family, worship and rest. Employees who feel accommodated are generally more engaged and less prone to burnout. Wellbeing and



Leaving everything behind reshaped Fatima's understanding of what truly matters. Possessions can vanish in a moment, but faith remains.

performance, studies show, are closely linked.

However, the impact varies across sectors. Retail, hospitality, healthcare, utilities and logistics frequently see increased evening demand. Electricity consumption shifts from daytime to night due to lighting, cooking and cooling needs. For these industries, work is not reduced but redistributed, requiring careful staff planning to avoid fatigue.

Small and medium enterprises also face seasonal pressure. Ramadhan is a peak consumption period for food retailers and hospitality providers. While administrative work may ease during the day, evening trade intensifies.

Oman's approach reflects a broader Gulf model that balances social cohesion with economic output. International

Labour Organisation research indicates that workplace flexibility, including adjusted hours, can improve satisfaction and reduce absenteeism, supporting long-term productivity.

Beyond economics, Ramadhan carries cultural meaning. It is a month of reflection, discipline and recalibration. Many professionals describe it as a time to reduce distractions and work with greater intention. Productivity during Ramadhan may appear different, but not necessarily diminished.

As burnout becomes a global concern, Oman's Ramadhan work model offers a relevant insight. Sustainable performance depends not only on hours worked, but on energy managed, purpose aligned and people supported.

RAMADHAN TWEETS



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Translated from Arabic by Grok

O Allah, keep upon us the blessing of security and safety 🙏🏻My Lord, make this city safe🙏🏻 🕌

The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque adorns the landmarks of the city of [#Muscat](#), the capital of [#Oman](#) 🇦🇪, with its enchanting architectural design.

Rate this translation: 👍👎



Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque stands tall during the holy month



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Translated from Arabic by Grok

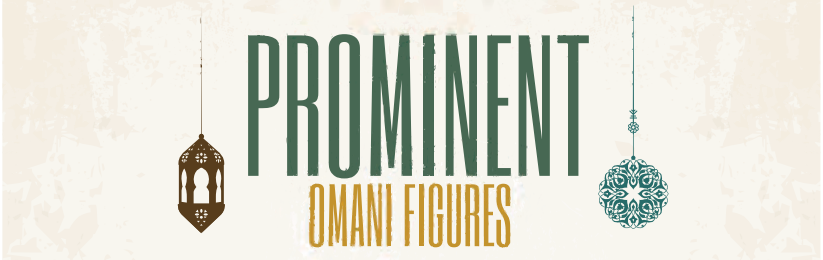
O Allah, preserve for us the goodness of the sea and bless us in it 🙏🏻

[#Oman](#)
[#Duqm](#)
[#RamadanMubarak](#)

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Omani fishermen return triumphant with a feast for Ramadhan iftar



PROMINENT OMANI FIGURES

Who is he?

Shaikh Salim bin Hamoud al Siyabi

(1908–) was a prominent Omani judge and scholar, known for his contributions to Islamic jurisprudence, history and literature; and for his service in the judiciary across several regions of Oman.



RAMADHAN TRADITION



In Sudan, there's a tradition called Al Birish, named after the woven mats people lay out in the streets at sunset during Ramadhan. Families place food and water on them — not just for themselves, but for anyone passing by.



HEALTH TIPS



ENGAGE IN A MILD EXERCISE ROUTINE

During the first few days of fasting, you may be feeling fatigued. Don't push yourself to exercise too hard. Instead try a milder, low impact exercise routine. Try walking briskly just after the sun sets and right before dawn. Because Ramaddan takes place in warmer months, you may want to avoid outdoor activity.

FEATURES

L I N E S O F B E L O N G I N G

SKETCHES THE SOUL OF MUSCAT



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

ON an unassuming morning in Muscat, while most passersby hurry between errands and meetings, Laith al Shiyadi unfolds a small chair, opens his sketchbook and begins to look, really look. For al Shiyadi, urban sketching is not a hobby. It is a quiet act of resistance against disconnection.

Trained in urban planning and deeply immersed in architectural history, he sees buildings not as isolated objects, but as events in space and time. “Photographs freeze a moment”, he says. “Sketching allows me to experience duration, the shifting light, the sounds of the street, the human presence”. His practice is rooted in one intention, helping people feel closer to their city.

Sketching on location has changed the way he inhabits Muscat. It has made him less shy in public spaces and more attentive to alignments, proportions and the rhythm between solids and voids.

Over time, he began recognising architectural signatures across the city, the work of Ayoub Issa Oghana in Ruwi, including the General Telecommunications Organisations Tower, also known as GTO Tower and its “siblings.” In addition, he admired the distinct language of the highly influential British modernist architectural firm Yorke Rosenberg Mardall, YRM, in projects such as Sultan Qaboos University and the British Embassy in Al Qurum.

