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TUESDAY
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PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR
05:05 AM

DHUHR
12:22 PM

ASR
03:46 PM

MAGHRIB
06:19 PM

ISHA
07:29 PM

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INBRIEF

HM CONGRATULATES
NEW CANADIAN PM

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Mark Carney on the occasion of him winning the race to be the Prime Minister of Canada.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to the Prime Minister in realising aspirations of further prosperity and stability for the people of Canada. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations of partnership and cooperation further development in various fields.

OMAN, AFGHANISTAN
REVIEW COOPERATION



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Monday received Amir Khan Muttaqi, Acting Afghan Foreign Minister, who is on a several-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two ministers exchanged friendly talks in the context of the historical ties between the two friendly peoples and the cultural values, civilisational and human traditions that bind them. Sayyid Badr stressed Oman's support for efforts aimed at facilitating Afghanistan's integration into the international community in a way that preserves its constructive and prestigious role in the regional and international arenas.

The guest praised the importance of these meetings in opening new horizons for cooperation between the two countries, praising Oman's foreign policy and its approach based on respecting the sovereignty of states. — ONA

OIA invests in US-based biopolymer technology firm

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 10

As part of its strategy to invest in advanced technologies, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has announced its investment in the US-based company Tidal Vision, a leading innovator in the field of biopolymer technology.

This investment was made during Tidal Vision's Series B funding round, in which the company successfully raised

over \$140 million from strategic investors, according to its recent announcement. Through such international investments, OIA aims to localise innovative solutions to meet domestic market needs.

Founded in 2014, Tidal Vision specialises in converting renewable natural resources into sustainable, eco-friendly materials. The company develops biopolymer solutions based on chitosan, a natural, biodegradable, and non-toxic biopolymer derived from



crustacean shells such as shrimp and crabs.

Tidal Vision has successfully commercialised the large-scale production of chitosan using a zero-waste extraction process, offering a higher-quality and lower-cost alternative compared to competitors.

The company is also committed to sustainability by repurposing byproducts from the fishing industry, reducing waste and supporting the circular economy.

Deal signed for exploration
and production in Area 54

\$25 million investment expected in initial phase

THE Ministry of Energy and Minerals has entered into an Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement with OQEP and Genel Energy to develop Concession Area 54, known as the 'Karawan Concession,' spanning an area of 5,632 square km in Al Wusta Governorate. The agreement was signed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Ahmed al Azkawi, CEO of OQEP, and Paul Weir, CEO of Genel Energy.

Pursuant to the agreement, OQEP shall maintain a 60 per cent operating interest, while Genel Energy shall retain the remaining 40 per cent as a non-operating partner. The initial phase of the agreement, spanning three years, will involve investments of up to \$25 million, which include the execution of 3D seismic surveys, drilling of exploration wells, and the re-evaluation of existing wells. The agreement shall enter into force upon the promulgation of a Royal Decree ratifying its terms.

Speaking on this occasion, Al Aufi said: "The execution of this agreement signifies a pivotal step in the Sultanate of Oman's endeavour to bolster hydrocarbon exploration and development. Through the expansion of exploration activities in concession areas, in collaboration with OQEP and Genel Energy, we reaffirm our steadfast dedication to increasing hydrocarbon reserves and ensuring sustained production. This initiative reinforces Oman's attractiveness as a prime investment hub for the energy sector, underpinned by a competitive environment that presents unparalleled opportunities for leading international companies.

"The development of Area 54 is a testament to our ambitious strategy to



The agreement was signed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Ahmed al Azkawi, CEO of OQEP, and Paul Weir, CEO of Genel Energy.

explore new frontiers and optimise the utilisation of our natural resources, building upon OQEP's proven track record, notably exemplified by the substantial production growth in the Bisat field. We are confident that this agreement will deliver tangible outcomes, sustaining oil and gas production and significantly contributing to the national economy."

Commenting on this, Ahmed al Azkawi said: "With the signing of the Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement for

Area 54, OQEP demonstrates its unwavering commitment to leveraging our substantial expertise to drive further growth. We are delighted to collaborate with Genel Energy, a distinguished international company. This partnership solidifies OQEP's achievements and integral contributions to Oman's upstream sector. The incorporation of Area 54 as our fourth operated asset, in partnership with a leading international player, validates OQEP's robust operational capabilities."

Zelensky in Saudi as US voices high hopes for Ukraine talks

JEDDAH: President Volodymyr Zelensky landed in Saudi Arabia on Monday to meet Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, a day before talks between Ukrainian and US officials that Washington expects to deliver substantial progress towards ending the war with Russia.

The United States, once Ukraine's main ally, has upended its wartime policies in its stated pursuit of a rapid end to the fighting, engaging directly with Moscow while stopping military assistance and intelligence sharing for Kyiv.

Grappling with the new approach in the White House, Ukraine has pushed for "pragmatic" relations after a disastrous Oval Office encounter between Zelensky and US President Donald Trump descended into acrimony last month.

Zelensky is expected to meet the Saudi crown prince, whose country has played mediating roles since Russia's 2022 war, including brokering prisoner exchanges and hosting last month's talks between Moscow and Washington.

Tuesday's talks between US and



Flags of Saudi Arabia and Ukraine line the King Abdulaziz Road in the Saudi Red Sea port city of Jeddah on Monday. — AFP

Ukrainian officials are the first official meeting since Zelenskiy's abortive White House meeting, and Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff said he had high hopes going into the talks.

"I think that we're going over there with an expectation that we're going to make substantial progress," Witkoff said in an interview.

Asked if he thought Zelensky would return to the US to sign a minerals deal this week, Witkoff said: "I am really hopeful. All the signs are very, very positive."



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SHORTTAKES

JUDICIAL SERVICES FEES REDUCED, NEW ONES INITIATED

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, the Supreme Judiciary Council has announced the reduction and cancellation of existing fees and the initiation of new fees in courts, public prosecution departments and notary public sectors. The step forms part of the third phase of implementation of the government services pricing project.

The Supreme Judicial Council revised a total of 25 fees - of which 14 were reduced, 5 were cancelled and 6 were introduced for the first time.

The review of the pricing of judicial and justice services seeks to ensure freedom of litigation, enhance the efficiency of judicial action, ensure high-quality judicial and justice services rendered to beneficiaries and improve the business environment.

ZERO WASTE EVENT TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA), in collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), launched a three-day Zero Waste event to promote sustainable practices and environmental consciousness, aligning with Oman Vision 2040.

Marking World Zero Waste Day on March 30 - a UN-recognised initiative since 2022 - the event underscores Oman's efforts in integrated waste management, recycling and pollution control.

Through interactive workshops, educational activities and an awareness pavilion, the initiative highlights the importance of reducing waste and encourages responsible consumption.

Eng Mohammed bin Saif al Kalbani, Director-General of Environmental Affairs at EA, reiterated Oman's commitment to environmental preservation through policies, laws and strategies supporting sustainability. — ONA

DHANK MUNICIPALITY LAUNCHES RO 1M ROADS PROJECT

DHANK: The Dhank Municipality in Al Dhahirah Governorate has commenced a significant infrastructure initiative to pave internal roads across the Wilayat of Dhank. With a total investment exceeding RO 1 million, the project aims to enhance connectivity between various villages.

Salem bin Mohammed al Alawi, Director of Dhank Municipality Department, stated that the initiative covers approximately 25 kilometres of new roads, benefiting key

The Dhank project aims to enhance connectivity between various villages

areas such as Qamira, Al Masila, Lajhmiah, Al Ajm, Balt, Al Sayah and Al Dhawihri. Additionally, several residential plans will see

road developments, including Al Saada, Fida, Khato, Wadi Khos Heights, Al Manajir and Daan Al Ramla, among others. The project also extends to major roads like Al Khubaib Road to Juffair, further strengthening intra-regional movement.

Al Alawi emphasised that these road improvements will significantly ease travel between villages and foster greater integration among residential communities, boosting accessibility and economic growth in the governorate. — ONA

Consultants invited for Expressway expansion

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, MARCH 10

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has invited consultancy services for the supervision of the construction of the Muscat Expressway Widening Project.

The road project was listed in the additional projects added to the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025). Based on the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Muscat Municipality announced the expansion of the Muscat Expressway last year with the tender floated for adding three lanes each on both sides. The project has now been taken over by MoTCIT.

Earlier, speaking to Observer, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said, "There are lots of road projects coming up in 2025, including the expansion of Muscat Expressway, the Burj al Sahwa remodelling, and the expansion of the November 18 road." The last date to receive tender documents is March 23, and the bid will be opened on April 20. The scope of work includes the modification of existing roundabouts at Al Qurum Area, expansions of existing lanes, modification of existing bridges' entrances and exits, Interchanges and related services as well as hot spots and bottleneck areas.

The Muscat Expressway Widening Project includes five lanes in each direction, starting from Al Qurum to Al Khuwair, and six lanes in each direction from Al Khuwair to match with four lanes of the existing Batinah Expressway (BEW) after Halban Interchange, east to South two lane left turn directional flyover from westbound Al Nahda Street to Southbound Muscat Expressway.

The flyover includes a two-lane Wadi

Since its official opening, the project has emerged as the key road network of the country

bridge across the Wadi Adai. The projects include upgrading the existing Sah Al Malh roundabout to a signalised interchange and widening the wadi bridges, construction of Improvements of Al Qurum Interchange, Saih Al Maleh Roundabout and widening of Al Qurum Heights Road. The scope of the project includes connecting Sultan Haitham City to the Muscat Expressway.

The consultant is requested to direct flow from Nizwa to Suhar, Muscat expressway to Bidbid-Nizwa road, ensure free right from Interchange 11 to Burj al Sahwa roundabout, free right from Interchange 12 to Al Khoud signalised intersection.

The 54-km long expressway runs parallel to Sultan Qaboos Street away from the coast and through the mountains. It joins the Al Batinah Expressway that goes up to the UAE

border at Khatmat Malaha.

Besides taking some of the traffic load from Sultan Qaboos Street, the Muscat Expressway project was completed in different phases to provide access to inaccessible areas and open up new areas for development.

Since its official opening in 2010, the project has emerged as the key road network of the country, especially with the real estate and tourism development of Madinat al Irfan, Bausher, Airport Heights, and the Al Rusayl Industrial Area, among others.

Currently, with one of the two lanes used by trucks and heavy vehicles and for exits, the road is limited to two lanes for seamless travel and sees heavy congestion during peak hours between Al Khoud and Al Qurum.

Muscat Governorate reviews development plans

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 10

Muscat Governorate reviewed the performance indicators for the year 2024 and the goals and directions set for this year at a meeting attended by the walis and a number of governorate officials, on Monday.

The meeting discussed the evaluation of the governorate's overall performance, highlighting the indicators that have seen improvement and identifying areas that require development based on digital data which helps in setting

more accurate and effective goals for the next stage.

The meeting also discussed the extent of institutional commitment and the level of beneficiaries' satisfaction over the governorate's services and projects. It also discussed the indicators of digital transformation and communication and interaction mechanisms to measure the impact of development projects and the extent to which policies and programmes are compatible with citizens' needs.

The reviewed the mechanisms

The meeting discussed the evaluation of the governorate's overall performance.

of performance evaluation for 2025 including amending the evaluation methodology and indicator weights compared to previous years. The attendees identified the main priorities for this year emphasising a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities between the departments of Muscat Governorate.

The meeting comes as part of Muscat Governorate's efforts to enhance transparency, ensure optimal use of public resources and establish effective communication with citizens.

BALANCING

**THE IDEAL TIMES
FOR EXERCISE
ARE TWO HOURS
AFTER IFTAR
OR JUST BEFORE
SUHOOR**

FASTING

FITNESS

AND

Fasting and exercise together boost fat burning and activate energy production systems, making Ramadhan an ideal time to focus on overall health and well-being

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

DURING the holy month of Ramadhan, many people wonder about the impact of exercise — whether it is beneficial or harmful, the best times to work out, and what types of physical activity to engage in.

Since fasting alters eating and sleeping habits, it naturally affects the body's physical and mental performance. However, with proper planning, exercise can be a valuable addition to a healthy Ramadhan routine.

Health and fitness experts suggest that the best exercise time is two hours after Iftar or just before Suhoor.

OPT FOR LOW-TO-MODERATE-INTENSITY WORKOUTS LIKE WALKING OR LIGHT JOGGING

**POST-IFTAR
WORKOUTS
CAN FOCUS
ON STRENGTH
TRAINING AND
HIGH-INTENSITY
EXERCISES**

**MAINTAIN A
BALANCED
DIET RICH IN
PROTEINS,
VITAMINS AND
MINERALS**

**AVOID HEAVY,
FATTY MEALS
AT IFTAR TO
PREVENT
SLUGGISHNESS**

Before breaking the fast, the body has low energy reserves, so it is important to engage only in light activities such as walking or gentle stretching. After Iftar, when the body is refuelled, it becomes easier to perform moderate to high-intensity workouts.

It is advisable to begin Iftar with fresh juices, water and calorie-rich light foods, followed by exercise, and then a proper meal to restore nutrients. Exercising right before Suhoor is another option, as it allows the body to replenish fluids and energy before the next fasting period.

The type of exercise matters as well. During fasting hours, low-to-moderate intensity activities such as walking, light jogging, or swimming are recommended.

These cardiovascular exercises enhance endurance without putting excessive strain on the body. Strength training or high-intensity workouts should be done post-Iftar when the body has enough energy to sustain them. It is also important to maintain a healthy diet rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals while avoiding heavy, fatty meals at Iftar, which can cause lethargy and digestive discomfort.

Staying well-hydrated with water and natural juices is essential for preventing dehydration and fatigue.

Exercising during Ramadhan offers numerous health benefits, including improved heart function, better cholesterol levels and enhanced fat metabolism.

It helps maintain body weight, boosts liver efficiency and supports a stronger circulatory system by increasing red blood cell production.

Additionally, fasting and exercise together help burn stored fat and activate energy production systems, making Ramadhan an excellent time to focus on overall health and well-being.

With careful planning and dedication, maintaining an active lifestyle during Ramadhan is not only possible but highly beneficial. By choosing the right time and type of exercise, staying hydrated and following a nutritious diet, one can stay fit while observing the spiritual essence of the holy month.

Prioritise yourself first, women urged on IWD

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

WHILE women often devote themselves to their families and loved ones, they must not forget to nurture their own well-being, says Dr Shifana Attur, Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Al Hayat International Hospital.

Speaking at an International Women's Day (IWD) event and Iftar organised by Palakkad Friends at Oman Avenues Mall on Saturday, she emphasised that a woman's happiness and health are essential for the well-being of her family.

"Women shouldn't work 24/7. If she works six days a week, she needs a day off - to rest, recharge, and simply breathe," she stated. "Our bodies need it, our minds crave it. Ramadhan is that break in the year - a time for deep reflection, for resetting our souls, and reconnecting with ourselves."

However, Dr Shifana noted



DR SHIFANA ATTUR
Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Al Hayat International Hospital

that, for many women, Ramadhan becomes an exhausting cycle of cooking, cleaning, and managing household duties instead of a time for peace and spiritual rejuvenation. "Waking up before dawn for Suhoor, fulfilling daily responsibilities, preparing elaborate Iftar meals and cleaning afterward - women are expected to do it all," she said. "It often feels less like a moment of tranquillity and more like a never-ending marathon."

She stressed the need for a shift in mindset, urging women to recognise that their strength does not lie solely in sacrifice but also in knowing when to pause and care for themselves.

"Society glorifies the image of an 'all-sacrificing, multitasking woman', but who is taking care of you?" she asked. "If you want to spread love, you must first nurture yourself. If you want to keep your family happy and healthy, you must first

take care of your own well-being."

