



Oman fully committed to women's innovation

More women enrolling for science courses

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN is keen to provide an attractive environment to support scientific innovations for Omani women, which contributes in enhancing their position and achieving many accomplishments at the regional and international levels.

This was stated by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, who was leading Oman's delegation at the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), held in New York from March 10 to 21. The session focuses on reviewing and appraising the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

A side event was held under the title 'Women and Technology: Inspiring Stories in the GCC Countries'. During this event Dr Al Najjar delivered Oman's speech.

Dr Al Najjar affirmed that the Sultanate of Oman has been keen on raising the efficiency of the infrastructure in educational and vocational institutions, by developing facilities and allocating digital laboratories suitable for all technological requirements. She also emphasised the importance of aligning specialisations with the requirements of the labour market, and providing economic sectors with qualified and trained national cadres in various advanced scientific and technological fields.



Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, speaking during the session.

The minister said that statistics indicate an increase in women enrolment rates in the field of science and technology for the academic year 2024/2025.

Moreover, during the CSW69 the minister, head of Oman's delegation at the high-level interactive dialogue with regional committees, delivered speech on "Muscat Declaration on Progress in Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab Region after Thirty Years."

During the speech, the minister stressed that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action present several strategic options and paths to advance the

status of women and girls, enhance their rights and empower them.

In her speech, the minister condemned the continued Israeli aggression on the occupied Palestinian territories, and the unprecedented violations of international law and international humanitarian law. These violations include war crimes, crimes against humanity, including torture and genocide.

She also stressed the need to respect international resolutions related to the Palestinian situation and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegal status of the occupation.

Dr Al Najjar also condemned the systematic violence against civilians in Sudan, especially women and girls who are subjected to serious violations that include multiple forms of violence.

She added that crises, conflicts and wars that some countries in the region are suffering from also affect neighbouring countries and the rest of the region. In such situations, women suffer from forced displacement and migration, as well as deprivation of basic services, including health, education and security.

The minister also stressed the commitment to consolidating the role of women in the Arab region in political leadership positions and enhancing their active participation in decision-making.

— ONA

IN BRIEF

HM THANKED BY SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on the occasion of the Foundation Day.

In his cable, King Salman expressed his appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's heartfelt sentiments and prayers, wishing His Majesty good health and happiness. He also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity.

DUTERTE HEADED TO THE HAGUE FOR TRIAL



Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte is on a plane bound for The Hague in the Netherlands, the Philippine Star posted on X social media, citing confirmation from a senior police official.

Reuters could not immediately verify the information and police did not immediately respond to a request for confirmation. Duterte's daughter earlier posted her father had boarded a plane but said the family had not been informed of the destination.

Duterte was arrested on Tuesday in Manila by police acting on an International Criminal Court warrant tied to his deadly war on drugs. The 79-year-old faces a charge of “the crime against humanity of murder”, according to the ICC.

Ukraine and US discuss partial truce as drones hit Russia

JEDDAH: Ukraine said talks with the United States in Saudi Arabia were progressing “constructively,” with a partial ceasefire with Russia on the table hours after Kyiv conducted its largest drone attack on Moscow in three years of war.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybига attended the meeting in Jeddah – which Russia was not participating in – as President Donald Trump ramped up pressure on Ukraine to end the war that began with Russia's 2022 war.

The talks follow President Volodymyr Zelensky's public dressing-down at the White House, after which the United States cut off military aid, intelligence sharing and access to satellite imagery.

Ukraine is hoping the offer of a partial ceasefire in the sky and at sea will persuade Washington to restore the assistance. “We are ready to do everything to achieve peace,” Ukrainian presidency chief of staff Andriy Yermak told reporters as he entered Tuesday’s meeting at a luxury hotel.



US and
Ukrainian
officials during
a meeting in
Jeddah in the
presence of Saudi
Foreign Minister
Faisal bin Farhan
and National
Security Adviser
Mosaad bin
Mohammad
al Aiban on
Tuesday. — **AFP**

A Ukrainian official, who requested anonymity, later said the talks were “going OK, a lot of questions have been discussed”.

Kyiv said the “largest drone attack in history”, in which hundreds of drones slammed into Moscow and other areas overnight, was intended to push Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to the aerial and naval ceasefire.

Three people were killed in the attack, which both sides said was the biggest so far in Moscow.

SEE ALSO P7

OMAN

SHORT TAKE



The Masirah Air Base team took first place in the general questions competition (question/answer), securing the cultural competition shield for the year.

RAFO CONCLUDES CULTURAL COMPETITION

The cultural competition of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) for the current year was concluded under the auspices of Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman.

The ceremony featured diverse cultural segments, including poetry recitations and religious supplications. At the event, the first place winners were honoured in each competition category.

The Masirah Air Base team took first place in the general questions competition (question/answer), securing the cultural competition shield for the year. The Royal Air Force of Oman Command team earned second place.

The ceremony was attended by senior officers, officers and members of the Royal Air Force of Oman.

Oman calls for action to ensure right to food

THE Sultanate of Oman participated in the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food as part of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council which is being held in Geneva.

Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and International Organizations in Geneva, delivered a speech in which he stressed that the right to food is not only a matter related to food security, but rather constitutes a fundamental pillar for guaranteeing human dignity and the right to a safe and healthy life.

Al Khanjari added: “Millions of people still suffer from malnutrition as a result of ongoing armed conflicts, climate change and economic crises that lead to disruption of supply chains which increases the suffering of the most vulnerable groups and poses a direct threat to the right to food. The challenges resulting from public debt, inflation and international financial policies complicate the issue of ensuring the right to food as countries burdened with debt are forced to divert their resources allocated to social sectors, such as food subsidy programmes, to pay off public



Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman.

The challenges resulting from public debt, inflation and international financial policies complicate the issue of ensuring the right to food as countries burdened with debt are forced to divert their resources allocated to social sectors, such as food subsidy programmes, to pay off public debt

debt. Besides, inflation affects the purchasing power making it difficult for individuals to obtain sufficient food.” Al Khanjari stressed the need to find a fair balance between financial obligations and ensuring that citizens’ basic needs are met and to adopt sustainable economic and financial policies that take into account human rights and guarantee individuals’ right to sufficient and safe food, indicating that achieving this goal requires radical reforms in the international financial system to enable countries to take effective measures to combat hunger and ensure food security.

Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and International Organizations in Geneva, said that the use of starvation as a weapon of war in the Palestinian territories is a flagrant violation to the right to food and constitutes a war crime according to international law. He called on the international community to take urgent measures to stop such practices that threaten life and human dignity.

At the end of his speech, he underscored the importance of joint action to ensure the right to food for all, especially in areas of armed conflicts. — ONA

Realise Your Luxury Wish List with Lincoln’s Exclusive Benefits

For those who aspire to experience luxury at its finest, Lincoln presents an exciting opportunity. Now, when you own a luxury Lincoln, you receive exclusive benefits, including 5 Years / 100,000 km Service, 5 Years / 100,000 km Warranty, Free Insurance and 1 Year Registration, all designed to enhance your ownership experience. (Conditions apply. Visit the Lincoln showroom in Wattayah for details.) The offer ends on 17th April 2025.

Sharing his thoughts about the latest campaign, a representative from Arabian Car Marketing, the dealers for Lincoln in Oman said, “Lincoln embodies effortless luxury and with these exclusive benefits, we are making it even more rewarding for our customers to drive home a vehicle that exudes sophistication, power and cutting-edge technology. This is the perfect time to realise your luxury wish list with a Lincoln that redefines refinement and performance.”

Lincoln’s impressive range in Oman includes the Corsair, Nautilus and Navigator, each offering an exceptional blend of sophistication, technology and performance.

A statement of style and power, the Lincoln Corsair seamlessly merges luxury with technology. Designed for those who appreciate comfort and performance, this two-row SUV features a turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine delivering 250 horsepower and 275 lb.-ft. of torque, paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission for a smooth, refined drive. Inside, Lincoln Co-Pilot360™ 2.1 Vision driver-assist features enhance safety, while a premium 10-speaker audio system ensures an immersive experience. The Corsair is crafted to glide effortlessly on the road, staying true to Lincoln’s Quiet Flight DNA.

With a bold new Lincoln signature grille, sleek tail lamps and an elegant light bar, the Nautilus makes a powerful first impression. Designed for those who desire both luxury and SUV versatility, it boasts a 2.7-liter twin-turbo V6 engine delivering 335 horsepower and 515 Nm of torque, paired with adaptive suspension and all-wheel drive disconnect for ultimate control. The Nautilus also offers an all-new wheel line-up, including premium 18” painted



aluminium and 20” machined aluminium options for an even more distinguished stance.

A true icon in the world of luxury SUVs, the Lincoln Navigator sets the standard for spaciousness and cutting-edge technology. Powered by a twin-turbo V6 engine generating 440 horsepower, this SUV is engineered for an exceptionally smooth ride, supported by a 10-speed automatic transmission. Inside, the Navigator delivers next-level opulence with Revel® Ultima audio featuring 28 speakers, a panoramic roof that floods the cabin with natural light and SYNC® 4 technology for seamless connectivity. Passengers enjoy personalised comfort with second-row audio and climate control, while the third-row seats feature power recline capability for a first-class experience.

For those seeking to elevate their driving experience, now is the perfect time to own a

Lincoln with these exceptional benefits. Visit the Lincoln showroom at Wattayah today and make your luxury wish list a reality.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to [www.lincolnoman.com](#), or [www.facebook.com/lincolnoman](#) or [www.instagram.com/lincoln_oman](#) for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

SHORT TAKES



The number of guests to these Iftars is increasing as well as the amount of food packets and fruits brought in by people.

2,000 PEOPLE COME TOGETHER FOR MEGA IFTAR

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

As many as 2,000 people comprising both Omanis and expatriates came and sat together for one of the largest Iftars happening in the these days, at the Muttrah Souq premises on Monday.

“We marked a great milestone in our annual Iftar spree which happens on all thirty days. But the Monday Iftar saw people from various walks of life sitting shoulder to shoulder for breaking their fast,” said Navas Kasargode, chief coordinator of the mega Iftar.

During the thirty days of the holy month of Ramadhan, social Iftar gatherings happen at different public places, inside Iftar tents and business compounds besides mosques as part of Iftar en masse with the onset of the holy month.

Held at the Baladiya parking area, the mega social Iftar has proved to be a great initiative to keep all segments of the society closely knit. The daily Iftar has been helpful to the travellers and workers who find it difficult to reach home in time for breaking fast.

It is a usual sight in the Sultanate of Oman where people gather for Iftar in a daily basis since the beginning of the holy month.

While the Iftar kits, comprising dates, fruits and laban, was supplied by the workers of the souq, the Suhoor food, a major food comprising biriyani and other dinner varieties, is supplied by an NGO which hosts daily Iftar en masse.

“For many years now, we have been catering to hundreds of passersby everyday with dates, water, juice, laban and the like,” added Navas.

VISIT OMAN PARTNERS WITH EXPEDIA GROUP

BERLIN: The National Travel Operator – Visit Oman and Expedia Group, one of the world’s largest travel technology companies, have signed an agreement at the world’s leading travel trade show, the ITB Berlin.

This collaboration includes integrating local tours and activity providers onto Expedia Group’s platform using API technology and creating a global digital marketing campaign targeting US, UK and Middle Eastern travellers and marks



a significant step forward in Visit Oman’s strategy to enhance digital distribution and connectivity. This strategic agreement aims to

digitise and aggregate Oman’s diverse tourism offerings, making them readily accessible to Expedia Group’s vast global audience. This initiative aligns with Oman’s National Tourism Strategy 2040. Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, stated: “By leveraging Expedia’s global reach and advanced digital marketing capabilities, we are bringing Oman’s rich cultural heritage and breathtaking landscapes to millions of potential travellers worldwide.”

Hefty penalty no brake for animals on the loose

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

DESPITE hefty fines aimed at controlling animals on the loose on roads, the problem still persists posing risks to motorists especially when visibility is low. In 2020, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources issued Ministerial Resolution No (485/2020) to regulate the impounding stray or neglected animals. The resolution stipulated a daily fine of RO 150 for each camel or horse, RO 50 for cow and RO 10 for goat or sheep. The decision also imposed administrative fines on owners of violating animals, amounting to RO 100 per day for each camel or horse, RO 50 for cow, and RO 30 for each goat or sheep. This fine is doubled in the event of a repeat violation during the same year.

In various governorates, citizens complain about the dangers of stray animals leading to tragic accidents. Rashid al Nasiri, one of the victims, confirms that accidents caused by stray animals have become a “nightmare” noting that some animal owners leave them loose in search of natural pastures due to the high prices of feed. “The responsibility lies with animal owners, as they are obliged to take measures to ensure people’s safety, such as putting luminous vests on the animals or keeping them away from highways.” Salma al Muqimi, a livestock breeder, believes that



Livestock breeders believe that the solution lies in regulating livestock feed prices because high prices prompt some breeders to release their animals to graze in public places

the solution lies in regulating livestock feed prices because high prices prompt some breeders to release their animals to graze in public places. She suggests, “Regulating specific periods during which animals are allowed to graze in designated areas, provided that the farms remain away from main roads and residential areas.” Abdullah Said says, “Stray animals cause damage to public property and farms, in addition to causing physical injuries to citizens in some cases.”

Municipal authorities are making efforts to solve the problem by setting up

designated places for breeders.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said it is working in coordination with the competent authorities to prepare farm plans and approve them in various governorates.

The ministry explained that the new farm plans will be far from residential areas and main roads. Mountainous sites and natural pastures have been identified for these purposes, after obtaining the necessary environmental and technical approvals. It also indicated that granting land to farms will be according to the usufruct system, as requests that meet the conditions are limited by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Despite the government’s efforts, citizens believe that implementing the laws requires strict oversight and to ensure that breeders do not leave their animals loose.

AMONG THE SOLUTIONS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM ARE:

1. Strengthening inspection campaigns, and imposing immediate fines on violators.
2. Obligating breeders to place GPS chips on animals to easily locate them.
3. Providing government support for fair feed prices.
4. Expanding awareness on the dangers of stray animals.
5. Installing street lights and building a fence on highways to reduce accidents.

CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT OF *Togetherness*

Exquisite Iftar

Showcasing the rich tapestry of Middle Eastern flavours with entertainment
OMR 29 net per person | Al Tanoor | From Maghrib time until 10:30pm

Private Cabana for Iftar

Perfect for small groups, each cabana accommodates up to 6 guests
OMR 34 net per person | Available daily from Maghrib time

A Serene Suhoor by the Beach

A selection of appetisers, beverages and more at SiO2 Beach Lounge
Minimum spend of OMR 15 net per person | From 8pm to 2am

Iftar To Go by Shangri-La

A selection of traditional Arabic dishes and desserts for 6 people
OMR 98 net per box | A 24-hour prior notice is required

Ramadan Corporate Gatherings

Ideal for groups with a selection of buffet and venue options
Iftar from OMR 27 net per person | Suhoor at OMR 18 net per person
Minimum of 30 people | Terms & Conditions apply

Ramadan Hamper

Personalise or gift a pre-filled Ramadan box
Pre-filled Hamper with 10 items at OMR 60 net
Personalised Hamper from OMR 12 net per box
Minimum of 4 and up to 10 items per box
Save 20% on a minimum purchase of 20 Hampers

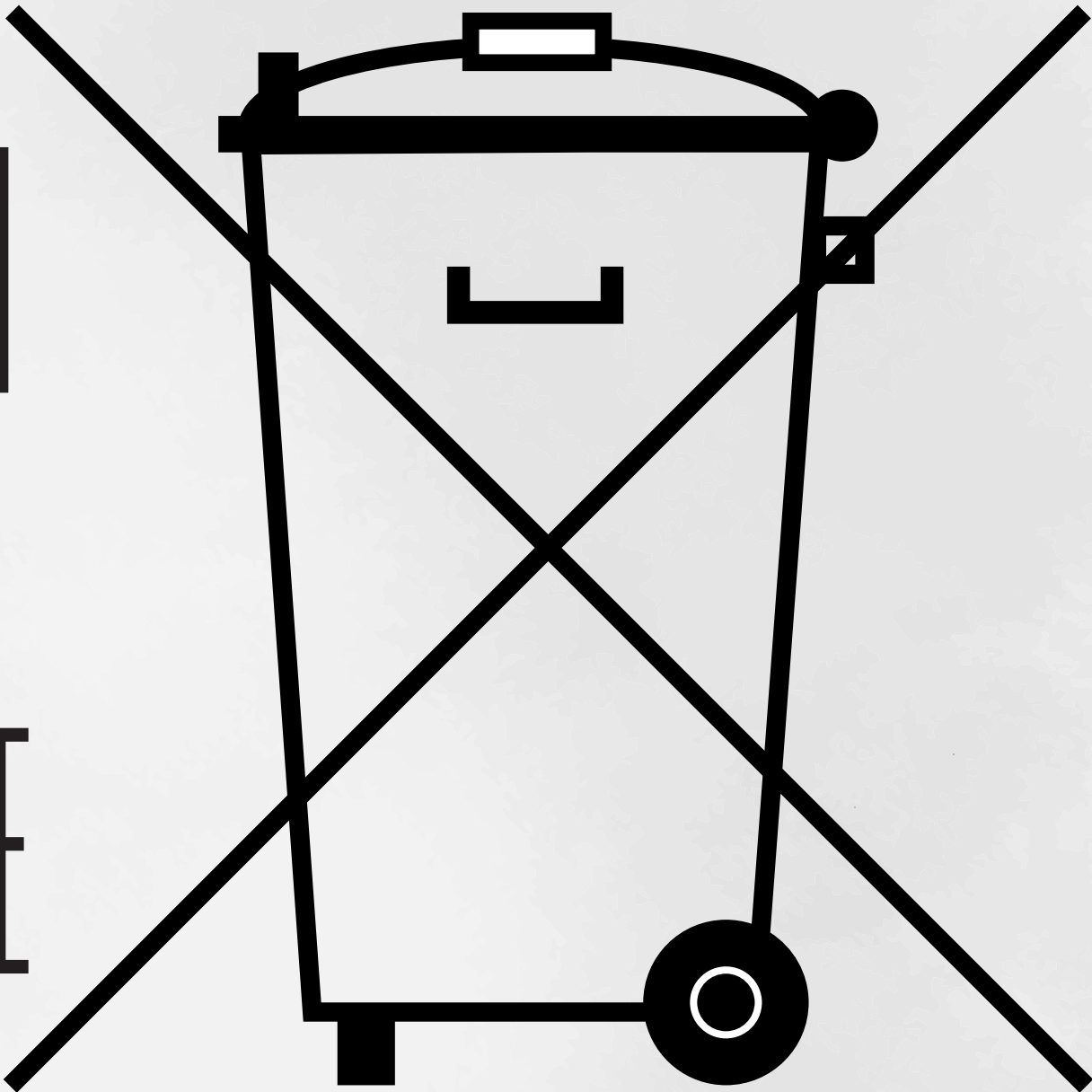
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RAMADHAN

Cook only what is needed
and utilise leftovers
creatively to stop food being
dumped in garbage bin

PLAN
RAMADHAN
MEALS TO
CUT WASTE



similar donations from other families. “At times, we found ourselves using the leftovers as livestock feed, which made us reconsider our food habits and reduce the amount of food cooked at home to avoid waste.” Saif also observed this issue in many other households, where excessive amounts of food are prepared, only for a large portion of it to end up in the trash. “I often see garbage bins overflowing with food waste. It’s a sad sight that reflects the scale of waste that could be avoided with greater awareness of food consumption management.”

SOCIAL INFLUENCE
Aisha al Raisi, a restaurant owner, points out that food consumption spikes noticeably during Ramadhan, with tables filled with dishes far beyond individual needs, leading to an increase in food waste. She attributes this trend to various social factors, including the influence of social media, which promotes a culture of showcasing lavish food spreads and encourages excessive shopping through enticing marketing deals.

Al Raisi also highlights the role of cooking channels, whether on TV or social media, in reinforcing these habits. Many of these channels present recipes that rely on simple but nutritionally poor ingredients, making them an appealing choice for many despite their negative impact on the quality of Ramadhan meals. “The demand for these foods, especially fast food, rises significantly during Ramadhan, negatively affecting nutritional balance and overall health. Many people rely on meals high in calories and fats but lack essential nutrients.”

SOLUTIONS TO REDUCE WASTE
To mitigate these consequences, Al Raisi recommends adopting a more balanced dietary approach during Ramadhan, focusing on traditional, nutrient-rich dishes such as soups, dried fruits, and vegetables while avoiding excessive portions. She emphasises the importance of meal planning, not just to curb food waste but also to maintain individual health during the holy month.

She concludes by suggesting several practical steps to minimise food waste and maximise the use of available resources. Chief among these is making a weekly food list and purchasing only necessary quantities, which can help prevent overbuying. Proper food storage—using airtight containers and labelling expiration dates—ensures that food remains consumable for longer. Another effective solution is repurposing leftovers by using excess vegetables in soups, thus reducing daily waste. Additionally, donating surplus food to charities is a valuable initiative to ensure that extra food benefits those in need.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

RAMADHAN is a month of goodness and giving, yet it also witnesses a significant rise in food waste. Enormous amounts of prepared food are discarded daily across various Arab countries during the holy month. This is primarily due to excessive preparation of Iftar and Suhoor meals beyond actual needs, coupled with a lack of proper planning. This waste poses a major environmental challenge, necessitating intensified efforts to raise awareness on ways to minimise waste and promote responsible consumption. This phenomenon raises multiple concerns from both health and religious perspectives. The over-preparation of food leads to unhealthy eating habits and contradicts Islamic values, which advocate moderation and discourage extravagance.

RAISE AWARENESS
To address this issue, raising awareness about the importance of mindful consumption becomes essential. This includes planning meals in advance, storing food correctly, and utilising leftovers creatively, thereby fostering a culture of sustainability and social responsibility. Saif Mohammed shares that his family distributes surplus food from Suhoor and Iftar to workers in tailoring shops and other places during the first week of Ramadhan. However, they sometimes encountered rejection as many workers had already received



Food consumption spikes noticeably during Ramadhan, with tables filled with dishes far beyond individual needs, leading to an increase in food waste

AISHA AL RAISI
A restaurant owner

Arabia

Falcon Insurance

العربية

فالكون

Invitation to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Arabia Falcon Insurance SAOG (the "Company") are pleased to invite the shareholders for the Company's Annual Ordinary General Meeting ("AGM") to be held at 09:00 PM, on Thursday the 27th of March 2025, through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository Company ("MCD") website ([www.mcd.gov.om](#)).

In the event that the quorum for the first AGM is not met, the date of the second AGM will be on Wednesday, the 2nd of April 2025, at 7:00 PM, through the aforesaid electronic platform to consider the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on Company's activity and its financial position for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.
- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors on corporate governance for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.
- To consider the statutory auditors' report and to approve the financial statements and the profit and loss account for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.
- To consider and approve distribution of cash dividend to the shareholders as on the date of the meeting at the rate of [10] baizas per share.
- To approve the sitting fees paid to Directors' for attending meetings of the Board and sub committees for the previous financial year and to determine the Directors' sitting fees for the upcoming financial year (as per annexure 1).
- To consider and approve the proposed Directors Remuneration of (RO 91,000) for the financial year ended on 31st December 2024.
- To notify the AGM with transactions carried out with related parties during the financial year ended 31st December 2024 (as per annexure 2)
- To consider and approve the related parties' transactions that the Company will enter into during the financial year ending 31st December 2025 (as per annexure 3).
- To notify the AGM with amounts paid towards social responsibility activities during the year ended 31st December 2024 (as per annexure 4).
- To consider the allocation of an amount of RO [15,000] for Corporate Social Responsibility for the financial year ending 31st December 2025.
- To elect one director to fill in the vacancy in the Board of Directors. Any person who wishes to nominate himself/herself to the Board of Directors should complete the nomination form. The completed forms should be sent to the Company at least five days prior to the AGM date. Nomination forms received after 5:00 pm on Saturday, 22nd of March 2025 shall not be accepted. The candidate must consider fulfilling the conditions prescribed for membership of the board of directors.
- To consider and approve the transfer of RO 1,749,442 from Share Premium to Legal Reserve.
- To appoint statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31st December 2025 and determine their fees.

Pursuant to the Company's articles of association and general meeting regulations, through modern technology means issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A juristic person, exclusively, has the right to authorize 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 MCD.
- Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date set for the Meeting until the end of the voting process on the day of the meeting, and in the event that the shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be invalid, and he must re-vote again on the day of the Meeting.

Respected shareholders are requested to attend at the AGM venue half an hour before the meeting.

Any questions relating to this notice should be addressed to Mr. Ahmed Al Tayeb on telephone no. (+968) 24660910 or Ms. Nujood Al Maqbaly Telephone No. +968 24660996.

Chairperson

Auditor

Legal Advisor

Teacher wins national award for innovation

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

THE 11th National Research Award (NRA), organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), celebrated some of the brightest and innovative minds in Oman. “Challenges Facing Innovation Management in Omani Higher Education Institutions from the Point of View of Innovative Students” by principal investigator Marhouna bint Hamed al Maqbaliyah, a teacher at the Ministry of Education and a PhD student of Sultan Qaboos University, won the award in the Young Researcher’s category.

She said the study is aimed to identify the major challenges confronting innovation management in higher education institution.

Her research team conducted interviews with 30 students who had previously participated in competitions or received research funding from the MoHERI. To ensure a comprehensive perspective, the study considered diversity in terms of years of participation and the stages achieved by the student teams or company.

As for the main findings of the study, results revealed several



RESEARCHER
MARHOUNA AL
MAQBALI

intertwined challenges facing innovation management, and issues emerging in one stage often extend to the subsequent stages highlighting the importance of planning from the outset.

She elaborated that the challenges of the first stage focused on innovative ideas exploration, team formation and suitable supervisor selection. The second stage’s challenges were an extension of the first phase and included personal challenges, policies and regulations, human and financial resources, logistics support, coordination among entities, incubator, knowledge and data access, and challenges related to

decision-makers. In the third stage, the challenges included a lack of follow-up after competitions, entities’ readiness limitation to adopt innovations, and human resources challenges as well as market and societal challenges.

She proposed several recommendations, including giving more attention to innovation management through pre-planning for the three stages and developing specific policies for innovative students to facilitate their work during the three phases.

The research project was published in the Educational Studies journal of the University of Jordan. The research team consisted of Prof Aisha bint Salim al Harthiyah, Dr Khalaf bin Marhoon al Abri and Prof Said bin Sulaiman al Dhafri.

Marhouna al Maqbali mentioned that “winning the National Research Award serves as a motivation to continue completing the whole research project and an incentive for conducting further research projects that contribute, even in a small way, to serving the country. Moreover, the success of this project highlights the voice of innovative students, whom I hope will receive greater attention from stakeholders, as they are the future and promising hope of the Sultanate of Oman.”

Volunteers revitalise Oman’s ancient Ramadhan traditions

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

In a remarkable scene reflecting the spirit of giving and cultural belonging, the annual programme “Volunteers in Ramadhan” was launched with renewed energy. Youth teams aim to revive Omani Ramadhan heritage through community projects that bring back the traditional Ramadhan atmosphere, which has gradually faded over time.

The initiative, launched by the Omani Volunteer Network (Taa’awon), includes several volunteer projects focusing on reviving Ramadhan gatherings, reintroducing traditional Omani dishes in modern



HAYAT
AL LAWATI

ways, organising heritage tours and promoting traditional crafts associated with Ramadhan.

The programme seeks to revive popular games and design Ramadhan decorations inspired by local culture.

The programme goes beyond fieldwork, requiring participating

teams to produce media content documenting the details of their initiatives through videos, reports and photos that capture their achievements. This helps spread the culture of volunteering and raise awareness about the importance of preserving Omani heritage.

Commenting on this experience, Hayat al Lawati, leader of the ‘Volunteers in Ramadhan’ programme, emphasised that this year’s version differs from previous ones in that it is not just about executing initiatives. It aims to transform Omani heritage into sustainable community projects that will have a lasting impact even after the holy month ends.

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

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الوطنية للتمويل

national finance

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Tel: 24470000 info@nationalfinance.co.om nationalfinance.co.om

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of National Finance Co. SAOG (the “Company”) are pleased to invite the shareholders for the Company’s Annual Ordinary General Meeting (“AGM”) to be held at **3 PM**, on Thursday the **27th of March 2025**, through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (“MCDC”) website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for the First AGM is not met, the date of the second AGM will be on **Wednesday, the 2nd of April 2025**, at **3 PM**, through the aforesaid electronic platform to consider the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors’ on Company’s activity and its financial position for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.
- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors’ on corporate governance for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.
- To consider the statutory auditors’ report and to approve the financial statements and the profit and loss account for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.
- To consider and approve distribution of cash dividend to the shareholders as on the date of the meeting at the rate of 12.6 baizas per share.
- To consider and approve the distribution of free shares as of the date of the general meeting amounting (8.0%) of the company’s capital (6 shares for 100 shares). The distribution of the free shares would increase the company shares from (573,704,261) to (608,126,538).
- To approve the sitting fees paid to Directors’ for attending meetings of the Board and sub committees for the previous financial year and to determine the Directors’ sitting fees for the upcoming financial year, as per (Annexure ‘A’).
- To consider and approve the proposed Directors Remuneration of RO 300,000 (Rials Omani Three hundred thousand only) for the financial year ended on 31st December 2024.
- To ratify the transactions carried out with related parties during the financial year ended 31st December 2024 (Annexure ‘B’).
- To ratify the amounts paid towards social responsibility activities during the year ended 31st December 2024, as per (Annexure ‘C’).
- To consider the allocation of an amount of RO 225,000 (Rials Omani Two hundred twenty five thousand only) for Corporate Social Responsibility for the financial year ending 31st December 2025.
- To consider and approve the framework for evaluation of the performance of the Board of Directors (Annexure ‘D’).
- To appoint an independent entity to measure the performance of the members of the Board of Directors and determine their fees.
- To appoint statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31st December 2025 and determine their fees.

Pursuant to the Company’s articles of association and general meeting regulations, through modern technology means issued by the Financial Services Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A juristic person, exclusively, has the right to authorize 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 items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date set for the Meeting until the end of the voting process on the day of the meeting, and in the event that the shareholder’s balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be invalid, and he must re-vote again on the day of the Meeting.

Any questions relating to this notice should be addressed to **Mr. R. Pennerselvam** (telephone no. **+968 24470102** or email: r.pennerselvam@nationalfinance.co.om)

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Advisors

وزارة عمان

2040

Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
114/2025	Consulting services works (design and supervision) for the establishment of the Social Welfare Home project in the Wilayat of Barka	Companies specialized in the field of consulting offices and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with an excellent or first class	Thursday 27-03-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 10-4-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
115/2025	Consulting services works (design and supervision) of Hydrotherapy building in Liwa	Companies specialized in the field of consulting offices and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with an excellent or first class	Thursday 27-3-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 10-4-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Wednesday 12/03/2025**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (**24402200**).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”

www.mosd.gov.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Election posters are seen outside the polling station in Nuuk, Greenland. — AFP

GREENLAND VOTES UNDER SHADOW OF DONALD TRUMP

NUUK: Greenland began voting on Tuesday in legislative elections which could yield a timeline for independence for the Danish self-governing territory coveted by US President Donald Trump. Trump, determined to get his hands on the vast Arctic island “one way or the other”, tried until the last minute to influence the election, sparking astonishment, rejection, and, to a small degree, enthusiasm among the 57,000 Greenlanders, most of whom favour independence.

“Our country is in the eye of the storm,” Greenland’s outgoing Prime Minister Mute Egede, head of the left green party Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA), said in a video posted to Facebook just hours before the vote. “The international community is watching us closely, and we have recently seen how much they are trying to influence our country,” he said.

The lead-up of the election to choose the 31-seat parliament, the Inatsisartut, was mostly marked by a debate on issues such as healthcare, education, and future ties with Denmark, which still controls foreign, defence and monetary policy.

— AFP

EX-PRESIDENT DUTERTE ARRESTED ON ICC WARRANT



Police gather outside Villamor Air Base, where former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte is currently being held, in Pasay, Metro Manila. — AFP

MANILA: Former Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte was arrested on Tuesday in Manila by police acting on an International Criminal Court warrant tied to his deadly war on drugs. The 79-year-old faces a charge of “the crime against humanity of murder”, according to the ICC, for a crackdown that rights groups estimate killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men.