All this led Al Shiyadi to discover the noble truth of architecture: it carries DNA, an indelible identity that grows and allows unique expression to be explored and experimented with.

Laith is especially drawn to Oman’s modern architectural heritage, buildings constructed during the first 25 years of the Renaissance.

He speaks of whitewashed walls catching light, of forts flitting with geometry, of subtle self-expression in old houses in Muttrah, Sur and Salalah. These details, he believes, reveal the cultural texture of contemporary Oman.

Through free sketching sessions at landmarks like Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz Carlton Hotel and districts such as Al Wadi



Al Kabir, Al Shiyadi invites architects and non-architects alike to engage critically with space. His aim is not only artistic output, but awareness, of scale, symmetry, atmosphere and memory. Luxury landmarks offer grandeur and clarity, neighbourhoods like Al Khuwair and Ruwi reveal spontaneity and layered social complexity. Both tell different stories of Muscat.

Challenges such as shifting light or weather are embraced as part of the process. He anchors structural lines first, then allows the drawing to breathe through varied line weight and occasional watercolor. “The sketch is a response to a moment”, he says, “not a blueprint”.

In a digital age obsessed with instant images, Al Shiyadi believes hand drawn lines still matter. Sketching protects attention. It transforms seeing into understanding. This is most evident during a session he held at Jibreen Castle in Bahla, as stories of scholars and rulers echoed through the halls, participants translated narrative into ink. The drawings became vessels of memory.

His advice to young artists is simple, start small. A 5 x 5 cm frame. Focus on massing before detail. “We are producing sketches, not perfection.”

Looking ahead, Al Shiyadi hopes to document Oman’s older coastal settlements from Al Seeb to Shinas, capturing modern heritage before it disappears. Cities evolve quietly, he says. Through his sketchbook, he is building not a postcard version of Oman, but a living, ever-evolving archive of invaluable substance.



CHANGINGWORLD

HONOURING THE UNSUNG HEROES: CELEBRATING OMANI TEACHER’S DAY



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
The writer is a Senior Editor at Oman Daily Observer.

This week, we are celebrating Omani Teacher’s Day, a special occasion to recognise the tireless efforts and dedication of educators across the Sultanate of Oman.

These unsung heroes work behind the scenes, shaping young minds and laying the foundation for a brighter future.

Teachers are the backbone of any society and Oman’s teachers are no exception.

They go above and beyond, often sacrificing their own needs for the sake of their students.

From teaching complex mathematical concepts to guiding students through the intricacies of literature, Oman’s teachers are the catalysts for change.

Their impact extends far beyond the classroom walls. They inspire, motivate and mentor students, helping them navigate the challenges of adolescence and young adulthood.

They are role models, confidants and friends, providing a safe space for students to grow and explore.

Oman’s teachers are also innovators, adapting to new technologies and teaching methods to ensure students receive a world-class education.

To all the teachers in Oman, I salute you. Your dedication, passion and commitment to education do not go unnoticed. You are the unsung heroes of Oman and your impact will be felt for generations to come. The role of teachers in shaping Oman’s future cannot be overstated.

They work tirelessly to create engaging lesson plans, develop curricula and assess student progress, all while staying up-to-date with the latest pedagogical trends.

The role of teachers in shaping Oman’s future cannot be overstated. As the country looks to diversify its economy and build a knowledge-based society, the importance of quality education has never been more pressing.

Oman’s teachers are at the forefront of this effort, equipping students with the skills, knowledge and values needed to succeed in an ever-changing world.

As we celebrate Teacher’s Day, we also acknowledge the challenges faced by Oman’s educators.

From limited resources to large class sizes, teachers often work under pressure.

Yet, they persevere, driven by their passion for teaching and their commitment to their students.

Their dedication is evident in the success of Oman’s students, who consistently excel in international assessments and competitions.

It’s a testament to the hard work and dedication of Oman’s teachers, who go the extra mile to ensure their students receive the best possible education.

But the journey to success is a shared one. Parents, too, play a vital role in their children’s education.

It’s essential for parents to work hand-in-hand with teachers, supporting their efforts and reinforcing learning at home.

By doing so, we can create a collaborative environment that fosters academic excellence, personal growth and character development.

So, to all the teachers in Oman, I salute you. Your dedication, passion and commitment to education do not go unnoticed.

You are the unsung heroes of Oman and your impact will be felt for generations to come.

As Oman celebrates Teacher’s Day, let us take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to these remarkable individuals. Your tireless efforts, late nights and early mornings have not gone unnoticed.

You are the reason why Oman is proud to be a nation of learners and your legacy will continue to inspire and motivate future generations.

To the teachers of Oman, thank you for all that you do. You are appreciated, you are valued and you are the heroes of our time.