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WEDNESDAY
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PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR

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MAGHRIB

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ISHA

07:27 PM

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INBRIEF

ROYAL DECREE
RATIFIES STATUTE OF
LABOUR CENTRE

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued Royal Decree No (30/2025) on ratifying the statute of the Labour Centre of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).
Article (1) ratifies the statute of the Labour Centre of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in accordance with the version attached to this Decree.
Article (2) states that authorities concerned shall deposit the document of ratification of the aforementioned statute in line with its provisions.
Article (3) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

OMAN, UK AGREE
TO ENHANCE
COOPERATION

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a meeting with David Lammy, British Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in London.
The meeting discussed historical relations and existing strategic partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom. Sayyid Badr and David Lammy expressed keenness to follow up and support the ongoing cooperation between the two countries in various domains of mutual interest. They laid emphasis on the role of the Oman-UK Strategic Consultation Team. The two sides exchanged views about regional and international issues.
The meeting was attended by Badr Mohammed al Mantheri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom, Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman, and a number of officials from both sides. **SEE ALSO P3**

DISPLACEMENT
OF PALESTINIANS
FROM GAZA STRIP
REJECTED

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN
EXTRAORDINARY ARAB
SUMMIT IN CAIRO

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN participated in the extraordinary Arab summit, held in the Egyptian capital Cairo on Tuesday, in the presence of a number of leaders of Arab countries and heads of delegations to discuss the developments of the Palestinian cause and the Israeli escalation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.
The Sultanate of Oman's delegation to the summit was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, who delivered a speech in which he conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the participants, expressing his deep thanks and appreciation to the Arab Republic of Egypt, the State of Palestine and



The Sultanate of Oman's delegation to the summit was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister in Cairo on Tuesday.

the Kingdom of Bahrain for their efforts in organising this crucial Arab summit held at a time when the challenges threatening the Palestinian cause and the aspirations of the Palestinian people to achieve justice and establish their independent state on the Palestinian land, are worsening.
In his speech, the foreign minister stressed the Sultanate of Oman's categorical rejection of statements and trends calling for the displacement of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip under the pretext of reconstruction, considering it as a crime against humanity under international law and international humanitarian law.
He also pointed out that the brutal Israeli war has unveiled a dark scene in the history of humanity, as a result of the fall of tens of thousands of martyrs and wounded in addition to thousands of missing persons and the massive destruction it caused to the infrastructure and facilities in the Gaza Strip.
The foreign minister added that Israel continues to violate the ceasefire agreements on a daily basis, hampers arrival of humanitarian aid and insists on killing and displacing civilians in Gaza and the West Bank while continuing to confiscate lands and detain more Palestinians than

it releases. He pointed out that a year has passed since the International Court of Justice (ICJ) urged taking every possible step to prevent these crimes without any real commitment from the occupation.
The foreign minister stressed that the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are Palestinian territories and that the Palestinian people have the legitimate right to self-determination.
He called on the international community to take urgent action to end the historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people so that they can attain their inherent right to freedom and independence. He also stressed the importance of establishing a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and ensuring the safe and full entry of relief and humanitarian materials into the Gaza Strip without any conditions or restrictions.
Sayyid Badr stressed the need to hold an international peace conference to ensure the enforcement of international legitimate resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative based on the two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital on the borders of June 4, 1967, and with full membership in the United Nations.
TURN TO P3

21 farm investment opportunities in Al Buraimi

AL BURAIMI: Acting in cooperation with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has floated 21 new investment opportunities in Al Buraimi Governorate, through 'Tatweer' platform, for the utilisation of land areas totalling 659.4 acres.
The opportunities range between agricultural projects, livestock production units and water bottling units. The overall aim is to support food security and enhance investment in the agricultural



sector in Oman.
The opportunities also include projects for the cultivation of crops like date palm trees and date production units in the wilayats of Mahadha and Al Buraimi. The areas allocated for these projects range between 12.6 and 64.6 acres each. Larger areas have been allocated for the cultivation of potatoes in the areas of Safwan, Al Madam Plain and Al Qabil. In addition, farming areas totalling 100 acres have been allocated for planting onions in Safwan and Al Qabil. — ONA

Omani doctors successfully separate rare conjoined twins

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman achieved a new medical milestone by successfully performing the first separation surgery for conjoined twins of the 'Omphaloischhiopagus' type. This rare form of conjoined twins shares the pelvic area, with connections in the intestines, urinary system, and blood vessels.
The surgery was conducted under the direct supervision of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health. The medical team included several specialists from various fields, along

with a select group of surgeons and medical teams from the Royal Hospital, Khoula Hospital, the Medical City Hospital for Military and Security Services and Nizwa Hospital. The team coordinated under a comprehensive medical plan to ensure the best possible outcomes.
The twins are currently receiving intensive care in the ICU, with their health condition steadily improving.
This surgery marks the first-of-its-kind in the Sultanate of Oman,



The surgical procedure went through several critical stages.

requiring a comprehensive medical effort involving specialised Omani teams from various surgical and supportive medical fields. This achievement reflects the progress and advancement of healthcare services in the country.
The surgical procedure went through several critical stages, beginning with thorough assessment and multi-stage surgical preparation. This was followed by the separation surgery and tissue reconstruction.
DETAILS ON P3

OMAN

SHORT TAKE



CDAA has urged everyone to exercise caution and strictly adhere to safety measures when children swim in the sea or wadis.

TEENAGER’S BODY FOUND IN SEEB AFTER REPORTED MISSING AT SEA

MUSCAT: The body of a boy, reportedly a teenager, in the Al Seeb Beach area was recovered by the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) four days after he went missing in the sea.

CDAA has urged everyone to exercise caution and strictly adhere to safety measures when children swim in the sea or wadis.

The search operations lasted four days, with the participation of rescue teams, citizens, and the relevant authorities.

It is also essential for those on adventure trips and swimming in wadis to wear life jackets and participate only with reputable tourism companies equipped with proper safety gear.

Multipurpose port to enhance profile of Masirah

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

THE plan to set up a multipurpose port in Masirah represents a new pillar in the economic diversification process, as it will help make the island an attractive tourism and investment destination in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of Al Sharqiyah South, said the agreement is “an important step towards enhancing the infrastructure of Masirah. This port will constitute a qualitative addition to the development of the maritime transport and logistics sector. The fisheries sector is one of the main beneficiaries of the project, as the port will provide advanced facilities for fishermen, contributing to better landing, storage and marketing facilities. Fishing is one of the main economic activities in Masirah as a large number of the wilayat’s residents depend on it as a main source of income. This project is expected to provide them with new opportunities, by facilitating exports and improving the supply chains for fisheries and marine products.

The new port will contribute to developing the maritime



DR YAHYA BIN BADR AL MAAWALI
Governor of Al Sharqiyah South

transport sector by enhancing connectivity between Masirah and other ports of Oman.

Developing the infrastructure in the maritime transport sector is seen as a key element in enhancing Oman’s competitiveness in trade and logistics.

“The port will contribute to supporting maritime activities and stimulating investments in the tourism sector,” the Governor said.

The port’s construction works will be carried out according to the highest technical and environmental parameters to ensure sustainable goals. This project will create new job opportunities and enhance Oman’s competitiveness in the maritime and commercial fields.

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SHORT TAKES



OMAN EXPO IN RUSSIA ATTRACTS 400,000 VISITORS

MUSCAT: As many as 414,481 visitors turned up at an exhibition titled “Omani Empire between Asia and Africa”, held at the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, Russia, from December 2023 to January 2025.

The exhibition, the second of its kind to be organised as part of Oman Hall Initiative, was applauded by visitors from different countries of the world.

The exhibition included a selection of artefacts that represented Al Yaruba Dynasty and Al Busaidi Dynasty, which established two maritime empires in the 17th century. — ONA

DISPLACEMENT OF PALESTINIANS

FROM PAGE 1

The foreign minister valued the fraternal meeting that took place between a number of Arab leaders in Riyadh on February 21, 2025, hosted by Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which reflected a unified position in support of justice and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

At the end of his speech, Sayyid Badr praised the efforts undertaken by all parties expressing hope that this summit will result in practical steps that would meet the aspirations of the Arab peoples. He also welcomed the Egyptian reconstruction plan in the Gaza Strip.

The Sultanate of Oman’s delegation to the summit comprised Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, Ambassador Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Sultanate of Oman’s Ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Representative to the Arab League, and Ambassador Shaikh Faisal bin Omar al Murhoun, Head of the Arab Department, along with several other officials from the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

OMAN AND UK HISTORICAL RELATIONS DISCUSSED

LONDON: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, held a meeting on Tuesday with David Lammy, British Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs in London.

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The two sides exchanged views



The meeting discussed historical relations and existing strategic partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom.

about regional and international issues. They underlined the importance of consolidating

diplomacy, dialogue and international cooperation in addressing current challenges, to help achieve security and stability for all.

They also stressed the need to engage in joint action to resolve crises and promote peace and sustainable development through multilateral frameworks and effective partnerships.

The meeting was attended by Badr bin Mohammed al Mantheri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom, Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman, and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

Enhancing presence of SMEs through e-screens

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

THE Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development launched a campaign to promote 60 small and medium enterprises through electronic screens in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.



The promotional campaign included more than 230 advertisements for small and medium enterprises through electronic screens in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, with the aim of increasing awareness of their products and services, and enhancing their opportunities to reach wider segments of the public.

The Authority supports small and medium enterprises through external digital advertising campaigns, as Omani markets have witnessed a radical shift towards digitisation in recent years, and digital marketing has become one of the main pillars of the success of companies, especially since small and medium enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman represent an important and vital segment for achieving sustainable economic development.

Khalfan al Khatri, Acting Director of Marketing and Events, said: “Promoting small and medium enterprises through

electronic screens aims to increase sales of institutions in various sectors by promoting the products and services of small and medium enterprises, introducing institutions and their services, spreading awareness of local products, and reaching the largest segment of the target group for the product or service.”

The Authority provides an encouraging regulatory environment for the growth and development of small and medium enterprises, and develops and facilitates support and empowerment procedures through innovative programmes and mechanisms to support and develop these institutions, and works on marketing and promotion to enhance their spread and

ensure their access to various segments of society.

Experts and specialists confirm that digital marketing is a fundamental pillar for the advancement of small and medium enterprises. Digital marketing is one of the most important tools in promoting small and medium enterprises.

Marketing and promotion are one of the most prominent support services and possible programmes for small and medium enterprises, and marketing is one of the vital and necessary activities for small and medium enterprises and other economic institutions, as it is the activity that aims to study the desires and needs of customers and meet them, and deliver them at the appropriate time and place, and provide all the data and information that customers need. E-marketing relies on the use of digital technology to market products and services.

The Authority seeks to find electronic marketing outlets for the products and services of entrepreneurs in local, regional and global markets as well. In today’s fast-paced business world, traditional marketing is no longer sufficient to achieve success and growth. Rather, digital marketing has become an indispensable necessity, as it enhances digital presence and competition, and targets specific segments of the public in order to sell services and products.

Oman achieves milestone after separating conjoined twins

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman achieved a new medical milestone by successfully performing the first separation surgery for conjoined twins of the ‘Omphaloischiopagus’ type. This rare form of conjoined twins share the pelvic area, with connections in the intestines, urinary system, and blood vessels.

The surgery was conducted under the direct supervision of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health. The medical team included several specialists from various fields, along with a select group of surgeons and medical teams from the Royal Hospital, Khoula Hospital, the Medical City Hospital for Military and Security Services and Nizwa Hospital. The team coordinated under a comprehensive medical plan to ensure the best possible outcomes.

The twins are currently receiving intensive care in the ICU, with their health condition steadily improving.

This surgery marks the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, requiring a comprehensive medical effort involving specialised Omani teams from various surgical and supportive medical fields. This achievement reflects the progress and advancement of healthcare services in the country.

The surgical procedure went through several critical stages, beginning with a thorough assessment and multi-stage surgical preparation. This was followed by the separation surgery and tissue



The surgical procedure went through several critical stages, beginning with a thorough assessment and multi-stage surgical preparation. — ONA

reconstruction, and ultimately the post-surgery phase, which requires intensive medical care to ensure the recovery and health stabilisation of the twins.

Dr Mohammed bin Jaafar al Sajwani, Senior Consultant Paediatric Surgeon at the Royal Hospital and head of the medical team in the separation surgery of the conjoined twins, stated: “Conjoined twins are an extremely rare condition. Unfortunately, many children do not survive before birth, during birth, or after birth, mainly due to the congenital abnormalities they have. While there are various cases of conjoinment, those involving the pelvic area are very rare, especially among girls, which complicates the situation due to the presence of

numerous organs in this complex area.”

On his turn, Dr Muhannad Mohammed Batal, Consultant Paediatric Surgeon, highlighted the significance of this medical success in Oman’s healthcare sector, emphasising the ability of Omani professionals to perform even the most complex surgeries. It further strengthens the Sultanate of Oman’s position in the field of advanced surgeries.

Dr Ali al Jabri, Senior Consultant in Neonatal Intensive Care and Head of the Neonatal ICU, also shared his insights, stating: “The condition was discovered early by obstetricians, and coordination was made with the intensive care team to ensure a safe delivery, which was carried out via a

caesarean section.”

Further, Dr Nawal al Sharji, Consultant Paediatric Urologist, pointed out that in conjoined twins, especially those conjoined at the pelvic area, there are often complications in the urinary system. One of the main challenges during the surgery was the shared ureters.

Meanwhile, Dr Masoud al Abdali, Consultant Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon at Khoula Hospital, said: “I was entrusted with forming the paediatric orthopaedic surgical team, which was made up of specialists in various aspects of paediatric orthopaedic surgery, including spine surgery and pelvic surgery from different hospitals. We held numerous preparatory meetings to discuss the details, both within our team and with other specialties, to prepare for this operation. Our role as paediatric orthopaedic surgeons in the separation of the twins in the pelvic area involved performing pelvic cuts to bring the lower limbs closer together.”

Speaking about this operation, Dr Shaykhan al Hashemi, Consultant Paediatric Reconstructive and Cosmetic Surgeon at Khoula Hospital, indicated that conjoined twins are an extremely rare condition globally, and this specific case of pelvic conjoinment is one of the rarest. It requires early preparation. The primary benefit of separating conjoined twins is the careful preparation of the tissues, ensuring

that each child is able to preserve vital tissues, nerves and major arteries.

Dr Ramla Malallah al Qassab, Senior Consultant of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care, and Head of the Anaesthesia Team for the separation surgery, stated: “Anaesthesia is one of the most critical stages in any surgical procedure to ensure its success. Preparation began as soon as the decision was made to perform the surgery at the Royal Hospital. We started forming the anaesthesia team with great care, including anaesthesiologists, technicians and anaesthesia nurses.”

Furthermore, Dr Farhana al Othmani, Consultant Paediatric Intensive Care Physician at the Royal Hospital, stated that the surgery was extremely long, lasting nearly 19 hours. Such long surgeries can lead to complications and infections, but the team handled the case with distinction.

Said al Muslahi, the father of the now-separated conjoined twins, expressed his gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. He also lauded the professionalism of the medical team and all those who contributed to the success of this operation.

Ruqayah al Jardani, Nurse and Operating Room Supervisor, stated: “We held numerous meetings and preparations to arrange the necessary requirements for the surgery. Coordination was made with other teams.” — ONA

RAMADHAN

Many institutions and businesses help needy families in Oman as part of social responsibility and community solidarity

GIVE HOPE, BRING SMILES

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

IN Ramadhan, many institutions and businesses unveil community initiatives to help needy families in Oman as part of social responsibility and community solidarity. Al Sharqiya Desalination Company launched three community initiatives on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadhan, under the auspices of Talib al Balushi, Member of Majlis Ash'Shura, in the presence of the company's CEO Murshid bin Abdullah bin Salim Al Fanah al Araithi and Dr Saleh bin Hamad al Alawi, Director of Social Responsibility at the company.

The initiatives launched include the Iftar Saem initiative, which aims to provide 200 meals daily to fasting people throughout the holy month; support for 100 families with limited income by providing basic food kits; and support for orphans, which aims to meet their needs during the Eid and bring joy to their hearts.

Speaking during the launch of the initiatives, Al Fana, stressed that the company is keen every year, before Ramadhan, to launch its programmes aimed at supporting needy groups.

Dr Al Alawi said that social responsibility is not just seasonal initiatives but rather a sustainable commitment through which the company seeks to improve the social and economic conditions of society. "We believe that social responsibility is a commitment that individuals and institutions have towards society. This commitment includes working to improve social, economic and environmental conditions, and ensuring that the activities we undertake are beneficial to society in general. This social cohesion is most evident during the holy month of Ramadan, as companies contribute to providing assistance to needy families, which alleviates their suffering and provides them with a decent living." Majlis Ash'Shura member Al Balushi appreciated

the role played by Al Sharqiya Desalination Company in contributing to improve the lives of the needy people. "It is an honour to launch the social responsibility initiatives in the Wilayat of Sur, within the framework of strengthening the partnership in the community role played by the company." Al Balushi stressed that such initiatives enhance trust between companies and the community, and emphasise the importance of the role that private sector institutions can play in improving the quality of life, especially during major religious and social occasions such as Ramadhan.

These initiatives represent a model to be emulated in cooperation between the private sector and the community, as they contribute to alleviating the economic burdens faced by many families. Providing daily Iftar meals for the fasting, enhances the spirit of solidarity and community participation. Supporting orphans during Eid also helps bring smiles to their faces.

The efforts of Al Sharqiya Desalination Company are not limited to these initiatives. The company seeks to expand the scope of its relief activities every year to bring in more beneficiaries.