As of Tuesday evening, he was still being held at the capital’s Villamor Air Base, according to his political party, while Philippine Vice-President Sara Duterte said there were plans to swiftly transfer him to the Hague. “As I write this, he is being forcibly taken to The Hague tonight. This is not justice -- this is oppression and persecution,” Duterte’s eldest daughter said in a statement.

“The Supreme Court will not agree to that. We do not have an extradition treaty,” he said after his lawyers filed a petition with the court. Duterte was arrested at the airport after “Interpol Manila received the official copy of the warrant of the arrest from the ICC”, the presidential palace said.

— AFP

UNUSUAL SECRECY

US judge orders DOGE to release records



A US judge ordered billionaire Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to release its internal documents, saying the agency’s work has been marked by “unusual secrecy”. US District Judge Christopher Cooper said the authority exercised by DOGE “across the federal government and the dramatic cuts it has apparently made with no congressional input appear to be unprecedented.” This was “especially so given the secrecy with which (DOGE) has operated.” — AFP

MILITANTS HOLD 450 TRAIN PASSENGERS HOSTAGE IN PAKISTAN

QUETTA: Armed militants held hundreds of train passengers hostage on Tuesday in an ongoing siege claimed by a separatist group behind rising violence in southwestern Pakistan.

The militants wounded the driver as they took control of the train in a remote, mountainous area of Balochistan province which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

“Over 450 passengers onboard are being held hostage by gunmen,” Muhammad Kashif, a senior

railway government official in Quetta, the capital of the province, said. “Passengers include women and children,” he added.

The attack was immediately claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) which is fighting for independence and accuses outsiders of profiting from the region’s wealth. In a statement, it said gunmen bombed the railway track before storming aboard the train. “The militants swiftly took control of the train and have taken all passengers

hostage,” said the statement released to media. The group “warned of severe consequences” if an attempt is made to rescue the hostages.

The incident happened around 1:00 pm in rural Sibi district, near to a city station where it had been due to stop.

“A passenger train called the Jaffar Express was stopped by armed militants,” said a senior government official in Sibi. “The passengers are being held hostage, and the driver has been injured.” — AFP

Amid truce talks, Israel fire kills civilians in Gaza

GAZA’S civil defence agency reported an Israeli air strike targeting a group of people in Gaza City on Tuesday, killing four. “There are four martyrs... as a result of an Israeli strike on a group of citizens in the Netzarim area, south of Gaza City,” agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said, adding those killed were men in their 20s. The Israeli military said it was looking into the reports of the strike.

Gulf neighbours Saudi Arabia and Qatar on Tuesday condemned Israel’s decision to cut electricity supplies to the Gaza Strip, urging the international community to take action. Saudi Arabia’s foreign ministry expressed “condemnation in the strongest terms of the Israeli occupation authorities’ use of collective punishment against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip by cutting off electricity to the area”. A Qatari statement said the wealthy Gulf state “strongly condemns the Israeli occupation’s act of cutting electricity to the Gaza Strip, considering it a blatant violation of international humanitarian law”. Jordanian foreign ministry spokesman Sufyan Qudah called the electricity cut “a clear continuation of the policy of starvation and siege imposed by Israel”, about a week after Israeli authorities blocked the entry of aid into Gaza. Jordan’s Qudah called on the world “to assume its legal and moral responsibilities, and oblige Israel to continue with the ceasefire agreement... restore electricity to Gaza” and reopen border crossings



Palestinians queue for water next to a distribution truck at a displacement camp west of Jabalia city in the northern Gaza Strip. — AFP

The United Nations warned of “dire consequences” for Gaza’s beleaguered population, while Britain said it was “deeply concerned”. Saudi Arabia called on the international community to “take urgent actions immediately”.

for aid deliveries.

The United Nations warned of “dire consequences” for Gaza’s beleaguered population, while Britain said it was “deeply concerned”. Saudi Arabia called on the international community to “take urgent actions immediately”, while Qatar also urged “immediate action to provide the necessary protection for the Palestinian people”.

Israel’s negotiating team left for Qatar on Monday for talks aimed at extending the fragile Gaza ceasefire after the authorities cut the Palestinian territory’s electricity supply to ramp up pressure on Hamas.

Ahead of the negotiations, Israel disconnected the only power line to a water desalination plant in Gaza, a move Hamas denounced as “cheap and unacceptable blackmail”.

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 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. Hamas accused Israel of reneging on the ceasefire deal, saying in a statement on Monday that Israel “refuses to commence the second phase, exposing its intentions of evasion and stalling”.

Israel’s move echoed the early days of the war when Israel announced a “complete siege” on the Palestinian territory, severing the electricity supply, which only began flowing again in late 2024. Hamas spokesman Abdul Latif al Qanoua said Israel’s move would impact its hostages still held in Gaza. — AFP



SERBIAN PROTESTERS BLOCK STATE TV

BELGRADE: Protesters barred access to the offices of state broadcasters in Serbia’s capital Belgrade on Tuesday, keeping employees out and forcing some live programming off the air. One police officer was injured in that incident, according to a statement from the interior ministry.

While the prolonged protest movement has remained largely peaceful, tensions are mounting ahead of a major rally scheduled for March 15. The protests’ student leaders have called for peaceful demonstrations. President Vucic said that clashes were inevitable. “Violence will not be avoided. Plans have already been made that we know about.” — Reuters

REMARKABLE DOWNPOURS

Spain near end of four-year drought



A drought that has parched fields and prompted water restrictions could be over soon thanks to recent abundant rainfall, national weather agency AEMET said. “With the amount of rain falling now in March, it cannot be ruled out that this situation ends up being reversed,” spokesman Del Campo said. Downpours in the first nine days of March have drenched Spain with an amount of rain that usually falls during the entire month. — AFP

FREQUENT BOMBINGS

Gunmen attack hotel in central Somalia



Gunmen attacked a hotel in a town in central Somalia where local elders and government officials were meeting and laid siege to the hotel, witnesses said. Dahir Amin Jesow, a federal lawmaker from Beledweyne, the capital of Hiraaan region, said at least four people had been killed. Hours after the initial attack, government forces were trying to flush out Al Shabaab fighters, some of whom had been killed in nearby alleys. — Reuters

Moscow faces largest Ukraine drone attack

UKRAINIAN drones smashed into high-rise apartment blocks and hit parking lots on the outskirts of Moscow in the early hours of Tuesday, with both sides saying it was the largest attack on the Russian capital of the three-year conflict. The Kremlin condemned the attack, which came hours before top US and Ukrainian officials sat down for talks in Saudi Arabia and after three years of Russian aerial barrages on Ukrainian cities. The attack killed three people, Russian officials said.

Kyiv said the strikes should push Russian President Vladimir Putin to accept its call for a halt to long-range aerial strikes, a proposal Moscow has previously ruled out. Ukrainian and US diplomats were meeting for talks on ending the conflict, with Kyiv saying it would try to get Washington -- which has resumed talks with Moscow under President Donald Trump -- on board with the idea.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denounced Kyiv targeting “residential houses”, claiming Russia’s own forces only hit military infrastructure, despite near daily attacks on Ukraine’s civilian areas and thousands of Ukrainian civilians killed by its offensive. Moscow’s army said it intercepted 343 Ukrainian drones with some falling on “residential and economic infrastructure”. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin called it the “most



This photograph shows a fire following a strike on the outskirts of Odesa. — AFP

massive enemy drone attack on Moscow”. At the site of one attack, journalists saw holes on the upper floors of an apartment block and broken glass and debris strewn across the asphalt. The drones hit areas surrounding Moscow, including Ramenskoye that is home to an air base, and an area near Moscow’s Domodedovo airport.

The conflict in Ukraine often feels distant in the Russian capital, where life has continued as Moscow’s army advances and attacks Ukrainian cities. Ukraine has previously targeted Moscow, but deadly strikes so far away from the front lines are rare. No air raid alert or siren was announced in the capital amid the attack. More than 90 drones

were intercepted over the Moscow Region, which surrounds the heavily defended capital. The rest targeted regions surrounding Moscow as well as regions bordering Ukraine.

Russian aviation officials temporarily closed the four main airports serving Moscow. Moscow Region Governor Andrey Vorobyov said a 50-year-old and a 38-year-old security guard were killed, with a local official later saying a third man died in hospital. The health ministry earlier said several people were in hospital, including a child. Russia’s investigative committee called it a “terrorist attack” and opened a criminal investigation. In the Vladimir region, some 200 kilometres east of Moscow . — AFP

EU CALLS FOR DEFENCE ‘SURGE’

STRASBOURG: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Tuesday called for a “surge” in European defence spending. Addressing lawmakers in Strasbourg, von der Leyen said Europe’s security order was “being shaken,” suggesting the continent could no longer rely on “America’s full protection”. “The time of illusions is now over. Europe is called to take greater charge of its own

defence,” the European Commission president told the EU’s parliament. “We need a surge in European defence. And we need it now.” Brussels has already sent a clear signal it is moving in that direction, with EU leaders last week endorsing a commission plan aimed at mobilising up to 800 billion euros (\$860 billion) to boost defence spending. — AFP

دعوة لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية
عن السنة المالية المنتهية في ٢٠٢٤/١٢/٣١

يشرف مجلس إدارة شركة الخزائن للخدمات النفطية (ش.م.ع.) بدعوة المساهمين الكرام لحضور الجمعية العامة العادية السنوية للسنة المالية المنتهية في: ٢٠٢٤/١٢/٣١، المقرر عقدها في تمام الساعة الواحدة من ظهر يوم الأربعاء الموافق: ٢٠٢٥/٠٣/٢٦ عبر المنصة الإلكترونية لاتعداد الجمعيات العامة والتي يمكنكم الدخول إليها عبر موقع شركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع (www.mcd.gov.om) وإذا لم يكتمل النصاب القانوني لاتعداد اجتماع هذه الجمعية فسيتم عقد الاجتماع الثاني في تمام الساعة الثمانية من ظهر يوم الخميس الموافق: ٢٧ مارس ٢٠٢٥ عبر المنصة الإلكترونية المذكورة أعلاه، لمناقشة جدول الأعمال التالي:

- ١- دراسة تقرير مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في: ٢٠٢٤/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه.
- ٢- دراسة تقرير مراقبي الحسابات والموافقة على الميزانية المعومية وحساب الأرباح والخسائر عن السنة المالية المنتهية في: ٢٠٢٤/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه.
- ٣- دراسة مقترح توزيع أرباح نقدية على المساهمين بنسبة (٢٠٪) من رأس المال بما يعادل (٢٠٠) بيسة لكل سهم والموافقة عليه.
- ٤- دراسة مقترح توزيع مكافآت على أعضاء مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في: ٢٠٢٤/١٢/٣١، والموافقة عليه. (حسب المرفق).
- ٥- التصديق على بدل حضور جلسات مجلس الإدارة والذي تقاضاه أعضاء مجلس الإدارة عن السنة المالية المنتهية في: ٢٠٢٤/١٢/٣١، وتحديد مقدار البدل للسنة المالية التي ستنتهي في ٢٠٢٥/١٢/٣١. (حسب المرفق).
- ٦- تعيين مراقبي حسابات للسنة المالية التي ستنتهي في ٢٠٢٥/١٢/٣١، والموافقة على تحديد أتعابه.

ووفقاً للنظام الأساسي للشركة وضوابط انعقاد الجمعيات العامة باستخدام وسائل التقنية الحديثة، نود أن نلفت عنايتكم إلى الآتي:

- يحق للشخص الاعتباري دون غيره تفويض شخص طبيعي لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة والتصويت نيابة عنه خلال وسائل التقنية على أن يكون لهذا الشخص الطبيعي رقم مسننمتر بشركة مسقط للمقاصة والإيداع.
- يبدأ التصويت على أي من البنود المطروحة على جدول الأعمال قبل تاريخ انعقاد الجمعية بمدة لا تزيد على ثلاثة أيام حتى انتهاء عملية التصويت في يوم الاجتماع، وفي حال تغير رصيد أي مساهم بالزيادة أو النقصان سيتم إلغاء أي عملية تصويت قام بها وعليه إعادة التصويت مرة أخرى في يوم اجتماع الجمعية إذا رغب في ذلك.

في حال وجود أي استفسارات يرجى الاتصال على هاتف رقم ٩٣٨٩٦٠١١

رئيس مجلس الإدارة

مراقبي الحسابات

المستشار القانوني

Both North Sea crash ships still on fire: UK Coastguard

GRIMSBY: Both vessels were still on fire on Tuesday over 24 hours after a cargo ship struck a jet fuel-laden tanker in the North Sea off northeast England, the UK Coastguard said. The fire on the Stena Immaculate tanker had “greatly diminished”, the Coastguard said, adding the cargo ship Solong was “still alight” and being “monitored” after it “separated” from the tanker late on Monday night and began drifting southwards.

Fires were raging after a cargo ship laden with toxic materials slammed into a tanker carrying flammable jet fuel in the North Sea, as questions mounted about how the accident happened. There were also growing fears that any spill from the collision could harm the local environment and coastline, home to seals, porpoises and some protected waders and waterfowl.

The fires were “still going on” nearly 24 hours after the Portuguese-flagged Solong cargo ship ploughed into the Stena Immaculate tanker, anchored about 16 kilometres off the northeastern port of Hull, nearby Grimsby port chief executive Martyn Boyers said. One crew member was also still missing, he said.

The Stena Immaculate was on a short-term US military charter with Military Sealift Command, according to a spokesperson for the command that operates civilian-crewed ships for the US Defense Department.



Smoke rises from the MV Solong cargo ship in the North Sea, off the coast of Withernsea, east of England. — AFP

Crowley, the US-based operator of the tanker, said the crash had “ruptured” the ship’s tank “containing A1-jet fuel” and triggered a fire, with fuel “reported released”.

The UK government’s Marine Accident Investigation Branch has launched a probe into Monday’s accident to determine the next steps. The UK Coastguard halted search operations late on Monday after rescuing 36 crew members from both ships. It was not immediately clear if the search had resumed early on Tuesday. “One crew member of the Solong remains unaccounted for. After an extensive search for the missing crew member sadly they have not been found and the search has ended,” said Matthew Atkinson,

divisional commander for the Coastguard. The Stena Immaculate was carrying around 220,000 barrels of jet fuel, according to the maritime information service, Lloyd’s List Intelligence.

The Solong was laden with 15 containers of sodium cyanide, it added, but authorities have not confirmed that and it is not known if any of the flammable compound had leaked. A spokesperson for Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who was hosting his weekly cabinet meeting on Tuesday, called the situation “extremely concerning”. Quoting government sources, the Daily Telegraph said there was nothing so far to indicate that “foul play” had caused the crash, but it could not be ruled out. — AFP

إعلان مناقصة
Tender Notice

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

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
41/2025/ MTCIT	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR SUPERVISION OF CONSTRUCTION OF MUSCAT EXPRESSWAY WIDENING PROJECT	10-03-2025	23-03-2025	20-04-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST CLASS)	(150/-) ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY OMANI RIALS (LOCAL, REGIONAL) (28/400) TWENTY EIGHT OMANI RIAL AND FOUR HUNDRED BAISA FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE
43/2025/ MTCIT	THE MARKETING PROGRAM FOR THE LOGISTICS SECTOR	10-03-2025	23-03-2025	13-04-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY-FIVE OMANI RIALS FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE
39/2025/ MTCIT	MANGEMENT OF DIGITAL MATURITY SUPPORTING SERVICES	05-03-2025	16-03-2025	20-04-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST & SECOND & THIRD & FOURTH CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY-FIVE OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE

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

CORRESPONDANCE:

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

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

@mtcitoman

www.mtcit.gov.om

OPINION

Sweat more in training, bleed less in battle



HYESHA BARRETT

The author is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat

THIS adage is a call to embrace the grind of preparation, with intentionality, purpose and urgency. It rejects shortcuts and emphasises ownership — of one’s thinking, actions and repercussions. Those who heed this principle understand that the true cost of success is not paid in moments of glory, but in the unseen hours of practice, reflection and relentless effort.

This methodology is not just a military strategy, it is a blueprint for life. It’s not about glorifying hardship but about mastering the skills necessary to respond decisively under pressure. Training is where mistakes are made and lessons are learned. However, most people want the victory without the sacrifice. They want confidence without discipline, and success without preparation.