Dr Shifana encouraged women to redefine Ramadhan as a period of nourishment - not just for their families, but for themselves. "Let's shift the narrative. Let's make space for ourselves. Self-care is not selfish - it is necessary," she urged.

The event featured a welcome speech by Charulatha Balachandran, Ladies Secretary, and a vote of thanks by Radhika Jayakrishnan, Ladies Joint Secretary. Other dignitaries in attendance included Sreekumar P (President), Harigovind (Vice-President), Jitesh Kutty (General Secretary), Jagadeesh (Treasurer), Srinivasan, Sureshbabu, Neethu, Vaishak, Vinod and Gopakumar (MC).

"Take time to fill your cup first, my dear sisters. Then watch how beautifully you overflow - filling the world with love and happiness," Dr Shifana concluded.

GLOBINVEST

The Global Omani Investment Company SAOC

ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of The Global Omani Investment Company SAOC is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's ordinary Annual General Meetings, to be held at 2:00 pm on Thursday, 27/03/2025, via the electronic platform to hold general meetings which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on Saturday, 29/03/2025 at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' report for the financial year ended 31 December 2024.
- To consider the Auditors' Report and to approve the Financial Statements, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account, for the financial year ended 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the proposed cash dividend to the shareholder, as on the date of the AGM, amounting to 0.040 Baisa for each share which represent 4% from the paid-up capital for the financial year ended 31 December 2024 to be paid as 2 % during 2025 and 2 % during the next year.
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the transactions the company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending on 31 December 2025.
- To approve the sitting fees of the Board meetings paid to the Board members for the financial year ended on 31/12/2024, and to determine the sitting fees for the next financial year ending on 31/12/2025.
- To consider and approve the proposal of distributing the total sum of Rial Omani (35) Thousand as remuneration for the Board of Directors of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2024.
- To appoint the Auditors for the Company for the financial year ending 31 December 2025, and to determine their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls of holding General Meetings using electronic plat form, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Juristic persons only, have the right to appoint a natural person as a proxy to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information, please contact Mr. Jamal bin Ahmed Al-Shanfari on office 24489009 GSM: 92839933

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Consultante

515 entrepreneurs from SMEs in Ata'a expo

MUSCAT: The 27th edition of the Ata'a Exhibition, an annual event organised by Dar Al Atta'a Association during Ramadhan, concluded at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The event brought together small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) owners from across Oman, showcasing a variety of Omani and Arab consumer products, including clothing, perfumes, accessories and Eid essentials. Dr Shamsa al Harthi, Director-General of Dar Al Atta'a Association, highlighted that this year's edition stood out due to its expanded venue, spanning five dedicated halls at the exhibition centre. — ONA

Looking for car, flat and furniture? Check out the Observer classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.

Sultanate Of Oman
University Medical City
Omani National Centre for Haematology & Bone Marrow Transplantation

BIDDING NOTICE

The Procurement Department at the University Medical City would like to invite companies to submit their quotations for:

S. No	Type of Business	Location	Date of site visit	Bid Number#	The last date to collect the Document	The last date to submit the quotations
1	Rental and operation of a restaurant / coffee	Omani National Centre for Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplantation	13/03/2025 10:00 am	UMC BMT 1/2025	16/03/2025	18/03/2025 before 11:00 am

- Bidders who wish to participate in this Bid may collect the Bid Documents from the Procurement Department at the University Medical City, during working hours, the Bid document for an amount of OMR.25 for (non-refundable). The last date for collecting the Document is on Sunday 16/03/2025
- The Site Visit for the selected aforementioned area is mandatory. It will be on the above-mentioned date and the assembly point will be at the Procurement Department.
- The last date for submission of the quotations is on Tuesday: 18/03/2025. The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Procurement Department, located on the first floor of the Hospital Administration building at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, and deposited in the Bid Box kept in the Department, before 11:00 a.m.
- The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Bid being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Bidder.
- The Bidder should prepare the Site per the health requirements of Muscat Municipality and the requirements of civil defense in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- University Medical City reserves the right to reject any quotation not comply the requirements and does not obliged to accept the highest rent or any other quotations.

Procurement Department at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital
University Medical City
PO BOX 38, P.C. 123, ALKHOD, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: 24144084 - Mobile:95800888
Email: hospitalprocure@squ.edu.om

Annoucement of the tender TND GSI G3 0005/03/2025 for the construction various civil works.

GS INIMA (AL GHUBRA) LLC has been awarded with the Engineering, Procurement and Construction of AL GHUBRAH III IWP in Oman, for CAPITAL DESALINATION COMPANY S.A.O.C.

Omani companies who have available on hand in Oman at least 50 civil workers with one-year valid visa, are invited to participate to the present bid.

Required profession: 1) Formwork carpenters. - 2) Certified Scaffolders. -3) Steel fixers. -4) Mason. - 5) Skilled helpers. - 6) Civil engineers. - 7 HSE officers. - 8) QA/QC officers.

To participate in the bidding please send quotation and copy of CR, copy of VAT certificate and copy of SME card (if any), via e-mail: ghubrah.3.site@inima.com, subject: TND GSI G3 0005/03/2025 by 16th March 2025 1:00 PM.

Ministry of Health

Annoucement

The Ministry of Health (Al Buraimi Hospital) invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Bidding Document	Last Date for Submission of Tenders	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non Refundable)
187/ 2025	Agreement providing gardening, agriculture & irrigation system maintenance services at Buraimi Hospital	Before 2PM On 20/03/2025	Before 10AM On 06/04/2025	Specialized companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the Second & Third degree	10 R.O Small & Medium Enterprises 25 R.O Local Companies 25 R.O International Companies

Please note the following:

- Companies wishing to participate in the Tender can purchase the tender documents electronically through the website (etendering.tenderboard.gov.om), provided that they are registered in the system.
- Companies must submit their bids electronically via the above-mentioned website, provided that a Bid Commitment Declaration, and bids received without the required Declaration will not be considered.
- The concerned entity is not obligated to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.
- For inquiries related to the above tender, please contact through the website of the Esnad system for electronic tendering: (etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)

P.O. Box: 147, Jawharat A' Shatti, PC 134, Sultanate of Oman, Fax: 24698496
E-mail: admin@soharpower.com, Website: www.soharpower.com

Notice and Invitation to Attend the Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of SOHAR POWER SAOG (the "Company") has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Tuesday at 07:00 PM on 25/03/2025, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (online). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting shall be held on Thursday at 07:00 PM on 27/03/2025, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (Online) to discuss the following agenda:

Annual Ordinary General Meeting Agendas:

- To consider and approve the Board of Director's Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2024.
- To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2024.
- To consider and note the transactions carried out by the Company with related parties during the financial year ended 31 December 2024.
- To consider and approve the transactions that will be carried out by the Company with related parties for the financial year ending 31 December 2025.
- To consider and ratify the Board and Committees' sitting fees paid during the preceding year and specify the Board and Committees' sitting fees for the coming year.
- To consider and approve the proposal to allocate up to OMR 10,000 for Corporate Social Responsibility activities for the financial year ending 31 December 2025.
- To appoint an Independent Firm to appraise the performance of the Company's Board of Directors for the financial year ending 31 December 2025 and approve their fees.
- To appoint statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31 December 2025 and approve their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information please contact on Telephone No 99219419 or email: salah.farsi@soharpower.com

Chairman
MIKLOS ALMASY

Legal Advisor
Dentons & Co (Oman Branch)

External Auditor
BDO

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto (L) and Vietnam's Communist Party General-Secretary To Lam (C) inspect the Presidential guard of honour at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. — AFP

INDONESIA, VIETNAM AGREE TO UPGRADE STRATEGIC TIES

JAKARTA: Indonesia and Vietnam agreed on Monday to upgrade ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership as the Southeast Asian allies' leaders met in Jakarta to mark 70 years of diplomatic relations. Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary To Lam held talks with President Prabowo Subianto in the Indonesian capital to boost economic and defence cooperation. "We have agreed in our meeting that we want to enhance our relations, our cooperation. We want to upgrade our relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership," Prabowo told a news conference after their meeting. "We truly want to strengthen and cooperate in almost all fields." He said they agreed to boost cooperation on fisheries, the digital economy, the green economy, high-tech industries, and defence and security. — AFP



Members of Syrian security forces man a checkpoint at the entrance of Latakia. — Reuters

SYRIA ANNOUNCES END TO 'MILITARY OPERATION'

LATAKIA: Syria's new authorities announced on Monday the end of an operation against loyalists of deposed president Bashar al Assad, after nearly 1,000 civilians were killed in the worst violence since his overthrow. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor reported the mass killings of at least 973 civilians since Thursday. The authorities on Monday ended their sweeping "military operation" against security threats and "regime remnants" in Latakia and Tartus provinces on the Mediterranean coast, defence ministry spokesman Hassan Abdul Ghani said in a statement. The announcement came after interim president Ahmed al Sharaa said the country would not be dragged into civil war again. "Syria... will not allow any foreign powers or domestic parties to drag it into chaos or civil war," Sharaa said in a speech posted by SANA. He also vowed to "hold accountable, firmly and without leniency, anyone who was involved in the bloodshed of civilians... or who overstepped the powers of the state". — AFP

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS RETURN HOME IN WAR-TORN SUDAN

PORT SUDAN: Nearly 400,000 Sudanese have returned to their homes over the past two and a half months after being displaced by the ongoing conflict, the United Nations migration agency said on Monday. Between December and March, "approximately 396,738 individuals" returned to areas retaken from paramilitary forces by the army, which has advanced through central Sudan in recent months, according to the International Organization for

Migration (IOM). Nearly all of the returnees moved back to their homes in the central Sudanese states of Sennar, which the army largely recaptured in December, as well as Al Jazira after it was retaken the following month. Thousands more have returned to the capital Khartoum, where the army last month regained large areas, and appeared on the verge of expelling the RSF. Displaced families have headed back in droves, even to looted and

burned homes, after more than a year of displacement. Across the country, 11.5 million people are internally displaced, many of them facing mass starvation in what the UN calls the world's largest humanitarian crisis. A further 3.5 million people have fled across borders since the war broke out. Parts of the country have already descended into famine, with another 8 million people on the brink of mass starvation. — AFP

PA says Gaza electricity cut 'escalation in genocide'

THE Palestinian Authority on Monday said Israel's decision to halt the electricity supply to Gaza was "an escalation in the genocide" in the war-ravaged territory. The Palestinian foreign ministry said in a statement that it "strongly condemns the Israeli Ministry of Energy's decision to cut electricity to the Gaza Strip, considering it an escalation in the genocide, displacement and humanitarian disaster in Gaza", which is controlled by Hamas and not the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority. The British government on Monday called on Israel to restore the electricity supply to Gaza, warning the country could be in violation of international law. "We're deeply concerned by these reports and urge Israel to lift these restrictions," Prime Minister Keir Starmer's official spokesman told reporters. "We're clear that a halt on goods and supplies entering Gaza, including basic needs such as electricity, risks breaching Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law." The German government said on Monday that Israel's decision to halt aid deliveries and cut off the electricity supply to Gaza could prompt a fresh humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territory. Referring to the decision to stop aid, foreign ministry spokeswoman Kathrin Deschauer told a regular press conference Gaza was "again threatened with a food shortage". "We note with great concern the cutting off of



Displaced Palestinian children push into a queue to get a portion of cooked food from a charity kitchen in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. — AFP

The Palestinian foreign ministry said in a statement that it "strongly condemns the Israeli Ministry of Energy's decision to cut electricity to the Gaza Strip, considering it an escalation in the genocide, displacement and humanitarian disaster in Gaza

electricity and the discussion about stopping the water supply," she said. "Such steps are or would be unacceptable and incompatible with (Israel's) obligations under international law," Deschauer added. She said that Germany "calls on the Israeli government to lift restrictions for all forms of humanitarian aid to Gaza with immediate effect". Israel's negotiating team left for Qatar on Monday for talks aimed at extending the fragile Gaza ceasefire, after Israel cut the Palestinian territory's electricity supply to ramp up pressure on

Hamas. The first phase of the truce deal expired on March 1 with no agreement on subsequent stages that should secure a lasting end to the war that erupted with Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel. There are differences over how to proceed — Hamas wants immediate negotiations on the next phase, but Israel prefers extending phase one. An Israeli official familiar with the negotiations said that the country's team had left for Doha. Media reports said the delegation was led by a top official from the domestic security agency Shin Bet. — AFP



MYANMAR PRAYS FOR AILING POPE

YANGON: In a cathedral's hush in Myanmar's biggest metropolis, Catholics bow their heads in prayer for Pope Francis — returning the good wishes the ailing faith leader often sends the war-riven nation. "He takes care of those despondent and weak. So he always remembers and prays for Myanmar," said Francis Than Htun, the rector of St. Mary's Cathedral and auxiliary bishop of Yangon archdiocese. "I feel saddened like he is my own father since he has been sick," he said ahead of a Rosary prayer for the Pope attended by dozens on Sunday evening. — AFP

RESCUE UNDER WAY

North Sea tanker, ship collision injures 32



A major rescue operation was under way after a collision between an oil tanker and a cargo ship in the North Sea which sparked a huge blaze and left 32 people injured. The injured had been brought ashore for treatment "in three vessels". The operation was being coordinated by the UK Coastguard after "reports of a collision between a tanker and cargo vessel off the coast of East Yorkshire", a Coastguard spokesperson said. — AFP

DESTRUCTIVE SEASON

Mozambique hit by third cyclone



Heavy rains and strong winds lashed northern Mozambique on Monday as the region was hit by its third cyclone in four months, the weather service said. Cyclone Jude made landfall in the morning with winds of 140 kilometres per hour and gusts of up to 195 kilometres per hour. Cyclone season in the southwestern Indian Ocean normally lasts from November to April and there are around a dozen storms each year. — AFP

ESCALATING ACTIVITY

Guatemalan volcano spark evacuations



Guatemalan authorities evacuated around a thousand people on Monday after Central America's most active volcano erupted, spewing lava, ash and rocks. Residents sought safety in a temporary shelter after the Fuego volcano — located 35 kilometres from the capital Guatemala City — showed escalating activity on Sunday. Some 125 families were moved to safety from the community of El Porvenir. Residents of another community in Las Lajitas were also evacuated. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (C) boards a military airplane, in Homestead, Florida. — AFP

US CANCELLING 83 PER CENT OF USAID: STATE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Monday the United States was cancelling 83 per cent of programmes at the US Agency for International Development (USAID). President Donald Trump signed an executive order in January demanding a freeze on all US foreign aid to give his administration time to assess overseas spending, with an eye to gutting programmes not aligned with his “America First” agenda.

“After a 6-week review we are officially cancelling 83% of the programmes at USAID,” Rubio said on social media platform X. “The 5,200 contracts that are now cancelled spent tens of billions of dollars in ways that did not serve, (and in some cases even harmed), the core national interests of the United States,” he added.