WINNING PROJECT SUGGESTS IDEA TO BETTER RESERVOIR WATER QUALITY

STAFF REPORTER MUSCAT, MAR 4

Among the many various innovative research projects in the 11th National Research Award organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, ‘A Robust Decision-Making Framework to Improve Reservoir Water Quality Using Optimised Selective Withdrawal Strategies’ by principal investigator Dr Mohammad Reza Nikoo, Associate Professor



DR MOHAMMAD REZA NIKOO

at the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering, Sultan Qaboos University, was awarded in the Environmental and Biological Resources field in the PhD category. Dr Nikoo mentioned that in arid locations such as Oman, improving the quality of water released from reservoirs is a challenge. This study, focused on Wadi Dayqah Dam, aimed to develop reliable operational guidelines for releasing water that meets downstream quality and quantity requirements. Dr Nikoo

and his research team aimed to improve reservoir water quality, identify vulnerable outlets and optimal release strategies, and enhance resilience to climate change impacts. Using a combination of multi-objective optimisation (NSGA-II), the CE-QUAL-W2 model and Artificial Neural Networks (ANN), the research team simulated and optimised water withdrawal strategies. A Robust Decision-Making (RDM) framework identified vulnerable outlets and

water release ratios under various climate change scenarios. The findings of the study revealed that activating multiple reservoir outlets reduces pollutant concentration and improves water quality. Also, water released from low- and mid-level outlets is more vulnerable to pollutants compared to surface outlets, and a strategic release of smaller volumes from lower outlets and larger volumes from upper outlets enhances operational stability and robustness.



شركة المطاحن العمانية (ش.م.ع) Oman Flour Mills Company (S.A.O.G) P.O. Box 566, P.C 112, Ruwi, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman



Consolidated and Separate Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

RESPECTED SHAREHOLDERS,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG (the Parent Company) along with its subsidiaries (the Group's) audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024.

GROUP PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS:

Overview: The Group demonstrated strong financial performance in 2024, driven by improved gross margins and a significant reduction in losses from associates. Revenue increased by 3.9% to OMR 128.8 million, while the cost of goods sold decreased by 2.2%. This disparity, mainly due to lower average commodity prices in global markets, contributed to an improved gross margin. The feed sector grew by 3.7%, while the bakery and flour segments experienced slight declines.

Revenue & COGS: The Group's 2024 results indicate significant financial growth over the year. Revenue increased by 3.9%, reaching OMR 128.8 million, with a reduction of 2.2% in the cost of goods sold. This disparity in growth rates is due to lower average commodity prices in the global market. 85% of total revenue is attributed to the Parent Company, while Atyab Food Industries, Sohar Flour Mills, and Atyab International Services contributed 10.8%, 4.5%, and 1.7%, respectively. Furthermore, a segmented comparative shows an increase of 3.7% in the feed sector. Conversely, revenue from the bakery and flour segments declined by 5.6% and 0.1%, respectively.

Indirect Expenses: Indirect expenses, consisting of Selling and Distribution (S&D) and General and Administrative (G&A) overheads, increased by 4.9% and 18.5%, respectively. Higher staff-related expenses drove the increase in S&D expenses. Meanwhile, the increase in G&A expenses was primarily due to increased depreciation, higher professional consultancy fees, and higher staff costs.

Finance Costs: Between the comparative periods, the Group's borrowing costs increased by RO 14.9%, allocated by an increase of RO 403k at the parent level borne from working capital requirements and RO 253k in Sohar Flour Mills LLC long-term borrowings. Higher costs are from increased global interest rates compared to the previous year and higher average loan outstanding throughout the year. By the end of 2024, global interest rates began to decline due to easing inflation and strategic monetary policies. Therefore, it is expected that the financing costs will decrease in 2025.

Finance & other income: The Group reported finance & other income of RO 1.87 million, compared to RO 1.86 million in 2023. In 2024, the Group recorded RO 598k as other income. Additionally, the Group recorded interest earned from receivables balances & bank deposits of RO 347k & 449k, respectively, which is a 110% increase compared to 2023. However, the increases were offset by a reduction of 61% in other gains, as the fair value gains have decreased from RO 1.1 million to RO 212k in the current year. As a result, the overall finance & other income is in line with the previous year.

Share of results from associates: The share of results from associates improved significantly, with losses reducing by 84.7% year-on-year to RO 296k, compared to RO 1.82 million in the previous period. Key contributors to this improvement include:

- **Atyab IFFCO** which reported a profit share of RO 447k, a significant turnaround from the RO 19k loss recorded last year.
- **Modern Dairy Factory** which demonstrated notable progress, reducing its share of loss to RO 40k from RO 224k in the same period last year.
- **APFC Group** which reduced its losses to RO 723k, down from RO 800k last year, reflecting a RO 77k improvement.
- **Bioproducts Oman SAOC** which incurred a pre-operative loss of RO 58k, compared to RO 18k in the previous year.
- **Oman Fisheries Company:** During the year, the Group lost "significant influence" as its key management personnel are no longer represented on the board of directors of OFC. As a result, the investment in associates has been reclassified to Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss.

These improvements indicate positive performance trends among key associates despite some ongoing losses.

Net Profit: Following these developments, the net profit after tax surged to RO 6.63 million, a significant increase of 410% compared to RO 1.34 million in 2023.

PARENT, SUBSIDIARY, AND ASSOCIATES COMPANIES:

The parent company's performance (before tax), along with our subsidiaries and associates, is as follows:

- Oman Flour Mills SAOG (OFM):** In 2024, the parent company demonstrated a strong performance improvement, with revenue rising by 6.5% to RO 109.35 million, compared to RO 102.68 million in 2023. The RO 6.7 million revenue increase was driven by a positive quantity variance of RO 12.4 million, offset by a negative price variance of RO 5.7 million. The average price declined from RO 167/MT to RO 158/MT, while total sales volume grew from 616k MT to 690k MT. Gross profit rose sharply by 68.8% to RO 18.63 million. Enhanced cost management has led to a decrease in the cost of goods sold by 1%. The drop in global commodity prices has led to an increase of 6% in the gross margin (2024 - 17%; 2023 - 11%). In 2024, the company also recorded a subsidy income of RO 2.5 million and RO 1.7 million against import wheat & Omani wheat purchases, respectively. The cumulative receivable subsidy balance stands at RO 3.2 million upon receipt of RO 8.3 million in 2024 (including previous periods). Selling and distribution expenses surged by 31.3% to RO 963k, primarily due to increased advertising expenditure of 39% and rising staff costs with an increase of 27% due to higher headcount. Additionally, administrative and general overheads grew by 19.3% to RO 5.36 million, driven by higher staff costs and depreciation. Despite higher operating expenses, profit from operations saw a substantial increase, rising by 94.5% to RO 12.95 million, compared to RO 6.57 million in 2023. Finance costs increased to RO 2.7 million, up from RO 2.3 million in the previous year, driven by higher average debt costs during the reporting period. However, with a decline in interest rates toward year-end, the company anticipates a reduction in financing costs in 2025. Meanwhile, finance income surged by 75.5% to RO 1.20 million, driven by the placement of deposits at competitive rates and interest earned on loans to related parties. The company's share of net losses from subsidiaries has increased by 21.4%. The holding company, Atyab Investment LLC (AI), recorded a 188% increase in losses from its subsidiaries. These increased losses have been offset by a reduction in losses from its associates of 72%. The holding company (AI) has also incurred RO 430k higher professional and consultancy expenses in comparison to last year, primarily due to ongoing investments in expansion initiatives. Overall, net profit for 2024 climbed to RO 7.58 million, a significant increase from RO 1.78 million in 2023, reflecting robust operational and financial performance.
- Atyab Food Industries LLC (AFI) (100%):** The income statement for 2024 reflects a challenging year, with a decline in financial performance compared to 2023. However, despite these challenges, management has identified key areas for improvement and growth moving forward. Revenue decreased by 5.6%, resulting in a 4.2% reduction in gross profit. This decline was primarily driven by:
 - a. The impact of the boycott on our QSR brand, which we are addressing through strategic marketing and customer engagement initiatives.
 - b. Market penetration challenges in the UAE, which have highlighted opportunities to refine our sales strategies and expand our reach.
 - c. A broader economic slowdown that has affected consumer spending. The trend is closely monitored to adapt our operations accordingly.On a positive note, the Company has maintained strong cost management. Selling and distribution expenses remained stable, with a marginal decline of 0.22%, while administrative and general overheads were reduced by 4.25%, reflecting the ongoing efforts to optimize operational efficiency. Despite a 41.83% decline in operating profit due to lower sales, the Company reduced finance costs by 71.95%. This has contributed to a net profit of RO 168k, representing a 27.47% decrease from the previous year. While this reflects the impact of external challenges, it also underscores the ability to manage costs effectively and maintain profitability in a difficult environment.
- Atyab International Services LLC (AIS) (100%):** AIS's sales exceeded last year's performance by 6.8%, reaching RO 2.25 million. This sales growth was coupled with a 6.7% increase in the cost of sales, which was slightly lower than the revenue growth. As a result, the company achieved a gross profit of RO 899k, a 5.9% improvement over the previous period. The increase in general expenses by 12.47%, primarily due to the higher depreciation of the newly established Khuwair HQ, reduced profit from operations by 14.66%, resulting in a profit of RO 101k. Additionally, the share of loss from AIS-Uzbekistan was recorded at RO 249k, an increase of 185k. While these factors contributed to a net loss of RO 164k, the company is committed to improving operational efficiency and reducing future losses as these new initiatives take hold.
- Atyab Technical Services LLC (ATS) (100%):** The company is currently under liquidation.
- OMAU PTY (100%):** Earlier this year, the Australian subsidiary successfully completed its second shipment to Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG, generating revenue of RO 4.2 million and a gross profit of RO 59k. After consultancy expenses of RO 30k, the company achieved a net profit of RO 28k by year-end.
- Sohar Flour Mills LLC (SFM) (60%):** The income statement for Sohar Flour Mill reflects both challenges and opportunities for growth in 2025. Revenue declined by 22%, reaching RO 5.9 million compared to RO 7.6 million in 2023, primarily due to a 31% decrease in Silo operations and an 18% reduction in the Flour Milling segment. Key factors contributing to this performance include:
 - a. Average reduction in Silo utilization compared to previous periods
 - b. Reduced revenue of the Mill due to pricing pressure.On a positive note, the cost of sales decreased in line with revenue, leading to a gross profit of RO 617k, a decrease of 26% year over year. Selling and distribution expenses saw a slight reduction of 7.7%, reflecting cost-control efforts, while administrative and general overheads increased by 1%, driven by higher expected credit losses. Finance costs rose by 11.1% due to an increase in term loan rates, but the company managed to generate other income of RO 156k from Silo and Berth rentals, providing some support. During the current year, a fair value gain of RO 120k was earned from the company's investment property, compared to RO 891k in the prior year. SFM recorded a net loss of RO 2.4 million, an increase from the RO 1.2 million loss in 2023.
- Bio Products Oman SAOC (BPO) (100%):** On 31st December 2024, the parent company increased its ownership from 33% to 100%, demonstrating strong confidence in the potential of the state-of-the-art fish and animal feed plant. The company invested RO 175k in pre-operative and trial expenses to ensure optimal efficiency and product quality. As a result, a net loss of RO 175k was recorded as the plant prepares for its commercial launch in Q3 2025.
- Atyab IFFCO Poultry (50%):**
 - a. **Sohar Poultry Co SAOC (SPC) (94.4%):** SPC's results demonstrate a remarkable improvement in financial performance for 2024 compared to 2023. Revenue grew by 17.4%, reaching RO 12.06 million, which contributed to a 35.4% increase in gross profit, totaling RO 4.5 million. Key factors behind this growth include:
 - i. Expanded retail and outlet exposure across various states in Oman
 - ii. Optimized production hatching cycles led to higher output and a boost in production capacity and sales.Selling and distribution expenses remained stable, while administration and general overheads increased by 11.6%. Despite these increases, operating profit surged to RO 1.0 million, a significant rise from RO 187k in 2023. Finance costs remained stable, while other income, which consists of income from bank deposits and the sale of hatching eggs, played a key role in boosting overall performance, leading to a profit before tax of RO 1.1 million, up from RO 251k in the prior year. The profit after tax reached an impressive RO 949k, marking a 507% increase compared to RO 156k in 2023.
 - b. **Osool Poultry Co. SAOC (9.9%):** Osool Poultry is one of the largest projects in the Middle East to produce and market Broiler Hatching Eggs. The investment is classified as Assets Available for Sale. During the year, the company recorded other comprehensive income of RO 152k.
- Arabian Food Production Company SAOC (AFPC) (33.33%):**
 - a. **Modern Poultry Farms SAOC (MPF):** MPF has considerably improved over the years. Revenue grew by a substantial 42.3%, reaching RO 16.4 million, which led to a 49% increase in gross profit, totaling RO 1.9 million. As a result, the company turned a profit from operations of RO 286k, a remarkable recovery from the loss of RO 305k in the previous year. Finance costs were increased by 3%. Overall, the company reported a profit after tax of RO 194k for 2024, reflecting a significant turnaround from the net loss of RO 376k in 2023.
 - b. **Emirates Poultry Farms (EPF):** EPF delivered solid growth in 2024, with revenue increasing by 8%, from RO 3.7 million in 2023 to RO 4.1 million. Gross loss reached RO 135k, marking a reduction of losses compared to the prior year's gross loss of RO 611k. Sales and Administrative expenses decreased by 24.2%, highlighting improved cost control. The company reduced its operating loss to RO 750k, a significant improvement from RO 1.4 million in 2023. With finance costs down by 28.6% to RO 46k, the net loss was reduced by 46.6%, totaling RO 794k.
 - c. **Gulf International Poultry Farms LLC (GIPF):** The company achieved impressive growth in 2024, with revenue increasing by 263%, from RO 4.2 million in 2023 to RO 15.3 million. This resulted in a substantial rise in gross profit to RO 2.2 million, compared to RO 282k in the previous year. Key drivers of this performance include:
 - a. A significant boost in production capacity, increasing from 30% in 2023 to 100% in 2024, enabling the company to meet market demand better.
 - b. The government initiative to support local poultry businesses by controlling imports by 66%.
 - c. Improved prices through brand development led to an improved gross profit margin of 8.3%, up from 6.6% in 2023.Although Sales and Administrative overheads increased by 93.2%, the profit from operations increased to RO 471k, a strong recovery

from the loss of RO 637k in 2023. These reductions were largely due to reallocating parent company overheads. The repayment period of term loans began in 2024, leading to a rise in finance costs to RO 1.5 million, up from RO 51k in 2023, which impacted profitability. Despite these positive developments, the company reported a net loss of RO 763k for 2024, a 17% increase compared to the loss of RO 648k in 2023.

- 10. Modern Dairy Factory (MDF) (40%):** MDF has significantly improved as revenue increased by 91%, from RO 1.39 million in 2023 to RO 2.6 million. This growth is driven by:

- a. Higher production following Rusayl soft opening
- b. A 12% increase in prices, as approved by PACP

This resulted in a substantial 230% rise in gross profit, reaching RO 1.0 million, while indirect expenses, including selling and distribution and administrative overheads, increased by 56% and 57%, respectively; the company successfully optimized its working capital cycle, reducing the cost per unit. These higher expenses were primarily driven by increased manpower and additional routes to meet higher sales demand.

Finance costs were reduced by 76% due to the capitalization of interest, and the company also recorded RO 71k in other income, earned through settlement discounts and loan interest waivers. As a result, MDF achieved a profit after tax of RO 100k, marking a remarkable improvement compared to the loss of RO 560k in 2023. This performance reflects significant progress and positions the company for continued growth.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

In 2024, the following key achievements were accomplished:

Business Awards

- ESG Excellence Recognition:** The OFM Group has been recognized by Muscat Exchange for its outstanding performance in ESG.
- Best Product Development:** The Dahabi brand received the **Best Product Development Award** at the OER Business Summit 2024.
- Top Omani Brand 2024:** OFM was honored as the **Top Omani Brand** in the manufacturing industry for 2024.

Key Participations & Achievements

- Conducted an MOD workshop for professional bakers.
- Successfully registered the **Dahabi brand** with major UAE retailers, including **Amazon, Carreem, Noon, and Talabat**.
- Participated in major regional food events, such as **Africa Big 7 and Horeca Oman**.
- Inaugurated Atyab International Services' new headquarters** in Al Khuwair.
- Introduced **Omani White Flour, T55 flour, and 10 KG feed products** to the market.
- Organized a **Poultry Feed Training Session** for agents.
- Conducted a **Sales Awareness Session** for local agents.
- Officially launched **Premix Products**.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR):

The shareholders have approved a budget of RO 200K for CSR activities in 2024. OFM successfully allocated RO 199K to support various initiatives, including providing free flour bags to needy families during Ramadan in collaboration with Zakat committees and other organizations, enhancing school facilities and environments, and funding interior renovations across governorates. Additionally, OFM funded a variety of impactful projects, such as sponsoring schools, youth training programs, sporting events, and other humanitarian efforts, all aimed at fulfilling the shareholders' objectives.

FUTURE OUTLOOK:

Multiple projects are being evaluated across the Group. The projects focus on integration across the value chain as well as diversification into new ventures

- Feed Mill Acquisition:** The transaction is progressing steadily, with the consultant having completed the valuation of the target entity, legal due diligence (LDD) currently underway, and negotiations with the shareholders advancing as planned.
- Frozen Bakery Merger** The consultant has completed valuations for both entities. Discussions are ongoing to identify synergies, align strategic objectives, and finalize merger terms.
- Sohar Flour Mills Restructuring** A proposal to separate the company into milling and silo divisions is under review to enhance focus on core competencies.
- Baby Food Market Evaluation in Uzbekistan** A comprehensive evaluation of the baby food market in Uzbekistan has been completed, and the findings are being discussed with the potential partner for further consideration and strategic decision-making.
- Millet Seeds Import and Cultivation** OFM is in the final stages of importing millet seeds, with plans to cultivate millets in Oman to capitalize on the country's favorable growing conditions and diversify agricultural production.
- Shared Farming Proposal** A shared farming proposal has been submitted to management, and the company is currently assessing its feasibility, scalability, and potential to enhance agricultural productivity and profitability.
- Other Projects Under Evaluation**
 - **KSA Bakery Expansion:** Exploring opportunities to expand bakery operations in Saudi Arabia to tap into growing market demand and strengthen regional presence.
 - **Industrial Cluster Development:** Developing a strategic industrial cluster to centralize operations, improve efficiency, and foster innovation across the value chain.
 - **Food Reserves Management:** Evaluating initiatives to strengthen food reserves, enhance supply chain resilience, and ensure long-term food security.
 - **Chlorella Trials:** Conducting trials for chlorella as part of innovative product development, aiming to introduce sustainable and health-focused offerings.
 - **New Product Introduction:** Diversifying the product portfolio with new offerings such as buckwheat flour to meet evolving consumer preferences and expand market reach.