The challenge is, when the heat turns up — and it always does — they find themselves bleeding every step forward. When you don’t rise to the occasion you will fall back on your training. If your training is weak, so is your response.

Preparation sharpens you for greatness. When you have already faced the storm in practice, you can walk into the real situation

with a different kind of confidence. It’s not arrogance, it’s earned assurance.

Effective groundwork demands discipline, endurance and an unwavering commitment to growth — qualities that distinguish those who merely survive challenges from those who emerge victorious. The more soldiers sweat during training, through repeated drills, strategic planning and physical endurance, the less likely there are to “bleed” in the chaos of combat.

This philosophy is equally applicable in everyday life. In business, leadership, sports and personal development, success hinges on the depth of one’s preparation. Entrepreneurs and leaders who invest time and resources into priming their teams through refining their strategies, studying market trends and enhancing skill development find themselves better equipped to handle emergencies and competition.

In personal development, working through past traumas, building self-awareness and healthy habits can be seen as “sweating” in training. Through doing the inner work, we are less likely to be overwhelmed by external stressors, reducing the emotional “bleeding” that can occur during life’s crises.

Whether on the battlefield, in the boardroom or within oneself, those who commit to disciplined practice and foresight are undoubtedly better equipped to face adversities with confidence and resilience.

The consistent self-reflection, learning and disciplined action build the mental and psychological stamina required to confront adversity effectively to face any challenges.

However, this mindset requires a shift in how we perceive discomfort. Many avoid rigorous preparation because it’s exhausting, time-consuming and often reveals our weaknesses. Yet, it’s precisely with this consistency, the willingness to do the unglamorous work behind the scenes, that transform ordinary individuals into high achievers. The temporary pain of preparation shields us from the lasting pain of unpreparedness.

The timeless reminder of the value of preparation and the importance of embracing discomfort is a growth path to success. Whether on the battlefield, in the boardroom or within oneself, those who commit to disciplined practice and foresight are undoubtedly better equipped to face adversities with confidence and resilience.

We can either embrace the grind now or pay the price later.

We get to choose, either the pain of discipline, or of regret. One builds you, the other breaks you.

UK HARD-RIGHT PARTY FIGHTS NEW OPPONENT — ITSELF

PETER HUTCHISON

Britain’s hard-right Reform UK party is riding high in the polls but a bitter feud between charismatic leader Nigel Farage and a fellow lawmaker praised by Elon Musk is threatening its rise.

Policy differences over immigration appear central to the split in the insurgent group, which additionally finds itself under pressure over Britain’s support for Ukraine against Russia’s war.

“I think the bigger mystery is not that they’re fighting, but that it took so long,” Manchester University politics professor Robert Ford said of the upstart anti-immigrant party.

Reform secured 14 per cent of the vote at Britain’s last general election in July 2024, winning five seats in the 650-seat parliament — an unprecedented haul for a hard-right party in the UK. Bookmakers have even made arch-Euroseptic Farage favourite to be Britain’s next leader, although the next election is likely in 2029 and the UK’s voting system disadvantages smaller parties.

But in recent days a war of words has broken out between Farage, who helped convince Britons to leave the European Union in 2016, and fellow MP Rupert Lowe.

The splits first emerged last Thursday when Lowe told the Daily Mail newspaper that Reform remained a “protest party led by the messiah” under Farage.

Reform suspended Lowe the next day, reporting him to police over claims of threatening violence against the party’s chairman. He now sits as an independent.

Reform also said it had received complaints from two female employees about alleged “serious bullying” in Lowe’s parliamentary office, allegations Lowe strenuously denies.

In a post on X on Sunday, he said his name was being “dragged through the mud as part of a political assassination because I dared to question Nigel Farage”.

Farage has defended Lowe’s suspension and said his former colleague had “dented” Reform’s “sense of unity”.

Westminster watchers speculate that a source of tension could be US tech billionaire Musk saying earlier this year that businessman-turned politician Lowe should lead Reform.

They also note that Farage has had high-profile fallout before, notably during his time at the UK Independence Party in the early-mid 2000s.

Analysts note too that Lowe has become a vocal advocate of “mass deportations” of irregular migrants, a position that Farage has distanced himself from. — AFP

High time for the launch of low-altitude economy

DURING a recent episode of ‘Seen’, a Ramadhan TV show hosted by Saudi social innovator Ahmad al Shugairi, viewers were introduced to China’s groundbreaking embrace of the “low altitude economy”. This concept is revolutionising sectors from agriculture to disaster relief. For Oman and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), where vast deserts meet ambitious economic visions, this emerging frontier offers a paradigm shift opportunity.

The low altitude economy refers to the commercial use of airspace under 300 metres, enabled by drones, electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) vehicles and advanced air mobility systems. These technologies are driven by high-speed connectivity, AI and automation, facilitating rapid logistics, precision agriculture and emergency services. Globally, the drone market alone is projected to reach RO 21 billion by 2025, with China leading investments at almost RO 1 billion in 2023.

Oman Vision 2040 prioritises diversification, tech-driven growth and enhanced connectivity — goals aligned with low altitude solutions. First, logistics in in Oman’s mountainous interior and desert expanses pose hurdles. Drones could slash delivery costs for e-commerce and medical supplies. Zipline, a Rwandan drone start-up, reduced blood delivery times from 4 hours to 45 minutes in remote areas — a model applicable to Oman’s 44 per cent rural population. The second solution is in tourism. Oman’s tourism, contributing 2.4 per cent to GDP in 2022, could leverage drones for aerial tours of sites like Al Jabal Al Akhdhar or marine life monitoring, enhancing visitor experience while preserving ecosystems.



The low altitude economy refers to the commercial use of airspace under 300 meters, enabled by drones, electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) vehicles, and advanced air mobility systems.



KHALID ALSAFI AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

Agriculture
With agriculture consuming 82 per cent of Oman’s water, drone-enabled precision farming could optimise irrigation. China’s farm drone sector, valued at RO5 billion, increased yields by 10–20 per cent, a potential blueprint for Oman’s 1.2 million hectares of arable land.

Beyond Oman
The GCC, seeking post-oil diversification, could collectively harness low altitude tech. First, cross-border drone corridors could streamline GCC trade, which hit RO 50 billion in 2022. Dubai’s Drone Strategy 2030 aims to deploy 100,000 drones for transport and logistics, saving around RO 6 billion annually.

Disaster Response
With the rise in adverse weather conditions, drones offer rapid crisis intervention, critical in climate-vulnerable GCC. After 2023’s Cyclone Shaheen, Oman could have deployed drones for real-time damage assessments, mirroring China’s post-flood responses. A third

of opportunities lie in smart cities. NEOM and other GCC smart cities could integrate eVTOLs for urban mobility, reducing congestion. The global eVTOL market, expected to hit almost RO 12 billion by 2030, aligns with the UAE’s ambition to launch air taxis by 2026.

In terms of navigating potential challenges, regulatory frameworks, public safety and infrastructure remain hurdles, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has begun drafting drone policies, licensing high growth start-ups such as Serb that specialises in Unmanned Travel Management (UTM), but GCC-wide collaboration — akin to the EU’s U-Space initiative — is vital. Public-private partnerships, like Saudi Arabia’s almost RO 8 billion drone manufacturing hub, can spur local innovation.

The low altitude economy is not mere futurism — it’s an actionable pathway for Oman and the GCC to leapfrog infrastructural gaps, foster inclusive growth, and secure global tech leadership. As Al Shugairi’s ‘Seen’ highlighted, the sky is no longer the limit — it’s the launchpad.

Let this Ramadhan be a turning point for peaceful world



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

RAMADHAN has always held a special place in my heart. During my two and a half decades in Oman, I was delighted to witness the beauty of the Muslim community as they fasted, broke their fast together and prayed in unison, all with remarkable precision!

Although I am not a religious scholar qualified to discuss fasting authoritatively, I believe that fasting is truly complete only when the body, mind, words and actions align and achieve purity.

Research shows that fasting has been practiced around the world for centuries. It has been widely used as a religious practice aimed at purifying individuals, atoning for sins and wrongdoing, and achieving physical well-being.

As a month dedicated to charity and generosity, Muslims strive to support those in need, embodying the spirit of giving and compassion. Iftar, the evening meal that breaks the fast, is a time of togetherness, where families, friends, and even strangers gather to share food and express gratitude.

Recent scientific studies indicate that fasting can regenerate the immune system. It reduces stress, lowers the risk of chronic diseases, improves mood and enhances mental alertness. In other words, fasting is a holistic practice that nurtures both the body and the soul.

However, as in many previous years, this Ramadhan also arrives amidst wars, conflicts

and devastation in numerous countries, casting a long shadow over the lives of those affected and magnifying their profound losses.

In countries such as Afghanistan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territories, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, crises and conflicts cast a long shadow over the unfortunate individuals who are compelled to observe Ramadhan without access to food, potable water, or other essential resources.

In Afghanistan, 14 million people have limited or no access to healthcare services. One-third of the population is experiencing acute food insecurity, and 7.8 million children and women require emergency nutritional assistance to prevent death and disease.

Reports indicate that in Sudan, 20.3 million people require urgent health assistance, and 15 million individuals are either displaced within the country or have fled to neighbouring countries in search of refuge.

In Syria, 14 years of conflict have left 90 per cent of the population living in extreme poverty. Forced to flee their homes, millions of Syrians have sought refuge in camps and makeshift shelters, where food, clean water and healthcare are scarce.

Lebanon is no different. Nearly 1.59 million people in the country are facing acute food insecurity.

The health system is struggling with a complex humanitarian crisis, which has been exacerbated by the economic downturn and the effects of recent conflicts.

Although the festive spirit may have faded in some countries, the essence of Ramadhan remains. This month offers an opportunity to step away from the distractions and concerns of everyday life and reconnect with one's faith

According to reports, 19.6 million people in Yemen struggle to access essential health services. Less than 40 per cent of Yemenis have access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, leaving the overall population highly vulnerable to preventable diseases.

In Palestine, the war has torn apart many of the familiar and cherished traditions of Ramadhan. In Gaza, Al Jazeera reports that echoes of war still resonate loudly. There is no certainty that this ceasefire will endure. People are anxious about what will happen next, fearing that the war may return.

Gaza's Health Ministry has reported that Israel's military offensive has resulted in the deaths of over 48,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom are women and children. Approximately 1.5 million Palestinians are currently without homes or shelter.

Although the festive spirit may have faded in these countries, the essence of Ramadhan remains.

This month offers an opportunity to step away from the distractions and concerns of everyday life and reconnect with one's faith. It is a time for forgiveness and a chance to seek closeness to Allah and cultivate spiritual resilience.

In his Ramadhan message, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, "In this holy month, let us all be uplifted by these values and embrace our common humanity to build a more just and peaceful world for all."

No doubt, in these challenging times, the spirit of Ramadhan is a beacon of hope. I wish all Muslims peace and joy.

TRUMP TARIFF FEARS CLOUD IRISH PM’S ANNUAL US TRIP

PETER MURPHY

Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin meets US President Donald Trump in Washington on Wednesday during an annual trip to mark Saint Patrick's Day, which could be marred by concerns over imminent US tariffs on EU exports.

The usually amicable diplomatic opportunity centres around the gifting of a bowl of green shamrock — a symbol of Ireland — to the current White House occupant.

But this year, amid escalating battles of tit-for-tat tariffs between Washington and countries around the world, Trump is expected to focus on EU member Ireland's enormous trade surplus in goods with the United States.

According to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, its deficit in goods trade with Ireland last year was almost 80 billion euros (\$87 billion), the fourth largest of any other single country.

Trump's Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick has even singled out Ireland's surplus as a key gripe. It is "nonsense that Ireland of all places runs a trade surplus at our expense", the outspoken billionaire wrote on X in November. Last week, Secretary of State Marco Rubio "discussed the US priority to address the US-Ireland trade imbalance" with his Irish counterpart Simon Harris, according to a US readout of a phone call between the two.

During a proclamation of Irish Heritage Month to mark festivities around the coming Saint Patrick's Day on March 17, Trump also raised the issue. The White House meeting with Martin could be an opportunity to "advance fairer trade policies" with Ireland, he said in the statement.

Trump has said products from the 27-nation European Union would be hit with tariffs of 25 per cent, adding that the bloc has "taken advantage of us."

The EU has vowed to retaliate with proportionate countermeasures. "An extended and escalating trade war would be entirely destructive to Ireland's interests," Louis Brennan, a professor of business studies at Trinity College Dublin, said.

"This could lead to the real possibility of US corporations currently based in Ireland reshoring back to the US, particularly in sectors such as pharma that have been called out by Trump," Brennan said. The United States is Ireland's single biggest export market for pharmaceutical drugs and ingredients, mostly manufactured by US companies like Pfizer, Eli Lilly, and Johnson & Johnson. US tech giants like Apple, Microsoft and Google also have European bases in Ireland with large staff headcounts, and bolster the country's bumper corporate tax receipts. A trade war would have "major negative impacts on the Irish economy in terms of employment and tax revenue", Brennan said. — AFP

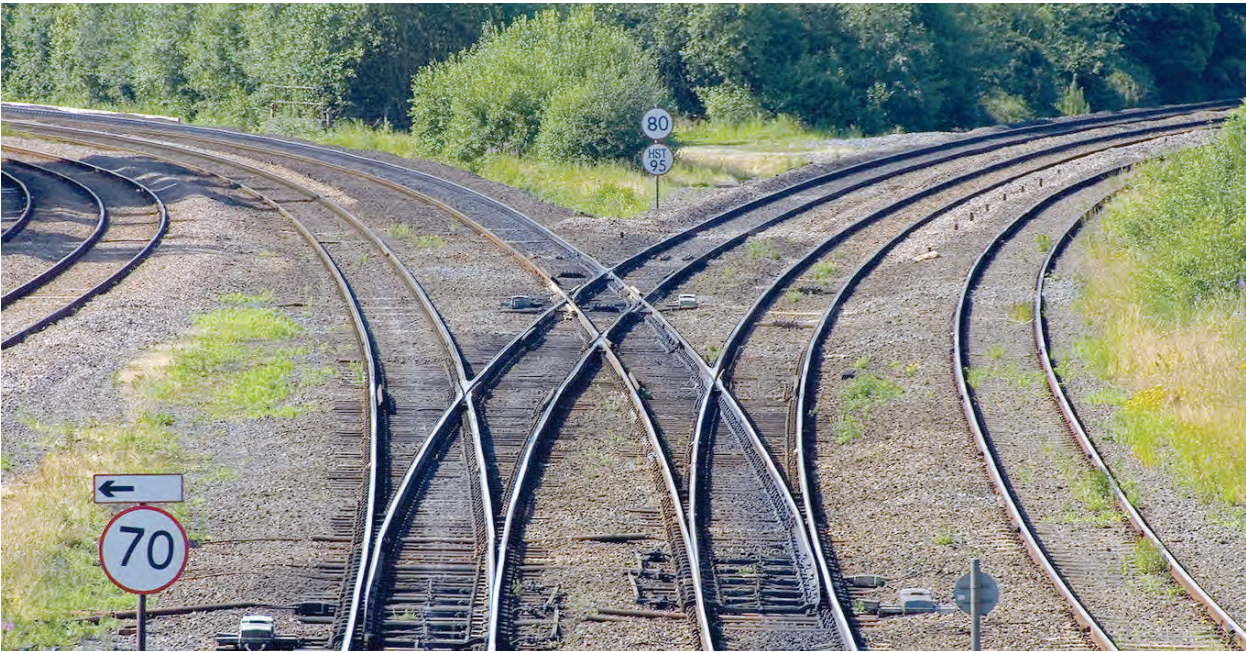
Are we responsible for our choices?

SINCE ancient times, thinkers have asked whether we freely choose what we do or if our actions are determined by forces beyond our control. That debate has been given new impetus by scientific discoveries that have advanced our understanding of the causes of our behaviour. Robert Sapolsky, a Stanford University neuroscientist and recent guest on the podcast "Lives Well Lived", which I co-host with the Polish philosopher Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek, is one of these science-based determinists.