Rubio on Monday notably thanked the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), which billionaire Elon Musk is leading in a drive to slash costs and cut jobs across government departments. Trump and his allies have argued that foreign assistance is wasteful and does not serve US interests. — AFP

STARMER TO HOST VIRTUAL MEETING



Prime Minister Keir Starmer will host a virtual meeting of world leaders to discuss Ukraine on Saturday, building on a summit in London this month when the British leader announced the formation of a “coalition of the willing” to support Kyiv. “You can expect the prime minister to host a second leaders’ meeting of the coalition of the willing, building on his Lancaster House summit,” Starmer’s spokesperson told reporters, referring to the London meeting on March 2. So far only Britain and France have publicly committed to providing troops, but other countries are either expected to, or to offer other forms of support. — Reuters

GERMAN GREENS SAY WILL NOT VOTE FOR NEXT GOVT’S SPENDING PLAN

BERLIN: Germany’s Green party said on Monday it would not give the votes necessary for the constitutional changes proposed by likely next chancellor Friedrich Merz to massively boost spending on infrastructure and defence. “We will recommend to the members of the Green parliamentary group not to agree to these changes,” Katharina Droege, the party’s leader in the Bundestag, told reporters.

German MPs will start debating Merz’s proposals to partially lift spending limits in defence and establish a 500-billion-euro

infrastructure fund on Thursday. The massive spending plan was put forward by Merz’s conservative CDU/CSU bloc and the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), who are hammering out a coalition agreement following last month’s general election.

The parties however rushed forward plans to change Germany’s constitution to boost spending, so the amendments could be decided on by the outgoing legislature. With the current division of seats, the conservatives and the SPD would need the support of the Greens to get

the necessary two-thirds majority to pass the changes. The same parties would not have the majority needed in the next parliament, which would force Merz to seek support elsewhere.

The conservatives and the Social Democrats were creating a “treasure chest” to fund their political priorities, including tax cuts, Droege said. “Whoever wants our approval for more investment, must also show that it is really about more investment in climate protection, more investment in the economy in this country,” Droege said. — AFP

Canada’s new PM Carney vows to ‘win’ US trade war

CANADA’S incoming Prime Minister Mark Carney struck a defiant note as the former central banker vowed to win US President Donald Trump’s trade war, saying his country will “never” be part of the United States. Carney lost no time standing up for “the Canadian way of life” after the Liberal Party overwhelmingly elected him on Sunday to succeed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. “We didn’t ask for this fight. But Canadians are always ready when someone else drops the gloves,” Carney told party supporters in Ottawa. “So the Americans, they should make no mistake, in trade as in hockey, Canada will win,” he said. “Canada never ever will be part of America in any way, shape or form,” said the 59-year-old, who will take over from Trudeau in the coming days. Carney may not have the job for long. Canada must hold elections by October but could well see a snap poll within weeks. Current opinion polls had the opposition Conservatives as slight favorites.

Carney warned in his victory speech that the United States under Trump was seeking to seize control of Canada. “The Americans want our resources, our water, our land, our country,” he said, adding “these were dark days brought on by a country we can no longer trust.” “We’re all being called to stand up for... the Canadian way of life.” Carney previously led both the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England. He soundly defeated his main challenger, Trudeau’s former deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, who held senior cabinet positions in the Liberal government first elected in 2015.

Carney won 85.9 per cent of the nearly 152,000 votes cast. Freeland took just eight per cent of the vote. Carney campaigned on a promise to stand up to Trump. Trump has repeatedly spoken about annexing Canada and thrown bilateral trade, the lifeblood of the Canadian economy, into chaos with dizzying tariff actions that have veered in various directions since he took office.



Canada’s Liberal Leader and Prime Minister-elect Mark Carney speaks after being elected as the new Liberal Party leader, in Ottawa . — AFP

Trudeau said “Canadians face from our neighbour an existential challenge.” European leaders meanwhile signalled interest in working with Carney’s government, as French President Emmanuel Macron said “The ties between France and Canada are stronger than ever.” British Prime Minister Keir Starmer congratulated Carney, saying: “I look forward to working closely with him on shared international priorities.”

China, which has a turbulent relationship with Canada, also congratulated Carney but said it hoped the country could “pursue a positive and pragmatic policy towards China.” Carney has argued that his experience makes him the ideal counter to Trump. He has portrayed himself as a seasoned economic crisis manager who led the Bank of Canada through the 2008-2009 financial crisis and the Bank of England through the turbulence that followed the 2016 Brexit vote.

Celebrating the outcome in Ottawa, party loyalist Cory Stevenson said “The Liberal

party has the wind in its sails.” “We chose the person who could best face off against (Tory leader) Pierre Poilievre in the next election and deal with Donald Trump,” he said. Data released from the Angus Reid polling firm on Wednesday shows Canadians see Carney as the favorite choice to face down Trump, potentially offering the Liberals a boost over the opposition Conservatives. Forty-three per cent of respondents said they trusted Carney the most to deal with Trump, with 34 per cent backing Poilievre.

Analysts say his untested campaign skills could prove a liability against a Conservative Party already running attack ads accusing Carney of shifting positions and misrepresenting his experience. “He is unproven in the crucible of an election,” said Cameron Anderson, a political scientist at Ontario’s Western University. But he said Carney’s tough anti-Trump rhetoric “is what Canadians want to hear from their leaders.” They are “viewing these things in an existential way.” — AFP

Far-right Romanian candidate to appeal presidential vote ban

BUCHAREST: Romanian far-right politician Calin Georgescu on Monday is expected to appeal a decision to bar him from standing in a presidential vote re-run, which has sparked violent clashes and plunged the EU and Nato member bordering war-torn Ukraine into deeper uncertainty. Romania’s electoral bureau on Sunday rejected Georgescu’s candidacy for the May re-run of last year’s annulled presidential election, which could spell the end of his meteoric rise and has already sparked outrage among his supporters in Bucharest.

Georgescu’s team has vowed to appeal Sunday’s decision, which the 62-year-old EU and Nato critic has slammed as “a direct blow to the heart of democracy worldwide”. “We will appeal the decision at the Constitutional Court. The appeal is being worked on,” a representative from his legal team said, saying they plan to file it later on Monday.

Hundreds rallied against the decision late Sunday, with clashes between protesters and law enforcers leaving 13 injured. More demonstrations are expected later on Monday. Georgescu, a former senior government official, is currently leading opinion polls and is projected to win around 40 per cent of votes in May.

Georgescu shot to prominence almost overnight to unexpectedly win the first round of a presidential election last November. But in a shock move, Romania’s constitutional court annulled the ballot shortly before the second round was to be held in December, after claims of Russian meddling and a “massive” social media promotion of Georgescu.

Georgescu appealed the annulment, which was also slammed by US tech billionaire Elon Musk and US Vice President JD Vance, but his petitions have so far



Supporters of far-right candidate Calin Georgescu confront riot police outside Romania’s central electoral bureau, in Bucharest, Romania. — Reuters

been rejected, and he submitted his candidacy for the May re-run last week. But in a statement on Sunday, the Central Electoral Bureau (BEC)

said it had rejected “the independent candidacy” of Georgescu for May’s re-run based on the top court’s annulment of the November ballot.

Another far-right politician George Simion, the leader of AUR, also slammed Sunday’s decision of the electoral bureau as “a serious abuse and attack on fundamental rights” and “a new episode” of a “coup d’etat”. “This is a black page in our fragile democracy,” he said. The rejection of Georgescu’s candidacy “opens the way for another candidate,” political analyst Radu Magdin said. In the far-right camp, Simion is well positioned to take over, although other politicians from different camps could also take advantage of the situation.

Last month, prosecutors indicted Georgescu on numerous charges, including making “false statements” over his campaign financing, as well as “attempts to instigate actions against the constitutional order”. Georgescu has been placed under judicial control, meaning he will have to report to authorities regularly. — AFP

OPINION

Social protection allowances enhance spending power



THE recent announcement regarding the spending of over RO 577 million for social protection allowances in Oman signifies a strategic investment aimed at bolstering the economy and addressing socio-economic challenges.

Like many countries, Oman faces unemployment, inflation and disparities in income distribution. The government's decision to allocate substantial funds towards social protection allowances is a response to these issues, aiming to provide financial support to vulnerable segments of society.

One of the primary effects of injecting RO 577 million into social protection allowances is the enhancement of consumer spending power.

When individuals receive financial assistance through welfare programmes, they are more likely to spend the money on essential goods and services. This increase in consumer spending can stimulate demand within the economy, leading to several positive outcomes.

As households receive additional income from social protection allowances, they are likely to purchase more goods and services. This increased demand can benefit local businesses and contribute to economic

growth.

The initial increase in consumer spending can lead to a multiplier effect within the economy. Businesses experiencing higher sales may need to hire more employees or increase production, which further stimulates economic activity.

By directing funds towards social protection allowances, the government is effectively supporting local economies. Increased spending by consumers can help sustain businesses and create jobs within communities.

Investing in welfare programmes not only enhances individual well-being, but also promotes broader economic stability. Social protection allowances can help lift individuals out of poverty by providing them with necessary financial resources.

Reducing poverty levels contributes to a more stable society and decreases reliance on emergency assistance programmes.

Financial support also allows families to access better healthcare services and nutrition, leading to improved health outcomes overall. A healthier population is generally more productive and contributes positively to economic growth.

By addressing socio-economic disparities through targeted welfare programmes, the

Oman's commitment to expanding its social protection system through an investment of over RO 577 million demonstrates a proactive approach toward addressing socio-economic challenges faced by its population.

government fosters social cohesion among different segments of society. This cohesion can lead to a more harmonious environment conducive to economic development.

Oman's commitment to expanding its social protection system through an investment of over RO 577 million demonstrates a proactive approach towards addressing socio-economic challenges faced by its population.

The anticipated influx of cash into the economy is expected to enhance consumer spending power significantly, fostering economic growth while promoting individual well-being and broader economic stability.

More than 1.5 million people have directly benefited from the Social Protection Fund (SPF) till January this year.

The Social Protection Law, which came into effect on January 1, 2024, introduced direct cash benefits for eligible segments of society through SPF to provide a comprehensive social safety net for citizens across various stages of life.

These benefits, fully funded by the state's public treasury, cover persons with disabilities, children, the elderly, orphans and widows. Its aim is to ensure decent living standards and sustainable well-being for citizens, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

Indonesians seek escape as anger rises over quality of life

MARCHIO GORBIANO

Indonesian private tutor Patricia has been learning German for two years, armed with a dream of leaving for Europe and driven by a lack of opportunities, economic stagnation and little hope at home.

She is one of thousands of Indonesians on social media promoting a popular hashtag that translates as "let's just escape for now".

Anger at the quality of life in Southeast Asia's biggest economy — a nation of 280 million known for pervasive corruption and nepotism — has stirred student protests and driven young and middle-aged professionals to seek jobs abroad.

"After working for so many years, my income remains about the same... meanwhile my needs are increasing," said the 39-year-old in the capital Jakarta, who declined to give her last name.

"I don't own a house or car... if I keep working like this, it will probably never be enough."

In the last month, the hashtag has picked up steam. It has racked up thousands of mentions and reached more than 65 million accounts on X, analytics firm Brand24 said. The outpouring has coincided with student-led protests against wide-ranging government budget cuts by new President Prabowo Subianto. Savings have been channelled into a new multi-billion-dollar sovereign wealth fund — that reports to the ex-general.

There were nearly 7.5 million unemployed people in Indonesia, according to the latest figures from the country's statistics agency, dating to August 2024. That has stoked anger against a perceived poor quality of life, as the divide between the emerging nation's rich and poor grows wider and the middle class is squeezed.

Some Indonesians are taking more physically demanding jobs abroad to escape. Randy Christian Saputra, 25, left an office job at a multinational consulting firm to do manual labour on a tomato farm in Australia. "I'm tired of the system in Indonesia. If we look abroad, they usually have a better system," he said.

Poor living standards in the megacity Jakarta encourage others to leave. "The longer I stay in Jakarta, the harder it is because of pollution or traffic jams. It has more to do with the living standard," said Favian Amrullah, a 27-year-old software engineer, who is leaving for a tech start-up in Amsterdam in April. Some foreign companies are trying to capitalise on the trend, including Japanese recruitment firms posting online seeking to attract the most talented. — AFP

Ramadhan's discipline: A lesson in self-reliance

EVERY year, Ramadhan arrives as a spiritual retreat, a time of self-restraint, reflection and renewal. While it is primarily a month of fasting and devotion, I have come to see Ramadhan as the ultimate test of discipline. The pre-dawn meal (Suhoor), the long hours without food or drink and the structured prayers require an unwavering commitment that goes beyond fleeting moments of motivation. It is during this sacred month that I have truly understood the saying I once read on X: "Discipline takes you places that motivation can't."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his famous essay Self-Reliance, speaks about the importance of trusting oneself and rejecting conformity. His words resonate deeply with the lessons of Ramadhan. The ability to wake up before dawn, to resist the urge to break one's fast before sunset, and to remain committed to spiritual and personal growth — all require a form of self-reliance that Emerson championed. He wrote, "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself." This echoes the discipline of Ramadhan, where the strength to endure hunger, fatigue, and the temptation to falter comes not from external validation but from an internal commitment to faith and self-improvement.

For me, Ramadhan has reinforced the idea that discipline is a muscle that grows stronger with consistent effort. Motivation, on the other hand, is fleeting. It is easy to feel motivated on the first day of fasting when enthusiasm is high, but by the tenth day, motivation often wanes. This is where discipline carries us through. It is what pushes students to study late into the night and professionals to keep striving for excellence despite setbacks. In Oman, and the general Islamic world, where community and faith are central to



Ramadhan's discipline extends beyond fasting. It governs speech, actions and even thoughts.



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our identity, Ramadhan becomes a collective exercise in discipline. The entire nation shifts into a rhythm of self-control and spiritual dedication, reinforcing the idea that personal discipline has a broader social impact. One of the greatest lessons Ramadhan has taught me is the power of delayed gratification. The simple act of waiting until sunset to eat reminds us that patience and perseverance yield greater rewards. In a world driven by instant gratification, where social media and technology cater to our every whim, Ramadhan forces us to slow down and exercise restraint. This lesson extends far beyond the holy month. Whether in academia, career growth, or personal development, success is rarely immediate. It is the disciplined individual, not the merely motivated one, who reaches the highest peaks.

Moreover, Ramadhan's discipline extends beyond fasting. It governs speech, actions, and even thoughts. The month teaches us to control anger, to speak kindly and to reflect on our behaviours. This level of self-awareness aligns with Emerson's belief that true growth comes from within. He urged individuals to be

true to themselves, to cultivate inner strength rather than rely on external influences. Similarly, Ramadhan is a time when we step away from distractions and look inward, building resilience and character through self-discipline.

In Oman, where tradition and modernity coexist, discipline is a cornerstone of both personal and national development. The country's steady progress, its commitment to education and its ability to balance cultural heritage with global advancement all stem from disciplined efforts.

The values learned during Ramadhan — self-control, perseverance and reliance on inner strength — are the same principles that drive Oman's success.

Ramadhan has shown me that discipline is not about deprivation but about empowerment. It is about gaining control over one's desires, thoughts and actions. Emerson's self-reliance, the wisdom of the quote I read on X, and the traditions of Oman all point to the same truth: motivation may spark the journey, but only discipline will see it through to the end.

Relevance of time in life...



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DAYS are moving faster than ever, say my friends. There is so much to do and so little time, is yet another comment we hear often. In the holy month of Ramadhan, the pace of the day slows down compared to other months, but the days seem to be running at a faster rate this year.

They say do not live in the past or the future; live today. But one factor that is relevant in these three aspects is time. When we take medication, time is of great importance, and so is when you have an appointment or, for that matter, when you have a flight, bus, or train to catch.

You do not want to miss the first few minutes of the lecture in the grad school. Professors know the significance of being on time, and some of them like to give pop quizzes in the first five minutes of the class. Now you can imagine why it is so important to be on time for a job interview.

All we have to do is ask ourselves the question, “Whose time is it?”

When you respect the person, you respect their time.