Completed projects:

- Sohar Beach Bakery Acquisition** The acquisition of Sohar Beach was successfully completed on January 1, 2025, and the bakery's integration efforts are now in full swing to align operations, streamline processes, and maximize value creation.
- Bio Products Oman Takeover** On 31st December 2024, OFM achieved a 100% takeover of Bio Oman, with a focus on seamless integration into existing operations to enhance efficiency, drive growth, and leverage synergies across the business.

THANKS AND APPRECIATION:

The Members of the Board of Directors would like to extend their most sincere appreciation and gratitude to the government for the continuous support under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tanik, may God protect and preserve him.

Regards,

Ahmed bin Ali bin Sulaiman Al Bulushi
Chairman, Board of Directors

CONSOLIDATED AND PARENT COMPANY'S STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Group		Parent company	
	2024 RO'000	2023 RO'000	2024 RO'000	2023 RO'000
Revenue from contract with customers	128,823	123,945	109,350	102,698
Cost of sales	(103,452)	(105,823)	(90,713)	(91,656)
Gross profit	25,371	18,122	18,637	11,042
Selling and distribution expenses	(5,308)	(5,060)	(964)	(734)
General and administration expenses	(8,469)	(7,129)	(5,397)	(4,507)
Net impairment (Loss)/ release on financial assets	(358)	107	(46)	169
Other income	528	247	334	345
Other gains net	551	1,240	351	328
Profit from operations	12,315	7,527	12,915	6,643
Finance costs	(4,851)	(4,222)	(2,698)	(2,297)
Finance income	796	379	1,204	687
Share of loss of subsidiaries accounted for using the equity method	-	-	(2,156)	(1,776)
Share of loss of associates accounted for using the equity method	(296)	(1,821)	-	(759)
Profit before taxation	7,964	1,863	9,265	2,498
Income tax	(1,348)	(563)	(1,705)	(717)
Profit for the year	6,616	1,300	7,560	1,781

Other comprehensive income:

Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss:

Share of other comprehensive income of subsidiary accounted for using the equity method	6	-	6	-
Changes in the fair value of equity investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	122	45	122	45
Total comprehensive income for the year	6,744	1,345	7,688	1,826
Total comprehensive income attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	7,688	1,826	7,688	1,826
Non-controlling interest	(944)	(481)	-	-
	6,744	1,345	7,688	1,826
Basic and diluted earnings per share(RO)	0.049	0.012	0.049	0.012

CONSOLIDATED AND PARENT COMPANY'S STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Group		Parent Company	
	2024 R0'000	2023 R0'000	2024 R0'000	2023 R0'000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	51,247	46,906	14,297	14,612
Investment properties	12,527	12,244	2,312	2,219
Intangible assets	26	17	-	-
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	20,787	19,389
Investment in associates	8,506	9,217	-	563
Goodwill	154	-	-	-
Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	370	400	370	400
Right-of-use assets	4,120	3,256	31	40
Long term related party receivables	4,797	-	4,797	-
Deferred tax asset	1,970	1,552	-	-
	83,717	73,592	42,594	37,223
Current assets				
Inventories	31,568	24,368	29,763	21,506
Trade and other receivables	29,730	42,797	24,069	32,875
Due from subsidiaries	-	-	11,630	13,244
Due from related parties	7,987	9,607	7,770	9,420
Loan to related parties	500	-	6,498	-
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	532	1,555	532	1,555
Term deposits	7,500	7,500	7,500	7,500
Cash and cash equivalents	6,071	5,407	3,861	4,404
	83,888	91,234	91,623	90,504
Total assets	167,605	164,826	134,217	127,727
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	15,750	15,750	15,750	15,750
Legal reserve	6,184	6,217	5,250	5,250
General reserve	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Retained earnings	53,408	47,560	54,343	48,529
Other reserves	278	150	278	150
Equity attributable to the equity holders of the Parent Company	78,120	72,177	78,122	72,179
Non-controlling interest	(1,723)	(779)	-	-
Total equity and non-controlling interest	76,397	71,398	78,122	72,179
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities				
Bank borrowings	19,463	21,892	-	-
Lease liabilities	4,719	3,806	26	35
Deferred tax liability	1,052	933	620	513
Provision for employee's end of service benefits	941	787	147	93
Total non-current liabilities	26,175	27,418	793	641
Current liabilities				
Bank borrowings	47,049	52,551	41,886	47,598
Provisions	535	535	535	535
Lease liabilities	170	124	10	10
Trade and other payables	15,646	11,774	11,266	6,088
Taxation	1,633	1,026	1,605	676
Total current liabilities	65,033	66,010	55,302	54,907
Total liabilities	91,208	93,428	56,095	55,548
Total equity and liabilities	167,605	164,826	134,217	127,727
Net assets per share	0.496	0.458	0.496	0.458

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun meets with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman during his visit to Riyadh. — Reuters

SAUDI ARABIA TO STUDY RESUMING LEBANON IMPORTS

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is to review “obstacles” to resuming Lebanese imports and ending a ban on its nationals visiting Lebanon, the two governments said on Tuesday as relations improve. The joint statement came a day after Lebanese President Joseph Aoun met Saudi Arabia’s de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh on his first trip abroad since taking office in January.

“The two sides agreed to start studying the obstacles facing the resumption of exports from the Lebanese Republic to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the measures necessary to allow Saudi citizens to travel to” Lebanon, the statement published by the official Saudi Press Agency said.

The two sides agreed on the importance of “extending the state’s sovereignty over all Lebanese territory, restricting weapons possession to the Lebanese state, emphasising the national role of the Lebanese army and the importance of supporting it”, the statement said. The joint statement also “emphasised the importance of implementing the commitments made in the presidential oath”. Aoun had pledged upon taking office to usher in a new era. — AFP

BERLIN TO SUSPEND AID TO RWANDA OVER DRC



M23 members sit on a truck during the escort of captured FDLR members to Rwanda, at the Goma-Gisenyi Grande Barrier border crossing. — Reuters

BERLIN: Germany said on Tuesday that it will suspend new aid to Rwanda over an offensive by the M23 group in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo that UN experts say is supported by Rwandan soldiers. “Germany will further restrict bilateral cooperation with Rwanda,” the development ministry said in a statement. “In particular, we will suspend new financial commitments (and) review existing development cooperation with the Rwandan government.”

The ministry said it “strongly condemns” the offensive, in particular the capture of the main cities of Goma and Bukavu, which it labelled “a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of” the DRC. German development ministry aid to Rwanda averages around 50 million euros a year, in areas such as economic development, production of vaccines and climate protection.

The offensive by the M23 has drawn widespread international condemnation. The German move comes after Britain recently suspended most direct bilateral aid to Rwanda and Canada imposed sanctions on the country over the conflict. Rwanda was informed in advance about the German decision, the ministry said. — AFP

LOST IN OPERATION

Philippine fighter jet goes missing



A Philippines FA-50 fighter jet is missing after flying a mission in the country’s south although hopes remain its two-member crew could still be alive. Philippine Army spokesman Colonel Louie Dema-ala said that the missing jet was part of a squadron sent “to provide air support” to troops engaged in a firefight overnight in Mindanao’s Bukidnon province. It was still too early to say if the fighter had crashed or made an emergency landing. — AFP

SYRIA FORCES LAUNCH LATAKIA OPERATION AFTER DEADLY AMBUSH

DAMASCUS: Syrian forces launched a security campaign in Latakia after “militia remnants” supporting ousted ruler Bashar al-Assad killed two personnel in an ambush, state media reported on Tuesday. “Groups of Assad militia remnants killed two members of the Syrian defence ministry in an armed ambush” in Latakia’s Daatur district, the SANA news agency said.

“The internal security department launched a broad security campaign” in the district

and a number of surrounding areas “to arrest the militia remnants and bring them to justice.” The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said the defence ministry gathered forces with troop carriers and armed vehicles in the area “in search of the gunmen who attacked an internal security forces patrol”.

Restoring and maintaining security across Syria remains one of the most pressing challenges for the new authorities after Assad’s overthrow. Syria has seen clashes

and shootings in a number of areas, often blamed on Assad supporters, with the new authorities announcing campaigns targeting “regime remnants” and making arrests.

Residents and rights groups have often reported violations including home confiscations, extra-judicial executions and kidnappings, with the new authorities dismissing such incidents as isolated and vowing to hold those responsible to account. — AFP

Gazans fear food scarcity after Israel blocks aid

PALESTINIANS living in war-ravaged Gaza say they fear food shortages and price hikes after Israel halted the entry of aid into the territory to pressure Hamas to agree to its terms for a ceasefire extension. The effect of the Israeli announcement on Sunday was immediate, and sent ripples through markets across the Gaza Strip. Prices for basic goods soared despite attempts by the authorities to keep them stable, shoppers and aid workers said.

“There is a lot of fear, today there are a lot of people buying food supplies and prices have risen a lot,” Belal al-Helou said at a crowded street market in Gaza City. As long as Gaza’s crossings are closed, “the prices will rise and increase even more”, Helou added on Sunday. “Today a kilo of sugar costs 10 shekels or 12 shekels,” he said — roughly \$3, and more than twice the price before the war. “Prices are rising and people are panicking about food supplies.”

Another shopper, Adly al-Ghandour, said prices had risen “80 per cent so far, and if the crossing remains closed, prices will rise 200 per cent”. Around them, stalls were still well-stocked from the first phase of the ceasefire, which began on January 19 and enabled the entry of vital food, shelter and medical assistance after more than 15 months of war triggered by Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack on Israel. Shopkeepers also sold decorations such as small lanterns and signs reading “happy Ramadan”, while bakers made hundreds of pancakes



Palestinian children during food distribution at a charity kitchen at the Nuseirat refugee camp. — AFP

Although the organisation’s stocks of medical equipment were somewhat replenished during the first phase, other items such as generators and supplies for water desalination were blocked because Israel labels them “dual use” items that could be used by militants to make weapons.

to be used in qatayef, a pastry filled with cream and nuts typically eaten during the Muslim holy month that started on Saturday in Gaza.

Caroline Seguin, emergency coordinator for Doctors Without Borders in Gaza, said trucks that were supposed to arrive on Sunday were turned back full. “We were able to get a few trucks in during the six weeks of ceasefire, but it’s no panacea” for the humanitarian situation, Seguin said Monday.

Although the organisation’s stocks of medical equipment were somewhat replenished during the first phase, other items such as generators and supplies for water desalination were blocked because Israel labels them “dual use” items that could be used by militants to make weapons. Seguin added that humanitarian aid “shouldn’t be a part of ceasefire negotiations while

Gaza’s population needs assistance”. In the northern city of Jabalia, displaced Palestinians who returned after the start of the ceasefire live in tents erected by charity organisations on a patch of cleared land, surrounded by bombed-out buildings.

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamadan said on Monday that only 15 of the 65,000 mobile homes that were due to enter Gaza during the ceasefire had actually made it in. Israel’s agency in charge of regulating the aid flow in Gaza did not respond when asked about the figure.

Seguin said she had noted an instant price increase in Gaza markets, including for eggs, whose price went up 150 per cent. But above all, Seguin said the aid suspension was a hard blow to Gazans’ morale. — AFP



GRENADES TOSSED IN SERBIAN PARLIAMENT

BELGRADE: Serbian opposition lawmakers threw smoke grenades and tear gas inside parliament on Tuesday to protest against the government and support demonstrating students, with one legislator suffering a stroke during the chaos.

Four months of student-led demonstrations have drawn in teachers, farmers and others to become the biggest threat yet to President Aleksandar Vucic’s decade-long rule, with many Serbians denouncing corruption and incompetence in government. At the legislative session, after the ruling coalition led by the Serbian Progressive Party approved the agenda, some politicians ran out of their seats towards the parliamentary speaker and scuffled with security guards. — Reuters

SECURITY CHARGES

Tunisia opposition figures go on trial



The trial of several prominent Tunisian opposition figures accused of national security offences opened on Tuesday. The charges in the case include “plotting against the state security” and “belonging to a terrorist group”, which could entail hefty sentences and even capital punishment, according to lawyers. The case has named politician and law expert Jawhar Ben Mbarek, Ennahdha leader Abdelhamid Jelassi, and Issam Chebbi. — AFP

ALLIANCE DEAL

RSF signs ‘transitional constitution’



Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and its allies have signed a constitution paving the way for the a parallel government. “The constitutional document was signed in Nairobi last night by all parties involved,” a member of the preparatory committee of the Sudan Founding Alliance said. The “transitional constitution” documents the “the governing system and the structures of the executive authority”. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



US President Donald Trump speaks in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

CHINA, CANADA RETALIATE AS TRUMP SLAPS HUGE TARIFFS

WASHINGTON: Mounting trade wars between the United States and its largest economic partners deepened on Tuesday as huge US tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China kicked in, sparking swift retaliation from Beijing and Ottawa. Trump had announced — and then paused — blanket 25 per cent tariffs on imports from major trading partners Canada and Mexico in February, accusing them of failing to stop illegal immigration and drug trafficking. He pushed ahead with them on Tuesday, citing a lack of progress on both fronts.

Canada responded with its own retaliatory 25 per cent tariffs, while Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said there was no justification for the US move and vowed to hit back with duties of its own. Trump also inked an order on Monday to increase a previously imposed 10 per cent tariff on China to 20 per cent — piling atop existing levies on various Chinese goods. Beijing condemned the “unilateral imposition of tariffs by the US” and said it would impose 10 and 15 per cent levies on a range of agricultural imports from the United States. — AFP

RUSSIA SEEKS TIES WITH MYANMAR



Russia's President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with Myanmar's military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing during a meeting in Moscow. Russia told Myanmar's leader and military junta chief Min Aung Hlaing on Tuesday that Moscow saw good prospects for expanding cooperation in a range of areas including agriculture and nuclear energy. — Reuters

GREEK PARLIAMENT TO APPROVE TRAIN TRAGEDY INVESTIGATION

ATHENS: Greece's parliament was on Tuesday to approve an investigation into possible evidence tampering at the disaster site of the country's worst train tragedy, which claimed 57 lives in 2023. The government was to support a vote in the late evening to set up a preliminary investigative committee that will examine whether the swift rehabilitation of the site had destroyed vital evidence. Suspicion has fallen on Christos Triantopoulos, a senior aide to Prime

Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the time. Triantopoulos was overseeing relief efforts. Triantopoulos has denied any involvement in what opposition parties have called an improper bulldozing of the site just days after the accident. Mitsotakis, who is under fire over his government's handling of the case, had already pledged his party's support for the parliamentary probe. Opinion polls show a strong majority of Greeks believe the government has attempted to

cover up evidence into the tragedy. Hundreds of thousands turned out at protest rallies nationwide on Friday, the second anniversary of the tragedy, to demand justice for the victims, in one of the largest mobilisations recorded in Greece. A committee investigating the tragedy concluded last March without assigning blame to senior politicians. Critics noted that the committee had declined to interview key witnesses including Triantopoulos. — AFP

Ukraine to maintain US ties even after arms halt

UKRAINE on Tuesday sought to maintain bonds with Washington after President Donald Trump ordered US military aid deliveries be suspended following a public clash with counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky. Trump's stunning decision strengthened fears in Ukraine and in many European capitals that America was pivoting away from its allies — and toward Moscow. “Ukraine is absolutely determined to continue cooperation with the US,” Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmygal told reporters, adding: “The US is an important partner and we need to preserve this.”

US and Western security guarantees were “existentially important” for Ukraine and for Europe, he said, adding Kyiv was ready “at any time” to sign a strategic minerals extraction deal demanded by Trump. The prime minister's outreach followed Trump's decision, which sent shockwaves across Ukraine, but which was also hailed by Moscow.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was a “solution which could really push the Kyiv regime to a peace process”. “If the United States stops (military supplies), this would probably be the best contribution to peace,” Peskov said. The European Union, which along with Ukraine, has been excluded from US-Russian negotiations towards a potential truce in Ukraine, has been scrambling to up its support for Kyiv. That urgency heightened on Friday, when Trump and Zelensky clashed in the White House, with Trump warning his Ukrainian counterpart “won't be around very long” without a ceasefire deal with Moscow.

Poland's government noted that America's decision was made without consulting Nato allies, and the impact was already being seen at a weapons and aid logistics hub for Ukraine it hosts. “Reports coming in from the border, as well as from our (logistics) hub... also confirm the announcements made by the American side,” Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said without elaborating. The US pause has gone into effect immediately and impacts hundreds of millions of dollars of weaponry in the



Communal workers stand next to burnt cars in the courtyard of a building damaged as a result of a drone attack in Odesa. — AFP

process of being sent to Ukraine, The New York Times reported. Ukraine's prime minister vowed in a news conference that “we will do everything to hold out” despite the US aid cut. A Zelensky aide, Mykhailo Podolyak, said on X his country was “discussing options with our European partners.”

Zelensky has yet to comment publicly on the halt of the US aid. Last week, he visited Washington to sign the multi-billion-dollar minerals deal — but ended up not doing so after his showdown with Trump and US Vice President JD Vance. Trump said Ukraine should be “more appreciative” of US support. Zelensky has accused Trump of succumbing to “a disinformation space” created by Russia, which he says is not serious about pursuing peace.