In his book Determined: A Science of Life Without Free Will, Sapolsky argues that free will is an illusion. Consider Joe, who decides that he should eat a healthy diet. He meets a friend at a café, and the friend orders a particularly tempting slice of cake, and urges Joe to order one, too. But Joe resists. He may think he exercised his free will and deserves some credit. No, Sapolsky would say: he was able to choose not to order the cake because of his genes, or perhaps because of the way he was brought up – in any case, because of factors over which he had no control.

Because our actions are determined, Sapolsky says, we are not morally responsible for them, and do not deserve praise or blame for what we do. He deplores the fact that that all over the world, in everyday life, from courtrooms to classrooms, at award ceremonies and in eulogies, we cling, with "ferocious tenacity" to our belief in free will.

What's wrong with this argument is not the claim that everything has a cause, nor the belief that everything in the universe, including our behaviour, is determined. We can grant that if someone knew everything there is to know about our genes and our environment, they could predict our behaviour. The flaw in Sapolsky's argument, and that of many others before him, is that he fails to



Understanding the causes of our behaviour.



PETER SINGER

The writer is Peter Singer, Emeritus Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University and Visiting Professor at the Centre for Biomedical Ethics at the National University of Singapore, is co-host of the podcast Lives Well Lived, co-founder of the charity The Life You Can Save

recognise the distinction between behaviour that results from a choice we make, and behaviour that does not. Consider George and Mary. George develops a grudge against his neighbour, who often ignores him when they pass each other on the street. George knows that every morning the unfriendly neighbour goes to a nearby station to catch a train to work, and George decides that this creates an opportunity to get rid of him.

George follows his neighbour to the platform, waiting for an opportunity to push him in front of the train as it arrives. For several days, the neighbour stands too far back from the edge, and George cannot carry out his plan. But he persists, until one day the neighbour stands close enough to the edge for George to give him a hard push. The neighbour falls in front of the train and is killed. Mary takes the same train to work. One morning she is rushing to catch it as it pulls in, and doesn't notice that someone has left a bag on the platform. She trips over it, falling into the back of her neighbour, who is standing near the edge of the platform. He falls in front of the train and is killed.

It is reasonable to say that George freely chose to kill his neighbour and is morally responsible for that person's death. It is not reasonable to say that about Mary.

Would it be better if we did not think that George should be held responsible, blamed and punished, for the death of his neighbour? Or if we somehow thought that George and Mary were equally responsible for the deaths of their neighbours? Surely not. People everywhere make such distinctions. Sapolsky himself even notes that some animals do it. He describes a study showing that monkeys and chimpanzees respond differently to a person who is unable to give them food, as compared with someone who could give them food, but doesn't. They prefer to be close to the former.

Sapolsky's response to this is: "Heck, even chimps believe in free will." But the study doesn't show that chimps believe in the kind of free will that is incompatible with the truth of determinism. If they believe in free will at all, it is a kind that is compatible with our actions being determined.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



MUSCAT RAMADHAN CHAMPIONSHIP WITNESSES THRILLING MATCHES

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

The Muscat Ramadhan Football Championship 2025 kicked off with thrilling matches, organised by Makasb in collaboration with the OAA. The competition is being held at the OAA Stadium, where teams are battling for the best results to boost their chances of advancing to the next rounds.

The first two days of the tournament featured intense encounters, resulting in dominant victories and exciting draws, reflecting the high level of competition.

The second day of the championship was marked by a heartwarming humanitarian initiative from the tournament organisers. A group of children from the Down Syndrome Association attended the event and participated in a friendly match and a kids' sprint race. This initiative aimed to integrate children with Down syndrome into sports activities and emphasise their important role in society. In a match showcasing clear dominance, the OAA secured a 6-1 victory over Fun Al Hadith. Goals were shared among Shihab al Buraiki, Abdullah al Buraiki, and Hamza Amer, while Ahmed al Mazroui scored Fun Al Hadith's lone goal.

Meanwhile, the Security & Safety team claimed a 2-0 win over Al Ghali, thanks to goals from Juwaid al Buraiki and Bashar al Muharibi, securing three valuable points to strengthen their position in the competition.

Group 2 matches were evenly balanced, with Shabab Al Khamisa and Blanco ending in a 1-1 draw. Basil al Jabri scored for Shabab Al Khamisa, while Mazin al Balushi equalised for Blanco.

Another 1-1 draw occurred between Tahadi Al Matar and KN3, with Hussam al Rashdi scoring for Tahadi Al Matar and Awad al Houti levelling the match for KN3. Both teams started their campaign with a single point.

In a well-balanced Group 3 fixture, Amjighos defeated Al Alami 2-0, with Ahmed al Harrasi and Waddah al Siyabi finding the net, securing an essential victory to boost their qualification hopes.

In an exciting Group 4 clash, Al Kiraz secured an important 3-1 victory over Rozna Hotel. Al Baraa al Hadi starred with two goals, while Adel al Souti added the third. Muhannad al Hasani scored Rozna Hotel's only goal, which wasn't enough to change the course of the match.

The most remarkable result in Group 4 was Ruba' Haima's stunning 19-2 win over Al Haditha for Energy, marking one of the biggest victories in the tournament so far. Star player Qaisar al Balushi stole the spotlight, scoring 13 goals, while Imad al Balushi and Moayad al Balushi contributed to the massive win. Meanwhile, Aflah al Harrasi and Hood al Toubi scored the two consolation goals for Al Haditha for Energy.

In another Group 4 encounter, Al Ittihad and Rozna Restaurant played out a thrilling 3-3 draw. Rozna Restaurant's goals came from Amjad al Khalili, Al Haitham al Riyami, and Waleed Ibrahim, while Al Ittihad's goals were scored by Al Mutasim al Hosni, Omar al Humaidi, and Abdulrahman al Yaqoubi. Each team earned a point in a match filled with continuous attacking exchanges.

Oman thump Belarus to conclude domestic camp

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

OMAN beach soccer team concluded their final preparatory domestic camp on a successful note as they thumped Belarus 8-5 on Monday night at the sandy court of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

With this motivational triumph, Oman players are in perfect shape to kick off their action at the main continental assignment of AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2025 which will take place in Pattaya, Thailand from March 20 to 30.

Oman players managed to show a top performance in the second friendly encounter against Belarus as they prevailed 8-5. Sami al Balushi was the star of the game as he netted a hat-trick while Masha al Orami, Musallam al Orami, Abdullah al Souti and Ahmed al Owaisi scored the remaining goals.

In the first warm-up game, Belarus earned a 5-1 win over Oman on Saturday night. Masha al Orami scored the only goal for Oman.

Oman's experienced beach soccer coach Talib Hilal finalised the starting line-up of the team in the Asian event. Under technical guidance of Talib, the national team won a gold medal in the Asian Beach Games in 2008 and then became champions at the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in 2015. Furthermore, Oman were also silver medalists at the Asian Beach Soccer Cup in 2011 besides winning bronze medals in 2009 and 2019. Hence, Oman's chances are very high to impress and rekindle the previous memories despite the expected tough challenge.

Oman will vie against Bahrain, Malaysia, and Vietnam in Group D at 2025



AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand. The continental showpiece will also offer three tickets to the Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup Seychelles 2025 in coming May.

Oman will begin their campaign in the

Asian event with a match against Vietnam on March 21 and then they will meet Malaysia on March 23. Two days later, they will conclude the group stage with a match against Bahrain.

Earlier last week, Oman had played two friendly matches against Russia. In both games, Russia beat Oman with a close 6-5 win in the first friendly and a 6-3 win in the second at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

OMAN SQUAD: Khalid al Orami, Munther al Orami, Abdullah al Souti, Nooh al Zadjali, Masha al Orami, Ahmed al Owaisi, Salim al Orami, Younis al Owaisi, Sami al Balushi, Yahya al Muraikhi, Abdulrahman al Fazari, Musallam al Orami, Majid al Affari, Yousef al Zadjali, Amjad al Hamdani and Sameer al Afari.

Seeb and Al Bashayer secure key wins in OVL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

Seeb and Al Bashayer clubs secured crucial victories on Monday in the final round of the first phase of the final qualifiers for the 2024/2025 Oman Volleyball League (OVL).

In a match held at the Sohar Sports Complex, Seeb earned a well-deserved 3-1 victory over Al Salam after a highly competitive game, especially in the early sets.

Seeb started strong, imposing its style of play in the first set and leveraging the experience of its players to clinch key points, ultimately winning the set 25-21.

However, Al Salam made a strong comeback in the second set, displaying solid blocking and precise attacking plays to snatch the set 26-24 after a fierce battle until the final moments.

In the third set, Seeb regained control, benefiting from powerful offensive strikes and swift transitions between defence and attack, securing the set 25-20. The fourth set was highly competitive, with Al Salam attempting to stay in the game. However, Seeb maintained their composure and showcased strong serving and reception skills to take the set 25-21, sealing a full-point victory.

Meanwhile, in the second match held at the Sultan



Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, Al Bashayer achieved a commanding three-set victory over Masirah.

The encounter was intense from the start, with both teams exchanging leads until the final moments of the first set,

which Al Bashayer narrowly won 26-24, capitalising on strong blocking and precise serves. In the second set, Al Bashayer increased the pace of their play and capitalised on Masirah's defensive errors, securing a comfortable 25-20

win.

In the third set, Al Bashayer confirmed its dominance with fast-paced attacks and solid defensive organisation, maintaining their lead throughout the set despite Masirah's attempts to mount a comeback. Al Bashayer sealed the set 25-19, completing a straight-set victory and affirming its readiness for the upcoming stages of the competition.

Seeb Lead the Standings as the First Phase Concludes

After the first phase of the final qualifiers, Seeb topped the standings with 10 points, followed by Majees with 8 points. Al Salam and Al Bashayer are tied with 6 points each, while Masirah remains at the bottom with no points.

Second Phase Kicks Off on Saturday

The second phase of the final qualifiers will begin next Saturday, with Seeb facing Masirah at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, while Majees will take on Al Bashayer at Al Amal Club Hall in Bausher.

According to the tournament format, the final stage follows a direct knockout system, where the top-ranked team faces the fourth-placed team, and the second-placed team meets the third. The winners will advance to the final to compete for the league title, while the losing teams will battle for third place.

SHORT TAKES



Yokohama F Marinos' Daiya Tono (R) scores a goal during the AFC Champions League match between Yokohama F. Marinos and Shanghai Port at the Nissan stadium in Yokohama. — AFP

YOKOHAMA THRASH SHANGHAI IN ACL QUARTERFINALS

YOKOHAMA, Japan: Japan's Yokohama F-Marinos cruised into the Asian Champions League (ACL) quarterfinals on Tuesday with a stylish 4-1 second-leg win over Shanghai Port for a 5-1 last-16 aggregate victory.

Yokohama, last season's runners-up, went into the home leg with a 1-0 lead from the opening fixture in China and they put themselves further in front with two goals in the opening half hour.

Shanghai pulled one back but Yokohama scored again before half-time before adding another after the break.

The win earned Yokohama, coached by Gareth Southgate's former England assistant Steve Holland, a place in the AFC Champions League Elite final tournament in Saudi Arabia.

Games will be played over 11 days in Jeddah, with the quarterfinals kicking off on April 25.

Yokohama made a dream start on a drizzly evening when a Shanghai defensive mix-up set up their opening goal just over a minute after kick-off.

Asahi Uenaka threaded the ball through to Daiya Tono and the striker buried it past goalkeeper Yan Junling.

Tono hit the post soon after as Yokohama kept up the pressure and Anderson Lopes doubled their lead a minute short of the half-hour mark.

Midfielder Kodjo Aziangbe cut through the Shanghai defence before slipping the ball through to Lopes, who beat Yan with a cute finish.

Shanghai gave themselves a chance when Brazilian Leonardo turned home a flick-on from captain Li Ang to pull one back five minutes later.

But Yan Matheus restored Yokohama's cushion with their third goal minutes from half-time after another quick break forward.

Lopes hit his second goal 10 minutes after the break after Aziangbe had thumped the post.

It was the top-scoring Brazilian's ninth goal of the competition. — AFP



Yokohama F Marinos' Anderson Lopes (2nd L) scores a goal. — AFP



Man United plan to build world's greatest stadium

MANCHESTER

UNITED on Tuesday announced plans to build a new 100,000-capacity stadium close to their historic Old Trafford stadium that co-owner Jim Ratcliffe said would be the "world's greatest" football ground.

The momentous decision by the Premier League club comes after an extensive consultation process around whether to develop their creaking current ground or move, in conjunction with the Old Trafford Regeneration Task Force.

United have now confirmed their "intention to pursue a new 100,000-seater stadium as the centrepiece of the regeneration of the Old Trafford area".

The club hopes the new stadium, which will cost a reported £2 billion (\$2.6 billion), can be finished in five years, though the start date remains uncertain.

Scaled models and conceptual images for how the new stadium and surrounding area could look like were revealed on Tuesday at the London headquarters of architects Foster + Partners, appointed in September to design the stadium district.



It's more challenging to build a stadium of 100,000 but I think the UK needs a stadium of that kind of presence and the north of England I think is the best place to build i

JIM RATCLIFFE

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

"Our current stadium has served us brilliantly for the past 115 years, but it has fallen behind the best arenas in world sport."

United said the stadium and a wider regeneration project had the potential to deliver an additional £7.3 billion per year to the UK economy, including the possible creation of 92,000 new jobs.

"United is the world's favourite football club and the biggest in my opinion and it deserves a stadium befitting of its stature," Ratcliffe said in London on Tuesday.

"It's more challenging to build a stadium of 100,000 but I think the UK needs a stadium of that kind of presence and the north of England I think is the best place to build it."

FERGUSON BACKING

The move to a new ground has been backed by former United boss Alex Ferguson, who won 13 Premier League titles during his reign of more than 26 years.

"Manchester United should always strive for the best in

everything it does, on and off the pitch, and that includes the stadium we play in," Ferguson said.

"Old Trafford holds so many special memories for me personally, but we must be brave and seize this opportunity to build a new home, fit for the future, where new history can be made."

United, struggling on and off the pitch, are around £1 billion in debt and have yet to say how they will pay for the new stadium.

Regarding the financing of the project, chief executive Omar Berrada said on Tuesday: "It's a very attractive investment opportunity so we're quite confident we'll find a way to finance the stadium."

Old Trafford, England's biggest club ground with a capacity of around 74,000, has been United's home since 1910 but criticism of the stadium has grown in recent years, with issues including leaks from the roof. Norman Foster has designed some of the world's most iconic buildings, including the HSBC Building in Hong Kong, London's "Gherkin" skyscraper and the reconstructed Reichstag in Berlin.

Foster said the stadium would feature an umbrella design sheltering a public plaza that is "twice the size of Trafalgar Square" in London. — AFP

Seeb in must-win against Kuwait's Al Arabi

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

Hosts Seeb will look for a win at the second leg tie of quarters at 2024/2025 AFC Challenge League as they will take on Kuwait's Al Arabi on Wednesday night. The match will kick off at 10:00 pm at Seeb Stadium.

The first leg match in Kuwait ended for Al Arabi as Bandar al Salamah's winning goal in the dying minutes delivered Al Arabi better advantage ahead of the return match. The star of the last game, Al Salamah, will be missed in today's game as he received two yellow cards and followed by a red card as he was sent off following the goal.

Seeb will need to win at least with two goals difference to ensure

Seeb will need to win at least with two goals difference to ensure moving to the semis while the visitors will play with two chances including the draw and triumph due to their crucial victory last week in home match game



moving to the semis while the visitors will play with two chances including the draw and triumph due to their crucial victory last week in home match game.

Seeb coach Nikola Djurovic may change in the playing style in today's clash as Amjad al Harthy will be back in defending area while Eid al Farsi will be missed due to injury beside Jameel al Yahmadi. The head coach and his assistant team will depend on Abdulrahman al Mushefri, the national team striker, beside the experienced attacker Abdulaziz al Maqbali, Mohammed al Musallami, Ahmed al Khamisi, Ali al Busaidi and the rest of the team members. In the last training sessions, coach Djurovic focused a lot in the attacking area beside instructing the players to

snatch the scoring attempts and avoid missing any opportunities.

Seeb had managed to show in the Group Stage that they are a force to be reckoned with when playing at home winning all three matches without conceding a goal. Furthermore, the board directors of Seeb club purchased all the match tickets and distributed for free for the team's spectators to ensure proper support for the country's representative in the AFC Challenge League.