In a project titled ‘The Fourth Dimension and Beyond’, it is stated, “In the study of the universe, it is convenient to think of time as the fourth dimension. Time is portrayed as one continuum with the past, present, and

future existing all at once.”

Let us look at the three dimensions, which are typically considered to be height, breadth and width. According to Einstein’s relativity, the fourth dimension is time.

Let us look at our simple life; when we write a letter, we make sure to write the date, and it helps us identify the ‘when’ factor. Luckily, the emails give us the time factor as well. It adds to our perception.

Time gives us an insight into history. But many feel either we are bad at time management or the clock is ticking away faster than before.

In March 2024, a study in the journal Nature said, “For the first time in history, world timekeepers may have to consider subtracting a second from our clocks in a few years because the planet is rotating a tad faster than it used to. Clocks may have to skip a second.”

This second that is to be skipped is called a ‘negative leap second,’ and that may be around 2029.

Yet again there might be one group of people who might feel the days are dragging on without anything to be excited about.

This is when we have to rethink how to make life purposeful. It is not the second needle that dictates how fruitful the days of our lives are. We need to know our purpose

Time gives us an insight into history. But many feel either we are bad at time management or the clock is ticking away faster than before

and then master the art of time management. And for time management, it is essential to know the priorities. We tend to float around because we have so many interests. But there comes a time when you have to draw a line between what is beneficial, what needs to be followed up on, and what can be dropped.

We also need to learn to say ‘no,’ which can be quite difficult at times. But if we need to move on, there is a need quite often to reflect, realign, and readjust. Of course, we need to know our goals. Once we achieve them, we need to evolve to find new goals.

Finding new goals requires learning, and that is why it is important to read and learn new things. After all, change is forever a constant feature. Instead of fighting against it, embrace it and the situation provides us a new opportunity to explore new beginnings.

All of this belongs to time. When we are a teenager, we are on an internal journey- getting to know ourselves and shaping our personality. But what we have to remember is that time does not look back to see if you have caught up. We have to move and realise this opportunity might never come up again, and even if the opportunity does arise, your priority might have seen a change.

As long as the priority is beneficial for all, brings you true happiness, and adds meaning to your life, it should be fulfilled.

BRICS’ CLIMATE LEADERSHIP AIMS TO HANG ON HEALING DEEP DIVIDES

VIRGINIA FURNESS

Ambitions by the BRICS group to take on a greater climate leadership role, building on success last month at United Nations nature talks, depending on the countries overcoming fractious politics and entrenched disagreements over money.

As the United States has withdrawn from global efforts to combat climate change and, more generally, shifted its focus to promoting domestic interests, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - known collectively as the BRICS - are well-placed to influence the outcomes of high-profile meetings this year. They established their credentials by proposing a draft text that ensured agreement at the COP16 talks in February in Rome, a dozen sources said, potentially unlocking billions of dollars to help halt the destruction of ecosystems. “Now BRICS has been able to come together in this fashion, (it) will influence our discussions in other platforms going forward,” Narend Singh, deputy minister of forestry, fisheries and the environment, for South Africa said.

South Africa is boosting its profile as holder of the G20 presidency this year, while another BRICS member Brazil prepares to host COP30 climate talks in November. “BRICS can fill a space that needs to be filled at this moment in the multilateral negotiations,” Brazil’s chief negotiator at COP16, Maria Angelica Ikeda, said.

Colombia’s Susana Muhamad, president of the COP16 nature talks, said the BRICS countries were positioning to be “bridge builders”. “They are trying to create this balance to represent the Global South in front of the far-right governments that are emerging in the US, Italy and Argentina,” she said. A British official present at the talks, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said other countries needed to consider what the BRICS’ more muscular approach meant for global institutions.

But if BRICS’ is to help fill the vacuum left by the United States under President Donald Trump, it has to address internal divisions over politics and finance. The group’s refusal to assume the official financial obligations of donor countries could prove a stumbling block, Timo Leiter, a distinguished policy fellow at the London School of Economics, said. So far the middle-income BRICS have resisted demands from cash-strapped developed countries that they should share financial liability, complicating the quest for compromise at UN negotiations on climate funding and upcoming talks on development finance in Seville, Spain. Of the \$25.8 billion in biodiversity-related financing in 2022, nearly three-quarters came from five sources: European Union institutions, France, Germany, Japan and the United States, data from the OECD showed.

Diverging national interests among the BRICS, with Russia keen to maintain its sales of fossil fuels, while Brazil presses countries to decarbonise faster, may also prove sticking points. — Reuters

Expanding role of Omani women in the judiciary

WOMEN

today actively contribute to numerous sectors, driven by principles of gender equality and their recognised role in sustainable development. Their participation spans intellectual, scientific, civil, and military domains, making their growing presence in legislative, judicial, and executive authorities a natural progression.

Governments and societies have invested significantly in women’s education, training, and professional development, enabling them to enter fields previously beyond their reach, including the judiciary and military. Their involvement in these sectors marks a transformative shift, reflecting their increasing role in nation-building and their ability to thrive in new and diverse professions.

Women’s integration into the judiciary aligns with broader social objectives, empowering them to contribute actively to national service. Their legal expertise and human insight help uphold justice and reinforce principles of equality, fostering an inclusive court environment that instils public confidence, particularly among women seeking redress.

Beyond elevating their societal standing, women’s presence in the judiciary challenges traditional perceptions, enhances their understanding of legal systems, and allows them to shape legislative frameworks that align with national aspirations. This involvement strengthens the foundations of justice, equality, and social security, reinforcing positive citizenship and broadening opportunities across all developmental sectors.

A gender-balanced judiciary facilitates access to justice, particularly in cases involving women, ensuring fair legal representation. Establishing a legal system that upholds gender equality not only enables more inclusive justice but also strengthens legal institutions, enhancing their credibility and



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effectiveness.

Oman has long championed women’s empowerment, integrating them into all sectors through education and training. Legislative and policy frameworks promoting gender equality have expanded women’s participation across social, economic, environmental, and technological fields. Omani women have excelled in business, artificial intelligence, space sciences, and energy sectors, achieving recognition at local, regional, and global levels.

Their entry into the judiciary further underscores their capacity to modernise legal processes and introduce diverse judicial perspectives, complementing their male counterparts’ contributions. This diversity fosters collaborative decision-making, enhances judicial outcomes, and supports policy development in line with national objectives.

According to the 2024 Omani Women’s Observatory, published by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the annual growth rate of Omani women in the judiciary between 2020 and 2023 reached 31.2 per cent. By 2023, the total number of Omani women in the judiciary stood at 608, reflecting a 25 per cent increase from the previous year. These figures highlight their expanding role within judicial institutions.

Women in the judiciary are predominantly concentrated in two professions: law and public prosecution, accounting for 92 per cent and 8 per cent of female participation, respectively. In 2023, the number of female lawyers rose by 27 per cent to 562, while female prosecutors increased by 5 per cent to 46. While their overall representation remains modest, the steady annual rise suggests greater future participation and broader opportunities in the judicial sector.

However, the current concentration of Omani women in just two legal professions calls for a review of their career pathways within the judiciary. Their skills and qualifications equip them

for diverse roles, and a phased approach to judicial integration should facilitate their entry into higher judicial positions. Given the state’s investments in women’s education and professional development, they are well-positioned to assume judicial responsibilities alongside their male counterparts.

Women’s participation in the judiciary carries significant social and developmental implications. A strategic approach to their empowerment would ensure clear benchmarks for their legal careers and strengthen their representation across various sectors. This aligns with Oman’s broader vision of fostering gender-inclusive policies and leadership roles.

The experiences of other Arab nations offer valuable insights. Jordan appointed its first female judge in 1996, while Bahrain followed in 2006. These examples demonstrate women’s capacity to excel in judicial roles, promoting diversity and inspiring greater female participation in legal and legislative fields.

Omani women possess the expertise and potential to match their global counterparts. Their achievements in business and other fields stand as testament to their capabilities. As the world marks International Day of Women Judges on March 10, expanding their representation in the judiciary would reinforce gender equality, promote fair opportunities, and support national policy development.

Oman’s commitment to gender parity has facilitated women’s progress across all domains. With continued support and open opportunities, women can further their contributions to sustainable national development. Ensuring their presence in all sectors, including the judiciary, necessitates ongoing review and expansion of their roles, affirming their integral place in shaping the nation’s future.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari (The original version of this article was published in the print edition of Oman Arabic on March 9)

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters

MADRID EDGE VALLECANO TO JOIN BARCELONA AT TOP OF LALIGA

LONDON: Real Madrid drew level on points with Barcelona at the top of LaLiga after beating Rayo Vallecano 2-1.

Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Jr produced outstanding finishes in the space of four first-half minutes to put Real in command at the Bernabeu.

Mbappe broke the deadlock after half an hour by cutting inside and slotting into the bottom corner before Vinicius netted in similar fashion following a mazy run with the help of a deflection off Andrei Ratiu. Pedro Diaz halved the deficit with his first Rayo goal in first-half stoppage time.

Barcelona, whose fixture against Osasuna on Saturday was postponed following the death of first-team doctor Carles Minarro Garcia, are level on points with Real with a game in hand and a superior goal difference of 15.

Third-placed Atletico Madrid saw their title hopes dented by a late Getafe show as Diego Simeone's side crashed to a 2-1 defeat.

Atletico took a 75th-minute lead when video assistant referee spotted a handball offence and substitute Alexander Sorloth converted from the penalty spot.

The contest turned on Angel Correa being sent off for a high boot Dakonam two minutes from time and Mauro Arambarri levelled from the resulting set-piece. Getafe made the most of their extra man in the second minute of stoppage time as Arambarri fired home Diego Rico's cross.

Nico Williams converted a close-range header as Athletic Bilbao salvaged a 1-1 draw against Mallorca.

Diego Llorente secured a 1-0 victory for Real Betis over 10-man Las Palmas, the winner coming four minutes after Dario Essugo's red card, and Sevilla won by the same scoreline at Real Sociedad.

Napoli trimmed Inter Milan's Serie A lead back to a single point by beating Fiorentina 2-1.

Romelu Lukaku's 10th goal of the season - his first since January 25- put Napoli ahead after David De Gea parried Scott McTominay's shot into his path. Giacomo Raspadori doubled the lead on the hour before Albert Gudmundsson pulled one back to give Fiorentina hope entering the final quarter. — PA Media/dpa



OMAN CRICKET CLUB (OCC)

Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Club for the year 2025

The Board of Management of the Oman Cricket Club (OCC) will be holding its Annual General Meeting of the club for the year 2025. The meeting will be held on Wednesday, 9th April, 2025 commencing at 6.00 pm at the Oman Cricket Academy. All Members wishing to attend this meeting and whose membership may have expired are requested to proceed with renewal of the membership with effect from the date of this announcement. The last date for renewal of membership is Monday, 31st March, 2025 before 5.00 pm.

As per Article No.29 of the Statute of the Sports Clubs No 124/2008, the meeting will be considered valid in the presence of an absolute majority of members of the club who are entitled to attend (half + one). If the required number of members are unavailable at 6.30 pm., the meeting could be postponed to another date within 15 days from the date of the first meeting, or be held on the same day at 7.00 pm.

The second meeting held on the same day will be considered valid in the presence of (quarter) of working members. Agenda will be available at OCC office before 7 days of the scheduled meeting.

Secretary of the Club
Chairman of the Board of Directors

Oman dominate Ahli Sidab to claim MoCSY shield

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 10

OMAN CLUB were crowned champion of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Handball Shield after a well-deserved 33-22 victory over Ahli Sidab in the final match held on Sunday at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The event took place under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and President of the Oman School Sports Association.

With this triumph, Oman Club secured the domestic treble for the season, adding the Shield title to their Oman League and Super Cup victories. Meanwhile, Seeb Club claimed third place after an exciting 27-26 win over Muscat Club.

The final match began at a fast pace, with Oman Club displaying high energy and taking advantage of their strong attacking lineup. Ahli Sidab attempted to impose their style, but Oman's defensive duo, led by Nasr al Tamimi and Mohammed al Dhaghishi, effectively closed spaces, thwarting the attacking efforts of Mohannad al Zarafi and Abdulhakim al Siyabi.

Oman Club's first goal came through Tahir al Hadidi, who capitalised on a fast break after intercepting a misplaced pass from Ahli Sidab.

Shortly after, Mohammed Elhab doubled the lead with a powerful shot from outside the area, leaving goalkeeper Huzaifa al Siyabi helpless.

Ahli Sidab attempted to narrow the gap through Mohannad al Zarafi, but Oman's goalkeeper Munir al Balushi pulled off a brilliant save, launching a quick counterattack that ended with Asaad al Hassani scoring a third goal. Oman continued their offensive pressure, with Nasr al Tamimi and Khalid al Jabri adding two more goals, extending the lead to 5-1.

Ahli Sidab fought back, with Mohannad al Zarafi scoring a second goal for his



Oman Club celebrating with the trophy. Pictures by: Hussein al Muqballi



Ahli Sidab attempt to score

team after an impressive individual effort. However, their struggle continued as they missed multiple chances, while Oman capitalised on their opponent's errors. Mohammed al dhaghishi and Mohammed Ihab added two consecutive goals, increasing the score to 10-3.

Before halftime, Oman Club exploited Ahli Sidab's defensive lapses, scoring four more goals, while Ahli Sidab managed just two. The first half ended with Oman leading 20-7.

Oman Club resumed the second half with the same offensive intensity, but Ahli

Sidab had an early surprise, as goalkeeper Huzaifa al Siyabi managed to score after noticing Oman's goalkeeper out of position. However, Tahir al Hadidi quickly responded, scoring his seventh goal to widen the gap to 21-8.

Ahli Sidab tried to reduce the deficit but rushed attacks and the continued brilliance of goalkeeper Munir al Balushi kept them at bay. As the match progressed, Oman's superior physical fitness became evident, allowing them to capitalise on fast breaks. Mohammed Ihab and Salah al Naseri scored back-to-back goals, extending the lead to 24-10.

Despite efforts from Mohannad al Zarafi and Abdulhakim al Siyabi to mount a comeback, Oman remained clinical in attack. Mohammed al Dhaghishi and Hamad al Dhaghishi added more goals, pushing the score to 27-12 by the 45th minute.

In the final moments, both teams exchanged attacks, with Ahli Sidab scoring ten goals in an attempt to narrow the margin, while Oman Club added six more. Referee Khamis al Wahaibi blew the final whistle, confirming Oman Club's 33-22 victory, securing their third major title of the season and reaffirming their dominance over the competition.

Oman parathletes compete in Grand Prix in India

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 10

The Oman Paralympic Athletics team is set to compete today, Tuesday, in the Grand Prix Athletics Championship for Para Athletes, hosted in the Indian capital, New Delhi, from March 9 to 15. The championship features an elite lineup of the world's top para-athletes.

The Oman Paralympic Committee delegation arrived in New Delhi on Monday, comprising athletes Mohammed bin Jameel al Mushaikhi and Taha bin Abdullah al Harassi, alongside national coach Asaad al Qarni. The delegation is headed by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Hinai, Secretary-General of the Oman Paralympic Committee.

Mohammed al Mushaikhi will compete in the shot put and club throw competitions, while Taha al Harassi will participate in the 100-metre sprint and long jump competition.

Monday, the national team players underwent a training session under the supervision of coach Asaad al Qarni to acclimate to the championship environment and enhance their technical readiness.



Coach Asaad al Qarni emphasised that the team's preparations for the Grand Prix Championship followed a well-structured plan, involving intensive training phases to elevate the athletes' physical and technical levels. He explained that the preparations began some time ago, with the athletes undergoing an intensive training camp at the

Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The camp included daily training sessions focused on refining performance in their respective events, in addition to specialised fitness programmes aimed at boosting endurance and physical strength to match the level of competition in the championship.