Ukraine is seeking tough security guarantees around an end to the war. With the United States opposing its bid to join Nato, Kyiv is turning to other measures backed by Western countries.

After weekend crisis talks in London, Britain and France are investigating how to propose a one-month Ukraine-Russia

truce “in the air, at sea and on energy infrastructure” — potentially backstopped by troops on the ground.

In Washington, Congressional Democrats immediately condemned the pause as dangerous and illegal. “My Republican colleagues who have called Putin a war criminal and promised their continued support to Ukraine must join me in demanding President Trump immediately lift this disastrous and unlawful freeze,” said Gregory Meeks, top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Trump has also warned he would “not put up” much longer with Zelensky's defiance, and said Ukraine's leader should be “more appreciative” of US support.

Zelensky dismissed calls for him to resign, repeating his pledge to do so only if Ukraine were given Nato membership, which Russia -- and now the United States under Trump -- opposes.

US and Russian officials have held talks on ending the war, enraging Kyiv and Europe for being sidelined, and prompting fears that any deal could threaten Ukraine's future. — AFP

EU chief unveils 800-billion-euro plan to ‘rearm’ Europe

BRUSSELS: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Tuesday presented a five-part plan to mobilise some 800 billion euros for Europe's defence — and help provide “immediate” military support for Ukraine after Washington suspended aid. “A new era is upon us,” the European Commission president said in a letter presenting the plan to EU leaders, two days before a summit aimed at cementing joint action on support for Ukraine and boosting Europe's defences. “ReArm Europe’ could mobilise close to 800 billion euros of defence expenditures for a safe and resilient Europe,” von der Leyen told reporters as she outlined the plan, which includes a 150-billion-euro loan facility along with steps to free up large-scale defence investments.

It was not immediately clear how fast funds could be made available under the proposals — which need approval by member states — nor

how quickly this could translate into battlefield support for Kyiv. “It can help finance or accelerate certain purchases,” Camille Grand of the European Council on Foreign Relations said.

“The results will be visible more likely in weeks or months rather than ‘immediately’ but it makes a difference, since that is when the American restrictions will start to bite.” The proposes that the EU ease strict budget rules to allow them to ramp up spending on defence. Von der Leyen suggested this measure could free up 650 billion euros over four years.

It calls for a new “instrument” to provide 150 billion euros of loans to member states for defence investment.

“We are talking about pan-European capability domains — for example: air and missile defence, artillery systems, missiles and ammunition drones and anti-drone



President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen gives a press conference at the EU Commission headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

systems,” said von der Leyen. “With this equipment, member states can massively step up their support to Ukraine. So, immediate military equipment for Ukraine,” she said. Another component would

involve using the existing EU budget “to direct more funds towards defence-related investments.” That would include letting member states repurpose so-called “cohesion” funds intended for the

development of poorer European countries — to use them for defence. Two areas of action would involve the bloc's lending arm the European Investment Bank.

EU states want it to drop limits on lending to defence firms and a savings and investments union to help companies access capital.

In a separate letter to EU leaders on Tuesday, the EIB's president Nadia Calvino said she would call for the scope of eligible investments to be “further widened” to align with the EU's “new policy priorities”.

A European official said this would involve making pure defence projects eligible — rather than dual-use civilian and military items at present — and would remove an eight-billion-euro cap on security and defence investments.

This would allow the bank to support large-scale strategic projects and items without plausible civilian use such as helicopters. — AFP

The risks of Dark Enlightenment



KHALID ALSAFI
AL HURAIBI

The writer is an
innovator and an
insights storyteller

LIKE a bird in the palm of a child — unaware of its suffering — Europe finds itself trapped by the whims of the current US administration. This imagery of Arab poet Qais Ibn Al Mulawwah, captures the fragile state of global democracy today.

At the heart of this crisis lies the rise of the Dark Enlightenment movement, a radical ideology threatening to reverse centuries of democratic progress. The Dark Enlightenment, also known as the “Neo-Reactionary Movement” (NRx), emerged in the early 2000s through the writings of Curtis Yarvin, who wrote under the pseudonym Mencius Moldbug. Yarvin and his followers argue that democracy is inherently flawed and advocate for a return to authoritarian governance led by a technocratic elite. Once confined to obscure Internet forums, this ideology now influences mainstream politics and figures with significant global reach — including US President Donald Trump and techofeudalists like Elon Musk of Starlink and Neurolink, and Peter Thiel of the genocide enabling software company Palantir.

Far from being an abstract intellectual exercise, the Dark Enlightenment is reshaping global politics. In the US, this movement fuels a bullying-based foreign policy that pressures and undermines its allies. Europe is a prime example, as it struggles with growing US economic and political coercion. This influence extends beyond US borders, shaping political landscapes in ways that challenge democratic norms

and foster authoritarian tendencies. The recent German elections illustrate this trend. With a voter turnout nearing 84 per cent, the conservative Christian Democrats Union (CDU) claimed victory, while a far-right, xenophobic party surged into second place. This shift reflects broader European anxieties — rising living costs, immigration and integration challenges, unemployment, and the complexities of the energy transition. The Dark Enlightenment’s message, amplified by Eurocentrism’s exploitation of fear and distrust, has emboldened manipulative far-right movements and deepened social divides.

Europe’s historical contributions to the modern world — ranging from the nation-state model to the values of the French Revolution — have long made it a symbol of cultural and political progress.

The honesty of the Dutch, the creativity of Italians, the warmth of Spanish culture, the precision of Germans and the hospitality of Eastern Europeans all reflect a continent rich in diversity and innovation. Yet, Europe’s legacy is also marred by the darker chapters of colonialism and world wars — reminders of how quickly societies can descend into chaos. Learning from these lessons is essential to prevent a repeat of history. The Dark Enlightenment poses a direct challenge to these hard-earned values. By advocating for the concentration of power in the hands of a manipulative elite, it seeks to dismantle the democratic ideals of mutual respect, equality, and shared governance. Its proponents argue that modern societies are too complex for the

The Dark Enlightenment poses a direct challenge to these hard-earned values. By advocating for the concentration of power in the hands of a manipulative elite, it seeks to dismantle the democratic ideals of mutual respect, equality, and shared governance.

general public to manage — a dangerously regressive view that risks undermining the freedoms that define decent life. Addressing this threat requires global awareness and collective action. Education is the first line of defence — understanding the ideological underpinnings of the Dark Enlightenment and recognising its manifestations in policy and rhetoric.

The world is more interconnected than ever, and the consequences of inaction will be felt across every region. For Oman and the GCC, the spread of unilateralistic ideologies could disrupt the delicate balance between modernisation and cultural heritage. A weakening of global democratic norms might embolden external powers to exert greater influence over the region’s political and economic landscapes.

Furthermore, as energy transitions accelerate, the region’s economic stability hinges on maintaining cooperative, rules-based international frameworks. If the Dark Enlightenment’s ethos of unilateralism prevails, the GCC’s ability to navigate global markets and preserve sovereign decision-making could be severely compromised.

As a believer in our shared duty to defend what is right, I call on every individual to take meaningful action. Let us not be like the child who smothers the bird out of ignorance. Instead, let us be the guardians of freedom — ensuring that democracy, like the bird, can soar once again. The challenge is formidable, but in unity lies our strength and the promise of a brighter future.

CHINESE LESSONS IN SAUDI SCHOOLS SHOW GROWING TIES

HAITHAM EL Tabei

With a map of China on the wall behind him, 14-year-old Yasser al Shaalan studied the names of professions in a Chinese textbook, one of thousands of Saudi children now learning the language at school.

Mandarin’s entry into public schools is the latest sign of growing ties between Saudi Arabia and China, as the kingdom pushes to diversify its economy and strategic alliances.

“The pupils at the other schools are proficient in English. I know Arabic, English and Chinese, which is a great asset for my future,” Shaalan said.

In August, Saudi Arabia introduced China’s official language as a compulsory second foreign language after English in six of its 13 administrative regions’ schools.

Shaalan and his classmates have three Mandarin lessons a week, taught by their teacher Ma Shuaib, a Chinese national and Muslim who is fluent in Arabic. In their classroom in northern Riyadh, close to the Saudi headquarters of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, Shaalan and his classmates learn Chinese characters shown on an electronic whiteboard.

“At first it was difficult, but now it has become easy and fun,” the teenager said.

Mandarin is one of the world’s most widely spoken languages, and the overwhelming majority of its speakers live in China.

After a visit to China in 2019, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced a plan to introduce Chinese throughout the education system.

Since then, several Saudi universities have opened programmes in Chinese. In 2023, Prince Sultan University in Riyadh inaugurated the kingdom’s first branch of the Confucius Institute.

Following China’s emergence as a major economic power, Mandarin teaching has become increasingly popular around the world, including in Europe.

However, in 2022 Germany warned the Confucius Institute language centres were being “used by the Communist Party for political ends”.

Dozens have closed in the US, Sweden, France, Australia and Canada in recent years, following similar accusations. — AFP

Why do women live longer than men?

MOHANA RAVINDRANATH

WOMEN outlive men, by something of a long shot: In the US, women have a life expectancy of about 80, compared with around 75 for men.

This holds true regardless of where women live, how much money they make and many other factors. It’s even true for most other mammals. “It’s a very robust phenomenon all over the world, totally conserved in sickness, during famines, during epidemics, even during times of starvation,” said Dr Dena Dubal of the University of California, San Francisco. But the reasons women live longer are complicated and less established — and the fact that they are outliving men doesn’t necessarily mean they are living better. Women tend to have shorter health spans (the number of healthy years a person lives) than men, said Bérénice Benayoun, an associate professor at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology. Women are generally more physically frail than men in old age; they’re also more vulnerable, particularly after menopause, to developing cardiovascular issues and Alzheimer’s disease, in part because age itself is a risk factor for those conditions, Benayoun said.

Scientists are trying to uncover the reasons men and women age differently in the hopes of extending life span and health span for both. Here’s what they know so far about what causes the longevity gap.



MOHANA
RAVINDRANATH

The writer is with
The New York Times

The reasons women live longer are complicated and less established — and the fact that they are outliving men doesn’t necessarily mean they are living better.

GENETICS

A growing body of research suggests that the XX set of female chromosomes (which, along with other chromosomes, carry our DNA) may impact longevity, though it’s not clear exactly how. For example, a 2018 study conducted by Dubal’s lab looked at genetically manipulated mice with different combinations of chromosomes and reproductive organs. Those with two X chromosomes and ovaries lived longest, followed by mice with two X chromosomes and testes. Mice with XY chromosomes had shorter life spans.

Epigenetic factors — environmental or lifestyle elements like climate or chronic stress that impact which genes are expressed, and how — may also play a role in life span, widening or shrinking the disparities between men and women, said Montserrat Anguera, of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine.

HORMONES

Researchers are also investigating the role of hormones like estrogen in longevity and are especially interested in the effect they have on the immune system. “There’s decent data showing that, at least before menopause, the female immune system tends to be better, more on it and better able to mount responses,” Benayoun said. In general, males “tend to do much worse in response to infection,” which in turn could shorten their life spans; they’re also more likely than women to die of sepsis, she said. One 2017 analysis found that women who experienced menopause later in life

— older than 50 — lived longer than those who experienced it earlier. When estrogen levels drop, such as during menopause, women’s immune systems seem to weaken. And women tend to catch up to (or surpass) men in terms of developing diseases that were less common before menopause, Benayoun said.

LIFESTYLE AND BEHAVIOUR

Behavioural patterns play a key role in the disparity. Women are generally less likely than men to smoke or drink heavily — behaviours that contribute significantly to mortality, said Kyle Bourassa, a psychologist and a senior fellow at the Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development at Duke University.

Women also tend to practice more “health-promoting behaviour,” like wearing a seat belt or going to the doctor for annual checkups, Bourassa said. In addition, he said that women are more likely than men to socialise, protecting them from the detrimental effects of social isolation and loneliness.

Ultimately, it’s a combination of all these factors that determines the life span gap, said Alan Cohen, an associate professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. “There’s probably a thousand ways that that’s happening.” And even though we do have control over some factors, like drinking, smoking and diet, it’s not yet clear how significantly longevity would be impacted by changing those behaviours, Bourassa said. “We need randomised control trials to tease these things apart,” he said.

Lights, camera, action... another episode begins!



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

LIKE the legendary film-maker D W Griffith's famous phrase, "lights, camera, action", the media set the stage for the live broadcast of the much-publicised meeting between US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky in the Oval Office last week.

But in the blink of an eye, everything changed, and the entire world was shocked by the public spat between the two leaders, making the scene resemble what a body language expert described as a "dramatic episode of a political soap opera."

This rare occurrence in the world of diplomacy came during growing tensions between Washington and Kyiv over Trump's efforts to negotiate a ceasefire in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Under normal circumstances, leaders of countries meet after advisers and diplomats from their respective nations hold discussions and reach an agreement on summit issues. In contrast, reports indicated that heads of state were taken directly to the summit instead of taking necessary actions.

During the meeting, Trump not only accused Zelensky of being "disrespectful", but also cautioned the Ukrainian President, "You have no right to dictate what we should feel. You're gambling with World War III, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to this country."

These heated exchanges occurred just a few months after Trump met Zelensky at his New York base in Trump Tower in September of last year, when he stated that it was time to settle Russia's war in Ukraine.

As NBC News reported, this extraordinary scene left Ukraine's ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova, who was in the room, holding her head in her hands, an image that went viral. Following the exchange, Trump cancelled the scheduled press conference with Zelensky and ended the negotiations.

History has shown that many former US presidents have had plenty of tense exchanges with their allies, but all have occurred in private, and as analysts pointed out, "never like this". US foreign policy is also based on the firm belief that democratic states are better allies and better trading partners.

However, the fact is that many believe Trump deliberately created public controversy. They think this is a drama that Trump orchestrated to humiliate Zelensky. Trump's intentions are evident from his argument that the United States has already provided \$350 billion in aid and his statement the other day that Ukraine should not seek Nato membership. Conversely, Zelensky sought membership in the European security alliance to protect himself from Russian threats.

Under normal circumstances, leaders of countries meet after advisers and diplomats from their respective nations hold discussions and reach an agreement on summit issues. In contrast, reports indicated that heads of state were taken directly to the summit instead of taking necessary actions

For Trump, Russia appears to be a powerful country with which the US can strike a deal, whereas Ukraine is a less powerful nation that may not have a seat at the table or a sympathetic ear in the White House.

In response to Zelensky's inquiry about what security guarantees the US would provide to Ukraine if it does not join Nato, Trump conveyed that Ukraine would be safe as long as American companies conducted business there.

In contrast, Nato countries have provided Ukraine with €267 billion in military and non-military aid during the past three years of conflict, with only half of that amount coming from European nations.

Reports indicate that in recent months, Zelensky has asserted that no ceasefire or peace agreement would be possible without security commitments from European countries and the US to help arm and protect Ukraine from Russia.

However, experts believe that Zelensky may have utilised the technique during the Oval Office meeting as a power move to align with Trump and avoid appearing weaker in his confrontation with him.

The bottom line, many believe, like Griffith's phrase is, Zelensky is at the centre of a film scripted, directed and produced by the West, while Trump is making a different movie. So, the camera will continue rolling!

60% OF ADULTS WILL BE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE BY 2050: STUDY

Nearly 60 per cent of all adults and a third of all children in the world will be overweight or obese by 2050 unless governments take action, a large new study said on Tuesday.

The research published in the Lancet medical journal used data from 204 countries to paint a grim picture of what it described as one of the great health challenges of the century.

"The unprecedented global epidemic of overweight and obesity is a profound tragedy and a monumental societal failure," lead author Emmanuela Gakidou, from the US-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), said in a statement.

The number of overweight or obese people worldwide rose from 929 million in 1990 to 2.6 billion in 2021, the study found. Without a serious change, the researchers estimate that 3.8 billion adults will be overweight or obese in 15 years - or around 60 per cent of the global adult population in 2050.

The world's health systems will come under crippling pressure, the researchers warned, with around a quarter of the world's obese expected to be aged over 65 by that time.

They also predicted a 121-per cent increase in obesity among children and adolescents around the world.

A third of all obese young people will be living in two regions — North Africa and the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean – by 2050, the researchers warned. But it is not too late to act, said study co-author Jessica Kerr from Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Australia.

"Much stronger political commitment is needed to transform diets within sustainable global food systems," she said.

That commitment was also needed for strategies "that improve people's nutrition, physical activity and living environments, whether it's too much processed food or not enough parks," Kerr said.

More than half the world's overweight or obese adults already live in just eight countries - China, India, the United States, Brazil, Russia, Mexico, Indonesia and Egypt, the study said.

Among high-income European countries, Greece will have the highest obesity rates for boys and young men by 2050. San Marino will have the highest rate for girls ages 5 to 14 while Greenland will come out on top for those ages 15 to 24.

While poor diet and sedentary lifestyles are clearly drivers of the obesity epidemic, "there remains doubt" about the underlying causes for this, said Thorkild Sorensen, a researcher at the University of Copenhagen not involved in the study. For example, socially deprived groups have a "consistent and unexplained tendency" towards obesity, he said in a linked comment in The Lancet.

The research is based on figures from the Global Burden of Disease study from the IHME, which brings together thousands of researchers across the world and is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. — AFP

The future of world order

US President Donald Trump has cast serious doubts on the future of the postwar international order. In recent speeches and United Nations votes, his administration has sided with Russia, an aggressor that launched a war of conquest against its peaceful neighbour, Ukraine. His tariff threats have raised questions about longstanding alliances and the future of the global trading system, and his withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement and the World Health Organization has undercut cooperation on transnational threats.