If they win with more than one goal Seeb will move to the forthcoming round of the Asian prestigious event. The winners of this match will face the winners between East Bengal of India against FC Arkadag in the semifinal.

SPORTS



Alcaraz celebrates after defeating Denis. — Reuters

ALCARAZ POWERS INTO INDIAN WELLS LAST 16

SABALENKA,
GAUFF, KEYS
ADVANCE

TWO-TIME defending champion Carlos Alcaraz powered past in-form Canadian Denis Shapovalov 6-2, 6-4 on Monday to continue his march toward a rare Indian Wells ATP Masters three-peat.

The world number three from Spain booked his place in the last 16 with a clinical victory, breaking Shapovalov in the opening game with a blistering forehand down the line as he roared to a 5-0 lead.

Alcaraz said the quick start was key against an opponent coming off a title in Dallas and a semifinal run in Acapulco.

“I knew at the beginning of the match that I had to be really focused. I had to start the match really strong, knowing it was going to be a really tough battle,” Alcaraz said. He saved three of the four break points he faced and converted four of his eight chances, sealing the match with an overhead that Shapovalov could barely get his racquet to.

Pleased with his performance, Alcaraz said there were still a few things he could improve as he tries to join Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic as the only men to win three straight titles in the California desert. In other matches, world number four Taylor Fritz, the Indian Wells champion in 2022, said he “just stopped making super random mistakes” to turn things around in his 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 victory over Chilean Alejandro Tabilo.

“For the first set and a half, I just, for no reason, was just missing balls.

The world number three from Spain booked his place in the last 16 with a clinical victory, breaking Shapovalov in the opening game with a blistering forehand down the line as he roared to a 5-0 lead.



Aryna Sabalenka hits a shot during second round. — Reuters



Coco Gauff hits a shot in the third round. — Reuters



Madison Keys hits a ball. — Reuters

I couldn’t even imagine, I don’t know why I was missing them,” added the American, who had 43 unforced errors to 32 winners.

Argentina’s Francisco Cerundolo beat Botic van de Zandschulp 6-3, 6-4, ending the run of the Dutch lucky loser who toppled 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic in the second round.

Cerundolo next plays Australian ninth seed Alex De Minaur, who cruised past Hubert Hurkacz 6-4, 6-0 to post his 50th match win at the Masters 1000 level.

While upsets have claimed men’s top seed Alexander Zverev, fourth seed Casper Ruud and number six Djokovic, the top five women’s seeds are all safely into the fourth round after victories for world number one Aryna Sabalenka, third-ranked Coco Gauff and fifth-ranked Australian Open champion Madison Keys on Monday. Sabalenka said her 6-1, 6-2 victory over 62nd-ranked Lucia Bronzetti wasn’t as easy as it looked, thanks in part to the unpredictable Stadium Court wind.

“I had to fight for every point and I’m super happy with the win,” said Sabalenka who next faces British lucky loser Sonay Kartal, who beat Polina Kudermetova 7-5, 6-3.

Keys’s struggles were obvious, but the American who shocked Sabalenka in the Melbourne final gutted out a 6-2, 6-7 (8/10), 6-4 victory over Elise Mertens.

Unable to convert two match points as she served at 5-3 in the second set, Keys blew two more in the tiebreaker before finally polishing off the 28th seed from Belgium in two hours and 48 minutes.

“It’s just about surviving,” said Keys, who admitted she was finding it tricky to manage her own expectations in her first tournament since capturing her maiden major.

“Today, obviously, I don’t think I played my best level, and I think that was more frustrating just because I’m starting to expect a little bit more of myself,” she said. Gauff cleaned up her service game to pull off a 7-6 (7/1), 6-2 victory over Greece’s Maria Sakkari — who beat Gauff in the semifinals last year on the way to a second Indian Wells final in three years. — AFP



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Solar power for new Barka-5 desalination plant in Oman

GS Inima's Barka 5 desalination plant.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 11

OMAN's potable water producer GS Inima Barka-5 Desalination Co SAOC has announced the signing of a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) that will pave the way for solar power to meet part of the electricity requirements of a major desalination plant that it launched at Barka in Al Batinah South Governorate last year.

GS Inima Barka 5 Desalination Co, owned 100 per cent by GS Inima — a global leader in the water sector — celebrated the inauguration of its 100,000 m3/day capacity reverse osmosis (RO) based plant at Barka last September.

Built with an investment of around \$135 million, the new plant represented the fifth phase of capacity expansions of the strategic Barka Water Hub designed to serve the potable water requirements of Muscat, Al Batinah North and South and Al Dakhiliyah

Built with an investment of around \$135 million, the new plant represented the fifth phase of capacity expansions of the strategic Barka Water Hub designed to serve the potable water requirements of Muscat, Al Batinah North and South and Al Dakhiliyah governorates.

governorates.

On Monday, GS Inima announced that its vision for a solar PV plant to support the desalination project's energy needs, had reached a significant milestone. "GS Inima moves towards sustainability with the signing of a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for the Barka 5 Photovoltaic Plant in Oman.

With a capacity of 6.5 MWp, this facility will supply up to 11 per cent of Barka 5 desalination plant's energy needs until 2044, contributing to carbon footprint reduction and improving operational efficiency."

In a statement, GS Inima added that the PV initiative aligns with its mission to integrate

renewable energy into the water sector.

"The development of the 6.5 MWp PV plant began from scratch three years ago in 2022. After meticulous planning and development, GS Inima is now poised to commence construction, with the goal of achieving operational status in the first quarter of 2026. This project will deliver substantial energy savings to the Barka 5 desalination facility."

Juan José Benayas, CEO of GS Inima Barka 5 Desalination Co, stated: "This PPA for the Barka 5 PV Plant is a testament to our ongoing efforts to incorporate renewable energy solutions into our projects and most importantly, to our commitment to delivering sustainable and cost-effective solutions to our valued client, Nama Power and Water Procurement Co (NPWP).

We are excited to bring this project to

fruition and contribute to a more sustainable future for Oman's water sector, while also fulfilling our obligations to provide reliable and efficient water services."

When operational by Q1 next year, the solar PV plant will be only the second facility of its kind to power water desalination in Oman.

In November 2023, Veolia's Sharqiyah Desalination Company celebrated the inauguration of a 17-megawatt peak (MWp) solar PV farm covering 100 per cent of the 131,000 m3/day capacity desalination plant's energy consumption over the daylight period.

Developed in partnership with TotalEnergies, the solar farm is presently the largest of its kind to support water desalination in the country.

TENDERS ADVERTISEMENT

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) Announce the following Tenders:

SR. NO.	TENDER NO.	TENDER NAME	FLOATING DATE	LAST DATE FOR OBTAINING THE DOCUMENTS	BID SUBMISSION DATE	REQUIREMENTS FROM PARTICIPATORS	TENDER DOCUMENT'S FEES (INCLUDING VAT) (RO)
1	22/ 2025	Supply of Oil for OETC Network	12/03/2025	26/03/2025	22/04/2025	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have a Valid Commercial Registration.	52/500
2	23/ 2025	Supply of HITACHI RED 670 Line Differential Relays, IO Modules and Test Plugs.	12/03/2025	26/03/2025	22/04/2025	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have a Valid Commercial Registration.	26/250
3	24/ 2025	Supply and Installation of a Unified Barcoding System for Operational Assets.	12/03/2025	26/03/2025	22/04/2025	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have a Valid Commercial Registration.	105/-
Participation		Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering.					
Buying the Tender		By E-Tendering System.					
Fees		Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer) , SMEs are exempted from tender's fees.					
The deadline for clarification		Before (21) Days from bid submission date.					
Submission		The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering					
Terms and conditions		• Specifying the name of the Company or whatever refers to in the Bid Guarantee Envelope.					
		• The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from bid submission date.					
		• The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from bid submission date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). Small & Medium Enterprises are exempted from the submission of 1% of the bid bond.					
		• Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted.					
		• OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.					
Offer		The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.					
Company Address		Muscat - Al Mawaleh Road No: 2153 - Building No. 423 0 Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 93515198 , 91491551					
Email Website		tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx					

Oman's electricity output rises 7.6%

MUSCAT: Oman's total electricity production grew by 7.6% in 2024, reaching 48,452.7 gigawatt-hours (GWh) compared to 45,012.9 GWh in 2023, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The highest electricity output was recorded in the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah, where production increased by 6.4% to 30,253.2 GWh.

However, Muscat saw a significant drop of 19.4%, producing only 486.9 GWh by the end of the year. In contrast, Dhofar Governorate experienced an 11.9% increase, with total output reaching 5,679.7 GWh.

Electricity production also grew in the Al Sharqiyah North and South governorates, rising 7.2% to 10,609.4 GWh. Meanwhile, Al Wusta Governorate

Muscat saw a significant drop of 19.4%, producing only 486.9 GWh by the end of the year.

recorded a sharp 24.5% decline, producing 169.6 GWh, whereas Musandam Governorate saw a 6.6% increase, reaching 503.8 GWh.

The net electricity production, which includes purchases by Oman Power and Water Procurement Company and Rural Areas Electricity Company,

increased by 7.2% to 46,813 GWh by the end of 2024.

In addition to electricity production, the statistics revealed that Oman's total water production remained largely unchanged, reaching 520.37 million cubic metres by the end of 2024, compared to 520.36 million cubic metres in 2023. — ONA



OETCOMAN 



ADVERTORIALS

NEW OPPORTUNITY



This campaign is about embracing a legacy of engineering brilliance, refined design and unparalleled value.

WIN BIG THIS RAMADHAN: BUY A MAZDA, ENTER TO WIN A MAZDA 6

MUSCAT: This Ramadhan, Mazda Oman invites you to experience the thrill of owning a Mazda while participating in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to win a free Mazda 6 through raffles. This campaign is not merely about purchasing a vehicle — it’s about embracing a legacy of engineering brilliance, refined design and unparalleled value.

At the heart of this campaign lies a dual promise: the joy of driving a Mazda and the chance to win another. Every customer who purchases any Mazda model during this period will automatically enter a raffle, with four brand-new Mazda 6 sedans up for grabs. The raffle draws will be held on March 16, March 23, April 6 and April 17, amplifying the excitement throughout Ramadhan.

Beyond the raffle, Mazda Oman enhances ownership confidence with a complimentary 4-year service package and 3-year AAA roadside assistance, ensuring that your vehicle remains in peak condition long after the festive season.

This combination of opportunity and assurance underscores Mazda’s commitment to delivering value that transcends expectations.

Mazda’s Ramadhan campaign showcases a curated selection of vehicles, each engineered to cater to distinct lifestyles and preferences. Below, we delve into the unique attributes of each model, highlighting why they stand apart in their respective segments.

Starting at RO 7,966, the Mazda 6 redefines sophistication in the midsize sedan category. Available in 2.0L and 2.5L engine variants, it marries fuel efficiency with responsive performance, making it ideal for both city commutes and long drives. Its sleek KODO design language, premium interior craftsmanship and advanced i-Activsense safety suite position it as a benchmark for modern sedans.

For those seeking a vehicle that balances practicality with prestige, the Mazda 6 is a compelling choice. This Ramadhan, purchasing one could also secure you a second — a testament to its unmatched value proposition.

The CX-5 starting at RO 8,955 is a masterclass in versatility. Powered by a robust 2.5L engine, this compact SUV delivers a harmonious blend of power and agility, effortlessly navigating urban streets and rugged terrains alike. Its spacious, ergonomically designed cabin, coupled with Mazda’s intuitive infotainment system, ensures comfort for both driver and passengers. The CX-5’s bold styling and Skyactiv technology underscore its appeal to families and adventure enthusiasts. This Ramadhan, it offers more than just a vehicle — it offers a gateway to new experiences.

The CX-60 starting at RO 12,999 marks Mazda’s bold entry into the premium SUV segment. Offering two electrified powertrains — a 2.5L and a 3.3L Turbo MHEV — the CX-60 combines exhilarating performance with eco-conscious engineering.

OAB, FSA TO LAUNCH FIVE DIGITAL TRADING PLATFORMS

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its leadership in innovation and advanced financial solutions, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) played a key role in collaboration with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) to launch five digital trading platforms for licensed brokerage firms on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

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



markets. Through this strategic partnership, OAB continues

to play a leading role in fostering financial sector growth and promoting investment in the capital market. Recently, the bank introduced a suite of advanced digital services, including collection solutions via virtual accounts, which enable clients to manage cash flows more efficiently by opening virtual accounts.

These solutions enhance transparency, simplify the tracking of outstanding amounts for each project or product and significantly streamline financial transactions among institutions operating in the financial sector.

Realise your wish list with Lincoln’s benefits

FOR those who aspire to experience luxury at its finest, Lincoln presents an exciting opportunity.

Now, when you own a luxury Lincoln, you receive exclusive benefits, including 5 years / 100,000 km service, 5 years / 100,000 km warranty, Free insurance and 1 year registration, all designed to enhance your ownership experience. (Conditions apply. Visit the Lincoln showroom in Al Wattayah for details.) The offer ends on April 17, 2025.

Sharing his thoughts about the latest campaign, a representative from Arabian Car Marketing, the dealers for Lincoln in Oman said, “Lincoln embodies effortless luxury and with these exclusive benefits, we are making it even more rewarding for our customers to drive home a vehicle that exudes sophistication, power and cutting-edge technology. This is the perfect time to realise your luxury wish list with a Lincoln that redefines refinement and performance.”

Lincoln’s impressive range in Oman includes the Corsair, Nautilus and Navigator, each offering an exceptional blend of



Lincoln’s range in Oman includes the Corsair, Nautilus and Navigator.

sophistication, technology and performance.

A statement of style and power, the Lincoln Corsair seamlessly merges luxury with technology. Designed for those who appreciate comfort and performance, this two-row SUV features a turbocharged 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine delivering 250 horsepower and 275 lb-ft of torque, paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission for a smooth, refined drive.

Inside, Lincoln Co-Pilot360

2.1 Vision driver-assist features enhance safety, while a premium 10-speaker audio system ensures an immersive experience. The Corsair is crafted to glide effortlessly on the road, staying true to Lincoln’s Quiet Flight DNA.

With a bold new Lincoln signature grille, sleek tail lamps and an elegant light bar, the Nautilus makes a powerful first impression. Designed for those who desire both luxury and SUV versatility, it boasts a

2.7-litre twin-turbo V6 engine delivering 335 horsepower and 515 Nm of torque, paired with adaptive suspension and all-wheel drive disconnect for ultimate control.

The Nautilus also offers an all-new wheel line-up, including premium 18” painted aluminium and 20” machined aluminium options for an even more distinguished stance.

A true icon in the world of luxury SUVs, the Lincoln Navigator sets the standard for spaciousness and cutting-edge technology. Powered by a twin-turbo V6 engine generating 440 horsepower, this SUV is engineered for an exceptionally smooth ride, supported by a 10-speed automatic transmission.

Inside, the Navigator delivers next-level opulence with Revel Ultima audio featuring 28 speakers, a panoramic roof that floods the cabin with natural light and SYNC 4 technology for seamless connectivity. Passengers enjoy personalised comfort with second-row audio and climate control, while the third-row seats feature power recline capability for a first-class experience.

MUZN ISLAMIC BANKING ANNOUNCES EXCLUSIVE RAMADHAN OFFERS

MUSCAT: NBO Muzn Islamic Banking has announced the launch of special Ramadhan financing offers for auto and goods financing, available from March 1 to April 30, 2025, offering Sharia-compliant financial solutions tailored to meet customers’ needs and expectations.

This exclusive financing opportunity allows customers to benefit from special profit rates across various tenures: 4.75% for Auto and Goods Financing under two years, 5.25% for three



to five years and 5.45% for five to ten years. These limited-time offers are designed to cater to both existing and new customers, reinforcing Muzn Islamic Banking’s dedication to financial inclusion and customer-centric banking. Salima bint Obaid Issa al Marzooqiyah, Assistant General Manager and Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO, said: “At Muzn Islamic Banking, we prioritise financial empowerment through Sharia-compliant solutions that align with our customers’

expectations. With these special Ramadhan offers, we are making it easier for individuals to access hassle-free financing options that support their personal and financial growth while ensuring transparency in every transaction.”

By providing competitive profit rates and easier access to financing, Muzn Islamic Banking continues to uphold its vision of delivering trusted Sharia-compliant financial services that uphold Islamic banking principles.