Al Qarni added, "We are

aware that the Grand Prix Championship will witness fierce competition, given the participation of top para-athletes worldwide. This requires a high level of preparedness and both mental and physical readiness. Over the past period, we have worked on enhancing the athletes' techniques in their respective events and simulating competition scenarios to ensure their full readiness."

He continued, "We have great confidence in our athletes, as they possess a strong sense of determination and challenge. Our goal is not just participation but to compete strongly for top positions and achieve a new milestone for Oman Paralympic sports."

The Oman Paralympic Committee aspires to achieve outstanding results and secure podium finishes following an intensive preparation period. The athletes are eager to deliver a strong performance that reflects the progress of Paralympic sports in the Sultanate of Oman, with high hopes of achieving a new accomplishment to add to Oman's record in international competitions.

SHORTTAKES



OMAN CRICKET
LAUNCHES
OC T10 TOURNEY

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket is thrilled to announce the commencement of the highly anticipated inaugural OC T10 Tournament, featuring 48 teams from B to I Divisions (8 Divisions). The tournament brings together the best emerging cricketing talent in an action-packed, fast-paced format on the state-of-the-art Oman Cricket Turf Grounds in Al Amerat.

With the T10 format gaining immense popularity globally and serving a medium to enjoy cricket with instances at every ball, Oman Cricket aims and continues to foster a competitive cricketing environment, offering teams an exciting opportunity to showcase their skills, involve friends and family during the evenings and gain quality exposure of playing on Cricket Turf in Oman. The OC T10 promises high-energy encounters, breathtaking performances and thrilling finishes as teams battle for supremacy in this electrifying short-format competition.

The 10-overs-a-side tournament will feature 48 teams, from B to I divisions in 8 groups of 6 teams each. Each group will play a round-robin league format with each team playing 5 league matches.

The 10-overs-a-side tournament will feature 48 teams, from B to I divisions in 8 groups of 6 teams each. Each group will play a round-robin league format with each team playing 5 league matches.

A total of 120 matches will be played on the state-of-the-art Oman Cricket Academy

Turf grounds, opening the doors to all cricketers to experience quality cricket at the Home of Cricket in Oman.

Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer, Oman Cricket, stated: “The OC T10 is an exciting initiative aimed at expanding the reach of cricket in Oman, making it more accessible to working professionals. It provides an opportunity for players from different divisions to compete in a dynamic format, sharpen their skills and gain increased match experience throughout the season.”

Oman Cricket encourages fans, cricket enthusiasts and aspiring players to follow the tournament closely and support the teams as they embark on their quest for glory.



Inter Miami CF's United States defender Noah Allen #32, Inter Miami CF's Spanish midfielder Federico Redondo #55, Inter Miami CF's Argentine defender David Martinez #14, Inter Miami CF's Spanish defender Jordi Alba #18 and Inter Miami CF's United States midfielder Yannick Bright #42 celebrate the team win at the MLS match between Inter Miami CF and Charlotte FC at Chase Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. — AFP

Messi watches from bench
as Miami edge Charlotte

LIONEL MESSI watched from the bench as 10-man Inter Miami held on for a 1-0 win over Charlotte FC in Major League Soccer on Sunday.

The Argentine was not used by coach Javier Mascherano in a game where Miami spent much of the time on the back foot after goalkeeper Oscar Ustari was sent off in the 38th minute.

It marked the third straight game that Messi failed to feature for Miami after he did not travel to Houston for last week's 4-1 win in MLS before watching the 2-0 victory over Jamaica's Cavalier in the CONCACAF Champions Cup first-leg game on Thursday.

Mascherano has said he is managing the workload of the 37-year-old World Cup winner and while his absence has been a disappointment for fans, Miami have not paid a price on the field.

Charlotte, coached by Englishman Dean Smith, the former Aston Villa manager, were the better team throughout the encounter but proved unable to convert their plentiful possession into real goal chances.

The visitors offered early indicators of where their threats lay, with Wilfried Zaha, the former Crystal Palace winger, showing flashes of his skill on the left flank while Israeli winger Liel Abada's pace was evident on the opposite wing.

Miami were creating little, with Ashley Westwood dictating play in the centre of midfield for the North Carolina side, and they found themselves in trouble when Ustari received a straight red after he raced off his line and brought down Zaha.



Messi before the game against Charlotte. — Reuters

The teams went in goalless at the break but it took just seconds for Miami to strike after the interval with a delightfully constructed goal.

Tadeo Allende back-heeled to Luis Suarez and the veteran returned the ball with a chip which the Argentine chested down and then buried into the bottom corner.

It was the fourth goal this season, in all competitions for Allende who joined Miami on loan from Spanish club Celta Vigo.

Miami opted to defend their lead, sitting deep and in numbers, frustrating Charlotte who struggled to break through their

defence despite 13 corners.

Their best chance came in the 65th minute when Zaha whipped in a wicked cross from the left but Patrick Agyemang's glancing header flashed wide of the post.

The crowd chanted for a Messi cameo, but Mascherano opted for defensive changes as the South Florida side held firm to maintain their unbeaten start to the season.

- No risking -
“Well, the truth is that in the case of Leo, we had thought of giving him minutes at some point in the game, but when we went a men down and with him having been out for so long, we thought it was best to keep him (on the bench) and not take any risks in that case,” said Mascherano, who did not explain what would be ‘risked’ by Messi.

There has been no clear indication of any injury for Messi with medical staff understood to be concerned about ‘overload’ on his muscles from the intense start of the season, resulting in the cautious approach from his coach.

Smith was left to reflect on his team's sloppy start to the second half.

“The only reason we come away with nothing today is because we give a really poor goal away with a lack of concentration straight from the kick off. It is difficult when I thought we were the better team,” he said.

Champions Los Angeles Galaxy slumped to their third straight defeat of the season with a 3-0 loss at home to St.Louis City.

German Cedric Teuchert put the visitors ahead, turning the ball home in the 44th minute after Galaxy keeper Novak Micovic dropped a corner. — AFP

Shai outguns Jokic as Thunder roll past Nuggets

LOS ANGELES: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander outdueled MVP rival Nikola Jokic with a 40-point performance as the Oklahoma City Thunder produced a late barrage to defeat the Denver Nuggets 127-103 on Sunday.

A pulsating battle between the NBA Western Conference heavyweights was settled by a fourth quarter offensive onslaught from Oklahoma City, who outscored Denver 41-20 in the final frame to romp to victory. Gilgeous-Alexander — widely seen as the front-runner to succeed Jokic as the league's Most Valuable Player — was instrumental in the Thunder's strong finish.

The gifted Canadian point guard once again came up big when it mattered, slamming the door on Denver after the Nuggets had got to



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) drives around Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray (27) during the second half at Paycom Center. — AFP

within one point of OKC at the start of the fourth quarter after clawing their way back from an 11-point deficit in the third quarter.

Gilgeous-Alexander added nine points in the fourth quarter to complete his 11th 40-point of the season, putting the Thunder within touching distance of clinching their place in the postseason. The Thunder are now 53-11 at the top of the Western Conference after their seventh straight victory, 12 games clear of the second-placed Los Angeles Lakers. “We were able to get stops down the stretch and then just execute,” Gilgeous-Alexander said of the Thunder's fourth-quarter bombardment. “That's what it's going to come down to when teams are so good. It's never going to be pretty all the time but if you get stops and

execute you'll give yourself a chance no matter who you play.”

Remarkably, Gilgeous-Alexander's 40-point game came despite him making just two of 11 three-point attempts. But the 26-year-old shrugged off his struggles from long range by attacking the rim to keep the points flowing for OKC.

“That's where it all starts -- easy baskets,” Gilgeous-Alexander told ESPN. “That's my comfort zone. I didn't make as many shots as I wanted to, but we got a dub (win) so I don't care,” Gilgeous-Alexander meanwhile shrugged off the hype surrounding his head-to-head with reigning MVP Jokic, the Serbian star who came into the game fresh from a historic triple double of 31 points, 21 rebounds and 22 assists in Friday's win over the Phoenix Suns. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes celebrates scoring their first goal with Casemiro and Joshua Zirkzee. — Reuters

ARSENAL TITLE HOPES HIT AGAIN WITH 1-1 DRAW AT MAN UNITED

MANCHESTER, England: Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice struck in the second half to cancel out Bruno Fernandes's free kick but Mikel Arteta's men could only muster a 1-1 draw with Manchester United on Sunday in a big blow to their Premier League title chances.

Second-placed Arsenal, who have failed to win their last three Premier League games, have 55 points and trail leaders Liverpool by 15 points but with a game in hand.

Manchester United, with one league win in their last five games and just three victories in their last 12, are 14th on 34 points.

The first half was far from a classic with Arsenal, who were hoping to build on the momentum from their midweek 7-1 Champions League thrashing of PSV Eindhoven, dominating possession but with few chances for either side.

Arsenal 15 points behind leaders Liverpool

Rice levels for Arsenal after Fernandes's free kick for United

United fans protest prior to kick-off

Fernandes finally broke the deadlock seconds before halftime and against the run of play with a brilliant free kick that sailed over the wall and past the outstretched hands of goalkeeper David Raya. It was the first time United had led at halftime of a Premier League game since December 1.

The second half was far more entertaining with near misses for both sides before Rice levelled in the 74th minute when he latched onto a ball from Jurrien Timber

and unleashed a blistering shot from the edge of the box past Andre Onana.

Martin Odegaard had a terrific chance at the other end when Arsenal teed up a short corner to the Norwegian but his shot was just pushed over the bar by Onana.

If Raya could perhaps be criticised for conceding from Fernandes's free kick, the keeper salvaged a draw for his side with a stunning double save in the game's thrilling final seconds. He partly saved a Fernandes shot, and then had to scramble to claw the ball away on the line as it was spinning backwards into the net.

The game finished with the teams level on six shots on target apiece.

"It helps when you score a goal and don't suffer (conceding first), you can feel the energy in the stadium," United boss Ruben Amorim said.

— Reuters



Manchester United's Noussair Mazraoui in action with Arsenal's Riccardo Calafiori. — Reuters



Stefanos Tsitsipas hits a shot in the third round of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Well Tennis Garden. — Reuters

Iga Swiatek serves the ball in the third round of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Well Tennis Garden. — Reuters

Daniil Medvedev hits a shot during the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Well Tennis Garden. — Reuters

DEFENDING champion Iga Swiatek edged closer to an unprecedented third Indian Wells WTA title on Sunday, overwhelming Dayana Yastremska 6-0, 6-2 to reach the fourth round.

Swiatek's 65-minute victory set the tone on a day that saw Daniil Medvedev spend just 10 minutes on court before ailing opponent Alex Michelsen retired.

Swiatek, the world number two from Poland, was in full control against hard-hitting Ukrainian Yastremska, swinging freely as she won the first 10 games.

She converted six of her 11 break chances and didn't face a break point herself and it was virtually over by the time Yastremska got on the board with wins in her last two service games.

"It's always hard to finish a match like that," Swiatek said. "But I'm happy that I got my intensity up the last game and closed it with confidence." Swiatek next faces Czech Karolina Muchova, who trailed 3-5 in the first set but won 10 of the next 11 games to beat compatriot Katerina Siniakova 7-5, 6-1.

Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva and 2023 Indian Wells champion Elena Rybakina joined Swiatek in dishing out bagels as they lined up a fourth-round clash.

Andreeva, who triumphed in Dubai last month to become the youngest ever winner of a WTA 1000 event, beat Denmark's Clara Tauson 6-3, 6-0 in 63 minutes.

Rybakina downed Britain's Katie Boulter 6-0, 7-5.

Andreeva — who beat Tauson in the final in Dubai — said she found conditions on Stadium Court tougher than she made it look.

"I'm just happy the way I managed to stay in the game," she said. "I didn't give her much rhythm so I guess it was not bad — but there's a lot of things to work on." Women's fourth seed Jessica Pegula of the United States, fresh off her first WTA title of the year in Austin, was another quick winner, putting away China's Wang Xinyu 6-2, 6-1 in just 62 minutes.

Pegula next faces Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Danielle Collins.

SWIATEK, MEDVEDEV, TSITSIPAS SPRINT INTO INDIAN WELLS 4TH ROUND

Medvedev headlined the men's lineup in the combined ATP Masters and WTA 1000 event, but he was barely underway when 20-year-old Michelson retired because of illness after dropping the first two games.

"Food poisoning or something like this, these things happen," said Medvedev, who was headed to the practice courts to tune up for a fourth-round clash with 10th-seeded American Tommy Paul.

Paul beat Britain's 2021 Indian Wells winner Cameron Norrie, now ranked 77th in the world, 6-3, 7-5.

GLADIATOR

Eighth-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas, coming off his first title in almost a year in Dubai, beat Matteo Berrettini 6-3, 6-3 in a rematch of their Dubai quarterfinal last week.

Tsitsipas dropped just eight points on his serve as he wrong-footed Italian with a variety of athletic shots, breaking him three times on the way to victory in 68

minutes. After months in the doldrums Tsitsipas said he was relishing a new mental approach to the game.

"I just feel like I want to get out there on the court and be a gladiator, and that's how I approach every single match I get to play," he said.

Tallon Griekspoor, the world No 43 from the Netherlands who shocked world number two and top seed Alexander Zverev in the second round, backed up his big win with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 victory over France's 29th seed Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard.

Griekspoor fired 10 aces, dominating the first set tiebreaker, and didn't face a break point in the second set.

Griekspoor needed an hour and 16 minutes to secure the win, but in a season in which dropping the first set has become an alarming habit that was fast enough.

"It feels nice to win a match in under one and a half hour," he said. — AFP



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Al Rifaa

Oman’s OQAE has 7GW of clean energy projects under development

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 10

Alternative Energy (OQAE), designated a National Champion by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, is presently developing a portfolio of clean energy projects with an aggregate capacity of over 7 gigawatts (GW) in the Sultanate of Oman.

According to Muhannad al Kiyumi, Head of Project Development — Clean Energy, OQAE, the project portfolio encompasses initiatives across renewables, low carbon molecules and other ventures to support the country’s energy transition.

Taking part in a webinar on the theme, ‘The Role of Liberalisation in the Omani Energy Market’, hosted recently by the



MUHANNAD AL KIYUMI
Head of Project Development - Clean Energy, OQAE

British-Omani Society, Al Kiyumi stated: “We have developed a pipeline of more than 7GW of projects — primarily solar, wind and storage — in Oman, supporting the decarbonisation plans of various industries.

This is an unprecedented market in the region, where a direct sale framework is allowed through our national champion, OQ Alternative Energy, to support industrial electrification efforts. Our initiatives not only help industries achieve their decarbonisation goals but

also enhance their competitiveness in the international market.”

As National Champion, OQAE will serve as a renewable energy developer for utility-scale projects, said Al Kiyumi. As part of this remit, OQAE will also support local content development, while attracting international investments into this sector.

“As a large utility-scale developer, we collaborate with various companies for design, grid impact studies and energy storage solutions. These partnerships enable us to deliver comprehensive and competitive energy solutions. Ultimately, this allows us to provide attractive offers to our offtakers, which include both existing and new industrial players investing in Oman,” he further noted.

“As a developer, we actively engage

with various companies across the energy sector, relying on a wide range of services to support our projects,” Al Kiyumi added.

Also taking part in the webinar were: Dr Firas al Abduwani, Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen — Ministry of Energy and Minerals; Eng Hilal al Ghaithi, Director of Energy — Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR); 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.