The prospect of a wholly disengaged, self-focused United States has troubling implications for world order. It is easy to imagine Russia taking advantage of the situation to try to dominate Europe through the exercise or threat of force. Europe will have to show greater unity and provide for its own defence, even if a US backstop will remain important. Likewise, it is easy to imagine China asserting itself more in Asia, where it openly seeks dominance over its neighbours. Those neighbours will surely have taken note.

In fact, all countries will be affected, because the relationships among states and other major transnational actors are interconnected. An international order rests on a stable distribution of power among states; norms that influence and legitimise conduct; and shared institutions. A given international order can evolve incrementally without leading to a clear paradigm shift. But if the preeminent power's domestic politics change too radically, all bets are off. Since relations among states naturally vary over time, order is a matter of degree. Before the modern state system, order was often imposed by force and conquest, taking the form of regional empires such as China and Rome (among many others). Variations in war and peace between powerful empires were more an issue of geography than of norms and institutions. Because they were contiguous, Rome and Parthia (the area around modern-day Iran) sometimes fought, whereas Rome, China and the Mesoamerican empires did not.

Empires themselves depended on both hard and soft power. China was held together by strong common norms, highly developed



The prospect of a wholly disengaged, self-focused United States has troubling implications for world order.

political institutions and mutual economic benefit. So was Rome, especially the Republic. Post-Roman Europe had institutions and norms in the form of the papacy and dynastic monarchies, which meant that territories often changed governance through marriage and family alliances, regardless of the subject people's wishes. Wars were often motivated by dynastic considerations, though the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought wars born of religious fervour and geopolitical ambition, owing to the rise of Protestantism, divisions within the Roman Catholic Church, and increased inter-state competition.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the French Revolution disrupted the monarchical norms and the traditional restraints that had long sustained the European balance of power. Although Napoleon's pursuit of empire ultimately failed after his retreat from Moscow, his armies swept away many territorial boundaries and created new states, leading to the first deliberate efforts to create a modern state system, at the 1815 Congress of Vienna.

The post-Vienna "Concert of Europe" suffered a series of disruptions over the following decades, most notably in 1848, when nationalist revolutions swept the continent. Following these

upheavals, Otto von Bismarck launched various wars to unite Germany, which assumed a powerful central position in the region, reflected in the 1878 Congress of Berlin. Through his alliance with Russia, Bismarck produced a stable order until the Kaiser fired him in 1890.

Then came World War I, which was followed by the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, whose failure set the stage for World War II. The subsequent creation of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the precursor to the World Trade Organization) marked the most important institution-building episode of the twentieth century. Since the US was the dominant player, the post-1945 era became known as the "American Century".

The end of the Cold War in 1991 then produced a unipolar distribution of power, allowing for the creation or strengthening of institutions such as the WTO, the International Criminal Court, and the Paris climate agreement.

Even before Trump, some analysts believed that this American order was coming to an end. The twenty-first century had brought another shift in the distribution of power, usually described as the rise (or more accurately, the recovery) of Asia.

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JOSEPH S NYE, JR

The writer is Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, is a former US assistant secretary of defence and the author of Do Morals Matter?

SPORTS

BEACHSOCCER



An Oman player shoots at the Russian goal.

OMAN LOOK TO BOUNCE BACK AGAINST RUSSIA

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

The Oman beach soccer team will take on Russia in their second friendly against Russia at the sandy court of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Wednesday. The match kicks off at 9:30 pm. Russia won the opening international friendly 6-5 on Monday night. The friendlies are among the team's programme for preparations for the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2025 in Pattaya, Thailand from March 20 to 30. The match against Russia ended with many positive outcomes despite the narrow defeat. The experienced national head coach Talib Hilal implemented different technical tactics and gave chances for new faces in the game. The first period of the match ended in a goalless draw despite some active scoring attempts through Khalid al Araiimi, Yahya al Murkhi, Abdullah al Souti besides others. All 11 goals were scored in the second and third periods as the opponent took advantages of Oman's shortage in the second period following Sami al Balushi's red card as the Russia went up 2-0 in the period. In the third and deciding period, the visitors extended their lead despite goals netted by Oman through Khalid al Araiimi, Abdullah al Souti, Yahya al Murkhi and Abdulrahman al Fazari. Oman players will look to bounce back strongly in Wednesday's game. The national team players had managed to win against Russia during CIS Games in Belarus in 2023 as Oman met Russia twice. The first match ended for Oman by 7-4 while they had suffered a 9-3 defeat in the third and fourth play-off match. Furthermore, Oman had played against Russia in 2023 in Muscat and they had received two defeats by 9-3 and 4-3. On the other side, Oman players are raising their final preparations ahead of the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2025. This event is very crucial for the national team as the Asian event will act as qualifiers championship for the Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup. The top three teams in Asian event will earn direct spots for the 2025 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup in Seychelles in May. The current camp in Bausher, which concludes on March 10, will feature two more preparatory games against Belarus, scheduled on March 8 and 10. Belarus confirmed their seat at the 2025 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup.

Oman will vie against Bahrain, Malaysia, and Vietnam in Group D at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2025. OMAN SQUAD: Khalid al Araiimi, Munther al Araiimi, Abdullah al Souti, Nooh al Zadjali, Mashal al Araiimi, Ahmed al Owaisi, Salim al Araiimi, Younis al Owaisi, Sami al Balushi, Yahya al Muraiki, Abdulrahman al Fazari, Musallam al Araiimi, Majid al Affari, Yousef al Zadjali, Amjad al Hamdani and Sameer al Afari.



Russia beat Oman 6-5 in the first international friendly in Muscat.

OMAN CLUB CROWNED HANDBALL CHAMPIONS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

OMAN CLUB continued their dominance in the Oman Handball League (OHL), securing their fourth consecutive title after a well-deserved 23-16 victory over Ahli Sidab in the final match. The game was held at the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher under the auspices of Dr Amer al Matani, CEO of the Development Institution at Oman LNG. The match kicked off with high intensity, as Ahli Sidab's Kuwaiti professional Mahdi al Haddad nearly opened the scoring. However, Oman Club struck first through Sameeh al Azzani in the first minute. Algerian professional Mohamed Ihab doubled Oman's lead with a successful breakthrough of the opponent's defence. Ahli Sidab responded quickly, with Azan al Maashari reducing the deficit by scoring his team's first goal. Muhannad al Zarafi later equalised from a penalty in the sixth minute. The back-and-forth action continued as Mahmoud al Jabri put Ahli Sidab ahead, but Sameeh al Azzani immediately restored parity for Oman. Ahli Sidab pressed forward, with Azan al Maashari and Muhannad al Zarafi adding two more goals to take a 5-3 lead. Oman fought back, as Hani al Dughaiishi narrowed the gap to 5-4. However, Al Zarafi extended Ahli Sidab's lead with two consecutive goals, while Oman struggled to penetrate a strong defence, reinforced by goalkeeper Hudhaifa al Siyabi's outstanding saves. Mohammed al Araiimi scored Oman's fifth goal from a penalty in the 18th minute, followed by a brilliant individual effort from Mohammed Ihab to bring the score to 7-6. Al Zarafi quickly restored a two-goal lead for Ahli Sidab with another penalty, before Salah al Dughaiishi made it 9-6 from a fast break. The fierce competition persisted in the final minutes of the first half. Ahli Sidab added another point, while Oman responded with two, reducing the deficit to just one goal at half-time, with Ahli Sidab leading 10-9. SECOND-HALF COMEBACK Oman Club entered the second half with renewed determination. Mohammed



Champions Oman Club celebrate with the Oman Handball League shield.



Ahli Sidab make a scoring attempt as Oman Club players defend during the final.

Ihab quickly equalised before Hamad al Dhughaiishi scored on a counter-attack to give Oman an 11-10 lead. Ahli Sidab attempted to regain control, but goalkeeper Munir al Balushi's solid performance denied them. Mahmoud al Wahaibi extended Oman Club's lead in the seventh minute, but Muhannad al Zarafi responded for Ahli Sidab in the ninth minute, bringing the score to 12-11. Oman were awarded a penalty, but Hudhaifa al Siyabi made a crucial save. However, Mohammed Ihab swiftly made up for the missed opportunity with two successive goals, increasing Oman Club's

lead to 14-11 by the 13th minute. Oman maintained their offensive pressure, with goals from Taher al Hadidi and Nasr al Tamimi. Ahli Sidab's Mohammed al Zarafi fought to close the gap, but Oman remained in control. Mohammed al Dughaiishi further extended the lead, though Al Zarafi managed to reduce it again, making it 17-13 in Oman's favour. In the final minutes, Oman Club completely dominated the game, scoring six additional goals while Ahli Sidab managed only three. The match ended with Oman securing a decisive 23-16 victory, reinforcing their supremacy in Omani handball by winning the championship for the fourth consecutive season. SEEB FINISH THIRD In the third-place playoff, Seeb Club edged out Muscat with a 22-21 victory to secure the bronze medal. Following the final match, the guest of honour, alongside Musa al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Handball Federation, awarded the winning teams. Oman Club were crowned league champions receiving the championship trophy and gold medals. Ahli Sidab finished as runners-up, earning silver medals, while Seeb secured third place and the bronze medals.

Djokovic, Alcaraz on collision course in Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, California: Carlos Alcaraz could run into Novak Djokovic in the quarterfinal stage in his quest for a rare Indian Wells 'three-peat', while defending women's champion Iga Swiatek also faces a tough test, according to the draw released on Monday. Djokovic beat the Spaniard to reach the Australian Open semifinal in January and is hoping he can become only the third man to claim 100 career singles titles when the main draw of the tournament kicks off on Wednesday in the California desert. The Serb, who got a first-round bye, will hope to have put recent injury concerns behind him as he kicks off his campaign at the 1000-level event against a qualifier or Australian firebrand Nick Kyrgios. The men's draw could also see German top seed Alexander Zverev play against rival Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas in a potential quarterfinal meeting, while 2022

Djokovic beat the Spaniard to reach the Australian Open semifinal in January and is hoping he can become only the third man to claim 100 career singles titles when the main draw of the tournament kicks off on Wednesday in the California desert.



champion and home hope Taylor Fritz may run into Russian Andrey Rublev in the final eight. On the women's side, Polish second seed Swiatek was on a quarterfinal collision course with Zheng Qinwen months after the Chinese seventh seed knocked her out in the Olympic semifinal. Top seeded Aryna Sabalenka will hope to bounce back after a pair of early exits from Doha and Dubai last month with Italian Jasmine Paolini potentially standing between her and the semifinal stage. A tantalising all-American quarterfinal clash could be in the cards after 2023 US Open winner Coco Gauff and newly minted Australian Open champion Madison Keys were pulled into the same half of the draw. Each hope to end an American women's Indian Wells trophy drought, with 24 years since Serena Williams last won. — Reuters

PAKISTANSQUADS



Pakistan head coach Aaqib Javed (L) and captain Salman Agha address a press conference at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Tuesday, ahead of their first Twenty20 international match against New Zealand. — AFP

AGHA NAMED T20 CAPTAIN, RIZWAN STAYS AS ODI SKIPPER

KARACHI: Pakistan all-rounder Salman Agha was named skipper of their Twenty20 International team while Mohammad Rizwan will continue to lead the one-day international side, the country’s cricket board said on Tuesday.

Shadab Khan will be Agha’s deputy, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) added, as it named squads for five T20s and three ODIs against New Zealand starting on March 16.

There was no place for senior batsman Babar Azam in the T20 side while Rizwan was also left out of a young squad as Pakistan look ahead to the T20 Asia Cup in September and next year’s T20 World Cup.

There was no place for senior batsman Babar Azam in the T20 side while Rizwan was also left out of a young squad as Pakistan look ahead to the T20 Asia Cup in September and next year’s T20 World Cup.

Aqib Javed will stay on as interim head coach for the tour, extending his assignment beyond Pakistan’s ill-fated Champions Trophy campaign on home soil, while the hunt for his successor begins. Mohammad Yousuf will join the squad as batting coach.

Hosts Pakistan ended their group campaign in the ongoing Champions Trophy without a victory and failed to reach the semifinals. — Reuters

PAKISTAN SQUADS:

T20: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Shadab Khan, Abdul Samaad, Abrar Ahmed, Haris Rauf, Hasan Nawaz, Jahandad Khan, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Haris, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair Bin Yousaf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim and Usman Khan.

ODI: Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Akif Javed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Imam-ul-Haq, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Sufyan Moqim and Tayyab Tahir.



India’s Virat Kohli watches the ball after playing a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy one-day international semifinal match between Australia and India at the Dubai International Stadium in Dubai on Tuesday. — AFP

Kohli leads India to CT final after tense chase

VETERAN

batsman Virat Kohli rolled back the years with a polished 84 as India pulled off a tense chase to beat Australia by four wickets in the first semifinal of the Champions Trophy on Tuesday.

Set 265 for victory, India lost the 36-year-old Kohli in the closing overs but KL Rahul’s unbeaten 42 steered the team home with 11 balls to spare at the Dubai International Stadium.

They will face South Africa or New Zealand in the final on Sunday in Dubai with India playing all their matches at the venue after they refused to tour hosts Pakistan for the eight-nation event.

Lahore was the alternate venue for the final had India missed out.

Australia elected to bat and posted the highest total of 264 all out at Dubai International Cricket Stadium in this tournament after key knocks from skipper Steve Smith, who made 73, and Alex Carey, who hit 61.

In reply India lost two early wickets before Kohli and Shreyas Iyer, who made 45, put the chase back on track in their partnership of 91.

Cooper Connolly, making the team in place of injured Matthew Short who was forced out of the tournament on Monday, trapped skipper Rohit Sharma lbw on 28 for his first ODI wicket.

Kohli and Iyer then took stock against an inexperienced Australian attack missing their top fast bowlers including Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood to injuries.

But the next line of bowlers stood up as leg-spinner Adam Zampa bowled Iyer before pace bowler Nathan Ellis rattled the stumps of Axar Patel for 27.

Kohli, known as a master chaser who recently hit an unbeaten 100 in India’s win over arch-rivals Pakistan on February 23, stood firm in another stand with wicketkeeper-batsman Rahul.

Kohli was dropped by Glenn Maxwell off Connolly on 51 but Zampa denied him another ton when he clubbed a googly to Ben Dwarshuis at long-on to leave India at 225-5 and Australia still hoping.

But Rahul kept calm and with Hardik Pandya, who hit three sixes in his 28, put on 34 off 31 balls to ease the pressure.

Ellis removed Pandya, another catch at long-on, but Rahul hit the winning six as a largely Indian crowd roared in delight.

Earlier, Australia lost regular wickets but kept coming back with partnerships including 50-plus stands between Smith and Labuschagne, who made 29, and then the captain and the left-handed Carey.

India pace spearhead Mohammed Shami stood out with figures of 3-48 as Australia’s innings lasted 49.3 overs. Spinners Varun Chakravarthy and Ravindra Jadeja took two wickets each.

Left-handed opener Travis Head gave the team a quick start with his 39 after losing his partner Connolly for a duck.

India’s victory is a reversal of their last match against Australia when they lost in the 2023 ODI World Cup final in Ahmedabad.

The second semifinal is on Wednesday in Lahore. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES
Australia 264 all out in 49.3 overs (S Smith 73, A Carey 61; M Shami 3-48, V Chakravarthy 2-49, R Jadeja 2-40) v India 267-6 in 48.1 overs (V Kohli 84, S Iyer 45, KL Rahul 42 not out; N Ellis 2-49, A Zampa 2-60)
Result: India won by four wickets
Next semifinal: New Zealand v South Africa in Lahore on Wednesday

Seeb, Al Salam win in five-set Oman Volleyball League thrillers

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

In an exciting round of the Oman First Division Volleyball League qualifiers finals, the competition witnessed two highly competitive matches. Seeb secured a hard-fought victory over Al Bashayer 3-2, while Al Salam managed to edge past Majees with the same result.

At the main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, Seeb and Al Bashayer delivered a gripping match full of dramatic twists. Al Bashayer started strong, dominating the first set with a commanding 25-12 victory.

However, Seeb quickly regained their balance and imposed their rhythm in the second set, securing an overwhelming 25-11 win.

In the third set, Al Bashayer reasserted their dominance, relying

on powerful serves and fast attacks from the flanks, which unsettled Seeb’s defence. After a series of exchanged points, Al Bashayer managed to clinch the set 25-16 in a tense finish.

As the competition intensified, Seeb entered the fourth set with a different tactical approach, strengthening their blocking and diversifying offensive play between quick sets and back-row attacks. This strategy paid off as Seeb won the set 25-21, forcing a decisive fifth set.

In the final set, Seeb showed greater composure, taking an early lead. However, Al Bashayer fought back, narrowing the gap and keeping the score tight until the closing moments. Ultimately, Seeb’s experience, particularly in serving and powerful spikes, made the difference, as they secured



An Al Salam player celebrates a point.

the set 16-14. This crucial victory propelled Seeb to the top of the league standings with seven points, while Al Bashayer remained in fourth place with just one point.

AL SALAM PREVAIL OVER MAJEEES
In another thrilling encounter held at Sohar Sports Complex, Al Salam secured a dramatic 3-2 victory over Majees in a match that remained fiercely contested until the final moments.

Majees started the match strongly, capitalising on Al Salam’s struggles in attack and serving, sealing the first set with a commanding 25-15 win. However, Al Salam quickly regained their composure and delivered a more structured defensive and offensive performance in the second set, claiming a 25-19 victory to level the match.

The excitement continued into the third set, where Majees once again regained their advantage, securing the set 25-19, reaffirming the close competition between the two teams. However, Al Salam demonstrated great determination in the fourth set, establishing control with strong blocking and effective attacks, winning 25-18 to force a decisive fifth set.

In the final set, the intensity between the teams escalated, but Al Salam proved to be the stronger side in the crucial moments, sealing the set 15-9 and earning a valuable victory that strengthened their position in the league standings.

With this win, Al Salam raised their tally to five points, moving into second place, while Majees, also with five points, settled for third place.