Ominvest celebrates Int’l Women’s Day during the MEIRA Oman iftar

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

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

the region.

The event created a unique synergy, blending the reflective spirit of Ramadhan with global focus on women’s empowerment and advancement, highlighting the pivotal role women play in shaping the future of the finance and investor relations.

Abdulaziz al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest, commented: “At Ominvest, we recognise that diversity and inclusion are fundamental drivers of innovation and sustainable value creation. We are committed to empowering women at all levels of our organisation and within the broader financial ecosystem. Their



The event brought together up to 70 influential leaders from the finance and corporate governance field.

strategic insights and leadership are essential to our ability to deliver long-term growth and contribute to Oman’s economic vision.

Their expertise and perspectives are key drivers of our strategic initiatives and operational excellence, fostering sustainable growth. We remain dedicated to cultivating an inclusive culture where women’s contributions are not only recognised but celebrated and we take pride in striving towards achieving gender parity in executive leadership.”

Paolo Casamassima, CEO of MEIRA, commented: “This event serves as a platform for fostering

dialogue and driving meaningful change in investor relations and corporate governance. We deeply appreciate Ominvest’s strategic partnership and their commitment to advancing investor relations within the financial sector. Their support has enabled us to create a powerful forum for recognising the contributions of women and promoting best practices across the region.”

Ominvest demonstrates its commitment to gender diversity through concrete action, with women comprising up over 20% of its board of directors and executive management respectively.

BUSINESS

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE



R MADHUSOODANAN

The writer is the Executive Advisor to the Board, Global Money Exchange, Muscat

“MY DEBT is spiraling out of control. I need a solution. Please help me.” I received a phone call recently that made me write this.

This individual has outstanding mortgage loan installments, personal loans, credit card dues and other overdue utility bills.

The reason for the above situation is a lack of financial literacy and discipline. Even among

the educated, the degree of financial illiteracy is high, which they admit only privately.

Having debt is not a bad idea. One may not have adequate liquid cash with him for the purchase of a house property, vehicle, marriage, education of children, etc. A long-term debt like a mortgage is ideal if properly conducted, considering the level of inflation. But the problem starts with multiple borrowing without looking into the cash inflows.

It is important to know the total debt ratio. In corporate parlance, it is called the Debt-Equity Ratio (DER). It measures the gross annual income required to pay the debt obligations. The total debt ratio is arrived at by dividing your total monthly repayment obligations including credit card payments by your monthly income.

For example, your monthly repayment obligation on your various loans like housing, vehicle, education and credit card is say \$40,000 and you have a monthly income of \$100,000, the total debt ratio is 40 per cent.

Ideally, this ratio should not exceed 30 per cent. Any ratio above 30 per cent gives a warning signal. Lenders also do not favour loans whose total debt ratio is more than 40 per cent.

STRATEGIES FOR BETTER TOTAL DEBT RATIO

As mentioned earlier, having debt is not a crime. But overleveraging is a crime. In today’s complex, financial landscape, the strategies for improving your total debt ratio cannot be overemphasised. The following are a few tips can help you to manage your financial health wisely.

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE

The first and foremost among all strategies is to inculcate a habit of financial discipline. Practice the art of combining financial discipline by proper planning, budgeting and strict implementation.

A properly drawn family budget can help you to a large extent in this regard. Tracking expenses and avoiding impulse purchases also are important.

PRIORITISE YOUR SPENDING

Identify areas where you spend more as well as look for opportunities to cut costs. While one has no control over certain expenses which are mandatory in nature, controllable expenses can be minimised. It is a fact that not all expenditures are equally important. Making conscious decisions about how to spend your money is very important.

DEBT CONSOLIDATION

Debt consolidation is a debt management strategy that combines all your loans under one umbrella. If you have multiple debts like overdrafts, credit card loans, purchase loans, or personal loans, bring it under one head for better management. This will not reduce your debt, but you may get a lower rate of interest and convenience.

SAVINGS HABIT

Save at least 10 per cent to 15 per cent of your gross income on a regular and consistent basis. Savings is a very difficult decision and always people postpone. Remember, the power of compounding can really help you to grow your investment multifold. Not only this, this may help you during exigencies. Also, try to practice the art of diversified savings and investments to achieve your financial goal.

REVIEWING STRATEGIES

Periodical review of the strategies followed by you needed to be reviewed at periodical intervals for several reasons. This may be required to match the changing market scenario, shifting goals and new information and insights. Revisit your strategies based on the above to improve the financial discipline.

OXFORD BUSINESS GROUP RELEASES REPORT TO DRIVE GREEN GROWTH IN OMAN

MUSCAT: Oxford Business Group has released a new report titled “Strategic Investment: Driving Green Energy, Digital Innovation and Sustainable Growth in Oman.”

The report highlights Oman’s commitment to innovation and sustainability as it pursues economic transformation under Oman Vision 2040.

Oman is positioning itself as a global hub for green hydrogen, renewable energy and digital transformation while leveraging its strategic location as a logistics centre. Key sectors such as tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and mining are undergoing



modernisation through advanced technologies and targeted investments, in line with the country’s 2050 net-zero emissions target.

The report underscores policy

efforts to create a pro-business environment by streamlining regulations and fostering robust public-private partnerships to attract foreign direct investment. It also showcases major initiatives, including Yiti Sustainable City and Hydrom, which are unlocking high-growth opportunities and shaping a future-ready economy.

Investment trends across key sectors — transport, agriculture, industry, tourism, energy and ICT — are explored in detail, offering insights into how Oman is driving economic diversification and sustainability while creating new opportunities for investors.

OOMCO to provide clean energy to Port of Duqm

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MARCH 11

AS part of its strategy to position itself as a gateway for clean energy, Port of Duqm Company has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) to explore and develop options for implementing solar energy systems, biofuels and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at Port of Duqm.

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

The MoU was signed by Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of Port of Duqm Company and Tariq Mohammed al Junaidi, CEO of Oman Oil Marketing Company, in the presence of Eng Hashim Taher al Ibrahim, Chief Business Support Officer and Mohammed Hassan al Mujaini, Deputy General Manager for Occupational Health, Safety, Quality and



Representatives of Port of Duqm and OOMCO at the MoU signing.

Sustainable Development at Oman Oil Marketing Company.

On this occasion, Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of Port of Duqm Company, stated: “We are committed to developing sustainable energy solutions at the port and this agreement strengthens our efforts towards achieving an environmentally friendly operational environment that aligns with Oman Vision 2040.

Our partnership with OOMCO

will open new avenues in the clean energy sector, contributing to the transformation of Port of Duqm into a sustainable logistics gateway at both the regional and international levels.”

Tariq Mohammed al Junaidi, CEO of Oman Oil Marketing Company, commented: “At Oman Oil Marketing Company, we are committed to providing innovative and sustainable energy solutions beyond fuel. Our advancements in

solar energy, EV charging infrastructure and biodiesel support Oman’s transition to clean energy.

This MoU with Port of Duqm marks a key step in enabling the port to optimise energy use, reduce carbon emissions and enhance sustainability. It also allows us to expand the reach of our green solutions, reinforcing our role in driving a more sustainable future for Oman.”

This collaboration will enable Port of Duqm to enhance its operational efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and serve as a model for the development and operation of sustainable ports.

Moreover, it represents a key step in establishing Duqm as a gateway for green and clean energy.

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

OCCI’s first Ramadhan Evening highlights Oman’s presence at ‘2025 Japan Expo’

NASRULAH AL AJMI

MUSCAT, MARCH 11

THE OMAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) launched its first Ramadhan Evening on Monday, on the theme, “The Importance of 2025 Japan Expo for the Private Sector”.

Held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the event explored the benefits of participating in world expos and how the Omani private sector can leverage these events.

The session also reviewed the goals of Oman’s pavilion at 2025 Japan Expo and the activities and programmes it will feature.

Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, emphasised that Oman’s participation in 2025 Japan Expo reflects the country’s national identity and rich heritage while showcasing its modern achievements and sustainable development.

He noted that engaging with major economies at the Expo will open new avenues for the Omani private sector to



Private sector representatives joined officials from MoCIIP and OCCI at the Ramadhan Evening.

expand investments, establish international partnerships and explore the latest innovations in various industries.

He further stated, “We believe that Oman’s private sector plays a fundamental role in showcasing the country’s economic identity globally. Oman’s long-standing history in trade and openness to the world makes its participation in 2025 Japan Expo particularly significant.

We encourage entrepreneurs to seize this golden opportunity to expand into international markets, explore new avenues

for growth and innovation and enhance Oman’s economic competitiveness by attracting investments and fostering trade and industrial cooperation.

Since 2025 Japan Expo focuses on AI, sustainability, digital transformation and future technologies, the Omani private sector has a unique chance to engage with cutting-edge developments and position itself as a leader in multiple sectors.”

Zakaria bin Abdullah al Saadi, CEO of OCCI, stated that the Ramadhan Evenings are a key annual initiative aimed

at fostering dialogue among various sectors to address critical economic issues and business challenges in Oman.

“These evenings serve as a dynamic platform to exchange insights and ideas, strengthen public-private partnerships and support Oman Vision 2040’s goals of improving the business environment, attracting investments, diversifying the economy and enhancing economic competitiveness for sustainable development and national prosperity.”

He also emphasised that these efforts align with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s vision to empower the private sector and enhance its role in driving development, improving investment conditions, and leveraging innovation and technology for a diversified and sustainable economy.

Al Saadi noted that this year’s Ramadhan Evenings align with the current interests of the business community, covering topics such as the importance of 2025 Japan Expo for the private sector — highlighting Oman’s preparations for 2025 Japan Expo in Osaka, which will run from April 13 to October 13 2025.

OPINION

Agri-Fish Fund: A strategic partner in achieving Oman Vision 2040



HANAN
AL SULAIMI

The writer is
Executive Director
- Agricultural
and Fisheries
Development Fund

THE Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund plays a pivotal role in Oman’s food security system and serves as a fundamental pillar in realising the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The Fund aligns its strategies and programmes with the requirements of this ambitious vision, focusing on key areas that resonate with the Sultanate of Oman’s national priorities.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
Environmental sustainability, a core pillar of Oman Vision 2040, is at the forefront of the Fund’s initiatives, particularly in addressing climate change challenges and water scarcity. The Fund finances projects that employ modern irrigation and water resource management technologies while promoting the use of non-traditional water sources in agriculture. It also prioritises biodiversity conservation by supporting projects that preserve indigenous livestock breeds and local plant varieties.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION
In line with Oman Vision 2040’s goal of economic diversification, the Fund is committed to increasing the agricultural and fisheries sectors’ contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It achieves this by financing projects that add value to local products, developing value chains and supporting agro-industrial and fisheries-related processing industries. By investing in these projects, the Fund contributes to diversifying income sources and reducing dependency on oil, thus reinforcing the economic and development pillar of the Vision, which aims to build a diversified and sustainable economy.

INNOVATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Recognising the significance of knowledge-based economies within Oman Vision 2040, the Fund actively supports innovation and digital transformation. This is evident in its backing of e-marketing initiatives for fisheries products, the adoption of advanced agricultural and livestock production technologies and the encouragement of food security-related innovations.

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT
The Fund places great emphasis on empowering rural and coastal women, enhancing the skills of farmers and fishermen and creating job opportunities for Omani youth in the agricultural and fisheries sectors. These efforts align with Oman Vision 2040’s objectives of human capital development and social participation.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS
The Fund is dedicated to strengthening public-private partnerships, a key element of Oman Vision 2040. This is reflected in its initiatives to attract private sector investments in agricultural, fisheries and livestock projects, as well as its support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within these sectors.

FOOD SECURITY
The Fund plays a crucial role in enhancing food security by increasing self-sufficiency in essential food commodities, developing food supply chains and ensuring the quality and safety of food products. These objectives align with Oman Vision 2040’s commitment to achieving sustainable food security.

TRANSITION TO A GREEN ECONOMY
The Fund actively supports the transition to a green economy by financing sustainable

The Fund plays a crucial role in enhancing food security by increasing self-sufficiency in essential food commodities, developing food supply chains, and ensuring the quality and safety of food products

agriculture projects, promoting responsible aquaculture and encouraging the use of renewable energy in production processes.

KEY PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE FUND’S ROLE IN OMAN VISION 2040
The Fund tailors its programmes to meet the requirements of Oman Vision 2040 through the following key principles:

- Supporting Advanced Technologies — Promoting modern agricultural and fisheries techniques, such as hydroponics and protected farming, to enhance productivity and sustainability.
- Financing Innovative Projects — Prioritising projects that offer innovative solutions to agricultural and fisheries challenges, fostering competitiveness and innovation in these sectors.
- Strengthening Partnerships — Collaborating with government entities, private sector stakeholders and international organisations to exchange expertise and enhance development efforts.
- Developing Infrastructure — Investing in infrastructure that benefits the agricultural and fisheries sectors, such as marketing facilities, improved transportation and storage solutions to ensure high-quality product distribution.
- Combating Pests and Diseases — Supporting pest and disease prevention and control programmes to safeguard agricultural and fisheries production, ensuring product quality and safety.

By integrating these strategic pillars, the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund emerges as a key partner in realising Oman Vision 2040. It contributes to building a diversified and sustainable economy, achieving food security, generating employment opportunities for Omani citizens and preserving natural resources for future generations.

BEIJING BUZZWORDS
HINT AT SLOW-BURN
CONSUMER FIX

BY KA SING CHAN

HOW TO boost the spending power of young workers is among the most-discussed topics during China’s annual legislative session this year. That could lead to sensible policies to boost consumption over the long term. But with deflationary risks mounting, officials are under pressure to deliver quick stimulus.

Deciphering policy signals from the so-called ‘Two Sessions’ is a daunting task. Every spring, some 5,000 senior lawmakers and political advisors gather in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for a week to rubber-stamp the party’s policy priorities and targets for the coming year. In 2024, for example, the State Council tackled 13,596 proposals, leading to 2,000 or so new policies.

Consumption takes the top spot in Beijing’s to-do list this year. That word was mentioned 31 times in Premier Li Qiang’s official report to the parliament, up from 21 times last year and more than the 28 mentions for “technology”.

And according to state-owned Xinhua News Agency, the most talked-about topics last week included lessening the tax burden for low-income workers and shortening the working week to 4.5 days.

Both proposals might help tackle China’s stubbornly high youth unemployment and sluggish spending. Currently, the government taxes monthly income above 5,000 yuan (\$698). Raising that threshold can empower workers to spend more: every one-yuan cut in taxes can translate into a 2.3 yuan consumption boost, according to a proposal tabled by a delegate from the State Administration of Taxation.

Reducing the working week from 5 days is also in line with a broader push to give more statutory holidays nationwide, though the economic impact is debatable.

Even so, Beijing is facing a more immediate challenge that will require an urgent response. The consumer price index in February fell 0.7% year-on-year and returned to negative territory for the first time in 13 months; even after stripping out seasonal food and energy costs, core consumer prices fell.

Perhaps acknowledging the risks, the government cut its annual inflation target to ‘around 2%’ in 2025, the lowest figure since 2003.

— Reuters

Rethinking FDI campaigns:
Fix first, market later



FDI campaigns often operate under the assumption that great advertising leads to great results.



MOATASIM
AL BULUSHI

The writer is
Communications
Operations
Manager at
Oman Investment
Authority

Unclear policies, bureaucratic delays and gaps in investor protections are red flags that no amount of advertising can hide. Such challenges must be tackled directly to create an investment-ready environment where trust can grow, allowing well-crafted communication to share the message effectively.

Reimagining FDI campaigns calls for a shift from broad, high-budget advertising to tailored, impactful communication.

Instead of using a broad approach, countries can adopt strategies that speak directly to decision-makers through exclusive events, personalised outreach and strategic partnerships.

Take Oman, for example. Its unique position at the crossroads of the Gulf, Africa and India, coupled with historical ties to China, positions it to craft a compelling story of stability, connectivity and

opportunity — one that resonates with both local and global stakeholders.

FDI isn’t solely about numbers; it’s fundamentally about relationships. Oman’s well-established societies and friendship associations with developed nations, along with its long-standing neutral foreign policy, have earned it international trust and exemplify the power of soft diplomacy — a tool that builds lasting trust and genuine stories.

Yet, relationships alone are not enough. Investors need to see a country’s strengths in action, conveyed through success stories, cultural diplomacy and proven partnerships that position the nation as a reliable partner in an unpredictable world.