OQAE — part of OQ Group, the integrated global energy group of Oman — is partnering with a number of international developers to support green hydrogen production in Oman.

OMAN AIRPORTS RECORD OVER 1.33M PASSENGERS

MUSCAT: Passenger traffic through Omani airports dropped by 6% in January 2025, with 1.33 million travellers recorded, compared to 1.42 million in the same period last year, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Muscat International Airport, which handles the bulk of air traffic, saw a 7% decline, recording 1.2 million passengers across 8,099 flights, a 7.5% drop in total flights. International flights made up 7,410 of these,



International flights made up 7,410 of these, carrying 1.1 million passengers.

carrying 1.1 million passengers, while domestic flights accounted

for 689 flights, serving 90,689 passengers.

Salalah Airport was the only major airport to record growth, handling 126,506 passengers, a 5% increase year-on-year. It saw 822 flights, marking a 1.6% rise. International traffic at Salalah included 404 flights carrying 59,429 passengers, while domestic flights totalled 418, with 67,077 passengers.

Sohar Airport handled just 10 flights, while Duqm Airport served 4,774 passengers across 52 flights. — ONA

OPAZ invites bids for cold chain economic cluster consultancy

DUQM: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has invited specialised consultancy firms to bid for a tender to develop an integrated economic cluster for cold chains at the Special Economic Zone in Duqm (SEZAD).

The tender documents are available on the electronic platform “Isnad” of the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, with a purchase deadline of March 18 and a bid submission deadline of April 17.

According to Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO of SEZAD, the project aims to establish world-class cold chain infrastructure, enhancing the efficiency of storage and distribution for perishable goods such as food and pharmaceuticals. By improving logistics and reducing waste, the initiative will boost the competitiveness of Omani exports while supporting



The initiative will boost the competitiveness of Omani exports while supporting the country’s economic diversification efforts.

the country’s economic diversification efforts.

“The project is designed to meet international standards, ensuring Omani products gain smoother access to global markets,” Akaak stated. He also highlighted Al Duqm’s strategic location on the Arabian Sea and its connectivity to international shipping lanes

as a key advantage.

SEZAD’s existing infrastructure — including Duqm Port, Duqm Airport and the fishing port — positions the area as an ideal hub for cold chain logistics. The project is expected to attract foreign investment, create jobs for Omanis and stimulate growth in the logistics sector.



Invitation from Bank Muscat S.A.O.G

For an Extraordinary General Meeting and an Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Shareholders of the Bank

Bank Muscat “S.A.O.G” takes pleasure in inviting all its shareholders to an Extraordinary General Meeting and an Annual Ordinary General Meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 26th March, 2025. The meetings will be convened via the electronic platform to hold the general meetings, which can be accessed via Muscat Clearing and Depository’s website (www.mcd.om). If the quorum for this meeting is not met, a second meeting will be convened at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, 27th March, 2025 through the same electronic platform. The meeting will consider and decide on the following Agenda:

First: The Agenda for the Extraordinary General Meeting

1. To approve the renewal of Meethaq Sukuk program(s) and issuance of RO 500 million (or its equivalent in US Dollar currency) Sukuks in various tranches in the domestic and international markets through public subscription or private placement. The Sukuk tranches under Meethaq Sukuk Program(s) will be of different amounts, maturities, profit rates, issued on different dates with varying terms and conditions of subscription. The total amount of Sukuks issued under Meethaq Sukuk Program(s) shall not exceed RO 500 million (or its equivalent in US Dollar).

And to authorize the Board of Directors of the Bank, or such person or persons as delegated from time to time by the Board of Directors, to determine the issuance amount, date and terms of subscription of each issue, provided that the total amount of Sukuk issued shall not exceed RO 500 million (or its equivalent in US Dollar currency) under Meethaq Sukuk Program(s). The Sukuk will be issued within 5 years from the date of the EGM approving their issuance. Each Sukuk issue shall be available for subscription only on obtaining the relevant requisite regulatory and Shari’a approvals.

2. To approve the issuance of senior unsecured bonds in the local market under a Medium Term Programme “MTP”. The Bank, within the framework of the proposed MTP, would issue senior, unsecured bonds denominated in OMR or USD in the local market either by a private placement or public offering in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations in Oman. The bonds issued under the MTP shall have a maturity of 2-7 years and shall be listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange. The proceeds from any issuance will be utilized for meeting the Bank’s funding requirements and supporting the Bank’s growth plans. The programme size shall be up to OMR 250 million with a programme tenor of 5 years from the programme start date.

And to authorize the Board of Directors of the Bank, or such person or persons as delegated from time to time by the Board of Directors, to determine and approve the terms of any issuance under the MTP Programme, the establishment of and any issuances including the amounts, currencies, all relevant dates, disclosure standards, methods and forms of distribution, listing and ratings requirements, engagement with the Central Bank of Oman, other government entities and regulatory authorities on behalf of the Bank, appointment of advisers and service providers, legal and regulatory documentation and the detailed terms and conditions of each issuance under the MTP Programme.

Second: The Agenda for the Annual Ordinary General Meeting:

1. To consider and approve the Report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 31st December, 2024.

2. To consider and approve the Report on Corporate Governance for the financial year ended 31st December, 2024.

3. To consider the Auditor’s Report and approval of the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Accounts for the financial year ended 31st December, 2024.

4. To consider the report of the Shari’a Supervisory Board of Meethaq, the Islamic Banking window, for the financial year ended 31st December, 2024.

5. To consider and approve the recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 16.5 Baiza for each share for the financial year ended 31st December, 2024.

6. To consider and ratify the sitting fees for the Board of Directors and its committees’ meetings for the financial year ended 31st December, 2024 and approve sitting fees for the current financial year.

7. To consider and approve the Board of Directors’ remuneration of OMR 300,000 (three hundred thousand Omani Rials) for the financial year ended 31st December, 2024.

8. To consider and approve the Related Party Transactions that will be concluded during the financial year ending 31st December, 2025.

9. Appointment of Shari’a Supervisory Board of Meethaq, the Islamic banking window and fixing their sitting fees and remunerations.

10. To appoint the statutory auditors for the Bank and the external independent Shari’a auditors for Meethaq, the Islamic banking window of the Bank, for the financial year ending 31st December, 2025 and set their fees, subject to the applicable regulatory approvals.

11. To elect a new Board of Directors for the Bank. Those who wish to nominate themselves for the election of the Board of Directors, whether shareholders or not, must fill-in the nomination forms prepared by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) for such purpose. The completed and signed nomination forms and the supporting identity documents, an ID copy for an Omani National or a copy of a Resident Card and a copy of a passport for a non-Omani, must be submitted to the Secretariat of the Board of Directors at the Head Office of the Bank **not later than 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, 20th March, 2025.**

In accordance with the regulations for holding general meeting using modern technology issued by the FSA, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

1. A juristic person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on its behalf through the electronic platform, provided that this natural person has an investor number at Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.

2. Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the meeting until the end of the voting process during the meeting, in the event that the shareholder’s shareholding balance is changed by increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and he/she will have to vote again on the day of the meeting.

For any clarifications in respect of the agenda of the above meeting, please contact
Ms. Samiya Salim Al Busaidi, Tel. No. (24767197), E-mail (Samias@bankmuscat.com).

Khalid bin Mustahail Al Mashani
Chairman of the Board of Directors

KPMG
Statutory Auditors of the Bank and External Independent Sharia Auditors for Meethaq, the Islamic banking window of the bank

Legal Advisor

17/05/2025

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



NBO HOSTS EXCLUSIVE IFTAR GATHERING FOR PRIVATE BANKING AND SADARA PRIORITY CUSTOMERS

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted an exclusive Iftar gathering at Crowne Plaza Al Qurum, bringing together its Private Banking and Sadara Priority Banking customers. The exclusive gathering served as a platform for NBO’s leadership to engage directly with its top-tier customers, fostering meaningful connections and strengthening relationships.

Commenting on the gathering, Ali Mustafa al Lawati, Assistant General Manager & Head of Private Banking and Segments, said: “ This Iftar gathering confirms our deep appreciation for our clients who have chosen NBO’s Private Banking and Sadara Priority Banking as their trusted banking partner. We are continually striving to strengthen our ties with our customers by enhancing our services and providing exceptional solutions designed to meet their evolving needs.”

Through its exclusive Private Banking and Sadara Priority Banking services, NBO provides customers with a range of personalised services, including wealth management advice, bespoke financial solutions and access to a network of global privileges. NBO remains committed to elevating the banking experience for its customers, continually expanding offerings to reflect the evolving financial landscape.

KR ESHRAQA FOUNDATION SHARES THE SPIRIT OF RAMADHAN WITH 10,000 FAMILIES

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to community welfare, the Khimji Ramdas (KR) Eshraqa Foundation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), has successfully distributed 10,000 Ramadhan essential food supply boxes across all Wilayats in the Sultanate of Oman.

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

Bank Muscat named most trusted brand in Oman

MUSCAT: In recognition of the its pioneering role in developing the banking sector and providing diverse customer-centric banking services, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been awarded the “Most Trusted Brand in Oman” title based on a survey conducted by Alam Iqtisad Wa Aamal (AIWA) published by the United Media Services (UMS).

The Bank was recognised at the high-profile ceremony recently held at the Intercity Hotel, under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, with the attendance of Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, along with senior officials and CEOs from various corporations.

The award was presented to Mohammed Hassan al Lawati, Assistant General

Chery Arizzo 5 now with exclusive benefits

CHERY’S latest introduction the all-new Arizzo 5 is now available in Oman with exclusive benefits.

The benefits include up to 5 years/60,000 km service, 1-year comprehensive insurance, 1-year registration and assured fuel card gifts. This exclusive campaign is valid until April 17, 2025 (Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Chery showroom for exact details.)

The all-new Chery Arrizo 5 is starting from RO 4275. This exclusive campaign is valid until April 17, 2025. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Chery showroom for exact details.)

The Arrizo 5 is equipped with a host of advanced features that enhance convenience and driving pleasure. At the heart of this sedan is a state-of-the-art infotainment system with a high-resolution touchscreen, ensuring seamless connectivity through Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

This allows drivers to stay connected, navigate with ease and enjoy their favourite music effortlessly.

Passenger comfort is taken to the next level with its spacious and ergonomic cabin, featuring high-quality materials, a leather-wrapped steering wheel and customisable ambient lighting.

The automatic climate control system ensures a comfortable environment regardless of external conditions, making every drive a pleasurable experience.

Under the hood, the Arrizo 5 is powered by an efficient and responsive 1.5L engine, delivering an optimal balance of power and



The Arrizo 5 is equipped with a host of advanced features that enhance convenience and driving pleasure.

fuel economy. The intelligent continuously variable transmission (CVT) ensures smooth acceleration and superior handling, making both city commutes and long drives effortless. Additionally, the advanced suspension system enhances stability and ride comfort, contributing to a superior driving experience.

Chery prioritises safety with a range of cutting-edge features in the Arrizo 5. The vehicle comes equipped with an advanced Electronic Stability Programme (ESP), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and a comprehensive suite of airbags, ensuring maximum protection for occupants.

The 360-degree camera and parking sensors make manoeuvring in tight spaces

easy, while the intelligent driver-assist systems provide an added layer of security on every drive.

Speaking about the all-new Arrizo 5 a representative from New World Autos, the distributor for Chery vehicles in Oman, said, “The all-new Arrizo 5 is a game-changer in its segment, offering customers a perfect blend of style, technology and performance at an exceptional value.

Whether it is for daily commuting or weekend getaways, this sedan is built to impress. With its outstanding safety features, advanced infotainment system and fuel-efficient performance, the Arrizo 5 is a vehicle that truly makes a difference in every journey.”

INITIATIVE TO TRAIN FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES IN SIGN LANGUAGE

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible banking experience, Sohar International has successfully concluded a specialised sign language training programme for its frontline employees

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

Commenting on the initiative, Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer at Sohar International, stated: “Inclusivity is not merely a social responsibility; it is a defining attribute of progressive and forward-thinking organisations. Our partnership with Al Tawasul Institute underscores our



This initiative aligns with Sohar International’s broader strategy to enhance customer experience through innovative and inclusive solutions,

commitment to working with industry experts who share our vision of fostering a society that values diversity and empowers every individual.

By equipping our employees with sign language communication skills, we aim to eliminate barriers and enhance service accessibility for all.

Beyond training, this initiative represents a broader effort to cultivate a culture of empathy, respect, and understanding —

both within our organisation and the wider community. Through such endeavours, we aspire to set a benchmark for the industry, encouraging a more mindful and proactive approach to serving individuals with disabilities with dignity and care.”

This initiative aligns with Sohar International’s broader strategy to enhance customer experience through innovative and inclusive solutions, ensuring banking services remain

accessible to all, regardless of communication abilities.

The sign language training program was meticulously designed to equip participants with both practical skills and cultural awareness, focusing on two key areas: sign language communication and the etiquette of engaging with individuals with hearing impairments.

These modules not only enhance employees’ ability to interact effectively but also foster a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by this segment of society.

By strengthening communication pathways, promoting cultural sensitivity, and cultivating an environment rooted in inclusivity, Sohar International reaffirms its commitment to nurturing a workforce that prioritises tailored customer engagement and values diversity in every interaction.



The Bank’s recognition with this award affirms its pioneering role in the banking sector of Oman.

Manager, Innovation and Enterprise Project Management at Bank Muscat.

The Bank’s recognition with this award

affirms its pioneering role in the banking sector of the Sultanate of Oman, particularly in providing top-notch services and facilities that earn the trust of customers from individuals and corporates.

On this occasion, Mohammed Hassan al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Innovation and Enterprise Project Management at Bank Muscat, expressed his pride in the Bank’s achievement of winning the prestigious “Most Trusted Brand in Oman” Award.

He said: “We would like to deliver special thanks to United Media Services for this well-deserved recognition, a testament to the Bank’s customer-centric strategy aiming to enhance the banking experience of customers, as well as its unwavering dedication to offering sustainable community programmes for over four decades.

The tribute of winning the award

demonstrates the efforts made across various fields and the Bank’s role in delivering the best banking services in line with the latest global developments in the banking sector.”

Bank Muscat’s brand is one of the prominent and recognised brands at local, regional and global levels, attributed to the various strategic plans and programmes which the Bank executed to promote its corporate vision of “To serve you better, every day.”

Additionally, the Bank annually implements community-driven initiatives that contribute to the development of society, especially in areas like economic, sports and cultural fields, with focus on programmes targeting the Omani youth. The Bank’s brand reflects its successful partnership with customers and the entire community, driving it to continue its journey of excellence and progress in alignment with its vision.”

BUSINESS



Dr Hazem Magdady, Dean of the College, conveyed the college's appreciation to Al Maawali for his valuable and insightful thoughts.

AL MAAWALI ENGAGES WITH STUDENTS OF OCMT

MUSCAT: The Oman College of Management and Technology (OCMT) recently hosted Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, for an open discussions with students specialising in Computer Science and Management Information Systems.

During the meeting, Al Maawali highlighted the government's dedication to advancing the transportation, communications and information technology sectors, considering them fundamental pillars in achieving Oman Vision 2040. He emphasised the crucial role that modern technologies play in strengthening the national economy and preparing for the future.

The Minister also discussed various government policies, programmes and initiatives aimed at supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, along with enhancing the work culture and the laws and regulations that govern this vital sector.

During the Q&A session, the students sought the Minister's insights on a range of topics, including the future of digitalisation in Oman, job market challenges and opportunities in fields like artificial intelligence and digital transformation.