SPORTS

LIVINGDREAM



Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior attends a press conference on the eve of the Uefa Champions League Round of 16 first-leg match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid. — AFP

VINICIUS WANTS TO EXTEND REAL CONTRACT AMID SAUDI LINKS

LONDON: Vinicius Junior wants to extend his Real Madrid contract and continue to live the dream despite continuous links to the Saudi Pro League. Champions League holders Real Madrid host city rivals Atletico Madrid in the first leg of an eagerly-anticipated last-16 tie on Tuesday. Real Madrid will be eager to bounce back from Saturday's LaLiga loss at Real Betis and plenty of focus will be on Vinicius, who has only one goal in his last nine appearances. Asked about his future, Vinicius told a press conference: "I'm very relaxed about it, I've got a contract until 2027, I hope we can renew that shortly. "I'm happy here and it's a dream come true to be playing along side the best players, under the best manager, the best president and for the best fans. I couldn't be anywhere better than where I am right now. "I'm here to continue making history. I want to repay all this club and the president have given me. I hope I can keep scoring goals and playing more games in this jersey. "Now I've got the taste for winning things and started writing my own history here, I want more. I want to go down in this club's history,which isn't easy with the number of legendary players in the past. I want to be one of them. "It's going to be a great game, we love a good derby. We look forward to these big games all season, especially in the Champions League," the Brazilian forward added. A remarkable 2023-24 campaign from Vinicius helped Real Madrid clinch LaLiga and Champions League success, with the Brazil attacker able to score 24 times. It made Vinicius a big contender for the Ballon d'Or, but he was overlooked for Manchester City and Spain midfielder Rodri. Vinicius and the whole Real Madrid squad decided to skip the Ballond'Or ceremony, which prompted criticism, but the much-maligned forward explained it was a club decision and has quickly shifted focus on further history at the Bernabeu this season. — dpa



Juventus' Khephren Thuram celebrates scoring their first goal against Verona. — Reuters

Juventus see off Verona to stay in Serie A top four

JUVENTUS moved back into Serie A's Champions League places on Monday by beating Verona 2-0 on Monday to dampen rumbling fan discontent. Khephren Thuram's fine first-time finish in the 72nd minute and a late strike from Teun Koopmeiners saw off struggling Verona. Juventus climbed two points above Lazio who briefly moved into the top four by winning at AC Milan on Sunday night, and next week host third-placed Atalanta with only three points separating the two teams. France midfielder Thuram opened the scoring just as fans at the Allianz Stadium in Turin were turning on the Juve players, loudly booed off at half-time by supporters already outraged at the midweek exit from the Italian Cup at the hands of lowly Empoli. "We played well and we deserved to win... it was an important three points," said under-fire Juve coach Thiago Motta. "I'm pleased with the players I have, with the effort and commitment they show... We know that the attitude was wrong last time (against Empoli)." The match was played in a flat atmosphere as fans protested their team's underwhelming season after bringing in Motta to replace Massimiliano Allegri and spending significant sums to renew the squad and mount both a challenge for the Scudetto and a deep run in the Champions League. Instead, Juve were dumped out of Europe's top club competition in the play-offs by PSV Eindhoven and trail league-leaders Inter by six points. Demanding supporters staged a protest outside the team hotel on Sunday night and launched foul-mouthed chants at Motta ahead of Monday's win, Juve's fifth in a row in Serie A. On Monday, Juve would have been behind to a rocket of a shot from Toma Suslov at the break had Davide Faraoni not strayed offside in the build-up. That ruling set the stage for Juve to win a match which they dominated from the first whistle and could have won more comprehensively had it not been for Verona goalkeeper Lorenzo Montipo. Koopmeiners, who has underperformed since arriving from Atalanta as a potential star of a reworked team, netted just his third goal of the season give the match a more respectable scoreline. — AFP

Italian Serie A results
On Monday:
Juventus 2 (Thuram 72, Koopmeiners 90)
Verona 0
Played Sunday
Bologna 2 (Orsolini 48-pen, 56) Cagliari 1 (Piccoli 22)
Genoa 1 (Vasquez 81) Empoli 1 (Grassi 36)
AC Milan 1 (Chukwueze 85) Lazio 2 (Zaccagni 28, Pedro 90+8-pen)
Monza 0 Torino 2 (Elmas 41, Casadei 66)

Roma 2 (Saelemaekers 61, Dovbyk 76) Como 1 (Da Cunha 44)
Saturday
Atalanta 0 Venezia 0
Napoli 1 (Billing 87) Inter Milan 1 (Dimarco 22)
Udinese 1 (Thauvin 38-pen) Parma 0
Friday
Fiorentina 1 (Gosens 9) Lecce 0

ITALIAN SERIE A TABLE AFTER MONDAY'S MATCH (PLAYED, WON, DRAWN, LOST, GOALS FOR, GOALS AGAINST, POINTS):
Inter Milan 27 17 7 3 60 25 58
Napoli 27 17 6 4 43 22 57
Atalanta 27 16 7 4 59 26 55
Juventus 27 13 13 1 45 21 52
Lazio 27 15 5 7 49 35 50
Bologna 27 12 11 4 42 33 47
Fiorentina 27 13 6 8 42 28 45
Roma 27 12 7 8 42 30 43
AC Milan 27 11 8 8 39 30 41
Udinese 27 11 6 10 34 37 39
Torino 27 8 10 9 31 32 34
Genoa 27 7 10 10 25 35 31
Como 27 7 7 13 33 43 28
Verona 27 8 2 17 27 56 26
Cagliari 27 6 7 14 27 42 25
Lecce 27 6 7 14 18 43 25
Parma 27 5 8 14 32 46 23
Empoli 27 4 10 13 23 44 22
Venezia 27 3 9 15 22 41 18
Monza 27 2 8 17 21 45 14
Note: Top four qualify for the 2025/26 Uefa Champions League; fifth goes into Europa League; sixth goes into Conference League; bottom three relegated to Serie B

Yokohama beat toothless Shanghai Port in Asian CL last 16

SHANGHAI: Brazilian forward Anderson Lopes scored the only goal as last year's runners-up Yokohama F-Marinos squeezed past Shanghai Port 1-0 away in the first leg of their Asian Champions League last 16 clash on Tuesday. Chinese Super League champions Shanghai were largely toothless, their best chance coming midway through the second half when substitute Li Shuai thumped the ball against the post. Coached by Gareth Southgate's former England assistant Steve Holland, Yokohama will be strong favourites to reach the quarterfinals of Asia's top club competition with the home leg to come next week. The first half at Shanghai's purpose-built Pudong Football Stadium was

Coached by Gareth Southgate's former England assistant Steve Holland, Yokohama will be strong favourites to reach the quarterfinals of Asia's top club competition with the home leg to come next week.



Yokohama F Marinos' Anderson Lopes celebrates his goal during the AFC Champions League match against China's Shanghai Port in Shanghai. — AFP

scrappy with few chances and several injury stoppages. Home defender Fu Huan lasted just 10 minutes before Shanghai's Australian coach Kevin Muscat, the former Yokohama boss, was forced into a change. Three Shanghai players were booked in a first period in which the hosts had more of the ball, without really threatening. Yokohama went ahead on the half hour thanks to some poor defending from Muscat's men, who attempted to clear the ball but succeeded only in inadvertently setting up Lopes for a simple close-range header. It was the 31-year-old captain's

seventh goal in the competition this term. The visitors turned the screw in the second half and should have gone up 2-0 on the hour but Brazilian Yan Matheus was denied by the legs of goalkeeper Yan Junling, who also denied Lopes in the closing minutes. Later on Tuesday, also in the East zone of the Champions League, Thailand's Buriram United host Johor Darul Ta'zim of Malaysia. In the West zone, four-time Asian champions Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia travel to Uzbekistan to face Pakhtakor. Another Saudi side, Al Ahli, is at Qatar's Al Rayyan. — AFP

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Under-Secretary of the
Ministry of Health for
Planning and Health
Organisation

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

OMAN is ramping up its efforts to enhance cancer care through a strategic collaboration between the public and private sectors, ensuring that advanced treatment and early detection services are more accessible to patients.

With cancer rates rising globally, the Ministry of Health is working closely with private healthcare providers to expand oncology services and integrate new medical technologies into the healthcare system.

During the launch of Aster Al Raffah International Cancer Care Clinic, Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Organisation, highlighted the importance of such partnerships in strengthening the country's healthcare infrastructure. “

The Ministry of Health is leading strategic plans to tackle non-communicable diseases like cancer, ensuring that patients receive the necessary care, whether through government or private healthcare facilities or even abroad if required,” he said in an exclusive interview with the Observer.

EARLY DETECTION AND EXPANDED
SCREENING PROGRAMMES

A key pillar of Oman's cancer care strategy is early detection, which has been a priority for the Ministry of Health. The national screening programme “Ifhas wa Itma'in” (Check and Be Assured), in place for over 15 years, was recently expanded to include individuals aged 35 and above, improving access to preventive care.

“We have introduced new programmes, including mammograms for breast cancer, which His Majesty supported just two months ago,” Dr Al Mandhari noted.

“Additionally, HPV vaccinations for girls aged 15 and above and pap smear screenings for cervical cancer have been integrated into the national vaccination and maternal health programmes.” These initiatives reflect Oman's commitment to preventive healthcare, reducing the burden of late-stage cancer diagnoses through proactive screening and early intervention.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION DRIVING
INNOVATION

Dr Al Mandhari emphasised the critical role of private-sector partnerships in advancing cancer treatment. “The private sector is a strategic partner, bringing innovative technologies and expertise that complement government efforts,” he stated.

In addition to private facilities, Oman has invested in specialised cancer centres such as the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Research and Treatment Centre and the National Centre at Royal Hospital.

Experts from these institutions collaborate to introduce cutting-edge diagnostic and treatment modalities, ensuring that patients benefit from the latest medical advancements.

By fostering a strong public-private healthcare ecosystem, Oman is expanding access to specialised oncology services, reducing the need for patients to seek treatment abroad and positioning the country as a regional hub for cancer care.

The Ministry of Health is committed to further integrating new technologies into cancer treatment and expanding its collaboration with private healthcare providers.

Oman’s economy grows
as non-oil sector expands

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

OMAN'S economy maintained steady growth in 2024, supported by a strong performance in non-petroleum activities, despite a decline in oil sector revenues and foreign direct investment flows, according to the latest Economics Brief issued by the Ministry of Economy.

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) at constant prices reached RO 28.15 billion by the end of the third quarter of 2024, reflecting a 1.86 per cent growth.

Non-oil activities in Oman drove the expansion, growing 4.17 per cent to RO 20.53 billion, while petroleum activities contracted 2.76 per cent to RO 8.88 billion, highlighting continued volatility in the oil sector.

The inflation rate averaged 1.0 per cent between January 2024 and January 2025, indicating stable consumer prices.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in Oman stood at RO 26.68 billion, up 16.18 per cent by the end of Q3 2024. However, FDI inflows dropped 22.94 per cent to RO 3.72 billion, reflecting weaker investor sentiment.

Oman's average oil price fell 12.8 per cent to \$72.5 per barrel as of January 2025, adding pressure to government revenues.

Trade data showed a mixed performance: The trade balance declined



The non-oil sector grew 4.17% to RO 20.53 billion.

3.38 per cent to RO 7.52 billion by the end of 2024; merchandise imports rose 12.09 per cent to RO 16.71 billion; and non-oil Omani exports dropped 16.26 per cent to RO 6.23 billion.

The latest figures highlight Oman's progress in diversifying its economy, with non-petroleum activities emerging as a key driver of growth.

However, the decline in FDI inflows and non-oil exports underscores the need to attract more foreign capital and strengthen trade partnerships.

As Oman continues its Vision 2040 strategy, investments in logistics, manufacturing and tourism are expected to play a crucial role in sustaining long-term economic stability.

Policy reforms to boost Sultanate of Oman’s
renewables-focused electricity market

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

NEW policy initiatives unveiled recently by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals are designed to pave the way for a more decentralised, efficient and sustainable electricity market that benefits both producers and consumers, a key Ministry official has emphasised.

Dr Firas al Abduwani, Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen, said the reforms centring around auto generation, direct sales and wheeling, aim to create a conducive environment for independent developers in Oman's expanding renewable energy space.

Participating in a webinar on the theme, ‘The Role of Liberalisation in the Omani Energy Market’, hosted by the British-Omani Society, the official stated: “These reforms are designed to open up the market. Rather than having all transactions pass through Nama Power and Water Procurement (PWP), we are enabling bilateral agreements where eligible generators and consumers can transact directly while utilising the national grid for wheeling.

This marks a crucial step in reducing dependence on centralised procurement and setting the stage for a more competitive market.”

The ‘Renewable Energy Policy for Self-Generation and Direct Sale’, launched earlier this year, seeks to promote sustainable development, encourage



Oman is embarking on a comprehensive energy market design: Dr Firas al Abduwani.

investments in clean energy and regulate electricity self-generation and direct sales. It is a key milestone in the country's energy transition as it targets generating 90% to 100% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2050.

Elaborating on the broader objectives behind these policy initiatives, Dr Al Abduwani noted that the Ministry is also embarking on a comprehensive energy market redesign.

“We are conducting a full assessment, similar to the exercise that led to the establishment of the regulator, to ensure a holistic and efficient market structure.”

Additionally, the Ministry, in coordination with the Oman Net-Zero

Centre, is driving new initiatives such as renewable energy certificates and mandatory decarbonisation targets. “The renewable energy certificate market will ensure that objectives and targets are met efficiently,” he said.

Furthermore, the government is evaluating various renewable energy and storage options, including pumped hydro, to enhance grid stability. “We are looking at ways to integrate storage solutions and ensure that our policies support the growth of renewables without compromising reliability,” he added.

Beyond market liberalisation, Dr Al Abduwani emphasised the Ministry's vision for fostering national champions in the renewable energy sector.

“With Oman's vast renewable energy potential, we aim to see major national champions operating internationally, with OQ Alternative Energy (part of OQ Group) playing a key role. Simultaneously, we want to create ample space for independent developers to drive innovation, challenge norms and contribute solutions.”

Also taking part in the webinar were: Eng Hilal al Ghaithi, Director of Energy — The Authority for Public Services Regulation; Head of Project Development — Clean Energy, OQ Alternative Energy; and Mikey Clark, CEO of Relode. Session hosts included: Chris Breeze, Vice Chair — British Omani Society; and Anna Halpern-Lande, Co-CEO and Co-Founder, Ortus Climate Mitigation.

ADVERTORIALS

PIONEERING INITIATIVES



NBO RECOGNISED AS MOST INNOVATIVE DIGITAL RETAIL BANK IN OMAN FOR 2024

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has been awarded the Most Innovative Digital Retail Bank in Oman for 2024 by the Global Business Outlook Awards, reaffirming its commitment to transforming the banking experience through cutting-edge digital solutions tailored to customer needs.

As part of its mission to drive innovation and enhance Oman's digital banking landscape, NBO has introduced several pioneering initiatives. Among them is the launch of Eid note dispensing machines, the first of their kind in Oman, strategically placed across five locations. This service addresses the common challenge of obtaining Eidiya notes during Eid, further reinforcing the Bank's focus on customer-centric solutions.

In addition, NBO has rolled out self-service kiosks at multiple locations, offering a broad range of banking services without the need to visit a branch. These kiosks enable customers to open new accounts, apply for Debit and Badeel Prepaid Cards, renew or replace Debit and Badeel Prepaid Cards and top up Badeel Prepaid Cards, ensuring a seamless and efficient banking experience.

Further strengthening its digital offerings, NBO introduced Oman's first digital credit card application facility, allowing both existing and new customers to apply for credit cards using digital signatures, in compliance with Central Bank of Oman guidelines. The Bank has also launched a new digital verification and update feature on the NBO app, enabling customers to quickly and securely update their personal details, enhancing service personalisation while ensuring compliance with Know Your Customer (KYC) regulations.

Dr Ali Salim al Shukaili, Assistant General Manager and Head of Digital Banking & E-Channels at NBO, commented on the recognition: "We are committed to redefining banking by integrating innovative digital solutions that cater to our customers' evolving needs. This award is a testament to our dedication to delivering seamless, secure and customer-centric services that set new benchmarks in Oman's banking industry. By continuously enhancing our digital platforms and customer touchpoints, including our the NBO app and self-service machines, we strive to provide elevated convenience, accessibility and security."

BANKDHOFAR DRIVES RAMADHAN SAVINGS WITH ENHANCED AUTO LOAN CAMPAIGN

MUSCAT: This Ramadhan, Bank Dhofar is excited to announce a special offer on its Auto Loan product, making it easier than ever for customers to purchase their desired vehicles without financial strain.

With a highly competitive interest rate starting at just 3.99%, flexible repayment options extending from 12 to 120 months and a simple application process, this loan is tailored to suit the needs of anyone looking to finance their next car purchase.

The campaign aims to attract both new and existing customers with an easy, secure, and affordable financing solution for their vehicle needs. Towards this end, the bank has set tiered interest rates: 3.99% for terms



up to 3 years, 4.25% for 4-7 years and 4.50% for 8-10 years.

Additionally, direct debit auto loans are available at 4.99%. The loan, secured against the vehicle, makes it an ideal choice for salaried Omanis and expats aged 18 and above.

To make the process even smoother,

BankDhofar has streamlined the application process, allowing customers to apply quickly and easily at any of its branches and through direct sales representatives, for loan amounts ranging from RO 1,000 to RO 120,000. Monthly payments are automatically deducted via direct debit from the customer's BankDhofar account. Furthermore, early repayment is allowed, with a fee applied for early settlement.

The loan approval process is quick and efficient, typically taking just a few working days for completion. Required documents for the loan application include a bank statement, ID card or passport copy, salary assignment and additional documents based on the car purchase.

New SUV in town: Lynk & Co 06 hits Oman's roads

LYNK & Co has officially introduced the much-anticipated Lynk & Co 06 at a spectacular launch celebration at its showroom in Ghala Heights, Muscat.