Ultimately, attracting FDI is more than a creative exercise. It is a process that begins with addressing core investor concerns and ends with a message that resonates through strategic communications.

For nations eager to compete on the global stage, the essential question is not how to market themselves better, but how to become truly investment-ready and share that readiness in a clear, credible way.

This goal can only be achieved when government units — responsible for communications, investment promotion and foreign affairs — collaborate to craft a unified narrative and build a supportive ecosystem for investors.

As decision-makers reflect on their next FDI initiatives, they must ask themselves:

Are we solving the real challenges investors face, or are we merely telling them a story they may not believe?

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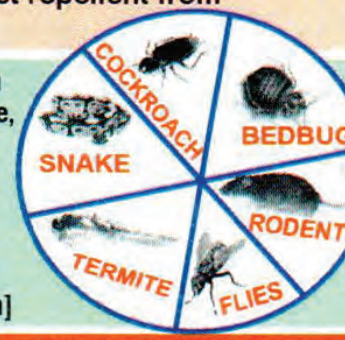
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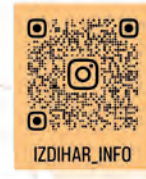
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Ramadhan

4

BASIC
RAMADHAN
GUIDES

FATWA

HIS EMINENCE SHAIKH
AHMED BIN
HAMAD AL KHALILI
Grand Mufti of Oman



A traveller gets sick while on his way, the doctor advised him to stop his Ramadhan fasting as it may harm his health condition. What is he supposed to do?

Better to break. However, he should make up for the missed days.



HADITH GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

*Abu Huraira reported
Allah's Messenger as saying:*

*If anyone forgets that he is fasting
and eats or drinks he should complete
his fast, for it is only Allah Who has fed
him and given him drink.*

QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY



*We have warned you of a near
punishment — the Day when a
person will observe what his hands
have produced and the faithless will
say, "O, I wish I were dust".*

(Al Naba)



DUA SUPPLICATION TO ALLAH

*O Allah, on this day, grant me
a share from Your mercy which
is wide, guide me towards Your
shining proofs, lead me to Your all
encompassing pleasure, by Your love,
O the hope of the desirous.*



FAMILY TOGETHERNESS TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT LAYALI AL IRFAN

BY YERU EBUEN
Instagram: [@yru_here](#)

FOR MANY families during Ramadhan, the pursuit of wholesome entertainment has become essential, serving as a means to strengthen familial bonds and foster community connections. As the holy month unfolds, families seek spaces where they can enjoy free offerings suitable for all ages — encompassing children's games, food, bazaars and prizes that embody the joy of this blessed time. This spirit of togetherness shines brightly every night at the Layali Al Irfan Festival, an enchanting celebration held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

Launched by the Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) in collaboration with Mangusteen Oman, a leading event management firm in the GCC, Layali Al Irfan Festival seeks to provide an all-encompassing Ramadhan experience. It serves as a welcoming oasis for families and friends to gather amid a backdrop of cultural activities, artistic performances and a vibrant marketplace showcasing local entrepreneurs.

"This festival highlights Omran's dedication to curating exceptional tourism experiences that captivate visitors while fostering initiatives that support local talent, entrepreneurs and SMEs," remarked Antoine Aoun, Managing Partner of Mangusteen Oman. Running until March 29, the festival captures the authentic essence of Ramadhan by fostering an atmosphere rich in warmth, hospitality and community spirit.

Rediscovering Ramadhan Nights: A Look Back
Historically, Ramadhan nights in

Oman have been cherished for family gatherings and communal festivities, often spent around the dining table sharing Iftar meals after a long day of fasting. Traditional forms of entertainment included storytelling, music and games that brought families together. Outdoor gatherings, especially in souks, were common where families enjoyed henna painting, shopping for new clothes and sampling local delicacies.

Over the years, entertainment options have expanded significantly within the region. In the past, opportunities for families were limited to small-scale community events or private family gatherings. However, as Oman has evolved, so too has the nature of Ramadhan celebrations. The introduction of larger festivals and fairs has transformed these nights, making them vibrant communal experiences.

Today, Layali Al Irfan reflects this evolution by blending traditional customs with modern entertainment, creating a festival atmosphere that resonates with both older generations and the youth. Performing arts reflecting Omani heritage, alongside a diverse range of food outlets serving local and international cuisine, bring an inclusive experience for all. As Aoun explains, "Layali Al Irfan is an engaging experience that beautifully embodies Omani hospitality, blending cultural authenticity with a wide range of activities for families and friends."

The OCEC Boulevard Experience: Embracing Family Values

Visiting the OCEC Boulevard during the festival offers a delightful experience, albeit with some traffic challenges, particularly on weekends. Throughout Ramadhan, Omran and the OCEC have transformed the venue from a

conventional conference centre to a family-friendly destination, aiming to engage visitors beyond business events and concerts.

Families can expect a treasure trove of activities designed with children in mind. Dedicated zones for kid-friendly games and engaging performances ensure that younger attendees have a chance to have their own fun while adults can appreciate the cultural displays and culinary offerings. A lively bazaar, alongside enticing prize draws, keeps the atmosphere dynamic and engaging.

As the festival unfolds, it becomes clear that Layali Al Irfan is much more than a mere entertainment event; it is a statement about revitalising the spirit of Ramadhan. Antoine Aoun's vision is to blend tradition with modernity, creating an experience that resonates with a diverse audience. "Our goal is to provide a meaningful Ramadhan experience where visitors can embrace the essence of the holy month while also creating a valuable platform for local entrepreneurs," he stated.

With 55 vendor spaces dedicated to local businesses, the festival not only supports entrepreneurship but also breathes life into Oman's economic landscape. By rotating vendors weekly, a wider range of products and services are brought to festival-goers, enriching their experience and supporting community growth.

The Layali Al Irfan Festival, free of charge and open nightly from 8:00 PM to 12:00 AM, stands as a beacon of hope, generosity and joy during Ramadhan. It invites families to come together, fostering a vibrant sense of community and celebration that encapsulates the true spirit of this holy month.



Ramadhan in the UK highlights the spirit of community and mutual respect

BY KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabiyousef](#)

AS THE days stretch longer and the weather becomes increasingly unpredictable, individuals across the United Kingdom embark on their Ramadhan fasting journey. This sacred month flourishes amidst a rich tapestry of diverse faiths, bolstered by a spirit of peaceful coexistence. This year, fasting hours range from 12 to 16, varying by location and will continue as the holy month unfolds.

For Muslims residing in the UK, the observance of Ramadhan serves as a powerful reminder that faith and community can thrive in any environment, provided there exists tolerance, understanding and mutual respect. Mosques and community centres across the country offer a variety of spaces for prayer, Quran recitation and the cherished Iftar meals, creating a vibrant scene where believers from different backgrounds come together in unity.

Ramadhan in the UK transcends personal spirituality; it stands as a testament to the strength of mutual respect, shared humanity and religious tolerance. This year, King Charles III graciously hosted an open Iftar at Windsor Castle. Additionally, the historic Houses of Commons welcomed their inaugural Iftar, graced by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, while thousands gathered in London's Trafalgar Square for Europe's largest open Iftar. Such inclusivity and recognition from the broader community transform Ramadhan into a period of collective solidarity, even within a predominantly non-Muslim nation.

Usman Raja, Second Secretary Political and Head of Communications at the British Embassy in the Sultanate of Oman, reflects on how he views Ramadhan as a sacred and transformative period. "Growing up in the UK, I often pondered how fasting in a largely non-Muslim environment would feel — whether it would breed isolation or disrupt my daily routine,"



Usman shares. Indeed, fasting in the UK brings its own unique challenges, particularly during summer months when the fast can extend to a daunting 18 hours. Many find the shorter winter days more manageable when adhering to the rituals. Unlike Oman, where Ramadhan is woven into the national fabric and observed by most, life in the UK continues largely as usual as many do not partake in fasting. "Despite these contrasts and hurdles, I have consistently been touched by the remarkable kindness, respect and understanding I encountered in the UK, which enriched my fasting experience in unexpected ways," Usman adds warmly. One of the most uplifting facets of Ramadhan in the UK is the evident camaraderie between Muslims and non-Muslims, who come together to honour and support this spiritual journey. "In my workplace, my colleagues were genuinely curious about fasting, often asking insightful questions and expressing authentic interest in its significance. Some even chose to join in fasting as a gesture of solidarity, which profoundly moved me. Their efforts to accommodate fasting colleagues — whether by

adjusting meeting times, refraining from eating or drinking in front of us, or offering words of encouragement — highlighted an exceptional level of understanding and respect. This kindness served as a poignant reminder of our shared humanity, transcending faith and background," Usman reflects. While the atmosphere may differ from Oman, where the entire nation collectively slows down for Ramadhan, the essence of fasting remains steadfast. At its core, it is about purifying the soul, cultivating patience and fostering empathy. Whether in a quaint community in the UK or a bustling neighbourhood in Oman, Ramadhan remains a sacred and transformative period for all. The UK's strong tradition of community service provides ample opportunities for kindness during this time. From food bank donations to volunteering at soup kitchens, individuals of all faiths unite to assist those in need. What makes this holy month truly special is that the spirit of generosity transcends religious borders — Muslims and non-Muslims alike come together to uplift the less fortunate, reinforcing our shared values of compassion and humanity.

RAMADHAN TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

“Bubur Lambuk” (rice porridge), night markets and community iftars in Malaysia

In Malaysia, Ramadhan is a vibrant and joyous month marked by communal unity and cultural diversity. As the moon is sighted, families begin preparations for a month filled with spiritual growth and festivities. The tradition of serving “Bubur Lambuk” — savory rice porridge filled with spices and meat — has become an iconic dish for iftar. Markets transform into bustling night bazaars, where locals gather to enjoy a variety of traditional foods and treats. As sunset approaches, families and friends come together to break their fast with laughter and gratitude. The evenings are often filled with cultural performances and collective prayers, emphasising the spirit of community. Charity during Ramadhan is highly valued, with many engaging in acts of generosity and kindness. Malaysians embody the essence of Ramadan — celebrating faith, family and the importance of giving back to the community.

DAILY HEALTH TIPS TO REMEMBER



Stay Active

Maintaining an active lifestyle during Ramadhan can be challenging due to the fasting routine, but it is essential for both physical and mental well-being. Engaging in light to moderate exercise is highly recommended to promote circulation, aid digestion and maintain energy levels. Timing your workouts is vital; consider exercising after iftar, once you've replenished your energy with food and hydration, or choose light activities such as walking or stretching throughout the day. Tasks like short walks can help sustain energy and reduce fatigue. After iftar, you might engage in more structured activities such as jogging, yoga, or group sports, depending on your fitness level. Staying active also offers opportunities to socialise with family and friends, enhancing both physical health and emotional balance during this holy month.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVENTS IN ISLAM



632-661 CE: The Rashidun Caliphate

The Rashidun Caliphate, encompassing the reign of the first four caliphs — Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali — was a period of rapid expansion and consolidation of the Islamic state. This era saw the compilation of the Quran, significant military conquests and the establishment of administrative practices. The Rashidun period laid the groundwork for subsequent Islamic empires, unifying diverse tribes under a common faith and legal framework.

FEATURES

BY YERU EBUEN
PHOTOS BY MOAYID AL-SIYABI

AS I STEPPED into the early morning light of Wakan, I was greeted by an enchanting symphony of colour and fragrance that took my breath away. The surrounding Hajar Mountains, shrouded in a soft haze, were adorned with a kaleidoscope of vibrant white and blush pink apricot blossoms.

Each delicate petal seemed to dance in the gentle breeze, transforming the rugged landscape into a picturesque paradise. The cool air whispered through the valley, beckoning me to explore the tranquil paths lined with blossoming trees.

This was more than just an escape; it felt like a magical moment suspended in time, an opportunity to connect with nature in its most vibrant form. With my heart set on adventure, I couldn't wait to discover what other treasures Wakan had to offer.

Nestled at an altitude of approximately 2000m, Wakan appears like a postcard from a bygone era, a charming mountain village that whispers of simpler times. Its laid-back vibe and phenomenal views provide perfect scenery for the road tripper seeking solace. With a cool climate year-round, Wakan serves as a welcoming refuge from the sweltering heat of Muscat.

From mid-February to mid-April, Wakan bursts with life as the apricot and pomegranate trees compete for attention, their blossoms drawing both visitors and wildlife alike. As butterflies flutter and bees flit from flower to flower, the village is transformed into a veritable paradise. Those lucky enough to witness the splendour of the apricot blossom are treated to an experience reminiscent of Japan's famed cherry blossom season, but with a decidedly Omani twist.

In coming weeks, the cycle shifts from blossom to harvest as villagers fill baskets with luscious, honey-coloured apricots ready for sale. However, it's important for visitors to remember that Wakan is not just a scenic backdrop; it is a living community that relies on these fruit-bearing trees. Out of respect for the local inhabitants, travellers are encouraged to avoid picking blossoms or fruits from the trees, though the friendly villagers are often more than happy to sell their produce.

THE EVER-CHANGING CHARM OF WAKAN

Having visited Wakan many times before, I always find myself drawn back to this enchanting village during the blossom season. Each year, while the apricot blossoms greet me with familiar beauty, they unveil their unique magic anew. Some seasons, the delicate petals take on a more vibrant hue of purple, while others showcase a pure white or blush pink that seems to flutter softly against the backdrop of the mountains. Yet, no matter the shade, the sight is always breathtaking, a reminder of nature's artistry.

As I wandered the pathways, the village transformed before my eyes, invigorated by the blooms that blanket the landscape. The air became a tapestry of sweet fragrances, drawing both locals and tourists alike into a vibrant celebration of spring. Every corner of Wakan buzzed with life—families gathering for picnics amidst the blossoms, children playing nearby, and artists capturing the scene on canvas. The beauty of the village wasn't just in the flowers themselves, but in how they brought people together, creating a shared sense of wonder and connection.

Wakan has now become a yearly attraction that enchants both tourists and locals, each flocking to witness the annual spectacle. As social media platforms showcase the stunning blooms, the village's reputation continues to grow, luring adventurers, photographers, and nature lovers eager to experience its charm. The connection forged each season, whether through the shared delight of discovering a particularly resplendent tree or the camaraderie formed on hiking trails, makes each visit unforgettable.

With the passage of time, Wakan's blossoms have not only marked the changing seasons but have also woven themselves into the fabric of the community's identity. It is in this celebration of nature's fleeting beauty that I find solace



Wakan's blossoms: A yearly attraction that weaves itself to the fabric of community's identity



and inspiration—an exquisite reminder that while the blossoms may seem the same each year, their magic is always evolving, and so too are we.

A HIKING HAVEN

For those who seek adventure, Wakan boasts an array of walking trails that promise breathtaking vistas and invigorating experiences. The most popular route leads up approximately 700 steps winding past terraced gardens to a watchtower perched atop the village. This climb generally takes about thirty minutes, with numerous viewpoints along the way ideal for resting or picnicking.

For the more adventurous souls, Wakan features three main trekking routes: W25, W24a, and W24b, each offering a unique experience of the surrounding natural beauty. Route W25, a 6-7 hour trek, leads to the Wakan Pass, revealing sweeping views of the Wadi Mistal valley. Meanwhile, W24b provides a shorter alternative without the same panoramic rewards, allowing visitors of varying skill levels to engage with the landscape.

As you traverse the paths of Wakan, don't miss the opportunity to explore the local stalls adorning the route. Vendors often sell a delightful range of produce, from honey to fragrant za'atar, inviting you to indulge in the rich flavours of the region. Indeed, an apricot purchased from a local farmer and savoured amidst the blossoms can enrich your experience, making for a truly idyllic picnic in this serene setting.

While Wakan is easily accessible for a day trip from Muscat, indulging in an overnight stay offers the added benefit of witnessing both magnificent sunrises and captivating sunsets over the mountains. Whether you're there for the blossoms, the bounty, or the breathtaking hikes, Wakan promises an enchanting escape into the heart of Oman's agricultural heritage and natural beauty.

Wakan's apricot blossom season captivates visitors not just with its aesthetic allure but with the warmth of its community and the richness of its natural landscape. So, pack your bags, prepare your camera, and set off to discover this hidden gem—where the mountains cradle memories waiting to be made.