Al Maawali stressed the need for students to acquire modern skills and take advantage of available training opportunities, underlining that success in the information technology sector demands dedication, persistence and creativity.

OMAN ISSUES RO 37.6 MILLION IN TREASURY BILLS

MUSCAT: The Omani government has allocated RO 37.6 million worth of treasury bills this week, with maturities of 28 and 91 days, according to an official statement.

The 28-day treasury bills amounted to RO 5.4 million, with an average acceptable price of RO 99.708 per RO 100 and a discount rate of 3.80208%. Meanwhile, the 91-day bills totalled RO 32.2 million, with an average price of RO 98.974 and a discount rate of 4.11438%. Treasury bills, issued by the Ministry of Finance and managed by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), serve as a short-term investment tool for licensed commercial banks.

The repo interest rate with the CBO stands at 5%, while the discount rate for treasury bill facilities is 5.5%. — ONA

Talent management: A pillar for Oman Vision 2040

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MARCH 10

IN today's rapidly evolving job market, organisations must adopt advanced strategies to attract, develop and retain top talent. As global competition for skilled professionals intensifies, talent management has become a critical factor in driving economic growth and national development.

A recent study titled “Talent Management Between Its Ethical Charter and a Comprehensive National Guide Aligned with the ‘Ejada’ System: Competitive Advantages for Oman Vision 2040”, explores the significance of talent management in the Sultanate of Oman. Conducted by Majda bint Talib Ali al Hinaiyah from Sultan Qaboos University, the research examines Oman's approach to talent management, compares it with regional and international practices and proposes a national framework to enhance workforce competitiveness in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

As businesses navigate an increasingly dynamic environment, human capital has become the most valuable asset. Unlike technology or financial capital, skilled professionals provide organisations with a sustainable competitive advantage that cannot be easily replicated.

MORE THAN JUST RECRUITMENT

The study highlights that talent management is more than just recruitment — it encompasses a comprehensive process involving attraction, development, retention and motivation. To be effective, talent management strategies must also consider cultural, economic and social factors that shape workforce dynamics.

However, Oman — like many other nations — faces challenges in implementing sustainable talent policies that balance corporate goals with employee aspirations.

The study provides a comparative analysis of Oman's talent management framework with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, two countries that have successfully integrated talent strategies into their national visions.

Despite Oman's ongoing efforts to enhance workforce development, several key challenges remain. One of the main concerns is the mismatch between talent strategies and market needs, leading to skill gaps. Additionally, there is a lack of a unified national framework for workforce planning and evaluation.

MORE ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT

The study also points out that Oman must work on creating a more attractive work environment, particularly in high-growth sectors. Moreover, balancing Omanisation policies with labour market competitiveness continues to be a challenge, as businesses



Skilled professionals provide organisations with a sustainable competitive advantage that cannot be easily replicated.

seek to hire top talent while adhering to national workforce regulations.

The research suggests that existing policies require reassessment to enhance talent retention strategies and prepare Omani professionals for digital and technological transformation.

To address these challenges, the study emphasises the need for a comprehensive national talent management framework built on two foundational pillars: an Ethical Charter for Talent Management and a National Talent Management Guide.

TWO FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS

The Ethical Charter is designed to ensure fairness and transparency in recruitment and career progression. It aims to mitigate bias and inequality in talent selection and development, promoting a more equitable job market.

Meanwhile, the National Talent Management Guide is aligned with the “Ejada” system, outlining clear strategies for talent attraction and development. This guide provides structured career pathways linked to Oman's economic and workforce needs and suggests practical recommendations to enhance workforce efficiency.

Some of these recommendations include enhancing performance evaluation systems to ensure merit-based career progression, integrating AI and digital analytics into HR processes for data-driven decision-making and expanding professional development opportunities through digital learning platforms.

Additionally, creating a more inclusive workplace with flexible work policies and competitive incentives can help attract and retain top talent. A case study within the research highlights Petroleum Development

Oman (PDO) as a leading example of effective talent management in the Sultanate of Oman. PDO has implemented advanced career development programmes, talent empowerment initiatives and AI-driven HR solutions to ensure long-term workforce sustainability.

The company's commitment to talent management has led to high employee satisfaction, supported by specialised training programmes. Moreover, PDO has optimised workforce efficiency through structured career planning and developed a future-focused HR strategy that integrates digital transformation into recruitment and professional development.

The study concludes that effective talent management is essential for Oman to achieve its Oman Vision 2040 objectives. To enhance workforce competitiveness, the researcher proposes several key recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, Oman should implement an Ethical Talent Management Charter to standardise fair and transparent HR policies.

Additionally, developing a National Talent Management Guide, aligned with the Ejada system and tailored to Oman's labour market dynamics, will provide a structured approach to workforce development.

Another important step is to leverage AI and digital transformation to improve workforce planning and talent evaluation. Encouraging companies to adopt talent retention policies, including flexible work arrangements and career incentives, will also be crucial in attracting and keeping skilled professionals. Finally, fostering a culture of continuous learning will ensure that professionals are equipped with future-ready skills to meet evolving industry demands.

Ooredoo’s 5G strategy drives growth across consumer and business segments

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MARCH 10

OOREDOO'S strategic 5G expansion has significantly enhanced customer experience, B2B solutions and digital transformation efforts, according to Quique Vivas, Chief Commercial Officer of Ooredoo.

In an exclusive interview with Observer, Vivas outlined the company's achievements in rolling out 5G with a clear purpose, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) in customer service and integrating sustainability into its business model.

5G EXPANSION: BEYOND SPEED TO STRATEGIC IMPACT

Vivas reiterated that 5G should not be merely a technological upgrade but a tool for improving customer experience.

“All the investments we have made have been around answering the same question that we were discussing last year — what is the purpose? And for us, the purpose is clearly and absolutely to ensure that we provide customers with a fantastic experience,” he said.

Ooredoo's 5G rollout has primarily focused on three key areas. The first is improving fixed wireless



QUIQUE VIVAS
Chief Commercial Officer of Ooredoo

access, ensuring that users migrating from 4G to 5G experience the best connectivity.

“We have managed to migrate a lot of customers from 4G which is a bit of clunky technology when it comes to internet at home to 5G. In terms of experience, usability and data consumption, things have improved

significantly,” Vivas explained.

The second area is the business-to-business (B2B) segment, where 5G enables high-speed, low-latency applications that enhance enterprise operations.

“My B2B colleagues have even monetised 5G better for very important customers, helping businesses revolutionise or strengthen their connectivity,” he noted.

The third aspect is mobile coverage, where Ooredoo has focused on increasing capacity and customer satisfaction.

“We have had a very good 2024 in terms of customer experience and 5G has underpinned that quite significantly,” Vivas added.

LISTENING TO CUSTOMERS: INSIGHTS DRIVING CHANGE

A key part of Ooredoo's strategy is its “Voice of the Customer” programme, which monitors feedback across different customer journeys. One major insight was the need to improve roaming services.

“We knew we needed to improve our roaming experience,” Vivas admitted. “Since we spotted that through customer feedback, we strengthened our roaming plans, improved communication about charges and made the roaming experience more seamless.”

Another area of improvement was prepaid services. “Prepaid is a difficult market because it's impulsive and fast-moving,” Vivas explained. “We have been listening closely to customer needs regarding data, pricing and accessibility, leading to the success of initiatives like Hala+.”

AI AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: ENHANCING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Ooredoo is also investing in AI-driven customer service, though Vivas remains pragmatic about its role. “Two years ago, the majority of the uses cases that we use today fell under the umbrella of Big Data. Now, people believe it's enough to rebrand those to AI,” he observed. “During the past few

years we have developed AI use cases to ensure personalisation, offering our customers the right deal at the right time, which contributed to a 22% net incremental revenue only last year.”

However, AI-driven chatbots are still evolving and Ooredoo is planning to invest in those. “Right now, when a customer has a query through WhatsApp, if the chatbot can't resolve it, they are transferred to a call centre agent,” Vivas said.

“We plan to invest more, not to cut costs, but to enhance the customer experience through better automation. Indeed, it is the customer experience that underpins our initiatives and much of our decision-making around AI and around our products and services generally.”

SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL IMPACT: A CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY

With Ooredoo celebrating its 20th anniversary in Oman, the company is reinforcing sustainability as a core part of its strategy. “A positive impact on society cannot come only from goodwill journeys or corporate foundations,” Vivas emphasised.

“It has to be embedded in the business model. We want to ensure that the things that make us a good company and allow us to earn money also give back to society in a sustainable way.”

OPINION

Is your mobile phone listening to your conversations?



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is the founder of Knowledge Oman

DURING a drive back from school, Balqees, a mother and her son, Abdullah, were planning to go to a restaurant. The two were speaking and wondering what should they eat and where should they go for lunch. Upon parking at a gas station at Shatti Al Qurum, Balqees picked up her phone only to see a variety of food options including the locations pop up as an advert on the screen of her mobile phone. Interesting but spooky isn't it? Similarly, Khalfan was searching for places to travel during Eid and was speaking to a travel agent for some vacation ideas in Thailand. Within a few hours, Khalfan opened his mobile phone and saw an ad customised with flights, accommodations and activities to do in Phuket, Thailand. Surprising but scary isn't it? Both Balqees and Khalfan spoke to me separately about their different incidents but had the same exact question, "Are mobile phones listening to our conversations?" I am sure this has happened to many of you, or at least with your loved ones. My article this week will try and shed some light on this growing concern. First things first — the mobile technology heavy weights companies, Apple for iPhone and Google for Android, have openly denied using their microphones to listen onto their customer conversations.

Furthermore, both have strict privacy policies that prevent applications from accessing camera, microphone, location, photos and videos from gallery etc without explicit permission. You may notice this whenever you try downloading and installing applications via their respective app market (eg playstore for Google's Android platform, AppStore for Apple's platform iPhone/iPad). On the other hand, however, both of Apple and Google's Artificial Intelligence (AI) voice assistants apps (eg Siri and Google Assistant) would respond to you and offer services by simply starting by requesting for one using designated key words such as "Hey Siri" for Apple, and "Hey Google" for Android. I am pretty sure many of you have noticed this lately especially with the latest developments in AI space. Nashat, my wife, is fond of calling home using the words "Hey Siri" and then "Call home" while driving our car. Hmmm, the technology heavy weights both claim that they don't listen into our conversations, but they both technically have access to our microphone via the embedded stock AI voice assistance apps in our mobile phones. I have personally experienced the same with customised Ads I get via different apps I use. The customised ads are the result of websites I visit and searches I do, using the mobile phone.

Virtually everyday a new creative app, driven by some new form of technology (present heavily is AI), using your information, pops up and becomes popular and mainstream in a few span of hours.

So what can we do to protect ourselves? Almost nothing or probably is a big challenge if one wants to continue living in a connected world and have access to information and services easily, conveniently and rapidly. Virtually everyday a new creative app, driven by some new form of technology (present heavily is AI), using your information, pops up and becomes popular and mainstream in a few span of hours. What fuels these apps is unfortunately your data (ie voice via microphone, video via camera, pictures via your gallery apps). About 6 years ago, during one of my cybersecurity sessions at one of the local banks here in Oman, I vividly stated that the word "privacy" may no longer be valid at some stage of our lives. I see this pretty much a reality today. Scary, yes I agree. I will try and share some basic steps next week on some ways that can help with protecting oneself privacy. To conclude, is there someone listening to our conversations? There is no solid evidence or proof yet the technology is there and it is very possible as I had shared on my article today. I also recommend complementing this knowledge by reading my past article on Oman Observer on whether modern cars can spy on us. You will get additional insights on the same for your kind perusal. Until we catch up again, be positive and try to stay safe.

US LABOUR MARKET RUNS INTO TRUMP’S REALITY

BY GABRIEL RUBIN

US FEDERAL Reserve leaders are fond of the adage that economic expansions don't die of old age — they're murdered. There is now growing evidence that February's jobs report, showing a 50th consecutive month of net gains, could be the last of its kind for a while, thanks to unwelcome unpredictability from the Trump administration. The numbers, released on Friday by the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, were mostly good: a 4.1% unemployment rate, an 80.5% participation rate for prime age workers, and 4% wage growth. But recent events instantly give the data a sepia sheen. A rapidly devolving trade war has pushed uncertainty indicators to crisis levels, and enterprises, public and private, have been spooked by cut-off payments and slashed workforces at the hands of Elon Musk's government efficiency initiative. The future for the US economy doesn't look nearly as bright as the recent past. Below the headline figures were some troubling signs that showed the early impacts of erratic policy. The average number of hours worked in a week matches the 34.1 of March 2020, a possible indicator of softening labor demand. The federal government shed 10,000 jobs in the month — a preview of larger losses not yet showing up in the data. Global outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas said on Thursday that pending layoffs jumped 245% to 172,017 last month, the highest level since July 2020. During all this, the White House has careened between bad trade ideas and worse ones. Newly instituted 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada were curtailed on the auto industry, then paused further on goods covered by earlier trade pacts, leaving companies guessing which imports are affected on a given day. The reprieve is set to expire on April 2, when Trump also plans to institute reciprocal levies on a broader set of countries. As a result, imports soared in January. Adding to the turbulence, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a combative speech to the New York Economic Club on Thursday that "access to cheap goods is not the essence of the American dream" and that unfettered trade had hurt upward mobility. If this economic expansion is truly in its death throes, the murder suspects will be easy to identify. — Reuters

Opportunity Oman: The emerging export hub

OMAN is embarking on a transformative journey, driven by the ambitious goals of Oman Vision 2040, to diversify its economy and achieve sustainable growth. Recognising the limitations of its relatively small domestic market and the inherent volatility of hydrocarbon dependence, the Sultanate of Oman is strategically positioning itself to harness the vast opportunities presented by global markets and an expanding network of free trade agreements (FTAs). By actively promoting and developing its export capabilities, Oman aims to stimulate economic growth, attract foreign investment and generate diverse employment opportunities, ultimately enhancing the prosperity and well-being of its citizens. According to the Central Bank of Oman's annual report, the export sector has shown an improving trend despite global economic challenges. The data reveals significant progress in Oman's trade balance, which posted a surplus of RO 7,581.8 million in 2023. Total exports reached RO 22,690.4 million in 2023, with non-hydrocarbon exports amounting to RO 7,442.3 million, demonstrating the growing contribution of non-oil sectors to the economy. Non-oil Omani exports have witnessed remarkable growth, accounting for 33% of total Omani exports at the end of the first half of 2024.

The volume of non-oil Omani exports until the end of June 2024 amounted to approximately RO 3.575 billion, compared to RO 3.307 billion for the same period in 2023, reflecting an increase in export value of more than 8%. This positive trend underscores the effectiveness of Oman's diversification strategy and the growing competitiveness of its non-oil products in international markets. While Oman's current export portfolio showcases a commendable variety of products, ranging from minerals and metals to plastics, rubber and foodstuffs, there lies significant untapped potential in transitioning towards higher-value goods and integrating advanced technologies into the production process. This strategic shift promises not only to boost export revenues but also to elevate Oman's competitive standing in the global marketplace, establishing the



Oman aims to stimulate economic growth, attract foreign investment and generate diverse employment opportunities.