Marking a new era in compact crossover SUVs, the 06 is set to make a remarkable impact in the Omani market with its superior build quality, bold design and advanced technology.

Starting at just RO 6,966, the Lynk & Co 06 is designed for those who seek both style and substance. This trendy, sporty SUV is powered by a 1.5L turbocharged engine which delivers an exhilarating driving experience while maintaining excellent fuel efficiency.

It features an array of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), ensuring superior safety and convenience on the road. With its bold aesthetics and high-end performance, the 06 strikes



a perfect balance between affordability, modernity & reliability.

Ideal for small families and young drivers looking for their first new car, this compact crossover is redefining value in

its segment.

The Lynk & Co 06 packs a powerful 181PS engine, delivering an exciting yet efficient drive. For added convenience, it comes with a power tailgate, remote start

and keyless entry for effortless access, making every journey memorable. Inside, it offers comfort and style with integrated sports seats enhancing its trendsetting appeal.

Riyadh Ali Sultan, General Manager of Towell Auto Centre highlighted the collaboration between Mobility Auto and Lynk & Co in Oman.

He remarked, "This partnership has been a remarkable journey driven by innovation, sustained growth and an unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional customer satisfaction.

Since Lynk & Co's introduction in Oman, it has established itself as a premium automotive brand offering a seamless blend of technology, performance and modern design. With an expanding lineup including the 01, 03, 03+, 05, 09 and now the 06, we continue to cater to the evolving needs of Omani consumers."

BANK MUSCAT ORYX FUND INCREASES DIVIDEND FOR 8TH YEAR

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, announced that the fund management body of Bank Muscat Oryx Fund has proposed a dividend distribution of 74 baisas per unit to be paid to the unitholders for FY 2024, subject to requisite approvals from the unitholders and other competent authorities.

Accordingly, the Fund has maintained its track record of consistently growing dividend distributions despite a challenging market environment.

In addition to the regular income distributions through dividends, the Fund has also been



rewarding its investors with attractive capital appreciation since its inception in 1994.

Bank Muscat Oryx Fund continues to reward its investors with its stellar performance with an

average return of 13.4% per annum to investors over the last 5 years which translates into an aggregate return of 87.5% over this period. For example, an amount of RO 10,000 invested in Oryx Fund has grown to approximately RO 18,750 over the last 5 years, consisting of original investment of RO 10,000 and investment gain (returns) of RO 8,750.

The return delivered by Oryx Fund over the last 5 years is significantly higher than average returns offered by alternatives over the same period like the MSX 30 Index 2.8% per annum, S&P GCC Index 5.4% per annum, MSCI Emerging Markets index negative 0.7% per annum.

Own Kia K8 now with VAT paid by Kia in Ramadhan

MUSCAT: This Ramadhan, let the spirit of togetherness shine brighter with Kia's incredible Ramadhan offer! Kia is bringing you the perfect way to celebrate — an exceptional opportunity to own the dynamic, classy Kia K8. In this blessed month, Kia pays the VAT for you, so you can focus on what truly matters — your spiritual journey.

Savour the sweetness of community and enjoy iftars, with a Kia K8, enjoy shared moments of gratitude and find joy in simplicity of life. The K8 is not just a car, you're embracing a lifestyle of comfort, luxury and performance — all with unbeatable perks.

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year of registration and insurance. Also, enter the grand raffle to own a Kia EV6, an all-electric crossover when your purchase a Kia.

Imagine making unforgettable memories with your family in the Kia K8, a high-performance sedan that reflects Kia's dedication to elegance and power.

Powered by the 3.5 GDI Smartstream powertrain, the K8 makes your spiritual journey smoother, more peaceful and more enjoyable. Plus, with 510L of boot space, long journeys will feel effortless and stress-free, giving you the freedom to go wherever your heart desires.

Step inside, and be greeted by futuristic technology — a 12.3 -inch TFT digital cluster for displays important information and a 12.3-inch infotainment system that connects you to the world like never before. And when it comes to sound, the Kia K8 sets the bar high with its sophisticated 14-speaker Meridian surround sound system, delivering an experience that feels like you're at a concert.

In K8 every journey is a pleasure, thanks to the Ergo Motion Seat designed for ultimate comfort. Whether it's the driver's seat, with its relaxing stretching mode that builds confidence, or the passenger seat with adjustable comfort settings, every detail is crafted for your well-being.

The K8's centre armrest, featuring a USB charging port, sliding cup

holders and a media control device for the second row, ensures everyone enjoys a connected, comfortable experience.

Driving the K8 through the city becomes an effortless adventure, with Kia's Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS) reducing risks and keeping everyone safe.

With the Forward Collision-Avoidance Assist (FCA), you can drive with peace of mind, knowing that if a collision risk arises, the K8 will take action. The K8's intelligent systems, like the Smart Cruise Control (SCC) and Highway Driving Assist (HDA), make your journeys not only safer but also more enjoyable. Parking is a breeze with the Surround View Monitor (SVM) and Front & Reverse Parking Assist, making it easier to park in tight spots.

BUSINESS

TEMPTING OFFER



The Asyad Shipping IPO will be the first IPO in Oman where a price stabilisation manager has been appointed.

ASYAD SHIPPING ANNOUNCES FINAL IPO PRICE AT THE TOP OF RANGE

MUSCAT: Asyad Shipping Company SAOG (under transformation), one of the world’s largest diversified maritime providers and a global leader in deep-sea transportation, today announces the final offer price and demand levels for its initial public offering (IPO) on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The final offer price has been set at Bzs 123 per share, at the top of the previously announced offer price range of Bzs 117 to Bzs 123 per share, raising gross proceeds of c. RO 128.1 million (c. \$332.8 million) for Asyad Group SAOC. Based on the final offer price, Asyad Shipping’s market capitalization upon listing will be c. RO 641 million (c. \$1.66 billion).

The offering comprised of a total of 1,041,748,856 existing shares by Asyad Group, representing 20% of Asyad Shipping’s total issued share capital. Of those, 25% of Offer Shares were allocated for Category II (Retail Investor) applicants and 75% of Offer Shares were allocated for Category I (Institutional Investor) applicants.

In the Category I tranche, 30% of offer shares were allocated to the two anchor investors, Mars Development and Investment LLC and Falcon Investments LLC, a subsidiary of the Qatar Investment Authority, who committed to subscribe for 10% and 20% of the Offer Shares respectively, at Bzs 123 per share.

Asyad Shipping, in collaboration with Asyad Group, appointed Ubhar Capital SAOC as the price stabilisation manager and liquidity provider for the offering.

Asyad Group has allocated RO 10 million from the IPO proceeds to Ubhar Capital to conduct stabilising transactions in the Company’s shares at the final offer price commencing on the first day of trading and for a period of up to 30 calendar days thereafter. The Asyad Shipping IPO will be the first IPO in Oman where a price stabilisation manager has been appointed.

The backing of Asyad Shipping’s Offering by prominent local and regional anchor investors played a significant role in the strong demand seen during the Offering.

Mars Development and Investment LLC and Falcon Investments LLC, a subsidiary of the Qatar Investment Authority, showed substantial confidence in Asyad Shipping’s competitive strengths such as its revenue backlog of \$1.9 billion, its backing by the Oman Investment Authority, its highly experienced management team, and its industry-leading adjusted EBITDA margin of 68%.

Their participation provided crucial momentum, contributing to the oversubscription levels experienced in the IPO.

OPAZ APPROVES NEW INVESTOR INCENTIVES FOR 2025

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

THE Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has approved a series of additional incentives to attract investors, including significant reductions in rental costs across key industrial cities.

In its first meeting of 2025, the board announced a 50% reduction in rental fees for five years for new projects in Ibri Industrial City, Sur Industrial City and Mahas Industrial City.



The board announced a 50% reduction in rental fees for five years for new projects in Ibri Industrial City.

Meanwhile, investors in Al Mudhaibi Industrial City, Al

Suwaiq Industrial City and Madha Industrial City will receive a 100 per cent rental exemption for the first two years, followed by a 50 per cent reduction for the next three years.

The incentives are part of OPAZ’s strategy to enhance Oman’s industrial sector by attracting more businesses, fostering economic diversification and creating job opportunities.

The move aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to boost private sector participation and increase the competitiveness of the sultanate of Oman’s industrial

hubs.

The approved incentives are expected to drive new projects in key sectors such as manufacturing, logistics and technology.

The focus on industrial cities highlights the government’s push to develop infrastructure, enhance supply chain efficiency and attract long-term investments.

OPAZ continues to roll out investor-friendly policies to position Oman as a regional hub for industrial development, reinforcing the sultanate of Oman’s efforts to create a more competitive and diversified economy.

Mineral exports boost Salalah Port cargo in 2024

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 4

PORT of Salalah, one of the world’s largest transshipment ports, has recorded a 10 per cent rise in general cargo volumes handled during 2024, underscoring the gateway increasingly prominent role as a maritime logistics hub for burgeoning minerals, petrochemicals and petroleum refining activities in southern Oman.

General cargo throughput climbed to 22.6 million tonnes in 2024, up from 20.6 million tonnes during the previous year.

The growth was mainly fuelled by an increase in limestone, gypsum and other dry bulk volumes.

Commenting on the outlook for the General Cargo Terminal’s performance, Braik Musallam al Amri, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Salalah Port Services Co SAOG, said: “General cargo volumes are projected to remain steady, with dry bulk commodities — particularly limestone and gypsum —



Ammonia exports from Salalah Port.

continuing to be key drivers.

Demand from India and Southeast Asia’s construction and manufacturing sectors is expected to sustain strong exports.

Despite global economic fluctuations and freight rate volatility, these sectors are relatively resilient to short-term demand shocks.

Additional growth is anticipated in break bulk cargo, alongside continued expansion in the liquid bulk segment. As a result, total cargo volumes are expected to surpass 2024

levels by the end of the year,” he added in the Directors’ Report of the company’s financial performance for 2024.

Container volumes, on the other hand, dipped to 3.3 million TEUs, down from 3.8 million TEUs in 2023, said al Amri.

He noted however that continuing uncertainty over safe maritime shipping in the Red Sea may impact Salalah Port’s container throughput in 2025.

“While the geopolitical situation in the Middle East has shown signs of improvement and the likelihood of the Red Sea

reopening has increased, there is no immediate indication of this happening,” he stated.

But boding well for container volumes growth, the Chairman pointed out, was the recent completion of a major upgrade of the Container Terminal, which will be fully prepared to accommodate the Gemini Network, a global vessel-sharing agreement between Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd. This investment is set to enhance Salalah’s role as a “strategic transshipment hub”, he added.

Port of Salalah recorded consolidated revenue from operations of RO 70 million in 2024, representing a 2 per cent increase over corresponding figures for 2023.

Consolidated EBITDA amounted to RO 15.6 million, which corresponds to an EBITDA margin of 22 per cent. This compares to RO 13.3 million, a margin of 19 per cent in 2023. Consolidated Net Profit was recorded at RO 2.3 million, as compared to RO 2.8 million during the corresponding period last year.

STUDENT-LED INNOVATIONS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT ESO FAIR 2025

MUSCAT: The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) proudly hosted the 2025 Sustainability Fair, bringing together 12 private schools to showcase innovative solutions for a greener future.

Held on February 25 at Sheraton Oman Hotel, the event highlighted student-led projects addressing key environmental challenges and alignment with the United Nations’ Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs).

This year, ESO took the lead as the primary organiser, reinforcing its commitment to environmental education, youth empowerment and community involvement in Oman.

In addition to the dynamic lineup of student-driven projects, the exhibition showcased university students, SMEs, businesses, governmental

organisations and innovators presenting real-world sustainability solutions.

These exhibitors were selected to participate for their commitment, expertise and insights in promoting environmental stewardship and as inspiration to future generations and the community at large.

A key highlight of the event

was the awards ceremony, where top projects were recognised:

- Best Presentation: ABQ Azzan Bin Qais International School
- Most Innovative Idea: International School of Oman
- Most Practical Implementation: ABA Oman International School
- Overall Winner: Hay Al-Sharooq International School

Six agricultural investment opportunities launched in Al Buraimi

AL BURAIMI: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, has announced the launch of six new agricultural investment opportunities in Al Buraimi Governorate through the “Tatweer” platform.

This initiative aims to attract investors, support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and enhance agricultural production using modern technologies. The investment opportunities span a total area of 29.6 acres, strategically distributed across the Wilayat of Mahadha.

A flagship project in Al Zaroub, covering 4.6 acres, focuses on the



This initiative aims to attract investors, support SMEs and enhance agricultural production using modern technologies.

cultivation and production of leafy vegetable crops using advanced farming techniques to promote sustainable agriculture.

Additionally, five investment opportunities have been allocated for SMEs in Safwan, Mahadha, each covering five acres. These projects include the cultivation of leafy green crops, vegetable

farming using modern agricultural methods, garlic and onion cultivation, potato farming and seasonal fodder production.

The Tatweer platform provides a seamless electronic application process, making it easier for investors to apply and participate in these opportunities.

This move aligns with the government’s broader strategy to enhance food security, support SMEs and boost agricultural efficiency in Oman.

Eng Nasser bin Ali al Marshoudi, Director General of the General Directorate of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Al Buraimi Governorate, revealed that more than 20 additional agricultural

investment opportunities will be announced in the coming week.

These projects will cover both plant and animal production sectors, aiming to contribute to food security and job creation in the region.

Furthermore, he stated that the ministry, in cooperation with the General Directorate of Housing and Urban Planning, plans to launch 50 new agricultural investment opportunities in 2025. This initiative reflects the government’s commitment to expanding investment in the agricultural sector, fostering economic growth and ensuring sustainable food production in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

UK equity fund outflows close to £100 bn since Brexit



ANDY JALIL

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

SINCE leaving the European Union, investors have pulled almost £100 bn from UK equity funds, raising questions over London's lacklustre IPO market and the city's position as Europe's leading finance centre.

According to data from Morningstar to the end of December 2024, £97.4 bn has been taken from UK-focused funds in the wake of the EU referendum vote in June 2016 — an event often blamed for increasing political uncertainty and exacerbating UK fund outflows.

Head of research at Peel Hunt, Charles Hall said: "It definitely should be a wake-up call. We cannot have an effective equity market without fund inflows, which are essential to enable companies to raise growth capital and to support IPOs."

UK equities have remained out of favour for years, with institutional investors in particular slashing their allocation to domestic companies to a record low over the past twenty years. Morningstar data shows £16 bn was withdrawn from UK equity funds in 2024, although that figure is down on the record £29.9 bn pulled in 2023.

Despite the FTSE 100 notching a record high last month, Hall added that mounting equity fund outflows were having a negative impact on UK company valuations and increased their attractiveness as acquisition

targets.

"All of this is materially undermining the UK's growth potential," said Hall.

"We have a crazy situation where we have significant tax benefits in pensions and ISAs and no requirement to support UK companies. We also have a tax on share trading that makes the UK uncompetitive and an unattractive market for both domestic and overseas investor's."

Several measures have been introduced to boost investment in domestic companies, including one of the biggest overhauls to the UK's listing regime in three decades.

Chief investment officer at Forvis Mazars, Ben Seager, said Brexit was not the only contributing factor to mounting UK equity fund outflows. He added: "Historically a lot of investing has had a home market bias, with investors favouring domestic names that they recognise."

"In recent years this has shifted to a preference for more of a global mindset and taking advantage of the much greater opportunity. Combine that with the period of US exceptionalism we've seen over the last decade and the global dominance of US mega-cap technology in the last few years and the shift in flows makes more sense."

The US stock market has continued to attract big investment from retail and institutional investors and has delivered more than 80 per cent over the past five years

UK equities have remained out of favour for years, with institutional investors in particular slashing their allocation to domestic companies to a record low over the past twenty years.

compared to around 17 per cent for the FTSE 100."Over the past 18 months, the market has been very S&P focused," said David Cummings, head of UK equities at Newton Investment Management.

"The S&P has been very tough to beat; and momentum and flow tends to go with the winning index." He said the UK was "overdue a decent year" and a pullback in the US stock market could catalyse improvements in UK equity fund flows.

"The US market is expensive relative to the UK and Europe. The elastic has been stretched quite wide," he said.

"Sentiment in the UK is pretty negative. The government got off to a tricky start and the market priced that in. Lower rates and lower inflation could help, but you have to wait for the turn." Other stockpickers are optimistic about the long-term outlook for UK companies and increased investor appetite.

"Despite their improved performance over recent years, UK equities still look cheap relative to other markets and reasonable on an absolute basis," said Fidelity International fund manager Alex Wright.

"Although the UK market continues to remain largely unloved by domestic investors, its attractive valuations are being recognised by other market participants such as overseas corporates and private equity firms who have been amongst the biggest bidders in the UK market."

EUROPE'S DEFENCE PUSH PROVIDES COVER FOR TAX RAID

BY GEORGE HAY

Europe's dark defence picture has a bright side. President Donald Trump's hostility to erstwhile US allies in Europe, exemplified by last Friday's dressing down of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House, has scrambled the continent's security arrangements. Yet leaders who gathered in London on Sunday have a consolation of sorts: the pressure to rapidly rearm gives them cover to hike taxes.

European governments were already moving to shore up their defences before Trump's televised spat with Zelenskyy. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer last week committed to raising UK military spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, with an ambition of hitting 3% by the end of the decade.

And the parties likely to form Germany's next coalition government are considering setting up special funds for defence and infrastructure, each worth at least 400 billion euros. European defence stocks soared on Monday morning.

The question is how to finance these extra outlays. Analysts at the Bruegel think tank reckon, opens new tab it would cost 250 billion euros to boost Europe-wide defence spending from 2% of GDP to the 3.5% level likely to be an effective deterrent to Russia.

About 125 billion euros of that might come from pan-European sources like joint borrowing, although this raises tricky questions. That would still leave states needing to collectively raise the same sum again at a time when some EU members' national debt piles, opens new tab exceed 100% of national output and tax burdens as a proportion of GDP are already at post-war highs.

The assumption therefore is that a bigger outlay on defence means cutting back elsewhere. Given national output of 2.8 trillion pounds, hiking British military spending to 3% of GDP would cost about 20 billion pounds a year.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves could finance this by slashing expenditure — even though some government departments have already faced swingeing cuts — or by hiking borrowing. Adding the equivalent of 2 percentage points to the basic rate of income tax, or a similar increase in value-added tax, would be more contentious and would breach the UK government's pre-election promises.

Yet in wartime, higher taxes are the norm. Researchers at the Kiel Institute for the World Economy analysed 113 examples of countries building up their militaries since 1870. They found that additional borrowing and taxation tended to do the heavy fiscal lifting. Overall government spending generally held up, aside from limited reallocations away from welfare.

Trump's aggressive stance towards EU has given Starmer, new German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and other European politicians an opportunity.

— Reuters

The role of desalination in global water resilience

WATER, the foundation of our society, is a fundamental life force. It drives global health, food security and economic stability. Covering over 70% of our planet, it is abundant — yet only a small fraction is freshwater and even less is accessible for human use.

Throughout history, civilisations facing water scarcity have sought ways to make the ocean drinkable.

Ancient Greek sailors boiled seawater, while Middle Eastern civilisations used early distillation methods from thermal distillations' process of boiling seawater and condensing the steam into freshwater.

From the first patent of desalination in 1675 to the first desalination for ships built in England in 1884 and then the island of Aruba pioneering a desalination plant addressing the island's lack of freshwater sources — today, modern desalination technologies — the initial thermal, the newer reverse osmosis and even modern solar-powered systems, are transforming how we secure freshwater in arid regions, shaping the future of global water resilience.

This is essential on a global scale; the International Energy Agency (IEA) reports about a quarter of the global population lack access to safe drinking water and nearly two-thirds experience severe water scarcity for at least one month each year.

The impacts of climate change predict these numbers are only going to rise. IPCC predicts a global temperature increase of 2°C will cause 1 to 4 billion people to face challenges accessing reliable, safe water sources (2022).

Furthermore, research by Nature Climate Change projects that over 80% of global croplands will face increased



Throughout history, civilisations facing water scarcity have sought ways to make the ocean drinkable. © Reuters



NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The author is a Media and Communication Master's graduate skilled in diverse writing formats, specialising in storytelling, branding, and in-depth journalism

water scarcity by the end of the 21st century (2022).

With millions lacking access to safe drinking water and agriculture struggling to meet rising demands, projections indicate that billions more will face water stress in the coming decades, exacerbating inequalities and straining ecosystems.

For Oman, and other countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, desalination is especially important, with the area recognised as the most water-stressed globally; Oman ranking 12th of the 17 most water-stressed countries there.

Water scarcity is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, demanding innovative and sustainable solutions.

Today, the future of global water security depends not only on advanced desalination but also the integration of renewable energy, smart water management and emerging innovations.

Water is not just a resource

— it is the foundation of life. Securing it today means securing our future tomorrow. It is the lifeblood of our planet, flowing through every nation and generation.

Only by uniting across borders and caring for each drop with wisdom can we ensure life's stream flows unbroken — vibrant and nourishing for all who follow.

Collaboration is key, with international conferences, energy summits, and sustainability forums such as the UN Water Conference — the next of which is scheduled for the UAE in 2026, the World Water Forum — held every 3 years in different host countries and Oman Water Week — taking place in April this year.

Such efforts are key in fostering cross-sector partnerships and investing in scalable, sustainable solutions, to ensure clean water remains accessible, resilient and a driving force for economic and social stability for generations to come.

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GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Abu Huraira,
may Allah be pleased with him,
reported that the Prophet,
may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him,

said: "There is no servant who conceals the faults of another servant in this worldly life, except that Allah will conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection".

QURAN
VERSE OF THE DAY



So leave them to blunder and play, until they meet their Day which they are promised. The Day when they will emerge from the tombs in a rush, as though they were hurrying towards a target.

(al maarij)



DUA
SUPPLICATION TO ALLAH

O Allah, on this day, strengthen me in carrying out Your commands, let me taste the sweetness of Your remembrance, grant me, through Your graciousness, that I give thanks to You. Protect me, with Your protection and cover, O the most discerning of those who see.

UNIQUE EXPERIENCES FAMILIES SEEK OUT DURING RAMADHAN

BY BALQEES AL ORAIMI

RAMADHAN in Oman signifies a period of adjustment. It is also a time when rich traditions blend with engaging activities. For Omanis and residents alike, life truly begins after Iftar—a moment when families gather around tables, sharing meals and creating memories that last a lifetime. Beyond the enjoyment of delicious food, the nights are vibrant with cultural events, entertainment and the warmth of togetherness.

Salem al Yahyaei and his family eagerly anticipate their Iftar, which often takes them to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. "It's more than just a meal for us," Salem shares. "The atmosphere is magical — imagine open-air feasting accompanied by the melodies of traditional Omani music."

His 10-year-old son, Abdulrahman, beams with excitement: "They have spectacular shows after Iftar! I love participating in the craft workshops. For me, Ramadhan is not just about fasting; it's about celebrating and learning!"

Ahmed and Sarah, a couple from Egypt, enjoy the simple pleasure of evening strolls. "After our Tarawih prayers, we wander the picturesque Muttrah Corniche," Ahmed explains. "The streets are alive with families, the night air is refreshing and we indulge in Omani treats like 'Khanfaroush' while soaking up the vibrant Ramadhan atmosphere."

Sarah adds, "It's the perfect way to relax and digest our meal while basking in the festive charm around us."

For Fatima al Jabri, a busy mother of five, Ramadhan nights present an opportunity to explore the lively souqs.

"We adore visiting Nizwa Souq and Muttrah Souq during this time," she enthusiastically recounts. "The markets come alive with stalls brimming with



dates, perfumes and delightful foods. My children are fascinated by craftsmen showcasing their skills." Her husband, Salem, adds, "Shopping centres offer enchanting Ramadhan activities too — storytelling sessions and creative workshops that keep the kids engaged."

For sports enthusiast Ahmed al Yaqoubi, the essence of Ramadhan nights is mirrored in friendly football matches. "After Iftar and Tarawih, it's game time with my friends," he says. "We gather in neighbourhoods and the excitement is infectious. Many young people flock to gyms too, keeping the energy high with special Ramadhan fitness offers." His friend Mazen adds, "There's just something about the camaraderie during these games that makes Ramadhan feel even more special."

Khaled and Laila, a couple from Jordan, relish immersing themselves in Omani culture during Ramadhan. "We love visiting the Oman Across Ages

Museum, especially during the evening hours," Khaled shares. "They host interactive activities that make learning enjoyable for our children. The traditional music performances create an enchanting atmosphere." Laila points out the vibrant cultural seminars and poetry nights at the Cultural Club in Muscat, where stories of Omani heritage and folklore come alive, enriching the spirit of Ramadhan.

For Walid al Hasani and his family, the great outdoors becomes a sanctuary during Ramadhan. "Sometimes we escape to the mountains for a cooler evening under the stars," he says. "With coffee and dates in hand, we share stories until Suhoor." His wife, Hind, adds joyfully, "The beaches call to us too! Imagine small gatherings around a fire at Qantab Beach, where laughter echoes and children play in the sand — these moments are the heart of our Ramadhan experience."



Traditions and community support during Ramadhan in the Philippines

THE Philippines, an archipelago comprising over 7,600 islands, is a vibrant mosaic of cultures and religions. Among its diverse populace, the Muslim community holds a significant place, primarily residing in the southern regions of the country, especially in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan. The Muslim population, estimated at around 11 million, makes up about 10% of the overall population, with the majority living in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). This unique geographic distribution underpins a rich cultural heritage that thrives in the face of historical and contemporary challenges.

As the holy month of Ramadhan approaches, Muslim communities across the Philippines prepare for a period of spiritual reflection, fasting and community bonding. Most Muslims in the country observe the fast, known as “sawm,” which entails abstaining from food and drink from dawn until dusk. Breaking the fast, or “iftar,” is a communal affair, where families and friends come together to share a meal. Traditional foods often grace the iftar table, reflecting both local and Islamic culinary influences.

Cultural practices during Ramadhan also vary across regions. In some areas, vibrant community gatherings offer free meals to those fasting, fostering a sense of solidarity. Prayer and recitation of the Quran take on heightened significance, with many congregating at mosques for nightly prayers known as “Tarawih.” Unique traditions may include the “Simbang Gabi,” a series of early morning masses leading to Eid Al Fitr and community activities aimed at promoting charitable giving, or “zakat,” which is one of the five pillars of Islam.

Non-Muslim Filipinos show remarkable support for their Muslim neighbours during Ramadhan, reflecting a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. Many non-Muslim communities make a conscious effort to accommodate those observing the fast, often refraining from eating in front of individuals who are fasting, particularly in public spaces.



This gesture fosters a harmonious coexistence based on respect for cultural practices.

One of the most beloved Iftar delicacies among the Moros, especially the Maguindanaons, is “sindol.” This delightful dish combines locally sourced ingredients — sweet potatoes and taro, which can often be found in a typical Moro backyard, while coconut, banana, corn, tapioca and jackfruit are available from farms or local markets.

Making sindol is a straightforward process. It begins with fresh coconut milk, traditionally prepared using a simple coconut grater called “kukulan.” While grating coconut is still common, pre-packaged coconut shavings are also available in markets.

To prepare sindol, start by boiling a mixture of coconut milk and water with the taro, banana and sweet potatoes. Once softened, add “pulot,” a sticky rice made from either black or white glutinous rice and stir for about 15 minutes. Finally, incorporate corn, tapioca, jackfruit and brown sugar, stirring until the mixture thickens. The delicious dish is then ready to delight fasting Moros.

The national government has also recognised the importance of Ramadhan in the Filipino social fabric

by declaring Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha as non-working public holidays. This recognition allows everyone, regardless of faith, to celebrate alongside their Muslim compatriots, emphasising unity and respect for diversity. Local governments and communities organise events that promote interfaith dialogue and understanding, featuring activities that educate non-Muslims about Islamic culture and practices.

Notably, community initiatives such as public gatherings during iftar highlight the integration of Islamic traditions within the broader Filipino culture. Events featuring traditional Muslim food, music and dance foster goodwill and build bridges between different faiths, showcasing the essence of the Filipino value of “bayanihan” — coming together for a common cause.

Ramadhan in the Philippines exemplifies a beautiful intertwining of cultures, where the Muslim community’s practices are celebrated and respected by their non-Muslim counterparts. As the islands of the Philippines continue to embody diversity, the spirit of Ramadhan serves as a poignant reminder of the power of compassion, understanding and unity across the archipelago.

RAMADHAN TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

IFTAR GATHERINGS, SPECIAL RAMADHAN BAZAARS AND SEHRI PRE-DAWN MEALS IN PAKISTAN

In Pakistan, Ramadhan is a month brimming with devotion and cultural richness. As the crescent moon is sighted, cities awaken to the vibrant spirit of this sacred month. Families partake in Sehri, a pre-dawn meal and throughout the day, engage in prayers and reflection. When the call to prayer rings out at sunset, the community comes alive as people gather for iftar, sharing dates, samosas and refreshing drinks. Street vendors thrive, preparing delectable treats for evening gatherings. Special Ramadhan bazaars emerge, bustling with festive shoppers seeking spices and sweets. The spiritual essence of Ramadhan transforms homes and neighbourhoods into sanctuaries of peace and gratitude. Acts of kindness and charity are embraced, reinforcing the belief in helping those in need during this significant time. For many, Ramadhan in Pakistan is not only about fasting but also an opportunity to foster love and unity among diverse communities.

DAILY HEALTH TIPS TO REMEMBER



MONITOR PORTION SIZES

Fasting for a whole day can create a sense of urgency at iftar, often leading to overeating. However, it is crucial to practise portion control to avoid discomfort and digestive issues. One effective strategy is to begin with smaller servings. Start your meal with a couple of dates and a glass of water, which will help ease your body back into eating. After a brief moment to assess your hunger level, progress to the main courses while remaining mindful of portion size. This approach helps manage caloric intake effectively without sacrificing nutrition. Eating slowly allows for better digestion and signals to your body when it is full, reducing the likelihood of overeating. Use smaller plates to help visually manage servings and try to include a variety of food groups for a balanced meal. Remember, it is perfectly acceptable to save leftovers for meals later in the evening or the following day.

CONTRIBUTION OF MIDDLE EAST TO THE WORLD



Astronomy: Astrolabe

Muslim astronomers improved the design and function of the astrolabe, an ancient device used for solving problems related to time and the position of the stars. By refining this tool, scholars like Al Fazari made significant advancements in navigation and astronomy, aiding both Islamic and European explorers during the Age of Discovery.

FEATURES

BY YERU EBUEN AND
BUTHAINA AL RIYAMIYA

IN THE DAWN of the new millennium, adventure motorcycling was already beginning to carve out a niche for itself among motorcycle enthusiasts. However, it was in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic that this niche burst forth into a full-blown revival. With travel restrictions and lockdowns confining people to their homes, many were suddenly seeking a way to break free from their confines. Adventure motorcycling was perfectly positioned to fulfil that yearning for exploration and adventure.

As the allure of adventure motorcycling grew, a natural synergy formed with landscapes that promised an exhilarating ride. Places like Morocco, Alaska and Patagonia became bucket-list destinations for those eager to experience the thrill of traversing diverse terrains. However, another gem was quietly emerging on the horizon — the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman’s stunning landscapes, from its sandy deserts to rocky mountains and picturesque coastline, carved out the perfect backdrop for adventure motorcycling. The vast expanses of the Rub al Khali, known as the Empty Quarter, beckoned daring riders with its endless dunes, challenging them to navigate the challenges of the terrain while absorbing breathtaking views. As word spread about these trails and roads less travelled, Oman began to gain traction as a destination for motorcycle tours.

Oman Backcountry Adventure offers a truly immersive experience for adventurers eager to explore the rugged and awe-inspiring landscapes of Oman. This unique company caters to those seeking an authentic journey that traverses magnificent mountains and stretches into serene desert expanses, showcasing the breathtaking beauty of this often-overlooked region.

Launched by two passionate Omani adventurers, Nasser al Rahbi and his partner Salim, Oman Backcountry Adventure stems from their deep-rooted love for nature and exploration. Both men embody a spirit of adventure that drives them to connect visitors with the extraordinary landscapes of their homeland. With a background in outdoor exploration, Salim and Nasser have dedicated their careers to guiding expeditions through some of Oman’s most stunning terrains, utilising motorcycles as a vehicle for discovery. Their philosophy encourages participants to step off the usual tourist paths and embrace a more profound connection with nature.

Oman Backcountry Adventure provides an integrated tour experience that seamlessly blends thrilling outdoor activities with rich cultural elements. Each journey highlights the various aspects of authentic Oman, where rugged mountains converge with tranquil wadis. Riders can expect to navigate winding trails that lead to breathtaking vistas, all while being enveloped by the enchanting sounds of nature.

Imagine cruising through ancient oases and marvelling at historical forts, or camping beneath a starlit sky in the vast expanses of the Rub al Khali, the Empty Quarter. Every tour is meticulously designed to immerse participants in the local way of life, allowing them to interact with communities and discover their vibrant cultures.

At the heart of Oman Backcountry Adventure’s mission is a commitment to providing an authentic experience at various layers. Logistics play a crucial role; visitors are provided with high-quality motorcycles that facilitate an intimate exploration of the terrain. Salim and Nasser ensure that their guiding team is equally equipped with motorbikes, thereby maintaining an engaging and truly immersive adventure. This hands-on approach fosters a spirit of camaraderie among participants, allowing them to share in the thrill of discovery together.

“Our mission is to showcase the beauty and tranquillity of Oman through the experiences we provide for our visitors,” says Salim, a representative from Oman Backcountry Adventure. “We aim to create opportunities for guests to meet locals



The emerging trend of seeing Oman through motorcycle adventure



and truly understand their way of life. Our commitment to continuously enhancing our services ensures that we are up-to-date not only with Oman’s evolving adventure tourism landscape but also with innovations in neighbouring countries.”

The community aspect of adventure motorcycling cannot be overlooked. Riders of all kinds — young and old, seasoned and novice — were embracing the call to the open road. They found camaraderie and shared their passion for exploration, often embarking on tours in small groups, bonding over their experiences. Many became enthralled with dual-sport adventure bikes — machines that could adeptly handle both long-distance touring and off-road escapades. As Oleg Satanovsky from BMW of North America described, these versatile bikes became the solution for those wanting to explore everything the motorcycle world had to offer without the need for multiple bikes.

As the surge in adventure motorcycling continued, Oman slowly began to open its doors to this exciting trend. Tour operators established routes that showcased the best of the country’s topography — canyon rides in Wadi Bani Awf, coastal explorations along

the Al Batinah coast and desert adventures in the Rimal Al Sharqiya became all the rage among those seeking an alternative getaway. The government, recognising the potential for tourism and cultural exchange, began to promote Oman as an ideal location for adventure motorcycle touring, ushering in a new era for both local and international riders.

Adventure motorcycling is more than just a thrilling ride; it is an experience that uplifts the spirit. Riders have the unique opportunity to escape the rush of daily life, rekindle their connection with nature and form lasting friendships. As Oman steadily makes its mark on the adventure motorcycling landscape, it opens its doors to a new generation of riders ready to find joy in the ever-changing horizons yet unexplored.

With more and more enthusiasts drawn to this exhilarating form of travel, Oman is emerging as a true paradise for those seeking adventure on two wheels. Each ride along the winding routes, from the jagged peaks of the Hajar Mountains to the serene beauty of coastal vistas, unveils a tapestry of experiences that inspire awe and ignite the wanderlust within.