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI

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The writer is founder and CEO - Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor.

nation as a hub for innovation and quality. The government is playing a proactive role in fostering innovation and technology adoption across various sectors, recognising their crucial role in achieving this objective. Initiatives such as the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) with world-class infrastructure and attractive incentives, coupled with a strategic focus on energy-intensive industries, are designed to attract foreign investment and stimulate the growth of export-oriented enterprises. These efforts are further complemented by significant investments in research and development, infrastructure development and comprehensive skills enhancement programmes, creating a conducive environment for technological advancement and innovation to flourish. Recognising the critical importance of efficient export flow for the overall development of the sector, Oman is prioritising the streamlining of customs procedures, the optimisation of logistics operations and the enhancement of collaboration among stakeholders across the entire supply chain. Significant investments are being made in modernising port facilities

at strategic locations like Suhar, Duqm and Salalah, expanding road networks and implementing cutting-edge digital solutions to facilitate the seamless and efficient movement of goods. To further accelerate the growth of its non-oil exports, Oman's Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has launched a new digital platform, www.exports.om. This initiative provides Omani businesses with the tools and resources they need to connect with global markets, streamlining export procedures and providing crucial support to fuel Oman's expanding global reach. More than just a website, "Oman Exports" serves as a dynamic and comprehensive hub designed to connect Omani businesses with the vast opportunities offered by international markets. Recognising that navigating the complexities of exporting can be challenging, the platform provides a user-friendly interface with a wealth of resources readily available. Oman's main trading partners in terms of non-oil exports are Saudi Arabia, UAE and India, representing significant shares of the total export volume. However, Oman is actively pursuing market diversification, targeting new and emerging markets in the Gulf region, East Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Africa, Europe and China. This strategic approach aims to reduce reliance on any single market and enhance the resilience of Oman's export sector to global economic fluctuations. Oman's export sector is at a pivotal moment, poised for a transformative leap. While addressing challenges like bureaucratic processes and SME financing is crucial, the government's commitment to innovation and infrastructure development lays a strong foundation for future success. By capitalising on emerging sectors like minerals, chemicals and food products, and by embracing technological advancements, Oman can solidify its position as a regional trade leader, creating a prosperous and sustainable future for its people.

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A person converted to Islam in the middle of a Ramadhan day. What should he do to compensate for the missed fasting hours?

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HADITH GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Narrated Abu Hurayrah:

The Prophet said: When any of you hears the summons to prayer while he has a vessel in his hand, he should not lay it down till he fulfils his need.

QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY



The righteous will be amidst shades and fountains. And fruits as they desire. "Eat and drink pleasantly, for what you used to do." This is how We reward the doers of good.

(al Mursalat)



DUA SUPPLICATION TO ALLAH

O Allah, on this day, let me have mercy on the orphans and feed [the hungry] and spread peace, and keep company with the noble minded, O the shelter of the hopeful.



FITNESS INSTRUCTOR SHARES BEST EXERCISES FOR A BALANCED ROUTINE THIS RAMADHAN

BY NAJAH AL RIYAMI

RAMADHAN

is a time of spiritual reflection, discipline and self-control, but that doesn't mean physical activity has to come to a halt. Exercising while fasting requires an approach that prioritises energy conservation, hydration and smart timing to avoid exhaustion. The key to maintaining fitness during this holy month is choosing the right type of workouts and scheduling them wisely.

Fitness Coach Taha al Amri shares his insights on how to stay active while fasting by selecting the right workouts and timing them effectively. He explains, "Ramadhan is a spiritual month that enhances worship and reflection; offering a unique opportunity to improve both physical and spiritual health. Exercising during this blessed month can help maintain fitness and boost metabolic activity, provided it is done wisely and in accordance with the physiological changes the body undergoes while fasting."

Reflecting on the impact of fasting on the metabolism, he says, "When fasting, the body relies on stored energy sources such as glycogen, which is the stored form of carbohydrates in the liver and muscles. This glycogen is used for energy production when direct food sources are unavailable (such as during pre-workout meals). Once glycogen stores are depleted, the body shifts to using fat as its primary energy source. This process helps reduce body fat, improves insulin sensitivity and

promotes balanced blood sugar levels."

Beyond its role in energy utilisation, fasting also triggers additional metabolic processes that further enhance overall health. Al Amri explains, "During prolonged fasting, the liver releases ketone bodies, which are by-products of fat breakdown. These ketones serve as an alternative fuel source for the body and brain, enhancing focus and cognitive performance. Fasting also stimulates cellular repair processes and helps reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, supporting overall long-term health."

He recommends that we maximise the benefits of exercising during Ramadhan by choosing suitable workout times, such as an hour before iftar to avoid excessive fatigue or two hours after iftar when the body has regained some energy. It is also recommended to focus on moderate-intensity exercises and avoid high-intensity training that may lead to dehydration and excessive exhaustion. He explains that "by balancing exercise, proper nutrition and rest, fasting individuals can achieve significant health benefits, making Ramadhan an ideal opportunity to enhance both physical fitness and spiritual well-being."

Choosing the right type of workout is just as important as timing. "Low-impact activities like walking, yoga and Pilates are excellent choices at any time of the day, as they improve flexibility and mobility without putting excessive stress on the body. Strength training should be performed after iftar when muscles are adequately nourished. Simple bodyweight exercises,

such as squats, lunges and push-ups, help maintain muscle tone without overexertion," he says. For those who enjoy cardio, light jogging or cycling can be beneficial, but it's essential to avoid excessive sweating and dehydration. Swimming, if accessible, can also be a great alternative as it keeps the body cool while providing an effective workout.

To maintain energy and prevent fatigue, hydration and nutrition play a crucial role. Drinking plenty of water between iftar and suhoor helps replenish fluids lost during the day, while a balanced diet rich in proteins, healthy fats and complex carbohydrates ensures sustained energy levels.

Rest and recovery are equally important, as the body is already undergoing adjustments due to fasting. Prioritising sleep and allowing adequate time for muscle recovery can make a significant difference in maintaining fitness throughout the month.

For those looking for fitness advice, Al Amri offers valuable insights and guidance to help individuals stay active and healthy on his Instagram account, Taha Trains.

Ultimately, staying active during Ramadhan is about balance and mindfulness. By listening to the body, adjusting workouts based on energy levels and prioritising hydration and nutrition, individuals can maintain their physical fitness while fully embracing the spiritual essence of the month. With the right approach, Ramadhan can be an opportunity not only for spiritual growth but also for enhancing overall well-being.

MEMORIES OF RAMADHAN

The transformative nature of holy month



BY LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

KRISTEN Norman Berg, hailing from Norway, possesses a treasure trove of cherished memories of Ramadhan, thanks to her 25 years in Oman.

What makes Oman so captivating for her? Kristen explains, “It’s the essence of living humbly within a community that values simplicity while also being incredibly unique.”

Her journey began with a three-week visit and upon leaving, she felt an inexplicable void that drew her back.

“There’s a remarkable opportunity to learn from this society, which fascinated me from the very first moment I arrived. It presents an entirely different way of life, offering fresh perspectives on tackling challenges. Issues can be resolved in various ways, often with an emphasis on humility and kindness — principles that resonated with me right from the start,” she reflected.

Kristen reminisces fondly about her inaugural Ramadhan, noting, “My first experience allowed me to witness a different lifestyle while focusing on values often overlooked from a Western viewpoint. It emphasises self-discipline and reflection.”

She acknowledges the challenge of fasting throughout the day, especially for those unaccustomed to it, but also highlights the profound joy of breaking the fast.

“Those precious moments at sunset, when the fast is broken, are truly special. They’re beyond words; you must experience them. The call to prayer, the act of breaking fast and the shared family meals create a unique sense of togetherness.”

Marrying into an Omani family has given Kristen a deeper understanding of the culture, allowing her to see life through a more intimate lens.

What changes did she notice? “Transitioning can be challenging in any situation,

but I’m fortunate to have a wonderful family, including my husband and children. Each year, we eagerly anticipate Ramadhan. On the first day, we reflect on the month ahead, but it always seems to whisk by in a flash and suddenly, Eid is upon us. It’s a truly valuable time that I would never want to miss.”

What does she learn from this experience? How does she embrace hunger?

“It’s a month dedicated to self-reflection, where you push your limits a little further each time. For those practising Islam, Ramadhan offers a chance for introspection, study and a closer connection to Allah. This



connection brings a profound inner peace. The purpose of Ramadhan is to provide an opportunity for renewal — an invitation to improve oneself while quietly honouring the religion and the community. Everyone partakes in this journey, creating a sense of unity that’s truly irreplaceable,” Kristen pointed out.

She views Islam as a personal journey, unique to each individual.

“I’ve observed that Omani society embodies pride, kindness and a reserved nature regarding personal challenges. They often rely on their faith to navigate these issues. Ramadhan serves as a time for reflection and reconnection with Allah,

reminding us to stay true to our paths.”

Kristen used to attend a series of enlightening talks at the Sultan Qaboos Mosque’s Islamic Information Centre that promotes education and intercultural dialogue.

“The essence I’ve embraced is a message of hope. Even if today is difficult, tomorrow holds promise. There are always people who respect and believe in you — you are never alone. While the challenges we face may seem daunting, it’s vital to remember that others endure even greater trials. Recognising this helps to provide clarity and perspective.”

She fondly recalls late Shaikh Khalfan al Esry, who played a pivotal role in bridging understanding between converts to Islam and Omani society.

“Shaikh Khalfan did remarkable work in fostering this connection. He recognised individuals for who they truly are and empowered them within the community at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. He ensured those who chose to convert to Islam faced support, a crucial element for anyone navigating such a significant life transition. It’s not an easy road and often, sacrifices must be made. But the Grand Mosque community provided a home — a haven where individuals could find comfort and encouragement. I think that’s an incredible display of support.”

Ramadhan also signifies Iftars and as an enthusiast of cooking, Kristen has embraced Omani culinary traditions, preferring to keep things straightforward.

“In the words of Shaikh Khalfan, ‘Please don’t fill your cart to the brim every day.’ It’s essential to be pious and simple — that’s the true essence of Ramadhan too.”

She’s even weaving in her Norwegian roots into meal preparations.

“We enjoy a lot of salmon — baked with a delightful sauce, served with rice or potatoes,” she suggested, embodying a perfect blend of her two worlds.

RAMADHAN TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Puff-puff (fried dough), communal prayers and storytelling in Nigeria

Nigeria boasts a rich and diverse Muslim population that weaves together vibrant traditions during Ramadhan. As the month arrives, the air is filled with excitement and anticipation. Families prepare for iftar, often featuring snacks like “puff-puff,” sweet fried dough balls that are loved by many. The evening prayers draw communities together, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. Special gatherings occur where stories and teachings of the Quran are shared, enhancing understanding and reflection. Charity is deeply embedded in the Ramadhan experience, with many contributing to food drives for the less fortunate. The month encourages personal growth and community spirit, as Nigerians participate in acts of kindness and collective prayers. Ramadhan in Nigeria is not merely a time for fasting but a celebration of faith, culture and humanity, creating bonds that transcend differences.

DAILY HEALTH TIPS TO REMEMBER



Prioritise Protein

Incorporating sufficient protein into your meals during Ramadhan is crucial for maintaining muscle mass, managing hunger and sustaining energy throughout the day of fasting. Protein-rich foods like lean meats, poultry, fish, dairy and legumes should be staples for both suhoor and iftar. Starting your day with a protein-rich breakfast, such as eggs or Greek yoghurt, can provide enduring energy and help reduce cravings later. For iftar, consider dishes featuring sources of protein, like grilled chicken, fish, or beans, to keep you feeling full and satisfied. Protein also aids in stabilising blood sugar levels, preventing fluctuations that can lead to fatigue. It’s beneficial to pair protein with complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains or vegetables, for a steady energy release. If you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet, options like lentils, chickpeas, tofu and quinoa can ensure sufficient protein intake while catering to your preferences.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS IN ISLAM



632 CE: The Death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

The death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) marked a significant turning point for Islam. As the founder and last prophet, his passing raised questions about leadership and succession within the Muslim community. Following his death, the caliphate was established, beginning with Abu Bakr as the first caliph. This transition initiated a new era in Islamic history characterised by political consolidation, expansion and the compilation of the Quran.

FEATURES

A blend of tradition and modernity

BY BALQEES AL ORAIMI

WITH THE advent of the holy month of Ramadhan, women in the Sultanate of Oman renew their interest in traditional fashion that reflects the authentic Omani identity, infused with touches of modernity and development. Ramadhan clothing in the Sultanate of Oman is distinguished by its diversity, as women are keen to wear garments that blend modesty with luxury, suiting the spiritual and familial atmosphere of this blessed month.

The traditional Mukhwar is one of the most popular styles, as women are eager to acquire hand-embroidered pieces in bright colours, particularly when attending Ramadhan gatherings and family celebrations. The Mukhwar, a long dress, is characterised by its exquisite embroidery and luxurious fabrics such as silk and cotton, often adorned with gold or silver threads.

With changing tastes and fashion trends, Ramadhan fashion in the Sultanate of Oman is no longer limited to traditional clothing. It has witnessed remarkable development thanks to Omani designers who have excelled in integrating traditional designs with modern styles, adding elegant touches to Ramadhan attire.

Omani women are increasingly favouring Moroccan jalabiyas and caftans, which are noted for their wide cuts and luxurious embroidery, alongside abayas featuring modern designs that merge luxury with simplicity. Nadia al Kharousi, the owner of an online clothing store, states: “Women in the Sultanate of Oman are keen to acquire the latest designs for Ramadhan outfits as well as prepare for Eid.” Soft colours like beige, light pink and sky blue have also become favoured choices for many women, in addition to traditional colours such as red, gold and black.

Ramadhan fashion is incomplete without accessories that add a touch of elegance and sophistication, as women in the Sultanate of Oman are eager to acquire pieces that complement the atmosphere of the holy month. Many prefer to wear traditional Omani silver jewellery, such as large rings and bracelets embossed with ancient Omani designs, in addition to necklaces made of pearls or precious stones, which contribute a luxurious touch to their overall appearance.

Maryam al Hatrooshi confirms that with numerous family gatherings and

Iftars, women are keen to select clothing appropriate for the festive atmosphere. In the early days of Ramadhan, women often opt for luxurious traditional fashions adorned with hand embroidery, while the demand for simple abayas and jalabiyas increases as the last ten days approach, when many prefer comfort and practicality whilst maintaining elegance.

Embroidered scarves and head coverings have also become an essential part of Ramadhan fashion. Some women opt for hand-embroidered silk fabrics that reflect the authentic Omani heritage.

During the holy month, Omani markets become lively and shops are bustling with women seeking the latest Ramadhan designs. Many Omani stores and designers offer special collections for this season. The markets of Muttrah and Nizwa are among the most prominent destinations experiencing great demand during Ramadhan, showcasing embroidered jalabiyas, luxurious fabrics and Omani garments in their traditional colours.

Additionally, modern boutiques and Omani fashion houses provide innovative designs that combine luxury and comfort, appropriate for both home and social events during Ramadhan.

On the night of Qaranqasho, a Ramadhan celebration enjoyed by children in the middle of the month, many women choose outfits adorned with traditional Omani patterns, featuring designs inspired by conventional costumes that add a touch of joy and festivities.

In recent years, many Omani women have turned towards supporting local products and handicrafts, showing a growing interest in garments made from natural fabrics such as cotton and linen, along with hand-embroidered designs in colours inspired by the Omani environment.

Oman is witnessing an increasing demand for sustainable fashion, as many designers strive to create garments that reflect Omani heritage using local materials and environmentally friendly methods, enhancing the value of traditional crafts and bolstering the local economy.

Ramadhan fashion in the Sultanate of Oman remains an integral aspect of the cultural identity of Omani women, merging authenticity and modernity in a unique blend that reflects the beauty of Omani heritage and the spirit of the holy month. Ramadhan elegance continues to symbolise the celebration of this holy month in a manner that unites luxury and spirituality.



Photo from Amal al Raisi Collection